

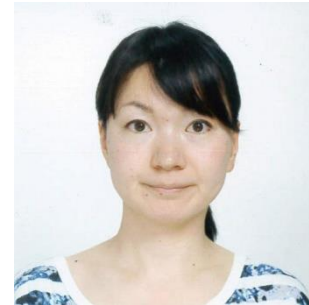


Title of Project:

The Writing Center as a Global Pedagogy:
A Case Study of a Japanese University Seeking Internationalization

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Final Report

Motivation for the Research

The writing center is a common writing support service in North America. At the writing center, tutors do not proofread students' work but instead try to engage students in dialogue about their writing. In the past few decades, this practice has gained momentum among practitioners worldwide as an effective pedagogy and been implemented in more than 60 countries worldwide (e.g., Archer, 2007; Bräuer, 2002; Tan, 2011). Although writing centers have been well received by international practitioners, more studies are needed to investigate the economic and political imperatives of establishing writing centers in respective contexts and possible impacts on different student populations as a result. To address these issues, my case study explored how the educational philosophy, pedagogical rationale, and concepts of the global writing pedagogy are interpreted by administrators and enacted in pedagogical practice at an internationalizing university in Japan (referred to as MLU, a pseudonym, in the case study).

Research Questions

RQ1. What were the rationales for establishing a writing center at a Japanese university?

- What macro factors and institutional factors influenced the decision-making process of the university policy planners?
- How did the planners justify the establishment of a writing center in their planning?

RQ2. How is the writing center pedagogy enacted in the three types of tutorials?

- What type of knowledge and strategies do tutors use in generalist tutoring? How do their students see the role of generalist tutors?
- How do tutees perceive their non-native tutors' stances? How might the tutors' linguistic statuses impact these perceptions?
- How do the Writing Center administrators, tutors, and international students view the role of the Writing Center?



Research Methodology

To examine the language planning stage, data were collected from interviews with five administrators and an analysis of relevant university documents. For pedagogical practices, primary data included audio-recordings and student interviews from four tutor-tutee dyads concerning three types of writing tutorials: (a) Japanese students seeking consultation on Japanese writing, (b) Japanese students seeking consultation on English writing, and (c) international students seeking consultation on Japanese writing.

Summary of Findings

By looking at the process of implementation from a language policy and practice perspective (Hornberger, 2005; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), this study found that the MLU Writing Center was caught between ideal literacy/educational practices of a “world-class university” (Deem, Mok, & Lucas, 2008) and the local literacy realities at MLU. In the language planning, the internationalizing goals of a world-class university (e.g., English language policies, increasing international student enrollment, and student-centered education reforms) were the primary motives behind the establishment of MLU’s Writing Center. In tutorial practices, particular aspects of the Writing Center pedagogy were challenged by tutees’ disciplinary practices, beliefs towards non-native English tutors, and Japanese language learning needs.

Implications

This research has implications for the decision-making processes of non-Western universities in initiating appropriate first, second, and foreign language writing support/academic support services. A crucial implication drawn from this study is the role of tutors in university language policy and planning. As those who confront these realities in everyday writing center practices, tutors are responsible literacy educators who could actively work together with administrators in finding a middle space between top-down policies and local writing needs. This study showed that MLU’s literacy realities challenged the ideal literacy situations envisioned by top-down policies. Some of these realities were international students’ language learning needs, discipline-specific literacy practices, and the dominant status of Japanese as a means of learning, teaching, and doing research. Policy making from ground up that takes these realities into account could better evaluate, formulate, and implement first, second, and foreign language writing support/academic support services.



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