Exploring Academics in Socio-cultural Contexts: Focusing on Experiences and Challenges of Junior Female Academics (JFAs) in Japanese Universities

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Chair: Dr Jisun Jung

Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to explore experiences of female academics in Japan especially focus on the academics who are preparing to be faculty members or who are in the first stage of academic career in university. Japanese higher education has dramatically changed since the early 2000s and this was based on neoliberal policy for enhancing the competitiveness and effectiveness of higher education in a global society. Moreover, the application of a limited tenure system in Japanese higher education, where lifetime employment and guaranteed academic autonomy is valued, is directly related to the academic lives and activities of junior academics (Kano, 2015). In this situation, this study digs into experiences of Japanese junior female academics as one of minor groups of academia whom the national and institutional policies have been applied to involve but still have some limitations to take a part actively in. As a theoretical framework, the perspective of "professional growth" of faculty members from O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann (2008) was applied to understand the junior academics in the socio-cultural contexts mainly based on the academic culture with intersectional influence of gender. For the study, the Academic Profession in Knowledge Society (APIKS) data was used and seven female and three male junior academics were interviewed with semi-structured questions. The study could provide implications to encourage participation of females in the diversity of academic society looking through the current status and challenges of female junior academics in Japan.

About the speakers:
Dr Yangson Kim is a lecturer at the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University in Japan. Her research interests include gender and junior dynamics within the academic profession, internationalization of higher education, institutional context and governance of higher education, and comparative higher education system in Asia-Pacific countries.

Dr Machi Sato is an associate professor at the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University. Her research interests include diversified academic lives and academic identity, professional development for graduate students, faculty staff, and third space professionals within HE, and higher education policy and nation building (particularly in Malaysia).

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