

Higher Education in Japan

The Japanese higher education system can be distinguished as an example of diversified mass higher education in a highly industrialized country. Higher education system consists of various categories and types of institutions that are different in their missions, functions, academic standards, prestige, status, and financing methods. After World War II, especially from the 1960s to the 1980s, the increase in higher education institutions was very striking. The number of students going on to universities or junior colleges also increased. In 1955, the percentage going on to higher education was a mere 10.1% of the age cohort (15.0% of boys, 5.0% of girls). By 1960, the figure had reached 10.3%, having hardly changed at all and showing that entry to higher education was still tinged with a select elitism. But by 1970, the figure had rapidly climbed to 23.6%. By 1980, the figure had risen still further, to reach 37.4%. In 2004 the figure eventually exceeded 50%. In the same way as in the United States, universal higher education was seen as having become a reality. Japanese higher education is in the mature stage. However, with the changing global environment such as an aging population and increasing international competitions, Japanese society faces significant new trends that will have a major impact on its higher education system and affect the mode of its operation. Some radical reforms such as the incorporation of national universities, initiating the certified evaluation system, expanding competitive resource allocation, and the promotion of internationalization are proceeding.

1. Development of Higher Education

The first attempt to establish a modern university based on the European model was made following a political revolution in 1868, known as the Meiji Restoration. In 1877, the government established the University of Tokyo by consolidating and restructuring several of the westernized institutions of higher learning. In that time, Japan felt an urgent need for well-educated government officials and professionals to lead the newly born vulnerable nation that was struggling desperately to protect its independence from the external powers. Several Western-style technical and professional colleges set up by the government and private individuals followed. In 1886, the University of Tokyo was transformed into the Imperial University of Tokyo. Drawing on Continental models, the Imperial University consisted of faculties of law, letters, science, and medicine. By 1891, faculties of engineering and agriculture were added, making the Imperial University a unique institution in the world granting university status to both these practical disciplines. By 1940, seven imperial universities had been established in various parts of Japan and crowned the prewar system of higher education. Under these imperial universities, in hierarchical order, there were other official universities that provided single disciplines, such as medicine, engineering, commerce and education; locally

established public universities; private universities; non-degree granting technical and professional colleges; and separate women's colleges. The entire higher education system served only select members of the population, whose number did not extend beyond 5% of the relevant age group.

Following defeat in World War II in 1945, Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces. During the occupation period, as one element of the democratization of Japan, education reforms were carried out. Based on the American model, the old prewar multi-track school system was transformed into the single-track of 6-3-3-4. The hierarchical higher education system was also reformed. All previous higher education institutions including former imperial universities and private ones, were grouped under the same status as "*daigaku*" which is generally translated as "new university". Most of the former non-degree granting technical and professional colleges were upgraded to universities or merged into the new universities. As a general rule, at least one national university was established in every prefecture. Institutions that could not satisfy the conditions to upgrade to *daigaku*-status, were permitted for the time being to start as two- or three year short courses. These institutions were called "*tanki-daigaku*" or "junior colleges." The intention of this egalitarian policy was both to eliminate social and political stratification of the people by offering a similar kind of higher education and to provide wider opportunities for higher education to the young generation.

The Japanese economy received a devastating blow as a result of World War II, but with special procurements arising from the Korean War (1950-53) as a foothold, it moved forward along the road of postwar reconstruction. By the mid-1950s, prewar productivity was already being exceeded. And moving into the 1960s, a further surge forward was achieved with the period of high economic growth. The industrial and economic world began to see a highly qualified workforce and research produced in higher education institutions as essential for industrial development. Higher education had to meet growing diversified demands for graduates for industry and society. In 1964, the Economic Council, a government body, issued a report entitled, "Issues and Measures concerned with Human Ability Development in the Context of Economic Growth". Focusing on the future development of the heavy chemicals industry, the report called for the planned training of a labor force, divided into layers consisting of a small number of highly talented people to administer and manage the industry, a large number of middle-level technical specialists, and a very large number of technicians to support them. Thus, during the 1960s and after, the policy for diversifying higher education was adopted.

The government concentrated its investment in the expansion of natural sciences and engineering programs at national universities and made efforts to develop graduate and research programs at a certain number of national universities. At the same time, the government deregulated the procedure for establishing private universities to meet the growing demands for higher education. Thus, quantitative expansion of higher education was mainly entrusted to the

initiative of private sector without any financial support from the government. In 1962, junior colleges which had been originally regarded as a temporary measure, were recognized as a permanent part of the higher education system. The junior colleges developed as general and specialized education courses mainly for female students. In the same year, the colleges of technology were created as a new type of institution. The colleges of technology admitted students from among those completing lower secondary schools and provided them with a five-year semi-professional education focusing particularly on engineering and mercantile marine studies.

The rapid expansion of private higher education without any public supports led to a deterioration in the quality of education. Many private universities had suffered from such problems as overcrowding of students, shortage of facilities and libraries, and increasing grievances of the students against the rise in tuition fees. In 1975, in an effort to alleviate the problems, the government began allotting public subsidy to cover some parts of the operational costs of private universities. At the same time, the minister of education introduced a higher education plan to control the establishment of new private universities or any increase in student enrollment in the private sector over the next five years (1975-1980). Also in 1975, another new law, the Specialized Training Colleges Law was promulgated. The purpose of this law was to elevate the status of non-degree post-secondary education institutions. In postwar Japan, many of these kinds of institutions appeared, providing various kinds of vocational and technical training. In spite of their size and quality, they had long been neglected, enjoying neither public support nor legal recognition as legitimate educational institutions. Following this new law, some of the more qualified non-degree postsecondary institutions were given legal status and renamed as “*senshu-gakko*” (specialized training colleges) to be included in the broad category of higher education. In 1981, a law to establish the University of the Air (called the Open University today) was enacted. Designed to provide lifelong learning opportunities to Japanese people, it started classes in 1985 by TV and radio.

While there were rapid expansion and diversification of higher education, there was also wide recognition of the great difference in status and prestige between institutions. Therefore, there was fierce competition for entry to the traditional national universities or top-class private universities. This continues to inflict psychological stress on both children and parents. This overheated competition has often been referred to in the media as “examination hell.” A great many Japanese children go to private cram schools on evenings or weekends or both to supplement or catch up with their school lessons. There are some young people, so-called *ronin*, who have failed in their first attempts at the entrance examinations for their first-choice universities, and put off entering another university so that they can study and try again in the following years. In the 1970s, reforming of the university entrance examination was one of the most heated issues in higher education. A new system was introduced in 1977. In the case of national and public universities the applicants first took the National Preliminary Test, which

was conducted nationwide by the University Entrance Examination Center, and then the test conducted by the individual universities. Although the operation of National Preliminary Test system has been modified, a large number of universities, including private ones, currently make use of the tests developed by the University Entrance Examination Center.

2. Structure of Higher Education

Table 1 shows the type and number of higher education institutions in Japan.

Table 1: Type and Number of Higher Education Institutions (2009)

Type	Provider	Number of Institutions	Number of Students
University	national	86	621,800
	public	92	136,913
	private	595	2,087,195
	all	773	2,845,908
Junior College	national	2	3
	public	26	9,973
	private	378	151,000
	all	406	160,976
College of Technology	national	55	22,579
	public	6	1,720 *
	private	3	836
	all	64	25,135
Specialized Training College	national	11	79
	public	204	6,845
	private	3,133	597,351
	all	3,348	624,875
	Total	4,591	3,656,894

(Source) MEXT, Statistical Abstract, 2010 Edition

* Excluding 1st ~3rd grade students(the equivalent of senior high school students)

In 2009, there were about 2.85 million students in total at 773 universities (86 national, 92 public, and 595 private). There were about 161,000 students in total at the 406 junior colleges (2 national, 26 public, and 378 private). The percentage going on to universities or junior colleges in the eighteen-year-old cohort was 56.2 %. There were also 25,000 students studying in the upper grades in the 64 colleges of technology (55 national, 6 public, and 3 private). In addition to the traditional higher education sector, there were about 625,000 students studying in 3,348 specialized training colleges (*senshu-gakko*, 11 national, 204 public, and 3,133 private) at the

postsecondary education level. In total, there were 4,591 higher education institutions enrolled with about 3.66 million students. The percentage going on to any higher education institutions in the eighteen-year-old cohort had reached 77.6%. The share of female students was 40.5% in universities and 89.1% in junior colleges.

Recently, with the tightening tendency of the employment market for young people, some university students attend specialized training colleges at the same time or after university graduation to obtain practical training and certificates to help them get jobs. This phenomenon is called “double-schooling”.

In 2009, 73.3% of university students were enrolled in private universities. Especially in junior colleges and specialized training colleges, a great majority of the students (93.8% and 95.6% respectively) were in private institutions. In terms of student numbers, 77.6% of students were enrolled in the private higher education sector. The dominance of the private sector, at least in terms of quantity, is one of the distinctive features of the Japanese higher education system.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has the statutory power to charter universities and junior colleges established by local governments and private educational legal entities. When chartering universities and junior colleges, in the case of private institutions, the minister seeks advice from the Council for University Chartering and Private Educational Legal Entities established in MEXT, which reviews the quality of institutions in light of the “Standards for Establishment of Universities” and “Standards for Establishment of Junior Colleges” set by the minister. The standards include basic requirements with respect to the organization of the university, the selection of students, staff qualifications, student-faculty ratios, staff, enrolment capacity, educational programs, graduation requirements, campus and other facilities, and the organization of the management and administrative structures.

Undergraduate courses last for four years, except those in medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and pharmacology, which extend to six years. Undergraduate courses have long been divided into two elements: general education and specialized education. The former was intended to provide students with a well-balanced background and included such subjects as foreign language education, and physical education, and basic courses in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. In 1991, the government revised the above-mentioned framework and simplified the basic principles for the university curriculum. Each university was given greater discretion to construct a curriculum independently. Taking the opportunity presented by this revision, in quick succession, universities adopted measures such as abolishing the general education requirement in the curriculum or reducing the teaching of foreign languages or physical education. On the other hand, in exchange for expanding discretion, universities were placed under an obligation to give a detailed report in the form of

self-monitoring and self-evaluation on their teaching and research activities.

Concerning the making of national policies on higher education, the Central Council for Education, an advisory body for the minister of education played an important role. In 1984, as an advisory body under the direct jurisdiction of the prime minister, the National Council on Education Reform (NCER) was launched. It remained in existence for three years and issued a total of four reports on comprehensive education reform including higher education. Based on the recommendation of the NCER, under the minister of education, the University Council was established in 1987 as an ad hoc council on higher education. The University Council was composed of a wide variety of learned persons, including university rectors, business executives, journalists, and researchers on higher education. In 1998, the University Council issued the report, "A Vision for the Universities in the 21st Century and Reform Measures" In this report, the following items were proposed: (1) qualitative enhancement of teaching and research; (2) securing the autonomy of universities: more flexibility in the educational and research systems; (3) improvement of administrative structure: responsible decision making and implementation; and (4) establishment of plural evaluation: compulsory public disclosure of the results of self-monitoring and self-evaluation, an introduction of the third-party evaluation system.

In 2001, with the integration of governmental councils, the University Council was reorganized as the University Division of the Central Council for Education. In 2005, the Central Council for Education issued a new report, "A Future Vision for Higher Education in Japan." This report presents a vision or "overall design" for the future of higher education in Japan over the mid- to long-term (from 2005 to 2015-2020) and measures to be taken to realize it. At first, it presents its fundamental ideas as follows: (1) the 21st century is referred to as the age of the "knowledge-based society," in which higher education is exceedingly important in personal development as well as in national strategies; (2) it is time to pay more attention to the comprehensive potential of the higher education system and policy, therefore, the government must take responsibility for higher education in the future; (3) there is a shift underway from an age of "plotting tertiary education plans and setting various regulations" to "presentation of future visions and provision of policy guidance." Based on these fundamental ideas, the report proposes the following 12 suggestions as the priority policy matters.

- 1) Responding to social needs on training of human resources.
- 2) Improving the management of higher education institutions.
- 3) Making the admissions policy, curriculum policy and diploma policy of each institution more clear.
- 4) Promoting the exchange of international students.
- 5) Making the standards and viewpoints for the chartering and the certified evaluation for higher education institutions more clear.
- 6) Comprehensive reviewing for undergraduate education curriculum.
- 7) Making the graduate education curriculum more solid.

- 8) Establishing and fostering world-class graduate schools.
- 9) Revitalizing university staff (upgrading the status of young researchers).
- 10) Expanding financial support to higher education institutions.
- 11) Building a diversified and meticulous funding system for higher education institutions.
- 12) Intensifying and systematizing student support systems.

3. Changing Dimensions in Higher Education

In the recent higher education reforms, the most widely discussed points and those which are making a great impact on Japanese higher education institutions are as follows: a) incorporation of national universities, b) introduction of the certified evaluation system, c) internationalization expansion, and d) expanding competitive resource allocation.

(1) Incorporation of National Universities

Since 2004, an independent corporation status was given to all national universities which have occupied the central part of Japanese higher education. Previously, all national universities, as part of a state-run agency were under the direct jurisdiction of MEXT. This is a great transformation of the legal status and management system of the national universities. It is said that the incorporation of national universities aims to improve their independence and autonomy in order to revitalize teaching and research activities. Such reorganization would enable each national university to become independent from the national framework and manage itself under its own responsibility under the leadership of the president of the university.

However, in the beginning, national university staff felt a lot of embarrassment and anxiety toward this reform. They felt that this reform was proceeding in the context of the global administrative reform in which the government had urged the reorganization of governmental structure, the diminution of administrative organizations, the introduction of private initiatives for distributing public services, and the reduction of national government employees.

In accordance with this reform, in terms of governance, the national universities became autonomous corporations with their own managing board, and chief executive (president) with authority over budgets, planning, the employment of staff and salary scales. Each university corporation is to establish a management system that consists of a Board of Directors comprised of a president and trustees for making decisions on the important matters, and two deliberative bodies to handle the management side (the Management Council) and academic activities (Teaching and Research Council). In the Management Council, more than half of the council members are to be invited from outside of the universities to adopt the recommendations of external experts in university management. The presidents are selected by the President Selection Council which is composed of the representatives of the above-mentioned two deliberative bodies. The minister formally appoints presidents according to the proposals from

each university corporation.

At the same time, each university corporation is required to draw out the medium-term targets for six years, proposed to, and approved by MEXT. This working plan is subjected to evaluation by MEXT every year to check on the progress toward its realization. To perform this work, the Evaluation Committee for National University Corporations was established in MEXT. MEXT continues grant financial support to the university corporations in the form of operation grants.

(2) Initiating the Certified Evaluation System

Prior to 2004, quality assurance in Japan was based chiefly upon ministerial control over the establishment of new higher education institutions. It was called an “ex-ante evaluation” based on the “Standards for Establishment of Universities” set by the government. In the 1990s, all national universities were required to do self-monitoring and self-evaluation on their teaching and research activities. And shortly afterward, they were bound to release the result of self-monitoring and self-evaluation. The 1998 report of the University Council recommended introducing an external or third party evaluation system aimed at assuring and improving the quality of higher education. In 2002, a new system called the “Certified Evaluation System” was launched, requiring all national, public and private universities, junior colleges and colleges of technology to undergo periodic evaluations (every seven years) by an evaluation organization certified by MEXT.

As of right now, there are five organizations that are publicly certified to undertake the evaluations: the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA), the National Institute for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE), the Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE), the Japanese Association for College Association (JACA), and the Japan Law Foundation (JLF). NIAD-UE is the only organization certified to undertake evaluations of all types of higher education institutions, as well as professional graduate schools, while JUAA is certified to evaluate universities, junior colleges and professional law schools. The other organizations are certified only for the evaluation of one type of institution, or in the case of JLF, for the evaluation of professional law schools. These certified evaluation organizations develop and use their own evaluation criteria and standards. The results of the evaluation are disclosed to the public and society at large.

(3) Internationalization

Japanese higher education has traditionally been domestic in orientation. In the early stages of building modern higher education, the government employed many foreign professors from western countries and sent Japanese students to study abroad. Shortly afterward, however, these foreigners were replaced by Japanese academics trained in western countries. From then on, the population of Japanese higher education institutions was overwhelmingly composed of Japanese professors and Japanese students, and taught in Japanese. Except for the students going overseas

to study in mainly English-speaking countries, higher education has been distinguished for much of the past half century by its modest international engagement, a limited flow of students in and out of Japan. The Japanese higher education market has been almost self-sufficient.

In 1953, the Japanese government initiated the foreign student scholarship program for Southeast Asia and the Middle East as the first undertaking in international cooperation in education. Japanese universities accepted an increasing number of students mainly from developing countries and gradually arranged some facilities, such as housing and student support systems for foreign students. In 1983, the first internationalization strategy of the government was presented. Known as the “100,000 International Student Plan,” the plan set the goal for increasing the number of international students enrolled in Japanese higher education institutions from 10,000 (in 1983) to 100,000 by the beginning of the 21st century. The plan was a high priority, and the budget for government scholarships for international students was greatly increased. The plan’s target was reached in 2003 when almost 110,000 foreign students were enrolled in Japanese higher education. Over 90% of the foreign students came from Asian countries, especially from China and South Korea. On the other hand, the number of Japanese who study abroad was about 7,500 in 2007. The majority study in the United States, with China, the UK, and Australia following in descending order.

In 2009, it reached 132,732. Among international students, about 10,000 are on a government foreign student scholarship program. About 80% of scholarship recipients are enrolled in graduate schools, especially in graduate courses in the science and engineering areas. Notwithstanding these important trends in the internationalization, the proportion of foreign students to total students is 3.8%, that is not enough compared with the average of OECD member countries. Japanese language and culture can be a major barrier for foreign students who want to study in Japan. Nearly half of all universities offer lessons in foreign languages, while at some universities all courses are in English. In these universities, it is possible for foreign students to study a regular degree program without knowledge of the Japanese language. Many institutions are working hard to strengthen the services for international students such as providing substantial Japanese-language education courses, support for daily life, and help with housing and job-seeking in Japan.

In July 2008, Japanese government announced the new “300,000 International Students Plan” which sets the long-term goal of accepting 300,000 international students by 2020. In 2009, to promote these goals, MEXT started a special project for developing 30 universities which would lead the way for the internationalization of Japanese higher education. The selected universities (the so-called “Global 30”) have received specific financial support for such activities as intensifying teaching in English, assigning more foreign teachers for fixed terms, hiring special staff to support international students, establishing overseas service centers for recruiting good foreign students, and expanding student exchange programs.

There was also a trend promoting the open-door policy to external higher education institutions. Beginning in the latter part of the 1980s, some 40 American universities opened branch campuses in various parts of Japan and began recruiting Japanese students. Some local governments backed up these institutions and offered substantial financial support. However, these enterprises experienced frustration in trying to acquire enough students, and as a result, the great majority of universities withdrew from the Japanese higher education market. Some possible reasons have been put forward. These universities were not formally accredited by MEXT, owing perhaps to the arduous process of approval under the pre-reform Standards for University Establishment. As a consequence, students enrolled at those institutions were unable to obtain benefits available to those enrolled at recognized Japanese universities, such as financial aid and student discounts on public transportation. Most of the high-performing Japanese students preferred to study in well-known Japanese universities. And it was said that so many students who entered these universities had difficulties in the English-based teaching system. While the Japanese government improved the legal status of the overseas universities and their operating conditions in 2004, foreign universities would have difficulty in succeeding in the mature Japanese higher education market.

Furthermore, Japan has played an important role in the establishment of international quality assurance networks, in the development of the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Education by OECD and UNESCO, and it hosted the drafting assembly for these guidelines in Tokyo. Japan has especially begun to put in serious efforts to promote university exchanges and quality control programs in Asia and the Pacific region. In 1991, Japan played a leading role in the establishment of the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) program. In 2003, the Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (SEED-Net) program was initiated by 19 leading universities of Southeast Asian countries and 11 Japanese universities with the aim of giving mutual support for human resource development in the field of engineering education. In 2009, in the summit meeting of the top-leaders of Japan, China, and South Korea, a new initiative promoting university exchanges among three countries was agreed upon. It is called the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia, (CAMPUS Asia).

(4) Expanding Competitive Resource Allocation

After the incorporation of national universities, the government provides public funds to national university corporations as operational grants and capital development subsidies. These direct subsidies cover about 50-60% of their current fund revenues. These universities obtain supplementary income from diversified resources such as tuition and other fees, incomes from university hospitals, private gifts and donations, and other competitive external funds. MEXT has begun to shift public research and development expenditures away from recurring funding awarded to institutions on a

formula basis, and towards funds that are awarded on a competitive basis. Competitive funds, which national, public, and private universities can strive to acquire, have steadily increased. They include the competitive research funds such as grants-in-aid for academic research, the “21st Century Center of Excellence Program” (COE), and its successor, the “Global Center of Excellence Program” (Global COE), in which the government concentrates its financial support on a specific number of universities for building up world class centers of learning. MEXT also started allocating competitive funds for the higher education institutions that propose innovative teaching projects. These distinctive education programs are called “Good Practice Programs” (GP Programs).

[References]

- Akiyoshi Yonezawa (2006), “Japan” in Forest J.F. & Altbach P.G. (eds.) *International Handbook of Higher Education* Part II Springer pp.829-837
- Eades R. G. and Yumiko Hada (2005) *The 'Big Bang' in Japanese Higher Education: the 2004 Reforms and the Dynamics of Change* Trans Pacific Press
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2006), *OECD Thematic Reviews of Tertiary Education: Country Background Report of Japan* (available at www.oecd.org/findDocument)
- MEXT (2009), *Quality Assurance Framework in Higher Education in Japan* (available at www.mext.go.jp/english/highered)
- MEXT (2009), Outline of the Student Exchange System: Study in Japan and Abroad
- MEXT (2011), *Higher Education in Japan* (available at www.mext.go.jp/english/highered)
- Kazuyuki Kitamura (1991), “Japan” in Altbach P. (ed.), *International Higher Education: A Encyclopedia* Garland Pub. pp.489-498
- MEXT (2010), *Statistical Abstract*
- Newby H. et al. (2009), *OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education: Japan* OECD
- Tetsuya Kobayasi (1992) , “Japan” in Clark B. & Neave G.R. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Higher Education* Vol.1 Pergamon Press pp.377-387

<Yasuo SAITO>

高等教育（記述の要点）

日本の高等教育システムは、高度産業化された社会における、マス化し同時に多様化した高等教育の一つの事例として特色づけられる。高等教育は、その目的、使命、機能、規模、学問的水準、社会的威信や名声を異にするさまざまなカテゴリーやタイプの機関によって構成されている。後期中等教育修了後に、大学あるいは短期大学に進学する生徒の比率は、1960年代以降、急速に拡大し、2004年には50%を超えた。高等教育を幅広く定義し、非学位授与型のポスト中等教育機関である専修学校への進学者を含めればこの比率はさらに高まる。

日本の高等教育は成熟した段階にあるといえるが、最近、日本の高等教育をめぐる状況は大きく変化しつつあり、この中で、国公立大学の法人化、高等教育の質保障や評価、高等教育資金調達の多元化などをめぐって高等教育改革議論が巻き起こっており、かなりラディカルな高等教育改革が進展しつつある。

1. 高等教育の歴史的発展

欧米モデルの近代大学の導入。帝国大学の設立。階層的多元的な高等教育システムの成立。第二次世界大戦後の高等教育改革。新制大学の誕生。戦後復興・経済成長と高等教育の量的拡張、高等教育機関の多様化。私学助成の開始、受験地獄と入試制度改革。

2. 高等教育の現状

高等教育機関の種類と数。大学設置基準。高等教育政策の形成過程。大学審議会。中央教育審議会大学分科会。主要な政策提言。

3. 高等教育の改革動向

(1) 国立大学の法人化

国立大学法人法。法人運営組織の特色。中期目標計画の作成と評価。

(2) 認証評価制度の導入

自己点検・自己評価の義務化。第三者評価の導入。評価機関の認証。

(3) 国際化の進展

国費留学生制度。留学生10万人計画。国際的・大学間交流と質保証。グローバル30。

(4) 競争的資金配分方式の拡大

COEプログラム。GPプログラム。