

# Impact of Higher Education Policy on Private Universities in Japan: Analysis of governance and educational reform through survey responses

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**Abstract.** Japanese higher education policy since the 1990s has been more economic-centered and neo-liberal in nature than previous policy and is characterized by both governmentalism and managerialism. It is widely known that operating grants for national universities have been reduced since they became national university corporations. At the same time, government control of private universities has increased, as evidenced by the new framework for providing financial assistance to private universities. Notable trends in Japanese higher education policy can be summed up by keywords such as “financial allocation cutbacks within higher education,” “accountability,” and “assessments”. A 2013 survey conducted by The Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan reveals that private universities’ assessments of their own financial situations differ depending on the size, history, location, and fields of study represented at the university and that various inequalities exist between public and private institutions and among private institutions.

**Keywords:** government control, managerialism, competitive funding, private universities in Japan, inequality

## Introduction

Globalized societies are subject to competition in domains such as research, education, and administrative operations, where information is shared instantaneously. In this regard, the effects of globalization have been substantial. The direction of higher educational policy and university reform has been impacted by the competition between nation-states, human resource development, human migration, and knowledge transfer that have occurred within the context of globalization. These changes have directly impacted universities worldwide. One example of a global trend that has impacted higher education policy is “quality assurance”. Yung-chi Hou (2012) states that the advance of globalization in the 21st century has stimulated an acceleration of accountability in higher

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education throughout the world, manifested in the form of quality assurance among higher education institutions. The concept of quality assurance in the context of higher education and universities is multifaceted and entails various aspects including systems, finances, organizations, administrative operations, internationalization, faculty members, curricula, entrance examinations, students, educational methods, and information.

In Japan, governmental oversight has been strengthened in order to promote improvement in these various aspects. Disclosure of education-related information became compulsory starting in 2011, and a public data base known as “The University Portrait” was established in 2014 to increase universities’ accountability to society as a whole as well as to various stakeholders. Simultaneously, both the School Education Act and the National University Corporation Law were amended in 2014. One of the major revisions of these laws entailed clarification of the role and authority of university presidents, vice presidents, and faculty meetings. The 2014 Amendment is symbolic of this new government control. The revisions strengthened the leadership of university presidents while weakening the authority of faculty meetings. Japanese institutions of higher education are obliged to change their internal school regulations, based on these revised laws which became effective in 2015. While the National University Corporation Law only applies to national university corporations, the School Education Act applies to both national university corporations and private universities.

Several previous studies have focused on national university corporations. Kobayashi (2014) examined trends in expenditures of national university corporations and autonomous efforts to increase financial resources for national university corporations and argued that the current trends had the potential to increase disparities in financial resources among strong and weak national university corporations. Several other studies such as Shima (2012) and Yamamoto (2008 & 2010) also stated that the disparity in financial circumstances among national university corporations have widened since national university corporation bill was passed in 2004. It is widely known that operating grants for national university corporations have been reduced. However, a new framework for financial assistance available to private universities was established in 2013. A certain portion of this assistance involves competitive finance whose aim is to improve governance and promote educational reform at private universities. This means that there is an anxiety that government control is applied to private universities to certain extent. Unlike national university corporations, private universities vary widely in terms of governance and management style, mission, and size, etc. While much attention has been paid to the opinions of presidents of national university corporations, who have expressed deep concern about the strong government control in recent years, there are few public comments and data regarding the overall situation of Japanese private universities.

As is evident from the Table in the Note section<sup>1</sup>, 77.5 per cent of all four-year university and college students are enrolled in private universities and colleges. Accordingly, the role of Japanese private universities is indispensable in terms of providing an education to and producing a workforce for Japan's labor market. What influence has the new framework for financial assistance targeting private universities, as well as the 2014 Amendment, had on private universities? In addition, how has recently-adopted learning outcome-centered higher education policy affected the reform of private universities? To answer these questions, this article first describes the current situation surrounding all Japanese higher education and delineates the historical context for post-1990s university reform. Next, after explaining MEXT's new framework for competitive finance, it analyzes the present state of reform at Japanese private universities and identifies issues faced by these institutions, using the results of a survey conducted by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan (PMC-PSJ) in 2013. Although the survey conducted in 2013 by PMC-PSJ does not have direct association with the 2014 Amendment, the results of the survey can delineate background, relevance and tendency of government control and reforms of private universities.

### Contextual considerations: The environment of Japanese higher education

The global trend of ensuring quality assurance has clearly affected Japanese higher education policy. One important factor underpinning efforts to strengthen "quality assurance" is the massification of higher education. In the past, approximately 15 per cent of Japan's population, comprising individuals aged 18 to the early 20s was enrolled in higher education. During the massification stage, this percentage jumped from 15 to 50 per cent of the same age group. In the post-massification stage, or so-called universal higher education stage, more than 50 per cent of this age group are enrolled in higher education (Trow, 1974). Japan entered the post-massification stage in 2003, when 49.9 per cent of high school graduates enrolled in higher education.

In 2014, the college enrollment rate rose above 55 per cent. In this context, almost all students desiring to enter university are able to gain admission. This implies that students who are

<sup>1</sup> Table 5 shows the number of university students by field of study in 2013.

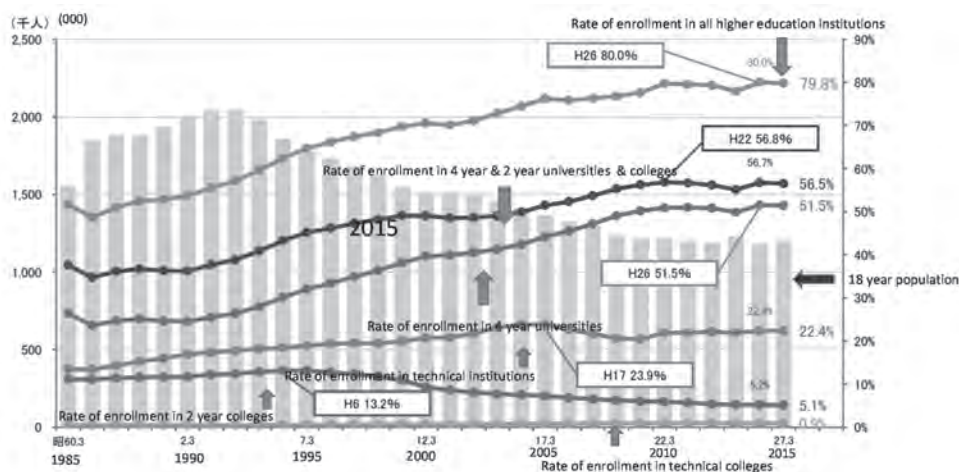
**Table 5. The number of students by field of study in 2013**

	Total	Humanities	Social science	Science	Engineering	Agriculture	Medicine & Dentistry	Other Health	Home economics	Education & teacher training	Arts	Others
Male	1,448,256	128,881	563,476	59,367	342,006	42,734	45,096	75,889	6,842	75,132	19,978	88,855
Female	1,113,812	248,301	285,176	21,123	48,036	32,990	22,877	149,430	64,446	108,651	50,159	82,623
National	447,973	31,334	68,608	31,297	133,601	30,273	31,577	25,638	1,210	66,871	3,510	24,054
Local	127,144	20,398	34,124	2,685	16,471	4,497	5,438	21,580	2,759	2,376	4,929	11,887
Private	1,986,951	325,450	745,920	46,508	239,970	40,954	30,958	178,101	67,319	114,536	61,698	135,537

Source: The School Basic Survey, MEXT, 2013

less-prepared for university studies in terms of basic knowledge, study skills, and motivation, are entering higher education. This circumstance has created the need for Japanese universities to strengthen quality assurance in terms of student learning. This point is addressed in greater detail in a later section.

In addition to government control in the form of “quality assurance,” the environment exhibits several characteristics unique to Japanese society. First, as is often pointed out, Japan’s demographic composition has had an extremely large impact. The population of Japanese 18-year-olds has been steadily declining. MEXT data show that the population of 18-year-olds was 2.1 million in 1992, but fell to 1.2 million in 2015. University enrollment at four-year universities reached 100.5 per cent of capacity in 2008 (The School Basic Survey, MEXT, 2015). The rate of enrollment in four-year and two-year higher education institutions in 2015 was 56.5 per cent (The School Basic Survey, MEXT, 2015). Figure 1 shows the trend of 18-year-old population and the rate of enrollment in higher education. The decline in the population of 18-year-olds has dramatically affected the finances of the majority of private higher education institutions. MEXT reported that 45.8 per cent of Japanese private four-year universities were unable to achieve full enrollment (i.e. enrollment capacity) in 2014.



Source: MEXT, The School Basic Survey, 2015

**Figure 1. Trends in Japan's 18-year-old population and higher education enrollment rates**

As of 2015, there were 779 four-year universities and colleges in Japan. Of these, 86 were national institutions, 89 were other public institutions, and 604 were private institutions. As can be seen in Table 1, 78.6 per cent of new students in 2013 matriculated in private institutions.

**Table 1. Number of new students**

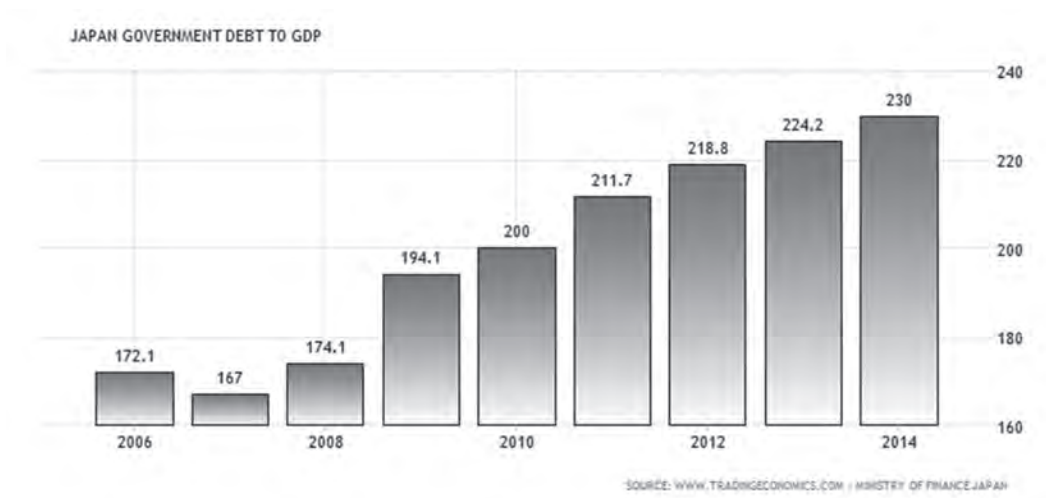
	Total	National	Local	Private
2011	612,858	101,917	29,657	481,284
2012	605,390	101,181	30,017	474,192
<b>2013</b>	<b>614,183</b>	<b>100,940</b>	<b>30,044</b>	<b>483,199</b>

Source: The promotion and mutual aid corporation for private schools of Japan, trend of applicants to four year and two year institutions, 2013

According to the PMC-PSJ, the population of 18-year-olds declined by 800,000 between 1993 and 2014. During this same period, the rate of advancement to four- or two-year institutions of higher education increased by 15.8 percentage points to 56.7 per cent. Meanwhile, the proportion of four-year universities and colleges unable to achieve full enrollment rose from 4.9 to 45.8 per cent during this period. In terms of finances, the proportion of private universities operating at a loss rose from 6.6 to 31.9 per cent. Management and recruitment of students by private universities and colleges have clearly been impacted by the decline in 18-year-old population; in response, private universities and colleges have endeavored to reform both financial management and teaching/learning.

Shirakawa (2015) examined whether or not there were disparities in enrollment rates of private universities by region and found that private universities in large metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Tokai and Kyoto/Osaka were able to achieve full enrollment but that private universities in rural areas could not. Such regional disparities will likely affect management and reform of universities located in disadvantaged areas.

Next, Japan's overall financial situation strongly and directly affects higher education policy. The Japanese government's debt to GDP ratio has been increasing year by year, reaching 233.8 per cent in 2015, compared to 110.1 per cent in the United States. Japan's debt to GDP ratio is the highest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries; Japan's financial situation has been a major constraint on higher education in recent years. Figure 2 shows the Japanese government's debt to GDP ratio between 2006 through 2014, and Table 2 provides a comparison of debt to GDP ratios in OECD countries. The Japanese government's debt to GDP ratio has continuously increased over the past seven years, making it the highest among OECD countries. It goes without saying that this underlying financial burden reduces the amount of financial assistance available to national university corporations. It has also led to the creation of a new framework for financial assistance to private universities.



Source: WWW. TRADINGECONOMICS.COM/ Ministry of Finance Japan

**Figure 2. The Japanese government debt to GDP ratio 2006 to 2014**

**Table 2. Comparison of government debt to GDP ratios in OECD countries**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Japan	193.3	209.5	216.5	224.2	230	233.8
USA	101.8	107.7	110.5	109.2	109.7	110.1
UK	77.9	82.3	95.7	93.3	95.9	97.6
Germany	84	83.4	86.1	81.4	79	75.8
France	96.9	100.8	110.5	110.4	114.1	117.4
Canada	89.5	93.1	95.5	92.8	93.9	94.3

Source: Economic Outlook 96

Taking the context described in the foregoing discussion into consideration, the next section examines trends in university reform in Japan after the 1990s.

### Historical context of post-1990s university reform in Japan

Efforts to reform higher education are occurring worldwide. A common thread among such efforts is that they tend to be economic-centered, market-conscious, and influenced by the shift in government policy toward deregulation, all of which reflect the increasingly industrialized world in which we live. In Japan, the push for reform also reflects newfound government concerns regarding Japan's ability to compete in the global market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century while simultaneously coping with both a rapidly aging society and a declining birth rate – concurrent trends that are expected to intensify financial loss and economic retrenchment.

In the era of retrenchment, institutions of higher education in Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have been subjected to similarly market-oriented educational reform. Currie (1998) states that managerialism, accountability, and privatization represent a shift in university agenda toward business and market values. Since beginning to focus on various aspects of Japanese university reform and the changing educational environment of higher education several years ago, the author has observed increasingly drastic transformations. Specifically, with the establishment of the national university corporation system in April 2004 and the coming into force of the revised law in November 2002<sup>2</sup>, all universities – including private universities – became subject to compulsory evaluation by accreditation agencies.

Two of the most substantial changes brought about by the partial revision of the School Education Law adopted by the Diet involve third-party evaluations. First, under the new law, all institutions of higher education – national, public, and private – must be evaluated by third-party evaluation entities. Second, such third-party evaluation entities must be certified by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter, MEXT). The amended law extends the obligation to undergo certified evaluation from national and public universities to private institutions. The amendment also strengthens government control by requiring the evaluating entities to be certified by it. The November 2002 amendment of the law is criticized for such strengthening and eroding the autonomy of institutions of higher education. This view, however, stands in direct contrast to Paragraph 2 of Article 7, which states: “The autonomy, independence, and nature of education and research of universities should be respected.” (NIAD-UE, 2009)

### **Substantial transformation of national universities**

The launch of the national university corporation system in April 2004 represents the most significant change in Japan’s higher education system since World War II. Before this change, the governance and management of national universities were subjects of intense debate. Japanese national universities were directly governed and managed by the national government, while public universities were directly governed and managed by local councils. The new National University Corporation Law granted the former national universities legal personhood<sup>3</sup>.

Before this reform, Japanese national universities had almost no power in terms of their own governance and management. They were supported and regulated by the government, which resulted in less individuality and flexibility among universities. Accordingly, it was expected that the granting of legal personhood would lead to the realization of autonomy and accountability. When the national universities became national university corporations, university presidents were expected to

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<sup>2</sup> The year of enforcement was 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This paper focuses on the impact of higher education policy on private universities. However, the passing of National University Corporation Law is the biggest event in the history of higher education after the WWII. Therefore, there is the section of heading refer to only the national university sector.

play a role similar to that of the top executives of corporations. Thus it was expected that the new management organization would involve integration of the board of directors with administrative and education/research councils. Boards of directors are represented by the president, full-time and part-time directors, and external personnel. Administrative councils are charged with deliberating management issues, while education/research councils consist of internal representatives who are responsible for issues related to education and research. In the reformed management structure, presidents serve as top managers – and management is expected to shift from the former “bottom-up” style to a “top-down” style, with the goal of expediting the decision-making process. Here, a president is granted absolute power to appoint directors from both outside and inside the university; and s/he is able to decide the budget and staffing of the university corporation.

Some national university corporations have changed their internal rules for selecting presidents to make it possible to select a president from outside the university. Before adoption of the national corporation law, all presidents of national universities were selected from within the universities. Such a management schemes allows for the creation of an educational and research structure that is more attractive from the standpoint of both students and corporate partners. Furthermore, accountability becomes more important in this system because it requires a third-party evaluation to improve the quality of education and research as well as to foster sound competitiveness. However, Osaki (2011) argues that the corporatization of national universities has complicated their responsibilities. National universities are now expected to perform two roles. One is to carry out effective management, which will be evaluated annually. At the same time, they are expected to develop public academic knowledge and conduct scientific research. These two very different roles impose a heavy burden on national university corporations.

Each university must establish medium-term goals within a given time frame and must propose concrete medium-term plans to achieve those goals. Every year, national university corporations must submit self-evaluation documents that are assessed by the MEXT corporate evaluation committee. An annual one per cent budget cut has been imposed on national university corporations as a means of forcing universities to execute more effective governance and management. In addition to the one per cent budget cut, a temporary salary cut affecting national university faculty and public servants was introduced after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. Although in principle the new management structure allows for flexible management, strong government leadership with regard to the allocation of funds for national university corporations firmly influences the direction of management research, as well as teaching and learning in national university corporations. Specifically, with regard to research in recent years, national university corporations have tended to adopt policies that emphasize science and technology. As a consequence the number of faculty and budgets for humanities and social sciences have been cut.



Although this paper primarily focuses on the private universities, it seems evident that the national university reforms accelerated by the government do shape private university reforms and their directions.

### **Competitive funds to support university educational reform and learning outcome-oriented higher education policy**

Due to the universalization of higher education, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of university students through selection at enrollment. As a result, the focus of quality assurance policies at Japanese higher education institutions has shifted from the entrance stage to the exit stage. Adoption of the grade point average (GPA) system; clarification of admissions; curriculum and diploma policies; and acceleration of faculty development are further examples of quality assurance initiatives. In 2009, it was reported that 49.2 per cent of universities and colleges had introduced GPA systems and had developed rigorous grade control systems (MEXT, 2012).

The abrupt introduction of demands for educational quality assurance through university learning experiences led to heightened emphasis on the performance of individual universities, as well as the performance of higher education as a whole. It has become more important to demonstrate educational outcomes. It is recognized that at the individual university level, the basis for educational quality assurance is the collection and measurement of educational data information the results of which are utilized to make improvements. After Japan's national universities were transformed into national university corporations in 2004, it became possible to accumulate and manage between various offices and sections the dissemination of data regarding financing, students, academic affairs, and other areas. For national universities that were expected to announce midterm goals and review their activities, centralization of data became a particularly important strategy. In addition, amid the frequent calls for educational quality assurance through learning experiences, the demonstration of educational outcomes became an important issue for all institutions of higher education – national or private. For those universities targeted for assessment, the measurement of educational outcomes; the collection and evaluation of educational data; and the utilization of the results thereof to make improvements have all become matters of great significance. In such an environment, institutions of higher education are obliged to assure the quality of student learning and outcomes of their educational programs. This reflects a common shift in higher education policy toward quality assurance that is occurring around the world. In reality, however, many institutions of higher education in Japan that share the desire for educational improvement currently do not conduct assessments based on objective data but, rather, rely on the subjective views and experiences of individual instructors.

The Central Council for Education released in 2012 a report titled “To transform the quality of university education for the future: The role of university education to cultivate students who can learn

throughout life and think proactively.” It urged institutions of higher education to achieve qualitative transformation of undergraduate education. It also notes that in the last decade a majority of institutions of higher education institutions have implemented reforms including the introduction of first-year seminars, syllabi, and active learning styles. Since professional development has been mandated, many faculties have become more teaching-centered.

The 2012 Central Council for Education Report is regarded as a turning point in the shift among Japanese institutions of higher education towards a learning outcomes orientation. In addition, the report touches frequently on issues related to university governance and effective management, which contributed to the revision of the School Education Law and National University Corporation Law in 2014.

### **New framework for MEXT financial assistance**

So far, how higher education policy has affected Japanese universities from the standpoint of accountability and assessment has been examined. As discussed above, both governmentalism and managerialism have been characteristics of Japanese higher education policy since the 1990s. The most symbolic issue has been the establishment of national university corporations. Since this change was implemented, government control of national university corporations has intensified, by means of corporate evaluations and the annual 1 per cent budget cut. At the same time, government control of private universities has also increased, as evidenced by the revision of the School Education Act previously mentioned. Governance of national university corporations is regulated by the National University Corporation Law, which requires the universities to undergo annual evaluations and imposes the mandatory 1 per cent budget cut. In contrast, the governance of private universities has not been as strictly regulated by the government. However, it is expected that governance of private universities will come under greater government control as a result of the revision of the School Education Act.

In addition, in 2013, MEXT established a new framework for providing financial assistance to private universities. Sato explains that private universities, in which 80 per cent of college students are enrolled, are expected to play an important role in the development of innovative human personnel and the creation of a knowledge-based society (Sato, 2014, p.69). Accordingly, MEXT has begun supporting private universities that are proactively engaged in systematic university reform through the Comprehensive Support Program for Private University Reform. The purpose of this program is to financially support private institutions of higher education that are deemed to be actively engaged in university reform through the integration of subsidies for current expenditures budgets for facilities development. Each university is required to respond to a survey regarding governance reform, educational reform, partnerships with industry, campus internationalization, and contributions to local

communities. MEXT then scores and selects the universities that it will support, based on assessment of the survey results.

In 2014 three hundred universities were selected for Type 1 practicing to promote the qualitative transformation of education. Examples of Type 1 practice include the promotion of university-wide educational management; reform of syllabi; improvement of students' learning hours; introduction of a curriculum numbering system; and the utilization of student evaluations. In all 150 universities were selected for Type 2 practicing to promote the development of local communities. Examples of Type 2 practice include the development of educational programs in partnership with local governments and measures to resolve issues faced by local communities. A total of 50 universities were selected for Type 3 practicing aimed at promoting partnerships with industry and other universities. A further 100 universities were selected for Type 4 practicing aimed at promoting globalization. Specific examples of Type 4 activities included the introduction of applied foreign language education; the establishment of study abroad programs; the signing of agreements with overseas universities; and contribution to the globalization efforts of local governments. Unlike national university corporations, private universities have their own missions, goals, and funds. As such, the government up to this point has not exercised direct control over private universities. The new framework for financial assistance can be regarded as a step towards an era of greater government control of private universities.

### **Problem statement: How diversity of private institutions affects governance and educational reform**

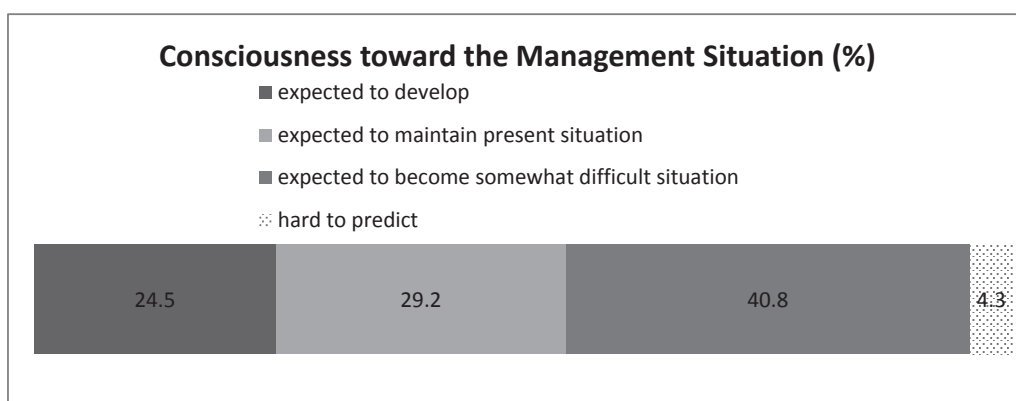
A number of previous studies have focused on governance in Japanese private universities. Morozumi (2000) suggested that the pattern of governance depended on the size and history of a given institution. The study revealed that decision making power resided with the board of trustees and faculty meetings in some universities while, in others, it resided with the board of directors, and that the president also served as director. Morozumi (2000) suggested that governance style at private universities was extremely diverse and that classifying governance style based on type of university was indispensable. Based on the above and similar studies, Morozumi and Ogata (2011) conducted a survey of private university staff to clarify the relationship between university governance, organizational culture, and personnel systems. The authors showed that a relationship did exist between these three factors, but overall governance at private universities remains highly diverse.

These studies suggest that, unlike the governance of national university corporations, governance styles in private universities are complicated and varied. The question then arises whether or not governance and university reform are proceeding in the same direction at all universities. Do these elements differ by size, location, history, and departments contained? Next, the current status of university reform at private universities is examined to answer this question.

### Survey results concerning university reform in Japanese private universities

As noted, the schemes for providing financial assistance to national university corporations and private universities are different. MEXT directly controls the financial assistance provided to national university corporations. The amount of money provided by MEXT to national university corporations is large. On the other hand, the majority of costs associated with running a private university are covered by tuition, and only a small portion of financing is provided by MEXT. This governmental assistance is not provided directly but, rather, through an entity associated with MEXT, i.e. the PMC-PSJ. It offers various services to private institutions including financial assistance, management consulting, surveying, and staff development workshops. It has conducted the survey of “improvement method and strategy of management” for school corporations since 1993. Items related to educational reform have been added to the survey in recent years. This section delineates the results of this survey with regard to items related to management and educational reform.

The figures below show the current status of university reform at Japanese private four-year universities and colleges based on a survey conducted by the PMC-PSJ in 2013. It contained questions regarding various topics including the governance of university corporations, university management, teaching and learning, university and educational reform, student recruitment, and financial status. The survey was sent to 594 private universities, and the response rate was 93.4 per cent. Figure 3 presents the distribution of responses regarding the issue of “Perception of the management situation.” 40.8 per cent of respondents answered that they expected the situation to become somewhat more difficult.



**Figure 3. The response on “perception of the management situation”<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> The source of data presented in Figures 3~7 and Tables 3 and 4 is the 2013 survey conducted by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan.

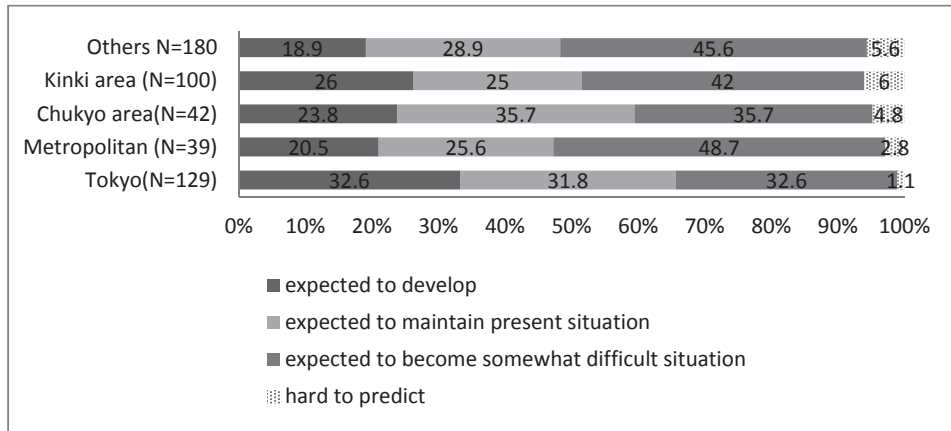


Figure 4. Perception of the management situation by regions

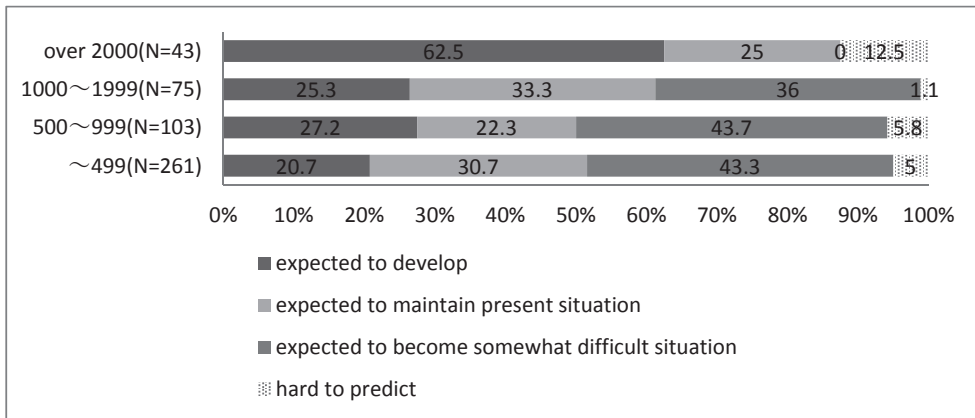


Figure 5. Perception of the management situation by enrollment capacity

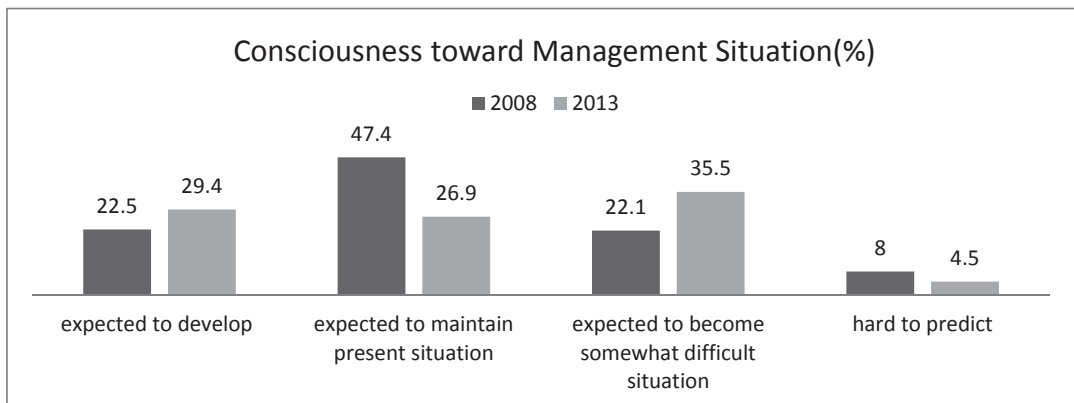


Figure 6. Comparison of perception of the management situation between 2008 and 2013

As can be seen in Figure 4, compared with other regions, more private universities in Tokyo responded that they did not expect the management situation to become more difficult. While large universities did not expect the management situation to become more difficult in the future, this was not the case for small universities (Figure 5). Note also that compared to the 2008 survey, the proportion of universities responding that they “expected to maintain present situation” decreased, while the proportion responding that they expected the situation to become somewhat more difficult increased (Figure 6).

Regarding the relationship between department and “Perception of the management situation,” the responses of small colleges having a single department (enrollment capacity of up to 499 and established after 1991) were compared to determine whether or not differences could be seen among departments. The results of this comparison (Table 3) indicated that differences do exist between departments. Colleges having a health- or pharmacy-related department or a science and engineering department tended to respond that they expected the management system to develop or stay the same.

**Table 3. The difference between departments**

	Department*	Develop	Maintain	Somewhat difficult	Hard to predict	Number
College	Health related	29.6	51.9	14.8	3.7	27
	Pharmacy, science and engineering	71.4	14.3	14.3	–	7
	Humanities	16.7	25.0	50.0	8.3	12
	Social Sciences	26.7	20.0	33.3	20.0	15
	Home economics	25.0	–	75.0	–	4
	Education	40.0	–	60.0	–	5
	Arts	–	20.0	27.3	–	5
	Others	40.9	22.7	–	9.1	22
* p<0.05						

Figure 7 shows the perceived importance of issues faced by private universities. 40.6 per cent of private universities responded that improvement of the financial situation was the most important issue, while 21.4 per cent answered that it was the second most important issue, and almost three quarters of all respondents ranked it in the top three issues. Altogether 67 per cent of private universities responded that dealing with the decrease in student numbers was an important issue (i.e. listed the issue as first, second, or third most important). The third most important issue (43.9 per cent in total) was how to strengthen the sustainable system for educational reform.

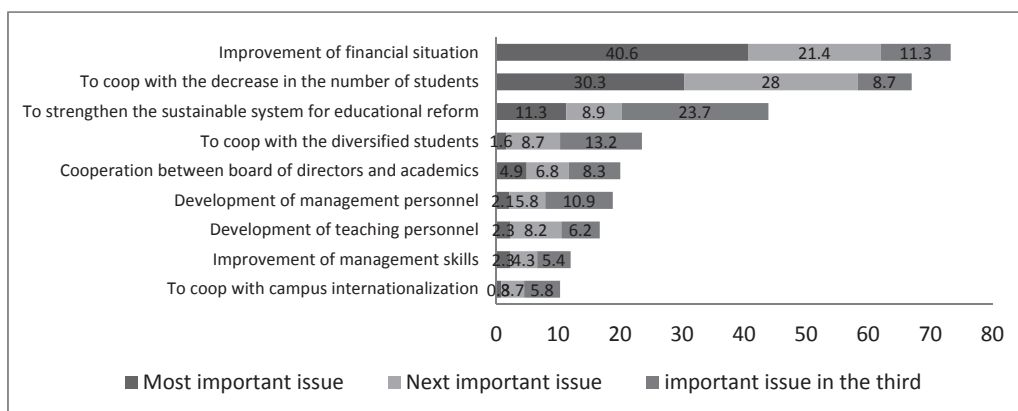


Figure 7. Issues faced by private universities

Table 4. Issues faced by private universities, delineated by school size and location

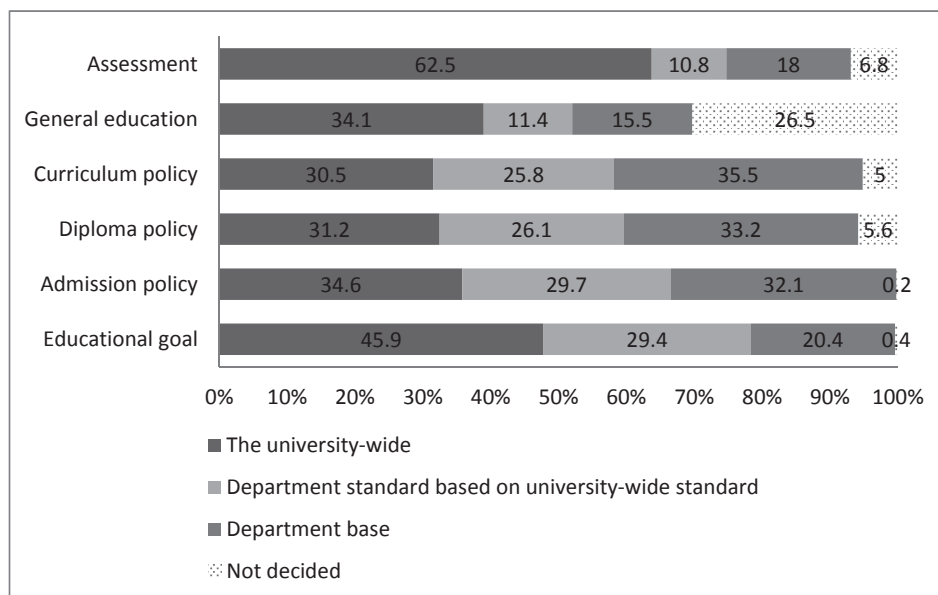
Size of capacity of entrants	Region	To coop with the decrease in the number of students **	Cooperation between board of directors and academics **	Development of teaching personnel*	To coop with campus internationalization**	Number
~499	Tokyo	62.2	8.1	21.6	21.6	37
	Metropolitan	81.1	29.7	24.3	5.4	37
	Nagoya	77.4	9.7	22.6	6.5	31
	Kansai	66.7	20.6	19	3.2	63
	Other	80.6	15.3	22.9	9	144
	Average	75.3	16.7	22.1	8.7	312
500~999	Tokyo	70	35	10	15	20
	Metropolitan	72.2	11.1	11.1	0	18
	Nagoya	75	16.7	8.3	25	12
	Kansai	64	28	4	8	25
	Other	80	20	25.7	8.6	35
	Average	72.7	22.7	13.6	10	110
1000~1999	Tokyo	55.6	11.1	11.1	25.9	27
	Metropolitan	83.3	16.7	25	0	12
	Nagoya	57.1	57.1	14.3	0	7
	Kansai	71.4	42.9	7.1	7.1	14
	Other	59.1	31.8	13.6	18.2	22
	Average	63.4	26.8	13.4	14.6	82
Over2000	Tokyo	31.8	40.9	4.5	45.5	22
	Metropolitan	66.7	33.3	0	0	3
	Nagoya	40	20	0	20	5
	Kansai	20	50	20	30	10
	Other	-	-	-	-	3
	Average	32.6	37.2	9.3	32.6	43
%						
** p<.01 *p<.05						

Table 4 shows the statistically significant result of cross tabulation by school size (i.e. enrollment capacity) and location. Small universities tended to regard the issue of dealing with the decrease in student numbers as being important. However, small universities in Tokyo tended not to regard this

issue as being as important as did universities in other regions. In addition, small universities tended to cite the development of teaching personnel as an important issue. In contrast, large universities tended to regard “coping with campus internationalization” as an important issue.

One of the aims of the 2014 amendment of the School Education Act was to strengthen university presidents’ authority. The survey conducted in 2013 asked the question, “Who is influential in the decision making process at your university?” At the time, 45.6 per cent of universities responded that the faculty meeting was influential in decision making, followed by the president (32.8 per cent) and the board of directors (15.1 per cent). The distribution of responses is consistent with the conventional view that the faculty meeting has the greatest influence in decision making in Japanese private universities.

Recently, MEXT has been encouraging university or educational reform. For example, it has required that all universities and colleges establish policies in three areas: admissions, diploma, and curriculum. In addition, there have been strong calls for general education in Japanese universities. It is often pointed out that there are no university-wide standards for academic policies in Japanese universities. Instead, policies are decided by individual departments, and some universities do not have any standard. In such cases, the ability to ensure the quality of student learning becomes questionable. What, then, is the reality in private universities in Japan? As can be seen in Figure 8, almost all private universities report that they have established educational standards and admission policies. Meanwhile, it appears that 26.5 per cent of private universities do not have general educational standards.



**Figure 8. Decision making situation regarding teaching and learning**



## Discussion and conclusions

It appears that, under the National University Corporation Law and the School Education Act, the governance of national university corporations was more strongly regulated than that of private universities. However, the amendment of the School Education Act and the introduction of a new framework for financial assistance have triggered increased government control of private universities. The era of freedom in higher education in which faculty have substantial decision-making power may be coming to an end in Japan.

The current trend in Japanese higher educational policy can be summarized by the keywords “financial allocation cutbacks,” “accountability” and “assessment,” which is in line with calls for quality assurance in various other countries worldwide. Rapid globalization has impacted educational policy in recent years and has led to a global trend towards increasing government control as a means to enforce quality assurance.

The results of the PMC-PSJ survey conducted in 2013 indicate that, in addition to the common factors of “quality assurance”, “accountability” and “assessment”, specifically Japanese factors related to the continuous decline in the 18-year-old population, and the large government debt to GDP ratio, have also affected the situation of private universities. It is true that many private universities are concerned about future management due to falling student enrollment numbers and difficult financial circumstances and thus point to the importance of improving recruitment and financial status. However, there are differences in the degree of concern depending on the size, location, and departments represented. Small universities in local communities tend to regard improvement of teaching and learning as the key factors to improving recruitment status and financial circumstances. That said, they also regard the decline in the 18-year-old population as a challenge for recruiting sufficient numbers of students to enable healthy management. It is certain that the one per cent annual budget cut imposed on national university corporations has affected their management. However, national corporations are less affected by lower enrollment numbers because tuition accounts for a small portion of national university corporations’ operating funds. In contrast, tuition accounts for a much larger portion of private universities’ operating funds. The financial status of private universities is directly affected by lower enrollment numbers, and the only option available to private universities for maintaining revenue in the face of low enrollment numbers is to increase tuition. Therefore, the decline in the 18-year-old population has a greater impact on private universities, especially smaller and local ones, than national university corporations.

Although private universities have made efforts to promote effective governance and to enact educational reform to improve the quality of education, there are many differences among universities with regard to the nature of their form and concerns for the future, depending on the size, history, location, and departments represented in the different institutions. While large universities regard

campus internationalization as important reform, small universities tend to cite “development of teaching personnel” as the most important issue.

Continuation of university and educational reform requires vast amounts of energy, knowledge and skill. It is questionable where there are sufficient personnel at small and local private institutions to cope with university and educational reform. If this is indeed the case, there is a possibility that the gap between small and large universities will widen even further in the future.

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