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HIGHER
EDUCATION IN
JAPAN:
CAN THE SYSTEM
CHANGE?

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ABSTRACT

The topic for this thesis is:

The Reform of Higher Education in Japan- Can the System Change?

Since the establishment of the university system in the Meiji Restoration, Japan's higher education system has been undergoing a series of changes and reforms that continue to the present day. Rapid social and economic changes and the quantitative expansion of higher education in the post-war period have greatly effected the affairs in education. There has not, however, been the same improvements in the quality of education received at the higher levels. The effects of the problems are widely reflected in the lower levels of education and society as a whole, through the increase in juvenile delinquency, violence in schools, and examination hell.

There are so many issues discussed within the reform debates that, for the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to focus five problems that have continued to plague the Japanese Higher Education system. They are:-

- Academic credentialism- The social climate in which too much value is placed on the educational background of the individuals;
- The hierarchy of and within the institutions of higher education;
- The quality in undergraduate education and the lack of graduate education
- Selection methods: the excessive competition for university entrance examinations;
- The Control of Education by the Government.

These problem areas are interwoven with each other, each having a strong effect on the other. The complexity and interrelationship of these issues are the starting point in the attempt to understand why there has not been any solution throughout the reform efforts of the past three decades.

Various education missions and councils have all pointed out these problems and made recommendations as to how their effects could be alleviated, but still there is no

change. Between the time the recommendations are made to the time when reform measures can be implemented, something is going wrong, blocking the chance to make the substantial changes necessary to bring about higher education reform in Japan.

Although the need for reform widely recognised both inside and outside Japan, the three major reform attempts in the past (Meiji, Occupation, and 1980s Nakasone Campaign), have not been successful in eliminating the problems that remain visible into the 1990s. Although some significant changes have been made, these reform attempts have failed to solve the major problems in higher education, and in some cases they have made them more visible. In other cases they have only made conceptual changes without dealing with the fundamental issues

Education reform is now (late 1990s) a major national issue. The current reform stems from a growing sense in Japan that higher education is neither responding to new national needs in a changing world nor to the changing concerns of Japanese youth. However, the Japanese must not only deal with the problems evident in society at present, but they must also face a future with fewer students of university age due to the low birth rate and ageing population. As a result of this demographic trend, enrolments at the university will decline steadily after peaking in the early 1990s. From now on, universities will have to market themselves to potential students on the basis of specialisation and differentiation.

The purpose of my thesis is to discuss whether or not the higher education system in Japan can reform itself into one that will meet the needs of the 21st Century. By outlining the development of the five problems I mentioned above, and looking at why have previous reform attempts to solve these problems have failed, I hope to come to a conclusion as to why the reform efforts to alleviate these problems have not been successful, and ultimately answer the question "Can the System Change?".

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1. INTRODUCTION

Japan is a country without many natural resources except for its people. School and higher education is the means to cultivate and refine this resource. As a result the education system has been considered by many the key to economic growth and political stability. Investment in education has significance both at the national level and the personal level. The state has sought over the past 100 years to create a system which could produce an effective workforce to lead the country's drive for modernisation, whereas for the individual, education is the key to social status and financial security¹. Japanese society is education-minded to an extraordinary degree: success in formal education is considered largely synonymous with success in life, and for most students, almost the only path to social and economic status.

Higher education in Japan began when the Meiji Government in 1877 established the first Western-style institution, Tokyo University. Since then Japan has become one of the most highly educated countries in the world. Yet Japan's education system of today is not one to be envied. Rapid social and economic changes and the quantitative expansion of higher education in the post-war period have greatly effected the affairs in education. A variety of problems have been exposed within the higher education system which include:

- the social climate in which too much emphasis is placed on the educational background of the individuals; the hierarchy of and within the institutions of higher education;
- the excessive competition for university entrance examinations;
- the uniform and inflexible structure and methods of formal education; and
- the poor quality of undergraduate education and the lack of graduate education.²

These problems are widely reflected in the lower levels of education and society as a whole, through the increase in juvenile delinquency, violence in schools, and examination hell.³

¹ Individuals in Japan are nowadays ranked largely according to their educational background rather than their family standing.

² Mombusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp> Education Reform

When we talk of higher education, we are referring to education beyond secondary schooling in some form of higher educational institution such as a university, college, polytechnic, and so on. The Higher Education Encyclopaedia states: *“Higher education influences and is influenced by the culture in which it is embedded. It is shaped by society and it helps shape society. It requires resources and it contributes resources- in the form of qualified members of the workforce, better citizens, and the discovery of useful and other worthwhile knowledge. It is an important guardian of a nation’s cultural tradition and it is among its sternest critics. It must respond to the demands of society and it must stand aloof from the whims of current fashion”*.⁴

In Japan, institutions of higher education include universities (daigaku), junior college (tanki daigaku), technical colleges (koto semmon gakkoo) and special training schools (senshu gakkoo). The School Education Law (SEL) of 1947 describes the aim of the university as being to teach and study higher learning as well as to give students broad general culture and intellectual, moral and practical abilities. The junior college may lay emphasis on the training of abilities necessary for vocational and practical life. The technical colleges aims at teaching specialised arts as well as cultivating vocational abilities.⁵

The higher education system in Japan is centred on the universities, which enrol over 80% of all students in higher education. The university is defined as a centre of broad general culture, higher learning and technical arts, and for the development of intellectual, moral, and practical qualities. It is authorised to add a graduate school and to offer evening, extension and correspondence courses. It is opened to men and women who had acquired a secondary education or its equivalent, while the graduate school was opened to those who graduated university or having equivalent schooling.⁶

³ These problems cause great concern for the Japanese people whose society is based on group harmony. Many people view these problems to be the result of the failing education system, but Beauchamp points out that some observers see these problems emerging in today’s Japan as nothing more than ‘advanced nation’s disease’ (senshinkoku-byo), the inevitable, if alarming results of modern industrial society: increases in rates of divorce, juvenile crime, school violence and other social ills associated with countries like the US. – Beauchamp and Vardaman, 1994 pg 28

⁴ Clark, Neave 1992 pg 841

⁵ Kobayashi, 1976 pg 142

⁶ *Outline of Education in Japan*, Ministry of Education, Science And Culture, 1991 pg 83

The purpose of higher education is to produce specialists in a variety of fields to prepare people for their working life and for them to make the greatest contribution to society that they can. *“One of the main connections between a higher education system and the society in which it operates is the provision of graduates in a variety of specialities and, since it takes several years to produce graduates, and the subject and curricula of higher institutions needs to be relatively stable over time, there is an intrinsic need for higher education policy makers to take a forward look at the labour force situation”*.⁷ This is one policy area that the government in Japan has failed to improve since the end of the rapid economic growth in the immediate post-war decades.

Universities have a two-fold object: study and education. However, the phenomenon of mass education at the university level in Japan seems to be changing the university into a place for education only. This is because of the inadequacy of conditions of study in terms of material and personnel. In Japan, education has become a mechanism for providing general education to the masses, with the bulk of the specialist training going on partly in the underdeveloped graduate schools, but predominantly in the industrial companies in Japan. The function of higher education for the training of specialists has all but been lost.

The Japanese higher education system, particularly the universities, has been widely criticised by both Western and Japanese scholars alike. William Cummings states that *“ The functions of the Japanese university are increasingly being performed by alternate institutions. Increasing proportions of Japan’s basic research, and virtually all applied research are being performed in the laboratories of industry and government. ‘In-service’ training and the provision of opportunity for exceptional students to study overseas is an alternative method of providing advanced professional education.”*⁸

Cutts⁹ writes *“On one thing nearly all can agree: Higher education in Japan today is in crisis. Its producing graduates for the wrong future, taught by professors who are*

⁷ Clark, Neave, 1992 pg 845

⁸ William Cummings cited Patience, 1984 pg 206

⁹ Cutts, 1997 pg 58-59

indifferent, and it is failing in providing society with the enlightenment, knowledge and energy it will need to meet internal and external hazards that loom...the deficiencies on campus and in faculty circles, not only threaten to leave the country with a leadership incapable of meeting global challenges that are already appearing, but they may well be irreparable”.

Michio Nagai (Minister of Education, Japan 1984) states that “*Japanese students work hard until they get into university, but from there on what is expected is to get a degree rather than an education*”.¹⁰

Furthermore, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone based a large proportion of his 1984 election campaign on education reform, stating in his Formal Request of Education Reform, September 5th, 1984 “*We are no longer without problems...I believe new situations, requiring reform, have arisen along with the passage of time over our 40 year post-war history*”.¹¹

The foreign and Japanese observers are quick to criticise the system, and yet reports both from inside and outside Japan tend to offer up ideals, without offering up the means to achieve these ideals. Regardless of the criticisms, however, it cannot be denied that the education system has many strengths. The Japanese education system is very highly regarded in the international community, with many Western governments believing that the education system in Japan holds the key to unlocking the secrets of Japan’s phenomenal post-war economic success. Although the system of education can be deemed a ‘success’ it can be clearly seen from the problems in society and the pressure on Japanese youths, that improvements definitely need to be made.

Not only must the Japanese deal with the problems evident in society at present, but they must also face a future with less students of university age due to the low birth rate and ageing population. As a result of this demographic trend, enrolments at the university will decline steadily after peaking in the early 1990s, and universities will have to market themselves to potential students on the basis of specialisation and

¹⁰ Michio Nagai cited Kiyota, 1971 pg 3

¹¹ Kawamura, 1985 pg 12

differentiation. It will be necessary to attract older adults who did not receive higher education in their youth but are now eager to continue their education.

The evils within the system are well documented in a number of critical reports.¹² These reports naturally differed in their approaches to the problems, in their analyses and their recommendations regarding them. They were, however, in agreement in pointing out that radical reforms are needed in Japanese education in order to meet the expansion of knowledge, the development of technical innovation, the increasing complexity of society and the changes in national and international life.¹³

Although the need for reform widely recognised both inside and outside Japan, the three major reform attempts in the past (Meiji, Occupation, and 1980s Nakasone Campaign), have not been successful in eliminating the problems that remain visible into the 1990s. Although some significant changes have been made, these reform attempts have failed to solve the major problems in higher education, in some cases only enhanced them more, or only made conceptual changes without dealing with the fundamental issues. Various education missions and councils have all pointed out the same problems and made recommendations as to how these problems could be alleviated, but still there is no change. Between the time the recommendations are made to the time when reform measures can be implemented, something is going wrong, blocking the chance to make the substantial changes necessary to bring about higher education reform in Japan.

Higher education has seen a succession of reforms since the mid-1980s, and after gaining considerable momentum over the past few years, education reform is now a major national issue. The current reform interest differs from that in the earlier periods in that it has not been precipitated by a major breakdown in the system or by a strong demand from the corporate sector for improvement. Rather, it stems from a growing sense in Japan that higher education is neither responding to new national needs in a changing world nor to the changing concerns of Japanese youth.

¹² such as the 1971 OECD report on Japanese education, the 1984 Ad Hoc Council on Education report, and various reports produced by business and industry leaders in Japan.

¹³ Kobayashi, 1980 pg 239

The reform movement faces many obstacles. Some fundamental education issues are at stake in a time of growing economic constraint, and deeply rooted tradition, status systems and vested interests are being challenged in the process. Any reforms that may be implemented are likely to have important implications for secondary and even elementary education as well.¹⁴

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss whether or not the higher education system in Japan can reform itself into one that will meet the needs of the 21st Century. I will look at five of the major problem areas that continue to be a thorn in the side of Japanese higher education, how they developed throughout the course of the development of higher education in Japan and why previous reform attempts to solve these problems have failed. This will include an outline of the historical context in which higher education developed and a discussion on the major influences in the government, education circles and society who block the reform attempts both in the past and today.

The discussion will focus mainly on the university sector, and will only incorporate other sectors if further explanation or comparison is required. The five problem areas I will look at are

- academic credentialism;
- hierarchy of and within institutions;
- poor quality of undergraduate education;
- selection procedures (entrance examinations); and
- the control of higher education by the Japanese government (particularly the MOE).

These problem areas are interwoven with each other, each having a strong effect on the other. For example, academic credentialism facilitates the competition for entrance examinations, which is made tougher by the desire to get into the top schools in the national hierarchy. The complexity of the problems is the starting point in understanding why there has not been any solution throughout the reform efforts of the past three decades.

¹⁴ http://timss.enc.org/TIMSS/addtools/pubs/124016/4016_49.htm pg 10

2. JAPAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Institutions of higher education in Japan may be classified into universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, and special training colleges offering advanced courses.¹⁵ Mombusho¹⁶ defines the purpose of the universities as centres of advanced learning is to conduct in-depth teaching and research in specialised disciplines and to provide students with advanced knowledge. Universities require the completion of upper secondary school or its equivalent for admission. Today Japan ranks very high in the world with regard to the proportion of the age group enrolled in institutions of higher education.

However in reality, although Japanese universities have traditionally trained researchers and educators, since WWII, advanced education has become so popular that universities have made available a higher level of general education. Graduate schools are now considered the training ground for researchers and professors, but these institutions are seriously under-developed and under-utilised. Also as seen by the entrance examination competition, high school graduation is not all that is required to enter a university, but rather long hours of stressful study and exam preparation.

Mombusho's current statistics on the number of universities and the number of students and teachers at these institutions are as follows:

UNIVERSITIES IN JAPAN				
	total	National	public	Private
Institutions	565	98	52	415
students	2,546,649	598,723	83,812	1,864,114

¹⁵ For further explanation of the function of the other institutions of higher education see Mombusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp> or *Kodansha Encyclopaedia of Japan*, 1983

¹⁶ Mombusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp>

teachers	137,464	57,458	8,256	71,720
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Source: Mombusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp/stat-en/em09010.html> 1996

About 38% of high school graduates go on to tertiary education in universities and junior colleges, while 30% go on to specialist schools and the remaining 25% go directly on to employment. Of the university population, over $\frac{3}{4}$ are enrolled at private institutions. Female students constitute 30% of university students, studying almost exclusively humanities, social science, home science and education. Since 1974 more females than males have gone on to tertiary education, but 60% of females in tertiary education study at junior colleges, and 90% of junior college students attend private institutions.¹⁷

The present system of higher education is governed statutorily by the School Education Law of 1947 and its subsequent amendments. Educational reforms under the 1947 law transformed the pre-war elitist higher education system to an egalitarian open system accessible to all graduates of unified secondary schools. The new system of reformed higher education has, in turn, produced a host of well-educated citizens for a stable democratic society as well as a host of human resources for the industrial development of the nation.

2.1 Higher Education Before World War II

Education in Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868) remained the monopoly of the elite-courtiers, feudal rulers, and samurai- and was based on Neo-Confucianism. The country had existed under a feudal political system and for approximately 260 years, the government enforced the closed-door policy with characteristic economical, social and cultural results. Although no actual recognised formal system of higher education existed, various institutions of higher learning, such as the Confucian Shoheiko, and other institutions of western learning began to develop in the latter part of the period. These institutions later enabled the rapid development of the formal system of higher education in the early stages of the Meiji period¹⁸.

¹⁷ Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999 pg 56

¹⁸ For a full explanation of Tokugawa education see R.P Dore (1984) *Education in Tokugawa Japan*

When a modern education system was developed in Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the university systems of Europe and the United States were used as models. Tokyo University, the first comprehensive university was founded in 1877 to train leaders needed for the modernisation of the country in the advanced learning of the United States and Europe. In 1886, the government issued the Imperial University Order reorganising the university as the Imperial University (later Tokyo Imperial University after the establishment of other imperial universities) and created five higher middle schools (high schools) in various parts of the country as preparatory schools for the university. This early period also saw the development of Semmon Gakkoo (professional schools), mostly private institutions which provided higher academic training for those who could not enter the imperial universities, and the increase of imperial universities, nine in total, through to the 1920s.

In 1918, the Ministry of Education promulgated the University Code (Daigaku Rei) which recognised the establishment of public and private universities in addition to the imperial universities. Influential semmon gakkoo thus became universities, while some of the government semmon gakkoo became colleges. This saw the beginning of mass higher education in Japan. In 1935 there were 45 universities classified as 6 imperial universities, 12 national universities, 2 public universities and 25 private universities.

2.2 Changes Under The Allied Occupation 1945-1952

The American Allied Occupation headed by General Douglas MacArthur, attempted a radical reform of the education system as an important element in the effort to democratise Japan. The reform aimed at the fundamental reorganisation of the multi-level educational structure and the unification of the institutions of higher learning (universities, higher schools, semmon gakkoo and normal schools) into unified four-year universities. The reform plan was put into effect along with the reforms of the public school system in 1947.

The greatest change was seen in the national institutions of higher learning. The 6 imperial universities became National Universities, various national institutions in one prefecture were combined into one university for that prefecture. While private

universities under the old system continued to operate as universities, most of the private *semmon gakkoo* were elevated to university status, effectively completing the transformation into 'new system' universities. As a result by 1949 a total of 173 new universities had been created: 68 national, 13 public, and 92 private.¹⁹

The basic principle that higher education should become an opportunity for the masses and not just the privileged few was recommended for the post-war education system and its ideals.²⁰ Unlike the pre-war system, in which the universities were reserved for the privileged elite, post-war universities opened their doors to all, with the mission of providing general and technical education to train the leaders of a democratic society. In the post-war decades Japanese universities continued to expand rapidly. With the university reorganisation, the number of university students jumped literally overnight from 87,000 to 370,000. By 1981 Japan had the extraordinary total of 513 universities, 377 of which are private.²¹

2.3 Post-war Higher Education

April 1975 saw the university population of Japan top the 2,000,000 mark, including students of junior colleges and graduate schools. Yet not once did the MOE evolve a long-range policy on higher education. Rather it kept leaving the bulk of the mushrooming student population- spawned by the baby boom of the 1950s- to the care of the private universities. This produced anomalies in university education in Japan. Firstly, private university students made up 78.8% of the total population of university students. Secondly, there was heavy urban concentration of the student population of four-year universities, with an estimated 80% in Tokyo and other major cities- Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, and Fukuoka, leading to an urban-rural disparity in the ratio of students going on to university.

The worst disparity indicated by a 1973 survey by the Federation of Private Universities which showed that a student of a private university paid 4.2 times more for tuition than their counterpart attending a national university, yet got only about

¹⁹ Kodansha, 1983 pg 170

²⁰ Tsuchimochi 1993, pg 144

²¹ Shimbori, 1981 pg 236

one fifth of the tuition the latter received. Then, in April 1975, the private universities raised their tuition fees by the highest rates ever, making education in these institutions beyond the purse of the average citizen.²²

Japanese high school students face a major dilemma in choosing whether to continue their education at the tertiary level, or whether to enter the workforce straight from school. The present generation of high school students must choose between facing competition over university entrance examinations- even if it means failing, studying for another year or two and trying again- or accepting a job that requires little skill or training and no avenues for advancement.

In order to alleviate this problem, the government authorised the establishment of vocational and technical colleges in 1976, ranking them as institutions of higher education. These schools have more lenient standards than universities, and mainly teach practical job-related knowledge and skills. However, because Japanese society still considers these schools a step lower than universities and junior colleges because of their short history, and in terms of employment opportunities and job conditions after graduation, incoming students do not find that technical and vocational colleges meet their needs.²³

The international image of a high-pressure school system is basically correct. The incentive to tolerate this enormously pressurised school system is that the university one has attended very largely determines the status in Japanese society.²⁴ Therefore, there is extra-ordinary pressure at all levels of society to enter the best regarded universities. A further major incentive is that the fees at the national and public universities, as well as the staff-student ratios, are much better than the private ones.

The university system never asks the students what he or she wants to be. With some exceptions, Japan's humanities and social science curricula, coupled with the whole system of selection of students by examination, puts no real emphasis on nurturing the professional aspirations of the entering freshmen and remain geared to producing the

²² Japan Quarterly Sept 1975 pg 191

²³ Nishimura, 1987 pg 190

²⁴ Lorrinan & Kenjo, 1994 pg 46

generalist who will be eventually shaped professionally by an employer. This leads undergraduate students cut classes with abandon; drop courses at a whim; and spend more time on leisure activities and even part-time jobs than in study- even at the best schools. A set of comparative studies of higher education conducted by Martin Bronfenbrenner affirms that *“The implication is that the average Japanese student does not learn anything in the time period he spends at college or graduate school”*.²⁵

²⁵ Cutts, 1997 pg 71

3. THE PROBLEMS

The fact that the rigid hierarchical system of higher education that was designed from the beginning to serve the needs of the state, has meant that education at the lower levels has become geared to producing students who are not creative and cannot think freely. Rapid social and economic developments in the post-war period have led to a vast quantitative development of higher education, but there have not been the same improvements in the quality of education received at the higher levels.

Discussions on education reform encompasses many issues and recommendations for change, and it is difficult to outline them in one volume. For the purpose of this thesis I have selected what I consider to be five of the major problems which continue to plague the Japanese universities and higher education system as whole, despite continuing efforts at higher education reform. These problems are:

- Academic Credentialism
- Hierarchy
- Poor Quality of Undergraduate Education
- Selection Methods
- Control of Higher Education

In this chapter, I will outline how these problems came about throughout the development of higher education in Japan.

3.1 Academic Credentialism

The desire for education has a long history in Japan, the notion of academic credentialism²⁶ has become deeply imbedded in Japanese society. In the Tokugawa period, Confucianism elevated education to a high level. Education was seen as an asset and was one of the major means of social ascent in the Tokugawa society particularly for the commoners in the latter Tokugawa period²⁷. While the value of education varied among the classes, it was widely agreed that the sons of samurai needed education, indeed the ethic of learning was part of the official ideology.

²⁶ The social climate in which too much value is placed on the educational background of the students.

Although both samurai and commoners desired education, it had not become a prerequisite for success to the extent that it did in the modern eras.

Due to the emphasis on Confucian learning ethic from the previous era, education was held in high esteem and its status continued to rise throughout the modernisation of the Meiji period. From the outset of the Meiji reforms, higher education institutions began to increase steadily as the desire and the need for higher education increased. As the higher education system developed in the decades following its establishment, the system became rigidly meritocratic. Entrance examinations controlled access to each higher level of education, and growing numbers of students competed to pass those tests and improve their educational, and hence economic, attainment. Without university, students could not enter the higher levels of business or government, and as such the system worked as an efficient mechanism for maximising the nations use of its precious manpower resources.

There is a strong tendency in Japan, for people to place undue emphasis on the educational background of the individuals, and this has led to an acute awareness of the differences between educational institutions, and consequently, to strong competition to enter the best schools.²⁸ As a result, virtually the whole education system has come to concentrate on examinations and the race for university degree. Unfortunately in Japan, 'academic background' has come to refer only the performance on entrance exams to enter the most desired higher educational institution, rather than an individuals academic performance at the university level up until the completion of a university degree.

Because of the strict entrance procedures, there was a reasonable assurance that anyone who got into Tokyo Imperial University had a high level of scholastic ability. Totally irrespective of what is studied, or of its relevance in the preparation for a future career, there was every reason to favour the graduates of the elite university. This preference for university graduates enhanced the value of university degrees in general, with the spill over effect of making more valuable even degrees of second-rate universities that were not so selective in their admission. Other companies

²⁷ Dore, 1984

²⁸ Suzuki, 1990 pg 23

employed the counter-tendency to avoid graduates, especially female graduates, to keep the wage costs down.

In time education has become, not just a vehicle for upward social mobility, but a condition for social placement at all. It has become absolutely vital to have received the first twelve years of education to get anywhere in today's Japan, and to secure white-collar employment, university education has become a prerequisite, whereas in the 1920s middle school was enough²⁹.

Academic credentialism led to the rapid increase of the number of universities in the early 20th Century, as degrees became more important for getting jobs, and the demand for opportunity to get degrees intensified. The result was the overproduction of graduates in the depression periods of the 20s and 30s, which meant that many graduates who couldn't find jobs were eventually absorbed into small banks and minor trading enterprises. These employers, who had not aspired to recruiting graduates, thereafter took their right to insist on a degree for granted³⁰.

This practice of government and top companies recruiting their employees from the elite institutions without consideration of performance, means that students who have entered these institutions simply relax after years of long competition. Murakami explains that *"in the era of rapid economic growth, employers were happy to mold their new recruits with their own hands, seeking only proof of their academic ability. Neither the students nor the employers, nor the universities themselves ever seriously resisted the universities gradual transformation into a four-year resort"*.³¹ Since students no longer feel compelled to study, the years at university becomes a four-year break between the years of stress it took to pass the entrance examinations and the time they enter into lifetime employment.

The decision by Japanese enterprises to stress the importance of the applicants' diploma when considering him for employment played the most crucial role in the

²⁹ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 54

³⁰ Dore, 1976 pg 47

³¹ Murakami, Japan Echo 1988 *"The Debt comes Due for Mass Higher Education"*.

institutionalisation of academic credentials. The costs of a system based on academic credentials are high, as critics of the system are constantly pointing out:

- the devaluation of university education that results from the fact that employers are more concerned about what university a man gets into than about what he does there.
- Severe anxiety and stress in adolescence as the years of entrance exams approach
- The increasing inequality of opportunity as more wealthy parents resort to private middle and primary education in order to maximise their chances of getting their children into the top state universities.
- The devastating effects on the curricula of high schools, which results from their preoccupation with preparing for entrance exams, and the backwash into the middle schools and primary schools to prepare students for the best high schools.

Yet despite all, Japanese continue to believe in education and frequently succeed in spite of the system.

Teruhisa Horio³² points out one of the effects of academic credentialism on children. He says *“In spite of our recent prosperity, the competition to enter prestigious schools is now becoming more and more intense, so much that parents now feel pressured to enrol their three and four year old children in famous nursery schools, believing this will get them a head-start in the race to success in our societies system of ‘stratification by school background’ (gakureki shakai). Under the pressure of their parents expectations, and forced into endless studies to ensure later success in our society’s entrance examination madness, our children are being robbed of their childhood”*.

Academic credentialism leads to schooling without education. Because of the close relationship between education credentials and recruitment, and because of their economic value, it is probable that people desire more education, not for personal enrichment but for future socio-economic benefits. If people enter schools not for learning but earning, the whole education system will revolve around this goal.

³² 1988 pg 15

3.1.1 The Ronin Phenomenon³³

As the higher education sector in Japan has expanded so enormously that it can accommodate over one third of the appropriate age group, university degrees or diplomas have come increasingly significant in terms of a better job, particularly a professional or managerial one. Hence many students become ronin. At present one in four of the first-year students is ronin who have previously failed to enter the university of their choice. As the certificates conferred by the elite universities have real significance in securing a promising future, there is little wonder that we find a large proportion of ronin among candidates of the entrance exams of the elite universities. The ronin phenomenon leads to wastage of education on the one hand, and a delay in the social and economic productivity on the other. Not only does it intensify the competition for success in examinations and university admissions, but it is unfair to those who are sitting the examination in their first attempt.³⁴

3.2 Hierarchy

Although there has never been any official ranking, every Japanese citizen knows that the nation's universities are clearly divided by rank. The strong hierarchy that exists among the universities ranks the top national universities in first place, with Tokyo University at the apex, followed by the noted private universities (Waseda, Keio) the local universities and private universities, which form the bottom strata of higher education. It is not only the institutions which are ranked, but also the faculties and departments within the universities as well.³⁵

The hierarchical, ordered mass education evolved from the outset of the higher education system and is closely linked to the competitive entrance examination and Japanese societies tendency to promote academic credentials above all else. Japan is

³³ Many secondary graduates who fail to gain admission to their preferred institutions try again the following year and commonly devote themselves full-time to the preparation process. The name 'ronin' comes from the masterless samurai of the Tokugawa Era.

³⁴ Lee, 1991 pg 217-221

³⁵ Departments with long-standing academic respectability have a greater prestige than lower disciplines. Within each department too, there is stratification between professor and assistant professor, and between lecturer and assistant.

distinguished among industrial societies by a system that retains the hierarchy and government-subsidised qualities of an elite higher education originally constructed on the nineteenth century European pattern, while expanding educational opportunities American-style in the post-war period. A hierarchical, ordered mass education has evolved³⁶.

In an effort to allocate its limited resources effectively, the government supported secondary schools and universities on a selective basis according to the degree of their importance to the modernisation and industrialisation effort. This created great disparities in human and material resources among education institutions, which, in turn, made people discriminate among schools in accordance with the allocation of resources, and as a consequence a clear hierarchical system based on social prestige came into being.³⁷

The opportunities for higher education were expanded by the Occupation reforms, but not without a price: in those private institutions that grew most rapidly, institutional facilities and the level of instruction deteriorated significantly, and the gap in quality between the elite national universities and most private universities increased. One of the major objectives in creating a large number of four-year universities after the war was to broaden opportunities for higher education and in the process dilute the dominance of the small numbers of elite universities. Even though all universities, new and old, were officially ranked equally after the war, the move to mass higher education not only preserved but actually enhanced and elaborated the hierarchical structure of higher education.

While more universities are now producing graduates, the most prestigious large private sector employers continue to turn to their favoured universities for their preferred recruits. This close linkage of university affiliation and career opportunity has been a characteristic of Japanese higher education since the government established Tokyo Imperial University in 1877.

³⁶ Rohlen, 1983 67-92

³⁷ Shields, 1993 pg 115

The imperial universities gained prominence through their virtual monopoly in supplying recruits to the higher civil service, then and still a career second to none in Japan. The linkage persists in no small part because of employers can know that, given the severe competition for admission, anyone who is accepted at a top university has a higher level of scholastic ability, intelligence, perseverance and capacity for effort. These qualities are highly valued in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. The view that these and other relevance qualities also can be developed and identified in other ways, places and stages of life is simply not part of the Japanese tradition.

Because of this pronounced preference by major public and private employers for the graduates of a few high status universities, these favoured institutions have enjoyed the greatest success in enrolling able young students. In the post-war period the leading universities have seemed even more eminent because the increase in the number of lesser institutions to which they could be compared. Because of their early and continuing prominence, the leading universities remain comparatively successful in attracting funds to establish new research institutes and graduate departments when they are interested in doing so.

There is some evidence that the picture is beginning to change. While Tokyo University graduates, for example, populate key sectors of government and business, there are few graduates of the traditional top-ranked universities in the new generation of Japan's fastest growing companies. This is partially because those graduates prefer the firms with established prestige, rather than those in the process of moving up.³⁸

3.3 Poor Quality of Undergraduate Education

One irony of Japan's education scene lies in the sharp contrast between the stringent demands of school education and the relative ease of study and graduation from the universities. While primary and secondary education in Japan produces highly trained pupils, Japan's universities remain a resting place or 'leisureland' for many youths.

³⁸ http://timss.enc.org/TIMSS/addtools/pubs/124016/4016_49.htm pg 9-10

Exhausted both mentally and physically by examination hell (*shiken jigoku*), they seek relaxation, enjoyment, and diversion in their university life.

The reforms brought about by the Occupation made rapid quantitative expansion possible, producing large numbers of graduates to enter the workforce and help fuel the rapid economic growth. The higher education system, however, did not develop its quality during the rapid expansion, resulting in great differences among the universities in the quality of education and research at the various universities, particularly between the prestigious national universities and the less prestigious private institutions.

The objective in Japan is to provide a firm theoretical base through education, which then forms the basis for thorough training throughout the individual's career. The average university student, up to and including university level does not actually expect to see any direct use for his or her learning, presumably merely seeing it as a tool to achieve a place at a top-ranking university. Japanese students can afford to be lazy because Japanese firms hire university graduates not so much on the basis of what and how much they have studied, as by the *hensachi* ranking³⁹ of their university. University grades do not significantly alter the situation. Rather employers rely on on-the-job training and other intra-company teaching techniques to train the new university graduates. Some ambitious students who intend to pass the state exams for the legal profession, civil service, medicine and so on do study hard, but on the whole, higher education means not so much productive pursuit of knowledge, but rather a consumption phase of relatively controlled leisure time.

The post-war curriculum reform required that 36 credits of the 124 required for graduation in the 4 year curriculum be devoted to general education with majors taken in the third and fourth years. This means that unlike Western universities where the students have four years of specialised study, Japanese students only receive two years. Reformers hoped this would induce universities to liberalise their traditional specialised faculties and establish organisational units along the lines of the arts and

³⁹ deviation score- a statistical formula to measure the test result of each student in a large sample with a view to predicting the probability of his/her passing the entrance exam of a particular university

sciences faculties in American universities. But most Japanese did not embrace the idea of general education.

Because of the low priority that university authorities have assigned to general education courses, students have also taken them lightly. Once admitted to a university, a student has a high assurance of graduation. Some sectors of Japanese higher education do take general education more seriously, especially in the faculties of science, engineering, agriculture and medicine. In these faculties, general education is sometimes spread across the four years rather than concentrated in the first two years. Thus, students are more likely to study seriously throughout the entire undergraduate period.⁴⁰

The teaching in both schools and universities is mainly one-way lecturing with no questions from the students.⁴¹ By and large university staff are lax in their duties and are prepared to pass most students without a thorough evaluation of their academic performance. In non-science and arts-based departments, it is more or less assumed that once one is admitted to a university, one rarely fails to graduate from it.

The MOE, which had the ultimate responsibility for examining the university charter application and also for ensuring minimal standards of educational quality, virtually abdicated both responsibilities, particularly during the 1960s. From 1962-68, nearly 80% of all charter applications were approved, most with only perfunctory scrutiny of the quality of the institution to be established. Furthermore, the standards of existing and newly established private universities were also virtually exempt from examination by government officials. Expansion within private universities became easy and profitable. Meanwhile large numbers of institutions fell far below the minimum legal standards.⁴²

⁴⁰ http://timss.enc.org/TIMSS/addtools/pubs/124016/4016_49.htm pg 5-6

⁴¹ This is a Confucian approach from the pre-war days (interpreted in Japan as the teacher being superior to the pupils and not to be questioned) which would definitely not be appropriate in the West, although even in Japan one-way teaching is often thought undesirable and teachers do frequently encourage questions.

⁴² Pempel, 1982 pg 193

3.4 Selection Methods

Traditionally the marks gained on the university entrance examination have been the sole criteria for admission to the best university one can enter. But the stress of competition, combined with academic credentialism and the hierarchy of higher institutions has led to the need to develop and improve selection procedures for universities in Japan. The following outlines how the university entrance examination has become entrenched in the higher education system of Japan.

3.4.1 Entrance Examinations

The major selection process controlling access to higher education for both men and women is the notorious entrance examination. The university entrance examinations are rigorous national competitions among many students contending for a limited number of places in the more prestigious institutions. The stakes in the competition are high, given the great life-long advantage traditionally enjoyed by those who graduate from a prestigious university.

In the late 1800s, when the education system was still not yet established, some higher schools found that they were not receiving sufficient numbers of students whose ability was considered acceptable for tertiary education. Entrance exams were introduced as a 'temporary' means of selecting students to meet the authorities desired standards. However, great disparities in human and material resources among education institutions meant that a clear hierarchical system based on social prestige came into being.

In Japan, it was the decade of the 1900s that the school entrance exam clearly began to function as the starting gate in the race for a higher level career.⁴³ The paucity of institutions of secondary and higher education, and their stratification, ensured that an increasingly competitive entrance examination system would remain a permanent feature of Japanese education. It became evident that measures such as the reform of

⁴³ Amano, 1990 pg 219

the education system or the increase in the number of student places could not cope with the problem.

The status of the new institutions was predictably lower and more uncertain than that of institutions with established reputations. The most prominent universities became flooded with applications, and they developed rigorous entrance exams to maintain control of their admissions. The new lesser universities, even when they had fewer applications than places, felt compelled to develop their own entrance exams in order to maintain the appearance of similarity to leading institutions. This led to the beginning of Japan's so-called 'examination hell' (shiken jigoku).

Despite Occupation reforms aimed at dismantling the hierarchical system of education in Japan, the excessive competition grew even more intense after WWII. Rather the reformed education system emphasising democracy and equality provided further motivation for people to seek better educational credentials and aim for the upper rungs of the social ladder.⁴⁴

Before 1990, students could gain admittance to some institutions on the basis of their performance on the First-Stage University Entrance Examination. This system was revised and this exam was replaced by the NCUEE common test.⁴⁵ Other institutions use the results of the common exam to establish the cut-off point to qualify a much smaller number to compete in their own second-stage entrance exams. The examinations test knowledge of facts, not aptitude or IQ. Such measures of student performance as high school grades, teacher recommendations, or extracurricular activities are not usually considered.

The university entrance exam is the dark engine driving high school culture. One wonders whether academic high schools could remain as orderly and serious if this pressure was absent. School systems and individual teachers would be more innovative and more independent of the MOE, and education itself would become more colourful and chaotic, a situation, as Rohlen points out, that most Japanese

⁴⁴ Amano in Shields, 1993 pg 111-123

⁴⁵ see 6.4.4.1

would no doubt find uncomfortable⁴⁶. The MOE is unable to rule education directly through its domination of the local school systems and loyal teachers, but it can in fact control exams and textbooks. The ambition to succeed is the ultimate source of discipline. Without the entrance exam competition, neither textbooks nor curricula requirements would be sufficient to keep instructions as strictly focused on the narrow path of encyclopaedic learning as it is now. This raises the question whether the MOE is sincere in its periodic reform efforts aimed at ending the entrance examination problem.⁴⁷

The exam driven system of education in Japan serves to limit the exercise of intellectual freedom. To a very large degree, the kind of life a person leads is a function of performance on exams. These exams are standardised in order to ensure the results are compatible. The exam system places heavy emphasis upon memorisation of material that can be incorporated into standardised tests.

Schoppa explains that *“With so much riding on entrance exams and with so many years of preparation invested by each candidate, universities recognise a responsibility to make no sudden changes. They announce plans for the revision sometimes ten years in advance. Students should not be penalised if they are prepared with the old answers. The reform of the content of entrance exams moves with glacial slowness. The realm of practical knowledge has been left behind. Details are required of the kind that will probably never again be needed once the candidate is safely past the gates of the university”*⁴⁸.

The JTU states *“The present entrance examination system should be abolished, and universities, as an organic part of youth education, should be open for young people who desire to enter them and are considered as qualified. Considerations should be given not to a select few for admission but how to prepare most appropriate university education for all persons who are qualified”*. Yet most union teachers not only acquiesce in the current orientation of schooling but reinforce it by responding to examination pressures. Underlying such a contradiction is the overwhelming fact that

⁴⁶ Rohlen 1983 pg 316-317

⁴⁷ Rohlen 1983 pg 266

⁴⁸ Rohlen 1983 pg 92-100

the reputations of the schools and teachers are largely determined by their success in preparing students for university entrance examinations.

Children's aspirations are no longer directed solely at gaining academic credentials or higher ranks in the social hierarchy. What the schools must do now is establish new objectives for education that will nurture and encourage other aspirations. Reforms on the basic structure of the school and the examination system are clearly needed, for without them, little improvement can be made in the examination system centred around entrance exams or the problems of academic credentialism⁴⁹.

Students who have little desire to gain better marks or academic credentials suffer a serious dilemma at school, and this is the source of the problems that are endemic in the junior and senior high schools today. One of the reasons for the pathological phenomena occurring in the schools today, including violence and bullying, is the gap between the changed attitudes and values of the young people and the unchanged orientation of the older generation. The educational system and institutions that are maintained and run by the latter have changed little.

The present day system of conducting entrance examinations for admissions to universities has aggravated the entire phase of Japanese education. Many plans have been worked out with an aim to improve the situation, particularly regarding subjects of examinations. Such improvements, however, are far from effective in solving the problems, because they only help to divert the people's attention from the very cause of the problem.

Lee quotes Shimahara⁵⁰ when he contends that the examination has done virtually nothing to increase the chances of upward mobility. First the system discriminates against the economically disadvantaged. Second, it is an arbitrary device for social placement rather than a pedagogical instrument, as contrary to general belief, it is not capable of identifying latent abilities, especially the abilities of the disadvantaged and those not good at passing exams.

⁴⁹ Shields 1993 pg 222

⁵⁰ Lee 1991, pg 231 quotes Shimahara 1978 pg 263-64

The Higher Education Encyclopedia states that *“In general it seems to be the case that restricted elite systems of higher education are the most likely to exercise a dominant influence on the school curriculum, since one of the main functions is to prepare individuals for competitive entry to universities and colleges. In some ways this is paradoxical since by definition in such systems only a minority of school leavers actually enter higher education”*.⁵¹ This can clearly be seen in the case of the Japanese education system.

Despite weakening aspirations, no basic change has occurred in the education structure so far. With few exceptions, students still have to pass entrance exams to enter high school or university. Because of the stratification of the senior high schools and universities, moreover, the schools cannot revamp their curriculum, which are designed to prepare students for the entrance exams, and put as many students in the good senior high schools and universities as possible⁵². However, an increasing number of universities, especially private ones, are beginning to admit students without examination, on the basis of recommendations from their high schools.

While the negative aspects of the examination system are usually stressed, it should also be noted that entrance examinations make some positive contributions to the overall education system. Because the examination system tests primarily what is known rather than student aptitude, Japanese young people come to know a lot in a variety of fields. Their knowledge is not limited to rote learning; international comparative studies of school achievement indicate that the Japanese young people also perform extremely well in solving difficult mathematical and scientific problems requiring advanced reasoning skills.

3.5 Control of Education

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, authority in Japan was decentralised, divided among nearly 300 politically independent feudal domains and no central administration existed to control and supervise education as a whole. The new Meiji government

⁵¹ Clark, Neave pg 846

⁵² Shields, 1993 pg 120-121

aimed to reorganise and integrate Japan into a unified nation with strong central administrative organs. The Ministry of Education was set up in the early 1870s to establish a school system under central government control and supervision. The need to modernise rapidly and the general public's ignorance of modern schools meant that from the start, Japan's modern education system was under strong central government control.⁵³

The new leaders saw that if a strong nation was to be built up, an organised national system of popular education was a fundamental aspect of a modernised society and as early as 1871 created the Ministry of Education (MOE or Mombusho) to develop such a system. The first job of the MOE was to develop a plan of national education, resulting in the promulgation of the Education Code of 1872 or Gakusei, which followed the model of the French system⁵⁴. However, this system did not take hold due to financial setbacks and public unrest. In 1885, the cabinet system was created and Mori Arinori became the first Minister of Education. Mori Arinori's School Ordinances of 1886 set the system that would hold through to 1945.

3.5.1 Occupation Enforced Changes in the Role of the MOE

The post-war reforms naturally came down hard on this highly centralised ministry control. Under the Occupation reforms, the MOE Establishment Law, promulgated May 1949, defined the primary role of the MOE as advisory and stimulating, stripping the MOE of its powers and reorganising its internal structure accordingly. The Ministry's one remaining function of importance in regard to higher education is to supervise the activities of national universities solely to ensure the maintenance of minimum standards, and to authorise the opening of new universities⁵⁵. The major issue for the Occupation authorities was the decentralisation of education in post-war

⁵³ Ikuo Amano *The Bright and Dark Sides of Japanese Education*, The Japan Foundation Newsletter Vol XIX No 5-6 May 1992. Pg 2

⁵⁴ Under the MOE the country was divided into 8 academic districts, each of which should have a university, and was further divided into 32 secondary school districts. A secondary school district should provide a secondary school, and was subdivided into 210 elementary school districts each of which should provide an elementary school. The Gakusei stipulated that all the nation's youth, regardless of former social rank, geographic region and even gender, were to receive elementary education. In the Meiji period many of the *terakoya* and existing *han* schools were transformed into elementary schools.- Kobayashi 1976 pg 25

⁵⁵ Fearey, 1972 pg 37

Japan, which had been alien to Japan since 1870. Much had been accomplished in higher education, but the serious problem of centralised control by the MOE remained. Although at the lower levels, administrative control had been passed to the local boards of education, with respect to higher education it was still centralised to a great extent by the MOE⁵⁶.

The Japanese believed that it would be extremely difficult for a strong force to develop which would protect the interest of the higher institutions if the controlling bodies of the various individual universities were dispersed about the country. SCAP maintained that the control of higher education should be moved out of the MOE. The final recommendation was that a considerable amount of control be maintained by the MOE, however, any university matters were to be handled according to recommendations made by the National University Council⁵⁷. The Council would give approval beforehand to all acts of the MOE that related to higher education⁵⁸.

Although plans to dismantle the MOE were never realised, “Americanisation” was promoted in many aspects of the system, including abolishing nationally standardised textbooks, greater freedom in organising curricula, and establishing local boards of education. The counter-reform moves that began in the 1950s were basically attempts to retighten MOE control⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ The boards of education did not find enthusiastic support: the voting rate in elections did not rise above 56%. The Japanese reaction to the boards of trustees was most emphatically negative because the university president, as the selected leader, is spokesman for the faculty. The Japanese had no desire that the president be a manager for a board of trustees composed of non-university persons. Something of a board system operated in the private universities, but the pattern was more complex than the American system. The political neutrality of the boards of education was hard to maintain in Japan. – Trainor 1983

⁵⁷ The Council was to be composed of 23 persons, 6 of these would be elected by the presidents of the national universities, 4 by the Japan Science Council (representing the interest of higher education) and 3 by the University Professors Association of Japan. The remaining 10 persons would be ‘persons of learning and experience’ recommended by both houses of the Japanese Diet. At each institution it was proposed that there be two or three other governing bodies: The University Council, The Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Meeting.

⁵⁸ Trainor, 1983 pg 237-241

⁵⁹ Specifically these included changing the means of selecting local boards of education from public election to appointment; revising textbook screening; making it mandatory for teachers to follow the course of study, which is a set of detailed, written guidelines prepared by the ministry for each subject taught in the elementary and secondary schools.

3.5.2 Post-war Control of Higher Education

Under the post-war system, Japanese government administration is divided into three levels: national, prefectural and municipal. Educational administration has the additional feature that elementary education is under municipal jurisdiction, secondary education is under the prefecture, and higher education is administered by the nation. The Ministry of Education exercises strict control of the education system as a whole by setting compulsory, unified standards.⁶⁰

While individual universities can exercise autonomy in many matters, particularly if they are very prestigious, private or both, the MOE retains primary influence over the development of higher education in Japan⁶¹. The Higher Education Encyclopaedia states: *“The relationship between higher education institutions and the society that surrounds them is a reciprocal one. Higher institutions need funds, but any government that attempts to use its control of the purse as a way of controlling academic life risks having a very mediocre intellectual elite and graduates who are unable to take initiatives”*.⁶² This is the case in Japanese society where it is repeatedly pointed out that the government uses budgets as a means of controlling individual policy and autonomy, and as a result, the universities in Japan are producing graduates who are uncreative and cannot think freely.

The concept that the government should be the ‘controlling entity’ in higher education, and the public perception that the government controls all campuses and ratifies not only the academic but social choices the universities make, has crippled the world of higher education in three ways:

- It has inflicted the lifetime employment system on faculties, especially those of national universities, guaranteeing that mediocrity will become the professional standard of almost every one of them.

⁶⁰ General education policy and administration are under the jurisdiction of the MOE, which has the authority to approve the establishment of new institutions, both private and public; has direct control over the budget of all national universities, colleges, junior colleges, and any associated research institutes; provides subsidies to private and prefectural institutions; prescribes minimum standards for universities with respect to curricula, number and qualifications of teachers, the size of buildings and grounds; and provides research and foreign travel support to individual scholars.

⁶¹ Japanese Education Today- Higher Education

http://timss.enc.org/TIMSS/addtools/pubs/124016/4016_49.htm

⁶² Clark, Neave pg 850

- It has subordinated the undergraduate education of the college and university to the process of public education.
- It has allowed higher scholarship in the universities – the research mission- to languish, leaving huge gaps in the pure sciences capabilities of the nation
- It has produced a railroad-like connection, from the entrance exam, straight through college and onto the lifetime job, which along with governmental control has damaged the vitality of higher education in Japan.⁶³

It is said that the Japanese education system is outstandingly efficient.⁶⁴ A factor in this efficiency has been the MOE's role in skilfully balancing the control and competition, the use of limited resources effectively through standardised education, and making preferential or gradated allocations of resources. Even universities must provide facilities, organise faculties and departments, and arrange the curriculum in accordance with the standards set by the MOE. There is limited freedom of choice for either the schools or the individuals, but waste of resources is minimal.

In allocating limited resources, particularly funds, the ministry had given priority training to personnel of significant strategic importance in promoting modernisation and industrialisation, that is on higher education, and within this area, in education for specialised professionals. Specifically, funding priority has gone to the national institutions of higher education and specialised education in science and engineering. By functioning to train personnel, education contributed very efficiently and effectively to promoting industrialisation.

The private universities have also developed under ministry control, but with little assistance from public funds, competing for survival with each other and the national and public universities. The MOE is unable to rule education directly through its domination of local school systems and loyal teachers, but it can in fact control exams and textbooks, and uses budgets and chartering regulations to control individual universities and prevent any reforms or changes they see as undesirable.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cutts, 1997 pg 63-64

⁶⁴ educational expenditure per student is somewhat lower than the West; the number of students per teacher is higher; and teaching, learning, research and facilities are not as good as might be expected in a country of such wealth. Despite this, Japanese children's academic achievement is on a high level.

⁶⁵ Rohlen, 1983 pg 266

In Japan, for many long years, local boards of education, universities and schools, teachers and students, and parents as well, have been accustomed to strict control and limited freedom of choice. If ministry control is relaxed, the high level of efficiency that has characterised Japanese education system may be lost and diversification may lead to inequalities. But the strictly controlled education of the past can no longer meet the needs of the new era appropriately and flexibly. In the 1980s, people also came to realise that the inability of Japan's education system, particularly higher education, to meet the needs of the new era flexibly is a major problem. The era of lifelong education has also dawned, with more adults seeking educational opportunities.

Patience explains another reason why control of education in Japan has remained unchallenged. He states that "*Japanese culture reinforces an advanced form of capitalist social and political infrastructure. Arguably, Japan has a highly developed 'corporatist culture': a culture that reproduces the characteristics of the entrenched and singular mode of economic and political corporatism that exists in this country. Within this corporatism, the Japanese university system must be controlled by the government, because it is from the intellectual classes that the strong consensus is likely to be seriously challenged. With the universities so effectively under government direction, Japan's intellectuals- at least those of them occupying academic positions- are neutralised as a source of criticism or opposition.*"⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Patience, 1984 JQ Apr- Jun XXXI No 2 206-212)

4. ACTORS ON THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM SCENE

In the previous section I have outlined five major problems that continue to plague Japanese higher education on the eve of the 21st Century. Many major recommendations to improve Japanese higher education into the 21st Century have still not been implemented and show no sign of implementation in the near future. The nature and complexity of the five problems has prevented any consensus agreement on how to solve them.

The majority of the reports in the 1980s and 1990s by the MOE and its various councils, have outlined the problems of bullying, juvenile delinquency, school violence and so forth. But these are only the symptoms of the much deeper problems that have not been successfully dealt with. Many observers point to the entrance exam competition and employment recruitment methods as the root of all problems in Japanese education. Yet the only recommendations proposed to deal with these problems was the substitution of the former exam with a new common exam, and a moral plea to businesses that they change their recruiting methods, without any way to enforce this suggestion.

In this section I will look at why the higher educational system has failed to undergo any substantial changes despite the various reform attempts and recommendations in the 1980s and 1990s. The major forces within Japanese society who play an important role in education reform are the government (LDP centre and LDP education zoku), bureaucracy (MOE and other ministries), opposition forces (both governmental and non-governmental), business and its vested interests, and Japanese society as a whole. Although each of these actors plays an important role in the development of educational policy and the long-range implementation of recommendations and reforms, some have more power than others. It is the balance of power that ensures the outcome of the reform process. As will be seen, unfortunately those who are the

most seriously effected, the students and parents, don't seem to have the ability to force change.

Leonard Schoppa, in his 1991 *Education Reform in Japan: A Case of Immobilist Politics*, provides an in-depth discussion of the workings of Japanese government. I will draw on this work in the discussion on government and bureaucracy, as it gives a detailed political analysis of education reform and government in Japan, and information on the other actors in the educational debate.

4.1 Government

One of the major factors hindering educational reform is that all political actors must agree to push education reform forward. When everyone agrees, reform progresses rapidly. An example of this is the subsidies for private universities in 1972-75. One main problem, as far as the major issues are concerned, is that all actors involved cannot come to an agreement on the right method of reform. In this situation the process of 'conflict avoidance' is common rather than producing viable problem solving tactics.

The nature of Japanese politics means that the government is continually changing members and Prime Ministers after relatively short terms of office. This instability means that these politicians work on short-term policies that will keep them in office, rather than planning ahead for the future. These continual changes in government means there is no chance to propose or implement long-range policy changes or reforms.

The conservative nature of the Japanese government and bureaucracy is another major reason why education reform has not moved forward in the post-war decades. According to Schoppa⁶⁷ the 'traditional conservatives' (including Nakasone, the LDP and many business leaders) saw the rise and school violence and delinquency as the most significant problem in Japanese education, and were concerned that the rise in indiscipline posed a threat to the Japanese work ethic. The traditional conservatives

⁶⁷ Schoppa in Beauchamp, 1991 pg 59-61

blamed the teacher's lack of commitment for the rise in school violence, and the fact that the post-war emphasis on the western ideal of individual autonomy threatened the traditional Japanese values.

Since the end of the Occupation period, the government has tried to go back to the values of the pre-war system and has not tended to look to the future. Horio⁶⁸ states that *“those proclaiming the need for a third reform of education see it as a way to bring back the spirit of strict order and tight discipline which was instilled by the pre-war educational system of the pre-war Imperial state. In other words, the discourse on the need for a ‘third reform’ of education is an intrinsic part of the attempt to eradicate the liberalising influences of the post-war reforms”*. These conservatives saw a move back to the pre-war ethic of intense moral education, guiding the students towards a ‘proper’ outlook and to love their country, as a solution to the problems in Japanese education.

4.1.1 The Role of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

The LDP plays a complex role in the Japanese education policy-making process. The party has consistently sought to reduce the Japan Teacher's Union's (JTU or Nikkyoso) power in the education system. On numerous other issues it has been divided. Part of the party advocates higher levels of educational spending, while another advocates cutbacks. Part of it urges an increased emphasis on ability/selection and a decrease in the standardising of MOE regulations, while another points to the success of the status quo and insists on the need for standards.⁶⁹

In the 1950s and 60s the LDP have been unified in seeking policies which could best help the nation to continue its' economic advancement. However, with the end of Japan's 'catch-up' phase in the 1970s, it was argued from within the LDP that a new emphasis was required for the 21st Century. The new approach should have a less rigid emphasis on academic background and less stress on memorisation in favour of more concentration on work-related ability, creativity and self-confident expression. Despite this recommendation, large parts of the LDP remained convinced that the

⁶⁸ Horio, 1988 pg 362

⁶⁹ Schoppa, 1991 pg 90

status quo system was best for the economy and advocated no change. This failure of the LDP to agree on a course for dealing with the changing demands of the economy contributed greatly to the breakdown of the recent reform initiatives.⁷⁰

The continuing rule of the LDP has given the party an increasing ability to influence the policy formulation activities of the ministries. Over the years of LDP rule, many LDP members have acquired at least as much policy expertise as can be claimed by even the most senior bureaucrats. Top ministry officials tend to respect the political priorities of the LDP members influential in their area, consulting with them throughout the legislative and budget processes and getting their consent prior to all major decisions.⁷¹

The motives behind LDP policy-making are often not directed at solving the major educational problems. Schoppa⁷² points out that in order to effect policy, politicians and parties have to have power, and so the LDP's education policy has sometimes reflected the goals of money, power and turf as much more than long term policy aims. Leaders of the LDP have pursued education reform in order to win elections and extend their term in office; opposition factions within the party have opposed leadership education initiatives in order to end a leader's tenure at the head of the party; and education policy has been effected by the quarrels of party's various zoku among themselves and with the 'centre' over money, power and turf.

4.1.2 The LDP Education Zoku

The education zoku is made up of young Diet members of unofficial policy-specialised cliques, who exercise significant power and leadership in their areas. These Dietmen are successful and remain in office, then move up the party ranks while consistently serving in positions related to their area of specialisation.⁷³ The education zoku⁷⁴ emerged in the early 1970s just as the CCE was drawing up its

⁷⁰ Schoppa, 1991 pg 64-65

⁷¹ Schoppa, 1991 pg 10-11

⁷² Schoppa, 1991 pg 72-73

⁷³ Schoppa, 1991 pg 11

⁷⁴ The zoku came about in the late 1960s at the time of the university disputes, in opposition to the older 'law and order hawks' of the government, who were using the student demonstrations to seek a new law to provide the government with greatly increased power over the universities.

reform proposals. Because the zoku was still relatively young, the MOE remained the dominant force in shaping education reform policies. The CCE report was only the first step in the reform process and by the implementation stage, the zoku had gained much more experience in the area of education and played a much more significant role, emerging in the late 1970s as the dominant actor in the education sphere.⁷⁵

After the oil-shock of 1973-74 and the ensuing budget ceilings, the zoku influence in the budget process was reinforced, because limited funds available meant that the MOE had to depend on zoku support even more to fund new programme campaigns. The education zoku made use of its project teams and subcommittees in the 1970s and 1980s, producing a steady stream of reports, which gave the zoku policy-making initiative for virtually the whole period. The zoku generally let the MOE develop the planning and issuing of proposals, playing a more aggressive part in encouraging campaigns. The zoku's primary tool is the budget, using its active role in the budget process to push issues it supports, such as aid to private universities and higher teacher salaries.

The pattern of co-operation between the MOE and zoku through the entire budget process was fully institutionalised by the 1980s. When the MOE issues its demands, the requests closely reflect zoku priorities and the zoku has gained a great deal of influence over the MOE.⁷⁶ The MOE-zoku relationship is not the only one relevant to education policy-making. The education subgovernment must also compete with the other subgovernments and convince the LDP centre to support its decisions.

Educationist Sakata Michita insisted, however, that the problems of the universities were not merely an issue of law and order, but in fact reflected real deficiencies in institutions of higher education, and he took the initiative to convene a special investigation in September 1968. The resulting proposals marked a significant change from previous party statements on education because they sought to address the educational problems at the root of the university disturbances rather than relying on the discipline and control as advocated by the law and order hawks. Sakata was joined by a group of young Dietmen who had been attracted to the education sphere as the university protests pushed the education issue to the top of the political agenda. The decision of all these young men to join the party's education organ at the same time was not entirely coincidental. The LDP's leadership realised that the party needed young Dietmen who had grown up in the post-war educational system in order to deal with the problems, and within a few years the new group were given positions of responsibility in the education sphere. As a result the education zoku was born.- Schoppa 1991 pg 81-82

⁷⁵ Schoppa, 1991 pg 83-84

⁷⁶ Schoppa, 1991 pg 86-88

4.1.3 The LDP Centre

Even as the education zoku was gaining influence over the MOE in the 1970s, the LDP centre was taking greater control over the government as a whole. In setting low ceilings, the LDP centre gained power at the expense of both the MOF and the spending subgovernments (MOE and Education zoku). The LDP leadership has maintained a more active role in all areas of policy-making through its control of the purse strings. PM Nakasone in particular sought to increase the centre's role in all areas of policy-making, including education, with the prime mechanism for Nakasone's involvement being the AHCE of 1984. However, while the zoku and the LDP centre gained authority and influence in the policy-making process over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s, neither could implement its desired policies without the other.

4.2 Bureaucracy

With the government changing so often in Japan, bureaucracy becomes the real minds behind policy, since it is the bureaucrats' job to implement policy and laws. The fact that education reform in Japan seems to fail at the implementation stage then is very likely to be a fault of the bureaucracy. A common trait of the Japanese bureaucratic ministries is that, like the LDP politicians, they like to observe and protect the status quo. The members of the bureaucracy don't want to lose their influential position, and so don't make any changes that may effect their position.

Other ministries are also concerned with education policy. The MOF seeks to assure that the MOE does not spend too much money on its reform projects, MITI seeks to assure that the MOE's education policies will provide Japan with the talent needed to maintain the nation's international economic competitiveness. Since most of the LDP support comes from the business and industrial sector, the LDP and MOE produce policies which satisfy the needs of these sectors to ensure their continued support for the government.

In other cases the relationship is not so positive. The Ministry of Health and Welfare refuses to allow the MOE to encroach on its control of the nations nursery schools and

finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeks to make sure the MOE's textbook control activities do not damage Japan's diplomatic relations with her neighbours. All of these cleavages serve to fragment the conservative consensus and make education reform more difficult.⁷⁷

4.2.1 Ministry of Education (MOE)

The strong central power within the government that holds dominance over the education sphere is the Ministry of Education (MOE). The predominant attitude of the MOE, across the whole range of policy issues is bureaucratic conservatism. The MOE has pursued status quo protection, which reflects the simple fact that the MOE had developed an attachment to the existing practices and policies over its many years of supervising the existing system. Since the MOE has presided over the post-war system since its establishment, it has developed a stake in preserving what it created and nurtured. In the period of the recent education reform initiatives, therefore, the vast majority of the MOE bureaucrats were committed to perpetuating the established system.

Bureaucratic conservatism serves to disrupt the consensus on education reform and makes change in the education sphere more difficult. Conflicts lead MOE bureaucrats to be conservative and not act until it is absolutely necessary. Park⁷⁸ suggests that the MOE have survived many ideological confrontations over policy in the post-war decades, and the officials have come to shy away from doing anything that might provoke unnecessary controversy. Park concludes that officials have the habit of acting only when 'sufficient pressure' has built up as far as major and controversial matters are concerned. The notion of not acting until sufficient pressure has built up helps explain the MOE's conservatism.⁷⁹ The tendency of bureaucratic conservatism is further reinforced by the bureaucratic system, *ringi sei*⁸⁰, which gives the officials

⁷⁷ Schoppa, 1991 pg 92-93

⁷⁸ Park cited Schoppa, 1991 pg 97-98

⁷⁹ Schoppa, 1991 pg 97-100

⁸⁰ The bureaucratic system under which decisions are recorded on a formal document (the *ringisho*) are drawn up by the lower- to middle- ranking administrators who are closer to the problem and know more about the details. These official statements are then circulated up through the ministry hierarchy where officials can contribute insights based on their broader knowledge and responsibilities.

close to the education *genba*⁸¹ a particularly important role in the decision-making process. The *ringi sei* way of thinking simply does not allow the ministry to overcome the conservatism of officials attached to the status quo.

Although the MOE represents a unified unit, there are sometimes differences of opinion within the MOE, just as there are in the LDP, business and progressive sectors. A small group of MOE officials were reform-minded bureaucrats, who became known as the 'internationalist faction' (*kokusai-ha*). The majority of the MOE bureaucrats, however, were less inclined to support the reformist ideas of the internationalists, and these officials became known as the 'status quo maintenance faction' (*genjoo iji-ha*). Many officials resisted the implementation of the Central Council on Education's (CCE) recommendations. After the departure of the key members of the internationalist faction in the early 1970s (through retirement or by involuntary transfer to other positions not related to education), the top new officials were much less inclined to take the initiative until sufficient pressure had built up, and were less inclined to be individualists or leaders in pursuit of educational reform.⁸²

4.2.2 MOE Place in the Process

The Ministry of Education plays a central role in the Japanese policy-making process. It is charged with drafting legislation, and is able to use the powers of administrative guidance to legitimise policy. It gathers the data and information that forms the basis for rational policy-making with all actors seeking to move it one way or another. Bureaucrats seem to maintain a superior attitude towards politicians, seeing themselves as guardians of 'neutral' policy-making based on their expert examination of objective facts.⁸³

Schoppa examines the role of the MOE from two perspectives: 1) as a 'politically neutral' bureaucracy dealing with a activist LDP education *zoku*, and 2) as a member of the education subgovernment, allied with the education *zoku*, dealing with the LDP centre. In both capacities the MOE emerges as an important player in the

⁸¹ The *genba* is the actual site at which education is being delivered- these views naturally come to represent the views of the local officials who tend to be opposed to change.

⁸² Schoppa, 1991 pg 105-106

conservative camp where its bureaucratic conservatism serves to disrupt the consensus on education reform and makes changes in the sphere more difficult.

4.2.3 The MOE as a 'Neutral' Bureaucracy Dealing with the Zoku

The MOE consistently express their concern about the growing dominance of the LDP in the running of their department and argue that the MOE has a crucial role to play in protecting the education system from majority-party domination. From its 'objective neutral' position, it must make sure policy accurately reflects the points of view of all groups in society i.e a social consensus.⁸⁴

In the legislative process, the LDP relies on the ministry for the actual drafting of legislation. The MOE does not have the ability on it's own to push through legislation or increase budgets in areas where it does not have LDP support. While the LDP zoku heavily influences what the MOE does in this capacity, the ministry retains the ability to transform or block policies which it especially opposes, particularly in cases where the LDP is not unified in its support for some change. Legislation, however, is only one kind of policy-making. Many actual education reform policies are of a type which can actually be implemented through changes in MOE regulations- an area which the ministry naturally has more influence.⁸⁵

In the process whereby the ministry seeks to bring its 'neutral' and 'objective' perspective to bear on policy issues, it relies heavily on a set of advisory councils (shingikai). Composed of 'outside experts', the councils serve to highlight both neutrality and rationality of the MOE's point of view. The fact that experts (presumably of different views) all agree to recommend certain courses lets the MOE claim that it has found a policy which is supported by a consensus. Having found a consensus, it can describe the policy as 'politically neutral' and 'in public interest', in effect, giving the MOE's position a certain democratic legitimacy.

⁸³ Schoppa, 1991 pg 10

⁸⁴ Schoppa, 1991 pg 108-109

⁸⁵ Schoppa, 1991 pg 110-111

By manipulating the councils, the MOE has a chance to greatly influence the education policy-making process. Schoppa⁸⁶ points out that it is widely known that the ministry manipulates its advisory councils. The 'expert' members are often picked based on their sympathy to the MOE position. The councils are frequently given a 'request for advice' which is heavily weighted towards the course of action favoured by the ministry. And the councils' deliberations are often manipulated through the use of MOE-provided information, staff assistance, and hints as to which sort of policy the ministry might find acceptable. To a large extent, therefore, the arguments that the councils provide expert advice and produce a consensus are just a cloak behind which the MOE legitimises its point of view.

4.2.4 MOE and Education Zoku Co-operation

There is not always the bureaucracy-party conflict in regard to education policy-making. In the majority of cases the ministry and the zoku work in a mutually supportive way to pursue their common interests as members of the education subgovernment in dealings with other subgovernments and the centre. The MOE works with the zoku to fight for its share of the budget and similarly co-ordinates its activities with its LDP allies in substantive issues involving conflict with other subgovernments, both on budgetary and non-budgetary issues.

In the case of many reform proposals, however, the co-operation between the zoku and the MOE is opposed to change. In the case of the Nakasone reform debate, the MOE and the zoku opposed liberalisation and flexibilisation (*jiyuuka* and *junanka*), which called for the reduction of MOE regulatory authority and a reduction in its budget. The MOE and zoku worked together against the centre to prevent the adoption of these controversial reforms.⁸⁷

4.3 Big Business/ Industry

Before discussing the business and industrial world's role in the education reform debates, it is important to understand the contribution of the business world to the

⁸⁶ Schoppa, 1991 pg 111-114

⁸⁷ Schoppa, 1991 pg 117-119

major problems outlined earlier. One of the main reasons competition for the entrance exams is so strong, is the business sectors reliance on academic credentials and the status of the university when recruiting new employees. This, in turn, strengthens the position of the most prestigious institutions in the hierarchy of Japan's universities. The recruiting procedures take place in the fourth year of study, so those who find employment early on, no longer feel the need to study. This, then, effects the performance of the students negatively, and contributes to the poor quality of undergraduate education in Japan's universities. The Lifetime Employment System is another measure that ensures that the students strive to get into the best universities to guarantee their future, since the majority of businessmen usually never change jobs once employed.

Companies' reliance on in-company training, rather than the students' performance at the university level, further reduces the importance of course content at the universities. Business has long enjoyed having graduates educated with general knowledge, who they can train for the positions they have available. They know the students have pushed themselves hard to get into the university, especially the more prestigious ones, and have the qualities they require.

Another factor to be considered is the major industry of cram schools and other businesses dedicated to getting students through the entrance exam competition, which have arisen over the post-war decades. This large, flourishing industry would not survive if the entrance standards were relaxed, so the representatives from this sector are not likely to support any changes that could put their livelihood at risk.

In the 1980s, with the end of Japan's 'catch-up phase' and the drop in the economy, the business world began to realise that the universities were not producing the graduates necessary for Japan's future as a post-industrial nation. Although the majority of various business and industrial groups are not directly involved in formulating education policy, many interests groups have commented on the educational system, and produced reports that were submitted to the government in the early 1980s when education reform deliberations were taking place.

The business groups tend to agree with the politicians and form a part of the conservative camp. The business and industrial communities have a say in policy-making through their support of the LDP in election campaigns. These groups are in a position to work closely with the government, who take into account business needs in terms of the economy and human resources. Some influential businessmen were members of the NCER and thus in a position to have their business priorities written into the NCER reports.⁸⁸ Consequently, the NCER reports concerned mainly those ideas that were felt by the government and business world to be the most in need of reform, not the ideas pointed out by the oppositional groups.⁸⁹

In July 1984, The Education Council, under the Japan Committee for Economic Development (Keizai Doyukai) issued a report, outlining its concerns with the Japanese education system. The Education Council concentrated on higher education, and was of the opinion that the reform of the higher educational system lay in reformed recruitment procedures. The council listed the qualifications to be expected of young people in the future as creativity, diversity, and internationalisation. Higher education and its content were the focus of the council's reports. Realising that the institutions of higher education are bound by the recruitment procedures, the Education Council initially proposed a revision of evaluation standards in business enterprises and government agencies, in effect a change in recruitment procedures.⁹⁰

The NCER also had critical concern the academic credentialism, stating that it is exactly this emphasis on school credentials that generates intense competition for admission to those universities that lead directly to the most attractive employment opportunities. Although this was a major topic in the NCER's deliberations, the council stopped short of recommending that this hiring practice be changed. Aware that it is a deep-seated and extremely difficult problem that exists outside the domain of education, the NCER merely issued a moral appeal to work organisations.⁹¹

As Japan moved into the 1990s, the economic pressure on business continued to mount, and is now forcing a change of attitudes of the business and industry

⁸⁸ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 137

⁸⁹ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 241-243

⁹⁰ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 142

employers in Japan. In-company training is no longer economically viable to many companies, and these companies now want universities to start producing specialists, not the generalists desired in the past. Major companies want more emphasis on performance at the higher educational level, which would mean that institutions would have to vastly improve their content and teaching methods, and students would need to study hard to graduate. The decline of the lifetime employment system is also making the future for graduates uncertain.

A significant change in the attitudes of business and industry sectors may be one of the major factors that could push education reform to the 'sufficient pressure' stage. The business sector is in a position to push the government to not only make recommendations to improve the situation, but to force implementation of the policies to help solve the major problems affecting Japanese higher education.

4.4 Opposition Forces – The Progressives.

The opposition forces at work against the conservative actors are known as the Progressives. The progressive camp, concerned with the development of the individual and a healthy democracy emphasises the people's right to education and the state's obligation to provide it equally for everyone.⁹² This would also ensure more direct political influence for their camp in the long run. In the 1980s round of reform, the Progressives opposed the PM Nakasone's call for the introduction of free market competition and greater diversity (which they read as elitism) in the education system as well as his call for more moral education and stricter teacher training.

4.4.1 Political Opposition

The political elements of the progressive camp are the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the Japan Democratic Party (JDP). These opposition parties tend to support the JTU. Although the progressives have succeeded in preventing the MOE from reverting to the pre-war ideologies of education, many of the progressive camp reforms are too radical for status quo protecting MOE and LDP.

⁹¹ Shields, 1993 pf 275

⁹² Roesgaard, 1998 pg 36-37

In reality, there has been no real united political opposition to force the government to make changes or implement reforms seen as desirable by the progressive camp. The one-party dominance of the LDP, and its continuing support from various business and industrial sectors, is not the only reason why the political opposition has not made inroads into education reform. The political opposition has been fragmented and reluctant to co-operate with each other and as a result have not been able to unite and be heard.

4.4.2 The Teachers Union's

One of the major opposition forces in the education reform debate are the teacher's unions. In 1947, the Japan Teacher's Union (Nihon Kyooshokuin Kumiai- Nikkyoso or JTU) was formed, as an amalgamation of two smaller unions. The JTU was in favour of local control of education rather than ministerial control. It opposed moral and political education in the schools, favouring egalitarian rather than elite education, and opposing the extensive system of examinations.⁹³

Like the progressive segment of the political community, the Japan Teacher's Union (JTU or Nikkyoso) did not agree with the conservatives interpretation of Japan's educational problems or with their proposals for change. They too saw the rise in school violence as a significant problem, but rather than blame it on the lack of moral education or the teachers, they attributed it to the pressures of the nation's competitive examination system and on the social system based on academic credentials that lay behind the competition. Not only the school violence problem but also the problems of bullying, the rise in the dropout rate, the rise in absenteeism and the whole 'desolation of education' were blamed on the examination competition.

The root of the problem, according to the JTU lay in the selective nature of the system. Given this interpretation of the problem, the JTU's education reform proposals differ significantly from those of the traditional conservatives. If selection is the problem, the solution is to eliminate (or at least delay) the process of tracking

⁹³ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 36-37

students by ability. In order to reduce the pressures of the university entrance examination, they argued that the government should build universities 'more open to the people' and specifically proposed that it should establish 'regional comprehensive junior colleges' to provide greater opportunities for more young people to receive post-secondary education.

Roesgaard states that in view of the history of teacher's organisations in Japan, it is no wonder that they have had so little influence on the policy-making of the MOE. Their influence was cut short by the restrictions on public servants' means of action, as well as the redefinition of teacher's organisations as 'personnel organisations' rather than unions, has meant that much of their effect has been lost. This re-definition meant that no trade union law applied to teachers, or other public employees for that matter. Thus, effectively put out of circuit as a union, stripped of any right to negotiate on a national level, the only road left to teachers has been at school level.⁹⁴

Teachers Unions have, however, been successful at blocking some undesirable reform proposals, especially those relating to nationalism, and they are able to use their influence to effect some decisions at the lower levels. But they have been effectively kept out of the policy-making process, often seen as too radical by the conservative bureaucrats.

In order to effect substantial educational reforms and to make any real changes, all the opposition forces need to pull together and make a stand against the government. Part of the fault is the failure of the opposition to come together to form a front to oppose the conservatives and put their views forward. The problem is that the views within these opposition groups are also varied to an extent that they cannot, or have not tried, to come to a unified agreement. The JTU and the progressive camp in general did not have the opportunity to participate directly in the recent education reform initiative. No official teacher's union representative was included in the PM's Ad Hoc Council. Nevertheless, their perspective is representative of a significant segment of the political community and contrasts interestingly with the view of the conservatives.

⁹⁴ Roesgaard, 1998 pg 119

4.5 The Neo-Conservatives

For most of the post-war period, the two groups that have dominated the debate over education policy have been the traditional conservatives and the progressives. Schoppa introduces another group into the education debate, the Neo-Conservative group, which has developed and emerged as a new school of thought in the recent years. According to the neo-conservative view, the most important problem was the rigidity and standardisation of the educational system, and the solution was to be found in less MOE control.⁹⁵

The contrast between the traditional and the neo-conservative views is clearly illustrated by two education reports issued around 1984 by the Japan Federation of Employer's Association (or JFEA -a member of the conservative camp) and the Committee for Economic Development (or CED). The JFEA's report, devoted entirely to the problem of school violence, emphatically called on the government to bring the school back under control. The CED's report, which did not once mention the issue of school violence, emphasised the need for a relaxation of government control in order to allow greater diversity, creativity, and internationalisation. For the neo-conservatives, the future economic need for workers possessing these qualities was the greatest educational challenge. The CED report blamed the rigidity and standardisation of the education system on the way in which universities and employers selected their students and employees, and suggested the reduction of emphasis on standard entrance criteria. The current system, in which all universities and students compete for their ranking on a single exam-based pyramid, should be replaced with a system composed of diverse universities less clearly stratified on a topography of multiple pyramids.⁹⁶

The neo-conservative group cannot be termed an opposition group as such, even though some of their ideas run counter to the views of the traditional conservatives. The chief spokesman for the neo-conservative line in the reform debate was Koyama Kenichi, a close advisor of PM Nakasone who was named to the Ad Hoc Council. Like the CED, he too considered "eliminating uniformity in education" to be the top

⁹⁵ Schoppa in Beauchamp, 1991 pg 62-64

⁹⁶ Schoppa in Beauchamp, 1991 pg 62-64

priority. He attacked the “disproportionate reliance on the standard criteria of entrance exam scores” as one source of excessive uniformity, but also pointed out several other causes including the uniform single-track 6-3-3-4 system that did not allow for any alternatives to a progression from primary school to university.

The final two items on Koyama’s list were also targeted by another neo-conservative group, the Kyoto Group for the Study of Global Issues, which issued a widely publicised report in March 1984, just as Nakasone was embarking on his reform initiative. “*Ideally*” the group argued, “*education should be free and independent of constraints and interference from public authorities. In particular we would like to see as much decontrol as possible in the education system*”. The neo-conservative reform agenda thus contrasted sharply with the changes advocated by the traditional conservatives. In the education debate which ensued, ‘liberalisation’ (jiyuka) and ‘flexibilisation’ (junanka) became the slogans of the neo-conservatives.⁹⁷

4.6 Society

The major problem with Japanese society is that it, too, is very conservative. The Japanese people are almost afraid of the effects of radical change, and seem to be more content to stick with what they know. The group harmony, which pervades the Japanese consciousness, prevents the individual from making a strong stand against authority. For centuries the Japanese people have been used to obeying the wishes of the establishment, and conforming to the ideology of the ruling government, be it the Tokugawa militarists, the Meiji capitalists, or the Post-war democrats.

A major problem is that this history of conforming has meant that the Japanese people on the whole do not understand the principles and workings of a truly democratic nation. Democracy as an ideal was forced on Japan by the American Occupation authorities, and has since developed into Japan’s own unique style of democracy, which seems to allow for the freedom of choice, as long as to mirrors the leaders way of thinking.

⁹⁷ Schoppa in Beauchamp, 1991 pg 62-64

The way the election system has worked in the past has allowed for the one-party dominance of the LDP, with the majority of employees of large companies simply voting for the party their company head supports, rather than making their own decision on who to vote for and why. The Japanese people trust the government to make the right decisions for Japan's future benefit. It seems that if the Japanese people are told by the authorities that there are going to be changes, their group orientation means that will comply with the governments requests and work hard and fast to initiate the new system and regulations.

As far as the education system goes, the people have seen the economic success of Japan in the post-war decades, and are only now realising the disturbing effects it is having on society. They may even be under the illusion that they wait long enough, the system will produce the economic success it has in the past. Japan as a nation has been through its ups and downs, and so the people may see this as a down point that they just need to ride out until the system somehow miraculously reforms itself. Generally, no-one likes the situation, but no-one does anything to change it. They allow the old practices to continue, by not standing up to the establishment, and they don't speak out against the wrongs in large enough numbers to be heard.

There are enough places in the system for those who wish to continue on to higher education, although not necessarily at their desired institutions. Rather than force the government to make changes in the selection procedures and realising that the public image of the hierarchy of institutions is no longer founded, parents continue to put pressure on their children to succeed and continue to pay the high cost for higher education. Many parents would not want their children to be the guinea pigs in the experiment of a new system of higher education, because history tells them that once their children succeed in the current system they are guaranteed future success. A new system would not hold this guarantee. But now, with the decline of the lifetime employment system, the old education system, too, is losing this safety net.

That only 38% of high school graduates go on to higher education should be enough reason for the parents of the other 62% of students to rally against the education system geared to passing entrance exams to the higher levels. These are the parents of the children who are most likely the ones rebelling against the system, producing the

undesirable problems which are surfacing in schools today. The strong negative effects that the university entrance exam is having on secondary education, means that those who do not have the desire to go on to higher education are forced to study a curriculum aimed at rote memorisation for university entrance.

The whole of the secondary school age students are, therefore, missing out on gaining a high quality secondary education they deserve. The high school curriculum is geared towards rote memorisation for passing entrance exams, but not all students have the ability or the ambition to go to university. High schools should offer the general education that is provided in the first two years of university, then the students could choose a vocational or professional career.

The increase in fees and money involved in the cram school industry has meant that the poorer families are falling behind in being able to secure higher education for their children. The national schools offering lower tuition so that poorer students can supposedly attend them, have the strictest, most difficult entrance exams, which means that only those who can afford the extra tuition are in fact able to enter these institutions. It would be realistic to assume that the parents of the students succeeding in the current system are more affluent than the parents of the rebellious students. They are in a position to do something about the problems, but since they themselves, and now their children, are succeeding in the system the way it is, they are not likely to act to force desired changes.

The people's attitude reinforces the status of the prestigious national and private institutions. The vocational track is not desirable for most Japanese, so parents push their children to succeed. Hierarchy and seniority runs through all spheres of Japanese life- the sempai/ kohai system is a means of keeping order, just as the hierarchy of institutions decides who the members of the next higher class will be.

5. QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gain an understanding of the Japanese point of view on the issues relating to the reform of higher education in Japan. My initial assumptions about the slowness of the reform of higher education in Japan, were that the Japanese perhaps did not view the problems in the same way as Western observers, and may not have even recognised some of the problems that these observers point out. If they are aware of the problems, perhaps they do not view them as being as serious a problem as the Western Observers do, and do not see the necessity for radical change.

I took a number of statements that had been made in various resources relating to higher education, and the participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements on the scale of 0-5:

- 0- No opinion- The participant has not thought about the statement before, so has no opinion on the matter
- 1- Strongly Disagree -The participant has considered the statement and has a totally opposing opinion about the statement.
- 2- Disagree- The participant has considered the statement and has an opposing opinion about the statement
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree- The participant has considered the statement, but has formed no opinion on the matter, or is undecided as to whether they agree or disagree.
- 4- Agree- The participant has considered the statement and is of the same opinion.
- 5- Strongly Agree- The participant has considered the statement and strongly agrees with it.

In addition, the teachers were given a longer questionnaire and asked to give reasons and explanations for their answers. I tried to word the statements so that none of my own opinions came through. I had help from a native Japanese speaker with a high level of English competence, to translate the statements into Japanese so that the meaning of the statements was not changed or lost through translation.

I surveyed a total of 60 participants- 7 teachers and 53 students. Although this is not a representative proportion of the total population of students and university teachers in Japan, it gave me an idea of how the students and teachers themselves think, and what they see as the important issues in the higher education reform debate. The purpose of the survey was to get some opinions on the Japanese higher education system from those who are currently working within it. It is not meant to be a statistical study for the whole population.

5.1 Problems In Japanese Higher Education Today

I began by asking what the teachers feel is the most serious problem in higher education today. Without giving any examples of the problems pointed out in the reports and foreign observations, I asked what the participants considered the most serious problems plaguing the higher education system in Japan. The following were suggested:

- *Selection methods (entrance exams)*
- *Although the percentage of entrance to higher schools is high, the content of higher education is of a poor quality. This is a problem of higher education for the masses. The talents of the students vary, and in some universities there are too many lower level students.*
- *Freedom, creativity, individuality, uniqueness, selection, internationality: these values have come to be considered important. But at the university (580 of them in Japan) those values are lacking, and are not sufficiently promoted.*
- *All aspects of Mombusho's strong control and regulations.*
- *Graduation from the universities is too easy.*
- *The main problem has been the same all along: the students don't study hard and they don't learn much directly from the courses they teach, although they do learn a lot about getting along with others*
- *There should be an education system that is more focussed on the interests and abilities of the students, rather than the current standardised system.*

These are much the same problems pointed out in the various education reform reports and foreign observations, and indicate that the Japanese teachers are aware of,

and consider these to be serious problems. No doubt the widespread discussions of these issues in the media and other reports influence the thinking of the participants, but interestingly all of them had differing views as to which is the most serious problem. Also it is interesting to note that the participants did not mention the recruitment procedures of companies as a major issue.

5.1.1 Social costs of the existing system

When asked about the social costs of the existing system, the following comments were made:

- *Students lack independence and initiative.*
- *Without having clear study aims, some students enter university because they are told to go to university by the people around them, and as a result, without aim or motivation, they acquire nothing in four years. After four years of moratorium, they graduate, but they cannot find many job offerings, have no fixed job, and end up just floating in mid air.*
- *Students seem to have sufficient knowledge, but its application/utilisation is lacking eg we spend a lot of time, money and effort to master the English language, but the language is rather acquired as knowledge, and application/use of the language is quite poor. Japanese politicians repeat the word 'internationalisation' again and again, but when they attend international conferences or meet foreigners they cannot speak English, so they cannot express their opinions. The same thing could be said for scholars, because they are good at reading and writing theses but they are quite poor at expressing themselves verbally.*
- *There are too many universities and too many students with no desire to study entering them. The quality of the students drops as a result.*
- *Even if you have the ability, but cannot get good marks on the entrance exams, then you can't go to university, and many of those who get into university don't study. Entrance exams are mechanical and test memorisation only.*
- *Students are not really being taught knowledge and skills that can soon be used in society when they enter the workforce. This is a waste of time and labour for both*

individuals and society. It is necessary to bring about a change to more realistic study.

The effect on the students seems to be a pressing concern. Japan's only natural resource is her people, and it is a waste for society if the university years are spent in limbo between high school and the workforce. As suggested above, the students are not being taught knowledge and skills that can be used in society when they enter the workforce. It was also argued that many students do have the knowledge, but they don't know how to use that knowledge effectively. This may be a result of the system of rote memorisation that pervades the whole education system. The ability to remember facts is rewarded rather than the ability to use what you know effectively.

The students could be entering vocational schools or going directly on to employment from high school, and utilising the in-service training programs from the age of 18. Only those who seriously want to study and pursue an academic career should go on to the university to do specialised study. One participant suggested that often, due to financial or other circumstances beyond their control, students with ability or other excellent qualities, cannot get good marks on the entrance examinations, and thus cannot go to university.

5.1.2 Higher education and the economy

History shows that Japan's rapid economic growth in the immediate post-war decades was fuelled by the highly educated society produced by Japan's education system. Thus the adverse effects of the system were not fully recognised until the economic growth slowed in the 1970s. Some of the comments made in relation to a good economy and higher education were:

- *Industry and university education hasn't linked together so far. Since the economy was good, mass entry was possible, and in-service training worked effectively. Although there was no big problem, it was not a good situation. This is becoming a problem now, since the economy is not so good, and companies don't have the luxury to provide expensive in-service training. They now want employees who can be effective directly after being employed.*

- *Japan's economic gains are not necessarily contributable to the development of good education. Those who really want to have a good education tend to study abroad in NZ, Australia, UK, and US. It can't be denied that college graduations have contributed to economic development in Japan, but during the rapid economic growth the authorities didn't think of improving higher education seriously, and the quality of Japanese higher education has suffered as a result*

The main issue regarding the social costs of Japan's competitive, credential-based higher education system is that the economic benefits of the existing system no longer outweigh the problems. In fact the problems of the system have become so prominent that they can no longer be overlooked. This was not a major issue in the 1980s round of reform because the economy was still holding its own even though the rapid economic growth had slowed following the economic crises of the 1970s. The graduates that the system is producing now are not innovative or creative, and are unable to come up with ways to boost the economy. The downturn in the economic situation of many companies means that in-service training has become an added cost many companies can do without, and preference for graduates with the necessary skills to enter the workforce directly after graduation is becoming more desirable.

5.2 Purpose of the University

Many observers of the higher education system in Japan state that the university is no longer performing its function in society, and is not producing the specialists that Japan needs to develop fully into the 21st Century. I was interested to see what the Japanese students and teachers felt the purpose of the university is. The following opinions were made in regard to the statements below.

5.2.1 The purpose of university education is to gain employment at a prestigious company.

Nearly half of those surveyed (28), including 4 teachers, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. 14 participants (1 teacher) were unsure, while 10 participants agreed (no teachers). 5 held no opinion. We need to take into account that this is a very personal opinion which would be affected by what each individual

hopes to achieve through studying at university. That almost half of the participants disagree with this statement is a good sign, but many observers would most likely argue that this result does not reflect reality. The observation that many graduates who successfully find employment in their 3rd or 4th year of study no longer study seriously would suggest that, once they gain employment students do not feel the need to continue learning since the university has served its 'purpose'.

5.2.2 The purpose of university education is to facilitate personal development.

54 participants, including all the teachers, agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while the remaining 6 were undecided. No-one disagreed. The above two statements could be interpreted as being related, in that gaining employment at a prestigious company is one way of facilitating personal development. This would indicate that personal development is important to today's generation of university students. But this could also be interpreted in regard to the social life that university students enjoy through the various clubs and other social groups. The four years at university are a time when the students, who have spent many years studying hard for entrance exams, find themselves in a position to truly get to know themselves and their peers, and to develop fully, in effect, facilitating their personal development.

5.2.3 The purpose of university research and education is to search for truth for its own sake.

Interestingly, 25 participants, including 1 teacher, neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. 24 others, including the remaining 4 teachers, agreed or strongly agreed, while 3 had no opinion on the statement, and the remaining 8 disagreed. Although nearly half of the participants agreed, it seems that the purpose of the university as a place of research and specialised study, is not clearly defined among the Japanese students. The suggestion that the university has become an extension of high school, rather than an institution that produces specialists in a variety of fields, may well be true.

5.2.4 Universities are a place where students can relax after years of stressful study for the entrance exams.

Only 31 of the participants either strongly disagreed or agreed with this statement. The teachers all disagreed. 17 students were undecided, and the remaining 8 students agreed. This indicates that the participants don't see this as the purpose of the university, but in practice, according to many observers, not a lot of study goes on at the university level. Perhaps some students believe they have worked hard to get into university, and past experience shows that they are practically assured of finding decent employment upon graduation. Although this may not be considered the purpose of the university by half of the participants, many observers would argue that most students relax and don't study seriously.

5.2.5 Students would want a university that is easier to get into, but at which they would have to study hard to graduate.

Japan's universities have been called a 'leisureland' where students can relax after years of stress to pass the university entrance examinations. I was interested to know how the Japanese students and teachers felt about this. No-one agreed that students would want this type of university. The following comments were made in regard to the above statement:

- *Only 20% would want this type of university, and only about 10 in 40 students at the university really want to study. The rest would like the system to stay as it is.*
- *Most Japanese believe that if you graduate college or university you will earn big money and live a good life. So long as they think like that they go to whatever university they can. The number of students who really study would be quite low.*
- *Universities should be more difficult to graduate from, and companies who hire graduates should hire based on real ability".*
- *Both kinds of university are needed- the leisureland and a university for those who want to study seriously.*

5.3 Quality of Higher Education.

The quality of higher education at both the undergraduate and post-graduate level in Japan has been a major topic of discussion in the debates on higher education reform. The teachers were asked to comment on the following statements relating to the quality of Japanese higher education.

5.3.1 There is a marked difference in the quality of education at the various institutions of higher education, regardless of their ranking in the hierarchy.

This question was to find out whether or not the quality of education had anything to do with the hierarchy of Japan's universities, and why the hierarchy has been sustained for so long. If Tokyo University is at the top of the hierarchy then surely the quality of education must be excellent. There seems to be quite a difference in opinion here as to whether the quality of the students is better or not, but the comments did raise some interesting ideas.

- *Definitely not*
- *If there is it is because of the level of the teachers and the difference in the levels of support/ funding for teacher's research.*
- *I personally don't think that graduates of Tokyo University are better educated. The average Japanese may think that because they are like 'brand' goods. And those who have had no experience living or studying abroad tend to think that Tokyo University students are better educated.*

The 'brand' goods is an interesting comment because the Japanese are known for their like of brand names in clothing, accessories etc. If society believes that Tokyo University is the best school, even if this is not based on the actual quality or results, people will still strive to get there because of what it means to be a Tokyo University graduate.

- *Not what university you have graduated from, but what you have learned, what you are capable of, and what personality you have are important.*

Unfortunately the bulk of the companies who hire graduates and society in general have not been along the same line of thinking in the past. Perhaps a change to this type of thinking by society will encourage reform in the near future.

- *There would be many cases where the knowledge is better, but the important things are creativity and foresight.*

This is an important statement since knowledge is of no use if you can't utilise it effectively. The problem is not that no-one wants to take charge and solve the problems, but rather that perhaps they don't have the ability to do so. Perhaps this has been the problem with reform. Those in a position to implement reforms have tried to follow established methods of reform to reach an ideal, which in reality is beyond reach, and no-one has the ability to create new ideas or methods. Even if they are able to come up with positive recommendations, the conservative machine will not accept them because they have no way of dealing with the new concept.

5.3.2 When students enter a university they are keen to learn, but the system and attitudes of many teachers discourage them.

Most teachers neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, also laying the blame on the students.

- *Of course the system and the teachers are a part of the problem, but also the students main concern is finding a job, not study.*
- *Today's students don't study seriously, because before entry they spend such a long time studying that they are quite tired both mentally and physically, so it is quite hard to expect them to study.*
- *Since universities are easy to graduate from, once students enter they gradually lose interest in studying, but even if they don't study, they somehow graduate and somehow get jobs without really studying at all.*

Perhaps another reason is that the students know that the companies they enter will train them, so they will not use what they learn at university. If the content of the classes does not interest them, then why bother learning it. As companies stop offering in-service training and want graduates who already have the skills required, perhaps students will start to value their university education and strive to get good results through hard work. It was also suggested that even if the teachers try to

motivate the students, some students can't be bothered and the teachers eventually give up trying themselves.

5.3.3 The education received at national universities is superior to that at public or private universities.

All participants were asked if they agreed with this statement. Those with no opinion were the highest yet, with 9 participants responding this way. 25 participants were unsure. It would appear that students don't think of the education itself but rather the status that goes with the institutions. Three of the teachers surveyed were also undecided. Only 1 agreed with the statement, but explained that it is because the funding, resources and quality of instruction of the national universities as institutions of higher education is generally better than the private universities.

5.3.4 Graduation from a university is more important than the actual education received.

36 participants disagreed with this statement while 12 were undecided and only 9 agreed. However, reality shows that employment procedures often show the opposite. At least in the students' mind, the value of education is there. Whether or not they actually receive the education or not is a different matter.

5.4 Selection Methods

The questions about selection methods were mainly directed at the problem of the entrance exams. I asked for the teachers' opinion of the University Entrance Examination, giving the five options below.

- a) They are too severe
- b) They are the main cause of many of the problems in the Japanese higher education system today
- c) They are a fair way to select students
- d) They are the best way to select students
- e) Other.

Although no-one agreed they were the 'best' way to select students, most believed they were a 'fair' way to select students.

- *They are the main cause of many problems in the Japanese higher education system today.*
- *Business, personal affairs employment, and societal judgement systems are also problems.*
- *There needs to be some improvement to the existing system, and more private universities should take part in the Centre Exam. Depending on the number of applicants, students should not have to take a second exam to enter a specific university (except in cases like Tokyo University, Kyoto University, Waseda University, and the other prestigious institutions where the number of applicants far outweighs the number of places.*
- *You need to think of the meaning of study at university and then decide what kind of entrance exams is necessary.*
- *Something needs to be done to make universities easier to enter.*
- *The entrance exams are often blamed for many of the educational problems, but the problem is rather that the universities and society place too much emphasis on examinations over the other possible criteria for admittance.*

I explained that in New Zealand (as in many other countries) we have a national examination in the final year of high school that gives us the qualification to enter any university in New Zealand. I asked if the teachers' felt a similar one-off national examination, made into law, make a difference to the 'examination hell' in Japan.

- *Yes, but the one-of exam would work but only if follow-up essays or interviews were conducted by the individual institutions.*
- *It would depend on the quality and management of the centre exam.*
- *The "exam hell is a necessary evil of the existing system of higher education, and since the entrance exam style has been followed for so many years in Japan, it is not so simple to change".*

- *If you abolish the entrance exam and admit students based on performance/grades at high school, the exam hell will change,*
- *Two others believed that any type of exam wouldn't make a difference: "as long as there is an exam, whether it be a unified one or not, the same problem would exist".*

No-one mentioned that there must also be some method introduced to allow non-traditional student a chance to enter universities as the university population wanes.

Interestingly, high school principals in Japan have suggested a standard exam of this nature. An article entitled "Uncooperative Academics" states that high school principals have repeatedly recommended, as they do once again now, that a system be established for giving standard exams throughout Japan as in many other countries. To the authors mind, too, this is the best way- and perhaps the only way- to break through the exam hell. While university applicants would still have to undergo exams, the strain would be greatly reduced, for it would not be the same as cramming for unpredictable elimination contests. Uniform, objective tests would be given simultaneously to all college-bound students during their last year in high school. A student could apply to as many universities as he/she wishes, and each of them would obtain the same scores for judging him/her according to their requirements.⁹⁸

5.4.1 University Entrance Examinations should be abolished

Only 2 out of 60 participants agreed with the statement, 35 disagreed, while 15 were undecided. All the teachers and most of the students disagreed with this statement.

- *You can't abolish it. It has been a part of the education system in Japan basically from the beginning.*
- *If the entrance exam was abolished, the quality of the students would be further lowered than it is today.*
- *Since so many people want to go to university, the university entrance exam is a necessity. But the content and method should be reconsidered.*
- *Abolishing the entrance exam could be a realistic possibility if other successful methods of selection could be devised.*

⁹⁸ "Uncooperative Academics" Japan Times Weekly, 27 November 1971

It was proposed that the first stage of the entrance exam should be the Centre's common test, and the second stage by interviews and essays rather than a second exam.

5.4.2 The University Entrance Examination is too severe

Only 8 people, including 2 teachers, said that the entrance exams are not too severe, while nearly half were undecided. However, 20 students and 2 teachers did agree that the entrance exams are too severe, which would suggest that some changes need to be made. The Japanese seem to believe that the entrance exams do have a place in their education system, but do not seem to know how to reduce the negative effects they are having on the students and the system as a whole.

5.5 Control Of Higher Education

One theme throughout the entire discussions on higher education reform is the role of the Education Ministry (Mombusho) in the realm of higher education. The following statements were made in regard to the control of higher education.

5.5.1 Mombusho is too controlling over the education system.

26 people, including all the teachers, agreed with this statement, 17 were unsure, and 8 had no opinion on the matter. Interestingly no-one disagreed with this statement. That only half of the participants agreed and the rest were undecided means that it can't be generalised that all Japanese feel Monbusho is too controlling. That all the teachers agreed with this statement would suggest that the academic community is in favour of relaxed government control.

5.5.2 Higher education should be entirely decentralised

Again 26 agreed, including 4 teachers, with this statement, but 22 were unsure, and 11 disagreed including 1 teacher. That some participants have disagreed with this statement, would suggest that some Japanese see a degree of centralised control as

necessary. Mostly males and teachers agreed with this statement. The girls were mostly unsure, held no opinion or disagreed.

5.5.3 Universities should develop their own individuality

48 of the participants, including all the teachers, agreed with this statement. Only 2 had no opinion, 8 were unsure, and no-one disagreed. Perhaps this is because individuality has been a key word in the reform discussion over the past decades. It doesn't indicate if the participants are aware of what 'individualise' actually means. But assuming that all participants do feel that each university needs to develop its own characteristics and market itself to prospective students, then this is an important issue which needs to be looked at by the reformers and the universities themselves. This would mean a definite relaxation of Mombusho control over the higher education system, a move which seems to be desired by at least half of the participants.

The issue of Mombusho's control vs university autonomy has been a topic of discussion for many years and no doubt will continue to be in the future. Mombusho is not willing to give up its control and position of power, and although they are theoretically giving universities the leeway to introduce their own reforms, these are strictly controlled through budget allowances. Any reforms Mombusho doesn't support are soon stopped by budget cuts or ministerial guidance. Until Mombusho loosens its reigns on the control, then nothing can be done to alleviate this particular problem.

5.6 Tuition and Funding At Japanese Universities

Another form of control is the high tuition costs controlling entry to the universities, and the low-level government funding to all higher institutions, but particularly the private ones. The cost of education continues to rise with each generation, and now is beginning to go beyond the purse of the average Japanese citizen.

5.6.1 Tuition at all universities should be equal

There were mixed answers to this statement. Most people were unsure, while 18 strongly agreed (no teachers), and 15, including 2 teachers, disagreed. More males strongly agreed than the other two groups. Of the teachers, 3 were unsure and 2 disagreed. None of them agreed with this statement. Some participants obviously see a place for the difference in fees at the various institutions, while others believe that all tuition should be equal. Consensus on this issue may be hard to achieve.

5.6.2 Government funding at all universities should be equal

Most of the teachers disagreed with this statement, with only one unsure. Of the students, 35 agreed (15 strongly) and only one male student strongly disagreed. This is an interesting contrast to the above statement about tuition. In both cases the teachers disagree, obviously seeing the need for some differentiation in tuition and government funding. This would relate to the issue of the quality of research and education at higher institutions. For the students, equal government funding is more important than equal tuition. Perhaps they believe that increased government funding would improve the universities more than an increase in tuition. The issue arises about the quality of the universities one is attending and also the issue of those who can't afford university.

5.6.3 All national universities should all be privatised

24 were unsure, and 10 had no opinion, and 19 participants, including 4 teachers, disagreed. That only 5 people, including 1 teacher, agreed with this statement (no-one strongly agreed) would suggest that the average Japanese person sees a place for the national universities in the higher educational system. Most students are unsure about this or haven't really thought of it as an option.

Privatisation of all Japanese universities was suggested as a reform option by Atoda Naosumi⁹⁹ who puts forward a good argument that national universities are no longer performing their function of providing low-cost education to needy families, since the

⁹⁹ Atoda Naosumi *A Privatisation Plan For Japan's National Universities*. Japan Echo, June 1997
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difficult entrance exams ensure that only those who can afford extra tuition can get past the gates. Privatisation would be a means of breaking down these institutions rigid practices and invigorating their research and educational activities. Atoda believes that in a mature country like Japan, there is no longer a need for the public sector to provide higher education. As long as there is a system of subsidisation for research, it does not have to be carried out at the national universities.

5.7 Hierarchy of Higher Educational Institutions

I asked if the participants believed that the strong hierarchy of Japan's higher education institutions is the cause of many of the problems inherent in Japanese higher education today. This question received a mixed reaction- some agreeing, others disagreeing. The hierarchy itself was not seen as a problem, but rather the specific characteristics assigned to the universities by society. They look at certain universities with bias, thus accentuating the hierarchy.

There has to be certain standards, and if a university can prove to be an excellent institution then it is right that it should be put above institutions of lower quality. Public opinion that Tokyo University is the best school may not reflect the actual situation. Although Tokyo University is a prestigious institution, like many other institutions, once the students enter, they can graduate without any serious study and enter the top bureaucratic jobs in the country. Unless Tokyo University can prove to be the excellent institution it is made out to be, then it doesn't warrant its place at the top of the hierarchy. It was suggested that a problem is that research and budgets are concentrated on Tokyo University and Kyoto University, which means that lower level institutions are unable to improve themselves easily.

5.7.1 The hierarchy of higher educational institutions should be dismantled.

25 were unsure and 1 teacher and 9 students held no opinion. Of the remaining participants, only 8 disagreed and 15, including 2 teachers, agreed. The responses were fairly even gender-wise. I would have expected the males to want the system dismantled since they are the ones most affected by academic credentialism and the status of the university that they graduate from. Without this differentiation,

employees for recruitment to large companies could only be hired based on their individual abilities and attitudes.

- *The system cannot be dismantled because no-one set it up to be this way. It has evolved over time with the development of the higher educational system, and as such cannot be dismantled.*

The above is representative of the attitudes of the Japanese people regarding the status of the universities, and underpins the tolerance of the continued hierarchy of universities thus the stratification of graduates.

5.8 Factors Hindering Education Reform

I put forward the statement that *despite many positive recommendations to reform higher education from various groups, such as the Central Council for Education in 1970, the OECD in 1971, and the Nakasone government in 1984, the major problems in Japanese higher education remain.*

The participants were asked what they felt the major factors hindering reform in the past were, and the following were suggested:

- *Japanese attitudes towards maintaining the status quo*
- *Many private universities simply catered for the baby boomers.*
- *There are many reports [dealing with the issue of education reform], but these reports only outline the concerns of only a handful of people in the upper echelons, so most of the general population are not concerned with these reports. They didn't think the problems pointed out in the reports were pressing matters. Usually Japanese don't do the things that they are really pressed to so until the problem becomes quite pressing. (They didn't see the problems the foreigners saw. Japanese way of doing things- so far didn't feel compelled to make the changes at that time).*
- *Mombusho bureaucracy.*
- *The system has various problems but due to prosperity from advanced economic growth, they didn't appear on the surface.*
- *The life-time, assured tenure system has not helped, however, since it surely results in much more uninspired teaching. The fact that the system has been,*

until recently, expanding in size has meant that older people were under no threat at all of losing their jobs.

This introduces a number of factors such as status quo maintenance, bureaucracy, economy and employment practices, which are discussed by a number of outside observers as well. It is also interesting to note that one participant mentioned that Japanese don't do things unless they are really pressed to. Schoppa (1995) also brings up the notion of 'sufficient pressure' when talking of the Japanese government's willingness to make changes, stating that the Japanese tend not to promote change unless there is sufficient pressure to do so.

All of the teachers surveyed felt that the higher education system in Japan could be reformed, and gave the following comments:

- *The number of children is decreasing, and since the economy is sluggish, it may be a good chance for university to reform itself. But renovation tends to be done without long-range visions. However, the government tends to produce short-range visions mostly about how to survive the winter age of the university.*
- *Since the Japanese people established the present system of higher education, it is also possible for us to renovate it. But in order to do that, we need a strong will and try to tackle the things which we can do easily first (make improvements one by one).*
- *There are problems within the education sub-government [education zoku and Mombusho] as well, so reform will be difficult. (not just system problems)*
- *If the people of the nation ask in a loud voice, then reform is possible.*
- *'Be reformed' indicates that change occurs due to a force from above. I believe that it will evolve and improve to meet the needs of society, but not because it was legislated, but rather because of economic necessity.*
- *Now, in many cases, the results of non-practical, non-usable higher education had been exposed, people are becoming aware of the problem areas, so reform may begin.*

Most were quite optimistic about the future, but all agreed that it was not an easy road and one suggested that the problems within the education government itself would make reform difficult. It was suggested that the reform would not come about due to any legislative changes, but rather economic necessity would force the system to

evolve and meet the needs of society. This is an interesting way of looking at it. If the universities themselves take initiative in the reform process then this may turn out to be a true scenario.

The fact that the adverse effects of the system, and the non-usable education have been exposed may lead the people to push more strongly in the near future. As suggested above, the government will have to start listening if the people call loud enough. Those surveyed seemed to have a positive attitude towards reform and we can only hope that this is widespread throughout the other institutions.

5.8.1 The success of the Japanese higher education system

The teachers were asked if they felt the higher education system in Japan has been successful. There were mixed answers to this question, with some disagreeing and others undecided.

- *Despite the problems, it has still made substantial contributions to society". Another suggests that the university has become a place for mass education where mass students with various talents are accepted and catered for easily.*
- *It is not a failure and not a success. If it was a real success then many more foreign students would want to study in Japan. At this stage Westerners only came to learn Japanese, while some developing countries maybe study other subjects.*

Perhaps the language barrier and lack of internationalisation would also account for this.

- *In some cases it is successful, but as far as English and creativity are concerned, it is not successful at all.*

It is suggested that public enthusiasm for educational reform is neither great nor constant. Roesgaard (1998 pg 26) quotes Higuchi Keiko when she says "*Japanese parents only encounter education-related problems once, and once their children have passed through the system they no longer worry about the problems.*"

Most agreed with the statement, with one saying "unfortunately this may be true". Only one thought the opposite, saying "Japanese are overprotective and look after their children even after they marry and have children of their own". So the parents

perhaps will worry about their grandchildren's education. Some other comments were:

- *After years of spending time and money on education, once their children successfully enter university, parents are relieved that everything is finished and they forget all about the educational problems.*
- *Japanese people are keen when it comes to them, but with strangers and the world, they are not really concerned or interested. Therefore once their children graduate, the problems are no longer 'theirs' and they lose interest.*

Perhaps this is why the Japanese people don't stand up and demand changes, because they know that there is an end and if they successfully navigate the path as it is, they will eventually be successful.

5.8.2 What type of higher education system would you like to see implemented?

- *University at present, is simply an extension of high school. Since university is a place for specialists, at the age of 18, students should rethink about their future career, more people should select vocational training course. At the same time, the universities should be open to the general public/ people in the workforce/ people with experience, which might contribute to raising the level of the university.*
- *A system where real learning takes place with students who are willing to learn. This will only happen, however, when there are more non-traditional students in the classes so that it doesn't look like a natural continuation of high school.*
- *The reform efforts of the past have concentrated on ideals that are too difficult to achieve. Without talking of these unrealistic ideals, those in a position to implement reforms should put the renovations into practice.*

The participants suggested that the kind of system that Japan needs is a more open, easily accessible, practical higher education system, in which the university, rather than being an extension of high school, should emphasise the values of creativity, freedom, individuality, uniqueness, and internationalism. Universities need to promote a more practical curriculum and concentrate more on educational

performance at the university level in an effort to produce the specialists Japan needs in the society of the 21st Century.

5.8.3 Changes that would benefit the Higher Education System in Japan.

I asked the teachers to comment on any changes that they felt would be beneficial to the higher education system in Japan. The following were the suggested examples for them to choose from.

- a) Abolish the university entrance examinations
- b) Devise new university selection procedures.
- c) Improve teaching and content at the higher educational level
- d) More emphasis on performance at the university level
- e) New employee recruiting methods at companies in Japan
- f) Dis-establish the hierarchy of higher institutions
- g) Privatise national universities
- h) Equalise government funding
- i) Others

The improvement of teaching and content at the higher educational level and selection procedures was the most important change to most. The teacher's suggestions included

- *the evaluation of teaching would be required and good teaching rewarded*
- *more liberal selection methods with a variety of criteria, like a written examination, originality, sports, mature age etc be adopted.*
- *Once the selection methods are liberalised, insubstantial prestige attached to certain universities may be dissolved and students may start going to universities to study, and not for prestige.*

Perhaps, then, this is the starting point that the government should look to, to get education reform underway as we enter the 21st Century.

For the students emphasis on performance at the university level and new employee recruiting methods at companies in Japan were also important changes. With employee recruiting in the 4th year, most students spend all their time with job-

hunting and recruitment procedures, to the detriment of their studies, and most gain employment before the even graduate. Perhaps the law should be changed to ensure companies don't begin recruiting until the end of the 4th year once exams and the academic year are completed. More importantly companies should recruit throughout the year so that those who have graduated in previous years and those with work experience have a chance to apply for the available positions. The students also felt that the improvement of teaching and content and equalised government funding was important, but selection procedures were not so important. Interestingly only one male student selected this and 5 of the female students. Disestablishing the hierarchy of institutions and equalising govt. funding were not selected as necessary changes.

6. EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss what reform measures have been recommended and implemented in an effort to improve the higher education system in Japan. There have been three major reform attempts in the history of the Japanese education system: the Meiji reforms of 1868, the Occupation reforms of 1945-52, and the most recent round of reform which began in the late 1970s and continues to the present day. The direct aim of the Meiji reform was to establish a modern education system and thereby contribute to the modernisation and industrialisation of Japanese society in order to catch up with the Western nations. Japan's first educational reform was clearly modelled upon the advanced Western nations of Great Britain, France, the US and Germany. The second educational reforms were imposed by a powerful Occupation force intending to transform Japan from a military dictatorship into a democratic society.¹⁰⁰ In both cases the initial sweeping reforms were followed by a more conservative reaction that served to temper earlier changes.¹⁰¹

One of the major differences between the third reform and the two earlier reform experiences is that in both the Meiji and Occupation periods there were foreign models that everyone agreed were worthy of emulation. Today, however, there are no foreign models that stand out as obvious candidates for adaptation. Virtually all the countries to which Japan has traditionally looked to for educational ideas are currently engaged in reform efforts to salvage their own inadequate education systems.¹⁰²

6.1 The Third Round Of Reforms

The third round of reform began in the 1970s, two decades after the establishment of the post-war education system inaugurated by the School Education Law of 1947. A review of the education system was prompted by the students' revolts of 1968-69, which virtually crippled the universities for the academic year of 1969.¹⁰³ The student

¹⁰⁰ Suzuki, 1990 pg 22

¹⁰¹ Beauchamp, Vardaman, 1994 pg 3

¹⁰² Beauchamp, Vardaman, 1994 pg 29

¹⁰³ For background information on the student revolts see Kodansha, 1983 pg 171- *University Upheavals of 1968-1969*.

protests represented a major challenge to the national political regime and produced a climate of re-examination of Japanese higher education and a growing awareness of deeply rooted flaws in the system. The result was a comprehensive re-examination of most major aspects of the country's higher educational system.¹⁰⁴

Around the same time as the 1968-69 student revolts, the Central Council for Education (CCE) were conducting a review of the post-war education system. When the CCE deliberations began in 1967, the structure of the university system was a major target for reform. Many Council members of the pre-war generation had grown up with a higher education system which sharply differentiated between the elite national universities and lesser institutions. The Occupation reforms had reorganised all institutions of higher education into four year universities and had reduced the ability of national universities to produce a high level of specialised training by requiring all students to spend their first two years taking general courses.

One camp proposed that the 'general education be abolished' and that the higher education system be divided into 'diverse parallel tracks: two- or three year institutions would provide courses in humanities and social sciences while, elite five-year universities would provide scientists with specialised training to the Master's level.

On the other hand, key academics on the council backed another proposal which called for the creation of a new class of graduate universities as a basis for creating an 'elite course' : the bulk of the students would complete their studies at three year 'general universities', while the best students would continue their education at graduate schools. Either plan would radically alter the nature of Japanese higher education. In the event, neither plan gained enough support.

The CCE's final report called for a policy of 'dividing into classes' (shubetsuka) in various institutions of higher education. Some would be classified as universities offering a relatively general education while others would be classes as specialised institutions. The most significant change provided for an increased emphasis on

¹⁰⁴ Pempel, 1982 pg 180

graduate schools- with these institutions being made more open to older students so as to allow for retraining. Once again the council failed to line up firmly behind a specific plan.¹⁰⁵

The CCE's recommendations, while far-reaching, had been scaled back as a result of the interplay between reformists and conservatives within the MOE, and as a result of criticism from various interest groups. Immediately upon its publication, the 1971 CCE report encountered a storm of criticism from the Japan Teachers Union and University Presidents Association, who felt the proposals for diversification were against the idea of democratic education.

Despite the protests, the government showed signs of actual commitment to the CCE reform programme. But it soon became clear that much of the early enthusiasm may just have been a façade designed to mask a less committed reality, and suggests that the LDP never seriously intended to implement the reforms. Schoppa explains *“Sakata Michiya, the party’s education minister for the final three years of the CCE’s deliberations and a firm supporter of the CCE, was replaced less than a month after the council submitted its final report. The new minister, Takami Saburoo was much less committed to the council proposals and ministry staff was no longer very committed to the reforms. Nishida, the ministry official who actually developed many of its proposals, was assigned top the Japanese office of UNESCO, a position totally unrelated to the implementation of education reform. Even more damaging was the retirement of Amagi just eleven days after the CCE issued its report. He was replaced by Murayama Matsuo, one of the mainstream MOE officials who had been unenthusiastic about Amagi’s reformism while the CCE was still at work. The 1972 budget finally killed the centrepiece of the CCE reform programmes, and the momentum of the CCE reform movement in general seemed to slow down.”*¹⁰⁶

In 1971 the OECD published a report entitled “Reviews of National Policies for Education in Japan”, in which a number of problem areas in the Japanese education system were discussed. The report states *“The problem of student revolt prompted a general process of self-questioning within the universities as well as raising against*

¹⁰⁵ Schoppa, 1991 pg 182

¹⁰⁶ Schoppa 1991 pg 187-191

the universities a variety of criticisms".¹⁰⁷ The OECD report and the resulting CCE recommendations for change began the round of reform that continues to be discussed to the present day. Unfortunately the Oil Crisis of 1973-74 and the resulting economic downturn meant that education reform as a political issue faded into the background.

It wasn't until the 1980s that education reform became a hot political issue once more, when Prime Minister Nakasone used education reform as one of his major election campaigns, as a part of the total review of the post-war institutions of Japan. In his Formal Request on Education Reform, September 5 1984, Nakasone stated *"The success and prosperity that Japan now enjoys were made possible by the people who grew up under our country's fine education system... However, we are no longer without problems...new situations, requiring reform, have arisen along with the passage of time over our 40-year post-war history... For our country to build a creative and vigorous society into the 21st Century, we simply cannot avoid addressing the problems that exist"*.¹⁰⁸

6.1.1 National Council on Education Reform – NCER

On August 7 1984, Nakasone established the National Council for Education Reform (NCER) as an ad hoc advisory consultative organ committee to the Prime Minister to put forward recommendations on how to reform the education system of Japan into one that would meet the needs of the 21st Century. The council was assigned to deal with education reform from a long-term perspective, with the support of all relevant government authorities. One of the eight major subjects for consideration was the 'enhancement of higher education and the individualisation of higher educational institutions'.¹⁰⁹ The higher education sub-committee was dominated by the MOE.¹¹⁰ The government announced that it would hold the reports of the NCER in the highest regard and gradually implement their recommendations.

¹⁰⁷ OECD Report, 1971 pg 69

¹⁰⁸ Kawamura, 1985 pg 12

¹⁰⁹ Monbusho Home Page: <http://www.monbu.go.jp>

¹¹⁰ Schoppa, 1991 pg 225

Virtually all the reform proposals raised during the 1970s reform initiatives were subjects of debate within the NCER. The Ad Hoc Education Law obliged the Prime Minister to ‘respect’ the NCER’s advice. If it could agree on a set of education reform proposals, therefore, the council was in an excellent position to assure that their ideas were implemented. However, “if it could agree” turned out to be a crucial qualifying statement.¹¹¹

The great publicity surrounding the activities of the NCER gave it the chance to build broad public support for its reform proposals. Nevertheless, the NCER initiative was not any more successful than that of the CCE in the 1970s. In fact, where the CCE was able to at least put together a substantive reform package, the NCER did not even get that far. The concrete proposals it produced included a few recycled recommendations from earlier reform initiatives, a few proposals to expand education programmes, and little else. Most of its far-reaching ideas died inside the Council.¹¹² It would be unfair to suggest that these reform attempts have done nothing to improve the state of affairs in the Japanese education system. In fact, many of the uncontroversial recommendations were enacted quickly, particularly at the lower levels of education, such as better use of computers for educational purposes, an expansion of part-time schools and correspondence courses to allow adults without high school diplomas to earn diplomas.¹¹³ But the more controversial issues, such as liberalisation¹¹⁴ and the major problems outlined in this thesis, were not dealt with so quickly.

Currie points out that *“the fact that the final report of the council was submitted in 1987 and most of the responses are still in the talking stages indicates just how conservative and slow to change is the university community as a whole in Japan.”*¹¹⁵ He goes on to explain *“Part of the slowness to translate into action concrete plans for university reform is due to the fact that two of the principle goals suggested by the Council seem to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, universities have been*

¹¹¹ Schoppa, 1991 pg 223-238

¹¹² Schoppa, 1991 pg 211

¹¹³ Hayao, 1993 pg 47

¹¹⁴ Liberalisation- education run under free market rules; school districts enlarged or abolished so that parents and children could choose the school they thought would suit their needs.

¹¹⁵ Currie, W.S *“Trends in Japanese Higher Education”* International Higher Education, 1995
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/direct1/News1/text5.html

admonished to raise the level of research so that Japanese institutions of higher learning can compete with other equivalent institutions on an international level. On the other hand, university educators have been encouraged to make higher education available to large numbers of people including older citizens in a rapidly ageing society. Attempts to make education at the 'elite' universities available to a broader audience seems to run counter to the attempts to concentrate on higher research." As a result, many of NCER's proposed reforms and reports seemed to generate more questions for enquiry and public debate than actual reform proposals.

6.1.2 Hashimoto Administration Education Reforms

Education reform remained an important issue as one of the Six Reform Packages of the Hashimoto Administration in 1996. The education reform measures aim at nurturing human resources through adjustments in the educational system. The Hashimoto administration continued working through the NCER recommendations and developing more recommendations to go with their own policy aims.

The Hashimoto Administration states that *"The fundamentals of the economic and social system, which supported Japan's social progress after WWII, now hamper the nation's dynamic development in such changing domestic and international environment...Educational reforms must be implemented to nurture people who are strong and fully creative, thoughtful, who have a questing sense of justice, and an awareness of the public good. Japanese people will go through some painful experiences during the process of reform implementation. However, it is indispensable to accomplish these reforms for the sake of increasing the quality of life for future generations."*¹¹⁶

Minister of Education Nobutaka Machimura, in a speech delivered on June 6 1998 to the Japan Society, states that *"the Japanese government are working hard to loosen, not tighten, national educational standards."* In regard to the success of the system, he states that *"Japan is proud of the almost 100% enrolments in elementary and lower secondary schools and the fact that 40% proceed onto higher education. Nonetheless*

¹¹⁶ <http://www2.nttca.com:8010/infomofa/domestic/6reforms.html>

*we are far from being satisfied and are quite worried about the current state of education in Japan. While our students are very knowledgeable, they often lack the ability to learn and think by themselves, to apply their knowledge. Harsh competition for entrance to schools and colleges, incidents of bullying and violence, as well as the fact that a substantial number of children refuse to go to school also trouble us... The education reform package of the Hashimoto reform plan is committed to doing something about the problems.*¹¹⁷

Both the NCER and the Hashimoto administration outlined the need for:

- the diversification of the higher education system;
- a revision of the entrance exam system;
- broadened standards for the establishment of higher educational institutions;
- improvement of the quality of both the undergraduate and post-graduate education;
- self-monitoring and self-evaluation procedures;
- the improvement of life-long learning structures;
- the reduction of MOE and government control.

That this reform has spanned over two decades, with many of these issues still unresolved, shows the glacial slowness with which education reform in Japan has been progressing.

6.2 The University Council

One of the major NCER recommendations in regard to higher education was the establishment of the University Council, to study specific reform measures, such as the advancement of education and research, individualisation of higher education, and the revitalisation of organisation and management.¹¹⁸ The University Council was inaugurated in September 1987 as an advisory to the Ministry of Education to examine various issues and problems regarding universities and other institutions of higher education to consider strategies for relevant future reforms. The Council has been progressively examining the various issues and problems regarding higher education and has published 14 successive reports.

¹¹⁷ <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news>

The University Council presented a final report "The Future Vision for Higher Education after the Fiscal 2000" on January 29 1997. The University Council discussed a future vision of higher education from the following perspectives: higher education system at the stage of universal access; maintaining the quality of higher education; human-resource development in response to the hanging needs of economy, society and academics; a regional balance of the distribution of higher education institutions. This report, viewing popularisation of higher education positively, envisages the higher education system where diversified institutions competitively, and independently, improve their quality and responsiveness to the ever-growing social expectation.¹¹⁹ In light of these University Council reports, the MOE is planning to implement relevant reform measures so that institutions of higher education may meet the diverse demands of the various sectors of society, and may become centres of education and research worthy of international esteem.¹²⁰

In 1998 the University Council produced a report entitled "A Vision of Universities in the 21st Century and Reform Measures- To Be Distinctive Universities in a Competitive Environment".¹²¹ The society envisioned by the University Council is one in which *"the social needs for lifelong learning, including professional workers' refresher education, will rapidly grow. Science and research will advance more rapidly and inter-disciplinary and comprehensive research will be needed more than ever before...The environment for higher education will change dramatically and the new era will require the restructuring of 'intelligence' in institutions of higher education."*¹²²

The University Council Report further states that *"Not until universities and other institutions of higher education fill their expected roles, will Japan, with its greatest resources of peoples intellectual activities and creativity, become a nation that can*

¹¹⁸ Monbusho Home Page: <http://www.monbu.go.jp>

¹¹⁹ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000023/>

¹²⁰ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp>

¹²¹ <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/>

¹²² 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/>

*demonstrate intellectual leadership, create unique intellectual property by itself to cultivate new fields, and actualise a truly affluent society.*¹²³

6.3 Ongoing Reform Of Higher Education

There have already been significant changes in the environment of higher education, such as developments in education and research, shifting demands for human resources brought about by economic and societal changes, increases in college attendance and increased needs for life-long learning. The demands society places upon the universities have become increasingly high level and diverse in nature. Mombusho has carried out the revision of many systems to allow more freedom in the development of unique, individualised education. One example is a broad revision of the “National Standards for the Establishment of Universities”¹²⁴, based on the findings of the University Council, and measures for reform are presently being taken at each university.

The priorities for higher education in Japan are to eliminate the factors that have attracted adverse international comparisons and other harsh criticisms and to fulfil the role of higher education in the development of superior human resources and the promotion of scholarship. The realisation of these goals requires ongoing efforts to develop educational and research activities in step with the changing times that Japanese society is facing into the 21st Century. According to the MOE, they are currently implementing the greatest reform of higher education since the establishment of the present system after WWII. These changes, which are based on reports of the University Council, include the diversification of higher education and the introduction of more flexible systems.¹²⁵

The 1998 University Council Report states *“The social environment for higher education is expected to have made great changes from the current state by the beginning of the 21st Century. In the last decade, higher education institutions have*

¹²³ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/>

¹²⁴ national regulations laid down by the Mombusho to provide a basic framework for the structure and programs at universities

¹²⁵ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp> “Recent Trends and Developments in Government Policies in Education, Science and Culture”

*taken reform measures in response to this Council's reports and have certainly made progress. They are now demanded to take more drastic measures promptly in order to meet the social expectations on the early 21st Century".*¹²⁶

6.3.1 Towards More Distinctive Higher Education

The MOE are developing reforms to move towards a more distinctive higher education system than has been available in the past. Given the wide availability of higher education in Japan, it is vital that universities clarify their philosophies and objectives and develop distinctive educational and research activities. It is necessary to encourage the creation of a diverse range of institutions of higher education, including research-oriented universities, universities that give priority to education, and universities that emphasise the expansion of educational opportunities for adult students.¹²⁷

Akita Arima, Education Minister in 1998 says *"Post-war Japanese education is good in that it has maintained equality and fairness among all Japanese people. As a result, students have become highly cultivated overall, but need to gain superiority in a particular field in order to become internationally competitive and not just all be the same... For us to be successful in the 21st Century, we need to break from the principles of fairness and equality to achieve real educational reform".* He stressed the need for more specialised schools and for unique abilities to be encouraged.¹²⁸

According to the 1998 University Council Report, *"to actualise the reform suggested in this report, it is important that persons related to higher education institutions must first make efforts. It is also indispensable that communities, various industries and every class of the nation thoroughly understand and support the reform. Thus the council strongly expects that persons concerned will help develop the reform move actively and practically".*¹²⁹

¹²⁶ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - preface

¹²⁷ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp>

¹²⁸ "Exam System Must Change: Arima" Japan Times August 4 1998.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/news8-98/news8-4.html>

¹²⁹ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/>

6.4 The Five Major Problems

I will now outline some of the various reform efforts that have been made in regard to the specific problems outlined in this thesis. These reform recommendations are outlined in detail in the 1897 NCER reports, and the reports of the university Council in 1997 and 1998, which can be found on the homepage of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, in Japan.¹³⁰

6.4.1 Academic Credentialism

The NCER's report discussed the council's critical concern with academic credentialism. It is this emphasis on school credentials that generates intense competition for admission to those universities that provide the credentials for attractive employment. Shields concludes that *"Although this was a major topic in the deliberations of the NCER, the council stopped short of recommending that this hiring practice be changed. Aware that it is a deep-seated and extremely difficult problem that exists outside the domain of education, the NCER merely issued a moral appeal to work organisations."*¹³¹

The fact that employers stress the importance of credentials when hiring graduates strengthens the importance of the status of the university one graduates from. To help alleviate this problem, the 1998 University Council Report states that *"When recruiting, industry is expected to employ graduates based upon their personalities and abilities with emphasis placed in their academic background"*.¹³² I assume that this is referring to emphasis on university performance through stricter grading procedures rather than on entrance exam performance.

6.4.2 Hierarchy

The 1971 OECD report stated that *"As long as universities continue to be a narrow topped hierarchy, intense competitiveness will remain a feature of the system. Any*

¹³⁰ <http://www.monbu.go.jp/>- the Mombusho Home Page and links from this page have been an excellent resource for Government White Papers and University Council Reports.

¹³¹ Shields, 1993 pg 275

¹³² 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - Chapter Two

*new procedure should be viewed as a part of a strategy to break through the present rigidity of educational and occupational stratification in Japan, and the destructive strain imposed on the thousand of young Japanese.”*¹³³

The problem of hierarchy encompasses the issue of diversity in higher educational institutions. Recommendations in the NCER reports and the Hashimoto administration reports for higher education reform in regard to lessening the effect of the hierarchy include:

- broadened standards for the establishment of the institutions of higher education to provide greater diversity;
- provisions for developing distinctive and diverse institutional structures and programs;
- improvement of graduate programmes and increased access to training at the master's and doctoral levels;
- enhancement of research at the university through the creation of 'flexible' research structures and organisations.

The 1998 University Council Report states that *“in order to appropriately respond to the diverse requests of society to higher education, each class of institutions such as universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, colleges of technology and professional training colleges, must first fill a role of its' own. Universities should develop in line with their individual philosophies and goals. Some universities emphasise the provision of comprehensive liberal education and some emphasise the cultivation of specialised professional skills. Some place higher value on the provision of life-long learning opportunities for the communities and others intend to conduct the most advanced research. Some universities prioritise undergraduate education and others give priority to graduate education. It is important that universities grow their diversity and individuality in their own courses”*.¹³⁴

But in reality, the problem remains that every university, the famous private universities included, aims to be a miniature University of Tokyo. Instead of diversifying to broaden the scope of activities, institutions strive for the uniformity

¹³³ OECD report 1971

with their higher-ranking counterparts. Kanji observes that “*Although the language used in educational policies always contains beautiful words about among for diversification and individuality, what actually becomes the sole objective is to raise the status of schools by merely adding new tiers in the form of graduate schools and master’s and doctor’s degrees.*”¹³⁵ Thus, perhaps the problem of hierarchy is not one that can be solved easily through mere policy changes.

6.4.3 Poor Quality of Undergraduate Education

The issue of quality has remained throughout the post-war decades. In the field of higher education, a restrictive policy by the government against further expansion was adopted in 1979 with deliberate intent to improve the quality of universities and colleges, particularly private ones. In 1979 the government introduced a system of financial aid to private universities for their operating expenses, and by the end of the 1970s the rate of subsidies for the total operating expenses in private universities had reached 27%.¹³⁶

One cause in the decline of quality was the rapid expansion of higher education of higher education in the immediate post-war years. An article in the Japan Times Weekly in 1975, entitled “LDP Plans Education Reforms”¹³⁷ stated that the LDP drafted a new education reform plan to restrict the construction and expansion of universities. The LDP Education Affairs Division called for drastic reforms of the university system, including improvements of the quality of education at the existing universities and narrowing of the gap between public and private universities in both facilities and quality. The government would approve neither the construction of any new university, except for earlier planned ones, nor the institution of a new faculty or course at any of the existing universities. The LDP believed that such drastic measures were necessary to “*improve the quality of the present university education*”. Critics however, said that the LDP plan was ‘too drastic’ to be carried out. It is completely ignored the fact the number of senior high school students who want to enter university was increasing by 2.5 % annually.

¹³⁴ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - Chapter One

¹³⁵ Nishio Kanji, 1984 pg 21

¹³⁶ Kobayashi, 1980 pg 238

In order to improve and revitalise the quality of their educational and research activities, universities need to maintain continuous self-monitoring and self-evaluation programmes and make improvements based on the findings of these programmes. A June 1991 amendment to the Standards for the Establishment of Universities made this requirement law. By 1994 80% of all universities had established internal regulations concerning self-monitoring and self-evaluation.¹³⁸

Since the recruiting activities have a negative effect in the quality of university education¹³⁹, the 1998 University Council report states *“to conduct orderly recruiting activities, universities and industry always need to exchange information and make efforts to take appropriate measures respectively. Respecting universities’ educational activities, industry is expected to conduct recruiting activities on weekends and/or holidays as much as possible and not to start recruiting activities early.”*

The report goes on to say *“In the future, higher education will become increasingly familiar to the public and thus the system needs to be changed so as to emphasise the quality of the graduate...Students’ academic backgrounds will be more diversified due to the varied course content of upper secondary schools. Furthermore, the number of adult students and foreign students will increase and various aspects of students such as their interests and academic backgrounds will differ. On the basis of the University Council’s reports, individual universities have been taking measures to secure the quality of education including implementation of the curriculum reform*

¹³⁷ Japan Times Weekly, 11 May 1975

¹³⁸The Standards for the Establishment of universities contain no specific provisions regarding the scope of self-monitoring and self-evaluation, but suggested it might include:

- educational philosophy and aims
- educational activities
- research activities
- faculty organisations
- facilities and equipment
- international exchange
- co-operation with industry and the community
- administration and financial management
- self-evaluation system.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1996 Japanese Government Policies in Education , Science and Culture 1995 *Remaking Universities- Continuing Reform of Higher Education*. – White Paper pg 45

and formulation and publication of syllabus as a detailed course plan of each individual class. However, universities have not yet rid themselves of severe criticism toward their education. Keeping this fact in mind, universities must promote their reforms further at the approach of the 21st Century. Each individual institution is expected to continuously make efforts to maintain and/or improve the quality of education and research, improve themselves with friendly rivalry and develop distinctive features.”¹⁴⁰

6.4.3.1 Improved Educational Methods.

A major feature of the current reform is that it encompasses not only the curricula but also educational methods. Efforts made by universities to develop and improve educational methods, include

- developing and using new textbooks
- improving course content through the introduction of course evaluation by students
- establishing their own centres to carry out research and development on educational methods.
- the expansion of small-group education through such innovations as the utilisation of small groups in combination with lectures or university –wide programs
- the development of dialogue- or debate-style teaching and the increased use of seminars
- the incorporation into courses of hands-on activities, such as volunteer activities.¹⁴¹

Reform efforts are also aimed at the credit system that operates in Japanese universities. According to the University Council, Securing the quality of graduates is one of the universities’ responsibilities to the society. They should grade the student’s achievement more rigorously...Individual universities should set an upper limit to the number of credits which students can take in one school year or one term”.¹⁴² As the

¹³⁹ see 3.4

¹⁴⁰ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - Chapter Two

¹⁴¹ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp> “Recent Trends and Developments in Government Policies in Education, Science and Culture” Chapter Four

¹⁴² 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - Chapter Two

system stands at the moment, the students pay the same fees regardless of the number of credits they take, so are more likely to take on a heavier workload to graduate sooner. Perhaps the Japanese university should adopt a system whereby each course or paper has its own set fee that students pay, rather than the existing system.

The 1998 University Council further states that, *“To enhance the quality of education, it is important to continually evaluate educational activities of universities as well as those of individual faculty members by taking such opportunities as self-monitoring, self-evaluation, course evaluation by students and the like.”*¹⁴³ As far as the quality of post-graduate education is concerned, *“Graduate schools are expected to actively develop high quality education and research on the highest international level and develop excellent human resources who play active roles in various fields in response to the expectations of Japanese society as well as international society.”*

6.4.4 Selection Methods

A key task confronting universities is the improvement of entrant selection methods, including the use of multiple and diversified entrance criteria in accordance with the objectives and characteristics of each university and faculty and the characteristics of each specialised field, and the development of methods that allow multifaceted appraisal of each applicants' abilities and aptitudes. In recent years this need has led some universities to select applicants not only by means of scholastic tests but also on the basis of interviews, theses and proficiency tests. In addition, universities are increasingly accepting students through admission on recommendation and establishing special selection quotas for adult students, young people returning from overseas, and other groups.

An editorial entitled “Uncooperative Academics”¹⁴⁴ says that *“Obviously [the University Entrance Exams] are not designed for discovering good students, or even eliminating bad ones. For the test, generally, luck plays too big a part- it depends on what the students has memorised.”* It goes onto say *“Exam hell receives a great deal more comment than action”* and suggests that *“a uniform nation-wide exam system*

¹⁴³ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/>- Chapter Two

¹⁴⁴ Japan Times Weekly, 27 November 1971

would serve the school much better.” One experiment in the 1960s failed because the institute established for the purpose was initiated by the MOE and the taint of suspected government control proved too much. The author argues that “*Since it is the universities that have the prerogative to fix their own admission standards and procedures, they should be challenged to organise a nation-wide testing system*”, and suggests that for a model there is the College Entrance Examination Board in the US.¹⁴⁵ As a reason for why institutions are not keen to give up their own exams is “*to give up administering their own entrance exams would mean sacrificing the income earned from exam fees*”.¹⁴⁶

6.4.4.1 University Entrance Exams

Based on NCER recommendations, the MOE in 1990, implemented the replacement of the First-Stage Joint University Entrance Examination now required for all applicants for national and other public universities, by a ‘common test’- an improved examination, administered by the National Centre for University Entrance Examinations (NCUEE), to be used by both public and private universities as the first entrance exam prior to the second exam given by the individual institutions.¹⁴⁷ The NCUEE system gives universities greater latitude with regard to the selection and weighting of the subject areas used in the selection process while maintaining a high standard of exam questions. By using the system in various ways according to their own judgement and philosophies, universities can administer entrance exams that reflect their specific characteristics instead on relying on uniform tests. The NCUEE is designed to improve entrance exams at universities of all types.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ The American board is an independent organ set up and supported by co-operating schools for their own convenience.

¹⁴⁶ Japan Times Weekly, 27 November 1971

¹⁴⁷ The National Centre for University Entrance Examinations is responsible for the preparation of test questions, the marking of applicants’ answers and other work for the examination jointly conducted by national, local public and private universities. The main purpose of this test is to assess the level of basic achievement that the applicants acquired in upper secondary school. Individual universities are expected to make an overall evaluation of applicants’ abilities based on the results of this examination, as well as on the basis of school reports, interviews, essay tests, achievement tests, practical skill tests etc. The universities are expected to strive to improve procedures for selecting entrants so that they may assess whether or not the applicants possess the diverse abilities and aptitudes necessary to obtain a university education, thus avoiding excessive emphasis on academic abilities assessed by a means of uniform criteria.

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1996 Japanese Government Policies in Education , Science and Culture 1995 *Remaking Universities- Continuing Reform of Higher Education*. – White Paper pg 18-19

This was a far cry from abolishing the entrance exams completely as PM Nakasone had vowed to do. Nakasone objected to the way in which the single, uniform exam played such a large role in determining an individual's future, and disliked its insistence on success across a whole range of academic disciplines. The exam, he believed, was the root of the standardisation of Japanese education. With each university forced to develop its own test, the standardising influence of the exam would be mitigated.

But Iijima Sooichi,¹⁴⁹ argued that the academic community prized the ideal of a student trained in a broad range of school subjects- encouraged by the First-Stage entrance exam, though he could see the need for some flexibility. He argued that neither the universities nor the students could deal with the work-load required by a totally unstructured system of exams. Students would not know what to study for, and university officials would have to go through the time consuming process of drafting their own exams. Most importantly, he represented the view that university officials ought to be able to determine their admission procedures themselves.¹⁵⁰ In the final NCER report, a last provision was added to allow universities to choose as few as one subject in the exam. While this provision held the potential to serve as a means of reducing the uniformity of the exam system, the recommendation as a whole fell short of what Nakasone had hoped to achieve.¹⁵¹

The MOE believes that the use of the NCUEE examinations does not aggravate the problem of university ranking, since each university can choose the number of subjects for which it will use NCUEE examinations. In addition, the examinations can be used by private universities as well as national universities and local public universities. A growing number of private universities are participating in the NCUEE exam system.

Shields states that *“the NCER failed to attack the entrenched entrance examination system, a most persistent source of tension and anxiety in Japanese education and*

¹⁴⁹ Leader of the NCER 4th Subcommittee on Higher Education and a university official.- Schoppa, 1991 pg 228-230

¹⁵⁰ Schoppa 1991, 230-231

¹⁵¹ Schoppa, 1991 pg 231-232

*according to the NCER itself 'a cause of desolation of Japanese education'. Although NCER proposed a common test, that is not likely to affect the system significantly".*¹⁵²

By the mid-1950s a variety of mechanisms emerged to help young people gain a more realistic sense of their chances in the examination competition. This was especially desirable because examinations were scheduled so that no students can sit for the examinations of more than two national universities.¹⁵³ Most secondary schools have developed a fairly accurate sense of how their graduates rank competitively in the annual contest for the various institutions. There are a variety of mock entrance exam tests administered by commercial companies. The results are evaluated against a growing data base which provides young people with indicators of their performance relative to others aspiring to their preferred institutions. On the institutional side, an important development had been the common examination, the Joint Achievement Test, administered by the Association of National Universities as an initial screening mechanism prior to the examinations by the individual institutions.

Another reform effort to improve the entrance exam system was the introduction of a 'separating and dividing pattern' in fiscal 1989, which has been used in addition to the traditional 'consecutive pattern', which enables applicants to take examinations for two or more national and local public universities. These changes aim to provide applicants with increased opportunities to take examinations and to promote diversified selection methods. In principle, all national universities will employ the separating and dividing pattern from fiscal 1997 onward.

6.4.4.2 Improvement of the System of Admission on Recommendation

The system of admission based on recommendation is extremely significant from the viewpoint of diversifying university entrance exams. In recent years, however, some universities appear to have been using the system simply as a means of securing more students as quickly as possible. Typical of this tendency are the universities that implement admission on recommendation extremely early, offer scholastic tests that

¹⁵² Shields, 1993 pg 274-275

¹⁵³ from 1989 a 'separating and dividing' pattern was introduced, which will be employed by all universities from 1997 onwards.

are similar to general selection methods, or select the majority of their students through admission on recommendation. There is concern that such practices could have an adverse impact on upper secondary education.

In a September 1993 report concerning its deliberations on the improvement of university entrance exams, the University Council made a number of specific recommendations for improving the system of admission on recommendation, including 1) the elimination of all scholastic tests, 2) the establishment of a time threshold, such as November, for the start of admission on recommendation process, and 3) the establishment of admission on recommendation ceilings of about 30% for universities and 50% for junior colleges. The MOE has accepted the views expressed in this report and is encouraging universities to improve their systems in line with its recommendations.¹⁵⁴

A 1998 Japan Times article entitled “*Broader Student Screening for Universities Seen*” reads: *More public universities are expected to search beyond the students’ test-taking skills as they select freshmen for next Spring, the MOE said Wednesday. A total of 55 faculties from 37 public universities will conduct interviews with applicants’ next Spring, up from the current 37 from 29 this year, according to the MOE’s University Section. Nine more universities even decided not to give written exams, as 56 faculties from 120 universities plan to admit next years applicants based on students’ achievements in essay and interviews. Most students will still have to take standardised preliminary exams, results of which will be used in the screening process by 95 national universities and 60 other public universities. This new trend is in line with last year’s recommendations by the Central Council for Education that the university admissions process be relaxed and varied.*¹⁵⁵

Yet, despite these various attempts to lessen exam pressure university entrance selection procedures is still a major issue as the 1990s comes to an end. Akita Arima, Education Minister, 1998, feels the examination system must change if real education reforms are to be achieved. “*It is a major problem to admit students based solely on*

¹⁵⁴ Monbusho Home Page <http://www.monbu.go.jp> “Recent Trends and Developments in Government Policies in Education, Science and Culture” Chapter Four

the basis of one written exam". One example Arima raised was a test similar to the Scholastic Aptitude Tests that tests college applicants' level of education. Applicants can take SAT more than once to improve their scores, unlike Japan's once a year entrance exams. The Minister nevertheless added that introducing SAT-style tests in Japan is still difficult considering the nations' present limited budget for education.¹⁵⁶

6.4.5 Control Of Education

Strong control of the education system as a whole by the central government, particularly the MOE, is probably the most important feature of Japanese education, and moreover, as we have already seen, this control extends not only to material conditions like faculties, but also to the content of education. The 1984 Ad Hoc Council saw this strong 'control' as the root of the many serious problems facing Japanese education, and while it did not go so far as to advocate abolishing ministry control, it did stress the need for considerable relaxation.

Japanese reformers are currently interested in eliminating the rigid uniformity and standardisation that epitomises the MOE's central control of the school system. The NCER recommended that centralised control over education should be loosened. National authorities should set minimum standards to maintain and improve the quality of education, but should allow for local innovation. The council recommends further diversification of higher education, with each institution having greater freedom to develop its own programmes. Admission to post-secondary institutions should be made more flexible through changes in eligibility requirements and entrance exams. Regulations should be revised so that students can change institutions and departments more easily. Graduate education and research should be improved, ways of obtaining private sector funds found, and joint industry-government-higher education research expanded.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ "Broader Student Screening for Universities Seen" Japan Times August 19 1998.
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/news8-98/news8-19.html>

¹⁵⁶ "Exam System Must Change: Arima" Japan Times August 4 1998.
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/news8-98/news8-4.html>

¹⁵⁷ http://timss.enc.org/TIMSS/addtools/pubs/124016/4016_63.htm

In the course of the NCER deliberations, the issue of liberalisation of education came to the fore. The MOE opposed liberalisation, because if it was implemented the control of education by the MOE would be greatly weakened. While the MOE conceded that the present school education system must be diversified and made more flexible in terms of the nature and method of education, it insisted that ‘reform must be carried out gradually’ and that ‘a sweeping reform would be difficult’.¹⁵⁸

McCarty¹⁵⁹ states that “*Government control of education is the norm in non-Western countries. Career bureaucrats think they know better than the people at the local level, and they have more power than elected politicians to enforce their viewpoint.*” This government influence is usually not direct and absolutist, but affect funding, accreditation of new programs and so forth in subtle ways. Japanese Higher education has not fared so well by international standards, but since most colleges are for profit, government regulations can mitigate ruthless business in colleges to some extent.¹⁶⁰

The University Council Report states “*To continually proceed with the higher education reform, in addition to individual universities’ efforts of self-reform, the national government should also make efforts without leaving the reform tasks only to institutions and faculty, staff members. Specifically, it is indispensable for the national government to actively promote the formation of a firm basis in which to make specific reforms measures presented in this report, such as the financial measures necessary for the establishment of facilities and equipment, staffing arrangement of faculty, staff members and enhancement of education and research expenses...Compared with other advanced nations, the ratio of financial aids for higher education institutions to the gross domestic product and/or the national budget expenditures is relatively low in Japan. Thus, the utmost efforts should be put into pushing up the national financial aids to the level of the advanced nations.*”

The report goes on to say “*Financial aids to private institutions need to be allocated more to distinctive education and research projects of high social necessity as well as*

¹⁵⁸ Kawamura, 1985 pg 9

¹⁵⁹ McCarty, Steve “A View From Abroad” http://www.kagawa-jc.ac.jp/~steve_mc/abroad.html

¹⁶⁰ McCarty, Steve “A View From Abroad” http://www.kagawa-jc.ac.jp/~steve_mc/abroad.html

*the human resource development demanded by society. It is also important to further promote tax reforms to diversify financial sources of private higher educational institutions.*¹⁶¹

What the University Council suggests is that the government needs some control as far as supporting the universities with standards and funding, but that is as far as control should go. The argument of university autonomy and relaxed government control remains a major issue in the higher education reform debates.

¹⁶¹ 1998 University Council Report - <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news-en/00000060/> - Chapter Two

7. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to discuss whether or not the higher education system in Japan can reform itself into one that will meet the needs of the 21st Century. The five major problem areas outlined that continue to plague the Japanese Higher Education system are:

- Academic Credentialism
- Control of Higher Education
- Hierarchy
- Poor Quality of Higher Education
- Selection Methods

The discussion has focused primarily on the university sector where these problems are most visible, and also because 80% of Japanese higher education takes place in the universities. I have looked at how and why each problem developed and what reform attempts have been made to solve these problems. This involved a discussion on the main actors involved in education policy-making and the education reform debate.

When I first began researching the topic of higher education, I believed that there was something seriously wrong with the structure of the system itself. Many of the books, reports and articles, both by Japanese and Western observers, held a negative view of higher education in Japan, labelling it “the weakest part of the education system”. But closer investigation has brought me to the conclusion that the system itself has only minor defects, and it is rather the attitudes of the Japanese people towards their higher education system and the high value placed on university education, which has led to the problems outlined in this thesis.

Since many of the opinions in the rhetoric on Japanese higher education are written by western observers, it is important to understand the difference in Japanese and Western perception of the University as a higher education institution. The following

is an abstract from Kitamura¹⁶², which explains this difference in opinion in the American and Japanese view of university education quite clearly.

“[There is] a considerable gap in the American and Japanese views of education and the role of the university. From the American viewpoint, to spend the first two years of college life relaxing is a waste of time. Japanese traditionally view the early stage of higher education as a transition from ‘schooling’ to ‘scholarship’. The basic premise is that college students, who acquired the capacity to learn and discipline themselves academically at high school, should be left free to study at their own initiative. They have entered university after twelve years of school education, during which they learned to endure intense competition, to study diligently, and to tolerate externally imposed restraints. It is only natural that they should seek some relief and freedom from restrictions after they enter university. Considering the even heavier demands awaiting them in full-time employment after they graduate, the opportunity to relax and enjoy life for a few years may be crucial to Japanese youth in adjusting to society.

Even though the first two years of university life are thought of as a period of relative ease and relaxation on the part of the students, it does not mean that the faculty are lax or that the students learn little. Japanese universities, especially in the fields of social sciences and humanities, try to leave the students as much free time as possible and avoid imposing restraints on them so that they will learn to cultivate individual initiative and motivation. This, indeed, is considered the important function of the university. Japanese professors do not exert the kind of heavy pressure to study on their students as their American counterparts do, and they keep their involvement to a minimum.

In fact, the greatest difference between Japanese and American education lies in which phase of the system- secondary or post-secondary- functions to provide instruction and discipline that nurtures scholastic aptitude. In Japan, scholastic aptitude is instilled before- and in the US after- entering university. Non-scholastic aptitudes, which are allowed to develop during high school as well as in college in the US, are in Japan given the chance to blossom only after the student has entered university. The quality and function of higher education cannot be appropriately discussed without considering the difference between the two educational systems and

¹⁶² Kitamura, Kazuyuki in Beauchamp 1991, pg 316-317

the roles they play in the two countries. The educational systems of the two countries are determined by the particular traditions and the social conditions and needs of each country.”

The above explanation shows that there is a considerable difference in the perception of the function of the university in America and Japan. But Japanese universities can no longer go on producing the ‘generalists’ of the past. As Japan heads into the 21st Century, changing demands in industrial, economic and societal contexts means that the universities are no longer meeting the manpower needs of the nation. Japan’s most valuable resources are graduating from universities without the skills required to equip Japan for her role in the international arena in the future.

The sort of society envisaged for Japan in the 21st Century is, firstly, that Japanese society will have large numbers of old people. Secondly, it is clear Japanese society, which has already entered the post-industrial period, will continue to experience certain structural changes. The number of people working in primary and secondary industry will continue to decrease, while those engaged in knowledge-intensive tertiary sectors will continue to increase. Third, it is inevitable that mutual dependence between Japan and other countries of the world will rise further, and that the Japanese will become increasingly accountable for their duties and responsibilities as members of the international community.

Japanese universities are facing a major financial crisis. The second wave of baby-boomers has already entered the university, and the number of eighteen-year-olds in Japan began to decline rapidly as of 1994. Even the most prestigious private universities in the country have seen a decline in applicants and a number of national and public universities are suffering from a similar decline. With a decline in student population, universities are having difficulty meeting rising personnel costs without raising tuition. And raising the already high tuition costs discourages students from applying, especially in these times of continuing recession. This vicious circle is the biggest headache within higher education today.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Currie, W.S “*Trends in Japanese Higher Education*” International Higher Education, 1995
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/direct1/News1/text5.html

7.1 Implementation

Initially I had expected that the lack of reform initiative and non-implementation of reforms would be the fault of the government and MOE. Although the conservatism of this particular institution is partly at fault, I discovered that there are a number of factors working against education reform.

Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 4, there are too many actors involved in the educational debate, meaning that to reach a consensus agreement on the issues is virtually impossible. Within the government, particularly the Liberal Democratic Party, members and Prime Ministers are continually changing after relatively short terms of office, meaning there is no chance to produce or implement long-range policy changes or reforms. The conservatism of the MOE leads bureaucrats to observe and protect the status quo, and they are committed to perpetuating the existing system. The MOE uses its power to control the budget and standards, to control the higher institutions, e.g. cutting budgets on university initiated reforms it sees as undesirable. Various government established councils have all the ideas for change, but there is not enough support from all those involved in the education scene.

Secondly, big business and industry contribute to the problems through their recruitment procedures and support of particular prestigious institutions. Japanese companies' reliance on in-company training, rather than the student's performance at the university level, further reduces the importance of course content at the universities.

Thirdly, although the progressive political opposition have succeeded in preventing the MOE from reverting to the pre-war ideologies of education, many ideas of the progressive camp are too radical for the status quo protecting MOE and LDP. The major problem preventing the opposition from influencing the education reform debate is their failure to come together in a united political opposition to force the government to make changes or implement reforms seen as desirable by the progressive camp.

Finally, Japanese society, too, is very conservative and the Japanese people seem almost afraid of radical change. Group harmony prevents the individual from making a strong stand against authority. The current system tells parents and students that success in the education system guarantees success in the future. Although parents may be against the exam hell, they continue to pay fees and push their children to succeed. The attitudes of the Japanese people and the way they view their education system has a large part to play in the institutionalisation of academic credentialism, hierarchy and exam hell.

7.2 The Problems

The problems outlined in this thesis are very complex and interwoven, having a strong effect each other. For example, academic credentialism facilitates the competition for entrance exams, which is made tougher by the desire to get into the top schools of the national hierarchy. This complexity is the starting point in understanding why these problems remained unresolved.

The roots of these problems were planted long before the symptoms (juvenile delinquency, school violence and other social ills) surfaced and it is these roots that must be dealt with. Current reform efforts are mostly aimed at solving the symptoms, or at least lessening their severity, and don't really deal with the underlying issues. We have seen how these problems developed and now, the government and educational reformists need to focus on tackling the roots of the problems to ensure real educational reforms take place.

7.2.1 Academic Credentialism

I have come to the conclusion that out of the five problems discussed, the most serious problem is academic credentialism. It leads to the intense exam competition to enter the 'best' universities, thus accentuating hierarchy, and since credentials are based on what university you enter, also leads to the decline in quality of the universities in Japan.

Academic credentialism grew out of people's perceptions that a university education is a necessity for success in life. In order to alleviate this problem, the Japanese need to have a shift in their perception of the value of higher education. Rather than clinging to the belief that university education, particularly that of prestigious institutions, is the only path to career success, the Japanese need to put value on any kind of post-secondary education, including two-year colleges, and put more value on the practical skills taught at technical colleges and special schools. With the changing curricula at the high school level, students of various backgrounds will be seeking entrance to higher institutions, and more non-traditional students will be seeking places at universities.

7.2.2 Hierarchy

There has never been any 'official' ranking of the educational institutions in Japan. It has grown in the Japanese minds, as those who enter the prestigious institutions reap the benefits of the credentials these institutions provide. In other words, the hierarchy exists only because the Japanese people believe it does. The hierarchy itself is not seen as a problem, but rather the specific characteristics assigned to the universities by society. They look at certain universities with bias, thus accentuating the hierarchy. One university professor pointed out that once selection methods are liberalised, insubstantial prestige attached to certain universities may be dissolved and students may start going to university to study.

In 1971 the CCE's final report did call for a policy of 'dividing into classes' (shubetsuka) in various institutions of higher education, classifying some as universities offering a relatively general education and others as specialised institutions. But no legislation to classify the institutions of higher education was introduced, and universities remained a largely homogenous group of institutions.¹⁶⁴ The various councils have tried to promote the diversification of universities and the MOE has broadened the standards for the establishment of higher educational institutions, and asked universities to develop fully their own philosophies. But in reality the problem remains that every university aims to be a miniature Tokyo

¹⁶⁴ Schoppa, 1991 pg 195

University. Instead of diversifying to broaden the scope of activities, institutions strive for uniformity with higher-ranking counterparts.

The lower level institutions that produce the ‘generalist’ white-collar workers of the nation need to be re-classified as something akin to polytechnics. The first step in the continuing reform process needs to be the redefinition of the universities and a re-classification of institutions that do not function as ‘universities’ in the true sense of the word. The top national and private institutions that have the funding and facilities to produce specialised education and research are the only institutions that should be classified as universities. These institutions should be distributed evenly throughout Japan to give all students the opportunity to attend them, and to ensure that the institutions specialise in diverse fields that meet the needs of each individual local community.

Kitamura points out that *“For the first time in the history of post-war higher education, Japanese universities are moving from a seller’s market to a buyer’s market, in which students will be ‘courted customers’ rather than ‘supplicants for admission’.* In the coming age of declining enrolment, a substantial number of marginal institutions will be forced to make a strong effort to attract not only traditional full-time students but also non-traditional part-time students.”¹⁶⁵

7.2.3 Quality of Undergraduate Education

The popular belief that the fact students are able to enter certain institutions is proof enough of their abilities, has led universities to become a place of leisure where little study takes place. Until the employers and society of Japan appreciate the value of true scholarship and study at the higher educational level, then quality is not likely to improve drastically.

The general view of the university being a four-year leisure–resort until students enter employment at a company they will most likely spend the rest of their working life at, with promotion and pay rises based on seniority rather than ability, seems to be a

¹⁶⁵ Kitamura, Kazuyuki in Beauchamp 1991, *The Future of Japanese Higher Education*. pg 318

rather depressing picture. The recent view is that Japanese society is changing and young people want more free time and self-fulfilment from their careers. An improvement in recruitment methods, and a shift to students studying towards a personal goal, would improve the satisfaction of professional life as well as the quality of graduates exiting the universities.

With the economic downturn, employers in Japan now want to hire graduates who have already acquired specialist skills upon graduation. This shift away from in-company training, which is no longer economically viable for many employers, can only have a positive effect on the improvement of the quality of universities and other higher educational institutions in Japan.

7.2.4 Selection Methods

The competition for entrance exams increased severely as people tried to gain the credentials from the prestigious institutions to ensure their success in life. The Japanese see these exams as a necessary evil in the race for a prestigious career and allow the competition to continue, even promoting it by using the cram school industry to succeed rather than standing up against a system which denies the vitality of the Japanese youth.

The NCER solution to the exam hell was the replacement of one exam by another. The new exam was to be used by both public and private universities. By using the system in various ways according to their own philosophies and judgement, universities can administer entrance exams that reflect their specific characteristics instead of relying on uniform tests. PM Nakasone had wanted the entrance exams abolished in favour of other selection methods but it seems that the Japanese see a place for exams in the education system.

There have been a number of recommendations on how to improve the examination system, but the problem of exam hell remains. The problem does not lie with the exam itself, but once again it is people's attitudes and great value they place on the exams that cause the exam hell.

There does need to be some kind of ranking mechanism and a certain academic level to move on to the post-secondary education level, but it shouldn't determine the course of one's life at 18 years old. There is no doubt that the content and method of the exams needs to be improved. A shift from rote memorisation will not only improve the exams, but also the quality of the student's who are sitting them. This change will take time because until a new high school curricula is developed and implemented, this change cannot take place. Unfortunately the high school curricula at present is geared towards passing the entrance exams, so change and ideas must also come from the exam authorities and the universities themselves. It is clear that the high school and university councils need to work together to come up with a plan on how to tackle this problem.

A change in the perception of the value of higher education, along with the diversification of institutions to provide for particular areas of interest, can only benefit the exam system. If there is not so much resting on the exam results and institution you gain entrance to, then more student's will look to their local institutions or schools that provide curricula in their particular interest areas, rather than to the school that they believe will give them the best chance to enter a prestigious company, as has been the norm in the past. With changes in the recruitment procedures, a re-classification of the higher institutions based on what education they provide, and a major change in university selection procedures, only then will examination hell cease to be a burden on the youth of Japan.

7.2.5 Control of Education

Although higher education has always been left to develop on its own without guidance for the sake of autonomy, the same restrictions that are found in the lower levels, such as budget, standards and curriculum controls have prevented the universities from making any substantial reforms based on their own initiative.

The MOE continues to maintain an indirect control through chartering standards and budgetary measures. Until the MOE and government can move beyond the issue of who holds power and decide what is best for higher education, no real substantial changes will take place. The authorities need to loosen the reigns on control, as

Education Minister Akita has stated¹⁶⁶, and let the universities develop according to their own aims and philosophies. The MOE, with its chartering standards, is in a position to re-define the purpose of the university and set new standards to ensure quality and efficiency. They need to re-classify those institutions that are not functioning as universities in the true sense of specialist institutions, and provide financial support to ensure that Japanese universities and the graduates they produce, are considered to be of high quality in the international arena.

7.3 Can the System Change?

This has been the focusing question throughout this study. Has the time come for Japan to finally achieve the education reform that has been discussed so frequently throughout the entire post-war decades? In the 1980s round of reforms the need for reform was still not being felt strongly. Everyone knew that the future would require new innovations in higher education, but no long-term plans were produced. Also, Nakasone was pushing education reforms for the wrong reasons. Instead of trying to reform the system to make it a better system, he was trying to ease the symbol of Japanese defeat in WWII by removing the American influences on the Japanese higher education system. But the Progressives argued that the Occupation reforms should be maintained, which suggests that a large proportion of the Japanese approved of the existing system, but not the way in which it was being used by the authorities.

When conducting the questionnaires discussed in Chapter five, I set out to discover what the Japanese thought of their own system of higher education, particularly the universities. With the types of problems the universities are facing, I expected that the students and staff of Japanese universities must be totally disillusioned with the whole system, that they would be completely dissatisfied with the university, and would have a desire to see real substantial changes take place. But in reality, I found students and staff who were relatively content within their system. Although all agreed that some changes did need to be made in regard to entrance procedures and content, at the stages they are at in their lives at present, the university is serving their

¹⁶⁶<http://www2.nttca.com:8010/infomofa/domestic/6reforms.html>. See Chapter six Page 2 for reference

needs. This explains, in part, why there is not the pressure for change from within the universities, as I would have expected.

But the problem remains that society is changing rapidly and the type of system that is meeting the needs of the current generation of students most likely will not continue to do so for the next. The structure of Japanese higher education system itself is fine. Four-year universities, junior colleges, technical colleges and special schools all have an important role to play in education the population of Japan. But changes need to be made in the functions of these institutions and especially in regard to society's attitudes towards its higher education system. I believe that the following changes are essential to the Higher Education System in Japan:

- **Reclassification and Redefinition:** The re-classification of all institutions of higher education and a re-definition of the function of each institution is needed. Universities need to return to their function of research and education to train specialists in a variety of fields, rather than institutions that produce generalists to fill the white-collar employment positions in Japan.
- **Emphasis on Performance:** There needs to be a change to an emphasis on performance at the university level so that if you don't make the grade, you don't pass. Universities need to produce specialists, well educated in their particular fields, and at the same time, reduce the number of students who have no desire to study. Universities need to become places for academic research and education.
- **Value of Higher Education:** There needs to be a change in attitude to value any type of higher education, not just that received at the prestigious universities. The promotion of all institutions is essential, and society needs to value the contribution that all these institutions make to the development and education of Japan's citizens. Only when the hierarchy that exists in people's minds is dismantled, the quality of the graduates improved, and the curricula adapted to suit the needs of the individuals and their personal goals, can the true value of education be realised.
- **Redevelopment in Line with Personal Philosophies:** The higher institutions themselves must re-develop in line with their personal philosophies. The government needs to promote diversification and allow the institutions to develop

on their own without the indirect government controls that have hindered this in the past.

- **Creation of a National Exam:** The creation of a national exam, similar to New Zealand's Bursary exams at secondary level with a set minimum mark of 50-60% or above, which allows successful students to apply to any university in Japan. Individual universities should not have their own exams. There needs to be more emphasis on high school records and performance, personality, and especially on attitude and commitment to study. This change will allow secondary schools to develop a more diverse curriculum to meet the needs of individual students and students' talents will be based on their own course of study.
- **Encourage Personal Career Goals:** Society needs to encourage students to follow their own career choices and become what they want to be. Every student should have a personal aim in life. The decline in funds available for in-company training means that graduates will have to start marketing themselves on their personal talents. Therefore, there needs to be a move away from the aim of 'getting into a good company', with the emphasis placed on 'What do I want to be?'.
- **Promotion of Vocational Education:** Promote vocational education at technical and special colleges, and ensure that the value of this type of education is widely recognised. This can be done through both government promotion and increased interest in these institutions by employers in business and industrial sectors in Japan.
- **Re-vamp the University Curriculum:** There needs to be a thorough re-vamp of the university curriculum, to one that teaches the knowledge and skills graduates can use immediately upon entry into the workforce, and as a means of marketing themselves to prospective employers.

The fact that education reform has been discussed so frequently over the development of the educational system, and the fact that the same issues keep coming up again and again, only strengthen the need for some real reforms to take place. The days of idealist recommendations that fail at the implementation stage have passed and some concrete, realistic reforms put into place. It is time for action on the part of those involved in the education reform debate. All actors need to come together and try to

put aside their own agendas of maintaining power for the sake of the future of higher education in Japan, and in effect, the future of Japan itself.

A change in the mind-set of the authorities is essential and a 100% effort to make realistic improvements needs to surface before any real reform efforts can be made. The universities will continue to need guidance from the educational authorities in regard to standards and financing, but not control. The role of the MOE needs to become totally advisory and stimulating, as the Occupation authorities had intended.

The University Council reports produce insightful recommendations, which if implemented would indeed solve or at least improve those educational problems. But in the same way as with earlier reform proposals of the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s University Council proposals do not offer up any concrete measures to make these proposals a reality. The Council needs to come up with specific ways in which these recommendations can be successfully implemented. Leaving the reform efforts up to the university themselves has produced little in the way of substantial changes. The authorities and academic community not only need to work on a system that will work efficiently, but they also need to develop a system that can be put into practice with relative ease.

The first step is to create general consensus on what type of higher education system is required. The Japanese need to decide what kind of higher education system they want and what kind of system will be able to produce the creative graduates needed for Japan to be able to compete effectively on an international level. Without the western systems to use as models, the current round of reforms gives the Japanese the chance to make the Japanese higher education system truly Japanese, something that the authorities have wanted ever since the outset of higher education in Japan.

My overall impression is that with a change in attitude and less emphasis on academic credentials, the system can change. It will, however, take total commitment and cooperation on the part of all those involved in the educational reform debate and pressure from society to make those in position of power to make changes. The key factor is that the Japanese as a nation must truly want change. Society has to pull together and demand that the conservative elements of the government relax their

hold on education and tasks the risks involved in implementing a true education reform. Whether or not they can do this remains to be seen.

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9. APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE- Historical Context in Which Japanese Higher Education Developed.

All the political, economic, social and ideological factors in society effect the way in which the education system develops. It is important to understand the historical context in which education has developed in Japan in order to understand why the education system takes the form it does, that is, the highly centralised, unified, hierarchical, competitive-based system we see functioning in Japan today.

1.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT

1.1.1 Tokugawa

The first recognised institutions of higher learning were established in the Tokugawa period under the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu and his successors. The feudalistic socio-political system, which was characterised by a strict stratification of classes and a highly restricted social mobility, kept the country at peace for over 200 years, but at the same time hindered all efforts at social change and progress.¹⁶⁷

There was a very strong central authority with a hereditary and autocratic ruler, the Shogun, and a military government, the bakufu, ruling from Edo (now Tokyo). The bakufu had a double function: it administered the Shogun's super-domain and also controlled the daimyo (feudal lords) and set national policy. Although the system was decentralised and each daimyo was absolute master of his domain, in reality the Shogun and bakufu maintained control since the daimyo domains tended to mirror the shogunate in both administrative organisation and laws.

¹⁶⁷ Reischauer & Craig 1989 pg 141

The Daimyo were personally controlled by the bakufu through the alternate attendance system¹⁶⁸, which ensured that the daimyo did not have the resources necessary to challenge the ruling shogun and his super-domain. However in the latter Tokugawa period, the improvement of the economy, and the Shogun and bakufu's inability to promote social change or progress, as well as the increasing foreign pressure to open up Japan to the rest of the world, led a group of lower daimyo to rise up against the government, and forcing the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

1.1.2 Meiji

The Meiji Restoration returned the Emperor to his rightful place as divine leader of the nation. The Emperor and his government began to reorganise the nation with enlightened modernised policies based on the models of the Western nations. The whole nation was unified and ruled by a newly formed government and the shogunate, clan institutions, and class distinctions were abolished. The Imperial capital was moved from Kyoto to Edo, and on September 3rd 1868, it was renamed Tokyo (eastern capital).

Initially, the Emperor and his court were not prepared for actual political leadership, and the real leadership lay in the hands of the samurai who had engineered the revolution.¹⁶⁹ As one way of centralising control, the 260 or so domains, which had existed as political units for three or more centuries, were abolished, and all of Japan was divided into 3 urban prefectures (fu), and 72 other prefectures (ken)(later reduced to 43). To replace the former domain and bakufu officialdom a new system of local bureaucracy was gradually created.

In 1885, the Executive Council style of government was reformed along western lines under Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, producing the modern cabinet or naikaku, under which its members, as ministers, were each to be responsible for policy within their own departments. The Prime Minister (Sori daijin) handled co-ordination between the

¹⁶⁸ The requirement that each lord and members of the family, accompanied by substantial numbers of servants and retainers, must live in the Shogun's capital for half of the year, made necessary the regular transfer of resources from the domains, and also ensured that the facilities for the movement of goods and people were maintained.- Beasley, 1990 pg 9

¹⁶⁹ Reischauer & Craig 1989 pg 134

ministries, together with making recommendations to the Emperor. Then in 1888, the Privy Council (Susuitsu-in) was created to provide the Emperor with a body of senior advisors. They were to be consulted on the interpretation and any revision of the written Meiji Constitution¹⁷⁰, on major reforms of the law, and on foreign treaties, but they had no right to initiate action.¹⁷¹ The resulting capitalist, nationalistic, militaristic government served Japan until 1945 when Japan was defeated and forced to democratise under the American Occupation of 1945-1952.

1.1.3 Post-war

The purpose of the American Occupation was to transfer the capitalist, nationalistic nation of Japan into a democratic society. SCAP¹⁷² ruled through the Japanese administrative structure, and 'military government teams' in each prefecture made sure that the reforms enacted into law were carried out.¹⁷³ The most significant efforts at democratisation of the nation occurred in the political realm. The old establishment was removed, with the trials of the political war criminals, and the purging of some 200,000 former politicians and businessmen associated with militarism. This brought to the fore a younger generation of Japanese better able to adjust to the reforms of the Occupation.

Early reforms were thorough and radical because they meant to eradicate feudal, militaristic, aggressive reactionary traits in the Japanese character. The basic assumption was that a democratic Japan was less likely to disturb the world's peace again.¹⁷⁴ The key reforms were demilitarisation¹⁷⁵ of the nation; the disestablishment of Shinto, severing all ties between the government and Shinto Shrines; the armaments industries were dismantled; and the Home Ministry abolished.

¹⁷⁰ The Meiji Constitution was developed due to pressures from both outside and inside the government. There were some that argued a constitutional assembly was needed for the sake of the national unity in the face of foreign threat. There were others who believed that a parliament's function would be to control the Emperor's advisors, not limit the Emperor's authority. The constitution outlined the functions of the Emperor (both his powers and as a symbol) the Diet, and the Parliament, and kokutai (national polity), the justification of the Imperial reign, and of a special relationship between the Emperor and his subjects.

¹⁷¹ Beasley, 1990 pg 68

¹⁷² General Douglas MacArthur was given the title of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces (SCAP) and the whole administration under him became known as this.

¹⁷³ Hane, 1986 pg 350

¹⁷⁴ Reischauer & Craig, 1989 pg 277-278

¹⁷⁵ The dismembering of the empire, returning Japanese nationals to Japan, demobilisation of military services, dissolution of paramilitary and ultranationalistic organisations.

In 1947, a new Constitution was enacted, transforming Japan into a truly parliamentary state, and beginning the second wave of reform following the initial Occupation reforms. SCAP sought to establish a legislative body that would be directly responsible to all adult citizens and develop democratically controlled political parties.¹⁷⁶ Changes were also introduced on the local level so as to strengthen the autonomy of local governments and foster democratic tendencies. The Emperor was stripped of his powers relating to government, becoming instead 'the symbol of the state and unity of the people', and the Emperor himself officially announced that he was not divine

1.1.4 Post-war Politics.

Institutional reforms of SCAP brought about a lasting transformation in Japanese politics. Power was in the hands of the elected Diet, and executive power was in the hands of the Prime Minister and the cabinet responsible to the Lower House (House of Representatives) of the Diet. The Liberal Party, under Prime Minister Yoshida¹⁷⁷ ruled the government during the Occupation years, except for a short period before 1948 when the Socialists and Democrats joined in an unsuccessful coalition attempt. Yoshida saw himself as the builder of a new Japan that would preserve the values of the old Japan.¹⁷⁸

A feature of the 1950s was the "Reverse Course", an attempt on the part of the conservative leaders to undo some of the Occupation reforms. Prime Minister Yoshida felt that some of the more radical reforms of the Occupation needed to be corrected, claiming that the enforced purge deprived the nation of a body of trained men at a crucial moment; that the break-up of the zaibatsu (business conglomerates) and the anti-monopoly laws gravely retarded Japan's economic recovery; how

¹⁷⁶ Hane, 1986 pg 350

¹⁷⁷ Yoshida Shigeru was Prime Minister four times- from May 1946- May 1947 and from October 1948 to the end of the Occupation; he served a fifth term after Occupation; he retired in December 1954; he was the dominant figure during the Occupation.

¹⁷⁸ Reischauer & Craig 1989 pg 285

organised labour was encouraged in radical actions, thus endangering law and order; and how education was reformed, sapping the moral fibre of bewildered youth.¹⁷⁹

Yoshida failed to implement changes in regard to education, but his successor Hatoyama introduced the Local Education Law in 1956, which weakened the power of the boards of education putting them under the supervision of the conservative prefectural assemblies.

Another feature of the post-war system was that decision-making came more and more to depend on a close relationship between civil bureaucracy, Japanese business, particularly 'big business', and one dominant party, the Liberal Democrats (LDP).

1.1.5 The LDP

The Liberals and Democrats merged in late 1955 forming the Liberal Democrat Party (LDP- Jimintoo, full name Jiyuuminshutoo) which remained on office for the entire post-war period until 1993. The LDP remained internally divided after the unification and as a party always lacked the unity of leadership. Factions were concerned with political ambition rather than policy or issues. The Party had ample funds, mostly provided by business, which enabled them to mount expensive election campaigns. LDP had strong support of the farmers initially because of land reform, reinforced later by a policy of subsidised prices of agricultural products. In addition, its Diet members individually cultivated a network of 'men of influence' within their constituencies, whose ability to deliver votes made it relatively unimportant for the party to have a genuine popular base.

A major source of strength for the LDP had been their close relationship with bureaucracy, a reflection of their many years in power. It also results from the pre-war practice of appointing ex-bureaucrats to political office. It has been estimated that on average about one fifth of Cabinet Ministers after 1955 were former bureaucrats, who joined the LDP on retirement. What is more, between 1955 and 1980 ex-bureaucrats held office as Prime Minister for a total of twenty years, compared with only five years for those who had risen through the party ranks.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Beasley, 1990 pg 228

¹⁸⁰ Beasley 1990 pg 231-232

1.1.6 Other Actors on the Political Scene

1.1.6.1 Japan Socialist Party

The most important rival of the LDP is the Japan Socialist Party (JSP or Shakaitoo). Its biggest election success came in 1958 with 166 seats won, but after that the party was in a gradual decline. A right-wing group broke away to form the Democrat Socialist Party (DSP or Minshatoo) in 1960. From the beginning it was split by a Marxist left and a social democrat right, whose differences had not been healed anymore than the LDP by the creation of a single party in 1955.

The Socialists depended heavily on funds and candidates from trade unions. But it was in the 1960s the unions, encouraged by rapid economic growth, started to focus on standards of living or wage increases rather than party politics. This pushed the politicians into greater reliance on radicals who had little popular appeal. In the election of 1969 the JSP won only 90 Lower House seats. There was a modest recovery in the next few years, as socialists profited from the unease that followed various setbacks in the economy, but after the mid-1970s the decline resumed.

1.1.6.2 Japan Communist Party

Another major party in the opposition was the Japan Communist Party (JCP). After 1965 the party detached itself from the divisions of the international communist movement, which led to numerous disagreements, and focused on domestic issues as well as mass membership. They gained popularity through their newspapers and youth organisations, holding aloof from the extreme forms of student violence, resulting in the winning of 378 seats in 1972 and retaining a popularity throughout the 1970s. The fall in popularity came with the demise of communism world-wide around and after 1989.

1.1.6.3 Komeito

The Komeito, or Clean Government Party is a newer party on the Japanese political scene. The emergence of the Komeito in 1964 highlighted the fact that neither the socialists nor the communists seemed able to make much political headway in a period of economic growth. Komeito was sponsored by the Soka Gakkai, an offshoot of the Buddhist Nichiren sect, and attracted mostly urban, less successful in the industrial growth of Japan. The party's programme reflected its social composition rather than religious affiliation, demanding better arrangement for small and medium businesses and more welfare protection for the underprivileged. Electorally, Komeito benefited from Soka Gakkai's very large membership, even though the two formerly severed their ties in 1970. In both 1976 and 1979 Komeito won over 50 seats, becoming the third largest party.

The opposition was fragmented and reluctant to co-operate with each other, enabling the LDP's long reign in government. Yet there was a degree of the public's disenchantment with the conduct of many of the LDP's politicians which showed in the gradual fall of the LDP's share of the popular vote. Widespread student unrest showed students dissatisfaction with the nature of Japanese capitalism as well as grievances about university management, causing severe disruption in 1968-69 on over 77 campuses. Around the same time, there were protests over industrial pollution, reaching a level in 1966-67 that forced the introduction of anti-pollution laws, notwithstanding objections from businessmen. The parliamentary system was being brought into disrepute by the actions of the LDP members, such as spending millions of yen on election campaigns, giving gifts and entertainment for voters and men of influence in various constituencies.¹⁸¹

1.2 Society

1.2.1 Tokugawa

The Tokugawa society was strictly divided into four classes¹⁸²(in descending order)1) the warrior-bureaucrats or provincial warrior aristocracy or samurai (numbering less

¹⁸¹ Beasley 1990 pg 235

¹⁸² Outside the official four-class system existed the tiny group of court aristocrats, a much larger category of Buddhist monks and Shinto priests, and a group of outcasts (eta) at the bottom. The eta seem to have originated in the pre-Tokugawa times from persons defeated in warfare, criminals, and

than 10%); 2) the peasants or primary producers (80% of the total population); 3) the artisans or secondary producers; 4) the merchants, whose contribution to society was less valued.¹⁸³ The Chinese concept of a natural social order consisting of a clear hierarchy of classes proved useful in imposing limitations on social change. The really sharp line fell between the samurai and the commoners. It was on the maintenance of the samurai's supremacy that the whole system depended.¹⁸⁴

A striking departure from social convention is that of the members of the military class who, through misfortune or discontent, rebelled against the established authority of their day. These were masterless samurai known as ronin. After the wars, when these samurai could no longer follow their calling, the number of soldiers expelled or otherwise deprived of masters and livelihood is said to have reached 500,000. These men became the centre of a plot against the Shogunate in the lead up to the overthrow of the bakufu and the Meiji Restoration.

In the latter Tokugawa period, social change began to take place. The samurai class, living in increasingly extravagant cities on fixed incomes, and getting the worst of the market, were trading their status and wealth (through marriage or adoption or falling into poverty. Towards the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century a new class of rural entrepreneurs rose to wealth from a source different than land ownership. They were the peasant farmers turned traders, money lenders, and manufacturers, whose lifestyle became like that of the samurai. Although there was still strong barriers in formal status, these could be overcome by marriage or adoption.

groups whose professions, such as butchery or leatherwork, were considered demeaning since they violated the Buddhist dicatates against the taking of animal life.- Reischauer & Craig, 1989 pg 88

¹⁸³ Reischauer & Craig 1989 pg 87

¹⁸⁴ There were gradations within each class, so there was some room for some social movement, though the division of classes was not easily disregarded. The military class included all members of the arms-bearing families, from the great warlords to the poorest samurai. The farmer class included all the poor peasant labourers and the well-to-do farmer. The artisans- the workers in various handicrafts- were regarded as lower in the scale than the farmers, but those who possessed special knowledge and capacity were treated with some respect, particularly if their craft was of service to the military class e.g swordsmiths, goldsmiths, silversmiths, artists and clothiers. Tradesmen- merchants and shopkeepers- came the lowest in the social scale (except for the outcasts) but as the economy of Japan developed and expanded in times of peace, merchants in particular were to gain increasing power, until by the eighteenth century they were able, by financial strength, to break down the barriers in the social structure which the Tokugawa Shogun's had erected.

1.2.2 Meiji

The abolition of feudal privileges and the removal of feudal social limitations took place early in the period by the young leaders, who themselves had risen up to power in defiance of feudal restrictions. They abolished class restrictions on professional fields of activity in 1869 and the next year permitted commoners to assume family names. In 1871, even 'eta' and other outcast groups were given full legal equality, although social discrimination against them remains strong even today.

The samurai were still distinguished from the commoners, but their separate classification carried no legal privileges. Some of the abler samurai became officials in the new government, but most lost their place and function in society when the domains were abolished and the military was turned from a closed class profession into a mass conscriptive system. The loss of their economic privilege meant that most samurai, unable to adjust to the new conditions, sank into poverty and disappeared as a class. The financial settlement¹⁸⁵ with the daimyo was much more generous and many became wealthy capitalists and a source of a large proportion of the banking capital of this period.

Most people found it difficult to adjust to the swift social and economic changes and peasant uprisings in response to fixed monetary tax and conscription (defined as blood tax) became frequent after 1868 rising to a crescendo in 1873 after the Conscription Law¹⁸⁶ was promulgated.

¹⁸⁵ Earlier former daimyo and bushi (the samurai) were offered financial inducements so that they could accept the abolition of domains. The stipends of the bushi were reduced and, in exchange, they were allowed to supplement their income by taking up an occupation. The obligation to service was abolished too. In 1976 government bonds were issued to settle once-for-all payments of annual allowances. The result was to provide ex-daimyo with substantial capital, enough that they continued to enjoy comfort and social dignity, while the poorest ex-samurai received a good deal less than would support their families even in a modest style.- Reischauer & Craig 1989

¹⁸⁶ The most important military innovation came with the issuance on January 10, 1873 of a conscription law, which gave the commoners, who had previously been denied the right to even possess swords, became the foundation of a greatly expanded and entirely centralised and modernised military system. The reason why the samurai, despite their upbringing, were not wanted in the army

1.2.2.1 Rural Society

Japanese rural society by the turn of the century was in no sense a simple peasant society. Primary education was on the point of becoming universal, and children of the well-to-do often went on to middle and higher education. The railways meant that the agricultural markets became nation-wide. Yet it was not a modern society, and in many important ways the traditional custom remained unbroken. Religiously, socially, and politically, the practice of community solidarity that derived from the 'traditional society' of Tokugawa Japan remained in force.

1.2.2.2 Urban Society

The traditional city in Japan was freer than the countryside. The modern city in Japan grew out of the traditional city following Japan's economic growth. Cities were often the centres of Japan's modern cultural transformation. During the 1870s and 1880s material signs of the times first appeared in Tokyo: horse-drawn streetcars, gas lamps, meat shops selling beef, western-style buildings, barbershops offering non-samurai cuts, western dress, and new schools and colleges. The cities also became the centre for higher education that spread the new culture of modern Japan, and enrolments in universities and technical colleges increase rapidly.

By the end of WWI the change in city life became even more conspicuous. Standards of living had risen; workers drank beer and soft drinks; weekly magazines, movie houses, bars, restaurants and other manifestations of the popular culture appeared. This was the age of the mobo and moga (modern boy and modern girl) girls who drank, smoked and read literature, and boys and girls who strolled the Ginza in Tokyo or the main thoroughfares in Osaka. Although this popular culture was tame by European standards, it seemed outrageous to many in Japan. That Japan's urban culture had reached this point made the gulf between the city and the village seem almost unbridgeable.

1.2.3 Post-war Society

was doubt whether the samurai would accept the necessary rules of discipline and promotion, which needed to be imposed without regard for personal status.

At the outset of the Occupation, the Japanese were faced with the destruction of cities, factories, and railroads, the people were hungry and ill-clothed, and the expectation was that the Occupation would be cruel and harsh. However, the Occupation forces did not exploit the Japanese, instead reforms were sought that would enable Japan to achieve a free and democratic society. The Occupation authorities were constructive and determined to build up a democratic Japan from the ruins, changing society into one very different from the previous decades, and it was a time that was referred to as the 'second opening of Japan'.¹⁸⁷ With the promulgation of a new Constitution, men and women were given full legal and political equality, and there was to be no bias based on race, creed, religion or social background, effectively breaking down the status barriers which existed in pre-war society.

With the upheaval of the Occupation period, there was such severe changes taking place that the real effects on society could not be seen until after the Occupation period ended, and recovery from the war, rapid economic growth, and urbanisation began to have an effect on society at large. Although Japan had been predominantly a village society as Japan entered the post-war era, it emerged a predominantly urban nation in the following decades.

1.2.3.1 Social Change in Modern Day Japan

With the rapid economic growth of the early post-war decades, it would be expected that the Japanese standard of living would have improved drastically. However, despite the high economic growth, the standard of living was lagging behind as much of the GNP went back into investments for future growth. Food prices were much higher in Japan in order to protect Japanese agriculture, land prices were astronomical, housing was more costly and less spacious, and employees worked long hours, leading to the 'death by overwork' or *karoshi* phenomenon in Japan.

A large majority of families have moved to nuclear families, replacing the traditional 'ie' of Japanese society, a trend that has been strengthened by urbanisation and

¹⁸⁷ Reischauer and Craig, 1989 pg 277

technological developments. However despite the decline of 'ie' as a family institution, the basic concept has survived as a structural basis for contemporary Japanese groups, and the concept of 'ie' persists in group identity as the basis of Japanese social structure.

The status of Japanese women improved enormously after WWII This does not mean, however, that discrimination against women no longer exists, and societal sex roles are still very visible in Japanese society today. The government has implemented various measures to improve the situation of working women. Nevertheless many companies have continued to implement separate hiring policies for men and women, with different systems for promotion and salary increases. Since women must stop working after a few years to take over household tasks, such domestic responsibilities can be seen as a major obstacle to the achievement of equality. The belief that men should work and women stay at home still holds sway in Japanese society.

By and large Japanese women today have achieved legal equality with men, but in reality they have yet to attain true equality. This trend is reflected in higher education, with the majority of women still attending junior colleges rather than four-year universities, and definite disparities in the number of women in subject areas such as engineering, and also in the national universities, where entrance is controlled by rigorous exams.

The lifestyle of the Japanese has been transformed enormously by the widespread use of modern household appliances, the expansion of instant and frozen food industries, and the availability of ready-made clothing and other daily necessities. The rise and relative consistency in the standard of living had produced a strong middle-class consciousness among the Japanese. The people are now calling for greater spiritual prosperity in the form of reduced working hours, more opportunities for participation in volunteer activities and so on. The Japanese have begun to devote more attention to leisure in recent years. The number of Japanese making overseas trips has increased notably in recent years. The overall standard of living in Japan seems to be quite high. This may be partially due to the fact that the Japanese are do highly educated. However, many of the stresses in society remain and the Japanese are really not free to enjoy their nation's prosperity.

1.3 Economy

1.3.1 Tokugawa

After the long years of civil war, stability and peace in Tokugawa Japan brought about a period of rapid economic growth. The government and samurai relied on a fiscal system well designed to tax agriculture, taxing commerce less heavily allowing it to grow more easily. The increase in agricultural production stimulated domestic commerce, and domestic commerce meant more and larger towns. Osaka became the centre of commercial and financial aspects of the system, and Edo a huge consumer market, housing at any time a large proportion of the ruling class due to the alternate attendance system.

One consequence of the Tokugawa economic changes was its effect on government finance and the lifestyle of the samurai. As commerce increased and samurai were less able to tax the non-agricultural sector, their income rose more slowly than their standard of living. Many feudal officials turned to merchants for advice and borrowing as a means to maintain their lifestyles. Before the end of the century most government administration were in debt.

The effect on the countryside of commercial agriculture and the spread of money economy to villages offered opportunities for poverty and wealth. Some wealthy farmers became landlords and entrepreneurs marketing crops such as silk, cotton, wax, rapre seed, and indigo to the urban markets. But others who failed in the new economic environment, squeezed between penal taxation and rising costs had recourse to the money lenders and often lost land because of it.

About 1800 two new courses of discontent arose (the exploitation of poor peasants and rich peasants, especially those who acted as money lenders; and the entry of feudal authority into the business of monopolies, depressing the profits of those who had the most to gain from commercial crops) and led to the peasant revolts of the late Tokugawa period, which grew rapidly in scale and frequency. Like other phenomenon prompted by economic change, they had political implications of lasting consequence.

The economy can be described as a cause of the bakufu's collapse due to the shifts in the regional and social distribution of wealth; the failure of the government, both nationally and locally, to come to terms with this economic change; and the proliferation of economic discontents.

1.3.2 Meiji

The government provided a favourable environment for economic growth by removing feudal restrictions on trade within the country and on individual activities, by assuring internal stability, and by providing sound currency, adequate banking facilities, a reasonable tax system, and efficient government services. It also took a direct role in industrial development, pioneering many industrial fields and sponsoring the development of others. The Japanese responded eagerly and in reality private initiative produced the bulk of Japan's modernisation and growth.

The first two decades, growth in agriculture, commerce, and traditional forms of manufacturing quite overshadowed the development of new industries due to initial reluctance to enter new fields. However, modern industry was essential to Japan if it was to catch up with the West, and eliminate the dangerous trade imbalance that had developed in its foreign trade.

In 1880 the government decided to sell all non-strategic government-owned industries as part of a policy of retrenchment and deflation. As Japan's industrialisation began to return handsome profits, the few who had been in a position to purchase these enterprises grew wealthy and came to control a large share of Japan's modernised economy, contributing to the eventual concentration of much of the Japanese industry in the hands of a few giant corporations- the zaibatsu, pre-war business conglomerates or 'financial cliques'. The retrenchment policies worked and Japan's finances were brought back into balance by 1886.

The financial crisis in the 1870s was followed by an economic boom in the 1880s. Further economic development had its ups and downs: slower expansion by 1895, upsurge after Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1895; another slow-down which caused a trend for mergers of companies into stronger units, and the Russo-

Japanese war of 1904-5 brought another big boom in the economy. Following this take-off period in the economy, the rate of economic growth after 1900 was spectacular, and by the late 1930s the Japanese economy was relatively mature, even in the heavy industries.

As the Japanese economy developed, it became closely integrated with the world economy. Japan lacked extensive mineral resources and so, as industrial output rose, it became necessary to import ever increasing amounts of raw materials, which could be only paid for by a corresponding expansion in exports. After WWI the world-wide depression and the resulting drop of exports effected the Japanese economy. However, advances were being made in technology, industry was diversified and manufacturing output doubled and Japan was already recovering from the depression by 1932. The major factor contributing to this recovery was the expansion of foreign trade, but the dependence on foreign raw materials further limited economic potential.¹⁸⁸

1.3.3 Occupation

In order to demilitarise and modernise the economy and to encourage the rise of democratic elements (by effecting a wider distribution of income and the ownership of the means of production and trade) SCAP initiated the dissolution of the zaibatsu, and produced the anti-monopoly law, prohibiting trusts, cartels, interlocking corporate controls and agreements in restraint of trade. The trade union law strengthened democratic reforms and effecting a more equitable distribution of wealth. Also, the land reform was another economic measure designed to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth, and it turned out to be more effective than the dissolution of the zaibatsu, by prohibiting absentee landlordism, enabling former tenants to buy land and insuring low rents for the remaining tenants.¹⁸⁹

From 1948, the priority of economic growth for Japan's recovery was emphasised to provide a basis for stable parliamentary democracy. The war left Japan with serious economic problems, yet unemployment ensured there was a pool of skilled labour.

¹⁸⁸ Reischauer & Craig, 1989 pg 193-196; Beasley 1990

¹⁸⁹ Hane, 1986 pg 347-348

Most importantly, the Japanese themselves made the regeneration of their industry a top priority after their defeat in WWII. In 1949, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI- Tsuusansho) was established and started to play a crucial role in strengthening the Japanese economy. These economic changes laid the foundation for the rapid economic growth that followed in the next two decades.

1.3.4 Post-war

After the end of the Occupation, Japanese entered two decades of rapid economic growth and industrialisation. Favourable factors in the economic development from 1955 were the expanding world economy, good labour relations in Japan, borrowing of technology from America, expanding domestic markets due to better earnings of farmers and industrial workers, bank loans through collected private savings, and government provided infrastructure of roads and railways.

In the 1960s conglomerates strong in steel, shipbuilding, mining industries, as well as commerce and finance dominated the economy. There were also big companies in relatively new fields of manufacturing: electrical goods, electronics, automobiles etc. The emphasis was in products with advanced technology and heavy capital investment.¹⁹⁰

1973 marked the end of the period of exceptionally rapid economic growth for Japan when the oil prices quadrupled by the decision of Arab exporting countries. Japan depended on oil in two-thirds of energy generation and nearly 100% of oil came from imports. Then came the second oil shock in 1979 again causing prices to increase. Apart from a range of temporary measures to reduce energy consumption, a major restructuring of energy generation took place to lower Japan's dependence on oil, and increase the reliance on nuclear generation instead.

In the 1970s Japanese economy still depended heavily on international trade, yet exports started to grow much faster than imports. The change in the relationship between imports and exports brought Japan's trade balance into credit in 1965 for the first time in twenty years. The trade imbalance in Japan's favour increased over the

¹⁹⁰ Beasley, 1990 pg 246-247

following decades and led to major trade disputes especially between Japan and the US. The seventies, especially the late seventies, saw the emergence of Japan with a new and different character. Economic growth slowed down, and balanced trade gave way to huge export surpluses, which made Japan the world's premier financial power.¹⁹¹ This trend continued into the early 1980s, but towards the end of the decade, as Japan exited the catch-up phase and entered the post-industrial stage in its economic development, economic growth began to slow down.

By the first part of the 1990s, Japan suffered the most severe recession the country had known for forty years. It began when the Ministry of Finance, seeking to protect over-extended banks from the effects of unwise lending, took steps to start deflating asset prices. The result was a drop in the prices of land and shares, sluggish consumption, and falling company profits. It also saw an increase in unemployment. The usual response of recent governments to recession has been a series of economic rescue packages, designed to act as a stimulus to consumer spending, but this was not successful.

Outside government, voices were raised to argue that something more fundamental was needed if the Japanese economy were to cope with the world situation. This was a response to the growing shortage of mostly unskilled labour in Japan, caused by a declining birth-rate, plus new attitudes among workers, especially the young, who were no longer wholly satisfied with a company-centred, workaholic way of life.

As Japan entered the 1990s, a period of recession began to develop and the relationship between recession and foreign affairs was a politically controversial one. The direct link between the two was provided by foreign trade and investment, and between 1988 and 1990 the country's trade surplus became smaller, bringing on the recession. The recovery from the recession has involved large government borrowing.

1.4 Ideology

¹⁹¹ Reischauer & Craig 1989 pg 320

1.4.1 Tokugawa

Throughout the Tokugawa period various ideologies were evident in Japanese society. Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, and Kokugaku all had an influence in the Japanese way of thinking and the shaping of society. Confucian ideas entered Japan from China, and in the Tokugawa period became very much more the philosophy of the educated samurai than of anyone else. Its prevalent form, Neo-Confucianism, was a form that gave Confucian ethical concern with human behaviour in society a bias towards the maintenance of order and authority.

Confucianism also had its place in the reformulation of the samurai's code, Bushido, which stressed the important virtues of a warrior: obedience to lord and parent (filial piety); courage and self-discipline; respect for the Gods (both Shinto and Buddhist). In the context of Confucian ethic, the samurai were not just to observe these virtues, but also to be a role model to the people as a whole. This resulted in the change of function of the samurai from soldier to official in the Tokugawa period.

Kokugaku (national learning) emerged in the late Tokugawa period, when Shinto scholar Motoori Norinaga produced a specifically Japanese view of good and evil, stemming not from imported beliefs but from Japan's own experience and tradition. However, kokugaku raised the question of political authority, and the role of the Emperor as divine leader. Thus, the next generation of Confucian scholars solved the problem of legitimacy of the rulers and resulting loyalty by making loyalty hierarchical: the samurai owed it to his lord, the lord to the Shogun, Shogun to Emperor. This enabled the authorities to bring together several diverse elements into a new political philosophy. In this way, Kokugaku was born and its essentials were imperial divinity; Confucian agrarianism, made into an argument for condemning all those developments in town and countryside which were putting the samurai's way of life at risk; and Confucian ethic, translated into a code of personal behaviour leading to social discipline.¹⁹²

1.4.2 Meiji

¹⁹² Ideology paraphrased from Beasley, 1990 pg 9-19

The creation of a strong state structure became the aim of Japan's leaders after the Meiji Restoration. The key concept of the Meiji Constitution was *kokutai*¹⁹³, the unique Japanese national polity centring on the Imperial house and the sacred lineage of the Emperor, and upholding the virtues of loyalty, filial piety, and other moral concepts which kept the Japanese society harmonious. The orthodox belief was narrow and conservative, and taught through prescribed texts at government schools from 1903.¹⁹⁴ The family or 'ie'¹⁹⁵ continued to be of political as well as social importance in Japan during the early decades of the twentieth century. It was seen as the building block of national polity. Its ideal virtues of harmony, solidarity and loyalty were projected onto the Japanese State and it was the last stronghold in Japan of Confucian social practices.

Shintoism became more closely related to Confucianism, which had come to be treated as a branch of secular philosophy rather than a religion, with its ethical code being regarded as a necessary element in the training of the young. Western beliefs such as Christianity, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Greek Orthodox were all accepted by the Japanese, both students and men and women of influence alike, though numbers remained small and they were still less attractive to the Japanese than the temporal religions. Still, intellectuals became preoccupied with 'civilisation and

¹⁹³ *Kokutai* or national polity, was used to justify imperial authority coming from the sanctity of the imperial line. Ito's concept of *kokutai* also contributed to the working out of a body of mystical beliefs by which the Japanese could be induced to give unquestioning loyalty to the human ministers who spoke in the sovereign's name.

¹⁹⁴ The prescription was explained in *Nippon Shindoo* or 'On the Way of the Subject in Japan', which was both influential and representative of the official view that the national safety depended on loyalty to the Emperor and filial piety. It promoted the healthy home life which was a basis for: the advance of Japanese culture; an increase in Japan's wealth and power; Japanese supremacy in the East; Japanese equality to world powers; and Japanese imposing participation in the world's politics.- Beasley, 1990 pg 83

¹⁹⁵ In the family as it existed in the late 19th Century, lineage, not matrimony, was holy. The line extended from the ancestors to the parents of the eldest son and hier. Marriage was for the purpose of obtaining an heir for the 'house'. If the marriage was childless, the bride could be returned or an heir might be adopted, or in a well-to-do family, a concubine might be set up. Both the eldest son and any unmarried sons and daughters lived with the parents. The ideal family was three generations under a single roof. Change in the institution of the basic family proceeds very slowly. Even after WWII the pattern described was still recognisable in most rural areas in Japan. Yet in urban Japan changes were already underway during the late 19th Century. The expanding population that accompanied Japan's early industrialisation produced a great number of second and third sons who moved to the cities and formed nuclear families. As the economy developed more and more time was spent away from the family, and for increasing numbers of wage earners the economic significance of the family as the unit of production began to disappear.

enlightenment' (bunmei kaika) reflecting a belief in the superiority of the western culture, which it was believed Japan had reason to emulate.

Among intellectuals there were three schools of thought about Western culture: 1) those who fully recognised the superiority of western culture, who urged Japan to acquire 'the spirit of civilisation' and rid itself of its past customs, specifically of absolutist and authoritarian traditions of Confucianism; 2) Traditionalists, who supported Japanese honesty and upright behaviour rather than the pursuit of novelty; and 3) Centrists, who tried to reconcile the two, learning from the West, while retaining Japanese identity. The Centrists view came to be the most characteristic approach of the 1880s and 1890s when Japan's tradition and culture were recognised to have virtues of their own. The debate among these three schools of thought could not be brought to a conclusion, and led the Japanese people to debate the subject of imperialist expansion and the relationship between tradition and modernity throughout history.¹⁹⁶

By the late 19th century, Japanese ideology had become increasingly nationalistic and militaristic. As Japan entered into the WWI and WWII, the Japanese authorities felt Japan were superior to other nations and beyond defeat, and as such, they were not prepared for what lay ahead of them.

1.4.3 Post-war

During the Occupation period the whole way of thinking of the Japanese was changed with the Occupation enforced reforms and the promulgation of the 1947 Constitution. The ideology of the post-war period, which replaced militaristic and ultranationalistic ideology of the pre-war period, was that of Western (particularly American) Democracy. American democracy offered far more intellectual freedom and political liberties than the Japanese had ever experienced before. The principles of western democracy ensured the people would be governed by their elected representatives, and produced the spirit of social equality resulting in a social condition of classlessness and equality. The ideals of human rights to liberty, free speech,

¹⁹⁶ Beasley, 1990 pg 97

academic freedom, and equality were new to the Japanese. This ideology was put forth with the enactment of the new Constitution¹⁹⁷, which strengthened the position of the elected Diet and eliminated the power of the military and imperial court. The Japanese people, because of their disillusionment over Japan's defeat in the war, embraced the new Constitution and the new democratic ideologies quickly.

The Occupation held the fundamental view that democracy can be taught- and taught by the foreign conqueror to a people already possessing a mature social system- instead of rising indigenously as in practically every other nation where democracy exists today.¹⁹⁸ Japan's inherited political, social, and economic structure was basically undemocratic and concepts of the importance of the individual, personal rights and freedoms, and the government as a creature and servant of the people, must triumph over the centuries-old habits of obedience, discipline, and duty to family, country and state, if Japan was to become a truly democratic nation.

The Occupation authorities saw education as the best means of introducing the new democratic ideology to the masses once the militaristic and ultranationalistic elements in society and education had been removed, thus the education system was quickly democratised and the new democratic ideology put into place.

In the process of pre-war modernisation, Japan destroyed much of its tradition in order to build a strong nation. A few traditional concepts, however, were enshrined at the core of the new nationalism in order to preserve symbolically what was being destroyed. The national consciousness of the Japanese as distinctive people and culture (*kokuminshugi*) was not lost. But nationalism in the sense of devotion to the state (*kokkashugi*) came under a dark cloud. The Japanese flag was rarely flown in the first two decades after the war. Actions could not be justified 'for the sake of the nation, or if sanction was sought, it was for the 'sake of the new Japan', international in outlook and democratic in practice.

In another reaction to the aimlessness and uncertainty in post-war intellectual circles, Marxism was revived. It became particularly strong in universities, but also

¹⁹⁷ The new Constitution won general acceptance and there seems to have been no desire to 'throw out the foreign document' as many feared at the time of its enactment, or to even amend it substantially.- Fearey, 1972 pg 50

influenced unions and parties of the left. Conditions in Japanese universities facilitated the spread of Marxism. In the post-war years campuses were physically depressing; the food was bad, most students were poor; classes were large, contact with instructors minimal; and learning was often rote memorisation.

The majority of students were apolitical or only mildly leftist in their politics. But a minority joined activist groups that soon took over the student self-government organisations established by the Occupation, known by the name of their national federation, zengakuren.

¹⁹⁸ Fearey 1972 pg 100

APPENDIX TWO- RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES IN JAPAN

The concept of 'lifetime employment' is very important in understanding both the Japanese educational system as well as the employment system. Since major corporations tend to recruit from the more prestigious institutions and since starting salaries do not vary greatly, employment competition is focused more upon the company than the actual job undertaken. Japanese students view employment as a lifelong matter. From the perspective of the companies, the employment of these students is a long-term investment issue.

The process of matching is a process of competition among the graduating students over better job opportunities, which tend to be those as better-paying and large scale corporations. It is also a process of competition among the prospective employers over the most desirable students, typically ones from more selective institutions. But, the competition may be particularly intense in Japan, because white-collar workers tend to stay in a single for their whole working life. For both the employers and employees, the choice at the point of graduation from higher institutions determines the rest of the employees working life.

At the start of the fourth year (and more recently, late in their third year) graduating students undertake various activities in preparation for the following Spring. A typical university student in Japan would start active job-search activities eg. collecting company information, visiting alumni working for those companies and researching companies through employment magazines, at the beginning (April) of the fourth academic year. In the summer, the employers would start accepting applications and then invite selected students for interviews and a written examination. This process continues theoretically until all prospective employees are matched with employers or until the end of the academic year, which is March. In practice, a majority of the students will be set by January. Most of the students hired for a permanent job start working on April 1st.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Although there are people hired in other months, it is the more respected companies who are making this custom.- Masukazu ,1997 pg 202

Because of the recent demand for higher education of graduates, the competition has become even more fierce. As a result, business firms are starting the process of interviews and examinations earlier every year, intending to secure the better students before the other firms can contact the students. There has been serious concern that this should undermine education in the last academic year of higher education. Various associations of business leaders and government thus have established a guideline stipulating a specific date after which employers can start the process of recruiting. It is said, however, that this guideline has not been fully observed.²⁰⁰

It has been frequently argued that college graduates are valued by employers, not because of the education they have received, but because they have demonstrated general cognitive abilities by succeeding to pass competitive entrance examinations. Education in higher institutions does not entail significance because, eventually, business firms would provide necessary education and training through in-firm training.

The recent favourable employment conditions have not been brought out by systematic efforts taken by higher education institutions to improve their relevancy to work. On the contrary, through the redefinition of the link between higher education and work, academic contents of what are taught in higher education have become more remote than ever. It is particularly true in such fields as humanities and social sciences. Even in natural sciences and engineering, where the link appears to remain strong, the values of what are taught in the university have been strongly questioned mainly due to the widening technological gap between academic and corporate sectors. Thus it is ironical that in the midst of improving employment conditions of the graduates, the confidence of what is learned in higher education has in fact been eroded seriously. This raises the question of whether college education really matters. Those in the higher education community would certainly like to think it does.

In 1984, the Education Council of the Japan Committee for Economic Development (Keizai Doyuukai) put forward a document entitled 'A Proposition from Businessmen for Educational Reform – In Pursuit of Creativity and Internationality'.

²⁰⁰ Motohisa Kaneko, 1992 *Higher Education and Employment in Japan* Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University.

In a section of this document 'Revision of Personnel Evaluation Standards in Business Enterprises and Government Agencies – Recruitment of Employees, the following recommendations were made:-

- Provide employment opportunities throughout the year to prevent excessive homogeneity.
- Give opportunities to applicants who have graduated from college 2 or 3 years previously.
- Positively accept those who have experienced foreign education due to their father's overseas assignments or those who have graduated from foreign universities, regardless of age or period of employment. The above would strengthen a company's ability to internationalise and at the same time internally resolve a part of workers problems which accompany overseas assignments.
- Encourage recruiting from as many schools as possible. When there are plural applicants who appear to be equal in ability, the company should try to select the person who has the least number of fellow alumni members within the company.
- Upon selection, place importance on the characteristics of the applicants such as 'way of life', 'way of thinking', and 'critical mind'.
- It is desirable to examine not only academic but also personal traits necessary for the relevant subject of the national qualifying exams.²⁰¹

The basis of Japan's employment system lies in the uniqueness of the employment system. This system plays an extremely important role in the formation of human capital in Japan. In the current recession, the Japanese employment has began to waiver; the life employment system and seniority rule are starting to collapse. If the employment system is really going to be individualistic, as in Western countries, the system of human capital formation will have to change²⁰².

A university education , particularly a prominent university, is still an effective passport to employment in a large corporation, of course, but having entered such a corporation no longer ensures a stable career with lifetime employment and promotion and wage increases by seniority.

²⁰¹ Kawamura, 1985 pg 35-37

APPENDIX THREE-

QUESTIONNAIRE ON HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN JAPAN

My name is Angela Burgiss. I am a Master's students studying Japanese Sociology at Massey University in New Zealand. The topic for my Master's Thesis is :

“The Reform of Higher Education in Japan- Can the System Change?”

For the purpose of my thesis I have produced the following questionnaire on the Japanese higher education system and the difficulty in implementing reforms. Many of the statements included in the questionnaire are taken from a number of sources discussing higher education in Japan and are common generalisations made about the higher education system.

However, many of these opinions are taken from political, bureaucratic, business or western point of view. I am interested in finding out what the Japanese people themselves (i.e those who work within the system, and those whose children must go through the system) think of their system of higher education and what reforms they feel are necessary for the improvement of the higher education system in Japan.

Please note the following points relating to this questionnaire:

- The questionnaire is not compulsory.
- Do no answer any questions you do not wish to.
- You may stop answering the questions at any time.
- Anonymity is guaranteed; the persons or institutions involved will not be named.
- The information gained will be used in an aggregated form.
- The only people with access to the answers will be myself and my supervisors.
- The data will be kept secure.
- The questionnaires will be destroyed upon the completion of this thesis.
- The questionnaires will remain confidential and are for my personal use only.

My supervisors for this these are:

Mr Paul Knight, Massey University
e-mail: P.S.Knight@massey.ac.nz

Dr Wayne Edwards, Massey University College of Education
e-mail: W.L.Edwards@massey.ac.nz

Please feel free to contact either of them with any queries you may have. Any enquiries in Japanese should go to Paul Knight.

Thank you very much for your co-operation, and for taking the time to fill-out this questionnaire.

Angela Burgiss
e-mail: angela@inspire.net.nz

²⁰² Yano Masukazu-in *Higher Education* 34:199-214 1997 *Higher Education and Employment*.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

GENDER: male female
 AGE GROUP: 18-23 24-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+
 OCCUPATION: student Faculty _____ Major _____
 Teacher/ Professor
 University Employee
 Do you have children? Yes No
 Children's age group: ~up to high school
 ~university student
 ~working

QUESTIONNAIRE

A- Please answer the questions below and explain your reasons where appropriate.

- 1- There are various problems within the higher education system in Japan that are being discussed today. What do you think is the most serious problem?

- 2- What are the social costs of Japan's system of higher education?

- 3- Do you think that these social costs are worth the economic benefits that prevail?

- 4- Do you think the higher education system in Japan can be reformed?

- 5- What type of higher education system would you like to see implemented?

- 6- Despite many positive recommendations to reform higher education from various groups, such as the Central Council for Education in 1970, the OECD in 1971 and the Nakasone Government in 1984, the major problems in Japanese higher education seem to remain.

What do you think is the major factor behind why the system has not been able to reform over the past three decades?

- 7- Is there are marked difference in the actual quality of education at the various institutions regardless of their ranking in the hierarchy? (i.e if a Tokyo University student and a student at a private university were studying exactly the same subjects at their respective institutions, would the Tokyo University student's knowledge necessarily be better than that of the private university student?)

- 8- What is your opinion of the University Entrance Examination in Japan?

- a- They are too severe.
- b- They are the main cause of many problems in the Japanese Higher Education system today.
- c- They are a fair way to select students.
- d- They are the best way to select students for university.
- e- Other

- B- The following questions require you to indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements using a scale from 0-5:

- 0- Have not thought about it.
- 1- Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

Please explain your answers.

- 9- The strong hierarchy of Japan's higher education institutions is the cause of many problems inherent in Japanese higher education today.

10-University Entrance Examinations should be abolished

11- In New Zealand (as in many other countries) we have a national examination in the final year of high school that gives us the qualification to enter any university in New Zealand.

A similar one-off national examination made into law, would make a difference to the 'exam hell' in Japan.

12- Japan's universities have been called a "leisureland", where students can relax after years of stress to pass the university entrance examinations.

Students would want a university that is easier to get into, but at which they would have to study hard to graduate.

13- When students enter a university they are keen to learn, but the system and the attitudes of many teachers discourage them.

14- The higher education system in Japan has been successful.

15- Japanese parents only encounter education-related problems once, and once their children have passed through the system they no longer worry about the problems.

日本の高等教育制度の改革についてのアンケート

私はアンジェラ・バージャスと言います。ニュージーランドのマセイ大学で修士をとるために研究中の学生です。

修士論文は『日本の高等教育の改革-このシステムは改革できるのか』についてです。

この論文を書くために、日本の高等教育システムとその改革を実施するための困難な点についてお尋ねしたいと思い、以下の質問書(アンケート)を作りました。

このアンケートの中のいくつかの質問は日本の高等教育システムを論じている資料からとりました。しかし、これらの資料の多くは政治家や官僚や大企業の役員や西洋の人々の考えを色こく反映しています。このアンケートによって、普通の日本人の人々(学生さんや大学の先生や大学の職員の方、ご両親)に日本の高等教育システムと改革についての意見を聞きたいのです。

このアンケートについて、以下の点にご注意下さい。

*アンケートにご協力頂ければありがたいですが、いやなら答えなくてもけっこうです。

*答えたくない質問には答えなくてもけっこうです。途中までのご協力でもありがたいと思います。

*質問の途中でやめてもけっこうです。

*お名前と勤務先は絶対に秘密にし、外部にもらすようなことはしません。

*得られた情報は集計された形でしか使いません。

*私(アンジェラ)と私の指導教授だけがアンケートの結果に接することができることとします。

*情報は安全に保管します。

*論文が終った後、アンケートを全部破棄します。

*文字はできるだけ楷書ではっきりと書いて下さい。

私の指導教授は:

Mr Paul Knight, Massey University

e-mail: P.S.Knight@massey.ac.nz

Dr Wayne Edwards, Massey University

e-mail: W.L.Edwards@massey.ac.nz

もしこのアンケートについてご質問がおありでしたら、上記の教授のどちらかに尋ねてくださってもけっこうです。日本語での質問部分には、ポール・ナイト先生(Paul Knight)がお答えすると思います。

ご協力頂いて、本当にありがとうございます。

Angela Burgiss email: angela@inspire.net.nz

アンケート

A- 以下の質問にお答え下さい。また、必要な所ではその理由を説明して下さい。

1 日本の高等教育制度には現在色々な問題があると報じられていますが、何が最大の問題であると思われますか。

2 現在の高等教育制度に欠陥があるとすれば、その欠陥によってもたらされる弊害にはどのようなものがありますか。

3 上記の弊害があるにしても、日本が獲得した経済的利益を考えれば、それはやむをえないことだと思いませんか。

4 日本の高等教育制度は改革できると思われますか。

5 どんな高等教育制度にすれば良いと思われますか。

6 1970年の中教審答申、1971年OECDの答申、1984年中曽根内閣当時のりん教審答申など、色々な改革意見が出されましたが、高等教育制度の主要問題の多くはまだ解決されないまま残っているように思われます。この30年間に有効な改革がなされなかった大きな原因はどこにあると思われますか。

7 大学の序列は別にして、実際の大学教育には質の上で大学間に大きな差がありますか。たとえば、もしある東大の学生とある私立大学生が同じ科目をそれぞれの大学で学んだ時、東大の学生の知識は必ず私立大学生の知識より上ですか。

8 日本の大学の入学試験について、どのようにお考えですか。

- a 厳しすぎる。
- b 日本の教育制度にある問題の主原因である。
- c 大学が学生を公平に選抜するための良い方法である。
- d 大学が学生を選抜するための最善の方法である。
- e その他。

B- 次の項目に関しては、賛成か反対かを5段階方式で示して下さい。そして、その答えについてなぜかを説明して下さい。

- 0- 意見なし
- 1- 強く反対
- 2- 反対
- 3- 賛成でも反対でもない
- 4- 賛成
- 5- 強く賛成

9 今日の日本の高等教育に内在する多くの問題の主な原因は日本の高等教育の強い序列、階級制度にある。

0 1 2 3 4 5

10 大学入学試験は廃止すべきである。

0 1 2 3 4 5

11 ニュージーランドでは(多くの外国のように)高校の最終学年に全国共通試験を受け、その試験でニュージーランドのどの大学へも入学する資格が与えられます。

それで日本でも高校卒業時に法で義務付けられている全国共通試験を一度だけ受けるようにすれば試験地獄は変ります。

0 1 2 3 4 5

12 今日の日本の大学は『レジャーランド』と呼ばれ、長年の大学入学試験のストレスから解放されてリラックスできる所だと言われているが、学生は実際にはもっと入りやすいが勉強しなければ卒業できない大学を望んでいる。

0 1 2 3 4 5

13 大学に入った時、学生は熱心に勉強したいと思っているが、大学制度や多くの教員の態度で意欲がそがれる。

0 1 2 3 4 5

14 日本の高等教育制度は成功している。

0 1 2 3 4 5

15 日本の両親は教育に関する問題に接するのは一度だけで、子供が卒業してしまうと、それらの問題に関心がなくなる。

0 1 2 3 4 5

16 日本の高等教育制度に関して、どのような改革が望ましいと思われますか。以下の項目の中から最も大切であると思われるものを選んで○で囲んで下さい。また、ここに書かれていないことで必要と思われることがありましたら、下(『その他』の欄)に書いて下さい。

- a 大学入学試験を廃止する。
- b 新しい選抜方法を考える。
- c 大学レベルでの教育方法と教育内容を改善する。
- d 学生がもっと熱心に勉強するような体制をつくる。
- e 日本の会社が新規採用を行う時に、卒業大学によらない新しい求人方法を考える。
- f 高等教育機関の序列、階級制度をなくす。
- g 国立大学を民営化する。
- h 政府の助成金を全大学に均等に配分する。
- i その他。

アンケート調査

性: 男 女
 年齢集団: 18-23 24-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+
 職業: 学生 学部 学科
 教師 学部
 大学職員
 お子さんがいますか: はい いいえ
 お子さんの年齢: ~高校生 大学生 社会人

次の項目に関しては、賛成か反対かを5段階方式で示して下さい。

- 0-意見なし
 1-強く反対
 2-反対
 3-賛成でも反対でもない
 4-賛成
 5-強く賛成

1- 大学教育の目的は一流会社に就職することにある。	0	1	2	3	4	5
2- 大学教育の目的は自己形成を促進することにある。	0	1	2	3	4	5
3- 大学の研究と教育の目的は真理を研究することにある。	0	1	2	3	4	5
4- 大学とは厳しい入学競争のあとでリラックスする所だ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
5- 公立大学や私立大学より国立大学の教育のほうが良い。	0	1	2	3	4	5
6- 大学を卒業することのほうが実際の大学の教育より大切だ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
7- 大学入学試験は厳しすぎる。	0	1	2	3	4	5
8- 大学入学試験は廃止されるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
9- 大学はそれぞれ個性を有する教育機関となるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
10- 文部省は高等教育に関して、管理的傾向が強すぎる。	0	1	2	3	4	5
11- 高等教育に関しては完全に大学の独自性にまかせれば良い。	0	1	2	3	4	5
12- 高等教育機関の階層、序列制度は廃止されるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
13- 全国の大学の授業料は同額であるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
14- 政府の大学助成金は全国の大学で均等に配分されるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5
15- 国立大学は民営化されるべきだ。	0	1	2	3	4	5

16- 日本の高等教育制度に関して、どのような改革が望ましいと思われますか。以下の項目の中から最も大切であると思われるものを選んで○で囲んで下さい。また、ここに書かれていないことで必要と思われることがありましたら、下(『その他』の欄)に書いて下さい。

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- b 新しい選抜方法を考える。
- c 大学レベルでの教育方法と教育内容を改善する。
- d 学生がもっと熱心に勉強するような体制をつくる。
- e 日本の会社が新規採用を行う時に、卒業大学によらない新しい求人方法を考える。
- f 高等教育機関の序列、階級制度をなくす。
- g 国立大学を民営化する。
- h 政府の助成金を全大学に均等に配分する。
- i その他。

17 ご自身は自分が受けた大学教育に満足していますか。

18 その他の意見。
