

## **Structural Changes in the Higher Education System in Japan —Reflections on the Comparative Study of Higher Education Using the Theory of Martin Trow—**

AMANO, Ikuo\*

translated by KIMMONTH, Earl H.\*\*

*Higher education systems are now in a global state of flux. Japan is no exception. The most persuasive framework for analyzing the basic structure and direction of change is the structural-historical theory of the American sociologist Martin Trow. This is a generalization of his “elite to mass to universal” based on first American and then European experience. The purpose of this paper is to use the Japanese experience as a case study for testing the validity of Trow’s formulations as comparative higher education theory.*

*In comparing the Japanese case with that of Europe and the United States, this paper validates in principal the appropriateness of the basic theory of transition put forward by Trow. At the same time, doubts are raised on the issue of whether it is possible to postulate a single path for the transition “elite to mass to universal.”*

### **1. Theories of change in higher education systems**

The Japanese higher educational system is facing the first major structural change since the changes that came in the wake of World War II. This structural change is being brought about by three mega-trends: (1) mass higher education; (2) the introduction of market principles; (3) globalization. Another way of stating this is to say “Americanization”. These developments did not appear from nowhere. They originated in the United States.

The most pervasive “theory” describing these changes in the higher educational system that were centered in the United States was developed by the American sociologist Martin Trow. At least among those doing research in the sociology of education, it is his structural-historical “theory” [Trow, 1976, preface.] postulating the developmental stages of “elite to mass to universal” that has achieved unquestioned authority.

The paper that made Trow known for his “elite to mass” theory of developmental stages

---

\* University of Tokyo  
e-mail: amano.ikuo@gmail.com

\*\*Taisho University  
e-mail: ehk@gol.com

was published in 1973. [Trow, 1973] In the nearly four decades that have followed, there has been no comparative macro analysis that has gone beyond his formulation of these developmental stages. Trow himself subsequently published numerous papers developing on his original formulation. Reading these, we cannot help but feel how richly suggestive his theory is.

The author of this article and KITAMURA Kazuyuki translated and edited three articles by Trow and published these as *Universities in a High Academic Level Society: From Elite to Mass (University of Tokyo, 1976)*.

The greatest problem with Trow's formulation as a theory of comparative higher education development is that it is based on his comparison of the United States and various European countries. Japan and other countries in East Asia that have undergone great development were outside his view. In particular, his formulation of developmental stages, especially his ideas concerning the transition from one stage to another, was essentially formulated exclusively on the American experience. As such, this limits the general validity of his "theory." [Amano, 1986.]

While the United States made a smooth transition from elite to mass and then to universal higher education, why have other countries faced difficulty in doing the same? It can be hypothesized that there is not just one but rather multiple paths that can be followed in making this transition. Would not it add to the richness of this theory, if it included not just American and European comparisons but also case studies from East Asia? Unfortunately, there are almost no instances where Trow touches upon this in his writings. If anything it is possible to see Trow's impatience over the difficulties other countries had in making this transition in the severity of his evaluation of European countries beginning with the United Kingdom, a country to which the US has particularly strong historical ties.

In making a reexamination of the theory of transition by stages, the intent of this paper is not to focus on the problems of Japan. Moreover, even it is provisionally assumed that there are multiple transition paths, this does not alter that fact that the unique success of the United States provides a model for Europe and the countries of Asia including Japan. The US example provides a basis for anticipating the problems and political issues that will arise and a framework for grappling with change. Taking clues from the various articles by Trow, this paper attempts to analyze the present situation by placing the rapidly changing Japanese higher educational system in the context of a reconstructed framework for the comparative international analysis of higher education.

## **2. From mass to universal higher education**

When he decided upon the stages of higher education development, Trow abstracted his models and concepts from the United States (mass) and Europe (elite). In the 1970s America was already at the mature mass stage and was moving toward the universal stage. When he presented his paper at a 1973 conference sponsored by the OECD, more than anything he was interested in the transition of European higher education from elite to mass. In an article that followed in 1978, he addressed the issue of why Europe was lagging. [Trow, 1978.] Because in the 1970s the increase in the participation in higher education in Europe was very slow, he even feared that his thesis might be mistaken. However, in the 1980s, there was rapid development of European higher education in a mass direction. By the turn of the century, the participation rate in many countries had gone over 30 percent. Reading the previously cited translation [Trow, 2000], it can be seen that in

conjunction with this shift to mass higher education, Trow's interest began to shift to changes in the mass higher education system and to the possibilities for universal higher education.

Trow pointed out early on that the meaning of universal higher education as manifested in the United States was not in terms of participation but rather in terms of access. Further, in the 90s he came to stress the importance of participation. This is because he saw the appearance of universal higher education as one of part of larger changes that included the parallel development of the "learning society" and the information technology. With the development of international competition based on the development of cutting edge technologies, there was an increase in demand for people with advanced education and adults were being pulled into life long learning. This was made possible by the development of information technology (IT). This would make the "learning society" a reality.

Once again, the model for this shift to universal higher education was the United States. Trow pointed out that this was because the American higher educational system was most appropriate for responding to the demands of the new era. Higher education in the European countries was increasingly aspiring to the American model, but Trow insisted that what made the US system the model was not because America was singularly prosperous, nor was it because America was a super power, nor was it because of the power of American culture, but rather because it was structurally and normatively oriented to the demands of post-industrial society.

However, when Trow's articles are read as a single thread, it is apparent that there is major contradiction latent in his formulation of developmental stages and the transition between them. On the one hand, he holds out the US experience as a model, but on the other hand, he must repeatedly recognize and stress the distinctiveness of the American case. Compared to higher education in other countries of the world, the American system has an extremely distinctive structure and role. The distinctive structure existed before the system contained a large number of students, but provided a structure and organization that was suitable for mass higher education. The institutions that ultimately bore the expansion were in existence and waiting a century before that expansion took place. Similarly, it can be said that the higher education structure and consciousness suitable for a future "knowledge based society" had been already formed in America.

The more the unique features of the American case are stressed, the greater are the doubts raised that the US could be a model for the transition of the higher education systems in European countries from mass to universal.

That Trow himself recognized this problem can be known from the fact that he observed that trying to implement the distinctive American system as such in other countries would be a major error, and expressed concern that this might be something Europeans involved in higher education had been guilty of. Similarly, he warned about "using the American model uncritically to explain the conditions for reform in the European situation." [Trow, *ibid*, 84.] Many of the innovations and reforms that have been taken up by European university management and academics have been based on American models. Nevertheless, in starting from a mass model and moving to a universal model for education, they are facing many major difficulties when it comes to linking reform in the higher education systems in their own countries to the structural and cultural peculiarities of the American system. His awareness of this came from observing the European reality in comparison to the US when it began a rapid shift to mass higher education.

### 3. European reality, American distinctiveness

What are the problems in Europe? According to Trow, efforts to turn the traditionally elitist European university systems into mass access systems have been going on for the past twenty years. In virtually every European country, it has been necessary to reexamine the existing system in the midst of rapid change. What should be done in response to the development of mass education has pushed European universities to respond to difficult issues involving management, finance, and organization. Moreover, above and beyond this, they are also facing new dangers associated with the response necessary for the rapid approach of universal access.

Given this, what are the fundamental differences between European countries and the distinctive American case?

Trow offers the following two points as the most important elements contributing to American distinctiveness. First, he noted the absence of a central oversight authority with responsibility for maintaining common standards in the system. This is the element that determines the political and economic structure of American higher education. In other words, the national government is “weak” in terms of American higher education. Second, the direction is determined not by groups of academics who are “producers” engaged in providing a higher education service but rather students who are “consumers.” In other words, the market carries great weight in American higher education. These patterns exert a great influence on American culture and values.

There is another significant force. “The loosely coupled American higher education system is constrained by a great variety of organizations. From this it acquires a single form.” [Trow, *ibid*, p. 38.] This can be described as a network that is formed spontaneously and proactively and which spreads among universities. Associations, groups, and societies—all manner of organizations make American higher education into a single system and perform a major function in supporting it. The existence of this network gives the American higher education system a measure of quality and consistency despite the weakness of the national government with respect to higher education.

In contrast to Europe, the United States lacks universities with traditions extending back to the Middle Ages. There is no “strong” state that has the power to charter universities. [Amano, 1986, chap. 2.] “In America there is no overall system for setting or maintaining a common academic level.” [Trow, 2000, p. 33.] Another way of saying this is that there is no universally shared concept of what a university is or of the criteria defining a university. In the American context, standards are upheld and raised by (1) “competition in the market place” and (2) “accountability to various and sundry outside organizations.” It is this context that gave birth to the American system of “accreditation.” It may also be said that American higher education is a “system” without unified control at the center and without universally accepted standards for academic level.

### 4. Issues in European Higher Education

Trow identified a number of points where European countries differ from the United States. [Trow, *ibid*, 91–92.]

First, European higher education looks to the central government for the greater part of its funding. It is questionable whether the private sector will provide more aid than it already does. There are very few private universities and the development of the private sector is very retarded. Second, the faculty and management of European universities understand that stronger leadership

than heretofore is necessary to support higher education and maintain institutional autonomy. Nonetheless, in most countries academic guilds and government bureaucracy are strongly opposed to this type of leadership. In other words, university leadership is as yet undefined. Third, there is the problem that the concept of “academic uniformity” or “academic integrity”—that all universities are equal—is still dominant. This pattern has been styled “isomorphic” by Eric Ashby. [Ashby, 1966.] In contrast to the United States, universities in Europe are chartered by the state and have the same form and standards. This has created a university sector that values uniformity and stands in sharp contrast to the American system that is premised on diversity.

To provide a concrete example of the problems that a strong state and a weak market give rise to, Trow takes up the example of Britain. Higher education in Britain is moving to the mass education stage marked by diversity and expansion. It seems audacious that the British government would seek to maintain tight control in the context of these changes. The British government is trying to control that which is inherently difficult to control. The ambiguity in the direction of higher education policy and reform is evidence that the government lacks the wherewithal to manage a large scale, diverse higher education sector that is being whipsawed by social, economic, and technological change. Those who manage the funding councils determine British higher education policy. But, notwithstanding the intent of these councils, the higher education system is growing more complex and the control effort is falling into a pattern of ever more complex rules. Critics have asked whether or not universities are expending the energy that is necessary for responding to social change, in trying to survive in an unstable environment caused by waffling government policy and in providing mountains of documentation to the funding councils.

In short, Trow points out that the source of difficulty is in the overall reliance of British and European universities on central government funding and the weight given by the academic community at large to uniformity. In other words, the issue is one of the central government versus the market. In considering the issue of a mass and universal higher education system, it is extremely important to recognize the difference in central government-market relations as represented by the American weak central government, strong market and European strong central government, weak market patterns. The weight of the central government is a major obstacle on the path to universal higher education in Europe. This is a fundamental difference between America and Europe. As long as the central governments guarantee the necessary funding for universities, this weight will not decline.

## **5. The crisis in mass higher education**

Trow goes on to describe European education as in crisis and posits that one more reason for this is in the pursuit of an ethical concept by elite higher education. In the United States where it is taken for granted that there is diversity in higher educational institutions and universities, there have been almost no cries that elite higher education is in crisis. This is because state universities and community colleges have been the main providers of mass and universal higher education. However, European higher education systems have been premised on uniformity centered on traditional elite universities. The development of mass higher education inevitably leads to a crisis for elite higher education. Various and sundry policies have been tried to avoid this, but Trow observes that the crisis of European higher education and universities continues to deepen.

Trow himself received his education from an elite university during the elite stage of higher

education. While he asserted that mass higher education was unavoidable, he also had a deep sense of crisis with respect to elite higher education. This can be seen in the 1975 work “The Crisis in Elite Higher Education” that followed his 1973 writing in which he described the stages through which higher education progressed. [Trow, 1976, chap. 3.] It can be taken as further indication that he did not see the development of mass and universal higher education as something to celebrate and uncritically accept. He had a strong interest in the future of elite higher education and viewed with great alarm the crisis in elite European higher education.

Based on American experience, Trow posited five difficult issues that higher education systems would inevitably confront in the transition to mass higher education. [Trow, 2000, 46.]

First, was the division between those who had experienced higher education and those who had not, particularly the stigma or handicap of those without higher education. Second, was the weakening of secondary education. With the advance of higher education, the intellectual capital that had been held by secondary education would be absorbed by universities, superior teachers would move from secondary education to universities as would a portion of the secondary curriculum. Third, there would be an estrangement from the heretofore-conventional goals and concepts of a university. The standard for what constituted a university would become increasingly vague. Fourth, there would be the disintegration of academic and scholastic norms. The academic norms that were the prerequisite for the cross border discussion of issues pertaining to higher education system would disintegrate. In the past when Latin was the language of scholarship, universities had had an isomorphic existence and a cosmopolitanism that transcended national boundaries. There had been shared norms and a shared sense among university people with respect to what a university was. That was rapidly lost with the “invention” of state universities, the providers of mass higher education. Fifth, there was the shift to a “learning society”. With this shift people would demand “participation” in universities and the question of how to respond to this would precipitate another crisis.

European countries are starting to face the same difficulties that the United States has experienced. However, as a corollary to the unique attributes of the US system that have been previously noted, the European response and solutions would inevitably be different. This was because other countries could not imitate without change the unique American experience. As society becomes more learning based and there is a steady or even sharp rise in those desiring to go on to higher education, European countries could be expected to exceed the 15% and 50% of the age cohort stages as they moved from mass to universal higher education. Trow was well aware that there was not necessarily one route by which the transition from mass to universal higher education would be made. Nonetheless, European countries were bewildered and groping for a path from mass to universal higher education that was different from the American one. It is appropriate to see the impatience that one encounters in Trow’s writings as being rooted in this European failing.

## 6. The Higher Education System in Japan

Now for the Japanese case. The question is where to place the Japanese higher educational system in a spectrum where the extremes are represented by the United States and Europe.

Trow has had exchanges with Japanese scholars specializing in higher education. There is no question that he is well informed about the system in Japan. Nonetheless, his references to Japan

as a case in point are quite limited. For example in *Universities in the Information Technology Age* [Trow, 2000.] in only one place and then only in a note does he mention Japan observing that “there is a very large and diverse private university sector” and that “there are prestigious national universities that rely entirely on the central government for funding and which are thus insensitive to the market.” [Trow, *ibid*, 107.] In having a “diverse private university sector,” Japan resembles the United States. But, in having “prestigious national universities,” it resembles Europe. In having two distinct sectors and in being second only to the United States in moving to mass higher education, Japan differs from both the United States and from Europe. As such is it not a case that is extremely difficult to place in Trow’s typology? His bewilderment and reluctance to comment is understandable given the history of the Japanese higher educational system. The Japanese higher educational system looked to both Europe and to the United States for ideal models, and despite repeated debate over reform and repeated political effort, the system that has been constructed is one that is a syncretic blend that differs from both the American and European models and which has its own peculiarities. [Amano, 1986, chap. 5.]

The Japanese higher education system began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century taking European higher education as its model. The Ministry of Education as an organ of the strong central government took full responsibility for the administrative control of higher education, and the system was constructed with national institutions as central. National universities were one part of this administrative structure. They were completely dependent on the national government for funding and internally strong, independent leadership failed to develop. Until recently they were managed as an “intellectual collective” by the faculties. In permitting the existence of a private sector early on, Japan differed from Europe, but it was not the case that the government permitted a free development according to market dictates. The creation of private universities was strictly controlled and they were pushed to maintain and raise standards. Further, the government applied strong pressure with the intent of having private universities adopt the same organizational structure as national universities.

The complexity of the Japanese system is the result of taking an idealized European system as a model, while at the same time having points of affinity with the American system, and it developed while having a certain element of commonality with the American system.

The first point of similarity is the diversity in the Japanese system. The prewar higher educational system was far removed from a single line isomorphic model. There were universities, higher schools, specialized colleges and others. These diverse institutions coexisted and performed different functions in a single complex system. In numerical terms, universities were only a small part of this system. The second point of similarity was the existence of a private university sector that was strongly driven by market principles in securing students. These institutions were definitely “consumer oriented”. They attracted students by offering educational opportunities tailored to the needs of students and in so doing sought to achieve stability and to expand. This pattern has continued from the beginning of the private sector.

A third point of striking similarity with the United States has been the reliance on fees to provide a “supplementary funding source” separate from the public purse. This was true not only of the private sector that received no public funds but unlike the European case, fees paid by families were an important source of income for national universities. Fourth, and arguably the most important point of similarity with the US, was the existence of a sector and higher educational institutions that would take on the task of providing mass higher education. In contrast to the American case where the institutions that took up this task were supported by public money and

informed by an ethos of openness, the Japanese case differed in that this role was assumed by the private sector that had no income source other than fees. The Japanese private sector had always had an inclination toward mass higher education. The existence of this private sector allowed Japan to cross the threshold of mass higher education ahead of European countries.

## 7. Setbacks in aspiring to the American model

From the Meiji period onward, the major point of contention involving the structure of Japanese higher education has been its compromise and eclectic character. Looking back at the debates over reform of the educational system, we see that these often revolved around whether to select the American model or the European model. [Amano, 2009.] For example, in late Meiji (1867–1911) and early Taisho (1912–1926) debates about reform of the educational system, there was an explicit assertion of the necessity of turning to the American model. It was proposed that all higher education institutions be incorporated in a single system as “colleges and universities” and higher schools be designated “liberal arts colleges”. [Monbu kagaku sho chosabu, 1–16.]

Although this proposal was rejected, as is well known, after the end of World War II, the shift from the European model to the American model was realized during the American occupation. Notwithstanding the compulsory nature of this reform, Americanization was superficial. It did not change the fundamental relationship between the central government and universities and did not extend to university management or governance nor did it impact on the organization and structure of education and research.

More than anything, there was no change in the strong control the government exercised over higher education through the Ministry of Education. When the occupation ended, the Ministry of Education which had avoided dissolution, was able to regain its authority. Using the University Chartering Standards and their application, the policy of striving for uniformity and of maintaining standards in the private sector led to strong control of not only personnel policy and physical plant but also of curriculum. A system of mutual evaluation and standard setting by universities (accreditation) was introduced by the occupation, but this American style system essentially failed to function. Until very recently, the University Chartering Standards determined by the government strongly determined the fundamental structure and form of higher education and was the mechanism for preserving standards.

It must also be noted that the compulsory introduction of “the new university system” with no additional resources nor redistribution of existing resources, no consideration of the variety inherent in the higher educational institutions that were carried over from the prewar, and with inadequate time for preparation in the context of the confused postwar situation, gave rise to a new set of problems.

Although all higher education institutions nominally became four-year universities, beneath the surface the disparities in staff, plant, intellectual scope and standards were carried over from their prewar predecessors. This preservation of prewar disparities gave rise to one of the distinctive characteristics of Japanese universities, the hierarchy that exists among them.

In this context, the difference among universities was not in terms of diversity of function but rather in terms of a rigid stratification and ranking. It is this that gave rise to a ranking based on the presumed difference in the value of credentials from different institutions and the associated extreme competition associated with entrance examinations. Along with faculty-centered manage-



ment as symbolized in the concept of “faculty self-governance”, this hierarchy was a major barrier to educational and research activity. The malaise that the “peculiarities” of the Japanese higher educational system gave rise to were critically noted in the report of an OECD educational survey that had Ronald Dore and Joseph Ben David among its members. [OECD, 1971.]

Entering the 1970s, the Japanese higher education system started rapidly moving toward mass higher education. In the 1960s the continuation rate was a bit more than ten percent but there was a rapid rise to more than thirty-five percent by 1975. In this context there was a strong demand for changes in the management, organization, and educational activities of universities in order to deal with the shift to mass higher education. In short, Americanization was demanded. This was essentially the gist of the 1971 (Showa 46) report from the Central Council for Education that is popularly known as “The Forty Six Recommendation.” [Central Council for Education, 1971.]

In retrospect, the “Forty Six Recommendation” gave a comprehensive statement of the issues associated with a mass higher education system and called for reform in the content and delivery of teaching in order to deal with qualitative changes in students, the separation of teaching and research organizations, the strengthening of management and governance, and the conversion of national universities to independent legal entities. Viewed from a contemporary perspective, these common sense proposals to move to an American model were too radical and too difficult to accept given that the mass level had only just been achieved and given that universities and their staff were used to collegial management by a “professorial guild” that was premised on the unification of teaching and research. In the face of criticism and opposition, the findings were essentially shelved. With the exception of the creation of Tsukuba University and some changes that were achieved over a long span of time, structural reform to deal with the shift to mass higher education was effectively stopped.

After the failure of structural reform as exemplified in the “The Forty-Six Recommendation,” the government took the opposite tack and moved to intensified control. Justifying its action in terms of a response to a decline in standards that had become obvious with the rapid development of mass higher education, the Ministry of Education turned to a policy of limiting the increase in the continuation rate. Since 1976, three plans for the higher education were drawn up and implemented. These had as their core a prohibition on private universities expanding their facilities in major urban centers. The other side of this prohibition was the start of government aid to private universities. In other words, using a “carrot and stick approach,” the government gained greater control authority over private universities than it had previously had.

This policy for raising standards was based on a hidden agenda of dividing higher educational institutions into different types. It needs to be pointed out that there was the hidden objective of making a systematic differentiation of the greatly increased number of universities according to whether they were to be focused on research, teaching, general education, or vocational education. The diversity to respond to the development of mass higher education was not to be achieved, through free selection driven by the market as in the American case, but rather as one aspect of a planned structure. Rather than stimulating spontaneous and autonomous development, the result was restrictions and limits.

## 8. Americanization Again

In the 1990s, there was once again efforts for Americanization, this time more fundamen-

tal. There were once again calls for higher education reform, in the context of increasing international competition in cutting edge science and technology. This was a manifestation of the wave of “globalization” that originated in the United States impacting on the world of higher education. There was awareness that, to borrow Trow’s expression, reform was necessary to provide a system “appropriate to the demands of a post-industrial age.” Once again, there was a start, this time more fundamental, on the proposals of “The Forty Six Recommendation” that had been previously been passed over. The reform proposals directed to an American-style model and organization appropriate to mass higher education were none other than those that had been energetically debated by the University Council from its formation in 1987 to its abolition in 2000. [Koto kyoiku kenkyukai, 2002.]

Among the many findings of the University Council, one of the most important was the 1991 statement “Concerning the Reform of University Teaching.” [Koto kyoiku kenkyukai, 2002, 221–242.] This finding called for a general relaxation of the “soft” aspects of the university chartering standards, especially those pertaining to the structure and content of the curriculum. The four-year curriculum structure that had been strictly circumscribed was relaxed and most universities embarked on internal reforms in the content and structure of their programs. On the basis of this reform that is referred to as the “outlining and freeing” of the chartering standards, general education courses and liberal studies departments disappeared. There was a rapid increase in the so-called “departments with new trendy names” in the course of the rapid curricular and structural forms in the direction of a system appropriate for mass higher education.

The coming of “marketization” and “universalization.” pushed reform. [Amano, 2003, chap. 1.] The 90s brought a major change in the eighteen-year old population and the demise of the plans for higher education that had been based on this population. The eighteen-year old population went from 1.5 million in the 1980s to a peak of 2.05 million in 1992 after which there was a sharp decline to 1.20 million. In the context of drastic changes in the eighteen-year old population, the government-imposed restrictions on university scale began to lose meaning and force. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, the end of the higher education plan that had been in effect for fifteen years was announced. Once again “marketization” appeared in the private sector in the form of a boom in creating new universities and in the competition for students. In short order, the participation rate reached and passed the fifty percent level bringing about universal higher education.

It is appropriate to see the shift to a weakening of government (Ministry of Education) control in the 1990s as a form of gradual structural reform led from above. However, around the beginning of the new century, the political pressure for university reform sharply increased being coupled to neo-liberal regulatory reform and to government fiscal reform. It would be correct to say that there was “Americanization” in politics and administration and further in the economy. University reform was swept up in this wave of political Americanization. The Ministry of Education was prodded from the outside to relax the university chartering requirements, to simply the approval of new universities, and to move on the demand for making national universities independent agencies (juridical persons).

The administration of the chartering standards by the Ministry of Education is inseparable from the national centralized control, and constitutes the core of central government administrative control of Japanese higher education. In the context of devolving authority to local government, privatization, and the extension of the agency model to government at large, there was a demand for the overall relaxation and simplification of the chartering standards that symbolized Ministry of Education control. This was described by the slogan “*a priori* regulation to *a posteriori* checks.”

The Ministry abandoned the existing policy of “differentiation” that had been based on regulations and administrative guidance that had the force of law and turned to a policy market driven diversity marked by “liberalization” and “individuation.” It is undeniable that the Ministry of Education was pushed further in the direction of Americanization.

After 2000, the Ministry of Education moved to implement a succession of changes. This stream of administrative relaxation effectively meant the collapse of academic uniformity. One indication of this is the proliferation in the names for departments, courses, and academic degrees. Subsequently with the shift in the creation and restructuring of departments and programs from an approval system to notification, the permitting of universities and graduate schools run by corporations—with each revision of the chartering regulations, there was further destruction of the uniformity that it is hard to say was ever strictly maintained.

## **9. The symbolism of making national universities independent agencies**

In the context of this Americanization, making national universities independent agencies has special symbolic significance. This is because as an element in the administrative structure, national universities had been seeking independence and autonomy as a managerial unit within the context of operating under faculty autonomy. This “privatization” that sought to achieve as far as possible financial independence by raising capital and operating funds from outside sources and by the establishment and strengthening of an operational and managerial structure centered on the university president and a board of directors, was in other words a means of compelling them to participate in the market by making them independent legal entities.

But, it must be pointed that making national universities independent agencies required a fundamental change in both the bureaucratic structure of universities and their management by “academic guilds.” [Amano, 2008.]

While it can be said that the shift to independent agency status created an executive structure centered on the university president and the board of directors, national universities are still under the indirect control of the Ministry of Education because they are required to formulate mid-term goals and plans that must be approved and because they are subject to performance evaluation. Further, there are more than a few university officials in executive and managerial officials who are on loan from the Ministry of Education.

The greater part of the university executive including members of the board of directors are drawn from the faculty and when their term of service is over return to their academic unit. They are on loan from other parts of the university. Perhaps this can be said to be similar to the British case as described by Trow where “the academic guild and government bureaucrats are intermingled.”

Additionally, this distinctive pattern of having an unclear dividing line between education and management, between the legal entity and the faculty, is not limited to the national universities but is also shared with the old private universities. In the older, traditional private universities, it is not uncommon for the university president who is also head of the board of directors to be selected by vote from the faculty, and a large share of the directors are also drawn from the faculty.

## 10. The current state of Americanization

At the turn of the century, the pace of Americanization accelerated and extended to system, organization, research and educational activity at large. Making national universities independent agencies (legal entities), the establishment of graduate schools, the introduction of a comprehensive evaluation system involving “certification,” compulsory faculty development, the reconstruction of bachelor degree programs, the strengthening of the competitive allocation of public funds especially research funds—were all based on American models. However, in looking at this stream of reform and the confusion it gave rise to, it is not possible to avoid a sense that Japan committed the error that Trow warned of when he wrote that it would be a grave mistake for European countries to introduce American patterns without change.

In the 2005 recommendation “The Future Vision of Higher Education” issued by the Central Council for Education, it was stated that the administration of higher education had shifted from an era of planning and regulation to indicative policy and providing a vision for the future. The role of government would necessarily change. It proclaimed that the role of the state in higher education administration would fundamentally and of necessity change. From henceforth the function of the state will be (1) indicating the direction and form higher education should take; (2) setting and revising the structural framework; (3) implementing quality control systems; (4) the provision of data pertaining to higher education facilities, society, and learners; (5) the provision of financial assistance. [Central Council on Education, 2005, 7.]

If this proclamation is taken literally, it would mean that the role of the state would be much more limited and indirect than has been the case heretofore. Even with respect to direct government funding, there would not be a rigid dividing by types of universities. Rather it would be expected that universities would decide which of the many possible functions to which they would give weight and that there would be a gradual division of labor. As a consequence, the government was considering a nuanced funding system that would provide indicative guidance. “There will be a shift to a form that responds to the many and varied functions that higher educational institutions have. This requires the construction of a multiple source nuanced funding system that effectively combines the competitive allocation of resources with assistance for basic operating expenses and which strikes an appropriate balance between aid to institutions and aid to individuals. Through this, with a nuanced division of effort that builds on the special attributes of the state, the public, and the private, it should be possible to achieve an appropriate level of competition that results in quality education and research.” [Central Education Council, 2005, 46.]

This was not just a proclamation. In fact there was a change in policy along these lines that has led to a sequence of system reforms. As a consequence, there has been a progressive weakening of the administrative control over higher education that is exercised by the Ministry of Education based on its application of the chartering standards. The traditional structure that dominated the system until now has largely collapsed. But, at the same time, the new structure that can be expected to emerge in response to this proactive push for Americanization remains largely unseen at this point.

## 11. Accountability—Credibility—Commercialism

There is another problem in the changing role of the government. Although it can be said

that its power over higher education has weakened, the Ministry of Education, an arm of the highly centralized national government, nonetheless still holds substantial regulatory power. The question, to borrow from Trow, is to what extent the government and the Ministry of Education will continue to hold “the power to command the system” that is growing increasingly complex. Will it come up with ever more complex rules that cannot respond to the increasing complexity of the system? May it not well be the case that universities will “consume their energy for spontaneous reform” in the production and provision of the paper work required by the funding agencies? In looking at the current situation of the legal entities created from the national universities, it is difficult to avoid feeling this concern. Further, while the Ministry of Education has been pushing hard for university reform, it can be asked whether as an agency of the central government, how much effort the Ministry of Education will expend on reforming itself. A new relation between universities and the government will only be possible if in addition to the universities making changes, the government itself changes. One of the most important issues will be creating a new relation with universities based on changes in the Ministry of Education itself.

There are also problems on the side of the universities that were largely freed from *a priori* regulation. With the advent of a greater range for managerial autonomy than was the case heretofore, how will universities move from the traditional “sectional autonomy” to “true university autonomy.” How will they manage the fusion of the “community of intellect” with “intellectual profit center?” As ever there are constraints imposed by the social role of universities and by the professional ethics of academics, but for universities that are now “intellectual profit centers” there is a major issue in the changes that are required of them.

In the highly diverse American case, there is what Trow called “partnership with society.” This is formed from (1) the accountability that is expected of universities; (2) the market mechanism; (3) “trust” in the university-society relation. The issues is how to achieve balance on these three points. In the case of universities that have been liberated from direct government controls and given freedom, how will they achieve their responsibility to be accountable to society? How will they maintain and assert the public service aspect that universities have? How will they build trust with society at large? These are the difficult questions that Japanese universities now face.

In this context it is worthwhile to recall Trow’s observation that the loosely coupled American higher education system is constrained by a countless variety of bodies.

Heretofore, Japanese universities had a “single model” that was dictated and maintained through the chartering regulations. With the weakening of government power and the shift “from *a priori* regulation to *a posteriori* checks”, the question becomes does Japan have or can it construct the “countless and varied bodies that constrain” universities and which will provide the “*a posteriori* checks?”

In Japan there are associations of universities, numerous academic societies, and the creation of an evaluation system is progressing. However, in comparison to the United States, the density of this network is extremely low. The associations of universities are essentially closed affinity groups differentiated by type of founding (public vs. private). It remains to be seen as to what degree the “accreditation” system that brings together faculty from different institutions to perform its functions will actually work to independently set and raise standards. Further, academic associations have, up until now, shown essentially no interest in university education or organization. With the weakening of state regulatory power and the scope for free and conscious choice greatly widened, what will appear in place of government regulation? Will this lead to universities forming mutual alliances to further confront the state? How will they meet the force of the mar-

ket? How will they achieve their accountability to society? How will they acquire the trust of society?

The most important point to be learned from America is the meaning of this “partnership with society.”

## 12. Issues in Japan

Trow pointed out five dangers in the shift from mass to universal higher education. These have been steadily appearing in Japan. First, there is the matter of social inequality and inequality in opportunity. Second, there is the weakening of secondary education. This has already manifested itself as a decline in the academic preparation of university entrants. Third, above and beyond this, the standard notion of what constitutes a university is shaken. With the large scale revision of the university chartering standards, the bureaucratic yardstick that determined “what is a university” has been lost. One indication of this is that recent debate in the University Study Group of the Central Education Council has taken the form of asking what constitutes undergraduate education.

Fourth, there is the collapse in academic norms that leads to other serious problems. With the rise of specialized graduate programs, there comes the question of the dividing line between these and general graduate programs. With a more diverse undergraduate curriculum, it becomes more difficult to see on what academic standard the bachelor’s degree that signifies completion of an undergraduate program is based. With differences in the type of university, differences in field, and generational differences, what university people think of as norms are themselves becoming more diverse. This is an inevitable consequence of increasing diversity. A certain amount of confusion is only to be expected.

Fifth, related to the shift to mass higher education is the issue of lag in the development of the “learning society”. Japan is an advanced country in terms of the hardware aspects of IT, but a developing country in terms of software. In terms of the introduction of IT in education that Trow emphasized, Japan is notably lagging behind. Notwithstanding the progress toward the “information society” and the “learning society”, the market for developing specialized talent remains at a low level. The concepts of “professional” and “specialized” are vague in this area and while various “professional” schools have been set up, it is difficult to say that they have been successful in attracting adult learners.

This reality points to the danger that the more forcefully Americanization is pushed, the greater the danger that the result will be a higher education system that rather than being built on the strong points of the American and European systems is built on their weak points and failings. Of special importance is the peculiar dilemma in Japan that results from the national sector being organized around elite institutions that do research and train high level professionals, while the private sector must bear the burden of universal higher education. Japan lacks open, low cost higher educational institutions that would make universal access and participation possible. The four year universities, two year colleges, and vocational colleges that are the principal bearers of the burden of mass higher education are all in the private sector and are dependent on tuition fees for their operating funds. Standards, the quality of instruction, and the costs are unavoidable issues in constructing a higher educational system appropriate to the stage of universal higher education. The question is how to resolve these issues. What form the universal higher education stage will take

in Japan remains to be seen, because participation in the Japanese-style learning society is constrained by access.

In this context, Trow has made a singularly interesting observation. “American universities exist as both public and essentially purely private with an infinite range of gradations”. In America, “private” universities also receive public financial support. One form of this is the preferential treatment of donations and endowments given to higher education. Another is the provision of financial aid to students. In contrast to this, public universities also secure private financial resources in the form student fees, donations, and contributions from business. Moreover, the administrative boards of public universities recognize the independence of the constituent units on a par with private universities. It is one of the peculiarities of the American system that there is a mingling of the public and private in terms of capital, function, and authority. [Trow, 2000, 29.]

In contrast to the American case where there is a continuum between public and private and only a vague division between the sectors, in the Japanese case, despite the nominal privatization of the national universities, the dividing line between public and private remains as sharp as ever. Compared to Europe where the private sector is miniscule, Japan has an enormous private sector. What role this enormous sector plays as Japan gropes for a third way to the stage of universal higher education may well be the most difficult issue faced.

#### References

- Amano, Ikuo (1986) *Kotokyoiku no Nihonteki kozo* (The Structure of Japanese Higher Education), Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu,
- Amano, Ikuo (2003) *Nihon no Kotokyoiku Shisutemu* (The Higher Education System of Japan), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai
- Amano, Ikuo (2007). *Daigakukaikaku no Shakaigaku* (The Sociology of University Reform) Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu,
- Amano, Ikuo (2008), *Kokuritsudaigaku—Hojinka no Yukue* (National Universities—The Course to Incorporation) Toshindo,
- Ashby, Eric (1966) *Universities: British, Indian, African*,
- Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai, *Kongo niokeru Gakkokyoiku no Sogoteki na Kakujyu-Seibi notameno Kihonteki-hosaku* (Central Council for Education, Concerning the Fundamental Policy for a Comprehensive Upgrading of School Education for the Future, (1971) Monbusho,
- Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai, (2005) *Wagakuni no Kotokyoiku no Shoraizo* (Central Council for Education, The Future Vision of Higher Education), Monbukagakusho,
- Kotokyoiku-Kenkyukai (2002), *Daigakushingikai Toushin Hokokushu* (The Recommendations and Reports of the University Council), Gyosei,
- Monbusho-Chosabu (1937) *Gakuseikaikaku-Shoan* (Proposals for Reform of the Education System),
- OECD (1972) *Nihon no Kyoikuseisaku* (Reviews of National Policies for Education: Japan) Junro Fukushima, trans., Asahishinbunsha,
- Trow, Martin, (1976) *Kogakurekishakai no Daigaku* (Universities in the Highly Educated Societies-From Elite to Mass), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, Amano Ikuo and Kitamura Kazuyuki trans.
- Trow, Martin, (2000) *Koudo Jyohoshakai no Daigaku* (Universities in the Information Society-From Mass to Universal), Kazuyuki Kiramura trans., Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu
- Trow, Martin (1974) “Problems in the transition from Elite to Mass Higher Education”, in *Policies for Higher Education: General Report of the Conference on Future Structure of Post-secondary Education*, OECD,
- Trow, Martin (1978) “Elite and Mass Higher Education: American Models and European Realities”, (Mimeographed),