

## 1. Developments in Post-War Higher Education Reforms

### (1) Post-war higher education reforms

Japan's higher education system in the modern era was introduced under the strong influence of the German university model, which was at the center of 19<sup>th</sup> century academia, and tailored to meet Japan's specific requirements. Through education reforms after World War II, Japan's pre-war system of higher education institutions adopted the US-style university system. Nevertheless, characteristics of the pre-war system continued in the post-war era, including a fixed hierarchical structure that gave the highest status to the former Imperial universities and an internal configuration that focused on an academic structure characterized by a course system and graduate schools as dependent parts of undergraduate faculties. In addition, a revision of the post-war reforms was undertaken from 1955 to 1965, including the shift to a multi-track system through the institutionalization of a system for junior colleges and the establishment of a system for colleges of technology.

Chronology of Post-War Higher Education	
1947	Enactment of the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law - Launch of a post-war university system
1949	Enactment of the Private School Law
1956 1962 1964 1973	Enactment of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities - Launch of the colleges of technology system - Launch of the institutionalized junior college system - Establishment of new concept universities (University of Tsukuba, etc.)
1975 1976 1979	Enactment of the Private School Promotion Subsidy Law - Launch of the special training college system - Introduction of the Joint First Stage Achievement Test
1987 1990 1991	Launch of the University Council (Advancement, individualization and revitalization are the keywords characterizing the Council's reform of universities, etc.) - Introduction of the NCUEE examinations - Expansion and simplification of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities
2003 2004	- Launch of the professional graduate school system - Launch of the national university corporation system - Launch of the certified evaluation system

Higher Education Plan, etc.

(Plan for 1975-1980)

(Plan for 1980-1985)

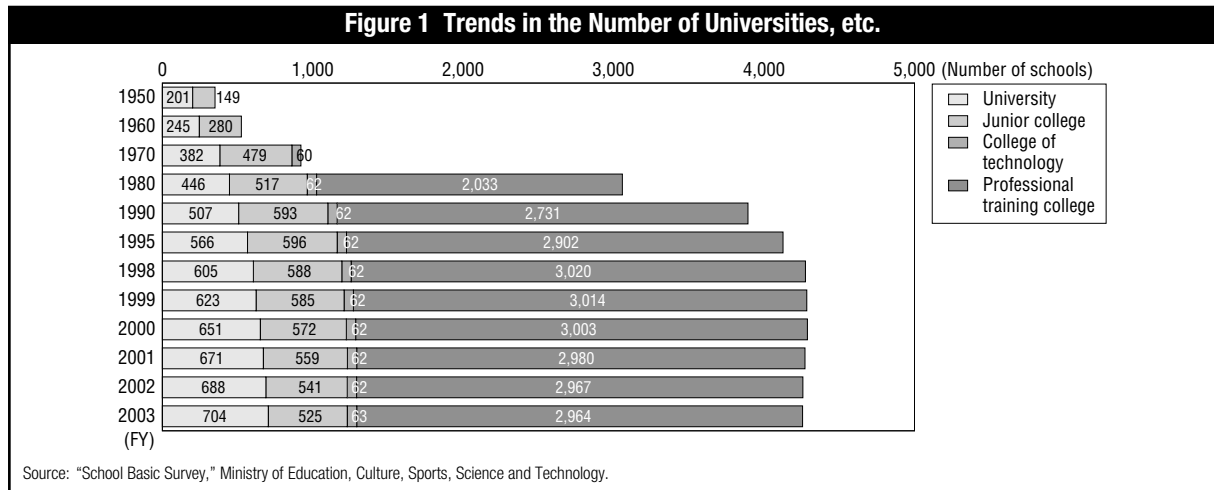
(Plan for the period of rapid growth in the number of 18-year-olds 1986-1992)

(Plan for the period of rapid decline in the number of 18-year-olds 1993-2000)

(Future concept for higher education 2000-2004)

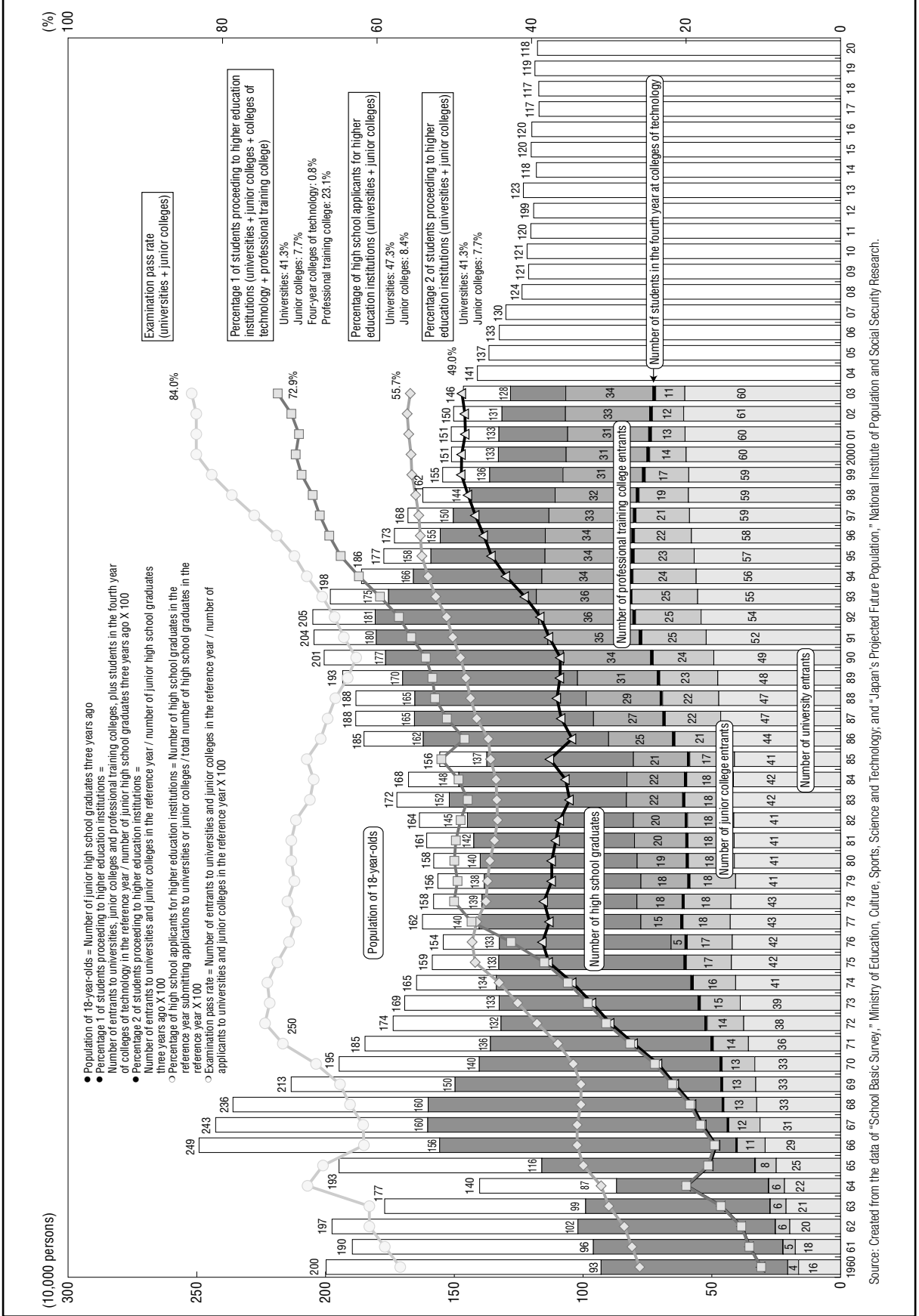
The percentage of students proceeding to universities exceeded 15 percent in 1963, and with the

Figure 1 Trends in the Number of Universities, etc.



Source: "School Basic Survey," Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

**Figure 2 Trends in the Population of 18-Year-Olds, Number of Entrants and Percentage of Students Proceeding to Higher Education Institutions**



Source: Created from the data of "School Basic Survey," Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; and "Japan's Projected Future Population," National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

exception of one short period, this figure continued to rise rapidly. Even with the period to 1975 of university demonstrations, the percentage of graduates entering university rose to 40 percent. Since then, the percentage of students proceeding to university has remained at the higher end of the 30 to 40 percent range. In the period from 1975 to 1985, Japan formulated its Higher Education Plan and advanced other measures that focused on quality and improvements to the system, including the promotion of private schools and establishment of new concept national universities (Figures 1 and 2).

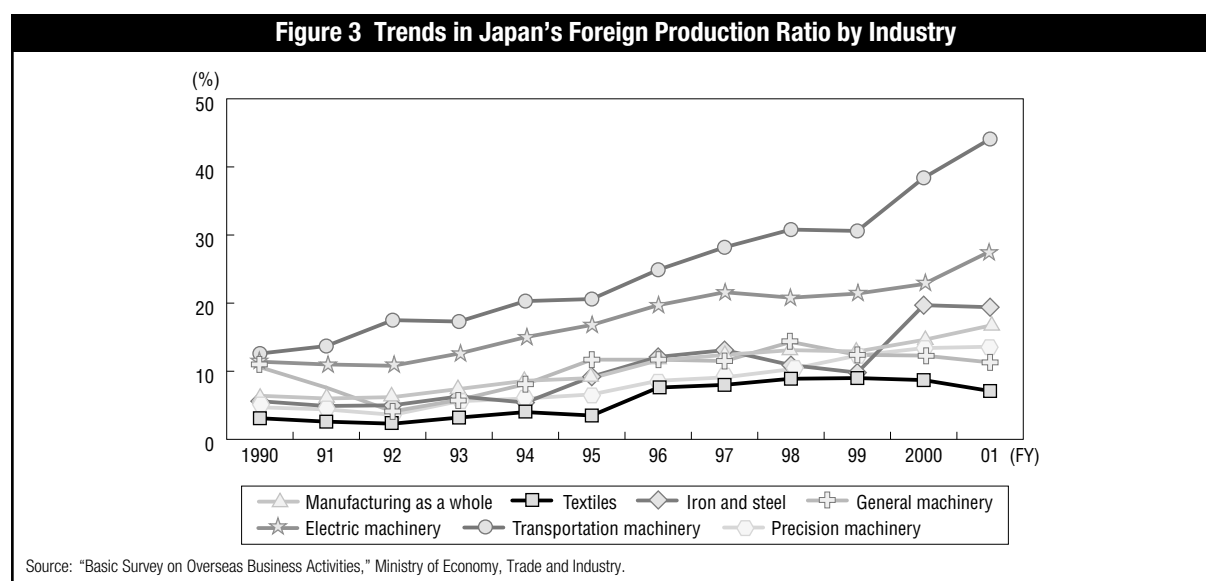
## (2) Recent higher education reforms and their background

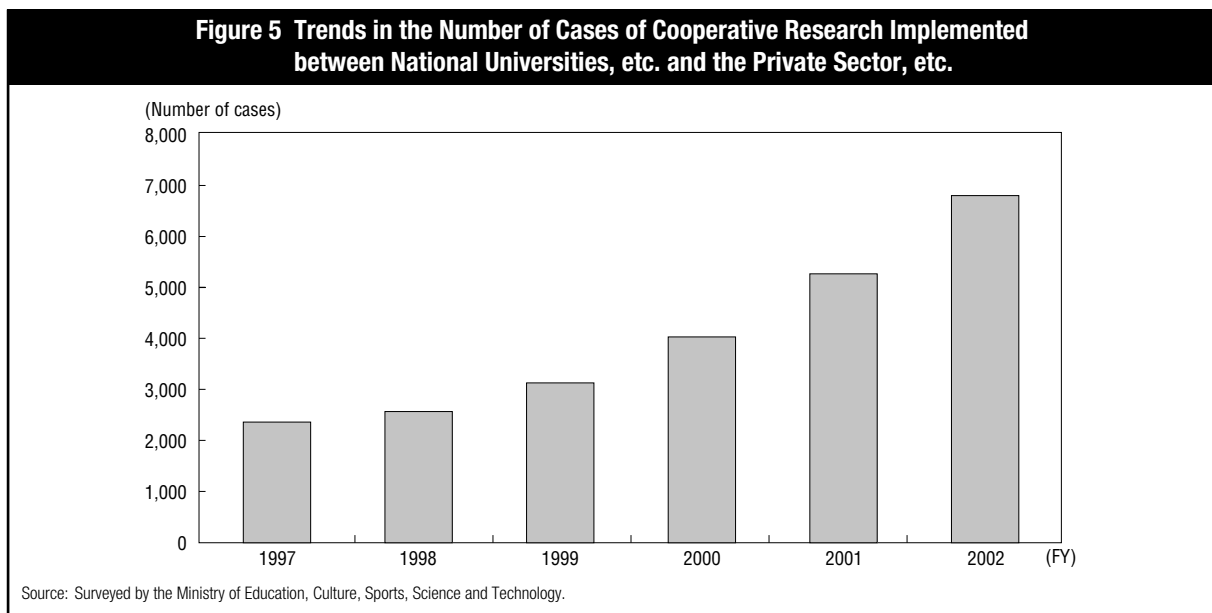
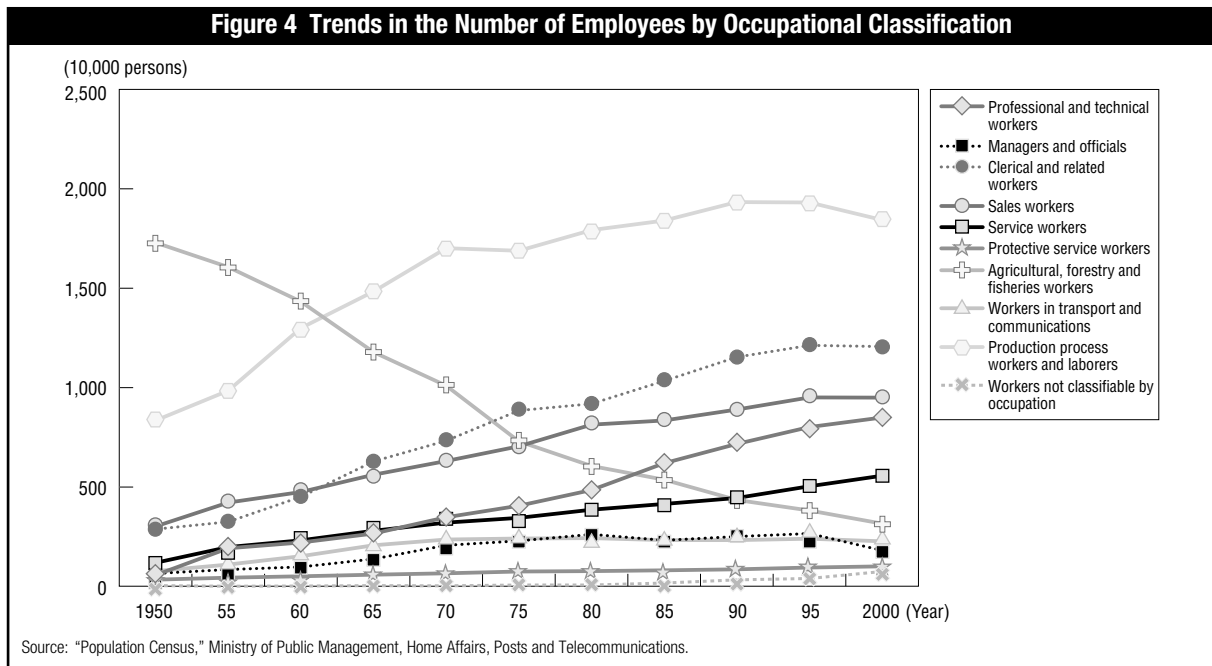
In 1984, the National Council on Educational Reform was established, and on its recommendation, the University Council was created. Prior to being reorganized and integrated with the Central Council for Education in 2001, the University Council compiled 28 reports focusing on the keywords of advancement, individualization and revitalization of higher education. In response to these reports, a wide range of university reforms have been advanced. The first chapter of Part I covers in detail the situation concerning the significant changes taking place in universities in Japan.

There are a number of underlying factors accounting for the expansion of university reforms. The first of these is changes in students. While the population of 18-year-olds is shrinking, the percentage of students proceeding to higher education is increasing. In addition to this so-called popularization of higher education, there is increasing diversity in upper secondary education as well as the abilities and knowledge of students who have traditionally proceeded to higher education, and an increase in adult students and foreign students. All of these have made a review of the modalities for education necessary.

Another factor is changes in the demand for human resources. In an environment in which Japan is moving from an international position of playing “catch-up” to the position of a so-called “front-runner,” so too is the economy and society becoming increasingly borderless and informatization is progressing, leading to a change in the abilities that employers are seeking in their human resources and a change in customs concerning personnel management and employment (Figures 3 and 4). In response to these changes, it is necessary for universities to review their curricula.

From a research perspective, the industrial world is increasingly relying on the knowledge base, thus making industry-academia cooperation a very important issue (Figure 5). As such, universities are required not just to impart technical guidance, but also to engage in full-fledged cooperation with the





industrial world in order to promote academic development.

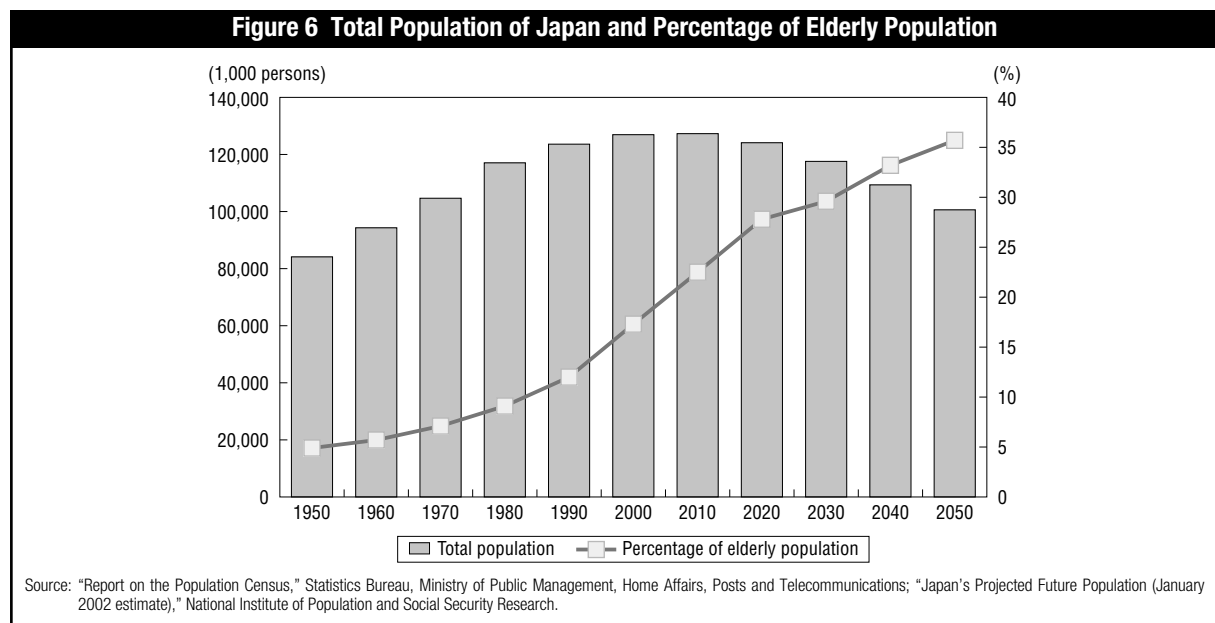
In addition, it is possible to identify many other factors, including the trend towards the realization of a lifelong learning society. In all of these various developments, the administration of higher education is moving from a position of "achieving quantitative improvements while securing the minimum level" to "promoting diverse development in a competitive environment." Policies are thus being formulated based on the acceptance of the concept that the system as a whole, including the varied institutions of higher education, need to accept the diverse demands of a rapidly changing society.

## 2. Role of Higher Education in a Knowledge-Based Society and the Necessity for Reform

### (1) Role of higher education in a knowledge-based society

In the so-called “knowledge-based society,” in which new technologies and information have become the foundation for various social activities including economic activities, it is more important than ever to ensure that the opportunity to receive education is continued following secondary education. Many institutions, possessing various characteristics, provide learning opportunities after the conclusion of secondary education. These include not only course institutions of higher education, but also public vocational training facilities and the education services industry. Higher education institutions are expected to fulfill the most important role as the central axis of these institutes for higher education. In particular, universities bear the role of concentrating not only on education, but as centers of academic research, they need to promote knowledge creation and the means of cultivating people with such knowledge. Other foreign countries also perceive higher education reform, including the reform of universities, to be a national challenge since the background to each of their cases have many similarities (refer to Chapter 4 of Part I).

In addition, the role of universities and other institutions in Japan has come to be recognized once again as a means to strengthen industrial competitiveness and ensure employment. In particular, in the case of Japan, where an aging society and declining birth rate is progressing at a globally unprecedented rate, it is estimated that by 2050 each 1.5 persons in the productive age population (15 to 64 years old) will have to support one member of the elderly population (over 65 years old)\* (Figure 6). In response, it is essential for Japan to enhance the intellectual production capacity of each of its citizens to maintain the country’s vitality.



#### \* Population estimate in 2050

For the median estimate of “Japan’s Projected Future Population” (January 2002, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research), the total population of Japan in 2050 is estimated to be 100,593,000 people, with 53,889,000 persons between 15 and 64 years old and 35,863,000 persons over 65 years old.

## **(2) New developments in higher education reforms**

Given such an environment, the expectations placed upon institutions of higher education, including universities, are rapidly increasing. Although various university reforms have been undertaken to date, these institutions still face serious issues. Universities face strong criticisms, including those to the effect that education content and reform methods do not reflect changes in the student population and that the quality of education is falling, that community cooperation in education and research aspects is insufficient and that various regulations and customs prevent flexible decision making, thus making it impossible to respond to social changes.

In response to these criticisms, while it is important to undertake specific reform measures, the creation of an increasingly competitive environment is also necessary to promote reforms. It is vital that institutions of higher education in a knowledge-based society are linked closely to society and that their position is further promoted through vigorous interactions. In addition, it is necessary for each institution of higher education to have autonomy, under which it can flexibly implement decision making and put decisions into practice. At the same time, reliable evaluations of institutions of higher education should be made, and this information needs to be provided not only to the institutions subject to the evaluation but also to the wider public.

As explained in detail in Chapter 2, national universities from FY2004 have been incorporated and a wide-ranging revision of the school corporation system is being considered. These reforms are designed to enhance university autonomy and to reform the decision-making process that supports such autonomy, in addition to promoting transparency. Furthermore, a certificated evaluation system will be launched simultaneously, whereby all institutions of higher education will be subject to evaluation by publicly certified evaluation institutions, and the results of the evaluation will be made public. In FY2003, a professional graduate school system was introduced. This system newly establishes graduate schools with the aim of cultivating human resources that can be employed in advanced, professional jobs in every sector of society. As part of this system, a graduate law school system will be established from FY2004. By establishing professional graduate schools, it is expected that the resulting enhanced cooperation between universities and the community will have a significant impact on the reform of universities as a whole.

## **(3) Future outlook for higher education**

As described above, higher education in Japan is on the verge of entering a new era, based on the accumulated reforms of the past and under a totally new framework. In the process of these reforms, all universities are expected to make use of their individual characteristics and clarify their outlook for the own future. At the same time, however, it is necessary for the higher education system as a whole to clarify its outlook for the future. Responding to social structural change, universities are also at the stage where they must construct a new image for themselves, one in which they can appropriately fulfill the role that is expected of them in the new society. To clarify a direction for the future, it is necessary to consider a number of questions, including what is required of universities, what is the role of undergraduate faculties and graduate schools in universities and the other institutions of higher education, how can learning opportunities be ensured as they become necessary at any stage in the lifecycle and how can those who want to learn be able to do so, and what is necessary to realize education and research of a world-class standard.

In addition, it is also necessary to demonstrate a concept as to how society can support higher education. If one assumes that an outstanding higher education system is necessary for society, then the provision of funds commensurate with such a system and the improvement of social infrastructure

necessary to develop higher education are required. Without workplaces to bring out the capabilities acquired at university and a framework that utilizes research results, it will be impossible to promote and develop higher education further.

From this perspective, the Subcommittee on Universities under the Central Council for Education is deliberating a future vision for higher education.

The world of higher education in Japan is facing a mixture of expectations and anxieties, embroiled in many challenges, but out of this process will emerge a new welcome chapter in the history of higher education in Japan.