

# Summary of Report: "Towards a Qualitative Transformation of University Education for Building a New Future - Universities Fostering Lifelong Learning and the Ability to Think Independently and Proactively"

## 1. Role of University and Purpose of Report

### Living in an unpredictable era

- ◆ Japan is affected in various ways by a rapidly changing society including: globalization, advanced information society, rapidly aging population and declining birthrate.

### Universities faced with greater demands and expectations

- ◆ Businesses and communities have high expectations for human resources and academic research which help to pioneer an unpredictable era.
- ◆ Higher education has entered a new stage with the university entrance rate exceeding 50 percent.
- ◆ A decade has passed since the establishment of national university corporations, and implementation of the approval assessment system.

Society demands human resources with the intellectual and conceptual ability to paint a future vision for society. Universities are autonomous centers of knowledge creation and accumulation, and **must cultivate individuals who take leadership and help create a future vision of society**. Universities are called to:

- define a vision for future society and the role of universities based on new knowledge and ideas
- cultivate human resources capable of becoming leaders of the next generation, promote academic research

## 2. Basic points examined

Interactive exchanges among various parties, importance of objective data

How to cultivate knowledge through lower/upper secondary school and higher education

Speedy reform necessary

## 3. Vision for Society and required capabilities

### Vision for Society

- ◆ A mature society that actively draws on the outstanding knowledge and ideas to develop, and that continues to maintain fair and stable growth.  
⇒ A model of independence, collaboration and creativity underpinned by knowledge

### Required capabilities in a mature society

- ◆ Cognitive capabilities, including critical and rational thinking, to identify solutions to "unsolvable" issues.
- ◆ Ethical and social capabilities to perform duties, demonstrate teamwork and leadership, and fulfill social responsibilities.
- ◆ Creative and conceptual capabilities based on extensive and ongoing academic experience.
- ◆ "Gakushiryoku" - ability required for university graduates for an unpredictable era including the education, knowledge and experience to make correct decisions in the face of unexpected difficulties.

## 4. Qualitative transformation needed for undergraduate education

- ◆ Undergraduate education must enhance subjective learning. The cultivation of "gakushiryoku" requires active learning through discussions and debates, and experiential education programs through internships.
- ◆ Students can acquire abilities for lifelong learning and to think independently only through gathering experiences in active learning. In order to do so, securing quality study time is needed.

## 5. Study time of university students

- ◆ Short study time (students study an average 4.6 hours/day during the school term).
- ◆ Citizens, businesses and students unsatisfied with current university education.
- ◆ Universities (presidents, deans, students) unsatisfied with students' general knowledge and study time outside of classroom.
- ◆ Study time for high school students with mid-level academic ability has decreased by nearly half over the last 15 years.

## 6. Methods for universities to advance qualitative transformation of higher education

- ◆ Necessary measures to reach a qualitative turning point to increase and secure students study time
  - Structuring curriculums (organize and consolidate class subjects) • Providing organized education • Improving curriculums (syllabus) • Consolidation and coordination between syllabuses and subjects
- ◆ Shift from teacher-centered composition of class subjects to establishing curriculum-based education for bachelors degrees

## 7. Issues towards advancing qualitative transformation of higher education

- Lack of basic awareness on the concept of "curriculum-based education programs for bachelor's degrees"
- Further improvements needed in learning-support environment
- Improving linkage and collaboration between education in high schools and universities
- Improving linkage between society and universities (change practice of students' early and prolonged job hunting)

To advance qualitative transformation of university education by clearing the above

## 8. Detailed reform measures

### Issues in need of immediate action

### Universities

- Presidents, deans, specialists and other members of staff need to work as a team with the aim of reaching a reform cycle based on each university's degree policy: Structuring curriculum (P) ⇒ Dividing roles between teaching staff and providing organized education through cooperation (D) ⇒ Evaluating academic results based on assessment tests, and assessing teaching staff based on educational activities and curriculums (C) ⇒ Improving curriculums and education methods even further (A)
- Assign university dean based on his/her competence in working as a team member to establish a reform cycle.

### University Support Organizations

(University organizations, assessment organizations, Science Council of Japan)

- ◆ Extensive faculty development (FD), training specialist staff
- ◆ Disseminate university information through "University Reports" (temporary name)
- ◆ Develop detailed methods to check academic achievements through assessment tests, experiential education surveys, etc.
- ◆ Utilize curriculum reference standards of the Science Council of Japan, placing precedence on departments of business management, linguistics, literature and law.
- ◆ Improve university assessment (priority on academic achievements, develop performance indices', utilize various stakeholders' opinions, optimize assessment processes)

### MEXT

- ◆ Support establishment of a reform cycle by allocating funds through foundation expenses and subsidies.
- ◆ Clarify relationship between systematic FD training, and educational capabilities of teaching staff based on university establishment policies.
- ◆ Advance research on FD and training specialists
- ◆ Enhance public financial support and advance tax reforms by improving student financial assistance and establishing financial foundations for universities.
- ◆ Continuation of direct debates and deliberations with students.

### Community, Businesses

- ◆ Create new collaborations through internships, experiential education, participation in bachelor degree programs, and enhance economic assistance.
- ◆ Utilize collaborations with universities which are the core of the community.
- ◆ Change practice of early and prolonged job hunting

Speedy and steady implementation based on university reform action plan

### Issues in need of immediate deliberation

- ◆ Examine the establishment of a council within the Central Council for Education to discuss advancing linkage between of education in high school and university in order to simultaneously advance the three areas of: university reform, student acceptance policies, and university education.
- ◆ Examine methods of governance and securing financial foundations to establish a basic shared awareness of the need for curriculum-based education programs for bachelor degrees
- ◆ Examine conditions of education programs for Junior college degrees
- ◇ Define general course of action for each item within a year.