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## THE GLOBALIZATION OF JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION:

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### CONTEXTS AND CRITERIA

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*“Globalization” has become one of the mantras of our age. Attempting the comprehensive, it has rightly been accused of both conceptual vagueness and an insensitivity to the plight of those whose boats might swamp when all yachts (globally) rise. Despite these criticisms, the discourse of globalization and global integration is a useful springboard for the examination of higher education trends that have recently begun to migrate from North America outward. These trends can be encapsulated in a new vision for higher education as a commercially viable business. Because of its well-established, differentiated, and widely privatized higher education sector, Japan serves as a particularly instructive test case for the importation of this new vision. The Japanese Ministry of Education has also begun to privatize flagship National Corporation universities in recent years as part of a comprehensive policy overhaul that will favor strong central leadership, a diminishment in faculty autonomy, the expansion of graduate programs, and increased institutional autonomy. Whether these top-down changes will ultimately make Japanese higher education both more self-sustaining and more competitive internationally is unclear. If western models are instructive, reform will only succeed if student/customers and their patrons are adequately “sold” on the value of university study to their career and personal pursuits. Given the traditional view in Japan of higher education as a fashion item, however, it is not yet evident if or how this commercializing reform will be achieved.*

Much—some would say too much—has been written in recent years on globalization, the global economy, and their various cognates (Google, 2006).<sup>1</sup> Distinguishing substance from fluff has been particularly challenging in a field that is equally movement and attitude, under a conceptual carapace that has been said to cover nothing less than “the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies” (Friedman, 2000, p.7). If we understand “markets” in a broad sense—to include sports, popular culture, and education—it becomes difficult to know what might be confidently excluded from the heading of the global or globalizable. Even Thomas O. Friedman’s olive tree would qualify, as the source of a multi-billion dollar European export industry.<sup>2</sup> Is jihad, to borrow from Benjamin Barber (1996), really less international

- 1 As befits its name, Google returned “about 99,800,000” hits for “globalization” as of 5:12 p.m., Tokyo time, March 26, 2006. Jan Aart Scholte (2005) provides another benchmark in an encyclopedic bibliography that runs to fifty pages, with the great proportion of entries published since 1990. At about 30 entries to the page, 40 pages per entry, 400 words to the page, Scholte’s list yields some 24,000,000 copyrighted words (give or take a few) on globalization in recent years.
- 2 As his title suggests, Friedman’s populist account points to the conflict between organic communities and the global village. To some degree, however (as Friedman acknowledges), the organic is itself a response to, and therefore a property of, the global. A similar argument might be made for earlier technology/tradition dyads such as Leo Marx’s machine in the garden and Henry Adams’ dynamo and virgin.

than McWorld? Surely, no one would wish to be late for the inexorable.

A term that attempts to cover everything raises doubts that it describes much of anything. Indraneel Sircar (2001) has recently raised much the same objection.<sup>3</sup> Hay and Marsh advocate a preliminary “demystification” of the term (Hay and Marsh, 2000). The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006) opines that “the term ‘globalization’ has quickly become one of the most fashionable buzzwords of contemporary political and academic debate.” In 1995, Jan Aart Scholte had already identified globalbabble as persiflage in need of energetic filleting (Scholte, 2003). Taking up the knife himself, he more recently attacks globalization discourse as “inexact, empirically thin, historically ill-informed, economically and/or culturally illiterate, normatively shallow, and politically naive” (Scholte, 2005, p.69).<sup>4</sup> To some extent, calling globalization a buzzword has itself become a buzzword.

The objection to conceptual cloudiness has a political feature, as well. Where terms are vague, very real forms of marginalization escape unnamed. This is the point of departure for Immanuel Wallerstein’s attempt (2005) to unravel the cocoon of “isms” and “izations” by which academic debate insulates itself from the life world. Tilotama Rajan (2001) issues a similar demurral in her discussion of the academic postmodern, suggesting that the latter’s “current dominance despite its lack of explanatory power is precisely [due to] an inclusive vagueness that masks underlying contradictions.”<sup>5</sup> Martin Khor (in Scholte, 2005) has gone so far as to label the hidden agendas of globalization neo-colonial. In the intra-European sphere, Habermas (2001) speaks of the need to clarify and protect minority interests in an expanded EU. Noam Chomsky (2001) inveighs against the jeddi-style renaming of Carlyle’s captains of industry as “masters of the universe” (see also Gray, 1998). Feminist and critical race theorists, finally (Eisenstein, 1998; Jobs and McDevitt, 2005; Scholte, 2005), have been nothing if not vocal in pointing to those boats that risk swamping under neo-liberal policies designed to make all yachts rise.

Despite these caveats, and without softening their critical force, globalization discourse is not simply globalbabble or ideological camouflage by which the strong are further able to exploit the weak. What Roland Robertson (1992) some time ago identified as a “concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole” might not say enough, but it does say something. In particular, it articulates the way in which the international transfer of ideas and institutions is also, necessarily, a transfer of world views. And here, where might often makes right, what John Williamson dubbed the “Washington Consensus” in the context of South American *Realpolitik* in the 1980’s is still arguably the prime mover in the international transmission of technology, capital, and institutional aid.

As a description of global trajectories of influence, such Anglocentrism may initially seem to strike too parochial a note (Held, 2005). It can be seen to perpetuate what has been dubbed the “diffusionist” bias in international political theory (Somjee, 1986), by which not only material and informational transfers but their discursive particulars are framed in conceptual models originating in the west. Indigenous global developments are thereby diminished or discounted because they lack a descriptive vocabulary and the social networks for effective dissemination. What “exists”, in turn, is what can be accommodated to western paradigms.

The limitations of such a perspective are evident. Above all, the ethnocentricity of positing some parts of the globe to be more global than others seems to be just the kind of suspect ideology under which significant evil can be manufactured. At a discursive level, however, the charge of monopoly remains theoretical or “critical” (in the Kantian sense) until alternative discourses actually begin to appear. It

3 Because “the concept of ‘globalization’ seems to apply to everything... it is interesting to examine if in fact it means anything.”

4 The adjective is telling: more is needed than simply “an introduction.” Scholte’s critical introduction to his critical introduction also begins on an unmistakably self-conscious note: “Not another book on globalization!” (xvii).

5 A fleshing out of the “academic postmodern” can be found in Simpson (1995).

stands to reason that something else must be there, but until it is identified, and not only posited, the nature and degree of bias is largely hypothetical. At an empirical level, the fact that diffusion obscures does not mean that the obscuring agent, as is sometimes implied, somehow loses its material weight. Insofar as North Atlantic nations are *de facto* net exporters of financial and knowledge-based resources, some parts of the globe *do* remain more global than others. As a descriptive metric, therefore, it is still appropriate if not exhaustive to view globalization as a process by which such resources are developed in western donor countries, transferred to non-western donees, and respun for local use.<sup>6</sup> The process is dialectical, but not dialectical in all possible ways.

What applies to political and economic discourse, I would argue, is even more relevant to the transfer of cultural or intellectual capital. Because the secular university is with few exceptions of western origin, its global expansion has tended to flow from the North Atlantic region outward. Much of the initial demand resulted from the need to staff colonial bureaucracies. Outside this context, the need for language and technological skills training has reinforced a global reliance on western-style (especially American-style) education. While the presumption of “if Harvard sneezes, the world catches cold” belongs to the Red Book report of 1945 rather than to the World Conference on Higher Education in 2005, it is still the case that the North Atlantic operates as an incubator, constructively or otherwise, for international higher education trends.<sup>7</sup> In fact, it is no longer the North Atlantic that runs an ideational surplus, but North America itself. The gradual but certain rationalization of European university systems bears witness to a sea change of sorts in which former educational donor countries have themselves become donees of institutional norms.<sup>8</sup>

In what follows, I would like to take a look at certain features of this incubation and exportation process in the context of the Japanese higher education sector. Japan is an instructive forum for transnational education policy for several reasons. To begin with, while the Japanese post-secondary system is the second largest in the world, comprising some 700 universities, two-year colleges, and technical schools that enroll more than 60% of high school diploma holders, its history and institutional structures are comparatively unfamiliar to non-specialists in the west (MEXT, 2004). With a particularly prominent private sector, accounting for about 75% of matriculants to four-year institutions, and 88% in two-year programs, the system is especially sensitive to market conditions, including the market for first-year students (MEXT, 2004). As declining age cohorts encourage post-secondary institutions to accept higher percentages of applicants, the already uncertain balance between access and quality becomes increasingly precarious. Similarities to the European and American higher education sectors are evident.

At the same time, the traditional relationship between higher education and society in Japan has no close parallels in Europe or America. Outside the main national corporation universities and a few, Tokyo-based private institutions, Japanese university education has been intellectually peripheral (Geiger, 1987). This is partly the consequence of earlier development policies that, in common with other Asian education systems, emphasized primary literacy objectives and concentrated the training of a bureaucratic elite in a centralized public educational sector (Cummings and Altbach, 1997). But it is also a function of the distinctive, and to Western eyes idiosyncratic, Japanese emphasis on university education as a social right of passage rather than as an opportunity for intellectual self-fulfillment or the augmentation of human

6 This dialectic of markets is not, of course, the only meaningful way to approach the notion of a globalized world. Specifically, the concept of de-territorialization as electronic information transfer, with roots in Marshall McLuhan’s global village, invites a different kind of analysis.

7 Harvard’s economic clout remains “global,” however: the little Puritan school started by an intrepid band of divines from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, now claims an endowment that exceeds the annual GNP of Lebanon and Bulgaria, putting it among the wealthiest 40% of countries worldwide. See the GNP figures prepared by the World Bank (2004).

8 Most dramatically the case, perhaps, in the United Kingdom, where the Jarrett Committee report in 1985 set in motion a number of changes, many incorporated into the Education Act of 1988, that have attempted to rationalize a still largely state-funded system.

capital (Aochi and Dore, 1994). As Yoshihazu Ogawa remarks in the context of the 1998 University Council Report, “[u]niversities are not perceived as truly educating students... [f]or their part, students treat university as a place to rest four years after the pressures of entrance exams” (see also McVeigh, 2002).

Curricular stagnancy has also been reinforced by notoriously soft state accountability measures, which have traditionally taken the form of enrollment quotas in place of clear achievement benchmarks. As fewer universities are able to meet their quota limits (up to 25% of private institutions in spring of 2003, according to Motohisu Kaneko [2004]), oversight of this kind becomes toothless.<sup>9</sup> Academically undercooked graduates, in turn, reemphasize the importance of in-house corporate training, long a concomitant of lifetime service expectations and a facilitator of group harmony in the workplace. The more prominent the role of company or industry-specific education, the more marginalized the university as a provider of fungible services.

The picture that emerges from this preliminary sketch is one of a higher education sector with certain recognizably western features embedded in native socio-political schist. Or, rather, it is this schist that is currently being formed by the metamorphic pressures of globalization. Relevant tensions can be found in both large and small format, with greater and lesser immediacy. On a macro level, the rationalization of government propagated by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980’s, with its various mantras of efficiency, privatization, and fiscal responsibility, has been relaunched by Prime Minister Koizumi as his signal reform agenda. Given the high domestic debt levels that Japan has sustained over recent decades, and the Tokyo government’s traditionally extensive financial support for both public and private universities, the effects of any sustained state slimming will have dramatic long-term effects on Japanese education across all sectors.

On a micro level, declining age cohorts, the challenges of an international knowledge economy, and the influence of higher education developments abroad have triggered a self-examination process among individual institutions. Many have begun to look to the underdeveloped post-graduate sector as a growth area. Others have stepped up their marketing campaigns for prospective students, often through the creation of exchange agreements, study abroad programs, gap-year travel opportunities, and the like. A further effect has been the institution of student evaluations, pay-for-performance criteria, and other checks on faculty autonomy common in the U.S. Yet another has been the aggressive use of university rankings and accreditation bodies to ratify the quality of individual programs or institutions.

The complexity of these developments invites a closer look at the current state of higher education planning in Japan, and who or what is likely to propel future reform. The 1998a government White Paper on Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century provides many of the relevant clues from which a longer-term sector topography might be mapped. However tentative the sketch at this point, the process appears to fit snugly into that venerable Japanese tradition of *wakon yosai*: western substance, Japanese method. The confluence of the two, from West to East, will begin to define what is meant by the newly globalized university in Japan.

## ii

As the above outline of “macro” and micronic factors suggests, much of what is being exported into the Japanese higher education sector falls under the elastic heading of the corporate university. As such, one can also speak of the Americanization of global higher education, though with important adjustments for what is non-exportable in the American college, what is intermixed at foreign points of entry, and what is common to the first-world education sector on the whole. No other topic in the international

9 It is for this reason that the MEXT higher education structural reform plan of 2001 requires all universities to undergo an external program review. Tellingly, however, baseline standards for such a review have not been worked out.

higher education field, however, has generated more discussion than the accelerated market orientation of the contemporary university. As with the globalization discourse, it is often difficult to retain a coherent image of main developments. To provide a preliminary orientation from which later comparisons might be launched, therefore, I would like to examine changes observable at both state and the institutional levels, with the latter disaggregated into student education, faculty autonomy, and administrative service.

### ***The Public Investment in Post-secondary Education:***

The standard argument for the public funding of higher education is that universities tangibly contribute to the commonweal. In the Anglo-American context, this contribution historically has taken two forms. The first involves the creation of positive externalities attributable to extended schooling: technological innovation and competent professional services, but also lower crime rates, reduced dependency on the public fisc, greater racial integration, and increased cultural opportunity. The second exists as targeted government investment in universities for strategic research and training: laboratories for scientific testing in WWII, Cold War math and science programs, and even, arguably, ROTC and military scholarship opportunities.

Of the two, federal direct investment has received less critical attention. American institutional histories typically limit themselves to the government research and development contracts awarded to a dozen or so influential universities in the 1940's and 50's (Thelin, 2004; McGrath, 2002). As the American Association of Universities reports (2006), however, the federal role in university research continues to be significant, even if decoupled from military strategy: in 2002, government investment amounted to \$22 billion, or 60% of sector-wide research budgets. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the vigorousness of this relationship can at least in part be attributed to the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which allowed universities to profit from their patented discoveries on the condition that federal bodies would enjoy a non-exclusive license to any work-product. As McPherson and Schapiro have put it, "[i]n a very real sense, the Bayh-Dole Act encouraged academic capitalism" (1993, p.46). By rethinking the research investment relationship as a profit-sharing contract, government effectively became an incentive-driven business partner. Its position remains a privileged one, and one ultimately dedicated to public welfare goals. The change in orientation, however, is noteworthy.

A similar ideational shift, but with different results, is discernible in the declining prestige of the argument for education as a public good. The objection is not so much to higher education as a positive externality, or even to the standard claim that for-profit providers will characteristically under-produce a socially optimal level of education. Instead, there is a growing conviction that the primary beneficiary of post-secondary training is not society but the degree-holding graduate. As such, he or she should be taxed for amortizable future gains. A decline in the number of students seeking public service careers, an increase in remedial coursework, and the inflated salaries open to graduates in high-demand fields have all contributed to this revised outlook. Whatever the sources of change, however, the government response has been predictable: federal aid programs find themselves with a ready-made argument for shifting the cost of educational services to individual users. With larger career payouts at stake, applicants can be expected to finance a greater percentage of their studies through investment plans or debt assumption.

State legislatures are handed a different version of the same argument. Where students agree to spend more on higher education (where, in other words, their demand curves for a university qualification are inelastic), universities can raise tuition without experiencing a proportional drop in enrollment. Awarding the same level of government subsidy would therefore hand public institutions an unwarranted windfall. In fact, as Ronald Ehrenberg (2000) argues, increasing direct student aid may have the same effect, as universities manipulate the availability of government funding in order to raise fees. Whether or not this would follow, it is undeniable that financial aid policy in recent years has moved dramatically from federal

student grants to a portfolio of federal and other loans, reflecting a new understanding of the student as utility maximizing consumer (St. John, et al., 2004; Rudy, 1976).<sup>10</sup> The subsidized matriculant is in this sense a kind of welfare drifter.

### ***Institutions I: Student Education:***

To the extent that any learning institution that relies upon student fees and other private contributions is in some sense a business, American education has been a commercial enterprise for more than 200 years (Rudolph, 1990; Morison, 1965).<sup>11</sup> As David Kirp (2003) remarks, however, what distinguishes the contemporary American multiversity from its smaller, more isolated predecessors is not its focus on the “bottom line,” but the degree to which an ideology of efficiency, pegged to microeconomic theories of the firm, has saturated institutional thinking at all levels. This is what is meant by Higher Ed., Inc., where parents and alumni play at being stockholders, staff and faculty function as managers, and students act the role of consumers.

As educational shoppers, student-enrollees are assumed to have choices among competing institutional products. They are further assumed to be academic rent seekers whose rent-seeking selections reflect concrete educational goals and some awareness of the opportunity costs incurred. The criteria used to evaluate and compare different programs are necessarily various, but predictably include such factors as disciplinary strength in the major, “name” professors, internship and research opportunities, school rankings, and reputation among peers and counselors.

As in most market oriented systems, the college admissions game, in Christopher Avery’s sense (2003), favors those with the best access to information. Given the complexity of the information to be absorbed, however, it is questionable just how sophisticated student choices really are, even when augmented by parental advice and professional coaching. Labelling is likely to have a more significant impact on admissions decisions than any advanced understanding of what individual degree programs entail, even among students for whom academic rigor is a primary consideration. Ratifying the label, in turn, is its signaling power on the jobs market. As Eric Gould (2003) avers in citing a 1995 *Chronicle of Higher Education* poll, the fact that university education continues to be in demand across all economic strata may ultimately stem from “a consistent public belief that higher education [is] a necessity for employment” (pp.16-17).

Where study is closely linked to employment outcomes, and where tuition levels reflect the amortization of anticipated future earnings, the choice of academic concentration will be strongly influenced by industry demand, salary structure, and promotion opportunities. The financial risk in choosing the “wrong” field, or of wandering among different fields in search of intellectual fulfillment, increases proportionally. The humanities as the garden in which such wandering has traditionally been permitted, even encouraged, becomes a more expensive curricular option.<sup>12</sup> The costs are especially high in those areas with significant linguistic or intellectual barriers to entry: Classics, for example, or Philosophy, whose institutional viability may ultimately depend upon its identification as luxury goods.<sup>13</sup>

10 As St. John puts it, there has in recent decades been “a transformation in emphasis in federal student aid from equal access to middle-class affordability through loans and tax credits” (2004, p.1).

11 It is worth recalling in this respect that the early, religiously affiliated colleges which (with the exceptions of Rutgers and William and Mary) eventually came together to form the Ivy League were initially public foundations. Only after 1789, and then primarily in frontier regions, did colleges routinely begin as private establishments, even if Harvard could be nominated a de facto private university by 1800.

12 This is the sense of Engell and Dangerfield’s (2005) reminder that “[f]ewer than 10% of colleges and universities in this country [US] now offer degrees primarily in the liberal arts and sciences” (p.6)

13 And therefore, according to standard microeconomic theory, in possession of an inverted demand curve: reduce the rarity of the Philosophy major by reducing its rigors (or “price”), and fewer candidates would sign on.



Other disciplines will be forced to clarify their mission as pre-professional or teacher training programs. In the case of English, university-wide writing requirements sustain minimum levels of student demand.<sup>14</sup> In the sciences, hot-button topics such as cloning or creationism can serve as bridges between the academy and the public sphere. In all cases, a consumer-driven curriculum will tend to favor majors and degree programs with clearly articulated standards, immediate cultural application, and proven vocational relevance. The days in which the university, with Abraham Flexner's approval (1994), could dismiss business schools as "not academic," are long gone.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Institution II: Faculty Autonomy:***

In the 1960's, when Christopher Jencks and David Riesman were collecting their data for the *Academic Revolution* (1969), an unprecedented expansion in American post-secondary education, coupled with judicially affirmed safeguards on academic freedom, had shifted the balance of power in many American universities toward faculty governance. Since then, the pendulum has steadily shifted to the other extreme.

Internally, an overproduction of Ph.D.'s in the humanities and social sciences has led to a lingering surplus of academic labor. Although the scarcity of jobs might initially be thought to have strengthened departmental solidarity and to have raised the intellectual bar by culling dead wood, this is not what happened. For the hardest-hit disciplines, the chronic underemployment of Ph.D.'s called into question the relevance of the graduate training on offer. It has also led to a search for distinction that has encompassed not only a Darwinian publish-or-perish ethos but an identity politics whereby the marginalization of certain social groups could be used to advocate preferential hiring and promotion. Insofar as the minority scholars who were the beneficiaries of such practices could hardly be termed "marginal", the association was rhetorically strained from the beginning. But it served to fortify academic principalities that could look after their own economic interests against a vastly more amorphous and disorganized profession, as well as against a better organized but generally indifferent or hostile university sector on the whole. The market strategy was clear: as long as the various cultural studies could maintain their status as central trading partners, they could benefit by restricting their club to those most likely to advance the cause (Bender and Schorsky, 1997; Jameson, 1995).

In terms of faculty autonomy, such coterie behavior benefited some at the expense of the many. The goliardic legions of part-time instructors—frequently relegated to their labors because they could claim no special status—were immediate losers, being increasingly reliant upon their tenure-line superiors for the renewal of short-term, ill-paying contracts. But many traditional academics also began to feel the pinch, particularly if they were deemed to be insufficiently politicized, or could be thought, as with Larry Summers in the recent Harvard Presidential controversy, to hold non-doctrinal views regarding women and minorities in the sciences. Something further: to the extent that race and gender questions typically generate more public interest than, say, new breakthroughs in Donne studies, academics in fields with a history of outspoken advocacy are better positioned to make names for themselves outside the narrow confines of the discipline. Following the advertiser's credo that there is no such thing as bad publicity, media exposure can make it possible for the select few to direct the terms of their academic employment. Such "stars" create their own weather. Colleagues, funding bodies, and students are all magnetized by the gravitational pull of the star, whose marketing value to a hosting university may have only a tenuous relationship to scholarly accomplishment.

14 Although school specific programs also exist. Boston University, for example, has long had a hybrid system in which some colleges develop their own courses and hire their own faculty, while others use the English Department's composition sequence. For an examination of a segmented writing program that ultimately failed, see Kirp (2003).

15 One might also recall Newman's characterization of practical studies, in his "Idea of the University," as a "deal of trash."

The evolution of a star-and-satellite system of organizational prestige is precisely what we would expect from a commercialized education sector. It might still be argued, however, that such an accelerated economy of winners and losers would never have been possible without an often lamented barrier to institutional flexibility: the security of tenure. This is so in large part for the reason adumbrated above: the work academics do, particularly in humanities departments and particularly if they campaign against commercializing trends, can easily appear a waste of social resources better applied to the practical ends of bridge building or internet shopping. Even if the career motives of profit-maximizing academics are similar to those of real estate moguls or investment bankers, the message is not. Where the disutility attaching to this message, in turn, is not clearly outpointed by the utility of having “names” on staff, the profit maximizing university manager has little incentive to retain rainmakers who are also troublemakers.

Indeed, from a business perspective, the need for tenure reform is generally understood to be a slam dunk. No CEO, President, or middle-manager in any publicly traded company in the west enjoys legally guaranteed employment beyond the terms of contract.<sup>16</sup> No profit-maximizing enterprise or economically viable industry could possibly afford such an organizational lapse in oversight and accountability. In common with trade unionism (so the argument goes), academic tenure is the product of an outdated market structure. As in the civil service, employment protection is a notorious breeder of workplace inefficiency. Professors released from the wheel invariably become slackers, neglecting their teaching, service, and research duties to pursue issueless hobbies such as macramé or model shipbuilding at public expense. Wouldn't you?

The literature addressing the elimination of tenure is extensive though generally inconclusive (McPherson, Schapiro, and Winston, 1994; Chait and Trowe, 1997; Byrne, 1997). It might be most useful to understand academic employment guarantees as expressing a principle of professional self-governance with origins in property law and the monastic fraternity. To the extent that capitalist networks function by transforming substance into process, and by placing consumer wants ahead of producer standards, the triumph of the corporate university is likely to mean the end of *Lehr- und Lernfreiheit* as currently practiced. What will emerge is the professor as *Freiemitarbeiter*—an independent contractor submitting his wares to the highest bidder who, if she has been selected as one of society's fittest, is likely not only to drive a hard bargain but hold the unimpeachable conviction that she is right in doing so.

### ***Institution III: Administrative Service:***

In the university as fraternal guild, administrative tasks, always subsidiary to the main academic purpose, are overseen by members of faculty who might be thought to have an especial aptitude for service of this kind. In the corporate university, on the other hand, academic training is itself a service, directed by professional administrators with graduate degrees in the field. These are the Prufrocks, the Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns, of the higher education sector (“do I dare admit a lemon?”), called in because academic marketing increasingly demands an understanding of the many non-academic factors that influence student enrollment choices: location, boarding and leisure facilities, social and athletic reputation, networking potential, and miscellaneous extra-curricular opportunities.

Again, much has been written about the explosion of what Philip Altbach (2001) has called the reign of administrative culture in recent university affairs (Zemsky, Wegner, and Massey, 2005). Some of the attention has been absorbed by the pale drawn between students and student-athletes at major conference schools (Bowen and Shulman, 2002).<sup>17</sup> Campaigns to upgrade academic reputation have also frequently

16 In the U.S., the federal Supreme Court decision, *Slochower v. Board of Education*, 350 US 551 (1956), established academic tenure as a property right in public universities, and therefore constitutionally protected under the 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments. Private universities have conventionally followed suit.

17 Probably best known as Bobby Knight's former bete noire at Indiana, Murray Spurber (2000) has also written a lively and opinionated account of NCAA athletics, American-style.



relied upon capital improvement drives.<sup>18</sup> Certain universities have hired marketing and public relations managers directly from industry.<sup>19</sup> Legal counsel offices in larger universities have expanded dramatically as student affairs become more increasingly litigious.<sup>20</sup> A recent, and one has every reason to think representative, perusal of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* job postings lists 731 positions in Student Affairs, as against 432 in the Humanities, 354 in Education, and 199 in the Arts (2006). As Julie Reuben (1996) has argued, the surge in student services is in part due to the awkward void left by the disappearance of moral instruction in the curriculum. Pastoral care and economic necessity thereby become regular, if not necessarily compatible bedfellows.

At some level, the focus on student services also reflects greater student diversity. The existence of Latino and African-American cultural centers presumes a critical mass of matriculants with the relevant ethnic background. They must still compose a minority on campus to require organization, but be sufficiently numerous to benefit from it. The broader observation here is that diversity does not necessarily equal integration. With faint but still audible echoes to the “nations” of the Medieval European university, the continued existence of clubs, programs, and degree programs in ethnic studies multiplies the number of independent administrative functions within the university as a whole. The greater the number of “interests” to be served, in turn, the greater the demand for administrators to provide leadership, many of whose job descriptions will be only tangentially academic. Each according to his wants, each according to his needs.

### iii

The image that emerges from this brief outline of recent shifts in the topography of American higher education reveals a progressively more differentiated system with respect to rank, institutional wealth, faculty autonomy, and student service provisions. To the extent that this differentiation process attempts to re-apportion the balance between rights and opportunities, it mirrors political and economic developments in Anglo-American public life as a whole. The creation of a (nominally) equal society through state-conferred benefits gives way to a prospectively wealthier, prospectively freer, community in which the fruits of Individual merit are to be returned to their creators. At both levels—that of the university and that of the state—competition becomes the driver for achievement, self-betterment, and a more efficient, more rationally organized social order. Moral objections to the harshness of this arrangement of winners and losers are answered in part by an appeal to social mobility enhanced by technological access and power. The Horatio Alger shoeshine boy risen by dint of hard work and practical smarts to become President of General Motors is now the minority child of a welfare parent, ferreting out internet scholarship opportunities on the Internet with an eye to making it big in law or banking.

Like all such images, this one doesn’t withstand extended analytical scrutiny. Its application to the university sector is even more uncertain. Derek Bok, former and currently acting President of Harvard, helps to explain why:

“No university can measure the value of its research output or determine reliably how much its

18 A representative case here is Northeastern University in Boston, which occupies an enviable location on Huntington Avenue near the Fenway, and which invested heavily in an omnibus student center, exercise facilities and high-rise luxury dorms in the 1990’s. Northeastern remains in the third-tier of private universities in the Boston area, but its goal of being among the top 100 research institutions in the U.S. is not utopian.

19 Under Dan Cheever’s tenure as President of Simmons College in Boston, for example, one such hire has been Maria Kadison, Vice President of Marketing, who was brought in to redefine and project the College’s traditional mission of providing professional training for women. Interviews with Kadison and Cheever, November, 2003.

20 Not the least in the area of sexual harassment allegations. For an expose of some such cases that include harassment as a reverse motive, see Kors and Silverglate (1998).

students are learning. For this reason, efforts to adapt the corporate model by trying to measure performance or “manage by objective” are much more difficult and dangerous for universities than they are for conventional enterprises” (2004, p.20).

As a description of institutional trajectories, however, the new ethos of opportunity agrees with what Sheila Slaughter has diagnosed as the characteristics of recent globalizing forces in higher education in Australia, Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. Her conclusion identifies four common features: an extended vocational curriculum, an increase in the number of students with lower mean state subsidies, an emphasis on applied research, and an enhanced role for government in the long-term planning (if not financing) of higher education (Altbach, 2001). To the extent that these developments can be traced in four of the largest education systems in the world, spanning the gamut of programs and institutions on three continents, one can confidently speak of the commercialization of the university, however American in inspiration, as a global phenomenon. If we return to the beginning of our discussion, then, the question that remains is how successfully Japanese higher education will be globalized according to these and the other commercializing criteria we have discussed.

As noted above, reforms initiated by MEXT, have already wrought visible changes in the structure and financing of Japanese public universities at the national level. Arguably, these reforms began with the purging of older western academics from national corporation universities in the mid-1990’s, a house-cleaning that the disenfranchised were unable to nullify in court. More conventionally, however, the 1998a government white paper, “A Vision of Universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Reform Measures” qualifies as the signal transition in educational policy outlook.

The White Paper itself sets out four goals, broadly defined: the cultivation of less rigid study programs (“the ability to pursue one’s own ends”), flexibility in curricular organization, the importance of university leadership in identifying and guiding the institutional mission, and a policy of greater cooperation and transparency in university governance (1998a). The published translation of this document is often infelicitous, adding to the difficulty for those with insufficient Japanese to pin down concrete proposals among a welter of abstractions. To frame the discussion, however, the Education Ministry sounds a familiar note: “[t]he age requires global cooperation and co-existence while it [also] requires reinforcement of international competition” (1998a). To remain a leading player in the international arena, in other words, Japan will need to balance the ideals of political negotiation with those of commercial wealth maximization. Doing so demands the training of a broad middle class both cosmopolitan and technologically adept. As Monbusho sees it, the universities have a crucial role to play in realizing these ends, specifically through “the advancement, diversification and individualization of education and research and [sic] revitalization of administration” (1998a).

“Diversification” and “individualization” are terms that carry considerable weight in the 1998 White Paper, and appear to be similar to what in Anglo-American contexts is referred to as the creation of market niches. Although the language is often imprecise, one gets the general message: “all universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, colleges of technology and professional training colleges must make their own philosophy and goals clearer and develop their diversity and ideas by demonstrating their characteristics.” The first thing for a given institution to determine, in other words, is its organizational mission, which should in some way contribute to the overall policy objectives of higher education reform, but do so in a way that does not duplicate what other institutions and sectors are attempting. Such is the preferred model of competition and cooperation on a domestic scale, by which institutions “stimulate each other” while offering a different product to what can be had elsewhere.

At this point, contemporary Japanese higher education policy agrees in all relevant respects with its

Anglo-European antecedents. The more the post-secondary sector is coupled to political and economic ends, the more it will need to clarify its objectives for non-specialist audiences. The more it is required to clarify its purpose, the greater the push for multiple purposes which different institutions are uniquely positioned to fulfill. In like fashion, private transport is important to the development of national economies. All makers of private transport vehicles offer different types of conveyance, from basic to boxy to banalistic. But the Honda Mission is nonetheless somewhat different in engineering and design to the Nissan Match and the Toyota Prius. Know your market and go for it. In a fully commercialized world, this applies to universities as much as to individual businesses.

At the same time, however, and as the Ministry of Education duly emphasizes, the traditional role of university education as right of passage and the declining number of high school graduates through 2010 put particular pressure on universities to both recruit and motivate students in ways unfamiliar to the west. The convention of passing all enrollees regardless of performance becomes increasingly controversial where some augmentation of human capital is expected in an international knowledge economy and where the pool of university matriculants includes more high school graduates unprepared for further study. To address this challenge, the Ministry of Education advocates the implementation of “a strict grading system for university students and [a] focus on the teaching abilities of academic [sic]” (1998). Meeting the staffing demands of a global economy implies a sustained level of qualified graduates. As age cohorts decline, however, lower quality entrants need to be transformed into higher quality leavers through the auspices of superior teaching.

Because superior teaching may be hindered by tenure guarantees, the Ministry of Education recommends reducing such awards in favor of “fixed-term employment.” Not wishing to be impolite, the Ministry of Education puts forward this suggestion “so that professors can transfer more easily.” The reasoning here would not fool an eight-year-old, but it highlights the need, in sector reform, for *entire* sector reform. A more sharply defined mission is ineffective unless the curriculum reflects institutional planning objectives. The curriculum will not serve its educational function unless students are willing and able to benefit from it and faculty are committed to its success. Where faculty set the curriculum, and where they find themselves socially and intellectually removed from their students, reform aimed at reducing faculty autonomy and compromising scholarly ends will predictably fail.

For this reason, perhaps, the Ministry of Education also advocates an executive-centered system, ringed about by faculty committees whose role would be primarily “deliberative.” A system of town meetings, in other words, in which certain answers are expected and contrary answers ignored or punished. National corporation universities have recently moved to such a system, with what has thus far been muted controversy. Private universities have traditionally depended upon such a leadership style to assert their commercial viability. In both cases, the growing complexity of higher education, combined with internal and external reform pressures, has accentuated the perceived need for central command.

How successful this command will be, however, is unclear. Even if the structural reform of Japanese higher education succeeds, and faculty autonomy is reduced to yield leaner, more competitive student nurseries, the skilled labor shortage created by declined age cohorts may doom strict grading policies where these do not produce significant job investment returns. Or, rather, restrictive credit-granting initiatives may only work at institutions that draw from the lowest deciles of high school graduates, and whose matriculants are generally uninformed (or misled) about job-market options or requirements. As information technology and other deprovincializing factors lead to greater sophistication among shoppers for a post-secondary credential, even these lower-tier institutions will find it more difficult to sell their distinctive brand of socialization. Articulated degree programs, gap-year and study abroad opportunities, internship placements, and integrated industry-campus classrooms may generate more reliable and sustainable revenue sources.

To conclude, three of Sheila Slaughter's four characteristics of globalized Anglophone higher education would seem to apply to the contemporary Japanese context, with the fourth (greater student numbers) reinforcing one central feature of the corporate university in its absence. Without increased student demand by adequately prepared applicants, however, the other proposed reforms to an oft criticized and self-consciously moribund higher education sector are unlikely to prove effective. It is possible that with inflated foreign enrollments, accelerated graduate programs, and a halving of the number of private institutions currently offering post-secondary degrees, some of the implosive pressures on the Japanese university sector will be relieved. In a society that continues to view post-secondary education as a fashion item, however, it is doubtful that significant changes to institutional behavior will succeed without significant changes in the public understanding of what the majority of Japanese institutions actually contribute to the commonweal. The Ministry of Education has every reason to want to make Japanese higher education more competitive domestically and globally. Whether it will be able to do so may finally depend—and by its own globalizing logic—on where shrinking pools of college-eligible students will decide to invest their resources. That decision will ultimately be made not by university presidents, education ministers, faculty representatives, or community and business leaders (though all will no doubt play their parts), but by a new and newly empowered class of student consumers.

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