

Private Universities' Mission in Japan

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In regards to the number of new graduates entering the workforce, the number of four-year university graduates surpassed the number of high school graduates in 1998. High school graduates amounted to approximately 186,000 whereas four-year university graduates amounted to approximately 447,000 in 2019. Although there are 2.4 times as many university graduates as high school graduates,

unfortunately this does not mean that the number of jobs requiring a university degree has also increased. In other words, companies see university graduates simply as a source of manpower to ease labor shortages, and use them as they see fit while ignoring the specialties these graduates learned at university. This is also a cause of Japan's lower productivity.

I think globalization is a process whereby the core of work gradually transitions from the movement of people to the movement of information. It will become possible to work anywhere in the world. Transportation networks developed during the Age of Discovery and the Industrial Revolution, trade and commerce expanded, people, things, and money traveled around the world, and this became the focus of people's work. The globalized information society will return the world to a state where once again, people will not move around as much. However, this will differ from an agricultural

society where people produce their own food on their own land.

For instance, in the manufacturing industry, a person working in Japan will be able to create things using the entire world as a factory. It is said that currently one third of the workforce is in the manufacturing industry in Japan. With the evolution of artificial intelligence and robots, this ratio is expected to shrink to one in ten in 30 years. Furthermore, thanks to globalization, the need to create Japanese products in Japan will disappear. In 1985, when I was a university student, more than 97% of Japanese products were manufactured in Japan, but now, more than 25% are being produced at factories overseas.

After China and India, about half of the world's population that previously wasn't participating in global economic competition joined in. With the end of the Cold War, participation in economic competition increased by half of the world's population in a single stroke. Now nearly everyone in

the world is part of the competition. As Japan's population declines, we will not be able to maintain the country's overall productivity if we do not increase the productivity of each individual. In other words, in the future the wealth of a country and its people will not be determined by the strength of the country or its companies. Rather, the wealth of a country and its people will be determined by the abilities of its people. For this reason—and now more than ever—education that increases the abilities of people is necessary.

Modern society, in which ICT has advanced by leaps and bounds, is completely different than the society of the past, in which people made decisions based on the premise that some things are absolutely right or absolutely wrong. The sayings, methods and so on of individuals who lived in the era when no one used a computer are useful as fragmentary knowledge, but they will never provide the essential truth needed to solve modern society's challenges.

In the age of constant change to come, diversity will become

incredibly important. In an age like this, developing labourers who are only suited to conditions right now is meaningless. And no amount of that sort of education will produce results that meaningfully contribute to society. This is because people who can only cope with current conditions will likely become obsolete just as quickly in the age to come.

National and public universities operate on taxpayer money, so they are obligated to develop talents that meet the average needs of taxpayers at the time. For this reason, these universities must focus on things in the short term.

In contrast, a private university's purpose is to realize its founding principles, and because these founding principles never change, private universities are capable of thinking about matters in the long term. Conducting independent education and research based on their own founding principles is both the right and the privilege of private universities, and producing results is their obligation.

For a private university, conducting education and research

that suit its founding principles also constitutes its primary form of social contribution. Private universities provide a public benefit, producing three-fourths of official Japan's university graduates. That alone fulfills the responsibility of sufficient social contribution without fulfilling some government requirement.

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