

# Higher Education in the Digital Society

~ In relation with access to higher education ~



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Higher education including universities and colleges have been challenged by the big movement of “University Reform” since 1990s.

In the meantime, information and communication technology (ICT) has developed enormously and it has helped universities reform and improve their system, including teaching/research and management/administration.

Now almost all universities have set up their own web sites and also their e-Campus, and both students and instructors may/must access their e-Campus to deal with academic and administrative work on the web.

Application and admission by internet, searching books and documents by computer network become popular. Using cell phone in classroom as a new device for instruction is not rare now. Universities and other higher education institutions now cannot be managed effectively without the help of ICT.

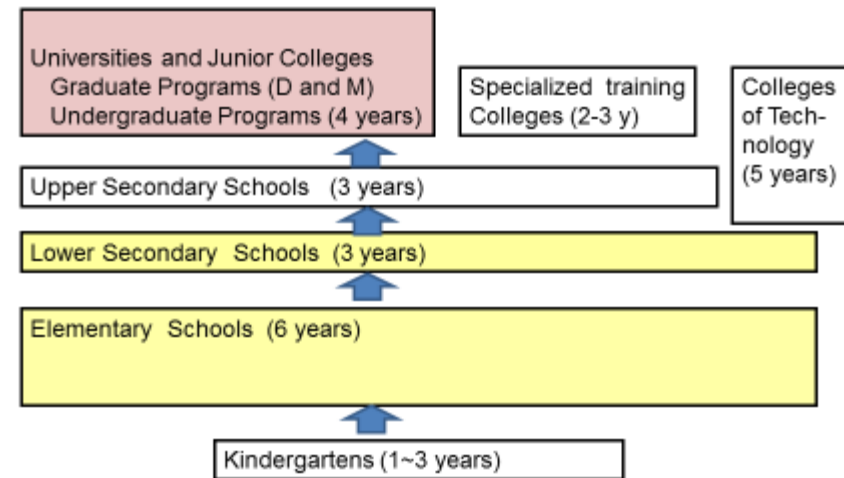
Nearly three decades have passed since then, but the reform movement does not seem to end. Rather, the pace of reform become faster.

Many people outside universities support the idea that universities should be more useful for the society. They think the current universities are too old and too conservative. The society that surrounds higher education has been changing rapidly.

Japanese government and industry recently referred the new idea that “Society 5.0” will come soon where, beyond the information and knowledge-based society, everything connect digitally and relate each other in a very sophisticated mode. Universities must respond more and more to such a very big change.

At present in Japan, universities are regulated rigidly by laws and orders that the government sets up. The basic idea is that universities should maintain and improve their quality of teaching and research by following government regulations.

Organization of the School System in Japan



Universities must have their own campuses and school buildings physically including classrooms and library. They must provide courses in the classroom at least 30 weeks a year. They accept their new students mainly in April according to their tightly scheduled academic calendar. They must not accept students more than capacity that is approved by the government.

In the digital age, large campus, way of providing course and its duration, way of students' acceptance, maximum limit of enrollment, and so on which have been regulated by the government may be and should be changed.

Digital and communication technology will overcome the limitation of space and time and people may access higher education far more flexibly and easily.

They can access higher education even in other countries. Students can easily cross the border, both geographically and politically.



In the near future higher education will become essential if people want to live positively in the digital age. Value of university degree becomes higher. Access to higher education with reasonable cost become more important issue for higher education policy.

People will look for such opportunity not only in their domestic market but in the global market around the world.

