
Reform of University Education for Non-Elite University Students

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After the shift in higher education policy in the 1990s, higher education underwent a rapid transformation from the previous “mass stage” to a “universal stage.” This stage shift was accompanied by the emergence of problems in university education that would not have been conceivable until then. I see this as a problem of “non-elite university students,” and have raised a number of arguments from the viewpoint that the direction of education reform in the group of universities that are forced to accept such students is an issue for “universal universities” (Igami 2010). Among other points, the basic direction of educational reform should be to have academic ability at primary and secondary levels completely taught in “remedial education,” and to present “career models for non-elite students” in “career education.” In conventional universities, these have been considered outside the scope of university education, but in universal universities, they are seen as extremely essential elements of educational reform.

I. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Japan’s universities have gone through huge changes that are astonishing in both speed and scale, and they are continuing to do so. Behind this lies a rapid rise in the university advancement rate. Using the higher education advancement rate as an index to express the stage shift in higher education, American higher education researcher Martin Trow expressed an advancement rate of up to 15% as the “elite stage,” that from 15% to 50% as the “mass stage,” and more than 50% as the “universal stage.” Japan’s higher education advancement rate (including universities and junior colleges) reached the mass stage in the 1960s and remained at that stage for a long time thereafter. With the shift in higher education policy at the beginning of the 1990s, however, the advancement rate rose rapidly, reaching the universal stage in the second half of the 2000s.

In any country, problems that cannot be handled adequately under the previous educational system arise in the process of expanding higher education. However, Japan is thought to face quite different issues compared to other countries, mainly due to the characteristics of the educational system as a whole (including primary and secondary education) and the unique structure of the labor market that employs young manpower. I perceive this as the emergence of “non-elite university students,” and view the issues of universities that are forced to accept them and deliver them to society as issues unique to “universal universities.” Here, I would like to raise points about the specific nature of educational reform in this group of universities.

Japan’s systems of education and labor are of course common knowledge to Japanese readers, but may not be so obvious for non-Japanese readers. I will therefore explain them

very briefly in the following.

II. Changes in Japan's Systems of Education and Labor, and Their Significance

A separate paper would be needed to explain trends in Japan's systems of education and labor in their entirety. Therefore, I would particularly like to give a brief explanation of changes in recent years and their significance, insofar as they relate to the discussion of university education reform.

1. Changes in Japan's Systems of Education and Labor, and Their Significance

(1) Changes over the Last 20 Years

Japan's system of education as a whole has been positioned under the policy guidelines of the regulatory agency, namely the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, until 2001 called the Ministry of Education), and remains so today. For higher education, however, a major "deregulation" was carried out as a result of policy development in the 1990s. Specifically, ministerial ordinances on University Establishment Standards were revised, and the content of university education (which until then had been decided under the detailed instruction of the regulatory agency) was basically to be left to the free decision of the universities themselves. This is known as the "deregulation of university act," a simplification or liberalization of University Establishment Standards. On university admission capacity, similarly, while the 18-year-old population is definitely expected to decline in the long term, a temporary increase in university capacity was permitted in response to a temporary increase in the 18-year-old population, and this came to be permitted permanently in practical terms.

One researcher of higher education policy has summarized these trends, commenting that higher education in Japan has shifted from a "planned era" to a "marketplace era" (Amano 1999). This means that, at the same time as being liberated from the paternalistic control of the regulatory agency, universities also had to accept the "freedom" to be defeated in fierce competition among universities for an ever-dwindling 18-year-old population.

On this point, one should also mention that Japan's higher education has been expanding, especially in the private sector. According to the latest edition of MEXT's School Basic Survey (FY2013), the number of universities (excluding junior colleges) currently stands at 782, of which 606 or 77.5% are privately run. In terms of student numbers, similarly, of a total of around 2.87 million (including postgraduate students), some 2.10 million or around 73% attend private universities.

When the Act on Subsidies for Private Schools came into effect in 1976, these private institutions that account for the majority of Japan's universities were permitted to have half of their operating expenses for education and research subsidized by the state. However, the rate of this subsidy has gradually declined after reaching nearly 30% in 1980; in recent

years, it has been trending at around 10%.

Given the meager prospect of financial support from the state, private universities in Japan face a fierce “competition for survival” due to the decline in the 18-year-old population. Currently, around 40% of all universities do not fill their admissions capacity (according to a survey by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan). And although few universities are actually closing at the moment, there is significant concern that this kind of university could increase rapidly from around 2020, when further sharp decline in the 18-year-old population is expected.

(2) Significance of the Changes

It would be surely no exaggeration to say that levels of academic ability among young Japanese have been achieved through competition in university entrance exams. The possibility of passing examinations for admission to individual universities is shown in an index known as *hensachi* or standard scores, based on mock examinations set by leading prep schools. Young people in Japan have striven to reach higher levels of academic ability from the stage of primary education (i.e. much earlier than senior high school), in the hope of entering universities with higher standard scores. However, this competition for academic ability is undergoing a rapid transformation as universities enter the era of “competition for survival.”

Universities that have always been able to select candidates using high standard scores still have extremely high “selectivity,” but in those from the middle level downwards, the function of selecting candidates has rapidly been lost. Originally, the system of entrance examinations for Japanese universities was based a combination of “general admission,” in which selection was mainly based on academic ability shown in the entrance exam, and “admission by recommendation,” in which selection would be based on elements other than the exam (e.g. a letter of recommendation or interview). In recent years, however, the proportion of new students entering university via “admission by recommendation” has risen, particularly in universities with greatly reduced selectivity. The MEXT guidelines set out to ensure that the proportion of students admitted to private universities via recommendation does not exceed 50%, but this proportion has in fact been exceeded in many universities.

Owing to this vast decline in universities’ selective function, university advancement is now a realistic option even in senior high schools known unofficially as “multiple career path schools” (to distinguish them from “academic path schools” whose graduates usually advance to university). In these schools, university admission has not conventionally been the main path available after leaving school. In other words, most of the school leavers follow “diverse career paths” such as “employment,” “specialized training college” or “no employment.” If a candidate’s academic ability becomes little more than a formal requirement for university admission, the only remaining hurdle would be whether the family’s financial circumstances would permit university advancement. Focusing only on humanities faculties in private universities (i.e. excluding sciences and medicine), the current average

of students' first year payments comprises tuition fees of around 750,000 yen and an admission fee of around 250,000 yen, plus an amount of around 150,000 yen for equipment maintenance, totaling around 1,150,000 yen (survey by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan). For reference, state universities charge tuition fees of 535,800 yen and an admission fee of 282,000 yen, totaling around 800,000 yen.

Japan has some of the highest tuition fees of any developed nation, and is the only country where there are hardly any grant-type public scholarships. Not too many households can comfortably afford to pay university fees amounting to nearly 4 million yen over four years; after somehow managing to meet the payments in the first year, students are forced to rely on their own part-time work income or loan-style scholarships, which have to be repaid with interest after graduation. Even then, many pupils of multiple career path schools who can actually realize the previously unavailable option of university advancement choose that path without any expectation at all of mastering a discipline at university.

Thus, paths to becoming a "university student," mainly from "multiple career path schools" to "low-selectivity universities," despite not having acquired sufficient academic ability to receive a university education, have expanded over the last 20 years or so. (One should quickly add, however, that a lowering of academic ability among students advancing from "academic path schools" to "high-selectivity universities" is also becoming problematic. If anything, it is generally these students who are tending to be seen as "a growing social problem," but in the author's view, this is not where the true problem lies). In the sense that they are a group of students with completely different abilities and motivations compared to the academic ability selection group in the "elite stage," I would like to define these as "non-elite university students."

2. Trends and Characteristics of Japan's Labor System

(1) Changes over the Last 20 Years

When Japan's higher education started to change in the 1990s, huge changes were also seen in the labor market. According to data from a private research body that surveys the jobs-to-applicants ratio among university students (including postgraduate students), the jobs-to-applicants ratio for students due to graduate in March 1991 was 2.86 (from the Recruit Works Institute College Graduates Job Opening Survey). With the collapse of the so-called "bubble economy," however, the ratio fell dramatically, going below 1 for the first time at 0.99 for March 2000 graduates. It gradually recovered thereafter, reaching 2.14 for March 2008 graduates, but fell back again under the impact of the global financial crisis of 2008 and will only be about 1.28 for March 2014 graduates.

However, there is considerable disparity within this ratio, depending on corporate scale and sector. Dividing companies into those with fewer than 1,000 employees and those with 1,000 or more, the ratio has trended between 0.5–0.7 over these last 20 years in companies with 1,000 or more employees. Those with fewer than 1,000 employees have undergone quite sudden change, rising sharply from 1.55 for March 2000 graduates to 4.26 for

March 2009 graduates. But the ratio has fallen back dramatically in recent years, and stands at 1.91 for March 2014 graduates. By sector, the finance industry has trended between around 0.2 and 0.5 over the last 20 years while the distribution industry has generally hovered around 3 or more, but has gone through huge fluctuations; the ratio was 7.31 for March 2008 graduates but had fallen to 3.73 for March 2013 graduates.

With these changes in the labor market for university graduates, universities are no longer institutions that necessarily guarantee stable employment for their graduates. In the MEXT School Basic Survey, the career paths of graduates from all universities in Japan every year are surveyed. According to this, the proportion of graduates “Not advancing to higher level courses nor entering employment” and “Entering provisional employment” (here collectively called “non-employed graduates”) was around 10% in 1990, but rose sharply after the collapse of the bubble economy, passing the 30% mark in 2000. After that, influenced by a very gradual economic upturn, it recovered to around 15% in 2008, but then the impact of the global financial crisis brought it back above 20%.

However, while the university graduate jobs-to-applicants ratio and non-employed graduate ratio have fluctuated in tune with the state of the economy, the establishment of university graduates in employment appears to have “peaked,” as it were, since the 1990s. According to a survey by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the job separation rate by university graduates within three years was 23.7% for March 1992 graduates, but then rose to 32.0% for March 1995 graduates, and has since remained in the 30% range to the present day (peaking at 36.5% for March 2000 and March 2004 graduates). Here again, however, a significant disparity exists in terms of sector; the manufacturing, finance and insurance industries have trended at around 20% over the last four or five years, but in the retail trade the ratio is in the upper 30% range, while in “living-related and personal services and amusement services” and “accommodation, eating and drinking services” it is at a considerably high level in the upper 40% range.

(2) Significance of the Changes

Japan’s young labor market is said to be characterized by “periodic collective hiring of new graduates.” That is to say, at a fixed time once every year, the custom is for students newly graduating from institutes of education all to be hired together. A characteristic of this hiring is that the specific vocational ability of the graduates is hardly evaluated at all. This is because many workplaces in Japan are not strictly structured around “jobs” as such (“job descriptions” would be impossible to write, or are unnecessary). Instead, students are evaluated not in terms of their ability to perform specific jobs, but on the basis of their latent ability to fulfill various tasks within the company’s organization in future. A proxy indicator of this latent ability has been the standard scores for academic ability when taking university entrance examinations, as these reveal levels of academic learning for entrance exams. The judgment has been that, if they were able to withstand the rigorous regime of study for entrance exams, they would also have strong enough “trainability” to apply themselves to

various tasks after joining the company. For some reason, moreover, their academic performance after entering university is not evaluated. This shows just how untrusted that performance is as an indicator.

Besides standard scores in academic ability, a recent trend is for the candidate's potential level of commitment to creating corporate culture and corporate values, i.e. "membership" (as a member of the corporate organization) to be particularly evaluated. In various corporate questionnaires on new graduate hiring, one response that always comes high on the list of items regarded with priority when hiring is "communication ability," an evaluation element that is difficult to define concretely.

In the process of hiring new Japanese graduates, the first stage involves general knowledge and other written tests. However, an important process in deciding whether or not to hire is the interview test. Usually, this does not consist of only one interview, but is carried out carefully several times with different interviewers. In the interviews, a series of questions and answers are exchanged on the basis of an "entry sheet" (a document resembling a résumé plus personal statement) submitted in advance. Most of the questions relate to the candidate's club circle activities, part-time job and others experienced at university; it is extremely difficult to discern from the outside what is being objectively evaluated and in what way. The only explanation one can give is that this is part of the individual student's "whole personality evaluation," as it were, in connection with the issue of "membership," i.e. whether the candidate has the disposition suited to becoming a member of the company.

Seen from this perspective, it is easy to imagine that "non-elite university students" face massive difficulty when seeking employment. Since they have no experience of studying for entrance examinations in the first place, they must be almost impossible to evaluate in terms of trainability based on standards of academic ability in entrance exams. And they must be even more difficult to hire from the viewpoint of "whole personality evaluation" with its focus on "communication ability." This is because evaluation focuses on the attributes naturally acquired by "elite university students," starting with "department" and going as far as "responding appropriately to adults" and "the cultural level of vocabulary used in conversation."

In reality, the possibility of "non-elite university students" having access to opportunities for classic "Japanese-style employment practices" that have been open to "elite university students" until now (treatment based on seniority and guarantee of lifelong employment) is extremely remote. Companies where "non-elite university students" can find employment relatively easily are those that do not base their selection on general knowledge tests or other academic ability, have no careful interview process to evaluate membership attributes, and view manpower as disposable. Many of these companies do not even honor the minimum standards of labor conditions set down in the Labor Standards Act, such as working hours and pay increments for overtime hours. In that these companies habitually engage in illegal activity, they are called "black companies" (originally an Internet slang expression), and these have become a considerable social problem.

III. Issues Facing Universal Universities

I will use the collective term “universal university” to describe those universities directly affected by the sudden transformation of Japan’s education and labor systems, as discussed above. Then, having correctly ascertained what sort of educational problems arise in this group of universities, I would like to discuss what sort of teaching reforms should be pursued (see Igami [2013a] for more detail).

1. Issues of Remedial Education: From “Pseudo-Attainment” to “Real Attainment”

The “non-elite” nature of students entering universal universities is as stated above. Many of them have lost the desire to learn long before entering university, and now find themselves without any basic learning habits. Their level of academic ability can generally be seen as stopping way short of the level required when finishing compulsory education. So what kind of “education” should the teaching staff of a “universal university” give to these “non-elite university students”? It would first have to be “education for the sake of education,” or in other words “remedial education,” in the sense of giving “supplementary teaching” in the educational content that should normally have been learned up to secondary education as a precondition for receiving a university education.

(1) Conceptual Goals of Remedial Education

Seen realistically, the purpose of remedial education befitting the reality of the universal universities would have to involve establishing basic academic ability in the initial stages of higher education. This basic academic ability has “fallen away” (i.e. it has failed to establish itself) in the process of primary and secondary education. On this point, the “20 Indicators of Academic Ability” proposed by Kazuhiko Sugiura are extremely thought provoking (Sugiura 2010). Sugiura’s indicators link elementary schools to junior high schools and on to senior high schools, based on his own experience of transferring from elementary school teaching to junior high school teaching and facing the critical fall-away of basic academic ability there. For my own purposes, I have recomposed these into the six fields shown below (the names given to the fields are my own).

i. Basic ability in Japanese

- 1) Must be able to read 90% and write 80% of the prescribed school-level *kanji* (the 1006 *kanji* characters learnt at elementary school).
- 2) Must be able to write characters at an appropriate speed and size in an exercise book.
- 3) Must understand subject and predicate and be able to use particles properly.
- 4) Must be able to recognize verbs, nouns and adjectives.
- 5) Must be able to read and write *romaji* characters.

ii. Japanese language usage

- 6) Must have read at least two generally acclaimed works of literature, biographies or scientific texts per year.
- 7) Must have recited several poems, proverbs, etc.
- 8) Must be able to use a Japanese language dictionary and kanji dictionary, and search for unknown words and phrases.

iii. Basic communication ability

- 9) Must be able to write out a chronological sequence of facts as they happened.
- 10) Must be able to organize fixed portions of a story and convey them to others.

iv. Basic counting ability

- 11) Must be able to perform addition, subtraction, multiplication and division freely.
- 12) Must be able to perform basic unit conversions.
- 13) Must be able to recognize basic graphic figures.
- 14) Must be able to estimate and roughly calculate times and distances.
- 15) Must understand the meanings of proportions (ratios, rates and percentages).

v. Basic social understanding

- 16) Must be able to travel north, south, east and west on a map and give directions by sketching a simple map.
- 17) Must be able to draw the approximate shape of the Japanese archipelago and know the locations of the prefectures.
- 18) Must know the positions of important countries in the world.

vi. Learning habits

- 19) Must be in the habit of learning at home (minimum 1 hour).
- 20) Must be familiar with using learning tools.

Although these indicators were originally proposed as academic ability indicators linking primary and secondary education stages, with just a little addition and revision they could also become concrete targets for academic ability linking secondary education with higher education. Remedial education inevitably tends toward the aspect of adapting to higher education, but remedial education in universal universities should first start by grasping these realistic levels of academic ability.

However, what looms large as a huge barrier here is the problem of the basic attitude to learning. That is to say, an adherence to “pseudo-attainment” is deeply ingrained in the students, as aptly pointed out by my research colleague Ryoma Endo. Namely, “The essence of attainment is lost along the way, and is replaced instead by a surrogate (for example,

merely being “in attendance,” or “fill-the-blank questions” where answers are given without understanding their meaning)” (Endo 2006). If we take this attitude toward learning itself to be the cause of academic ability “falling away,” remedial education would stumble at this very first stage. What is most important here is careful “explanation” and “persuasion” to bring about a radical change in those students’ mentality.

Kazuhiko Sugiura says that the essence of basic academic ability is “academic ability that is effective for re-learning.” I will quote him directly below, albeit at some length, as his explanation is rich in implication.

The majority of citizens do not think of scholarship as something aimed at making a huge discovery that will amaze the world, or knowledge that will come in handy when running a large corporation. Their real wish is to acquire the knowledge needed to get a proper job, and academic ability as a foundation for learning the knowledge and skills to support future hopes and ambitions. When those hopes and ambitions change in mid-course and they want to make a new start, they want to acquire enough academic ability to support learning of the necessary knowledge and skills. However, sites of school education are starting to stagnate; children’s motivation to learn is in decline, as is the knowledge that forms the basis of learning. This decline appears in the form of mistaken judgments, simplistic and narrow thinking, a tendency toward gratuitous attacks on society and the vulnerable, abuse of knowledge and misrepresentation, and technical errors. (Sugiura 2010, 14)

A feeling gained from daily classes is that students appear to have considerable latent desire toward “re-learning.” However, what stops this from rising to the surface is the obsession with “pseudo-attainment” that has become ingrained in school life until now. Of course, students have somehow managed to get through to senior high school (and may now actually be “university students”!) just by sitting at their desks and copying sentences straight out of their textbooks as instructed by their teachers, without understanding the meaning. However, we need to “explain” properly that this will not be good enough from here on. We need to explain repeatedly that students will not be able to get “proper jobs” in the labor market with the way they have done things until now. We also need to “persuade” them that the only way to change from “pseudo-attainment” to “real attainment” is to continue making diligent efforts, however tough that may be. We need to patiently persuade them that, rather than excuses that things “cannot” be done, making it even slightly possible that they “can” be done helps to expand life’s options.

Rather than merely supplementing the learning content, the essential and conceptual goal of remedial education in universal universities surely lies in expanding the breadth of life options through this combination of explanation and persuasion. In this sense, remedial education needs to be approached from two perspectives—not only that of completely acquiring the content of compulsory education, but also that of career education, in order to

create links with the students' way of life and a vocational understanding offering prospects for the future. I will return to this point in a later section.

(2) Issues in Practicing Remedial Education

Let us here briefly mention some issues in the practice of remedial education by universal universities. Until now, I have discussed the conceptual aspects of remedial education, but if one were to put it into practice, a number of issues would arise right away. One of these is the problem of who the providers would be, and another is who the recipients would be. The usual answer would doubtless be that the providers would be university teaching staff and the recipients would be all of the students, but in reality that would not necessarily be true.

On the subject of providers, there is in reality a progressive "outsourcing" to operators external to universities. Even if a given university's teachers are responsible for organizing the curriculum and accrediting units in terms of the syllabus, there is evidently no lack of cases where the actual lessons are given by instructors who are not on the university teaching staff. Making specialist researchers in higher education responsible for remedial education at junior high school level, let alone senior high school, could raise problems in terms of both educational skills and "pride" as university teaching staff. Of course, it would be ideal if roles could be efficiently shared between universities and external sources, but this should basically be within the scope of work borne by university teaching staff.

The problem with recipients could be seen as one of the "scattering" of students' ability and motivation. However weak they may be in selectivity, plenty of universities have a certain number of students with reasonably high ability and motivation. These are selected as the "elite" and are subject to a different educational system from "ordinary" students, for example by giving them special classes. The idea is that these will eventually be employed by so-called blue chip companies and used as PR for the universities' entrance examinations. Although this kind of "top-runner strategy" must inevitably be tolerated to a certain extent in terms of universities' management strategies, it would surely mean that there are huge problems in university education if the vast majority of students permitted to enter university are given no remedial education of any note, but are merely given easy credits and allowed to graduate. However, as students' ability and motivation are scattered over such a broad spectrum, where to set targets in trying to "raise the bottom line" is actually an extremely difficult issue for any universal university. Although using the phrase "bottom line" may be a problem, it is a fact that there is a cohort of students who are below the "threshold" point of ability and motivation. As such, it may be better to see this as an issue that goes beyond the scope of university "education." Again, I will re-examine this point in a later section.

2. Issues with Career Education: “Non-Elite Careers” as Another Career Model

What should be borne in mind when discussing this issue is that the labor market for university graduates no longer provides opportunities for classic “Japanese-style employment practices” (treatment based on seniority and guarantee of lifelong employment) to all university graduates. This sharply questions the validity of building career education based on the “elite” model (in which a new recruit may initially be employed in sales or clerical work but be rotated through various related departments within the company, while having prospects for advancement to middle or even top management) as a career model for all university graduates. With this point firmly in mind, here again I will briefly state the following points unique to universal universities.

(1) Problems in Combining Remedial with Career Education

In the above, I highlighted the need to combine remedial education with career education in the sense of linking the purpose of university education to the students’ future vocational prospects, with a view to making remedial education function toward attaining conceptual targets. From experience of being responsible for several courses related to career education, the vocational prospects of most students seem to have been simplified into two images. One is the extremely easy university graduate qualification fantasy, whereby students can be employed by first-rate companies without even making effort (they can become the “elite” of this society). The other is the fear of succumbing to “black companies,” based on their own part-time experience and Internet information, etc.

Firstly, to even slightly increase university graduates’ potential for employment by “proper companies” in the labor market, the height of the specific “hurdles” facing them must to be shown. But this must not result in lowering their “motivation” (motivation to learn) at the same time. Hurdles that can be overcome with “a modicum of effort” are desirable (though for them, this may be an enormous effort). This issue is also connected with the recently much-discussed problem of “quality assurance” in university education. Nevertheless, I feel that the best to be hoped for in “non-vocation-oriented,” “private humanities-based” universities might be vocational education that can respond to the “hiring level” for companies. As a concrete example of this, we could consider the acquisition of Grade 3 or Grade 2 level in the Business Proficiency Test sponsored by MEXT (operated by the Association for Technical and Career Education, name changed to “Jobpass” from FY2013). Under the new system, the Grade 3 level “targets senior high school 3rd graders and students enrolled at universities and specialized training colleges. Its content requires general business knowledge and knowledge that should be acquired in order to adapt as a professional in future, such as basic communication and making use of information, on the premise of forming the student’s own concepts of vocation and labor” (from the Association’s Japanese website). Again, under the new system, the Grade 2 level “targets students at universities, specialized training colleges, and others who are soon to start job-seeking activity, and workers in their 1st or 2nd year of employment. Its content requirements include an

understanding of companies' roles, responsibilities, powers, etc., how to work efficiently, basic communication aimed at problem-solving, and techniques in using information, on the premise of Grade 3 knowledge" (same source). Since the Grade 3 level has always had a pass rate of around 80%, this would appear to provide a fairly good hurdle. (As an additional note, the Grade 3 level mostly involves questions of "Japanese reading comprehension" rather than "vocational ability.")

Now, when this kind of general or universal vocation-related qualification or test is made into one of the goals (quality assurance in university education), whether or not remedial education and career education can be successfully combined as a curriculum would appear to be a very important point. To make this function as a curriculum, the student's freedom of choice would have to be significantly limited, such as by increasing the number of compulsory subjects in the first year. This represents a dilemma for many universal universities that have somehow managed to establish themselves by broadly permitting the breadth of free choice in subjects taken, in that it could also increase the number of dropouts. However, unless this dilemma is overcome, they will fall into a "spiral" whereby the reduced quality of graduates causes a further decline in the quality of new matriculants.

(2) Presenting a Non-Elite Career Model to Replace the Elite Model

As shown above, however, even if vocational ability at the "hiring level" can somehow be secured, the actual labor market for university graduates is a major issue that cannot be controlled by the universities, in that it does not function to provide the elite model described above to all university graduates. What the universities can do is to indicate that other career models could also exist, while also trying to motivate students with the conventional elite model. Here, we should take particular care to stress that a common concern among students—i.e. that non-elite careers all converge toward "black companies"—is in fact very mistaken. Students do seem to have a deep-rooted belief that all non-elite places of employment are "black companies" (as, indeed, do people in society as a whole), but this misconception needs to be exposed.

Under Japan's legal system, there is no substantive restriction on working hours (i.e. restriction designed to protect workers' lives and health) in the first place (see Hamaguchi 2009). As such, even with elite careers (or precisely because of elite careers) the reality of the labor situation is inevitably nothing but "black." The reason why this reality has not been perceived as "black" is that their labor has been expected to provide ample "reward," in the sense of offering career prospects of advancement into middle and top management. Now that this kind of "reward" cannot be expected at all, however, the essence of the "black companies" problem is that only the reality of the labor has come to be demanded of elite careers.

In that case, career education is required not merely to instill a knowledge of the legal system, enabling students simply to ascertain whether a company is "black" or not (although, since even that is hardly taught at all, this is also necessary in itself), but to present a

new career model to replace the elite model. The perspective most lacking in today's career education, colored as it is with cultivating "global human resources" and "entrepreneurs," etc., is this very idea of non-elite careers. These are careers that aspire to the working style of "ordinary workers" in western society—namely, a "normal working style" in which there is no expectation of career progression into middle and top management but a balance between work and other aspects of life (the "work-life balance"), based on a commitment not to the corporate organization itself but to a "job" within the company.

Quite a lot of companies have already introduced systems of "area-specific regular employees"; in future, the issue of institutionalizing "job-specific regular employees" should also be studied and introduced in earnest. One major role of career education in universal universities must surely be to find within this a model of very "decent work," in the sense of "spending 8 hours working in order to live, 8 hours sleeping or resting, and the remaining 8 hours doing as one pleases" (not a slogan for a labor union movement!), and to make the prospects of non-elite careers more easily accessible.

(3) An approach to Students Going beyond the Scope of "Education"

Let me briefly raise another point. However we attempt to expand career education to include non-elite careers, there is a group of students who will remain resolutely "uninvolved." These are students who occasionally suffer from developmental and psychiatric problems. Although they inevitably leave university as "non-employed graduates," they tend to be excluded from the "denominator" of "Persons seeking work" in the "Employment rates" used for PR on university entrance examinations. As such, they are not perceived as a particular pressing issue in terms of university management. As mentioned briefly in the section on remedial education, it may be better not to grasp this issue within the scope of "education" in the first place. As specialist professionals involved in career education, "career counselors" who approach mainly from the psychological angle are probably the norm. However, this would seem to be an area requiring specialization in "social work," whereby such students are approached from the fields of social welfare or mental health instead.

Movements such as support for employment and independence by local youth support stations, using manpower specializing in social work, and support by NPOs for university dropouts or graduates without employment are already spreading outside universities. Although this kind of outreach (home visit support) activity is gradually permeating into some senior high schools, at university level it is almost non-existent. For university "education" to function properly, the time has surely come for support based on this welfare-type approach to be considered (on this point, see also Igami 2013b).

IV. "Justification of the Existence" of Teaching Staff in Universal Universities

Finally, I will discuss the "justification of existence" of teaching staff in universal universities, where various issues not anticipated in conventional university education are

being faced. The reason why this discussion is being raised in the first place is that society at large has an extremely low awareness of the very existence of universal universities. That is, there is a very deeply rooted rationale that it is proper for universal universities to be weeded out from the marketplace. However, the argument made here is that universal universities have a unique social significance. There has always been a tacit presumption that university teaching staff should not be “educators” but “researchers.” In universities that are forced to admit non-elite students—to say nothing of those where elite selection is practiced—their nature not only as “researchers” but also as “educators” has been brought sharply into question.

Now, models that portray university teaching staff as “educators” include the perspectives of the “owned-operated model” and the “organized-operated model” (Ogata 2012). The former could be rephrased as the “traditional professor model,” in that they are dedicated to research, and the latter as the “reforming teacher model,” in that they are inclined toward organizational reform of university education. The impression directly received is that teaching staff at universal universities are “almost in despair” at their daily lessons, but seem to be characterized by a “conflicting model” that drifts back and forth between the two mentioned above. The cause of this “conflict” is largely that they not only have to be involved in “co-education” (I use this as a collective term for non-specialist, general education) combining remedial education, career education and others in fields outside their own speciality, but also that they have a sense of futility in that their efforts are not well recognized by society.

While the social *raison d’être* of universal universities is brought sharply into question, if we are to assert that education by universal universities can make a social contribution, we need to explore ways of having the efforts of university teaching staff in “co-education” (and particularly in the “conflict model”) valued by society. Efforts of this sort outlined in this paper include the fact that they guarantee to provide “non-elite university students” with “academic ability effective for re-learning” via remedial education, and “vocational ability” that should function effectively, at least at the hiring level; and that they present a career model offering a “work-life balance” via career education. However, doubt still remains as to whether these are therefore unique issues that should be tackled by “universities as institutes of higher education.”

Here, we are inevitably forced to confront a fundamental question: “What are universities in the first place?” Or in other words, the debate over the “functional specialization” of universities. In the 2005 Central Education Council report “Grand Design for Education and Research in the 21st Century,” the functions of universities are divided into seven categories, namely (i) global hubs of research and education, (ii) cultivation of high-level specialist professionals, (iii) cultivation of a broad range of professionals, (iv) comprehensive liberal arts education, (v) education and research in specific specialist fields (art, physical education, etc.), (vi) local hubs for lifelong learning opportunities, and (vii) social contribution functions (community interaction, industry-university collaboration, etc.). Based on

these divisions, it was proposed that each university should gradually specialize its functions based on its own individuality and characteristic features. Although this is conceptually a theory of all-embracing functional specialization, it could hardly be seen as an argument firmly grounded in the current reality of Japan's higher education, now arrived at the universal stage. When the importance of "universal universities" as universities is brought into question based on the emergence of "non-elite university students," I would like to stress the significance of the function of "liberal arts universities with a strong elements of vocational education." Although "vocational education" and "liberal arts" may be two ideologically opposed concepts, if we take the current status of non-elite university students into account, I think both of these are necessary.

Certainly, there are plenty of voices questioning the possibility and necessity of a radical swing to "vocational universities." When premised on the structure of Japan's labor market, however, vocational education that could somehow be achieved at the school stage could only go up to the hiring level at best, as stated above. When it comes to acquiring more specialized vocational ability, public vocational training institutes must be in a far superior position. Assuming this to be true, we then arrive at the argument that universal universities should rightly be weeded out of the market if they cannot give vocational education. Nevertheless, if we are to assert their *raison d'être* as universities even then, we really have no choice but to base them on "liberal arts," in the original meaning of the latter as "a discipline that frees people from the constraints of labor."

To me, "liberal" does not have the classic meaning of "escaping from the yoke of labor," but one of "enabling people to live freer lives by expanding life options." A candid analysis of the current situation of non-elite university students would suggest that their life options may quickly become narrow in future. The teaching staff of universal universities should give them more options for living their future lives, through the kinds of remedial and career education described above. When individual teachers can proudly assert themselves to society in this way, it will mean that the social *raison d'être* of universal universities has indeed been recognized.

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