

**Plenary Paper 2: Japanese Private Higher Education-Its History and Progress, Dr. Yumiko Yokozeki (IICBA)**

Japanese universities founded and developed in the latter part of the 1800s modeled themselves on some of the prestigious American and European universities. Both national and private universities developed simultaneously as part of the modernization of the country in the Meiji era from 1860s.

Currently, Japan has 86 national universities, 95 public universities and 597 private universities. National universities belong to the government and some of them were established as ‘Imperial universities’. Public universities are established and run by the local governments. Private universities are numerous and some are quite old and others are new. There is a great variety in the size and the range of education they provide. 2.1 million out of 2.9 million students are enrolled in private universities in Japan. Private universities have nearly three quarters of the student body. These private universities have played an important role in the social and economic development of the country.

The modern Japanese tertiary education system has undergone a number of changes since the Meiji period in the 1860s when modernization started from the feudal and closed “Edo” era. Japan had closed its doors to the rest of the world for nearly 300 years. The higher education system was largely modeled after western countries such as the USA, Germany, France, and Britain, to create a unique Japanese model to serve its national needs.

Among all western countries, Germany was probably the most influential in Japan’s modern higher education system. German universities were considered the most innovative in Europe then, and also the Japanese government saw 19th-century Germany as quite close to Japan in its goal of industrialization. The German model continued to inspire Japanese Imperial universities until the end of World War I. Japanese universities were a strong force for the industrial development of the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century

The Meiji government systematically constructed these so-called imperial universities as centers of excellence from 1886. The imperial universities

comprise Tokyo University (founded in 1886), Kyoto University (1897), Tohoku University (1907), Kyushu University (1911), Hokkaido University (1918), Keijo University in Seoul (1924), Taihoku University in Taipei (1928), Osaka University (1931) and Nagoya University (1939).

Parallel to these national efforts on the German model and in keeping with the new Japanese government's vision in the Meiji era, private universities were also established. These private universities were started by young academics who had studied overseas and been inspired by foreign academics. While they had modest beginnings, these universities are highly regarded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as centres of excellence. While the Imperial universities were modeled after German universities, private universities took their inspiration from different sources and different countries.

Keio University was established between 1858 and 1890 by Mr. Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1910), writer, scholar and public intellectual. He had studied at Brown University in the USA and returned to start a school to teach the Dutch language while he was a guest of one of the noble families in 1858. In 1868 he changed the name of the school to Keio Gijuku and devoted all his time to education. While Keio University started as a private school to teach Western studies, it quickly expanded and established its first university faculty in 1890, and became known as a leading institute in Japanese higher education.

Waseda University is another prestigious private university with a particular history. Waseda was founded as *Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō* (Tokyo specialized school) in 1882 by samurai scholar and Meiji-era politician, formerly prime minister, Mr. Shigenobu Okuma (1838-1922). The university was renamed Waseda in 1902 upon acquiring university status. It started as a college with three departments and currently it is one of the largest universities with 13 faculties and over 52,000 students.

Sophia University was established in 1913 by Jesuit priests. The university started with departments of German Literature, Philosophy and Commerce, headed by its founder and the first President, Hermann Hoffmann (1864–1937). It has remained a Catholic university throughout its history with a strong emphasis on peace and human rights. During the

military government which did not approve of Christianity and Western educational philosophy, Sophia University preserved its values. After WWII, a number of supporters came from overseas to reconstruct the destroyed campus.

Ms. Umeko Tsuda (1864-1929) was a pioneer woman educator. In 1870, at the age of six, she went to San Francisco as the youngest member of a Japanese expedition. She remained in the USA until she was 18 years old, when she returned to Japan. First she worked as a tutor for daughters of noble families, but then decided to go back to the USA to further her education. After returning to Japan in 1888, she wrote and worked to improve the status of women. The 1899 Girl's Higher Education Law enforced each prefecture to establish at least one public middle school for girls. However, these schools were not able to provide the same quality of education as that of the boys' schools. Tsuda founded the Women's Institute for English Studies in Tokyo in 1900 to provide quality higher education for women. She spent a lot of time fundraising to support the school. Today, Tsuda-Juku University remains a women's university of high quality.

These private universities established in the Meiji era were characterized by a commitment to academic advance, vision and enthusiasm for education and development, and youthful energy. The government provided some support for these initiatives, as higher education and research were vital for economic and social development. However, the greater part of their resources came from private donations and support from philanthropists.

Another change for Japanese higher education came in 1945 when Japan was defeated in the Second World War. During the American occupation after WWII, Japan incorporated higher education ideas developed in the United States to modernize and democratize its higher education for the contemporary era.

With donations from various churches in the USA, the International Christian University (ICU) was founded in Tokyo, reflecting ideas of democracy and championing liberal arts. ICU was one of the first bilingual universities in Japan.

Japanese private universities have always been influenced by globalization in their respective eras. The private universities were established and developed through the idealism, vision and inspiration of young people. In the Meiji era, young scholars in their 30s and 40s started universities from modest beginnings to evolve into centers of excellence. The energy, hard work and determination of these young scholars have been inspirational. While the Imperial universities were firmly supported by the government, private universities received funds from various sources. In addition, these private universities had diverse models and sources of inspiration. These private universities in Japan are evolving. We see them growing more innovative and creative meeting the needs and demands in 21<sup>st</sup> Century.