

Masao Homma

*20 Years of Activities of the ANUM: the Association
of Innovative University Management*

I. “*Houjinka*” (Quasi-Privatization) of National Universities

In April 2004, the biggest structural change in Japan’s higher education took place, namely all the 87 national universities were incorporated and all their academic and non-academic staff ceased to be national civil servants. Instead of being part of the national government, they became an independent entity with the power and responsibility to manage their own affairs, including finances and personnel. Before this change (“incorporation” or “*houjinka*”), almost every aspect of university management from salaries to the restructuring of faculties was controlled by the government, and important positions of the university administration such as Chancellor and chief financial officer were filled from among the MEXT’s¹ officials.

In the Japanese higher education system, the national universities’ share in the nation’s total student number is only 15%, but their importance in research, ranging from pure to applied sciences, is overwhelming.

For example, about 60% of “*Kakenhi*” (the equivalent of DFG’s basic research fund) goes to national universities, while all the 25 Nobel Prize winners in the natural sciences are graduates of national universities (8 from Kyoto and 6 Tokyo). The universities of Tokyo and Kyoto are the most difficult to enter among more than 800 universities.

II. National Universities vs. Private Universities

Why this overwhelming excellence of the national universities, the universities of Tokyo and Kyoto in particular ?

It derives from the fact that as a part of the *Meiji* Government’s “Rich Nation, Strong Army” policy after the *Meiji* Revolution in 1867 in order to defend the newborn country from the European and American colonization movement, a substantial part of the nation’s limi-

ted resources was invested in the creation of the modern university as the centre of the import of the advanced civilization and modern technologies from the west on one hand, and the nurture of engineers, administrators and industrialists on the other.

In accordance with this policy, 9 “Imperial Universities” were created, after Tokyo and Kyoto in the late 19th century, in Tohoku, Osaka, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Nagoya, Seoul and Taipei and received heavy investments from the government.

Under these circumstances, private universities which were more or less established by critics of the autocratic *Meiji* government² like S. *Okuma* (founder of Waseda) or Y. Fukuzawa (Keio) were not given official “university” status until the mid-1930’s and were discriminated in various aspects of social life, e.g., qualification for civil service examination.

Although an entirely new school education system was introduced in the aftermath of the Pacific War by the Occupation Forces based on the American model and private universities acquired an equal status with national ones, de facto discrimination in favour of national universities against private institutions remained.

For example, annual subsidies to national universities (currently about 6.3 billion euros) is almost 4 times as much as those to private universities. Thanks to heavy subsidies, national universities are able to keep the level of tuition fees at about 3,400 euros p.a., while private universities, depending heavily on tuition fees for running costs,³ have to charge more than double or even 6 times as much in the case of the medical faculty.

III. Mounting Discontents Against the National Universities’ Performance

By the beginning of the 21st century, national universities have almost completely lost (or did not have from the very beginning) the ability and “mind-set” to mana-

1 Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

2 Between 1867 and 1911.

3 Subsidies from the national government account for only 9% of private universities’ running costs, while it amounts to 60% for national universities.

ge themselves effectively and efficiently, for money as well as management staff were “delivered” from the MEXT, and important decisions, academic or managerial, were made by the MEXT for more than 100 years.

Nevertheless as a result of “*houjinka*” (quasi-privatization of the national universities), the national universities are expected to, with enhanced autonomy, establish “a clearly defined philosophy and objectives” for the respective university, introduce third-party **evaluation and clear accountability for management, promote outsiders’ participation in management, improve efficiency** and accelerate information disclosure.⁴

Behind this drastic change, there existed mounting discontents with the national universities among politicians, industries and the society at large: politicians criticized inefficient management and asked for more “value for money”, and industries started demanding that national universities enhance university-industry cooperation and produce more “globalized” talents fit for a “knowledge-driven economy” in order for them to survive in international competition which became severer every year.

Ms Atsuko Toyama, the then education minister and former high official in the MEXT, made the following statement when she declared “A Plan for the Structural Reform” in May 2001 on the occasion of the annual conference of the Association of National Universities Presidents (“*Kokudaikyou*”) and this showed very clearly the general feelings towards the national universities at the time:

“Japanese (national) universities have not performed to the expectations of the country and are severely criticized by the society and industries. Therefore, they must listen to these criticisms humbly and make even greater efforts for reform. I am convinced that **no structural change of the universities: no re-birth and development of the country.**”

IV. Why ANUM?

I worked for Kyoto University for nearly 6 years, first as Chancellor and later (after “*houjinka*”) as Vice-President. And served under the 2 presidents Prof. S. Nagao and Prof. K. Oike.

1. Success and Failure at Kyoto University (2001-06)

I succeeded in getting an approval for the budget allocation from the MEXT in constructing a third campus for

graduate schools of engineering in the west of Kyoto City, obtained 2 large-scale donations from *Funai Denki* (an electrical appliances manufacturing company) and *Rohm* (a semiconductor manufacturer) and set up a number of facilities open to the general public. Before my arrival at Kyoto University, the university was closed and almost inaccessible for the public. I wanted the university to be open to the public so that they could have a better understanding of the university and eventually receive more support from them.

After “*houjinka*”, I, in line with the “Toyama Plan” and through numerous meetings and consultations, drew up a comprehensive plan to restructure an administrative office comprising some 3,000 staff, thus realizing an efficient and effective administration.

I then tried to reform a seniority personnel system in which “No Miss” and the length of the career were the most valued in deciding promotion and there was practically no chance for young administrative staffs to become a division director (“*kacho*”) until mid-50’s even if they were lucky enough to be promoted to “*kacho*”. The important part of the reform in the personnel system is how to deal with the “*ido kanshoku*”, i.e. Chancellors and middle management staff on loan from the MEXT. They moved from one national university to another every 2-3 years (“*ido*” means “moving”, “*kanshoku*” officials).

In theory, the university president can “hire and fire” any administrative staff at his/her will, but in practice, these “*ido kanshoku*” come and quit on the “propositions” from the MEXT.

They almost monopolize not only Chancellors’ posts but also strategically important positions such as directors responsible for mid- and long-term planning, finance, and personnel.

As far as my experience tell, they are more or less capable and equipped with knowledge and experience, e.g. on how budget and subsidies of various kinds are allocated by the MEXT. Furthermore, since they work in national universities of different sizes, with and without university hospitals and faculty mixture, they normally have wide experience and perspectives, which are valued by presidents.

However, they have the following vital shortcomings:

- - they are, generally speaking, **very conservative and dislike changes**: this is a fatal flaw at a time when innovations and changes are needed.
- - **their loyalty is to the MEXT**, not to the university

4 MEXT “White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2001”.

they work at, since the MEXT has a power to promote or de-promote them.

- they quit by the time they begin to know the university and its people and problems.
- **they often lack knowledge and experience** concerning university management and policy-making in higher education since their professional backgrounds are mostly in primary and secondary education, sports or cultural bureau.

The National university president, as the highest and final authority in administration, finances and personnel as well as academic matters, is in theory encouraged to introduce outside experts, but in practice they hesitate to say “no” to the MEXT’s “propositions” for management staff, fearing perhaps the “revenge” from the MEXT in one way or the other.⁵

My plan to make changes to this personnel system failed partly because my term as Vice-President was about to end, partly because the resistance from within, namely from those who benefited from the seniority system, was so fierce.

2. Inbreeding of the Leadership Team and the University Closed to the Outside World

Another serious problem after the quasi-privatization of the national universities (“*houjinka*”) is that most of the executive board members (“*riji*”)⁶ are recruited from among faculty members of the university concerned. As a matter of fact, they are scholars and critics not practitioners with experience in managing an organization of this scale, with 22.477 students, 8.020 academic staff and an annual budget of 11.8 billion euros. Moreover, “outside experts” appointed “*riji*” are mostly officials of the MEXT, or if they are from private companies, they are often part-timers, and their responsibilities are limited or vague, i.e., “management in general”: this means that national universities do not take “outside” experts seriously or more precisely, they do not like “interferences” from the outside.

After “*houjinka*”, I was appointed chairman of the training committee of “*Kokudaikyou*” and created 5-day training programmes for presidents, vice-presidents and top and middle managers. I am convinced that the core of an efficient and effective management is selecting the right person for the right position, someone with determination, passion, knowledge and experience. But only a year after “*houjinka*”, it became clear that presidents and

the management staff are not always good and capable managers, that they do not take management very seriously. Most of the “*riji*” appointed from among academics (mostly former department heads) tend to regard the job of “*riji*” only as a temporary deviation. They are half-hearted in executing their responsibilities and never give up teaching and research for the sake of their job as “*riji*”. And “*Kokudaikyou*’s” main concern is more or less limited to academic affairs such as entrance examinations.

3. Birth of the ANUM

All these impelled me in July 2005 to set up a national organization whose mission is to share “innovative good practices” tried and implemented by different national universities, establish really effective and substantial training programmes for management staff as well as future management leaders.

I talked to my colleagues, chancellors of about 20 national universities including old imperial universities such as Tokyo, Tohoku, Nagoya and Kyushu and other “local” universities like Tokushima and Kanazawa and persuaded them successfully to become founding members of “the Association of National Universities Management”.

The late Prof. Arima, former President of Tokyo University and Education Minister who decided to go along with “*houjinka*”, accepted to become an advisor of the ANUM. Thanks to wide newspaper coverage, about 500 national university academic and non-academic staff of all levels became full members, while 15 private companies such as Fuji Xerox and Nomura Security Holdings and 20 national universities joined the ANUM as corporate members. Several university co-operatives also became corporate members. The ANUM held an inauguration ceremony in Tokyo in July 2005.

V. Memberships, Budget and Activities of the ANUM

1. Journal “University and College Management”

From the very outset, the main activity of the ANUM has been the publication of a monthly journal entitled “**The University and College Management**”. The 1st issue appeared in July 2005 and the latest issue published in October 2024 is its 232nd.

Up until now, contributions to the journal amount to about 2,000: they comprise not only articles on person-

⁵ In fact, this fear is almost entirely groundless.

⁶ The number of “*riji*” is fixed by law for the respective national

university. In the case of Kyoto University, the number of “*riji*” is fixed at 10, 2 of which have to be recruited from outside.

nel and financial management, strategic planning, risk management, BCP and the like, but also those on academic management and the introduction of AI and ICT technologies for teaching and learning. Monthly copies sold are 1,300.

Here is a summary of specific themes the journal dealt with in the last 20 years:

1) higher education policies, 2) university management (“student centered” university, enhancing diversity in university: LGBTQ, female and foreign professors and students, leadership of president, university management at the time of covid-19 pandemic, who leads reform, role of chancellor, management at the faculty and department level, how to train university leadership teams, marketing, BCP., how to draw lessons from failures, university reform based on the voices of students, etc.), 3) national universities (role of “local” national universities, national universities in the aftermath of “*houjinka*”, “*ido kanshoku*”, how to mobilize “outside” experts, etc.), 4) “local” universities, 5) articulation of high school and higher education entrance examination, 6) reform of university education (visualization of outcomes of education, active learning, role of head of department, how to make use of ICT in improving education, etc.) 7) student support (student engagement, role of dormitories in student’s development, how to train “globalized” students, “student centered” campus, etc.), 8) enhancement of research capabilities.⁷

2. Memberships

The number of current corporate members (universities, private companies, university co-operatives and the Kansai Economic Federation) is 57, and each member contributes as a membership fee 1,250 euros p.a., while individual members are 330 including university presidents, administrative staff and researchers on higher education. Their membership fee is about 600 euros and they are entitled to receive the journal and participate in various events such as the higher education forum or ANUM’s training programme at a discount price.

I am the editor in chief of the journal, and work in co-operation with an editorial board which consists of jour-

nalists specialized in higher education, university professors specialized in higher education and university staff. Some high-ranking officials of the MEXT including the Vice-Minister are observers of the editorial board so that I could obtain the latest and “inside” view of higher education policies.

This mixture of academic and non-academic staff of all universities, journalists and officials of the MEXT in the composition of the ANUM is a unique feature and at the same time the source of its strength since it can draw on a wide range of views, opinions and experiences.

3. Financing

Membership fees are the major source of income of the ANUM. Incomes from advertisements in the journal are also an important source of income. The president and executive board members as well as editorial board members work entirely voluntarily, i.e., no remuneration is received and this is the major reason why the ANUM has been financially viable for as long as 20 years without any subsidies from the government. The annual budget of the ANUM is about 190,000 euros.

4. From “The Association of National University Management” to “The Association of Innovative University Management”

The ANUM started its activities for national universities, but several years later it decided to deal with all the universities including private and public (local government) institutions and cover not only management but also issues and matters related to university education.

Masao Homma, Founding President of the ANUM, studied at London School of Economics, served at the OECD as a professional staff, and later at the Japanese Embassy in Paris. Afterwards he was appointed Chancellor and later Vice-President of Kyoto University, Vice President of Ritsumeikan University and the Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University. From 2013 - 2021 he was Chairman of the Executive Board, Baiko Gakuin University (Shimonoseki). He is the author of numerous books and articles on higher education policies and university management.

7 9) university-industry co-operation, copyrights, 10) AI, ICT, 11) university library, 12) administration (how to establish more effective and efficient administrative office, etc.), 13) risk management, 14) information disclosure, 15) finances (fund-raising, investment in trust funds, scholarship & tuition fees policy, financial strategy, etc.), 16) campus and facilities, 17) university hospital, 18) audit and auditor 19) international exchange, 20) faculty development,

21) distant education and re-skilling, 22) administrative staff and staff development (co-operation between academic and administrative staff, “generalist or specialist?”, reform in personnel system, ANUM’s programme to train reform-oriented administrative staffs, 23) alumni organization, 24) university ranking, 25) university co-operatives and private companies, 26) universities in Europe and Asia.