Educational Ideas of Waseda University

by
Katsuhiko Shirai
Vice President
Waseda University, Tokyo

I. Introduction

My name is Katsuhiko Shirai and I am Vice-President of Waseda University. I wish to express my heartiest appreciation to the organizer and co-organizers for inviting me as a speaker at this special occasion of the 6th IRBA Academic Forum. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to introduce you to the educational ideas of Waseda University. In doing this I will stress our founding traditions as well as the challenges we are currently facing and our plans for responding to them.

Waseda University was founded in 1882 by Shigenobu Okuma, scholar and government leader. Inspired by the ideals of its founder, Waseda has fostered a unique academic culture based on the lofty ambitions of free thinking students gathered together from all over Japan. Waseda is founded upon the ideal of “Academic Independence” and through its educational and research activities, Waseda aims to emphasize freedom of research and investigation, and to encourage original and creative studies, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

However, Waseda is no mere ivory tower. One of our central ideals is the notion of the “Practical Utilization of Knowledge.” This means we aspire to foster ways and means of utilizing knowledge side by side with the carrying out of academic research and learning, thereby hopefully contributing to the advancement and well-being of all peoples. Another central ideal is the development of “Good Citizenship.” From this comes a profound awareness of the importance of international exchange and the need for the development of a deeper understanding of world society and its diverse values and cultures. Waseda strives
to educate talented people with global perspectives. Since the founding of the university, special emphasis has been placed on international exchange, and our network of exchange agreements now reaches out all over the world.

II. The Social Context of Higher Education in Japan

Many of you know Japan is undergoing a series of reforms in a variety of different areas. Higher education, within this context, faces special challenges. First of all, universities in Japan have been suffering from financial difficulties due to the stagnant economic situations of Japan and other Asian nations, resulting in declining donations, falling interest rates, and a shrinking number of international students coming to Japan. In addition, we have a rapidly aging population. This springs from a declining birthrate and the fact that more people are living longer than in the past. Combined these are creating a dramatic reduction in the number of college age students. It is projected that the number of entering first year students will drop by twenty to fifty thousand in each of the next eight years. Furthermore, our society is experiencing a dramatic diversification of values among its people. These trends, in addition to the aging of our population, create a need for continuing, life-long education, a need that will only increase in the coming years. Under such circumstances, we must produce young people who have the flexibility and aptitudes for continuing to learn -- and continuing to seek out opportunities for learning -- throughout their careers. Finally, our society has been going through a period of rapid internationalization in the past decade or so in consequence of a surge of immigrants to Japan during the economic boom in 1980's and the overall globalization of the world. This trend will soon be reflected in the world of higher education, bringing Japanese universities to open their doors even more widely to the international community.

We are faced with a higher education system that until recently had been centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. During this decade a number of significant reforms have occurred. The result is that today colleges and universities are free to develop their own curricula and manage their own future in ways that were unimaginable only a few years ago. A key challenge facing all institutions of higher education in Japan is learning to govern ourselves in ways that preserve our independence and yet serve our constituencies.

The communiqué at the Köln Summit held in June 18-20 this year, especially the Köln
Charter adopted on education, laid great emphasis upon the importance of life-long learning opportunities and global mindset and footwork of students as well as faculty members. This emphasis stems from the viewpoint that the coming century will be a century of flexibility and transition and in such an era the “Passport”, which enables all people to cope with mobility, is education and life-long learning. Now, the needs for reviewing educational systems are commonly recognized in the world in order to deal with the increasingly globalized age.

We recognize that educational institutions have a very special role to play for the larger society and that this role itself is evolving quickly. There is great need for higher education to develop flexible and effective ways of delivering evolving educational services. There is also great need for us to institute multi-tiered systems for evaluating and continuously improving the educational services we provide.

The net result of these trends is that universities in Japan have entered a period of rapid change. We must stress the differences between ourselves, with each institution developing along its own trajectories, stressing its own strengths, and its vision of the role it is best suited to play. And we must do this in the midst of an unprecedented period of competition with each other for a shrinking pool of students.

III. Basic Outlines of ‘A Grand Design for Education and Research’ in the Twenty-first Century

At Waseda we are currently debating what we call "A Grand Design for Education and Research." We hope this will lay the groundwork for far reaching changes that will permit Waseda both to remain competitive and to provide national leadership as Japan moves into the next century. I would like to share with you some of the features of this plan.

Over the next eight years we hope to double our number of graduate students while reducing our undergraduate population by ten percent. This will result in a shift of graduate to undergraduate student ratios from one to six to one to three. We hope to open a number of new graduate schools providing advanced professional training in a variety of areas. We plan to consolidate research institutes and graduate programs, and plan a significant increase in the size of our graduate faculty. As part of this projected dramatic shift in the
composition of our student body, we will actively pursue ways to increase the numbers of students in three special categories. These include international students, adult students in our regular programs, and students enrolled in the life-long educational programs. Concerted efforts will also be made to increase the number of our students studying abroad, especially in Asia. We also are actively discussing the possible establishment of a liberal arts college within the University. Furthermore, we will make positive efforts to strengthen the existing links between our affiliated high schools, undergraduate schools, graduate schools, and research institutions.

We at Waseda University have been debating some additional unique measures to drastically alter our University system. One such measure is the adoption of what we are currently referring to as an ‘Open Education Center’ available to all undergraduate students. Under this ‘Open Education Center’ 20 to 40 new colleges catering specifically to the needs of first- and second-year students will be created. Each college will provide a thematic curricular home to groups of 200 – 400 students during much of their first two years at the University. As they become sophomores and juniors, students will move from these colleges to the regular schools of the University. As first year students they will be admitted to one of the schools of the University as they enroll in one of these colleges. We also are actively pursuing the possibility of creating new graduate schools for training highly skilled experts in various fields as well as the development of new methods of education over the network. By taking such measures, we hope to lay the groundwork for realizing our ideal of the university for the twenty-first century.

IV. New Graduate Schools at Waseda

As a part of our efforts, we opened a new graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies in April 1998. This school offers an MA in International Relations and an MBA in International Management. Classes are offered in English and in Japanese and it is possible to attain degrees in either language. Forty percent of the entering class came from outside of Japan, most from various countries in Asia. Internships and research projects linking students directly to the Asian business community are central features of its curricula.

This coming spring, we will open a Graduate School of Global Information and Telecommunication Studies. Again, courses will be offered in both Japanese and English.
One of the goals of this program is to respond to the need throughout Asia for people able to use and develop the new information and telecommunication technologies. Three areas will be emphasized: telecommunications systems, multimedia design and the social environments of these new technologies. We will offer both a Masters and a Ph.D. course.

These are simply two examples of new graduate programs that we will be creating in the near future.

V. The Reorganization of Personnel Management System for Faculty Members

Having top-level faculty members is, we believe, one of the most important goals of successful university management. In order to keep excellent scholars as our faculty members and provide them with the best possible environment to pursue their educational and research activities, we are also aware of the importance of promoting a more effective personnel management system. It is our hope that our sustained endeavors in this regard will successfully attract prominent scholars not only from Japan but also from all over the world.

VI. Toward the 125th Anniversary

Waseda University continues to reinforce its unique identity built upon its founding principles. One of Shigenobu Okuma’s ideals was to live a full and active life of a 125 years. As the university he founded prepares to celebrate its own 125th anniversary in 2007, we are engaging in dramatic reforms aimed at realizing what we refer to as a “Glocal University”. The word “glocal” is a combination of “global” and “local”. Waseda University aims to foster the “global” perspective of its founders while also building on its century-old tradition of educating young people with “local” spirit and energy.

Under this concept, we reaffirm our commitment to our original mission and identity. We strive to strengthen our local community and to pay great respect to the individual identities of the multiple institutions comprising our university community as well as the individuals who comprise our faculty, staff, and student body. At the same time, we intend to develop into a global institution for lifelong learning, open to people of all ages and communities,
maintaining and developing global standards in education and research.

Anticipating the 125th anniversary of the founding in less than ten years, we have recently reconfirmed what we regard as our three commitments to the global society. The first of such commitments is to foster the development of global citizens. Our ideal global citizen is someone who believes in living in harmony with others in the world, who finds the meaning of life in making contributions to the future of the world, who is well-cultivated, has a global outlook, and finally, is someone who resolutely engages the challenges of global citizenship. Secondly, we are committed to become a world class institution in the field of cutting-edge technologies. Backed by our past achievements in tackling diverse problems that have faced the earth and humankind and contributing the results of such challenges to the world, we at Waseda University are determined to create and develop innovative technologies to enhance the particular missions of each of our research institutes. Finally, in order to respond to Japan's rapidly maturing society, we aim to transform Waseda University into an institution for life-long learning. Waseda University will be a truly 'open' university to people of all generations so that we can provide people with opportunities for engaging scholarship and learning throughout their life course -- a big step beyond the 'happy retirement' concept prevailing in Japan today.

All of these initiatives are deeply related to the main theme of this conference, the educational philosophy of universities and professional ethics. We hope that as these and other changes are implemented at Waseda University we will both come in line with and aid in developing new global standards for higher education. For this reason I am particularly pleased to be invited here. Thank you very much and I hope this session will be followed by most fruitful and productive discussions.
Developing New Systems for Education and Research
- A Grand Design for Education and Research of the 21st Century -

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Professor Katsuhiko Shirai
Vice-President
Waseda University

The Social Context of Higher Education in Japan

1. Stagnant Economy of Japan and Asia
   - Cutbacks in educational expenses in households throughout Japan
   - Decreasing outside donations
   - Financial difficulties among educational organizations including scholarship foundations due to continued low interest rates
   - Decline in the number of international students

2. Results of the Falling birthrate

Social environment surrounding universities in Japan

(3) Expansion of graduate education
   Number of students enrolled: 150,000 (1995)
   Number of students projected: 300,000 (2007)
   (4) Spreading lifelong education
   (5) Internationalization
   < Ratio of graduate students to 1000 people by country

Basic outline of 'A Grand Design for Education and Research'

During the first 25 years of the 21st century:
(1) Various reforms and new projects will be implemented by stages from 2001 to 2007.
(2) Growing into an elite research university serving the Asia-Pacific region.
(3) Producing talented people, the key to the future of Japanese industries and society.
(4) Consolidation of existing institutions within the university through so-called scrap and build procedures.

Directions of new systems for education and research

(1) Ratio of students
   Present
   Undergraduate : Graduate = 6:1
   2007
   Undergraduate : Graduate = 3:1
(2) Consolidations of the existing schools and departments and the establishment of new schools
(3) Increase the number of international students, adult students, and students enrolled in lifelong education programs
(4) Strengthen the existing links between affiliated high schools, undergraduate schools, graduate schools, and research institutes

Some creative ideas unique to Waseda University

(1) Introduction of the open education center, which specifically offers small-size classes of general education to all enrolling students.
(2) Fostering innovative ideas at newly-created graduate schools for training highly skilled experts
   (Applicable fields: science and engineering, social information, public administration, law, business administration, Japanese language teaching, medical technology, environmental technology, health and welfare, biology and life sciences, management of technology)
(3) Formation of an international consortium of universities and the introduction of the collaborative educational programming over the network within its membership
Waseda University 125th Anniversary Project

So that Waseda might offer its intellectual resources and culture to the global society

Waseda University is currently developing organizational structures suitable to a university of the twenty-first century

1. Our commitment to nurture the global citizens
2. Our commitment to challenge innovative cutting-edge technologies
3. Our commitment to become fostering grounds for life-long education