

Ver. 1 (2012): the first version made open.

Ver. 2 (2014); statistics data updated to the newest available.

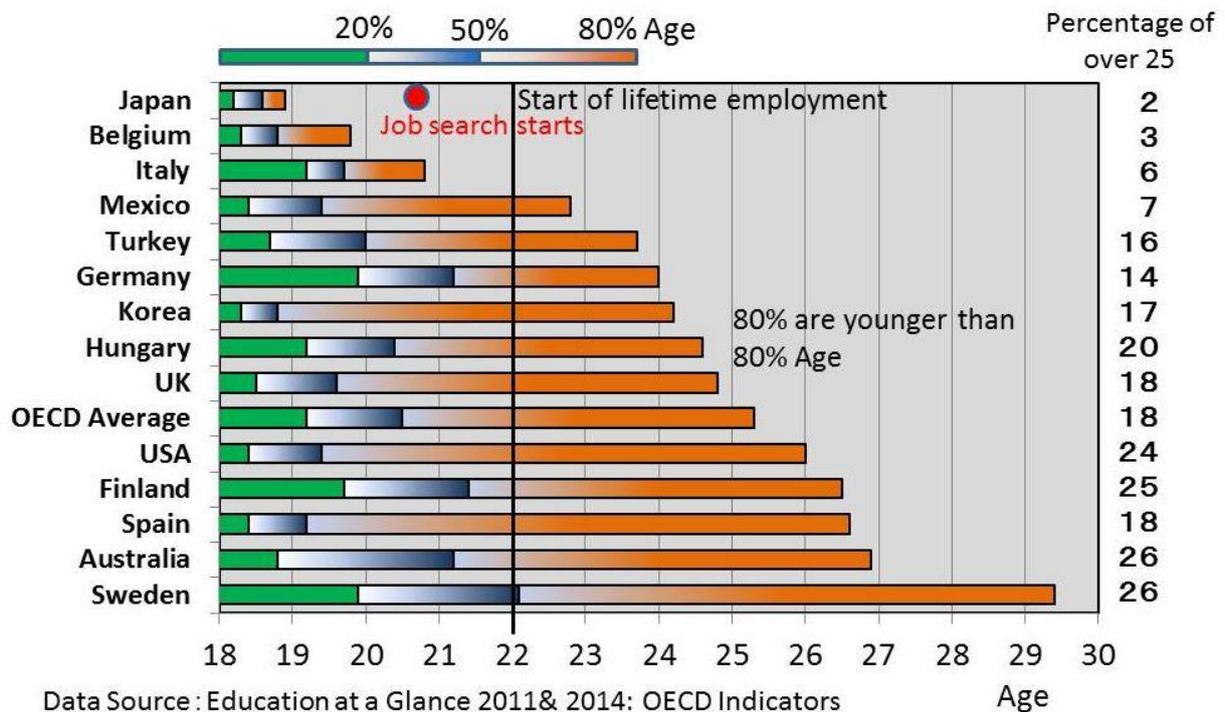
Ver. 3 (2016, final): statistics data updated to the newest available.

## Note on Japanese Universities found in Statistics

### Topics 1: Age distribution of new entrants

Japanese new entrants are **the World Youngest !**

84% are fresh graduates of high schools. Over 25 are only two percent.



- Data for international comparison are obtained from Indicator C2 and C3 given in the OECD's annual report "Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators".

[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance\\_19991487](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance_19991487)

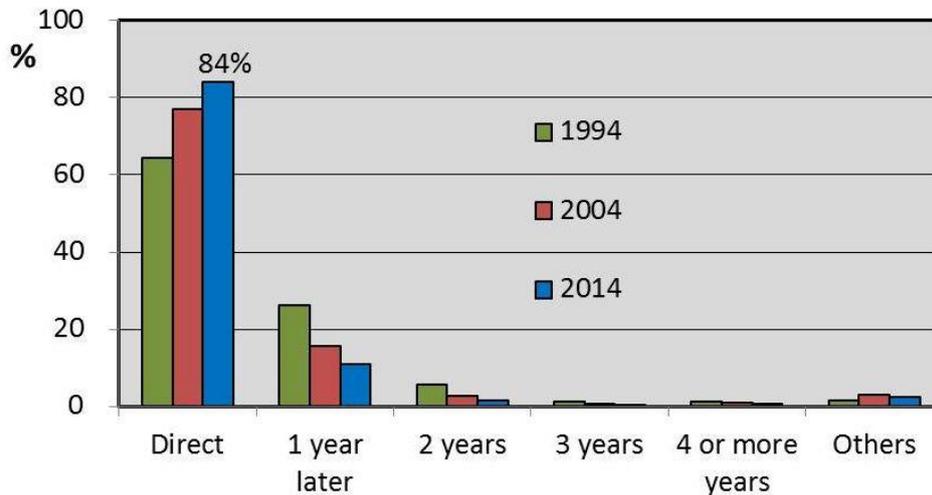
Age distribution is taken from 2011 Edition (newest available) and over 25 data from 2014.

Domestic data are collected from Fundamental School Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

- Universities are defined as those that offer programs leading to Bachelor degree. In Japan duration is at least full-time 4 years. In OECD countries corresponding education is classified as Level 6 Tertiary Education that offers largely theory-oriented programs with duration of full-time 3 to 4 years.
- Distribution of new entrants: When 100 new entrants stand in line in the order youth (the

youngest is the first), the age of 20<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> student are 20%, 50% and 80% age , respectively. These three ages may represent the distribution of a histogram.

- Histogram of Japanese new entrants in 1994, 2004 and 2014 is shown below. Grouping is made by the interval after the graduation of high school (upper secondary school), that is, Direct, 1 year later, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years or more, and Others. Others include those who graduated from foreign schools, vocational schools or were recognized as equivalent. Percentage indicates the ratio of each group to the total.



- In the last twenty years even under stagnant economy, the rate of direct entrance increased more than 20% and reached 84%. The major reason may be attributed to the fact that the gate to universities has become almost full open to everybody who desires to study. The willingness of parents to help children go to universities has not changed even under economically difficult situations.
- Since the case of direct entrance from high schools to universities is common in most countries, the scattering of 20% age is relatively small. The factors that affect entrance age are; the standard age to finish upper secondary education, intake capacity of universities relative to the number of applicants (admission barrier), opportunity to enter labor market for fresh high school graduates, requirement for qualification test like Baccalauréat of France and Abitur of Germany, etc.
- Countries with high 50% age have also high 20% age. They are mostly northern European countries with higher barrier to admission and have consequently high reputation for the quality of education.
- The scattering of 80% age is quite large. Two major cases to push up 80% age are either to enter universities after finishing compulsory military service like Korea, or to begin studies with a few years work experience after graduation of high schools. To encourage the latter case, universities offer flexible programs suitable for elder students like USA or special programs with values on work experience like Nordic countries. In countries where tuition is free or kept low, the carrier shift from work place to university may take place relatively easy.
- In those countries with higher 80% age, such carrier path is socially well accepted that tertiary

education is inserted not at the start but at the proper stage of professional development.

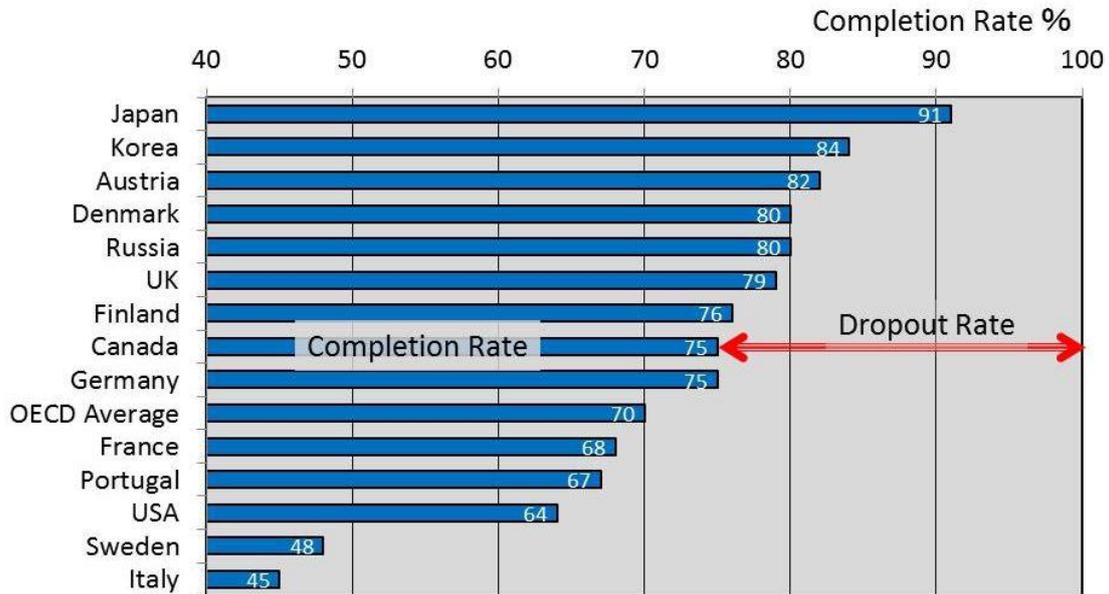
- From the viewpoint of national finance, it is desirable that students get degrees as young as possible and start paying income tax immediately after getting degree-worthy well paid occupations. Some governments are encouraging students to enter and finish university education as early as possible.
- Problem of Japan is that the personal histories of young generation are too much fixed and synchronized! The classmates of a Kindergarten proceed simultaneously to primary, lower secondary, upper secondary schools, universities and even to graduate schools. After getting degrees in March, they start their career as rookie employee on April 1<sup>st</sup> with the ticket of lifetime employment. If this opportunity is once missed, it becomes extremely difficult to get the ticket again. This situation is expressed as “a train that comes only once in a life”. Young people are too much forced to proceed on this single track. They lose possibility of diverse carrier development. Those who missed the lifetime tickets must work under unstable and disadvantaged condition. If this group increases, it has obviously a negative effect on the national economy.
- Japanese employers must choose new employees from very young students who start job search during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, under age 21. Japanese companies owe fatal restriction that their future leaders have to be selected from the world most immature age group. Recruiting is becoming international. Japan-specific search/recruit job process may change gradually.
- This statistics implies so many factors. If we study further and investigate the circumstances of each country, we may find more cause and effect.

End

## Topics 2: Comparison of completion rate

Japanese universities: Congratulations Rate **World Number One !**

91% of entrants go on to graduate.



Data Source: Education at a Glance 2009, 2010 & 2013: OECD Indicators

- Data for the international comparison are collected from Indicator A4 “How many students complete tertiary education” given in “Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators”. Data of most countries are taken from 2013 Edition but missing data from 2010 or 2009 Edition.
- Completion Rate is defined as the ratio of those who completed study with Bachelor degree to total entrants who started tertiary education for the first time. Those who started for the second degree are excluded. Graduation rate could mean the same, but retention rate means the ratio of continuing students after a definite time interval, that could be a semester, one year or standard years to graduate.
- The above histogram indicates the completion rate of each country in order of high percentage. The difference is quite large. Japan boasts very high 91% that is of course Number One in the world!
- The reasons to push down graduation rate are:
  - Barrier to graduate is high. Examinations of courses are relatively tough, so that substantial efforts are required to go on to the final goal.
  - In countries where tuition is free or kept low, it may easily happen that students put taking examinations off for the next chance and finally fall into running out of time. Low mental pressure from parents or financial patrons may also be a factor to escalate dropouts.
  - Even if the completion of study at the present university seems difficult potentially or

financially, alternative future choices are prepared, such as to transfer to universities with less academic requirement or less tuition, to transfer to vocational colleges, and so on.

Dropout is received not as a breakdown but as a change of tactics.

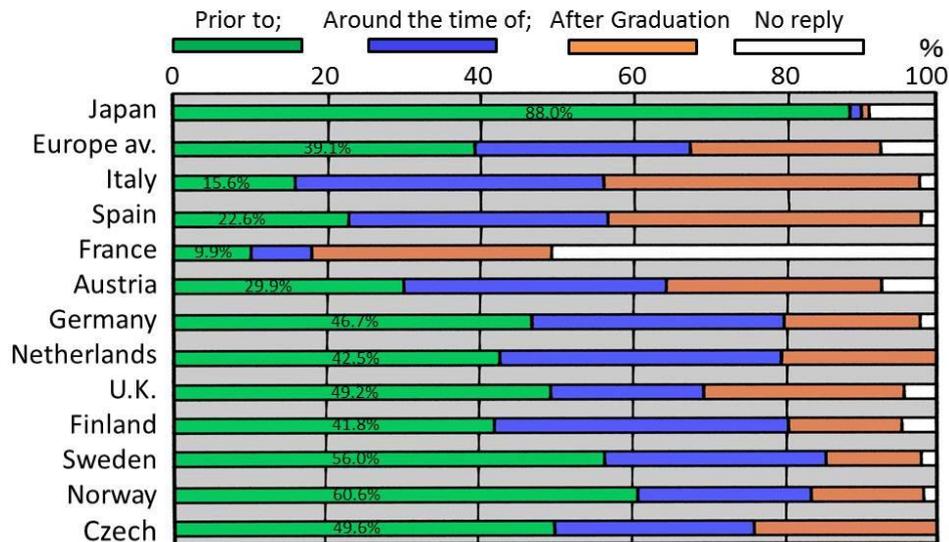
- The reasons to push up completion rate are just the negatives of the above reasons.
- Very high completion rate of Japan could imply low requirement for graduation. However more essentially, this situation has been supported and enhanced by the social demand that bases on the traditional Japanese recruit/employment practices.
- In the recruit practices of Japanese enterprises, applicants are evaluated with less value on their outcomes of studies, but with substantial value on the attributes that are necessary for their long term association. Cooperativeness and leadership are most highly evaluated attributes that are hardly measured by paper test of knowledge. Therefore, face to face interview is the most significant procedure for the final judgment.
- Simultaneous (once every year) recruiting of new graduates and synchronized promotion among the same group are common personnel practices everywhere from government to private business in Japan. These practices base on the premise that the age range of new graduates is narrow.
- Completion rate of students who finished study in the required minimum years is not known from the statistics. However, among 91% successful Japanese students, around 85% are estimated to have finished in the minimum 4 years.
- 85% of entrants from high schools to universities are the same age, and 85% of them graduate after 4 years, that is, 72% (.85x.85) of new graduates are the same age. This is the background to enable personnel management by the unit of simultaneous employment.
- It is common among foreign students that they positively look for the opportunities to study abroad for a short period or to join long term internship in domestic/foreign companies. They all know well that these experiences augment their employability at the graduation and get sure advantage for job search. This is not the case in Japan. Japanese students are often criticized for being too introverted. In reality Japanese students are forced to be introverted.
- Two World Number One introduced in Topics 1 and 2 are inseparable from Japanese recruit/employment practices, though there may be disputes over which one is chicken or egg. The singularity of Japanese practices is clearly exposed by these two indices.
- Once the opinion is well accepted that the source of Japanese industrial competitiveness consists in the Japan-specific employment practices. The world changes restlessly. Now major Japanese enterprises look for expanding business outside in potential countries and recruit promising personnel from global labor market. Our traditional recruit/employment practices are getting not a standard but a local version. This change will urge also the change of university education.

End

### Topics 3: Timing when students start seeking a job

#### Questionnaire: When did you start seeking a job?

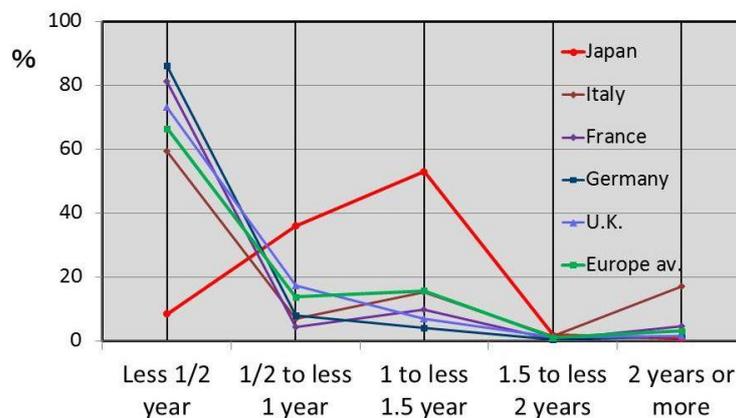
-Comparison among Japan and 11 European countries-



Source: Report of Japan Inst. for Labor Policy and Training, 2001. Survey on graduates of 1995.

- Multinational survey on the timing when students start seeking a job, is quite rare. The report “Survey on Education and Occupation conducted in Japan and European countries” published by Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training in 2001, may be the only one that provides data for international comparison. The Institute conducted an extensive survey by questionnaire on a variety of items over education and occupation in Japan and eleven European countries. The result is quite precious but a little obsolete. The students who graduated in 1995 answered the questionnaire and the realities could have changed since then. As far as Japan is concerned, the change is not essential, but circumstances in other countries are unknown. Please be reminded that the discussion is based on data 20 years ago.
- The report (only in Japanese) is available from the URL;  
[http://db.jil.go.jp/db/seika/zenbun/E2001090016\\_ZEN.htm](http://db.jil.go.jp/db/seika/zenbun/E2001090016_ZEN.htm)
- The questionnaire covers a wide variety of items on education and occupation of universities. The timing of job search is questioned by the following item C2:  
 C 2 ; When did you start seeking a job?  
 1. Prior to graduation, [ ? ] months earlier  
 2. Around the time of graduation  
 3. After graduation, [ ? ] months later  
 Please check one of three cases, 1, 2 or 3. In case of 1 or 3, answer number of months in [ ? ].  
 Answers without check are classified as “No reply”.
- Questionnaires were distributed to 3,421 Japanese students and 31,315 students of 11 European countries. Answers were summed up separately by country and gender, but the following comparison is made for male and female together.

- The upper bar graph indicates the percentage of four answer groups, that is, Prior to; Around the time of; After graduation; and No reply. It visualizes clearly the character of job search timing of each country. Those who start prior to graduation are in the minority in Latin countries like Italy, Spain and France, but are in the majority in other countries. Japan shows an extraordinary high percentage of 88 %.
- In the case of 'Prior to graduation', problem is how early it was. According to common sense it could be three months earlier when possibility of graduation becomes almost visible. It could be eventually one semester or half a year earlier. This survey has a definite advantage to know the timing by number of months.
- The diagram below illustrates the distribution of the timing of job-search start for 6 representative countries. The answers are classified to 5 groups according to the number of months, that is, less 6, 6 to 12, 12 to 18, 18 to 24 and 24 or more months.



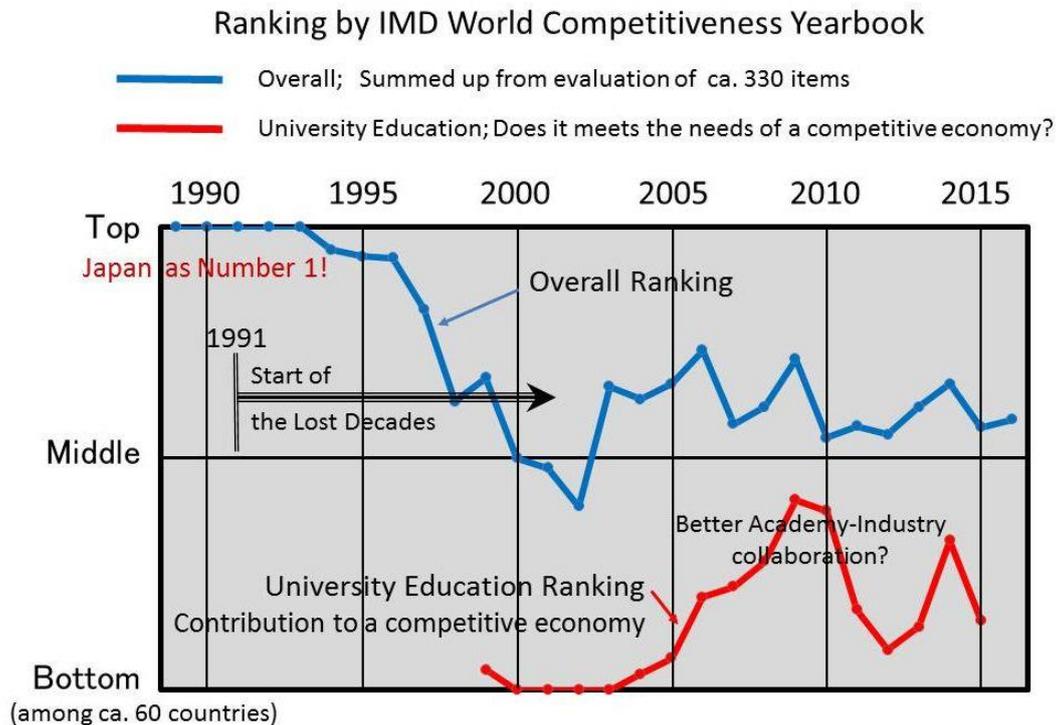
- This diagram indicates the singularity of Japan most clearly. In other countries except Japan, large majority of students start within a half year prior to graduation, for example, 86% of German students belong to this group. It may be a common practice in foreign countries that students start job-search after conditions for graduation have been almost fulfilled.
- In Japan the group 'less than 1/2 year' occupies 8.4 %, '1.5 to 2 years' 1.8 %, and '2 years or more' 0.8 % and they are all in very small minority. On the other hand, the group '1 to 1.5 years' occupies 53 %, the largest majority, and '1/2 to 1 year' 36%, the second majority. Japanese situations look like as if students are urged to start by signal gun fired at the beginning of the second semester of the third year. Those who missed prompt response to the signal gun, form the second majority. The career guidance and support by placement offices of universities, search/recruit business plan of career support industries and recruit schedules of employers, they are all synchronized with the timing pattern described above.
- As above mentioned, European students start job-search after graduation conditions have been almost met. Japanese students seem to become confident on graduation one and a half year prior to graduation. Very high 91 % completion rate of Japanese students introduced in Topics 2 may be the source of their self-confidence.
- If students can get a promise of employment at an early stage of the study, they could concentrate themselves in study and may accomplish better performance after all. This

scenario is possible but not realistic for ordinary students who desire to graduate with the least effort. Early start of job search and early promise of employment could reduce effective study period of corresponding students.

- In Topics 1, 2 and 3 the singularity of Japanese universities is disclosed from three viewpoints based on statistics. As mentioned frequently, the singularity is inseparable from singular Japan-specific recruit/employment practices.
- Practices and business system change in accordance with the change of external environments. When changes take place, both singularities of universities and business practices will be affected simultaneously.

End

## Topics 4: Ranking by IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook



- Features of Japanese universities picked out from statistics, and their solid interdependence on Japan-specific recruit/employment practices are repeatedly discussed in Topics 1 through 3.
- The outcomes of such social system may be evaluated by research institutions that study and survey the strength and competitiveness of each country or economy.
- IMD, International Institute for Management Development, is a Switzerland-based think tank/business school, and publishes widely cited IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook every year. The rankings indicated in this Yearbook are adopted as the indices to measure the outcomes and performance of Japan

<http://www.imd.org/wcc/wcy-world-competitiveness-yearbook/>

- The examination is carried by two ways, that is, by hard data based on available statistics and by soft data collected from Executive Opinion Survey. Questionnaires are distributed to executives in top and middle management of each country. The hard data bear 2/3 of the total weight and the soft data the rest.
- Overall competitiveness is evaluated as the summing up of the following four factors with the same weight, i.e., Economic performance, Government efficiency, Business efficiency and Infrastructure.
- Each factor contains five sub-factors with the same weight. For example, Infrastructure contains sub-factor 'Education', which contains further 16 items. 'University Education' is an item of 'Education' along with 'Pupil-teacher ratio', 'Student mobility', etc. There are total 333 items (2013 Edition). Evaluation is conducted on each item by hard or soft data.
- The upper figure indicates the history of two rankings of Japan, Overall by blue line and

University Education by red line.

- Overall ranking dotted since 1989 is a measure of integrated economic competitiveness of Japan. As stated, overall means the summing up of every conceivable factor which may affect the strength of a country.
- Japan boasted Number One position till 1993, ahead of the second runner, USA. The book 'Japan as Number One' written by Ezra Vogel symbolized the past brilliant years. 1991 is a determinant year for Japan, when the domestic bubbly booming economy collapsed and the Cold War Regime disappeared. So called 'the Lost Decade' begun this year.
- Downhill started in 1993 and the steady decline continued till 2002 when the overall ranking dropped below the middle line. Recovery started after Japanese banking institutions overcame the long suffering bad loan problems, an aftermath of the past bubbly economy. Recent ranking fluctuates around one third position from the top. Most recent 2016 Edition of the yearbook indicates; 1<sup>st</sup> Hong Kong, 2<sup>nd</sup> Switzerland, 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S.A.,, 26<sup>th</sup> Japan,, 61<sup>th</sup> (bottom) Venezuela.
- The red line in the upper figure indicates the ranking of University Education which started in 1999. Evaluation is made based on Executive Opinion Survey. The questionnaires mailed to executives ask "Does University Education meet the needs for a competitive economy?" The contributions to the personal and organizational development are both the object of the question.
- In the first year 1999, Japan positioned at the 45<sup>th</sup> among 47 countries, and Korea the bottom. During four successive years, 2000 through 2003, Japan kept the dishonorable bottom position. Upward change started from 2004 and reached once close to the middle line. However the recent ranking is again low and unstable. The floatation from the bottom may be attributed to the attention to enhanced research cooperation between universities and industries.
- If the surveys on University Education were conducted before 1999, Japan's position would have been surely the bottom. Japanese executives of those days experienced severe period of student unrest in campuses and shared an evil image of academy-industry collaboration. It is easily imaginable that they answer; "Study hard in university? No!, Got good friends? Yes!", "The development of my company is the result of hard work of the employees. Universities are just bystanders!" The consequence of those answers to the evaluation is quite clear.
- How distinct is the contrast between the rankings of Overall and University Education! This is just another expression of the reality that Japanese universities have been responding and adapting to Japanese style management, or Japan-specific recruit/employment practices.
- Japanese economy had been staggering for two decades. The gap between the rich and the poor was widening. National debt grew year by year. Politicians were enthusiastic only over their power struggle. In spite of all these feelings of entrapment, currency Yen continued to be stronger.
- The change started at last in 2013. Japan has been struggling for escaping from persistent deflation by restoring economic strength and regaining power of growth. We have to continue self-reform for years to come. Before blaming responsibilities of others, trying the best to

achieve own mission and tasks may be the key to open the future. The young delegates to world competition like World Cup and Olympic Game are showing wonderful examples how to do one's best.

-End-

Thank you so much for your interest!

Ver. 1 is completed on August 7 in the midst of London Olympic 2012.

Ver. 2 is completed on June 27 in the midst of 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil.

Ver. 3 is completed on August 11 in the midst of Rio Olympic 2016.