

making based on simplistic assumptions, a focus on numbers of EMI classes and student mobility rates, and ad hoc delivery. Coherent curriculum development, the linguistic, social, and academic needs of students, and the professional development of faculty members are not receiving the attention they deserve.

A final, and perhaps overarching parallel between IT and EMI can be seen in how both have been going against a prevailing social structure. IT was seen as an addition. It was a layer added to existing administrative and curricular precedents, rather than an impetus for deep structural change within universities or the wider social environment. The attempt to develop a new generation of computer-literate specialist students went against the notion of what universities were supposed to do at the undergraduate level: produce generalists. This struggle is familiar to those work-

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**Another aspect is seen in how implementation is approached at the national level.**

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ing in current EMI initiatives. EMI is being implemented, in many cases, to create an internationally minded young generation. However, this goal runs counter to the prevailing notion of the importance of Japanese national identity. The ministry of education has repeatedly emphasized that moral education, and a deep understanding of Japanese traditions and culture, are prerequisites for global education. This leads to attempts to foster students as outward-looking people, but not *too* outward looking. The deep and possibly identity-threatening changes in institutional culture, administrative structures, and pedagogical approaches necessary to make EMI a central part of Japanese higher education are slow to be adopted.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Looking back at the IT experience, the key roadblocks to implementation stemmed from decisions that universities made when they set out to establish new systems and policies. Implementing IT and effectively integrating it university-wide would have meant making deep systemic changes in the culture and politics of the given institution, a daunting prospect. The alternative, focusing on superficial technical issues and numerical targets on a department-by-department basis, thereby avoiding the more troubling issues, was an easier path. Universities chose the easier path. Implementation was characterized by short-term planning

and reactive problem solving. Consequently, IT has never really lived up to its potential in higher education. Communications technology, information management, and online distance education all remain relatively underdeveloped in Japanese universities.

But what of current EMI initiatives? All signs indicate that we are heading down the same easy path of short-term, reactive decision-making. In 20 years, EMI could be where IT is now, with a stable position as a commonplace part of higher education, but not playing a central role and not deeply integrated into the university culture. If that is what we, as EMI stakeholders, want, then we may be on the right path. However, EMI in Japan is still in its infancy and there is time for universities to take a more challenging path. When properly integrated, EMI has the potential to effect the internationalization of Japanese higher education. We can learn from the experience of the IT programs before us and consider the structural changes that need to take place to ensure not just successful EMI implementation, but real EMI integration.

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## Admissions in Japanese National Universities: The Need for Change

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Japanese college admissions at national universities have traditionally practiced a devolved selection process. Faculty members in each department design their own admissions policies and criteria, and make selection decisions. There are admissions offices, but their responsibilities tend to be mostly administrative and managerial.

Up until this point, written examinations have been the most valued selection criteria at national universities. The majority of applicants to national universities are required to take two written examinations: a multiple-choice national examination called “National Center Test for University Admissions” (hereafter National Center Test), administered once annually in early January, and a second-stage examination administered by each university after the National

Center Test. That examination has more emphasis on thinking and writing skills. The two examinations mainly measure applicants' scholastic abilities (*gakuryoku* in Japanese) gained at high school.

This *gakuryoku*-oriented idea originated in the belief that a high score reflecting excellent *gakuryoku* was a strong indicator of the students' knowledge, skills, motivations, and even of their character. In order to assess applicants' *gakuryoku*, universities have relied on written examinations. The national university entrance examinations use this measure extensively.

#### MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE

While universities value *gakuryoku* for their college admissions, our knowledge-based society requires students to gain a multitude of skills useful in the twenty-first century, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and intercultural communication skills. Because of this trend, the definition of *gakuryoku* has been shifting recently. The ministry of education, culture, sports, science and technology, hereafter MEXT, recently redefined the components of *gakuryoku*. In addition to the previous definition of simply possessing knowledge and skills, the new *gakuryoku* concept values what students are able to *do and accomplish* by applying their knowledge and skills.

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**Up until this point, written examinations have been the most valued selection criteria at national universities.**

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Additionally, there is an increase in Japan in the numbers of nontraditional students, such as adult learners, disabled learners, repatriate students, international students, and students who have studied through alternative education systems. In order to admit these diverse students, universities have started to rethink the concept of "fair assessment" of applicants for university admissions. A single measurement for all applicants used to imply the idea of fairness, but this is no longer the case.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF HOLISTIC ADMISSIONS

As of 2015, according to statistics released by MEXT, the percentage of students admitted through "holistic admissions" was 15.4 among national universities. Behind the current trends, there is strong pressure from the government for universities to shift their ways of implementing university admissions. In 2013, the Education Rebuilding

Implementation Council released a statement on university admissions. It noted the significance of universities introducing multifaceted and comprehensive assessments of students' knowledge. This encourages universities to assess not only students' *gakuryoku* but also their twenty-first century learning skills, motivations, college readiness, and students' past activities, based on the university admission policies.

Following this statement, the powerful Central Council for Education and the Japan Association of National Universities echoed that reforming university admissions and developing a new national university entrance examination were necessary. Especially the Japan Association of National Universities set an ambitious goal of raising the percentage of holistic admissions to 30 by 2018. They also called for a screening that would assess critical thinking, ability to judge properly, and expression, as well as *gakuryoku*. To reflect this change, the university entrance examination will be revised in 2020.

#### CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTIVES

Taking the government announcements into account, more national universities, whose admissions have long relied on test scores, are currently introducing holistic admissions. However, they are experiencing several challenges when implementing these changes.

National universities, especially leading national universities, have not moved completely away from old *gakuryoku* concepts, nor have they well understood the implication of introducing holistic admissions. The concept of fairness—using the same measurement for all applicants without any regard to their backgrounds—is strongly ingrained and prevents universities from doing away with objective test-score based admissions.

Despite the introduction of a holistic review approach, test scores remain an important factor in the application review process and are considered an indicator for how well students may perform in college. To assess the students' personalities, universities require students to submit personal statements and recommendations from high schools, attend interviews, or submit documents indicating their engagement and achievements in and outside of school, in addition to demonstrating a high level of *gakuryoku*. Holistic admissions at national universities are rather demanding. Universities are unfortunately not able to attract enough applicants for the holistic admissions process, as students prefer to go through simpler test score-based admissions.

Moreover, national universities have insufficient infrastructure to implement holistic admissions more broadly. Practicing effective holistic admissions requires a lot more time and human resources, and it is necessary to establish a system far removed from test-score based admissions.

Holistic admissions is an art and a science. It allows universities to make decisions based on students' academic and personal backgrounds, experience, and potential. Reviewers need special expertise and experience to ensure a fair and transparent admissions process.

Such professionalism in college admissions has yet to take root. Faculty members are still key drivers for both policies and practices in holistic admissions. Currently, holistic admissions are quite limited. Faculty members are able to remain involved with the whole selection process. This raises the question of whether or not they will have the capacity to remain as involved when the percentage of holistic admissions reaches 30—as recommended by the Japan Association of National Universities.

The introduction of holistic admissions is going to bring tremendous changes to universities: measuring the implications of introducing holistic admissions, reviewing ideas on *gakuryoku* and fairness, professionalizing college admissions, adapting organizational structure, and reexamining the admissions system as a whole. However, these challenges may turn into great opportunities. High schools and universities are shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching and learning in order to prepare high school students for holistic admissions and allow a more diverse student body to be admitted to college. This will have a positive impact not only on college admissions, but also on education in high schools and universities as a whole.

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## Creating National Champions in France: A Little Less *Égalité*, a Little More *Sélectivité*?

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Few universities can claim such an animated history as the now defunct University of Paris, split in 1970 into 13 autonomous universities following the May 1968 events. Two of its “successor” universities, namely Paris–Sorbonne University (Paris IV) and Pierre and Marie Curie University (Paris VI), have vowed to spur a return from the ashes by

merging and becoming a single, multidisciplinary institution. The merger should be understood within the French context, as well as within the broader European trend of mergers aiming to consolidate higher education systems, provide economic gain, and enhance the position of higher education institutions (HEIs) in global rankings.

The French context is characterized by an unclassifiable higher education system that nonetheless presents elements of a hierarchical binary higher education system, ever since Napoleon established the prestigious *grandes écoles*, predominantly selective, hyperspecialized, small, vocationally oriented institutes of higher technical or business education. On the other side of the binary divide, many universities present the unusual characteristic of being specialized institutions, having undergone structural reorganizations after 1968 and dismemberment along disciplinary lines. The reunification of historic universities has been a government priority in recent years, following a trend of mergers observed in Europe since 2005.

One of these mergers is the rebirth of the “old” Sorbonne University, expected to take place on January 1, 2018. The *Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings (2018)* placed Paris IV at rank 197 overall, while Paris VI was ranked 123rd. These specialized universities score higher in their disciplines: in the 2017 QS World University Rankings by Subject, Paris IV reached the 26th position for its arts & humanities course offerings, while Paris VI claimed the 55th spot for natural sciences and the 94th place for life sciences & medicine. What can we expect from the merger of these two leading specialized universities, and the establishment of a large multidisciplinary institution, claiming the history and academic pedigree of one of the oldest universities in the world?

### RECENT EUROPEAN TRENDS

Mergers are often framed by governments as a way to rationalize and consolidate higher education sectors, while reducing duplication in course offerings and, as a result, costs. Furthermore, they increase scale, notably of research outputs, and can enable HEIs to perform better in global rankings. Research by the European University Association suggests mergers became more prevalent beginning in 2005, with Denmark and Estonia setting the trend. In Denmark, the number of institutions decreased from 12 to eight. In Estonia, the University of Tallinn absorbed eight surrounding institutions, and the number of HEIs in the country decreased from 41 to 29 between 2000 and 2012.

### MERGERS AND THE CREATION OF NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

France followed suit in 2008, through the € 5 billion *Opération Campus* that sought to promote up to 12 centers for research and education, then known as *pôles de recherche*