

# **The expectation on the Open University of Japan -from the standpoint of higher education policy-**

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In many countries, under the drastic social and economic changes thorough globalization and advancement of knowledge-based society, the role of higher education is growing more and more important and diversified. In addition, confronted to various domestic issues including declining birthrates, growing aging population, difficult economic and fiscal conditions and damages by the Great East Japan Earthquake, universities in Japan are expected to be the engine of renaissance of Japan by strengthening human resources, fostering innovation and contributing to solve social problems.

The basic idea of the new total plan of education policies (2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education ) which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) should draft by the end of this fiscal year is to construct lifelong learning society on the basis of fostering capabilities of “independence” “collaboration” and “creation”. Four pillars of the plan will be ①fostering capabilities to live in the ever-changing and diversified society ②nurturing leaders to open up a new way to the future ③securing access to education ④constructing communities and social ties though learning. University reform will be the most important issue, related to all those pillars.

In June, MEXT established the University Reform Action Plan to enhance and accelerate university reform. The aims of university reform are to reconstruct universities to be capable of handling drastic societal changes and to enrich and strengthen university governance. The plan includes various actions such as;

- redeveloping the quality of university education for fostering capability to learn, think, make decisions and act independently
- nurturing students to be capable of corresponding with globalization and promoting internationalization of universities
- promoting universities as the center or communities
- creating the foundation and system which promote university reform and thoroughly

promoting quality assurance.

In considering the challenges of higher education policy, Open University of Japan is expected to strengthen the roles and functions to widen opportunities of university education and promoting life-long learning, meeting the needs of diverse learners including persons of variety of age and career, persons with handicaps and difficulties. Collaboration with universities and colleges and utilization of ICT will contribute to enrich programs and construction of the “learning community”. Collaboration with universities in Asian countries that AAOU would play a great role is becoming more and more important to meet the needs of the globalized society.