

## Tatsuya Sakamoto



Professor Tatsuya Sakamoto is Vice-President for International Affairs at Keio University, Tokyo. Prior to this, he was Director of the Keio International Center and the Center for Japanese Studies (2003-2005). After obtaining his B.A. (1979) and Ph.D. (1984) from Keio University's Faculty of Economics, Professor Sakamoto became a Keio professor of History of Social and Economic Thought in 1989, focusing, in particular, on David Hume, Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment. Professor Sakamoto has received Suntory Academic Prize (1996) and the Japan Academy Prize (2001). He has international research experience at the University of Glasgow (1984-1986) and Boston University (1997-1998).

### **In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario for higher education governance?**

One extreme scenario is that the social role and significance of higher education will be entirely dominated by market forces in order to meet people's needs for better living and social condition. The opposite extreme is that higher education will maintain its independent status and power against market forces. In Japan's case, its past tradition clearly prefers the second scenario but, in reality, under increasing financial pressure and the declining population of younger generation, the first scenario will have more realistic impact upon policy makers in both government and HE institutions. It is particularly the case in a short term.

### **In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?**

It is to foster human resources of various kinds highly skilled and motivated to serve the progress of human society in general and to be capable enough to play leading roles in a variety of positions of a given society. Given the increasing number of HE enrollment in developed countries, general role of HE has become to educate and produce highly intellectual human resources for the stability and progress of a society. Pursuit of universal knowledge and scientific truths are no longer the only and ultimate goal of HE.

### **What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?**

Main future challenges are,

1. how to define the ultimate mission and goal of HE (education, research or public service?),
2. how to finance HE under the unprecedented situation in developed countries at least, of universal access to HE,
3. how to internationalize HE in non-English-speaking countries without neglecting the importance of native language for profound understanding of any national culture and tradition.

**In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?**

- A. Exclusive choice of either one of the three goals of HE (education, research, service) at the cost of neglecting the others. Under the increasing pressure of global competition, top universities are going in the direction of research-concentrated strategy of their own institutions even risking the general neglect of education and student's satisfaction. This is highly likely result in many developed countries. Page | 59
- B. Cost of maintaining HE to be entirely borne by the students resulting in the exclusion of the poor from the benefits of HE. Japan has currently seen increasing drop-out rate of students for economic reasons. Scholarship is increased for foreign (and in many cases, relatively richer) students by way of reducing support and service to Japanese students. This is not highly likely because of the importance of the native (and poor but smart) students for financial stability of HE institutions.
- C. Domination by English of the non-English speaking culture causing a general degradation of the respect for native culture and tradition. Popularity of Japanese university is declining among Korean and Chinese students because of Japanese language skill becoming less and less evaluated in labour market after graduation. This is not also highly likely because majority of Japanese students are not able to survive full-English taught courses and they are the main student body and the main source of university income.

**What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?**

- A. Quality education is systematically supported by quality researchers and teachers, and the final output of the collaboration serves society by means of producing high-quality human resources as potential innovators and leaders in a variety of fields. The main risk here is the general difficulty of nurturing a good educator and a good researcher combined in one and the same individual.
- B. A fair and equitable balance between public and private funding to be achieved for HE resulting in a proper cost sharing among students and parents alike. No particular risks are identifiable in this scenario.
- C. Incoming foreign students without the prior native (Japanese) language skill are gradually trained by proper provision of the courses in the language. Since English courses are fully offered concurrently, by the time of graduation, foreign students become quite familiar with both the national and international wealth of knowledge. The high risk here is that the graduating students feel frustrated from poorly offered English courses or from the sense of NOT having acquired the native language.