



***Choices and Responsibilities:
Higher Education in the Knowledge Society***

Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE)

THE INCORPORATION OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN -
FIRST REACTIONS FROM NEW NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CORPORATIONS

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In April 2004, all the national universities, which had legally been subordinate organizations of the MEXT (Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture), were given juridical personality and became national university corporations. Thanks to the incorporation, each national university enjoys enlarged autonomy vis-à-vis the Government in terms of utilization of the budget (block money), personnel affairs (recruitment, nomination, salary, etc.), internal organization, and so on, although it is still under governmental regulations to a certain degree including the enrolment number and tuition fees. Released from strict regulations imposed by the Government, every national university is expected to develop its individually and to be distinguished in certain areas.

The paper will focus on the first reactions from newly created national university corporations. Drawing on recent observations on national universities (national university corporations), it will describe how national universities have defined their goals and strategic plans as well as how they have structured and staffed their organizations to achieve the goals and strategic plans. Some universities have experienced serious problems when preparing for the incorporation, including the new decision making procedures, the allocation of competence between the presidency and the departments, and staffing. The paper will then analyse problems stemming from the incorporation and finally present some major challenges as well as conceivable directions that may be taken by national universities and the Government in the knowledge society.