



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

**Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE)**

Can We Construct Our Advantage? .Regional Contribution of Japanese Universities  
in the Global Knowledge Society

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Universities are increasingly seen as key institutions for competitiveness in the knowledge society at large. This paper examines the changing policy environment in which Japanese universities are embedded as part of the globalising knowledge society. The paper focuses on the geographical dimension of the recent growth in academic entrepreneurship in Japan. This coincides with the historical transformation of national universities into the “incorporated” status as of April 2004.

The following key questions are investigated:

- What are the structural factors behind national policies encouraging academic entrepreneurship, or the so-called “third stream activities” at Japanese universities?;
- In what ways would the “incorporatisation” of national universities affect strategies and resources for the “third stream activities” of universities?;
- What are the successful strategies of universities vis-à-vis their “regions” and, vice versa; and what are the barriers to universities playing a more active role for their regions?
- What would be the impact of the third stream activities of universities for their regions and how could it be “evaluated”?

Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of national and regional innovation systems, the paper illustrates the recent local cluster development involving universities as main actors, promoted nationally by two ministries. Universities need to construct their advantage spatially in the knowledge society by combining the different strands of their activities (i.e. teaching, research and the third stream). In the light of the regional contribution, the impact can be captured in terms of four principal dimensions: economy; human resource; governance and community.