

# **International Market Principles and Private University Reform in Japan**

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## **Abstract**

Japanese higher education today is faced with serious challenges that will threaten the very existence of some universities. A declining birthrate combined with increasing international competition will require that universities take a more active approach if they are to attract enough students to ensure their survival. There are several areas that universities can focus on in response to these challenges; but first and foremost there needs to be a realization that a university is also a business and therefore reform strategy needs to focus on market principles. One way the universities must improve is in the quality of their administration management. Effective and efficient management is as essential to a university as it is in a company. Another factor the universities must focus on is to expand their applicant base outside the traditional 18-23 year old demographic group, which is shrinking. Making efforts to attract more foreign students and adult learners will also be necessary. In order to attract students in these new groups and still draw sufficient numbers of the traditional group, Japanese universities are going to have to make greater efforts in improving the quality of their course offerings and move towards a new paradigm of lifelong education. While universities in Japan do not compare well internationally, steps can be taken to improve their quality. Currently, teaching is not a high priority among university instructors and more needs to be done to attract and retain qualified teaching staff, regardless of nationality. A greater effort to attract quality foreign staff will be essential to introduce greater competitiveness. Finally, greater attention should be placed on lessons from corporate experience in quality control management, for there do seem to be lessons to be learned from corporate TQM methods. Some progress has been made thus far, but due to the seriousness of the challenges faced, a much more serious effort needs to be made towards realizing reform. There is much left to be done in responding to the challenges faced by private Japanese universities.

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