

第4部 課題

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第18回 毎日パソコン入力コンクール 6月大会

【課題】

第4部 英文B

Free tuition plan should guarantee fairness,
universities' independence

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Editorial: Free tuition plan should guarantee fairness,
universities' independence 

The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has commenced
laying concrete foundations for tuition-free higher education in
Japan. As this system takes shape, however, the authorities
should take care that it does not become a tool for government
control of universities. 

Under the government's plan, people from households under the
2.5-million-yen threshold for paying local taxes would be exempt
from tuition at national universities and junior colleges. Those
advancing to private institutions of higher education would
receive a set amount of tuition support. The government would pay
the tuition exemption or support amounts directly to the
institutions concerned. 

It is very important to support young people from poor families
to advance their education, as a way to break the chain of
poverty in low-income families and prevent economic inequality
from being baked permanently into Japanese society. 

There is, however, one aspect of the plan that gives us pause:
The government is demanding that institutions meet certain
conditions to receive the tuition aid payments. Namely, the
government is calling on universities to hire teaching staff with
real-world experience, tap outsiders as governing board members,
strictly manage student grading, and disclose information on
their financial statuses and management practices. This list of
requirements will directly impact class content and overall

education at these institutions. 

Indeed, it is important for universities to undertake reform to respond to the shifting needs of society. We also agree that the hiring of instructors with hands-on working experience in their fields would energize the educational content at these schools. 

Furthermore, some 40 percent of private universities across Japan are not meeting their student enrollment quota, and a weeding-out of weaker institutions and a general reshuffle of the sector are inevitable. Large sums of public money cannot be dumped into keeping schools with sloppy management and educational programs alive. 

However, educational reform needed at the institutions themselves is a different issue than economic support for students. And under the current proposals, there is a risk that tuition support will be used as a back door to impose the government's thinking about higher education on universities. 

Juichi Yamagiwa, president of both Kyoto University and the Japan Association of National Universities, has been increasingly critical of the setting of conditions for universities to receive tuition aid payments, calling it government "intervention in schools' autonomy." Universities should play a leading role in educational reform, so we can certainly understand his concerns. We also have concerns about applying conditions and requirements uniformly to all institutions. 

The government's tuition support conditions also take a student's high school grades into account. If the conditions are too severe, then the policy will risk losing its meaning as an anti-poverty measure. It would be much more appropriate to

concentrate continuing eligibility evaluations on a recipient's performance after admission. ↩

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has set up an expert committee to consider the system, and the body is expected to present specific recommendations on issues including eligibility conditions for students and institutions by this summer. ↩

We hope to see a system that is both fair and extends a helping hand to as many students as possible.
