Reform of Higher Education in Japan
- Fostering responsiveness to society -

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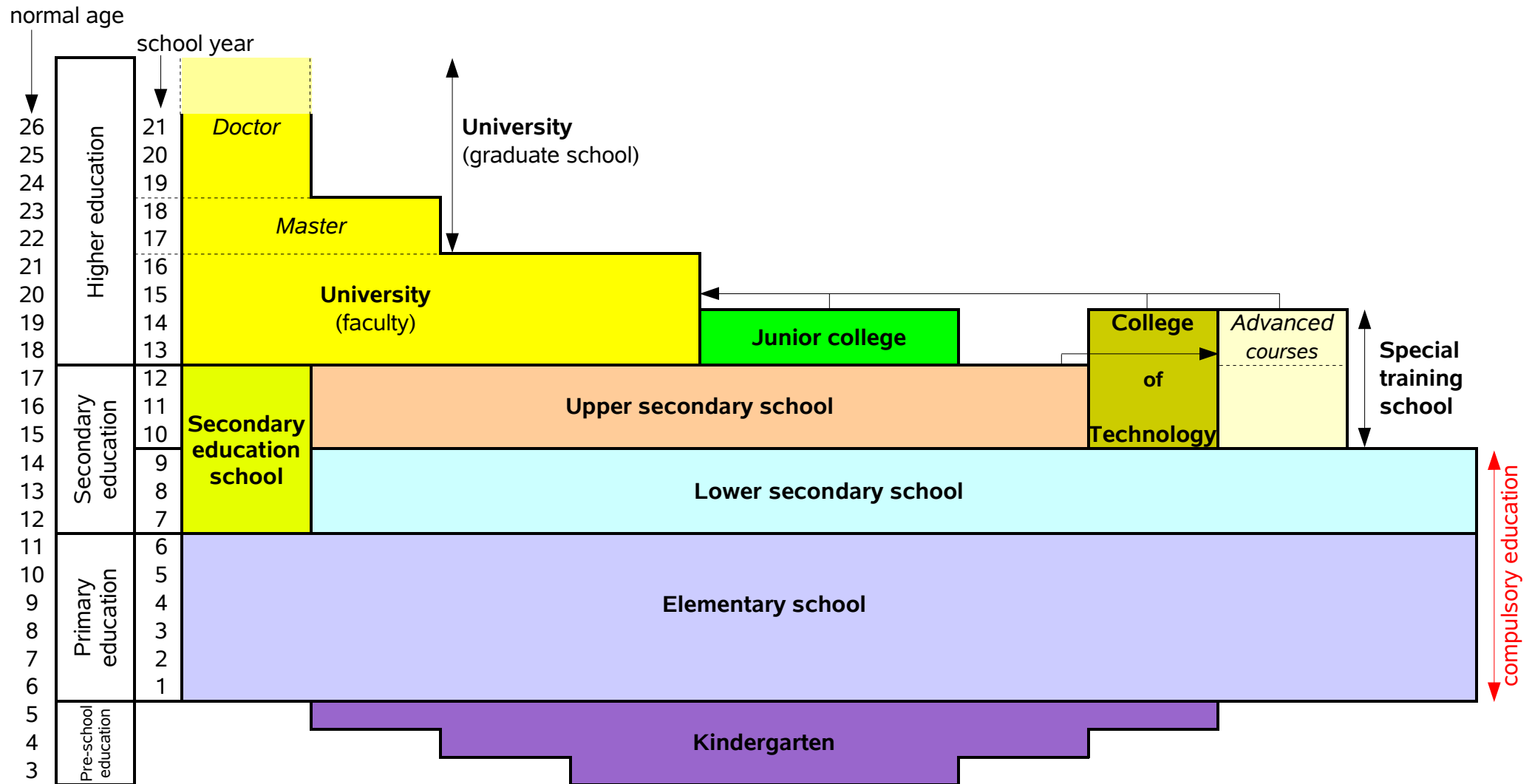Hiroshima University, Japan
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Contents

I Education system in Japan

The present school system

- Entire revision under the occupation

- Nine-year compulsory education

- Unified into a single track system

  – universities being open to every graduate of an upper-secondary school

  – abolition of distinction among higher education insti-tutions

Organisation of the present school system

normal age

school year

26	21	*Doctor*	**University (graduate school)**
25	20		
24	19		
23	18	*Master*	
22	17		
21	16		
20	15	**University (faculty)**	
19	14		
18	13		

Higher education

Junior college

College of Technology

Advanced courses

Special training school

17	12	
16	11	**Secondary education school**
15	10	
14	9	
13	8	
12	7	

Secondary education

Upper secondary school

Lower secondary school

11	6	
10	5	
9	4	
8	3	
7	2	
6	1	

Primary education

Elementary school

compulsory education

5	
4	
3	

Pre-school education

Kindergarten

4

A very good performance in primary and secondary education

- Ranking in the OECD's PISA 2000
    - first group for mathematics and science
    - second group for reading
- PISA 2003
    - still in the same groups as the PISA 2000
    - Japan slightly lowered its ranking by country.

II Higher education in Japan

1. Foundation of modern higher education institutions

- Imperial universities
  - University of Tokyo (later Imperial University, then Tokyo Imperial University) in 1887
  - Other imperial universities in major cities
  - Based on the German model
- Other types of institutions of higher learning (public and private)

Number of higher education institutions as of 1943

	Universities [imperial universities]	Specialised Schools	Total
Governmental (national)	19 [7]	58	77
Local public	2	24	26
Private	28	134	162
Total	**49 [7]**	**216**	**265**

Characteristics of pre-war higher education

- Well-organised bureaucratic administration system in governmental institutions

- Coexistence of the three sectors of higher education institutions – governmental (national), local public and private

- Limited number of governmental institutions and a larger number of private institutions

- Absolute priority to the national institutions, especially the imperial universities

After the war (as of 1949)

- 70 national universities without difference in legal status among them

- 17 local public universities

- 81 private universities

- Junior colleges (regarded as provisional)

2. The expansion of higher education and its decline

- Rapid growth of higher education in the 1960s and early 1970s

- Number of institutions
  - 1960 : 245 universities and 280 junior colleges
  - 1975 : 420 universities and 513 junior colleges

- Multiplication of students from 1960 to 1975
  - Universities : 2.77 times
  - Junior colleges : 4.28 times

Number of universities by sector
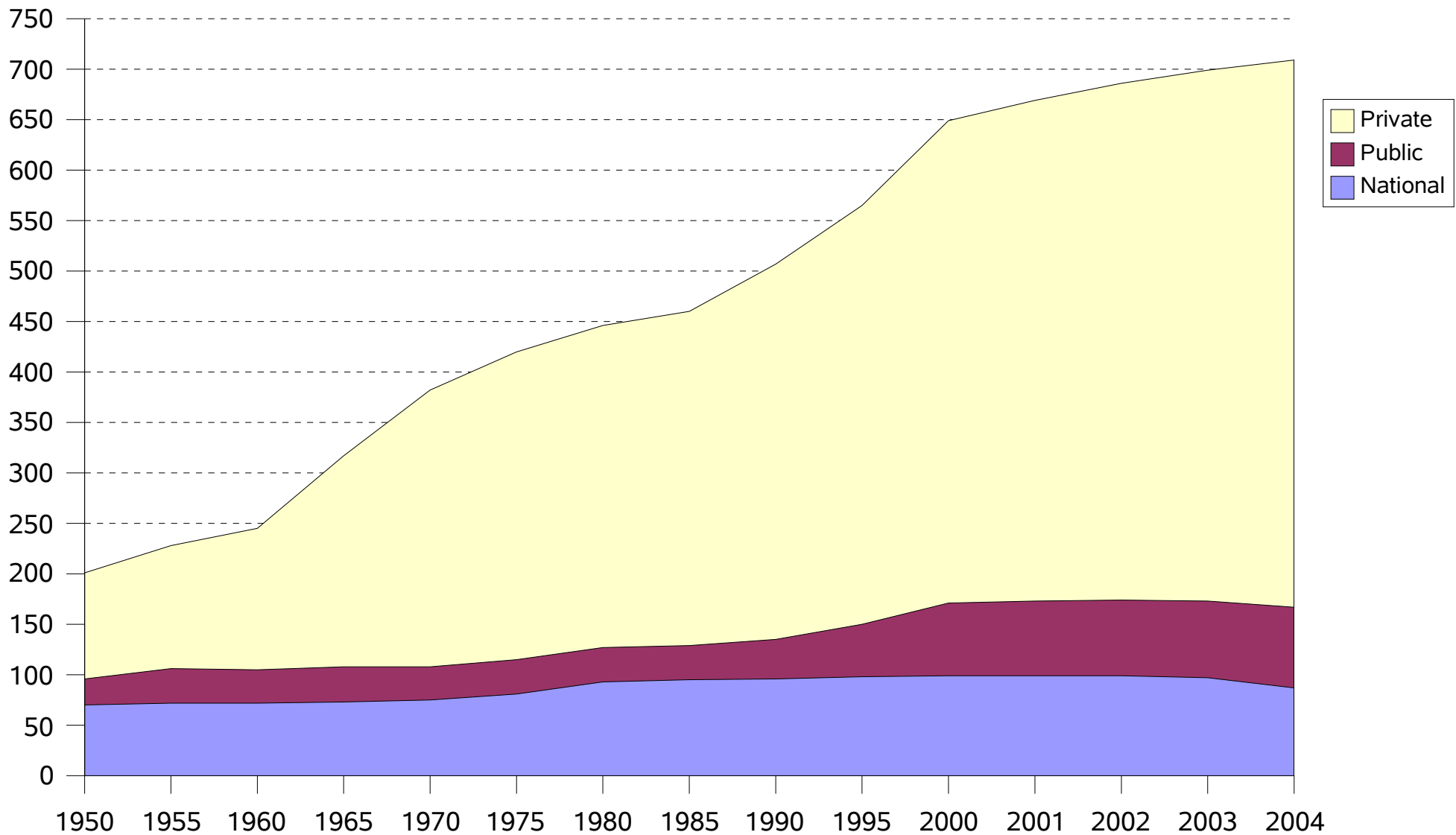
Number of junior colleges by sector
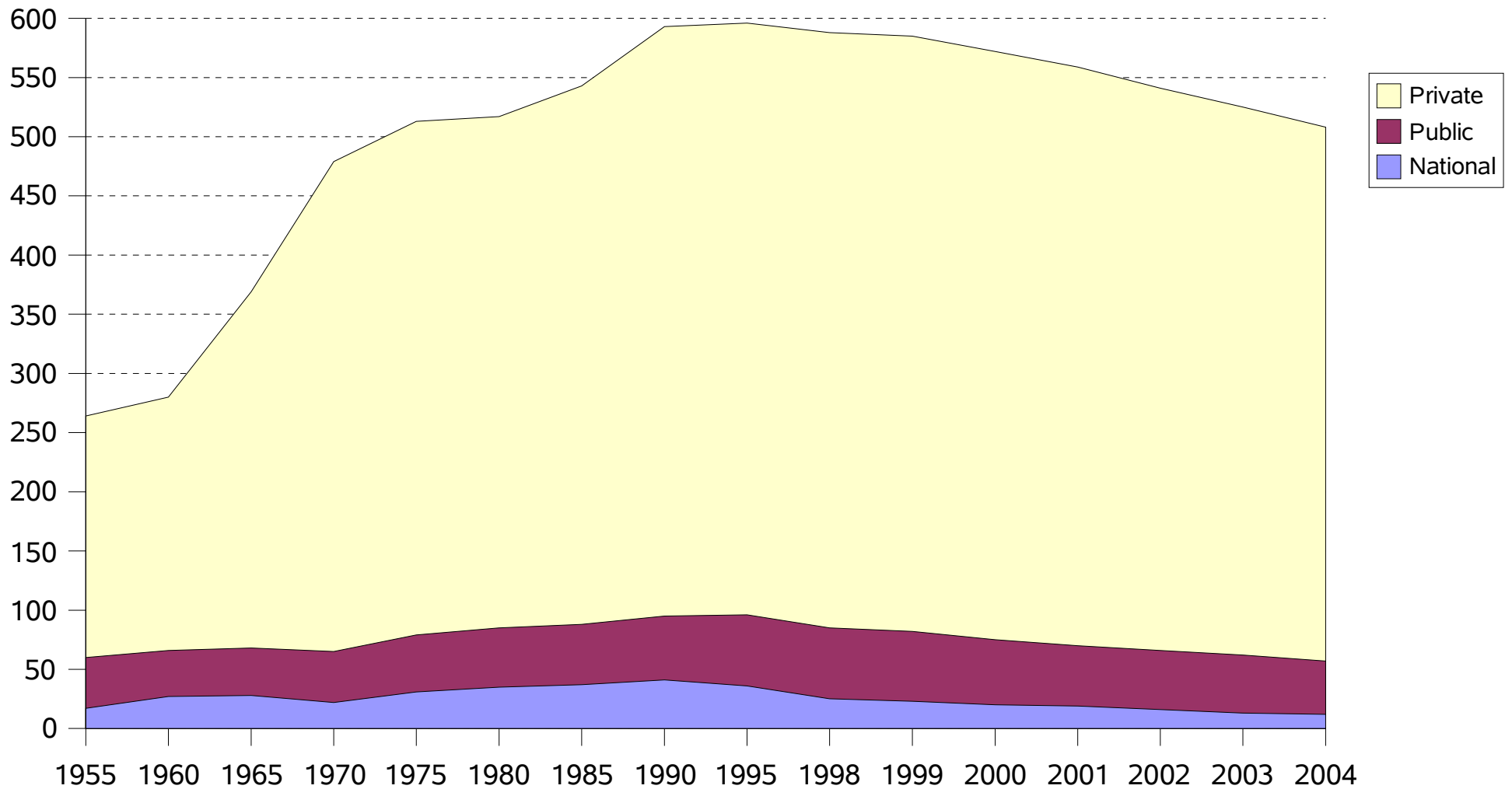
- Enrolment ratio (of the age cohort)
  - 10.3% in 1960
  - 38.4% in 1975

Student movements in the late 1960s and university reform

- Incapable of coping with the growth in the 1960s

- Student movements from 1966

- Central Council for Education's 1971 Report

  - diversification of higher education;

  - curriculum reform;

  - improvements in teaching methods;

 - opening of higher education to the general public

The planned expansion of higher education after 1975

- A decade plan for higher education from 1976 to 1986

- Creation of special training schools (advanced courses) as non-university institutions in 1975

Second expansion in the 1980s and early 1990s

- Number of universities
  - 1980 : <u>446 universities</u> (93 national, 34 public and 319 private)
  - 1995 : <u>565 universities</u> (98 national, 52 public and 415 private)
  - 2004 : <u>709 universities</u> (87 national, 80 public and 542 private)
    - junior colleges have been decreasing however

Trends in 18-year-old population and access to higher education
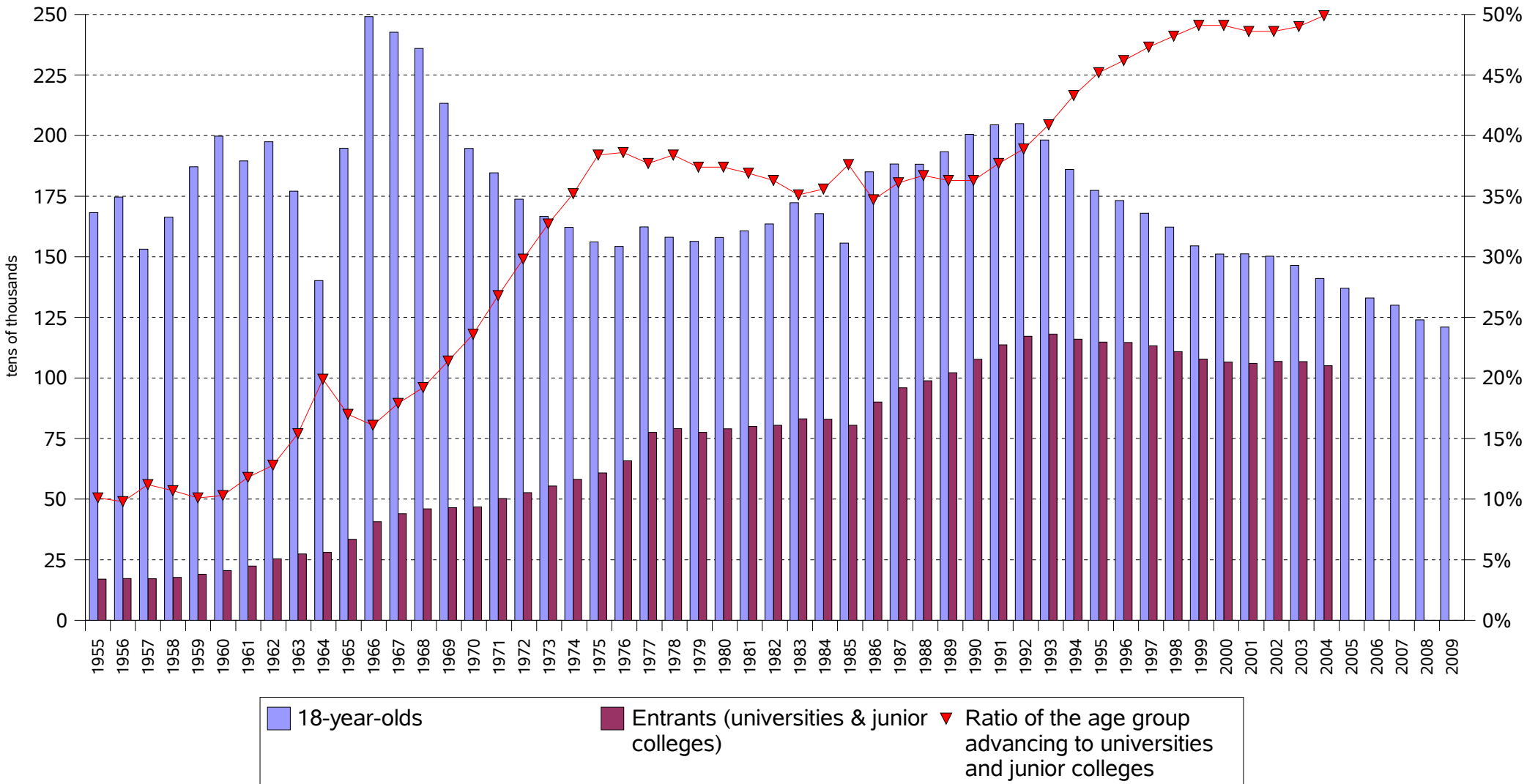
III Higher education and societal needs – How can universities be more responsive to society?

1. The transition to universal higher education

- M. Trow's Model
  - elite phase
  - mass phase
  - universal phase

Characteristics of the three phases of higher education system defined by M. Trow (1974)
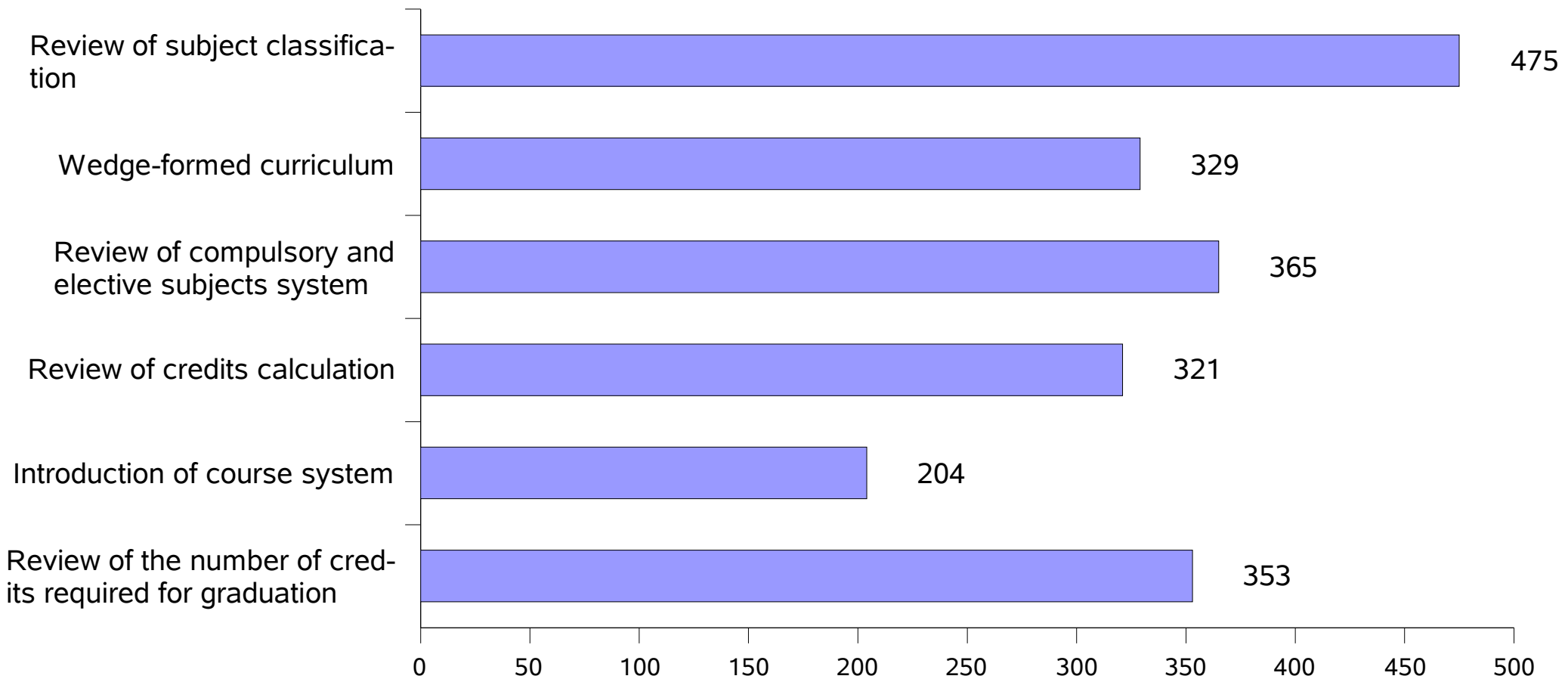
	Elite	*Mass*	*Universal*
Enrolment ratio	Under 15%	Between 15 and 50%	Over 50%
Attitude towards access	Privilege	Right	Obligation
Primary functions of higher education institutions	Shape the mind and character of the ruling class; Prepare students for broad elite roles	Prepare a much broader range of elites; Transmission of skills	Prepare large numbers of people for life; Maximise the their adaptability to society
Curriculum	Highly structured; Highly specialised and governed by the professor's notion	More modular, marked by semi-structured sequences of courses; Credit system; Movement between fields	Less structured and boundaries between courses being broken down; Rejection of academic forms and standards

2. Diversification of universities and their programmes

- Towards the universal phase

  - Over 50% in 1987 (non-university sector included)

- Decade plan was over in 1986.

- Acceleration of diversification of higher education institutions

- Establishment of the University Council in 1987

  - academic and non-academic members
  - comprehensive study on higher education

- Abolition of subject areas in 1991
  - structure curricula reflecting their own educational ideals and objectives
  - no definition of subject areas, such as general education and specialised education
  - no requirement on obtaining a certain number of credits in each subject area (acquisition of a minimum total number of credits only)

Implementation of curriculum reform in universities (2001)

Bar chart showing implementation of curriculum reform:
- Review of subject classification: 475
- Wedge-formed curriculum: 329
- Review of compulsory and elective subjects system: 365
- Review of credits calculation: 321
- Introduction of course system: 204
- Review of the number of credits required for graduation: 353

1998 Report *A Vision for the University of the 21st Century and Future Reform Measures : Distinctive Universities in a Competitive Environment*

- Improve the quality of education and research with the purpose of nurturing the ability to investigate issues;

- Secure university autonomy by making the educational and research system structure more flexible;

- Establish university administration and management with responsible decision-making and implementation; and

- Individualise universities and continuously improve their education and research by establishing multiple evaluation systems.

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2002 revision of the School Education Law

- More flexibility for a reorganisation of faculties and departments

  - A reorganisation without change in the kinds and fields of degrees does not need ministerial authorisation.

- Introduction of a continual third-party evaluation system

  - accreditation every 7 years by a accrediting organisation authorised by the MEXT (Ministry of Education)

Incorporation of national universities in 2004

- Change in the status of the governmental institutions

- Legal personality and more autonomy

- Non-public servant status for staff

- Participation of external people in university administration

Closing remarks

Three major factors for HE reform

- Diversification in students

- Changes in the demand for human resources

- Increased reliance of industry on academic research activities

Deregulation to have universities more responsive to society

- Differentiation of institutions

- Increased autonomy

  – institutional structure

  – curricula

For universities

- Continual reform

- Improvement of the management
  - Rationalisation of the administration
  - Development of non-academic staff

Government's role

- Definition of the grand design of higher education

- Maintaining an appropriate competitive environment

- Quality assurance

- Investment for the future (development of human resources)