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In Conversation with a Global Leader



What Makes a Graduate Internationally Competitive?

University College London (UCL), one of the constituent colleges of the University of London, is an historic institution dating back to 1826. One of Hitotsubashi University's own founders, Arinori Mori, studied at UCL; together with fellow alumni such as future statesman Hirobumi Ito, he would later become one of the architects of modern Japan. UCL has produced more than twenty Nobel laureates and has ranked consistently among the world's top ten universities in recent years. Declaring UCL "London's Global University," President and Provost Professor Malcolm Grant has actively promoted the globalization of UCL, and has produced "internationally competitive graduates" that are the focus of this conversation. Here, Professor Grant shares wide-ranging insights into the topic with Hitotsubashi University President Susumu Yamauchi.



Malcolm Grant

President and Provost, University College London



Susumu Yamauchi

President, Hitotsubashi University



As Our Graduates Think and Act Globally, Government and the Private Sector Will Work Convergerently to Create a Better Society

Were Arinori Mori's Studies at UCL the Foundation of Japan's Modernization?

Yamauchi: I'd like to begin by asking you about the founding principles of UCL.

Grant: I would say there were three founding principles. The first was that this was to be an institution that was open to everybody, irrespective of their religion, their race, or their wealth. That was very radical at that time. Secondly, that it would be a university that would teach new knowledge, and not merely the ancient teachings that were being followed at Oxford and Cambridge. So it became the first university to teach geography, to teach engineering, or to teach modern languages. In fact, by about 1870, it was teaching Japanese, Gujarati, Hindu, Farsi, a whole range of modern languages. The third principle was multidisciplinary. The instruction of our founding fathers was to explore the wealth of knowledge across all of the disciplines.

Yamauchi: Would it be true to say that UCL still lives by those principles today?

Grant: Yes, that's absolutely correct. We continue to recommit ourselves to them. I think the first principle, of access to a university on merit, has to be a basic principle for all universities nowadays. And our other quite proud act was that this was the first university to take women on equal terms with men, which occurred in 1878.

Yamauchi: In 1878. That was quite early, wasn't it? Women were first admitted to Hitotsubashi after World War II.

Arinori Mori, one of the founding fathers of the Commercial Training School, which later became Hitotsubashi University, had the experience of studying at UCL, a fact which I believe is of great significance. I think that Mori interpreted the

founding principles of UCL himself and then tried to introduce those exact principles in Japan.

Grant: Yes, I think that there may well be some truth in that. And in 1863, as a young Japanese, there would not have been many universities which would have accepted him as a student. So it was, I think, a very important act that he and the other members of the Choshu clan were able to come to UCL. And it's also very interesting that Professor Williamson treated them as members of his own family.

Yamauchi: Professor Williamson was a chemistry teacher, wasn't he? Recently Japan has generated quite a few Nobel laureates in the field of chemistry. If we look back into history, perhaps this

derives from the fact that the UCL professors originally taught the Japanese some very important things such as chemistry. *(Laughter)*

Grant: Well, I think you're too generous. *(Laughter)* But certainly those foundations were laid a long time ago.

Yamauchi: And the foundations count, don't they? Arinori Mori was a very progressive thinker who placed great importance on the English language even before the end of the shogunate in 1867. He was very democratic toward women, as well, and was the first Japanese to have a marriage contract.

What Is the Relationship between Liberalism and Democracy?

Yamauchi: Since its founding, Hitotsubashi University has embraced the spirit of liberalism. As you have made clear, UCL has a history as a democratic institution. What do you see as the relationship between liberalism and democracy?

Grant: I think that's a very challenging question. It's one that we face all the time in government in the UK.





Yamauchi: By liberalism, as defined here at Hitotsubashi, I mean economic liberalism...

Grant: Well, I think we pay a lot of lip service to economic liberalism, but we have consistently had governments who believed in highly regulated markets. And of course, after the recent economic crisis, we are swinging back towards greater regulation. And that creates quite a conflict

for us. Within British democracy at the moment, there is a strong struggle between, on the one hand, trying to reduce regulation and to allow markets to flourish, whilst at the same time trying to avoid the mistakes of the past decade, in which unregulated markets have caused widespread economic disruption. So there is considerable public dismay at the workings of the market and particularly of the banks, and yet the public last year elected a government that was more likely to be market-minded.

Yamauchi: Japan, since the Meiji period, has had a powerful state and has made a strong economy a national priority. In that context, liberalism as it is understood at Hitotsubashi University has tended to focus on the role of the citizens in building economic strength. Economic liberalism of this kind formed the core from which various freedoms developed. In that sense, we have contributed to the formation of civil society in Japan.

Grant: That's a very interesting role. I think in the UK we have seen swings from liberalism to regulation quite significantly, certainly in the era since

1945. The first government post-1945 was a highly socialist government, and since then we have gone backwards and forwards. At the opposite extreme was Margaret Thatcher's government from 1979, which had a much more economic liberalist view of the world and quite transformed economic thinking, not just in the UK but internationally. Since then we have come back to some extent, but Tony Blair was a strong economic liberalizer.

Yamauchi: Prime Minister Blair was Labour, wasn't he?

Grant: Yes, but he believed in markets to secure social ends.

Yamauchi: When I say "liberal," although this may sound contradictory, Hitotsubashi considers it important, as the framing concept of liberalism, that there should be a social aspect, and priority placed on the public welfare.

Grant: Yes, I understand. It's interesting that you may have a group of economists who can all agree on a single approach. This is unusual.

Yamauchi: Oh, I don't mean that everyone accepts it. *(Laughter)* That's just my view.

New Developments in Education and Research in Britain and the EU

Yamauchi: Turning now to a different subject, a new educational program known as ERASMUS¹ is under way in continental Europe. What is your view of it?

Grant: Absolutely excellent. Erasmus has done a great deal to promote student mobility around Europe, but it's been the first of a number of initiatives. I think two others are worth mentioning. One is on research, where we've had a series of framework programs, and now we have the European Research Council which is trying to develop, across Europe, a very strong platform for research, drawing together scholars and universities. The other is the Bologna Process,² which is not a European Union process but is broader than that. It has been attempting, quite successfully now, to produce a harmonization of structures of

1. The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) is a program for training, exchanges, and cooperation in science and technology between European Community (now EU) member nations. It aims to increase student mobility among EU nations by linking a large number of joint programs based on inter-university agreements, such as Inter-University Cooperation Programs (ICPs), to form a European University Network.

2. An education project based on the Bologna Declaration (1999), which was signed by the education ministers of twenty-nine European nations with the aim of creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010.



university degrees.

Yamauchi: Do British students also go to continental universities?

Grant: Yes, but we get many more coming from continental universities to the UK. So at UCL we have 4,000 students from Europe outside the UK. Our students who go to study in other European countries will normally take one year, the third year of their degree. We also have a few joint degree programs, where students will do two years with us and then two years in another university. Those are mainly in law, so students can obtain a dual qualification.

Yamauchi: I believe the legal system is quite different between Britain and the continent. Is that the reason why it is mainly your law students who study on the continent?

Grant: Yes, that's an important reason. And for each of those degree programs, we will give them a basic education in the civil law for the country where they will go, so that it's not entirely new. But they will be able to qualify with an understanding both of common law and of civil law. And another important area is European Union law itself.

Yamauchi: Hitotsubashi University and Keio University carry on joint education and research about the EU with financial support from the European Commission.

Three Ways to Internationalize a University

Yamauchi: Speaking of the EU, would you care to comment on the relationship between the EU and the UK?

Grant: It is a very difficult relationship, because the UK has the problem that, first of all, it's an island. Secondly, it faces America, and so it is pulled in both directions. It has strong language and cultural ties to America that are not shared by any other European state, except for Ireland. And so it can't quite make up its mind whether its stronger link is with America or with continental Europe. Secondly, we are not, of course, part of the euro zone. There are some political parties who cam-

paign to take Britain out of the EU altogether. Even within the Conservative Party, the main party of government at the moment, there is a split right down the middle between those who are pro-Europe and those who are anti-Europe. So governments tend to avoid it as an issue if they can, because it arouses such passions.

Yamauchi: Under these difficult circumstances, you are actively pursuing globalization. Could you comment on the globalization of UCL in that context?

Grant: Well, I'm very pleased with the way it's going. It's a pretty significant change, because we have watched what has been happening in the world, we have watched the increasing movement of students around the world, and we think that that is likely to continue. And to respond to that, we've done it first by internationalizing our curriculum, to make everything that we teach have an international relevance and not be very narrowly based on the UK. This is work in progress, but we're getting there. Secondly, we want to ensure that our students will graduate as global citizens. They must have the intellectual tools and the cultural sensitivities to be able to thrive anywhere in the world.

So, for example, next year we will introduce a requirement that each new undergraduate coming to UCL must already have proficiency in a modern language other than English. Thirdly, we are continuing to attract to London students and faculty from all over the world. Finally, we have started to open some small campuses outside the UK; for example, we are now working with a campus in Adelaide, South Australia, which is a graduate school in energy and natural resources, and in September we will open a campus in Qatar which will





be a graduate school in archeology. We are also working in Kazakhstan to advise the government on its new university in Astana.

What Are “Global” Human Resources?

Grant: We believe that universities do have a global responsibility and we are trying to develop in this way, but we will do this quite slowly, not opening too many campuses. We don't do it for financial profit. It doesn't work like that. It's for intellectual advantage. One other example: in 2009, we signed a collaboration with Yale and agreed that our two institutions would work together across a number of areas, because we could see that it would achieve even more if we brought them closer together, as one big university on each side of the Atlantic.

Yamauchi: Your globalization doesn't sound slow to me. *(Laughter)* ... How do you envision “global competitiveness of human resources”?

Grant: It is very important that all of our graduates should be able to think globally and to act globally, because so many problems in the world are not local but global in origin, and they require global attention. There are several levels of acting globally. One is that graduates should be capable of being hired by a multinational company and be able to thrive working with teams of people from other countries around the world. Secondly, they need to be capable of being hired by a global agency such as the United Nations or the World Health Organization, and to be able to understand the Millennium Development



Goals ... climate change, the problems of sustainable cities ... areas where we need the most intelligent and best-trained minds to assist.

Self-Evaluation Is More Important than World Rankings

Yamauchi: With its long history and active pursuit of globalization, UCL is one of the world's top-ranked universities. These ranking systems are a headache for Japanese universities. I have heard that, in spite of UCL's high standing, you have criticized the ranking system. Why is that?

Grant: Well, I think it's fundamentally flawed, because the very concept suggests that universities can be compared in a way which says that some are better than others, when actually we are all doing very different things. You end up with the subjective opinion of those who create the rankings determining the order in which universities appear. So it's a problem for Japanese universities—and I understand that—but it's a problem also for all universities. The response that we always get from the companies that do the rankings is that they use the best data. But what they are less willing to disclose is why they take the decisions that they take, or how they attach weightings to the data. Why should it be, for example, that they can pretend to compare the quality of teaching at this and that university? Nobody is capable of doing that.

At UCL, we do our own rankings internally: we constantly compare how we perform in research and teaching quality with the other big universities. We hired an American company to tell us where we would rank within America upon research criteria. But we do this ourselves for our own understanding and our own self-improvement. Whilst we enjoy the public rankings, we would never take decisions about how to run the university on that basis.

Yamauchi: It's a difficult issue, though, because everyone likes rankings...

Grant: The University of Tokyo always does very well because it's very big and it turns out a lot of science. Science is the other issue. The London School of Economics doesn't do very well because, like Hitotsubashi University, it's a social science institution.

Yamauchi: We will definitely quote you on that in HQ. *(Laughter)*

You have many connections with Japanese universities. Could you tell us your impressions of Japanese universities overall?

Grant: Again, like rankings, it is difficult to generalize. I think that amongst Japanese universities there is a mix of very strong private and very strong public universities. I think that the changes that occurred in 2004 (when the national universities were corporatized) were quite positive in opening them up to a greater degree of autonomy, which has been a big success for British and US universities, whereas many universities in continental Europe still are too tightly governed by their governments, and it makes it difficult for presidents to take decisions or to take risks. Certainly in terms of science, medicine, and, of course, the social sciences, the leading Japanese universities are very well respected. We see very fine scholars coming from them to work in our laboratories.

Encouraging the Best Students to Take Science with Social Sciences

Yamauchi: Hitotsubashi's students mainly pursue social science subjects. I'd like to ask you for some advice to them.

Grant: That's a difficult question. What we are trying to do at UCL at the moment is to open up areas of study to be much more multidisciplinary. It's difficult with undergraduate students, because they need to have a thorough grounding in their main discipline. We are about to launch a new liberal arts program at UCL, for the very best students, which will require them to do arts, social sciences, and science. This is a very American model, unusual in the UK. We will be the first in the UK to do this in a very rigorous manner.

However, students who study social sciences, and particularly law and economics, develop from that the potential for a highly professional career. That also carries with it, I think, big responsibilities, responsibilities to always ensure that the broader social impact of what we do is properly understood. The professions traditionally had, I think, a very important role in advancing public welfare, not just pursuing private wealth. This harks back to the relationship between govern-



ment and private commerce, but the two working convergently, rather than wholly divergently.

Yamauchi: Finally, universities are subsidized by their national governments. What relationship do you see between a nationally oriented or patriotic mindset and globalization?

Grant: The whole function of the EU, since its inception, has been to try to break down the notion of nationhood within Europe, whilst at the same time maintaining local languages, traditions, and customs, because nationhood and patriotism have been seen as agents of hostility and warfare. And that is the history of Europe for four hundred or more years. We have, however, not come to a point where we have properly understood regional governance, let alone global governance. And I think we need now to develop a much more sophisticated and coherent theory of global governance. The Copenhagen meeting (the 15th Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in 2009) demonstrated just how fragile our understanding of global community really is. These forces are in very serious tension, between nationhood and global governance.

Yamauchi: I look forward to building even closer ties of cooperation with UCL, one of the world's most prestigious universities and the place where our own founder studied. Thank you for your lecture at Sano Shoin Hall, and for the most interesting and wide-ranging insights you have shared with us today.