

Research Summary

Building Global Universities: University Internationalization in Japan

According to the report of International Association of Universities in 2003, internationalization has ranked one of the top missions in every university. Literature on internationalization of higher education with an emphasis on academic exchange and international student recruitment has been of great interest among universities in the western world. However, not many studies have been done on the East Asian experience. Recently, a number of studies have endeavored in investigating the practices and outcome of international initiatives on higher education in Asia. The call for increasing regional cooperation and academic exchange among higher education institutions within and beyond Asia has attracted a wider attention. In responding to this trend, many countries have made an effort to develop further links with institutions from international partners in order to facilitate teaching, research and administration of universities. This project aimed to investigate the internationalization practices at Tokyo and Waseda University as representative of higher education institutions in Japan. In particular, it focused on issues such as : What features in internationalization that existed among Japanese universities? What difference does internationalization make to Tokyo and Waseda University, and how is it implemented? What kinds of strategic responses are needed to promote more international academic relations in Japan? How is the increased influence of the English language affecting internationalization in Japan? In response to globalization, Japanese government has imposed many educational policies including increasing the number of international students in Japan and restructuring university international infrastructure. Research findings indicated that university internationalization in Japan originated from the drastic decline of birth rate and the emergence of an aging society in 1980s. This societal phenomenon has resulted in a tremendous student shortage among universities. Thus, Japanese universities went through three reform stages to cope with such challenges including: 1) Merging National Universities to strengthen education and research. 2) Converting National Universities to Corporations by adopting managerial concepts used in the private sector. 3) Fostering Universities of the World's Highest Standard by enhancing universities with vitality and international competitiveness. Along with these phases, the implementation of the University Corporation Law in 2004 accelerated the pressure over universities to expand international territories by setting academic agreements with overseas institutes, increasing the volume of international students, and establishing overseas academic branches and centers. It is found that both universities of Tokyo and Waseda have geared to strengthen academic connection with the western world though Asian students comprise more than 60% of total international population at both universities. It is also found that interaction between local Japanese and international students is rare and needs to be strengthened. The latter are not outreached enough to assist the making of a multicultural university campus in Japan. In addition, many English-taught courses and programs deserve further evaluation to enhance their effectiveness. The overall academic infrastructure on both campuses has made a great progress except the administrative support for internationalization.

Key words: University internationalization, Tokyo University, Waseda University, Japan

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

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