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## State Initiatives on Globalizing Higher Education in Japan

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### Summary and Keywords

The aim of internationalization for Japan during the early postwar period, still emerging from being an ODA (Official Development Assistance) recipient nation, was to promote student exchanges and mutual understanding across nations. Japan then successfully shifted its role to that of an ODA provider in the 1970s, engaging as a responsible citizen in the international community. However, the nation's competitive edge has slipped with a long-stagnating economy from the mid-1990s onward, the national target has shifted from the ODA provider role towards desperate attempts to regain the lost edge through public investment in research and development as well as promoting internationalization of the nation.

As the notions of world-class universities and global university rankings have prevailed worldwide over the last decade or so, the recent policies established by the Japanese government in response to an increasingly competitive and globalizing environment of higher education have transformed to leveraging domestic universities to compete for placement in the global university rankings. Balancing the reputation demonstrated in the global university rankings and generated inequalities in the service and quality of education provided among these institutions seems to be critically lacking in the current debate and hasty movement toward internationalization by the Japanese government. These hastily made policies do have some strong potential to build Japan's universities into stronger institutions for learning, research, and producing globally competitive graduates. However, thorough long-range planning, keen insight into the overall impact of the policies, and clear long-term goals will be critical in attaining success.

Keywords: Japanese higher education, globalization/internationalization, state initiatives, foreign student policy, student mobility, world university ranking, new flagship university

### Introduction

The cumulative record of government's leadership on internationalizing higher education in modern Japanese history began with inviting a small group of foreign students from overseas. The postwar environment for accepting international students by the Japanese government was formed in 1954 with the founding of a national scholarship program, which initially invited 23 students from around the world with the aim of international cultural exchange. The continual state initiatives led to a much larger scale of expansive policy three decades later, with implementation of the Plan to Accept 100,000 International Students in 1983. The plan, which was realized in 2003, was more recently succeeded by the 300,000 international student plan in 2008 and set a long-term goal of accepting 300,000 international students by the year 2020.

Although the Japanese government's policies on internationalizing the nation's higher education seems to have been developing seamlessly throughout the postwar era, internal efforts in the earlier premillennium phase was rather driven by external pressures from the international community, expected to fulfill the role as a responsible global citizen. However, as the nation's competitive edge has slipped, with a long-stagnating economy from the mid-1990s onward, the national target has shifted from an "ODA provider role" towards desperate attempts to regain the lost edge through public investment in the country's top research universities. The Top Global University program of 2014, which aims to achieve top-100 world ranking for 10 of the nation's universities over the next 10 years, is an example of the global excellence initiatives most recently taken by the Japanese government as such.

The notion of "world-class universities (WCU)" has prevailed worldwide over the last decade or so. The impact of the WCU concept has also been amplified by its twin image of global university rankings. Proliferation of these two notions underscores that universities today are deeply involved in a global race for earning popular votes in the borderless marketplace of higher education, where institutional prestige and elitism in the name of excellence would attract enormous financial as well as human resources. Building a robust operational capacity is certainly a critical element to laying a solid and sustainable foundation for today's universities serving a diverse population and playing versatile roles. The problem with the WCU concept, however, is well articulated in Altbach's (2004) statement "Everyone wants a world-class university. No country feels it can do without one. The problem is that no one knows what a world-class university is, and no one has figured out how to get one. Everyone, however, refers to the concept."

The recent policies established by the Japanese government in response to an increasingly competitive and globalizing environment of higher education have also centered around leveraging domestic universities to be listed on the global university rankings. Despite the governmental efforts since around the turn of the century with a growing amount of public funding poured into the nation's higher education system, the

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degree of aspirations towards globalization varies among domestic colleges and universities, with only a select few universities showing readiness to face the open market and many others opting out of the global race. It is rather true that Japanese universities have typically responded to rapidly transforming environments by partially adapting to internationalization through a “*Dejima*” or an enclave model within the country.

This article reviews the historical record of global excellence initiatives taken by the Japanese government in modern history, which have certainly been influenced by those established by the neighboring peer nations, and their impacts on the formation of today’s higher education policies and research in Japan are also examined, with a trajectory view of state policies.

## Modernization, Isolationism, and a Path Towards Self-Reliance: 1870s to 1980s

### The Birth of Higher Education in Japan (1870s-)

Universities, or *daigaku* in the Japanese language, as institutions of higher learning were introduced to Japan in the 19th century during the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the nation was accelerating the process of modernization through the “westernizing by imitation” policy of the central government. The state initiative on westernization was promoted to increase the economic competitiveness of the country and to catch up with the industrialized Western world. As a result, fostering of industry and strengthening of military power (*fukoku kyōhei*) along with developing new industries (*shokusan sangyō*) became the two most highly prioritized national agendas of Japan’s domestic policies.

The Japanese government established the first imperial university, known today as the University of Tokyo, according to the Imperial University Ordinance (*teikoku daigaku-rei*), which was promulgated in 1886.<sup>1</sup> Then, six other imperial universities, namely Kyoto (1897), Tohoku (1907), Kyushu (1911), Hokkaido (1918), Osaka (1931), and Nagoya (1939), in the chronological order of founding years (in parenthesis) were established following the preceding model of Tokyo, with the purpose of educating the next generation of government officials and elites by inheriting the spirit of the aforementioned national agendas.

The imperial universities at the outset employed academics from overseas quite proactively as foreign mentors (*oyatoi gaikoku-jin*), who were hired for their expertise in assisting and guiding the modernization process of the country. The foreign faculty, invited mostly from Europe at that time, were hired by the Japanese government in order to bring in the European system of higher education, to absorb the advanced knowledge and skills, and to ultimately produce the first generation of “indigenous” academics in hopes of launching the nation’s original purebred university in years to come. Therefore, building the foundation of modern universities based on the Western model was considered an indispensable exercise during the period of fostering an autonomous Japanese higher education system.

As the Western style of higher education began to settle domestically, there was an increasing demand among future-focused Japanese leaders with entrepreneurial minds for further broadening the opportunity of higher learning to a wider population. As a response, a number of elite private old system technical colleges, including Tokyo College (*Tokyo Senmon Gakko*), which was established in 1882 to become the predecessor of Waseda University today, were set up during this period, with a rising movement towards accelerated nationalism (Obinata, 2016).

The inbred Japanese faculty members of these elite institutions gradually came to replace the prior government-appointed foreign academics, taking over the role of the management of the university by excluding the foreign teachers from the faculty meetings and relevant internal organizational committees. This exclusionism continued until the enactment of the Act on Special Measures concerning Public Universities’ Employment of Foreign Teachers and Other Matters (Act No. 89) of 1982, which allowed

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foreign faculty members to take part in the faculty meetings and to have the right to vote. Even under today's circumstances, however, non-Japanese faculty members are still underrepresented in management positions, and they are often appointed on a term-limited employment contract. As a result, the proportion of full-time foreign faculty in Japan nationwide remained approximately 3.2% in 2012 (Japan Association of National Universities, 2013).

### The Postwar Recovery Period (1950s-)

The origin of Japan's policies on inviting international students in the postwar era dates back to the Japanese Government Scholarship Program of 1954, established upon a proposal made to the Minister of Education by the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO in 1953, in order to promote acceptance of international students by granting them opportunities to study in Japan on a nationally sponsored scholarship program. The original program invited the total of 23 students from 11 different nations in 1954, of which 17 students gathered from Southeast Asia and six from Western countries (Takeda, 2006).

The principal aim of the government scholarship program was set to contributing to mutual understanding and international cooperation through mutual enhancement of education standards in partnership with the international community. The effort was certainly an important step for Japan, despite its small scale at this immature stage, as it began to take on the role of a responsible member of the international community during the postwar recovery phase. The nation then experienced a miraculous economic recovery and a rapid economic growth from the 1950s through the 1970s, which has often been termed the "Japanese miracle." In aspiration of learning the mechanism of the Japanese economic miracle in later years, business leaders and researchers in the world became fascinated with Japanese studies, as exemplified by *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*, written by Vogel (1979), a Harvard sociologist, and a growing number of students began to study about Japan. It was therefore a course of natural selection for Japan to shift its position from that of an Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient country to an ODA provider as the nation rebuilt its strength through rapid economic growth in this period.

### The Economic Miracle and Emerging Diplomatic Issues (1970s-)

The internationalizing efforts by the Japanese government entered the next phase around the mid-1970s. Although economic growth was certainly an influential factor driving the national policies, and moving the community of Japanese higher education towards internationalization, it was the report titled *Review of National Policies for Education: Japan*, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1971, followed by the translated Japanese version published in 1972, that urged the government to set up initiatives to further promote internationalization. The OECD report overviewed the education policies of Japan and strongly recommended the government to contribute to the international community, particularly, in the areas of education. In short, the OECD's recommendation requested the Japanese government to begin providing educational opportunities to those in developing countries and to financially assist them in building their educational systems. In line with these efforts, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was also founded in 1974, in order to "actively support economic and social infrastructure development, human resource development, and institution building" and consequently contribute "to the economic and social development of developing countries especially in East Asia" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014, p. 204). The primary mission of Japan's internationalizing initiatives in this way came to be perceived both domestically and internationally as part of contributing to the world society as a fully developed country by supporting developing countries' endeavors in establishing their own formal structures of education through accepting international students from those countries to study in Japan.

As the world economy stumbled due to economic turmoil in the 1970s, i.e., the oil and energy crises of 1973 and 1979, however, fiscal conditions worsened in many industrialized countries, and the financial burden of hosting international students grew heavy on the governments of host countries. The international student policy as such became no longer an issue at the level of individual institutions, but it was escalated to the agenda of national fiscal policy for many of these countries.<sup>2</sup> The Plan to Accept 100,000 International Students was launched by the Japanese government in 1983 under these circumstances, and comprehensive measures focused on developing the proper environment within Japanese institutions, e.g., provision of relevant information in English, classes to study Japanese language, scholarships, course credit transfers, accommodations, and so forth were undertaken. The mission of the plan points to contributing to human resources development in the developing countries as well as raising the standards of education and research of Japanese universities through international cooperation and exchanges. It is important to clarify, though, that the focus of the plan at this stage was not so much placed on encouraging Japanese students to study abroad, but only to accept inbound international students from developing countries to support their development exercises through training of necessary human resources.

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The number of international students finally reached the target of 100,000 in 2003, and the total of international students grew to 123,829 by 2008 (MEXT, 2012), which further led the government to set an even more ambitious goal. In July 2008, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (or the “MEXT” for short) and other related ministries and government agencies settled upon the framework of the “300,000 international students plan,” which set a long-term goal of accepting 300,000 international students by 2020. The plan includes making efforts in systematically implementing support measures, from before entering into Japan to helping search for jobs after graduation.

From a cost and benefit point of view, however, the expansionary policy on international students taken by the Japanese government in 1983 was clearly running against the current of many other developed countries (Tojo, 2010). In fact, the policy was criticized for being high-cost with low return (Takeda, 2006). However, by the early 1980s mature Japanese industries were seeking chances to expand their businesses overseas. As a result, promoting development and exchange of human resources, particularly in the business sector, had grown to a pressing issue due to economic friction emerging between Japan and other nations over the trade of manufactured products, as Japan took a large share in those markets (Takeda, 2006). The issue of international cooperation, therefore, grew to a new diplomatic agenda and became the focus of the central government due partly to the swelling ambition to expand business opportunities beyond the domestic markets.

During this expansionary phase, Japanese colleges and universities did not typically sense the necessity of increasing the international student population on their campuses. Most of them rather felt the responsibility of providing college education to youth in developing nations who otherwise had no access to higher education. Kitamura (1984) explains that the rationale behind setting internationalization as a central agenda for the Japanese government stemmed from the aforementioned OECD (1971) report, which urged Japan to amend its attitude towards international cooperation and take a responsible role in the world community. Thus, the aim of widely accepting international students in this period more or less involved the mindset of contributing to the international community by fulfilling an ODA role as an emerging economic giant (Tojo, 2010). The principle of the Plan to Accept 100,000 International Students stems from this ODA role as a responsible citizen, and this spirit of accepting international students was inherited and perpetuated until recently (Takeda, 2006).

## The New Paradigm and Hasty Globalizing Policies

### The Paradigm Shift

The year 2004 is deemed by many as the “big bang” of Japanese higher education, as unprecedented university reform was undertaken in this year in the form of corporatization of the national universities. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) also reframed the approval system of the nonconventional institutions of higher education as well as the credits and diplomas earned from the institutions located outside Japan in 2004. For instance, foreign universities operating campuses in Japan became officially recognized by the MEXT as being equivalent to their Japanese counterparts. Similarly, Japanese universities operating in foreign countries were accredited as institutions equivalent to their main campuses in Japan. Additionally, in order to adapt to the academic calendars outside Japan and enhance both inbound and outbound international student exchanges, the School Education Act was amended in 2007 to allow Japanese colleges and universities to set the beginning of their academic year on a day other than the first of April, in discretionary judgment by the president of each university. Further amendment of the Standards for Establishment of Universities by the MEXT in 2013 also enabled the introduction of the quarter system, as opposed to the semester system, into the Japanese academic calendar of higher education.

### Accelerated National Policies for Borderless Higher Education (2000s-)

As a successor of the Global Center of Excellence (GCOE: 2007–2009) program, which is one of the first large-scale subsidy programs in recent years for internationalization, the “Global 30” project was introduced in 2009 by the MEXT, and 13 universities were selected to offer degree programs in English,<sup>3</sup> with government support of over US\$140 million for the period of 2009–2014. Through the Global 30 project, which aimed to provide advanced learning environments for international students for low tuition fees and generous scholarships, the MEXT claims that “these universities have broken down the language barrier which was one of the obstacles preventing international students from studying in Japan” ([http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a\\_menu/education/detail/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/03/30/1383779\\_07\\_1.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/detail/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/03/30/1383779_07_1.pdf)).

In addition to the Global 30 project, which focused on investing in inbound students, a new MEXT-led subsidy program named “Re-Inventing Japan” project was established in 2011 with a total budget of over US\$20 million. The region-specific design of the Re-Inventing Japan project

aims to foster human resources capable of being globally active, and to assure the quality of mechanisms for the mutual recognition of credits and grade management through an international framework, by giving financial support to efforts for the formation of collaborative programs with universities in such

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countries as Asia and US, that conduct study abroad programs for Japanese students and undertakes the strategic acceptance of foreign students (<http://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/highered/title02/detail02/sdetail02/1373893.htm>).

Yet an additional public subsidy program, the “Go Global Japan” (GGJ) project, was launched by the MEXT in 2012 and a large amount (US\$1 to 2 million per university each year) of fiscal budget has been poured into 42 projects proposed by the selected universities for the expected span of five years. On the surface, the aim of the GGJ project is set to provide “support for developing an organized education system to comprehensively strengthen and promote the global capabilities of students, in order to foster human resources who can work internationally and positively take on global challenges” (<http://go-global-japan.com/about/>). The true motive of the MEXT is found in the increase of “inward-oriented” students in Japan who show no interest in seeking learning opportunities outside the country, or challenging themselves in a global arena. The number of Japanese students studying abroad peaked at 82,945 in 2004, but then the number declined by more than 30% to 58,060 in 2010. In order to turn this situation around, the selected universities have promoted through the GGJ project a range of initiatives including enhancement of English education with specifically preset goals (e.g., TOEFL-iBT80) and developing an international study program through provision of intensive language training and study abroad programs as well as recruitment of international academic staff.

In 2013 the prototype of the “Top Global University Japan” project for which the government would select ten or more domestic universities and invest in them to be ranked in the top 100 in the global university rankings over the next decade, appeared in a report titled the *Japan Revitalization Strategy: Japan Is Back*, which was released by the office of the Prime Minister of Japan as part of a national growth package ([https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/keizaisaisei/pdf/saikou\\_jpn.pdf](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/keizaisaisei/pdf/saikou_jpn.pdf)). A chain of government-led internationalizing efforts finally culminated in 2014, in the realized form of the “Top Global University Japan” (or more commonly known domestically as the “Super Global University”) project.<sup>4</sup> The project aims to support only Japan’s top universities with a high potential for world-class education and research caliber, and the selected universities are intended to become driving forces of internationalizing Japanese higher education, while fostering international compatibility and competitiveness. The announcement made by the MEXT in April 2014 jolted the higher education community in Japan because the project was understood by many as a manifest of the central government’s strategy to fit the domestic colleges and universities into a typology or rating of universities, which rationalizes the prioritization of efficient funding allocation to a certain group of institutions. The total annual budget of approximately US\$77 million will be allotted each year to the group of selected universities for the span of 2014 through 2023.

As discussed above, the original concept of the Top Global University Japan project was included in the national strategy of reboosting economic growth under the office of the Prime Minister Shizo Abe in 2013. Clearly, education and research outputs produced by

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universities have been deemed by the government as important sources of incubation and innovation required in a highly competitive knowledge-based society, in which Japanese industry has fallen behind since the collapse of the hyper economic prosperity in the early 1990s. Public stimulant packages have been introduced occasionally by the central government, but they had only a limited impact on reboosting economic growth or restructuring the conventional organizational practices and human resource development. In the meantime, the unease of the Japanese government continues to grow as the neighboring countries come to the fore in the world markets, both in industry and academia.

## Discussions

### Imported Policies and General Aspirations for Internationalization

The nation of Japan today faces unprecedented challenges uniquely related to a rapid transformation of demographic composition as well as outdated administrative systems. The institutions of higher education similarly face various challenges arising due to the dramatic changes in demography and a borderless environment, particularly a rapidly contracting 18-year-old bracket population with rising demand from the international as well as domestic and local communities to serve their manifold and diverse needs.

In order to tackle these newly emerging social issues, the Japanese government has undertaken various administrative reforms of the related agencies, including higher education reform, under the Koizumi administration (2001–2006). During the period of the Koizumi administration, for example, the postal reform (2003) was conducted, transforming the public postal services to private business by founding the Japan Post; the judiciary reform that led to the introduction of the Japanese version of a jury system and professional law school system (2004); the dissolution of the Social Insurance Agency and founding of the Japan Pension Service (2009) by which the employees lost their status as public servants. These administrative reforms were undertaken in the name of improving the efficacy and morale of the government agencies, with the tailwind of the “New Public Management” movement, which originated in the U.K. in the 1980s (Watanabe, 2015). In the context of these sweeping reform attempts, the corporatization of national universities was realized in 2004.

Introduction of the professional graduate schools scheme in 2003, modeled after the U.S. professional schools, preceded the enactment of the national university corporatizations of 2004, by which new types of professional graduate programs in business (MBA), law (JD), public administration/policy (MPA/MPP), public health (MPH), and so forth were established nearly overnight. However, the direct importation of the U.S. professional

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school scheme soon proved itself faulty due to immature domestic job markets for those professionals (Watanabe, 2012, 2015). This professional school scheme in Japan left a big enough scar as a crucial lesson to learn that “internationalization by imitation” would not easily take root in the soil of this country.

The aspiration of Japanese universities for internationalization is well scrutinized in a study by Murasawa et al. (2014). Using data sets collected from university executives nationwide, i.e., presidents, vice presidents, deans, and chairpersons, the study examines whether and to what extent Japanese university executives affirmatively acknowledge the performance of their institutions in fulfilling multiple functional roles and what factors contribute to shaping such self-identity. Although the study shows that a large fraction of Japanese university executives recognizes “becoming a global research and education hub” as being an important institutional mission, the finding also reveals that the executives have become more locally engaged than becoming globally oriented institutions between the 2005 and 2012 survey years. Thus, the goal of the global excellence initiatives led by the MEXT since 2004 seems to fall short of what it originally hoped for. Importantly, this analysis result further suggests the MEXT policies may be having the opposite effect among discouraged local or provincial national universities and small-scale private institutions, which seem to be pulling back from globalizing efforts, while only the comprehensive research universities such as those selected as the Top Global University project continue to show readiness to compete on the world stage.

### Influence of Neighboring Countries' Policies

It seems that the current positioning of universities worldwide has been established as a result of “periphery” nations, as opposed to the “core” nations (e.g., the United States and U.K.), having been vulnerably responsive to the influences of these core countries through the medium of the global university rankings. Although the dependency theory, originally posited by Prebisch (1950), was framed in the theory of development, stating that “the core nations continue to grow at the expense of the resources provided by the underdeveloped periphery of countries” (Meyer & Thomas, 1980; Walters, 1981), the dependency theory seems to fit into the picture of global university competition with a possible scenario that the periphery or semiperiphery nations, as classified by Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994), will always fall behind the core nations.

External forces of pressure generated by peer countries, both in implicit and explicit forms, also affect the reactions of each nation. One form of pressure may simply come from the geographically contiguous neighbors, e.g., strategies of Asian countries influencing Japanese policies. Another type of pressure may be generated by the overall progress of internationalization among the peer countries worldwide as manifested in various measures demonstrated in the university rankings. In the words of DiMaggio and Powell (1991), both these effects are perhaps interpreted as “mimetic isomorphism” whereby each nation learns “from [the] other and responds to unanticipated situations and ambiguity in similar ways,” It may be hypothesized that these “domino effects” (Baldwin, 1995) impose significant impacts on competing countries in their working efforts of multilaterally developed relationships. Murasawa et al. (2013), using a consolidated data set for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), demonstrate that “varying stages of socio-economic as well as political development, along with indigenous ethnic and linguistic complexities, affect the robust progress of implementing multilateral higher education policies.”

Where will the global excellence initiatives and university competitions lead us though? The strategies taken by the Japanese government clearly grew on the foundation of international networks along with strong influences of peer nations, benchmarking with the top-ranked institutions on the list of world university rankings. The peer nations have taken a similar strategy—e.g., South Korea’s “Brain Korea (BK) 21,” Russia’s “5/100 Project,” and China’s “211” and “985” projects—and all of these schemes allow only “a select few to become rich” as Cheng et al. (2009) phrase it. These isomorphic strategies are perhaps equivalent to the standardization of higher education systems with the Western, in particular the American, system as a model. This may result in deterioration or loss of the unique academic culture and approach grounded in the context of the nation, which have a strong linkage with indigenous languages, and segmentation of the nation into those equipped with English proficiency and those without (Yoshida, 2013). The

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potential long-term impact of these global excellence initiatives which pervade worldwide today requires further careful investigations, as pointed out by Chirikov et al. (2017).

### Internationalization With the “*Dejima*” Strategy

The Japanese university’s typical strategy to promote internationalization has been pursued only by partially adopting required reforms without involving the entire existing organizations within an institution, e.g., setting up a new “island” department or degree program specifying English as the official language of communication and instruction. In fact, many of the programs established under the Global 30 project remain outside of the regular organizational structure within each university. The practice is often cynically referred to as the *Dejima* strategy. Historically, *Dejima* was a man-made island specifically assigned to foreigners for their residential area and to have direct trade with Japanese merchants in the city of Nagasaki when the country took the self-imposed isolationist policy or *Sakoku* during the Edo period (1603–1868). It was a way to constrain or minimize direct foreign influence on the indigenous society of Japan. Using *Dejima* as a metaphor, Kitamura (2001) discusses how internationalization of higher education in Japan has taken place only within specifically created locations, and there is little communication and exchange of information between the new establishment and existing organizations. Nonetheless, in this model the new establishment is somehow expected to act as an innovator that would eventually transform the organizational structure and culture in a slowly diffusing manner. An initiative to promote internationalization in such a way, however, has had little impact on the structure of existing faculties or departments.

In the white paper published in 2008, the MEXT states that universities should aim to provide globally competitive education by (1) having clear purpose of education and research at the university, (2) having structure to ensure the quality of education, and (3) offering internationally respected academic degrees. The MEXT then identifies areas for universities to work on such as defining enrollment, curricula, and diploma policies, constructing aligned curricula and degree programs, refining credit systems, improving teaching methods, having rigorous assessments, and providing necessary professional development for faculty members. The discussion in the 2008 white paper applies to all the universities in general, and the MEXT sought more strategic and bold plans to support a select few universities to be globally competitive.

In hopes of turning the situation around, the MEXT designed the Top Global University project to encourage organizational reforms of each institution to achieve the goal of creating globally competitive universities. There is a clear change in the tone of the meaning of internationalization in the MEXT’s policies. What was once meant as a medium of making contributions to the international communities by accepting international students from developing countries now means a way to enhance the capacity of higher education to achieve a higher profile in the international higher

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education market, and to educate students to be globally minded (Ninomiya & Shimomura, 2007).

### Discourse in Japan's Globalization Policies

Over the last two decades or so, particularly since the collapse of the country's infamous bubble economy in the early 1990s, nurturing *gurōbaru jinzai* or globally competitive human resources has risen as a major national agenda among Japanese policy makers, with an incremental pressure on the universities to review curriculum and extracurricular activities to respond to this new demand. The office of the Prime Minister of Japan (2012) defined the concept of *gurōbaru jinzai* as a person who possesses (1) language and communication abilities, (2) independent, proactive, cooperative, and responsible attitude, and (3) intercultural understandings and Japanese identity. Although the definition is rather broad and abstract, the central government's intent is seen as strongly supporting university's initiatives to raise the international profile of the country to the next higher level.

Underlying the government's leadership is that globalization is the only way forward for the country, although there exist criticisms such as by Iriyama (2015) who argues that the world is not as globalized as presented and that there are only a small number of truly globalized companies in the world. In fact, some research on assessing the level of globalization reveal that very few multinational enterprises actually operate globally (Rugman & Verbeke, 2004), and the world is falling into a state of incomplete cross-border integration referred to as "semiglobalization" by Ghemawat (2003). In addition, Stiglitz (2002) offers his views on what has gone wrong and what could be done differently and insists that globalization has not progressed carefully nor fairly enough, often based on inadequate economic analysis, which has led to growing inequality, financial instability, and failures in the process of development.

Debates in related literature in the Japanese context of internationalization tends to emphasize, in conformity with the government policies, pragmatic know-how and means of promoting globalization of higher education on the premise that it is an unavoidable path to take for the nation, in order to win a larger market share in today's zero-sum world. A drawback in the nature of current discourse, however, is that the terms "internationalization" and "globalization" are becoming fashionable catchwords, which hinders us from critically engaging with the thoughts concerning planning the future landscape of the country. The policy discourse carved in this way has unconditionally accelerated promotion of internationalization, or more precisely in the recent examples of Japan, mimetic "Americanization" of universities.

Internationalization, as Knight (2008) defines, is understood to be "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels." However, as *Dejima* practice evidences, chasing myopic indicators and achieving the numeric targets

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set up for assessing the progress of, often only partial aspects of, internationalization such as the number of international students and academic staff members, courses taught in non-Japanese languages, and English-written articles published in academic journals, have become the objective of institutional initiatives. In other words, internationalization captured only by these indicators has become proof enough to demonstrate a degree of achievement, and the transformation process has gone largely ignored. The tendency of placing heavier weight on the number of publications appearing in highly influential academic journals has been accelerated with the MEXT's Program for Promoting the Enhancement of Research Universities, for which 22 institutions were selected in 2013 for the overall annual funding support of over US\$60 million for the span of 10 years, in combination with the financial incentives of the Top Global University program. As a result, Japanese universities today face a number of organizational issues and challenges, such as lacking clear vision for internationalizing purposes and strategies, basic support structure for international students and faculty members, and the lack of university-wide policies to promote inclusion and ensure diversity on campus (Ota, 2015). Discussion of what the numeric indicators mean to the purposes, culture, and functions of Japanese universities is critically lacking.

It has long been noted with criticism that the organizational structure and management practices within a Japanese higher education institution are overly exclusive against non-Japanese communities, due perhaps both to linguistic and cultural barriers. Nonetheless, there is still a firm and continual tendency to directly import good practices from the West rather than creating its own in this country (Amano, 1978; Kitamura, 1978A, 1978B, 1984). This is particularly so when national policy stands at a critical crossroads, even after more than 100 years since the Meiji Restoration, which symbolized the dawn of Japan's modernization after more than 250 years of closed policy under the Tokugawa Shogunate in the Edo period. As Toyama (1978) pointed out, the system of Western higher education was introduced back in the incipient stage of the formation of modern education in Japan, but Japan has yet to foster an autonomous mindset to design and build truly indigenous ideas of academic activities.

Extensive efforts were made by the central government during the 19th and 20th centuries, in order to bring the domestic universities on a par with their international counterparts despite the unavoidable linguistic challenge. The hierarchical structure born through this process created favoritism towards the former Imperial Universities, which resulted in a layered segmentation of the domestic universities and colleges, paralyzing their ability to flexibly cope with the rapidly transforming landscape of higher education outside the country. At the early stage of establishing a modern system of higher education, the Japanese government invited scholars from the West to learn advanced knowledge and pedagogy from them. The scholastic knowledge acquired in foreign languages was then translated into Japanese over the years. Eventually the Japanese language became the medium of higher education instruction, making higher education accessible to the general populace. While the birth of modern Japanese higher education contributed to the economic miracle during the postwar period, it has also contributed to

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the birth and growth of academic communities in the nation. According to *Gakkai Nenkan*, a database of academic societies compiled jointly by the Science Council of Japan, Japan Science Support Foundation, and Japan Science and Technology Agency, there exist 2,006 academic societies as of February 2017, most of which publish their own academic journals.

The Japanese language has long been pointed out as a nontrivial barrier for Japanese universities to gain competitive advantage in an increasingly borderless world of higher education. Yoshida (2013) criticizes that the efforts invested into “Englishnization” (a coined term often used by the Japanese media<sup>5</sup>) by non-English nations would exhaust currently available resources through the process of making English the official language of instruction. Kariya (2014) also argues that the issue of gaining international competitiveness requires further and careful scrutiny, raising the importance of recognizing the difference between “real” versus “imagined” competition, i.e., whether universities face competition in tangible ways (e.g., the number of patents) or in more abstract “imaginary” ways (e.g., assessment scores on the PISA test). Otherwise, Kariya warns, international competition would lead to uncalled-for reforms, inappropriate allocation of resources, and possibly harming the quality of higher education in Japan.

### Conclusions

This article traces the evolution of Japan's government-led efforts to internationalize higher education. In its inception in the 1950s, as Japan was still emerging from being an ODA recipient nation, the aim of internationalization during the early postwar period was for promoting student exchanges and mutual understanding across nations. This policy then developed into a much stronger stance as ODA provider and in the roles of global citizenship, and focused on providing educational opportunities to students from developing nations. As the economic growth of the nation continued to accelerate in the 1960s-1970s, so did the push to provide funding and opportunities to students from outside Japan, which was largely driven by calls from the international community for Japan to step up to this role. The prevailing view that characterized this period was an economically and technologically advanced nation providing opportunities to students from abroad to learn from the success built in the post-World War II era. The various initiatives to increase the foreign student population in Japan discussed in the sections above reflect this view. However, as the economic growth stagnated following the end of the bubble economy in the early 1990s with a prolonged economic downturn over the next 20-plus years, this view also waned.

Japanese industry suffered, and perhaps Japan became less attractive to potential foreign students. During this same time period, the number of college-age Japanese who took an active interest in studying abroad also declined significantly and the internationalization of Japan's higher education institutions took a significant downturn. While many foreign students still came to study in Japan over these years, and the actual numbers continued to increase, the foreign student population peaked in 2004 and since then has been in decline. Like all nations coming to terms with the realities of a borderless and knowledge-based economy, Japan's policy makers have had to create new policies and new initiatives for the nation to hold their own in the globally competitive markets, including academia. The stance has now become a decidedly competitive one, and the initiatives are focused on the domestic universities becoming globally top-ranked. As neighboring countries such as Korea, China, and Russia launched their own large-scale initiatives to globalize education in the late 1990s onward, Japan's policy makers were slower to respond, and the hasty moves to internationalize since 2004 have been the result. This raises concerns of the viability of the plans being so rapidly implemented. These hastily-made policies do have some strong potential to build Japan's universities into stronger institutions for learning, research, and producing globally competitive graduates. However, thorough long-range planning, keen insight into the overall impact of the policies, and clear long-term goals will be critical in attaining success.

Many of the local or provincial national universities and small-scale universities in Japan seem to have already opted out of the global race and have decided to be locally engaged flagship universities as described in Douglass's (2016) new flagship university model. It will then be a competition among the top universities selected from each country, with

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substantial resources poured into investing in production of a high volume of publications and international faculty and students. Balancing the reputation demonstrated in the global university rankings or the world-class universities and generated inequalities in the service and quality of education provided among these institutions seems to be critically lacking in the current debate and hasty movement for internationalization by the Japanese government. This dilemma of competing priorities, balance of resources, and the pursuit of educational excellence on both global and local levels will certainly continue to challenge policy makers, faculty, and management of higher education institutions in the years to come. Watanabe and Sato (2017) showcase the examples of two national, not formerly imperial, universities in Japan who adhere to the original mission and try to grow on the long-built strengths of the institution. As Watanabe and Sato discuss, continuing to face these challenges with a keen awareness of the dilemma and a clear, strong purpose is perhaps the only way we can hope to overcome them.

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### Notes:

(1.) The predecessor of Tokyo Imperial University (*Tokyo Teikoku Daigaku*) was founded in 1877 as the University of Tokyo (*Tokyo Daigaku*).

(2.) For instance, the Thatcher administration in the U.K. drastically inverted its national higher education policy by introducing full tuition fees for international students in 1981.

(3.) The universities selected for the Global30 project include Doshisha University, Keio University, Kyoto University, Kyushu University, Meiji University, Nagoya University, Osaka University, Ritsumeikan University, Sophia University, Tohoku University, University of Tokyo, University of Tsukuba, and Waseda University.

(4.) The expression of the "Super Global University" was used in the original Prime Minister' report, and has been the adopted phrase until today, used as a nickname. The

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official name of the “Top Global University Japan” was given by the MEXT then, but the “Super Global” nickname is still commonly used by the Japanese community of higher education.

(5.) “Englishnization” is a coined term used by Hiroshi Mikitani, CEO of Rakuten, Inc. in his book *Takaga Eigo! - Englishnization* (2012), who made English the official language of communication in his company in 2012 (see also *The Japan Times*, July 30, 2012).

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