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The International Student 100,000 Plan (Policy Studies)

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Abstract

In accordance with Prime Minister Nakasone's proposal to encourage students from abroad to study in Japan, "The International Student 100,000 Plan" was launched in 1983. Although the Ministry of Education has taken various measures to realize this quantitative goal, in 2001 there were still only 78,812 international students enrolled in Japan. Why was this Plan not realized? Were the Ministry of Education's measures effective or ever fully implemented? In order to answer these questions, this paper aims to analyze the policy processes involved in, and the measures for, the Plan between 1983 to 1999, using Fowler's classical stage model framework. Also, the paper will examine the model of political decision-making of the Plan in the light of one of Swanson's six models—the elite theory.

Keywords: The International Student 100,000 Plan, Japan, international student mobility, policy process, policy analysis

1. Introduction

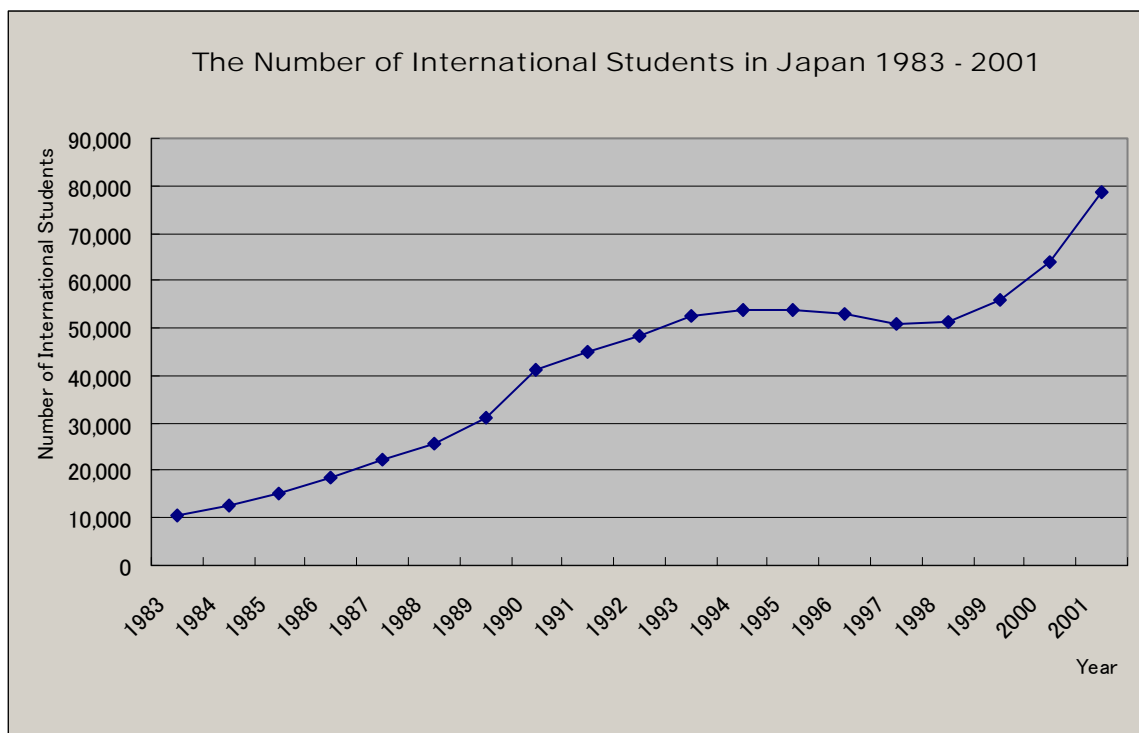
Since the 1980's, internationalization has been one of the most crucial issues in Japanese higher education. In the beginning of the 1980's, Japan recognized that the country's economic achievement implied expectations for, and would therefore depend on, greater contributions to the international community not only financially but also intellectually. In trying to meet these expectations, the government, in accordance with Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's proposal, set a target in 1983 to increase the number of international students enrolled in Japanese universities and colleges to 100,000 by the beginning of the 21st century¹ (hereafter called "the International Student 100,000 Plan" or "Plan"). However, by 2001, there were still only 78,812 international students enrolled in higher education within Japan. The actual rate of increase was 20.1 percent per year for the first decade, significantly higher than the projected 16.1 percent (Ministry of Education, 2000). The question must be asked: Why did this quantitative goal fail in spite of the various measures taken by the Ministry of

¹ According to the Ministry of Education, "by the beginning of the 21st century" does not mean "by 2001." The Ministry literally interprets "beginning" as "around the beginning" in the context of bureaucratic Japanese. Therefore, the definition of "by the beginning of the 21st century" is quite arbitrary and the Ministry actually says that 2005 or 2006 can be interpreted as "the beginning of the 21st century."

Education under the International Student 100,000 Plan? Were these measures ever fully implemented and truly effective in order to accomplish the goal?

In answering these questions, the meaning and significance of study abroad, flows, factors, and motivations of student mobility will be studied first from a historical perspective. Secondly, the relation between student mobility and Japan's economic growth will be dealt with. Thirdly, the research will explore the policy processes involved in, and the measures for, the International Student 100,000 Plan between 1983 to 1999, using the classical stage model in "Policy Studies for Educational Leaders" (Fowler, 2000). Finally, this research will analyze the model of political decision-making of the Plan, referring to one of Swanson's six models²—the elite theory (Swanson, 2000). The significance of this research lies in examining the Japanese government's initiatives and measures to promote internationalization and national prestige through hosting international students with the numerical target set at 100,000.

Figure 1



² The Swanson's six models of political decision-making are: (1) institutionalism, (2) incrementalism, (3) group theory, (4) elite theory, (5) rationalism, and (6) systems theory.

Table 1

The Number of International Students in Japan

Year	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Number	10,428	12,410	15,009	18,631	22,154	25,643	31,251	41,347	45,066
1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
48,561	52,405	53,787	53,847	52,921	51,047	51,298	55,755	64,011	78,812

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (2002). Summary of Schemes for International Students (Incoming and Outgoing).

2. Flows, Factors, and Motivations of Study Abroad

Altbach, Kelly, and Lulant (1985) describe that the major pattern of international student flow is close to unilinear from largely developing countries (peripheries) to industrialized countries (centers). In host countries, international student inflows are affected by policy changes, political and economic factors, and demographic changes. For sending countries, student outflows are also influenced by policy changes, political and economic factors, and educational changes. Altbach (1987) also argues that political factors have directly affected not only student outflows from a country but also directions of the flows.

Past research indicates that “push” factors in sending countries and “pull” factors in host countries are involved in the broad picture of international student flows (Altbach et al., 1985; Glaser and Habers, 1978; Kobayashi, 1995; Rao, 1979). In terms of private and public aspects, individual students and their families have their own interests and concerns, and governments both in industrialized (host) and in developing (sending) countries have priorities and interests. Therefore, in many instances, there is more than one motivation or factor involved in choosing study abroad, and motivations and factors are becoming more diversified and intertwined.

What are motivations for people to study abroad? To study abroad is meaningful on the assumption of the universal validity of knowledge (Ota, 1998). The reason why people go to other countries to study is that the people presume knowledge and technology obtained in other countries will be useful and convertible in their home countries. Were science and technology indeed perfectly universal, people probably would not have to study abroad, being able to discover the same knowledge and results in their own countries. However, in reality, scientific and technological progress varies in each region of the world. Moreover, a great number of individuals, who have completed secondary education, cannot enter domestic universities in some countries

since domestic higher education systems are very small and highly selective. Hence, these students often choose to go abroad for their post-secondary education (Altbach et al., 1985). In other words, aspiring people come to countries where they can study advanced science and technology (Ota, 1998). This is the typical academic (dissemination) factor for international student mobility.

International student mobility includes not only academic benefits but also socio-economic advantages. Altbach et al. (1985) mention that the largest number of international students hope to improve their professional opportunities and job qualifications through study abroad in order to yield higher salaries and better prospects for promotions at home. In many cases, they obtain higher degrees, training, and knowledge in business, technology, or other hard science fields³ which are not available at home institutions. For others, the prestige value of a degree obtained in an industrialized country is a major motivation. Both skills obtained abroad and benefits of having studied abroad are highly valued and useful credentials in the job market in most developing countries (Altbach et al.). Nevertheless, there are some international students who perceive their study abroad as a preliminary to emigration, and statistics on the “brain drain” from countries such as Taiwan, China, and African countries support this phenomenon (Glaser and Habers, 1978; Rao, 1979).

Neave (1995) asserts that the motivation of host countries is of an “official nature” or a “degree of control” as a factor which influences international student mobility. In other words, authorities exercise control over the movement of individuals and require that they move within a particular formal framework, scheme or program, and diplomatic (foreign policy) and economic considerations justify such intervention. For instance, Western governments have wished to maintain their influence overseas and regard study abroad opportunities with scholarships as means of exerting this strategy (Coombs, 1964). This is a traditional approach originally from the relationship that exists between suzerain countries and colonized countries. The U.S. government’s Fulbright program has promoted a new “International Linkages” component which attempts to foster the U.S.’s diplomatic relations with partner countries, especially Third World nations, and financial assistance (scholarship) provided by host countries has recruited an influx of highly potential students from developing countries. These traditional motivations of host countries are known as the “aid” approaches.

³ The most popular fields of study for international students in the U.S. are business and management (19 percent), engineering (15 percent), and mathematics and computer sciences (12 percent) in 2001.

Additionally, industrialized countries have emphasized the value of having international students on campus in the context of “internationalizing” their higher education systems. This movement is a kind of a transitional phenomenon towards the following new approach.

Due to the rapidly prevailing globalization of the world economy, internationalization of higher education has spilled into both the international student market and higher education institutions (Kameoka, 1996). In host countries (industrialized countries which spearhead globalization), both governments and institutions have attempted to maximize their higher education system’s marketability beyond national boundaries so that these countries’ universities can attract more international students coming from developing countries (undergoing globalization). Those industrialized countries, in turn, disseminate globalization and knowledge-based economy through the acceptance of international students. At the same time, countries hosting a large number of international students have been part of an international phenomenon in which higher education has become less part of social policy and more a subset of economic policy. Higher education systems in industrialized countries generally operate within a tight budgetary climate⁴ in which regulatory mechanisms and performance indicators are the accepted standard. Ironically, more than a decade (since the middle of the 1980’s) of higher education under-funding in host (industrialized) countries has coincided with the incredible growth in international education. Rhoades and Smart (1996) assert that the higher education system in industrialized nations, which is considered in many ways to be the most market-oriented and competitive in the world, has been inhibited by an incentive structure bogged down by intervening levels of state policies, finance issues, and campus central administration. These recent motivations of host countries to absorb students from abroad are called the “trade” approaches.

3. Intellectual Trading Agency of Asia

Although the trade approach significantly influences the flow of international students more and more, the educational opportunities and research functions of study abroad (in Japan) still provide incentive to prospective international students (in Asian countries). Since the first 114 international students from Korea came to Tokyo in 1896,

⁴ The sum of expenditure on total higher education from both public and private sources as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) was 0.78 percent in the U.K., 1.15 percent in Australia, 2.22 percent in the U.S., and 0.60 percent in Japan in 1998 (OECD, 2001).

Japan has played a considerable role as the intellectual trading agency of Asia (Ota, 1998). Japan has been the prime location of import for Western knowledge, science and technology; modifying Western knowledge for Asian use, and then exporting the expertise to other Asian countries through international student exchange. Ota explains that, historically, many prospective Asian students have selected Japan as the destination to study abroad since Japan is geographically close and culturally similar, has the same linguistic root through the use of Chinese characters, and is the place to attain Western knowledge efficiently due to Japanese modification. Furthermore, Japanese academic prestige and granted degrees are appreciatively higher than their Asian counterparts due to both Japan's former colonization of the East Asian region and its advanced scholarship and technology. As a result, the country distribution of international students is concentrated heavily on neighboring Asian countries, making up around 90 percent of the total. Three major countries, China, Korea, and Taiwan, comprise about 75 percent of students studying abroad in Japan (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The status of the intellectual trading agency has gradually fallen as information technology has developed and globalization has expanded, with the gap between global standards and Japanese standards growing larger in the academic fields. In terms of engagement in scientific research and technological development, it seems that Japanese academics do not feel fully confident despite their country's important economic role in the world (Mitsuta, 1998). In an increasingly global context, higher education is expected to play an international role more than ever.

Subsequently, "part of its new responsibility would be to promote the advancement of research and education by transmitting the Japanese own ideas, knowledge, experiences, and information to the world" (Kameoka, 1996, p. 246). This must be implemented in such a way as to make sure that international students can learn Japanese at various levels of proficiency and study their own academic fields without the mastery of Japanese (Ebuchi, 1995). The practical benefit of this approach is that universities would be able to attract students with similar academic interests without being limited to the minority of students who have mastered Japanese.

However, Japanese academics traditionally believe that there cannot be real understanding of Japan and its people if one does not have a strong command of Japanese language (Kameoka, 1996). Only three out of 622 universities identify themselves as bilingual universities (Mitsuta, 1998). The efforts of the Japanese to preserve their own culture and tradition are still very strong. This is reflected by

Japanese universities, in which almost all courses are taught in Japanese and designed for Japanese nationals in the anticipation of life and work in Japan (Mitsuta, 1994). Accordingly, international students from the three neighboring countries mentioned previously are continuously prominent and it is very difficult to diversify the distribution of the students without drastic institutional change.

Mitsuta (1998) argues that Japanese universities are not really internationalized even though they have accepted international students and scholars. Therefore, few prospective international students seek to enroll in Japanese universities. While the Ministry of Education has attempted to internationalize Japanese higher education by accepting international students, it might be time to analyze this model and find a solution by reviewing Japan's internationalization methods. In other words, in order to attract more international students, Japanese universities should first find a way to internationalize their curriculums completely, not just partially through the import of an international student-body.

Additionally, in many countries—especially in China, Korea, and Taiwan—the internal opportunities for higher education have been rapidly improving and expanding at the undergraduate level. Japanese universities can no longer expect a huge increase of first/bachelor-degree-seeking international students from those countries. Also, English speaking countries in Asia and the Pacific, e.g. Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore, have become more active players in the international student market with the powerful support of the governments. Australia regards its higher education as a competitive export product these days and conducts massive recruitment activities for international students at 22 offices of Australian Education International around the world, with the number of these students rising from 43,000 in 1994 to 80,000 in 1998 (Horie, 1999).

4. Policy Process

Fowler (2000) presents a policy process that consists of the six stages: (1) issue definition, (2) agenda setting, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy adaptation, (5) implementation, and (6) evaluation. In the following sections, the development of the International Student 100,000 Plan is discussed in accordance with Fowler's policy process.

4.1. Issue Definition

In 1983, then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone paid a state visit to South East Asian countries, and during the visit he had meetings with politicians, government

officials, and business leaders who had previously studied in Japan. The prime minister was upset at the meetings because these former international students told him that they were not satisfied with their study experiences in Japan and would recommend that their children should study in either European countries or the U.S. (Association of International Education, Japan, 1997). This episode is still well known as the origin of the International Student 100,000 Plan among people involved with international education in Japan. As soon as Nakasone returned to Tokyo, he ordered the Ministry of Education to establish the Council for International Student Policy towards the 21st Century as his ad hoc consultative agency in order to examine the long-term vision of international student policy and its plans.

The initiative of the prime minister as well as the existing inferiority complex among Japanese political and business leaders towards the West supported the “issue definition” of international student policy. Although Japan had already become one of the world’s leading economic nations, an inferiority complex arose from the fact that the number of international students in Japan was conspicuously low at a time when industrialized countries, especially the U.S., France, Germany, and U.K.,⁵ had large numbers of international students. In other words, Japan was recognized as superior in economic terms, admired by developing countries as the only highly industrialized country that was not in the West, but Japanese universities were not as highly regarded as other industrialized countries’ universities. It led Japanese leaders to think that this lower-prestige value of Japanese higher education was the major reason why Japan was not one of the most preferable destinations for prospective international students in developing nations, despite its economic success and geographical proximity to those countries.

Even Japanese people might have given low evaluations to their own higher education system. In fact, Japan, where the number of outgoing international students was much higher than the number of incoming international students,⁶ was the only industrialized nation in the world to exhibit this phenomenon, which was principally regulated to only developing countries. Thus, Japan still heavily relied on “truly” advanced countries like the U.S. and U.K. regarding scholarship and advanced scientific technology. Kondo (1989) attributes this academic inferiority complex as an essential

⁵ In 1983, the numbers of international students are approximately 310,000 in the U.S., 120,000 in France, 60,000 in Germany, 50,000 in the U.K., and 10,000 in Japan (Council for International Student Policy towards the 21st Century, 1983)

⁶ In 1987, the number of incoming international students was 22,500 whereas the number of outgoing international students (Japanese) was 57,000 (Ministry of Education, 1988).

motivation for forming the International Student 100,000 Plan.

4. 2. Agenda Setting

The Council for International Student Policy submitted the “Proposal of International Student Policy towards the 21st Century” (hereafter called “the Proposal”) to the Minister of Education in August 1983. The Proposal reviews the system and conditions of hosting international students and generally describes the policy agenda to increase the number of international students. First, the Proposal criticized Japan as being pitifully unprepared to welcome international students educationally as well as socially and was described as a desert (not an oasis) to most students entertaining study abroad (Council for International Student Policy towards the 21st Century, 1983).

The Proposal states the fundamental importance of Japan enhancing its mutual understanding through both international exchange and the promotion of activities and friendly relations built upon mutual trust with other countries. On the basis of this statement, the Proposal describes, that the significance of international educational exchange is to have incoming international students attain an accurate understanding and wide range of knowledge about Japanese society and culture. In other words, educating international students at Japanese institutions is primarily beneficial to the national interest. From the purview of the country’s development model known as “catch-up with the West,” this was the turning point of both Japan’s diplomatic and international education policies. The government realized that a great number of young Japanese people had studied in Europe or the U.S., and that Western knowledge, science, and technology were being imported through those students. Moreover, these returnees turned in favor of their former host countries in general. However, Japan had not endeavored to promote the understanding of the country internationally, particularly through the acceptance of international students. A small number of international students were recognized as being disadvantageous to national security.

Subsequently, as a crucial part of the Proposal, the Council (1983) proposed the numerical target (100,000) so that Japan should be able to host as many as international students by the beginning of the 21st century as France had in 1983. It meant that, under the government’s initiatives, universities and colleges would have to enroll ten times as many as international students over the next two decades. At the time, this numerical goal was conceived as too ambitious, even unrealistic, by international educators in light of the Japanese government’s long-time ignorance of supporting international students.

In short, the International Student 100,000 Plan turned out to be one of the most

important and challenging national policies set beyond the scope of higher education to raise the Japan's prestige, promote national security and become fully integrated within the emerging international society.

4.3. Policy Formation

In October, 1983, the Ministry of Education set up the Committee of Collaborators Concerned with Study and Research of International Student Affairs (hereafter called "the Committee"), a task force committee that aimed at putting the aforementioned Proposal into concrete shape as policy. The Committee compiled "Development of International Student Policy towards the 21st Century" (hereafter called "the Development") in the following year. In the Development, the Committee reaffirmed the mission and significance of hosting international students as described in the previous year's Proposal.

Besides these reaffirmations, the Development stresses international students' contributions to Japanese higher education, and increasing numbers of incoming international students are expected to both enhance internationalization of higher education and uphold the academic prestige of Japanese universities and intelligentsia (Committee of Collaborators Concerned with Study and Research of International Student Affairs, 1984). With respect to accepting international students, and in correspondence with Japan's economic stature (the second largest economy in the world), the Ministry was obviously forming a clear vision to surpass France and become the second largest country after the U.S. By the beginning of the 21st Century, Japan was expected to become fit the definition of a truly advanced country intellectually as well as economically (Kondo, 1998).

4.4. Policy Adoption

The importance of the Development is the clearly indicated quantitative target of the newly establishing international student policy. The Committee (1984) and the Ministry of Education explicitly presented its numerical goal, which projected that 100,000 international students would be studying in Japan at the beginning of the 21st century. The phrase "100,000 international students" quickly pervaded all over the country through massive publications and reports within the Japanese media. Horie (1999) reviews that the impact went out of control after the media became carried away with the policy report, repeating the symbolic phrase "100,000 international students" over and over. In other words, the phrase literally terrified not only people concerned

with international and higher education but also the general public. The release of the Development and the Ministry of Education's clearly defined numerical target was considered as the adoption of the International Student 100,000 Plan (Horie, 1999; Kondo, 1998).

4. 5. Implementation – I

According to the Development, the following measures should be carried out as soon as possible (Committee of Collaborators Concerned with Study and Research of International Student Affairs, 1984):

- a) Expanding the Japanese Government (*Monbusho*) Scholarship
- b) Assisting other Asian countries' governmental scholarship schemes financially in order to accept more international students supported by these governments
- c) Building university residences for international students
- d) Consolidating Japanese language education courses for international students and the system of Japanese language teachers' training
- e) Initiating several schemes to assist privately financed international students financially, AKA the Tuition Reduction Scheme for Privately Financed International Students
- f) Establishing international student centers, which includes the function of Japanese language education for international students, at national universities

These measures were mainly taken to cope with both the language and financial difficulties of international students studying in Japan. In 1986, the Council for Promoting Acceptance of International Students⁷ was established in each prefecture under the auspices of the Ministry of Education so that it could implement measures concerning the International Student 100,000 Plan in cooperation with municipal governments and the private/business sector. Next, the Ministerial Council for Promoting Acceptance of International Students was created within the Office of the Prime Minister, meaning that the International Student 100,000 Plan became not only a vital part of the Ministry of Education's policy but also high on the national agenda under the direct auspices of the Prime Minister. Subsequently, the Ministry of Justice eased immigration regulations regarding the issuance of student visas, which included simplifying the procedure for prospective students coming from abroad to obtain visas

⁷ Members of the council are universities, colleges, municipal governments, business organizations, and NGOs.

and permitting an international student with the proper visa to work off-campus up to 4 hours a day for a maximum of 28 hours a week.

The Ministry of Education's budget for incoming international students rose nearly seven times⁸ in the years from 1983 to 1997 and was linked with the increase of the Japan Official Development Assistance. Also, various volunteer groups and NGOs were gradually established in the community to support international students at the grassroots level.

Consequently, the number of international students increased steadily and reached a total of 45,066 in 1991. The increasing rate was considerably higher than the government's expectation for the first decade after setting the International Student 100,000 Plan.⁹ Seo (1997) rationalizes this increase:

In the 1980s, the pushing factor of students was rapidly industrializing Southeast and East Asian countries' expectation that demanding human resource would be partially made up by their people studied in Japan.¹⁰ The pulling factors of students were both Japan's highly booming economy and the government's initiatives and measures brought by the new plan to increase the number of international students. (p. 10)

The more a country's economical presence grows, the more transmitting information from the country attracts aspiring people from outside (Shibazaki, 1999). These strong external factors explain the rapid increase of international students during the first decade of the Plan. The internal (educational) factors, such as the attractiveness of Japanese higher education institutions and their educational and research programs, did not directly lead to raise the number of international students. In other words, it does not mean that the educational factors met international students' academic needs for the period.

Additionally, the enormous imbalance between Asian countries and other nations in terms of the distribution of international students' countries of origin¹¹ turned out to be a diplomatic and budgetary issue in view of the fair distribution of Japan Official Development Assistance.¹²

⁸ The budget was about 8 billion yen in 1983 and increased to 55.6 billion yen in 1997 (Horie, 1999).

⁹ The actual rate of increase was 20.1 percent per year for the first decade, significantly higher than the projected 16.1 percent (Ministry of Education, 2000).

¹⁰ Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir spearheaded the Look East Policy in 1981. The policy aims at developing the country with an ideal model like Japan.

¹¹ In 1991, 92 percent of international students were from Asian countries.

¹² The Ministry of Education's budget concerned with incoming international students heavily relied on the funds come from the Japan Official Development Assistance.

4. 6. Evaluation – I

In transition to the second decade of the International Student 100,000 Plan, the Administrative Inspection Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency evaluated the Plan and its implementation. In 1993, the Bureau released an inspection report entitled “Present Conditions and Problems of Measures to Host International Students—Aiming at 100,000 International Students.” The report suggested that the Ministry of Education should maintain the numerical target of “100,000 international students,” flexibly deal with the diversifying needs of international students, and improve the quality and system of services for international students. Specifically, the measures of first priority are presented as follows (Administrative Inspection Bureau, 1993):

- a) Consolidating the system of hosting international students extensively—laying stress on local cities in order to prevent the high concentration of international students’ population in major cities
 - Improving educational and research conditions to meet international students’ needs
 - Expanding financial assistance schemes
 - Providing reasonable housing
- b) Developing the system of recruiting international students in overseas countries
- c) Offering information regarding study in Japan
 - Providing Japanese language training
 - Developing a method for evaluating academic credentials in overseas countries
- d) Encouraging universities to form a mission of accepting international students and to recruit the students actively
- e) Developing the educational system so as to accommodate non-degree-seeking (junior year-abroad or semester abroad) international students, especially from Europe and the U.S., e.g. a special program conducted in English for these international students
- f) Supporting the research and academic activities of former international students working for higher education institutions overseas in order to maintain international friendly relations and academic exchanges

The report oddly marked a turning point for the International Student 100,000 Plan as precipitated by a slowdown in the increase of international students. As though the decreasing numerical corollary was in proportion to the economic stagnation of the period coupled with the subsequent Asian economic and currency crisis during the mid 1990s, the growth rate of international students declined and the number of students

in both 1996 and 1997 decreased (Kondo, 1998). This supports Shibazaki's theory¹³ because fewer aspiring people came to Japan as the country's economic growth slowed and its perceived economic presence in the world waned.

4.7. Implementation – II

In accordance with the suggestion in the Administrative Inspection Bureau's report, the Ministry of Education established the Advisory Committee on Promotion of Short-Term Student Exchange Programs within the Ministry in 1995. Afterward, the Committee submitted the proposal for "Promotion of Short-Term (less than one year) Student Exchanges" (hereafter called "the Promotion") to the minister. The summary of the Promotion is as follows (Advisory Committee on Promotion of Short-Term Student Exchange Programs, 1995):

- a) Accepting not only degree-seeking students but also non-degree (short-term) students through student exchange programs or junior year-abroad programs
- b) Developing financial assistance for incoming as well as outgoing international students to promote student exchange programs with universities abroad
- c) Diversifying international students' countries of origin
- d) Developing academic programs and courses taught in English (lowering the requirement of Japanese language proficiency or not requiring the proficiency of Japanese towards non-degree international students)
- e) Shifting the concept of study abroad from "studying Japan and Japanese" to "studying your academic field in Japan"

The Promotion was aimed especially at national and local public universities, where traditionally mutual student exchange programs and junior year-abroad programs were not as common as compared to private universities that had already developed these kinds of programs in order to attract high school graduates with respect to the increased recruiting competition within higher education.

In addition, the Ministry's initiative of short-term exchange programs can be seen as an attempt to follow the relatively new trend of international student mobility based on reciprocal agreements with universities abroad. ¹⁴ Ninomiya (1997) argues, "Japanese institutions of higher education have traditionally hosted students from developing countries as a part of overseas assistance program. But the focus must

¹³ The more a country's economical presence grows, the more transmitting information from the country attracts aspiring people from outside.

¹⁴ The expansion of study abroad programs in the U.S. and the success of the ERASMUS Plan (the mobility of university students in EU) in Europe can be given as examples.

change to student exchange programs” (p. 20). Industrialized countries realize that students need to go abroad and experience different cultures and languages in order to live in the global age. In this sense, short-term study abroad programs are effective and significant schemes in order to encourage students to study abroad and foster their cross-cultural competency. It was time for Japanese universities to develop programs to attract students from Europe and North America who wished to experience studying and living in different cultures (Ninomiya, 1997). Consequently, at major national universities in Japan, courses and programs taught in English developed for international students through promotional short-term student exchange programs were on the rise. This movement led those national universities to attract students, in fields other than Japanese studies, who might not possess enough Japanese proficiency so as to study their academic fields in Japanese (Ninomiya).

In spite of the Ministry’s promotion of short-term exchange programs, the number of international students did not increase. Conversely, the number decreased in 1996 and 1997 consecutively. The Ministry began to examine the admission procedure of Japanese universities for prospective international students in order to increase international student flow to Japan. The Research and Investigation Committee for International Student Issues was formed by the Ministry and compiled “Measures to Improve Admission Procedure for Prospective International Students” in 1997. The following directives are pointed out in this report (Research and Investigation Committee for International Student Issues, 1997):

- a) To recruit not only international students currently studying at domestic Japanese language schools but also prospective students living in their home countries (direct recruitment and pre-arrival admission)
- b) To establish a new Japanese language proficiency test exclusive for prospective international students (Japanese version of TOEFL)
- c) To promote actively “study in Japan” and Japanese higher education to the world

In terms of degree-seeking international students, Japanese universities have generally recruited prospective students who are currently studying at domestic Japanese language schools due to a lack of Japanese language preparatory institutions

within these universities.¹⁵ Japanese language schools are mostly private¹⁶ with constant financial difficulties, as they do not receive any subsidies from the government.¹⁷ Thus, their learning conditions are not so favorable. Nonetheless, only these schools provide enough Japanese language training and study skills for newly arrived international students wishing to proceed to degree granting programs at higher education institutions. Because of private language schools' high tuition and universities' unwillingness to recruit abroad, prospective international students are financially discouraged and unsure about whether or not they will be able to continue their study at the university level.

The development of Japanese language proficiency test for prospective international students has long been an issue. Almost all the universities use a government-sponsored test called "The Japanese Language Proficiency Test" (hereafter called "JLPT") as a prerequisite for prospective international students to take university entrance examinations. However, it is not a test targeted specifically at academic Japanese language learners wishing to study at universities; rather it assesses only the proficiency of general Japanese language learners. Experts of teaching Japanese as a Second Language often criticize the mismatch between the intention of the JLPT provider and the usage of test scores for international admissions at universities. In addition, the proficiency test is provided only once a year compared with the TOEFL's monthly administration.¹⁸

The lack of information concerning Japanese higher education (study in Japan) abroad is frequently criticized by prospective international students and their study abroad advisors. Except for a few innovative private universities, Japanese universities in general, especially inward-looking national ones, do not promote themselves to the world. Unlike their U.S., U.K., and Australian counterparts, Japanese universities do not provide a systematic and user-friendly roadmap for aspiring young people which comfortably leads to "Study in Japan." Japanese universities' websites are not well-established with offerings of adequate information for these people who consider study abroad in Japan. Most of the universities do not have a documentary screening

¹⁵ In North America, numbers of universities provide preparatory education at affiliated English language institutes/schools for international students who do not have sufficient proficiency in English so as to be accepted by degree granting programs in the following terms.

¹⁶ The majority of domestic Japanese language schools are proprietary and for-profit organizations.

¹⁷ Almost all the private universities can access governmental subsidies in Japan.

¹⁸ Starting in 2002, the new test called "The Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU)" is administered twice a year.

system based on high school grades, language skills, and academic test scores for prospective students residing in overseas countries, requiring them instead to travel to their Japanese campuses to take their entrance examinations.

The above-mentioned three problems have not been fully resolved yet and continue to be major negative factors hindering international student flow into Japan.

4. 8. Evaluation – II

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the number of international students declined in 1996, continuing through 1997, for the first time since the Ministry of Education began compiling the annual data in 1978. The collapse of Japan's booming economy in early 1990s was pointed out earlier as the main reason for the decline. The media began to doubt the achievement of the International Student 100,000 Plan's goal, and the government was again required to reexamine the Plan and its related measures. Under these circumstances, the Ministry of Education established the Commission on International Student Policy (hereafter called "the Commission") in order to review the Plan and propose effective countermeasures to turn around the drop in the number of international students. The Commission released "Primary and Future Prospects of International Student Policy" in 1997. This report overviews the International Student 100,000 Plan and its relevant matters, and describes the following factors for the decreasing number of international students (Commission on International Student Policy, 1997).

- a) High living cost and the shortage of adequate and reasonable housing for international students
- b) In overseas countries, the lack of information targeted at prospective students about study in Japan
- c) Structural and cultural gap between Japan and other advanced countries regarding higher education and research system (lagging behind global standards)
- d) Homogeneous and closed society: The shortage of exchange or friendship programs between international students and local residents at the grassroots level in order to foster mutual understanding for the sake of "living together" as a community
- e) Rapid expansion of higher education in other Asian countries: Increasing accessibility to universities for young people in such countries
- f) English is becoming the world standard language¹⁹ (language barrier)
- g) Long depression of Japan's economy since 1992 and Asian economic and

¹⁹ In Australia, the number of international students significantly increased from 21,000 in 1989 to 83,000 in 1999.

currency crisis in 1997: Deteriorating the image and future prospects of Japan

However, since the International Student 100,000 Plan was launched in 1984, these negative factors have been repeatedly brought up by people involved with international education, but no real substantial countermeasures have been successfully implemented to address the problems.

4. 9. Implementation – III

In 1998, then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi stressed the significance of international student policy at his first cabinet meeting. In response to his initiative, the Ministry of Education asked the Commission to propose a strategic approach to the international student policy in view of the advent of the 21st century. In 1999, the Commission released a report entitled “Aiming at Development of Intellectual Contribution to International Community and Progress of New International Student Policy” (hereafter called “the Aiming”). The Aiming declares that the Ministry should maintain the International Student 100,000 Plan, especially its numeric target, and strive to achieve it for a new paradigm in the 21st century coined “International Intellectual Contribution” (Commission on International Student Policy, 1999). Also, the Aiming marked the turning point of the Japan’s international student policy from the benevolent aid approach to the win-win approach in the context of advancing globalization. This change was premised on the government’s view of the global society. The Commission states:

We live in the global community that has complicated relationships of interdependence among countries. Our stability and prosperity is not ensured unless a peaceful, stable, and prosperous international community is realized. It is because Japan heavily depends on both overseas markets and foreign sources.
(p. 2)

Regarding the win-win approach, promoting the acceptance of international students is positioned as an “International Intellectual Contribution,” and this contribution brings about Japan’s national interests. In the Aiming, these mutually beneficial relations are stated as follows (Commission on International Student Policy, 1999):

- a) Security and peace: Further development of mutual understanding and friendly relations between Japan and foreign countries.
- b) International intellectual influence: Securing the initiative of forming global

standards and intellectual networks and leading Japanese higher education to “Centers of Learning”

- c) Globalization: Reforming social and economic structure and improving and enriching higher education on the open-door basis.

Furthermore, the following recommendations are presented to improve Japanese higher education since hosting international students is viewed as an opportunity to uplift the standards of universities (Commission on International Student Policy).

- Reforming higher education’s structure in order to improve the quality of education and research conducted in universities through hosting international students
- Developing a system that is more open to the world in order to attract prospective international students
- Assisting the life of international students with various schemes sponsored by the collaboration between the government and private sector

In the Aiming, the rationales, concepts, and prospects of hosting international students are described more comprehensively and elaborately than ever. Nevertheless, almost all the detailed measures and recommendations have once again been repeated from previous reports. It indicates that the issues are clear, yet they have not been resolved. Contrary to the Ministry of Education’s expectation, the increase of international students has not contributed to the internationalization and reform of the Japanese higher education system. As a result, the growth rate of international students has been stagnant although the number of international students has risen gradually since 1998.

5. Political Decision-Making

Swanson (2000) presents six models of political decision-making: institutionalism, systems theory, instrumentalism, group theory, elite theory, and rationalism to examine educational policy. The elite theory is applicable to the International Student 100,000 Plan. Virtually, bureaucrats and their appointed scholars in the Ministry of Education have promoted this Plan and pursued its relevant measures. None of these people, however, have had an opportunity to work for international students on a daily basis. The Ministry has not held any public hearings to collect suggestions and opinions of people working for international students at the grassroots level in order to achieve the

Plan. Many non-governmental or non-profit organizations²⁰ that advocate assisting international students have attempted to communicate with the Ministry and to inform of them immediate problems and needs encountered by these students. However, their voices have not reached the Ministry. From issue definition to evaluation,²¹ the whole process of the International Student 100,000 Plan has been conducted within the government sector. Consequently, the measures taken for the Plan have neither satisfied numerical goals of the government nor frequently met the needs of international students.

For instance, there is virtually no financial assistance available for international students who are currently enrolled in Japanese language schools and who expect to go to universities afterward. The Tuition Reduction Scheme provided by the Ministry of Education is not applicable to these private language school students, and almost all the scholarship and financial assistance schemes do not accept applications from the students. This is because the Ministry does not accredit a private language school as an official educational entity stipulated in the School Basic Law. Therefore, the language school is treated merely as a private company and can neither apply for any financial assistance schemes nor the preferential tax treatment intended for accredited private schools. And international students of language schools are treated in the same manner.²² As a result, the tuition fees of language schools must be solely borne by study-abroad students and are much higher than those of universities and colleges.

It seems that the government does not recognize that language schools act as a “port of entry” for study in Japan in connection with the traditional recruiting behavior of Japanese higher education institutions. Since language acquisition is the foundation for successful study abroad, language schools should receive support from the government in order to increase international student flows from other countries.

Flower (2000) mentions, “Education policies must be implemented at the grassroots level” (p. 17). Nonetheless, the measures and tasks of the International Student 100,000 Plan have not been fully implemented at the grassroots level. The mission of the Plan has become too idealistic for college communities and is neither

²⁰ These organizations are JAFSA: Japan Network for International Education, YWCA’s Group of International Students’ Mothers, and Voluntary Group: Counseling and Assistance for Students from Abroad are active advocates for international students.

²¹ The Fowler’s (2000) policy process model consists of six stages, i.e., issue definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation (Fowler, 2000)

²² A student visa is also not granted for a language school student. The Ministry of Justice grants the students a “pre-college visa” with strict restrictions.

well-interpreted nor distributed adequately to universities as well as to society-at-large so as to obtain assistance for the Plan. Additionally, there is little incentive for universities to recruit international students actively and to provide the students with assistance programs to support their study and campus life, aside from insufficient financial assistance from the government.

The Ministry of Education's top-down approach of the Plan has not functioned well for higher education institutions with the exception of national universities, which are owned by the Ministry and account for only a quarter of all Japanese universities. For the last three decades, the Ministry's control extended to private universities has been diminishing as the ratio of the government's subsidy for private universities' current expenditures has been declining.²³

Not only this Plan but also Japanese educational policies are generally decided under an elite theory of control with a rigid bureaucratic system. Swanson (2000) describes, "The elite share a consensus on basic social values and on the importance of preserving the system. The masses give superficial support to this consensus that provides a basis for an elite rule" (p.111). In Japan, approximately 85 percent of the high-ranking bureaucrats in the central government are graduates of either the University of Tokyo or University of Kyoto (Kawaguchi, 1987), are regarded as social elites, and believe they are of a privileged class. In short, due to the lack of communication and trust between the government, universities, and organizations supporting international students, the International Student 100,000 Plan failure is illustrated by the fact that the international student policy developed by these elites (bureaucrats) is not well-supported by the masses, i.e. people working for international students and the top management of Japanese universities. Consequently, a university has neither been able to establish its own educational mission in order to host international students²⁴ nor has it been able to position international students in a meaningful way which truly internationalizes the institution, and the Plan has merely attempted to fill in a quota expected by the Ministry of Education.

6. Conclusion

After Japan became internationally-acknowledged as an economic giant, the government's next target was to be a cultural and intellectual superpower, reflecting a

²³ It was about 30 percent in the late 1970s, but has been only 10 percent since the early 1990s.

²⁴ I investigated major twenty universities' web sites, but none of them had a mission statement regarding international students.

reaction to the country's poorly evaluated universities. This inferiority complex and Japan's fare share of foreign-aid appropriations were ascribed as being the essential motivations in initiating the International Student 100,000 Plan and maintaining it. However, interestingly, Japanese leaders and the government have been reluctant to admit the academic inferiority complex publicly. Instead, the Ministry of Education has euphoniously cited the cliché of "internationalization of universities" or "Japan's academic contribution to the international community" when discussing international student policy. The reason why the inferiority complex has not been explicitly mentioned is that it reflects the reverse side of an aspiration that Japan and the Japanese wish to be a real superpower and is supposed to be hidden in a diplomatic manner in light of Japan's colonial history in East Asia. The Japanese government is, in turn, afraid of neighboring countries' negative speculation that the Plan is actually Japan's masked strategic agenda of further cultural colonization in the region.

The Ministry of Education has ostensibly undertaken the internationalization of universities by accepting international students. To the contrary, accepted international students have been required to fit into the old-fashioned system of Japanese higher education. Accordingly, once the Japan's booming economy collapsed, domestically-focused universities began to have difficulty recruiting international students. In the modern era of expanding globalization, the more university is internationalized, the more prospective international students are attracted by that particular university. Japanese universities should endeavor to internationalize themselves first to increase international students.

Lastly, the coordination problem across ministries and governmental agencies figure as the biggest obstacle for the failure of the International Student 100,000 Plan. International student affairs include a wide range of transnational and national issues, such as education, economy, technology, industry, immigration, and diplomacy, and international student flows are also affected by various kinds of pull and push factors between countries and peoples. Thus, international student policy requires not only well consolidated and coordinated development among ministries but also government-wide measures in order to accomplish the objectives of the policy. However, the Plan was virtually established within the Ministry of Education only, and the Japan's vertically divided administrative functions have prevented the Ministry from gaining the support and corporation of other ministries and governmental agencies, especially the Immigration Bureau. These circumstances have inhibited the smooth implementation of the Ministry's measures for the Plan, and therefore a cross-ministry, strategic and

practical organizational model is needed to fully implement an attractive and progressive international student policy.

Subsequent research should endeavor to examine the impact of non-educational factors affecting international student flows and how an international student policy can effectively surmount and address these factors.

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