Chapter 2
Globalization of Japanese Higher Education and the Case of Hokkaido University

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education all over the world are facing the pressure to internationalize their operations and academic programs, to enhance its competitiveness in an international education market. The first part of this chapter presents a review of national policy to incentivize the internationalization of higher education in Japan since 1980s. The second part introduces internalization initiatives of Hokkaido University in the last decade. Under the initiative of the president, university formulated its vision of "Hokkaido University, contributing to the resolution of global issues" in the "Future Strategy for the 150th Anniversary of Hokkaido University," a blueprint for drastically reforming the university. In the 2014 fiscal year, a strategy to further internationalize education, "Hokkaido Universal Campus Initiative" was chosen by MEXT for the "Top Global University Project." The author analyzes Hokkaido University's internationalization progress, focusing on the strengths and activities of major projects and the changes in the overall management.

INTRODUCTION

Our world is undergoing a sea change due to the rapid advance of globalization and growth of the internet, enabling people in any corners of the world to instantly connect with others and obtain information. This is growing the importance of the knowledge economy and technology, and thus have always challenged in all countries over the world in the past two and three decades. The idea of internationalization is considered as a positive phenomenon for many people yet questionable for many others, but no one doubts that this new situation is somehow linked to new forms of technology and economy. Many higher education institutions have been tried to internationalize their operations and their academic offerings to enhance its competitiveness in an international education market, by ensuring the delivery of a culturally-enriched educational experience.

The first part of this article focuses on how Japanese universities have been reformed to internationalize higher education in Japan. A national policy is also reviewed to examine how the government tried to initiative internationalization.

The last part of this article introduces a recent initiative of Hokkaido University since 2008, which aims to internationalize higher education. The author analyzes the Hokkaido University's internationalization progress with a focus on the strengths and issues of major projects and activities and changes in the overall management.

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Internationalization in higher education in Japan started in the 1980s (Horie, 2002). One of the measures to progress internationalization and multiculturalism in higher education institutions is to promote the international mobility of students. In 1983, Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Monbusho*, later MEXT) announced a plan to have 100,000 international students studying at higher education institutions in Japan by 2000 (MEXT, 2008). The objective of this plan was to accelerate mutual understandings and deepen friendship between Japan and other countries, strengthen intellectual power over the global society, and contribute to internationalization of economic and social systems. The plan was successful in terms of increasing the number of international students (from 10,428 in 1983 to 64,011 in 2000). However, the plan paused due to the limited capability and attractiveness of Japanese education. One of the main causes is the difficulty of learning Japanese. Furthermore, many stakeholders have started to point out that improvement in the quality of education by internationalization is more important than increase in the number of international students.

In 2008 the Japanese government set a goal of attracting 300,000 international university students by 2020, following the 'Global 30' plan in 2009 aimed at transforming 30 universities into world-class institutions of higher education (Yonezawa, 2011). The '300,000 international students plan' and the 'Global 30' plan have focused more closely on supporting universities to expand their English-taught degree programs.

From 2011, in order to rather enhance the international compatibility and competitiveness of higher education in Japan and to provide prioritized support for the world-class and innovative universities, MEXT launched three projects: the Re-Inventing Japan Project was launched in 2011 to establish collaborative relationship initially and mainly with Chinese, Korean and North American universities; the Go Global Japan Project, originally titled the 'Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development', was launched in 2012 to develop 42 target universities' international education offerings and to increase the number of Japanese students studying abroad (MEXT, 2012); 'Top Global University Project (TGUP)', titled in Japanese as the Super Global University Project, launched in 2014 is a large-investment initiative designed to enhance the international compatibility and competitiveness of higher education in Japan and to provide prioritized support for the world-class and innovative universities that lead the internationalization of Japanese universities (MEXT, 2014). The TGUP has provided funding for 13 'Type A: Top Type' universities, which have been identified as having the potential to become top 100 ranked world universities and 24 'Type B: Global Traction Type' universities, viewed as innovative universities that can lead the internationalization of Japanese society. MEXT has indicated that all policies are interconnected; the Go Global Japan Project has been directly linked to the TGUP. Hokkaido University was chosen as one of the 13 Type A universities.

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