



## Internationalization of the Japanese higher education system

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### Abstract

In the Japanese higher education system, there are three types of higher education institutes, National universities, Public Universities and Private Universities. The number of these institutes was 86, 91 and 600 respectively in 2016. MEITY launched a project known as the TGU project to enhance the quality and quantity in these institutions. This article aims to analyze the work of the project and its expected outcomes.

**Keywords:** Japanese higher education system, Top Global University

### Introduction

Japan's Ministry of Education, culture, sport, science and Technology selected 37 universities of Japan for its most ambitious project, which is named as 'Top Global University (TGU) project. It is a multimillion-dollar project for "enhancing the international capability and competitiveness of higher in Japan." Millions of dollars are to be spent on internationalizing education in the universities of Japan. 'This project can be seen as an extension of the previous program launched in 2013 to promote research universities.' 35 Universities are selected under two categories, namely Type-A and Type-B. Type-A includes 13 universities. These universities are considered 'potential universities' and have the potential to be listed in the top 100 universities of the world. These universities will receive 420 million yen (US \$ 3.5 million) annually. Type B includes 22 universities. These 'innovative universities' will be funded with 172 million yen (US \$ 1.4 million) to support their internationalization. Type-A includes 2 private universities and Type-B includes 2 public and 10 private universities <sup>[1]</sup>. This project is part of the 'internationalization of higher education'.

After going through the proposal, we find many "common goals and aspirations as well novel initiatives based on the history of each institute" <sup>[2]</sup>. A few universities are introducing a new education system based on a quarterly semester system so that the Japanese education calendar will be according to the rest of the world and they can launch new English language dual degree programs. So, they can attract a large number of foreign students. These universities are also planning for the construction of "international dormitories" in which domestic and overseas students will leave together. Universities are also going higher new faculty members based on competitive salaries. For this purpose, the power of the university president is about to expand.

### Main Text

The world economic scenario is everchanging activity, so, the demand for labour is changing according to the needs. The demand for skilled labour has increased twice, compared to the demand a few years back. That is why, higher education institutions must adopt such a system in which "student learning, assessment, and curricula are

updated to reflect significant changes in societal demands <sup>[3]</sup>" to keep pace with the changing needs and requirements of society, Japan introduced the internationalization in the higher education system of Japan. This internationalization process was "put forward by former Prime Minister Fukuda as a policy measure to make Japan a more open society." MEXT verbiage reflects an emphasis on global competitiveness as universities feed research into the private sector placing Japan at the "Asian gateway," and interestingly, without reference to global or even pan-Asian educational quality assessments. The youth population of Japan is also declining so, Japan wants to use its population in a very efficient way. This can be possible if every one of them is educated to stand against the international youth population in terms of education and skill.

### Higher education in Japan

In the Japanese higher education system, there are three types of higher education institutes, National universities, Public Universities and Private Universities. The number of these institutes was 86, 91 and 600 respectively in 2016. There were 2873524 students enrolled in these institutions out of which 1625898 (56.5%) were male students and 1247626 (43.5%) were female students. This data shows an increasing number of female enrollments in higher education, which was 39.3% in 2005. The ratio of the students enrolled per institute was 7098 students in National, 1654 in Public and 3521 in Private universities. This data shows the student's wish to be enrolled in higher education was higher in National universities of Japan. The overall enrollment capacity in Japan was 92% in 2016, which means 92% of students got admission, who were planning to be enrolled in higher education. It also shows the decreasing competition in getting admission. when we look at the student-teacher ratio, we get that under one teacher, there were 5.8, 5.3 and 8.5 students in National, Public and Private universities respectively. We can get information about the quality of education by following Pictures-

Based on the above data, we can say that private universities play an important role in higher education in Japan. Because it gave admission to 73.53% of students. The quality of education will be determined mostly by the Private Universities due to the large proportion of enrollment in

these universities. Although National universities are considered a brand and hold a tag in Japan. This means students who studied in these institutions are given more respect in society. But only 21.24% of total students were enrolled in National universities, which means a large number of students were not able to get admission to these universities and their last hope was private universities (Public universities represented only 5.24% of the total students). But private universities in Japan are facing “crisis”<sup>[4]</sup> because their only source of income is tuition fees, paid by the students. So, they all are trying to attract students by using various measures. Sometimes most of the seats are vacant in these universities so they face huge economic losses. This is also a reason due to which the teacher-student ratio in such universities is higher than the government-funded universities (National and Public universities). All these things have a direct impact on the quality of education (Although the quality of National University is very high, as we have already mentioned, National University represents less than one-third of the total number of students). Due to all these things, higher education in Japan is characterized as a myth (Brian J. McVeigh, 2002). In 2013-14, only two universities in Japan were in the top 100 universities of the world, while China and South Korea both represented 3 universities. To tackle all these problems, the TGU project was launched.

Now the question is, what is the internationalization of education? Internationalization of education involves the ‘cross-border flow of knowledge, introduction of the education system of international level, introducing a pattern of education structure which is according to the modern education system at the international level, increasing the education quality according to the international standards and quality assessment of institutions and teachers according to the international standards’<sup>[5]</sup>. The process of internationalization of education in Japan is not new. We can trace the internationalization of Japanese education back to the ‘*kojiki*’ book of legend in which the Chinese writing system was brought to Japan through the Confucian ideology. However, “widespread democratization and internationalization of education for Japanese did not arrive until the Meiji period (1868–1912), which was also a time when foreign scholars from European countries, as well as native English-speaking countries, were imported in the fledgling years of the country’s opening to the west, e.g., the public Tokyo University, and the private Doshisha University, Tsuda School, etc.”<sup>[6]</sup>

The internationalization of higher education in Japan includes the following 4 projects, namely the top global university project (TGU), the Inter-University exchange project (Re-inventing Japan project), the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development; Global 30 project – Establishing University Network for Internationalization. Top Global University project is a “funding project that aims to enhance the international competitiveness of higher education in Japan. It provides support for world-class and innovative universities that lead the internationalization of Japanese universities”. Inter-University Exchange project “is a funding project that 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 countries as Asia and US, that conduct study abroad programs for Japanese students and undertakes the strategic acceptance of foreign students.” Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development is also a “funding project that aims to overcome the Japanese younger generation’s “inward tendency” and to foster human resources who can positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field, as the basis for improving Japan’s global competitiveness and enhancing the ties between nations. Efforts to promote the internationalization of university education in Japan will be given strong, priority support.” Finally, the Global 30 Project (Establishing University Network for Internationalization) is also a funding project which “aims to promote the internationalization of the academic environment of Japanese universities and acceptance of excellent international students studying in Japan. The selected 13 core universities have been implementing a variety of approaches to internationalizing academic systems and campuses such as developing degree programs conducted in English and enriching international student support, while they are expected to enhance inter-university networks for sharing educational resources and other outputs including the establishment of overseas office which can be jointly used by all Japanese universities.”<sup>[7]</sup>

These 4 projects are 4 pillars of the internationalization of Japanese higher education. Japan, “a non-English speaking country with a relatively large population (128 million in 2007) is disadvantaged in attracting international academics and students.”<sup>[8]</sup> So the process of internationalization will increase these numbers so the flow of education at the international level will be much easier.

### Issues of Internationalization of Japanese Higher Education

After World War II, the USA tried to renovate the Japanese education system, but they failed. The education system of Japan remained largely based on the Japanese language. The only thing that changed, was the number of students, faculty members and even the number of higher education. Till recently many books were published in the Japanese language, due to which most Japanese students were unable to communicate on an international level and were unable to be the part of international intellectual community, also due to this overemphasis on the Japanese language led to the problem in the cross-border flow of education.

Another issue regarding the internationalization of higher education is the meaning of internationalization for Japanese students and the general public. For most people, internationalization means adopting the international culture and leaving behind their own culture. This thinking is slowing down the process of internationalization of higher education. Although it has a very minor effect on the internationalization process the fact cannot be ignored. Another fact regarding the internationalization of education is that the total number of foreign faculty members in Japan is around 5%, while it is 29.5% at US Barkley, 7.4% at MIT, 38.6% at Harvard, 31.0% at Yale, 41.5% in Cambridge and 39% in Oxford university. The ratio of foreign students is also not satisfactory. The total number of foreign students in Japan is 3.2% while this percentage is 7.4% in US Barkley, 27.2% at MIT, 19.7% at Harvard, 15.4% at Yale, 26.7% at Cambridge and 28.6% at Oxford University. So, for Japan it is not an easy task to increase

this number and the effort to achieve the objective of internationalization should be increased.

Another issue is the funding of higher education. Although this program has a focus on funding but still, according to the OECD report, the funding for higher education in Japan remains at only 0.5% of its GDP, which is below the average level of all OECD member countries, which is 1.0%. So, there is a need for more focus on funding for higher education so that the internationalization process will be much easier. Several students, going to study abroad, despite all their effort, is decreasing. So, in this respect, there is a need to make such an environment and provide assistance to the students, although this program sought to do so there is a need the reform such a mechanism.

### Conclusion

So, we can see, the effort of the government is appreciable. Internationalization of higher education will improve the quality of Japanese higher education. If the aim is accomplished, then we can hope for more universities in the list of the top 100 universities in the world. Although there are a few issues which need to be resolved. But, as we can see, the government is trying to overcome all these issues. There is also a need to make the process of admission easier for foreign students which can increase the number of foreign students. The number of faculty members is also an important thing in a quality-based education system. It is said that full-time faculty member is more loyal to their duties than part-time member, because of their attachment to the institution. In Japan, 51.6% of the total number of faculty members are part-time faculty members and 48.4% are full-time members. Although this issue is not related to national universities because, in national universities, the percentage of full-time faculty members and part-time faculty members is 62.02% and 37.97%. But as we have already mentioned Private universities have a very important role in Japanese higher education because of their large number of students, this issue needs to be resolved. Japan has largely focused on this program, mostly on national Universities (23 out of 37 universities are National universities), but there is a need to improve education in private universities and also there is a need for considerable focus on private universities. In such a program the percentage of private universities should be extended.

### Keywords

*TGU Project, Project TGU, Higher Education in Japan, Japanese Higher Education System, MEITI, the Global 30 Project, the public Tokyo University, and the private Doshisha University, Tsuda School.*

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