

Pioneering New Immigration Policy in the Contemporary Japan

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Abstract

Although Japan from an outside context may exhibit a monolithic cultural society, once immersed it exposes a variety of diverse groups and communities displaying a far disparate vision from entirely homogenous society and state that is commonly perceived. This vision of diverse Japan will be extended by developing new ways of accommodation for the contemporary immigrants, especially increasing wave of international students and refugees. In fact, this process had been strongly pushed by the government since 2014, through policy changes within Japan Revitalization Project (JRP). This paper will discuss and analyses current effects of those migration policies focusing on international students, migrants and refugees. The strategy made by the Japanese authorities is giving major advantages to “newcomers” wanting to work or study. However, at the same time, people seeking refuge within borders of Japan still are facing many obstacles due to bureaucracy barriers.

Keywords: *Japan, Students, Immigration, Policy*

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Çağdaş Japonya'da Yeni Göçmenlik Politikasına Öncülük Etme

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Öz

Dış bağlamdan bakıldığında Japonya'nın tek parçalı kültürel bir toplum gibi görünmesine rağmen, derinlemesine incelendiğinde yaygın bir şekilde algılanan tamamen homojen bir toplum ve devletten bambaşka bir görüntü sergileyen farklı gruplar ve topluluklar çeşitliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu farklı Japonya görüntüsü özellikle uluslararası öğrenciler ve mülteciler dalgasını artırarak çağdaş göçmenler için yeni konaklama yolları geliştirilmesiyle genişletilecektir. Aslında bu süreç 2014 yılından bu yana hükümet tarafından Japonya Yeniden Canlandırma Projesi (JRP) kapsamında politika değişiklikleri aracılığıyla kuvvetli bir şekilde desteklenmektedir. Bu makale uluslararası öğrenciler, göçmenler ve mültecilere odaklanan göçmen politikalarının mevcut etkilerini ele alır ve analiz eder. Japon yetkililer tarafından oluşturulan strateji çalışmak ya da okumak isteyen "yeni gelenlere" büyük avantajlar sağlamaktadır. Ancak aynı zamanda Japonya sınırlarında sığınma talep eden insanlar bürokrasi bariyerleri nedeniyle birçoğu engelle karşılaşmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Japonya, Öğrenciler, Göçmenlik, Politika

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Japanese Ministry of Justice began revising its law regarding permanent resident status, and reducing the amount of time required for foreigners to obtain it (Rodionova, 2017). As of March this year, a foreign resident will be able to apply for permanent residency after five years of working as a high-skilled worker; the new legislation considers additional merits – the qualities that foreign professionals possess, and, under special circumstances, it is even possible to receive permanent residency after three years, or even one year of work under special circumstances (Carrigan, 2017).

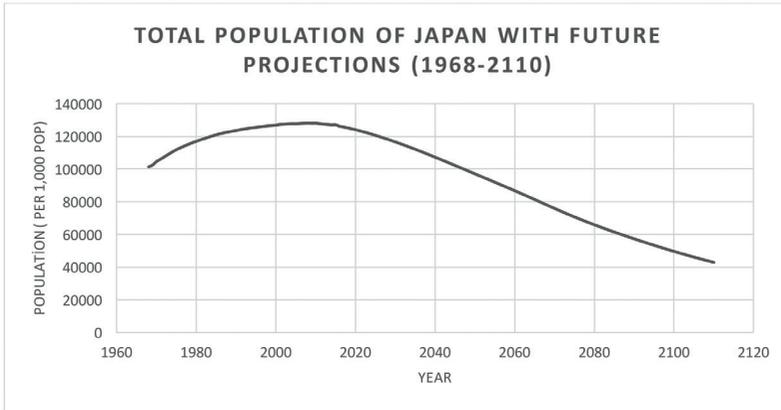
This small change by the Japanese government is a breath of fresh air wafting through the tight and inaccessible window known as the Japanese immigration policy. Nevertheless, it is not the only gust discernible among the government's policies in recent years.

The major question remains: why was there such a sudden move to loosen the intricate and exclusive system and create a more embracing migration policy? (Peng, 2016). To help answer this question, the primary objective of this paper is to describe the reasons that forced the Japanese authorities to adapt a new immigration policy that would be more accessible, particularly for international students and professional workers (Murai, 2016). The additional objective is to examine the changes in the policy regarding all migrants and refugees already living in the country, and the issues they face due to marginalisation and the lack of an efficient assimilation process. The most notable group were Korean (called Zainichi) descendants, who were especially ostracised; after the end of World War II, they were not allowed to become full-fledged citizens, but remain only as permanent residents.

Migration has occurred since the dawn of humankind; however, today, it is reaching its highest peaks – and the phenomenon is not isolated to one region, but is happening around the world. The likelihood of an imminent and greater population movement will be one of the most important rationales for Japan to implement a new

migration policy and strengthen its national borders. The reason for strengthening borders is connected to the region in which Japan is placed. According to population projections by the World Bank, Asia will reach its demographic peak between 2050 and 2060. The tremendous amount of human capital looking for jobs, stability, and security, will increase the income disparities, political disturbances, and environmental devastation that are inevitable with the diminishing roles of the European Union and the USA in the fields of economics and the military (Hawksworth & Chan, 2015, p. 3). Thus, there will be an incentive for Japan to reorganise and re-evaluate its role in the future of the Asian continent. These times will be extremely turbulent, and the movement of labour at the international level will be the most significant element of Japan's migration policy development.

Japan's migration policy shift is being pushed forward by the current Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, who is aware of the projected massive depopulation of his country in the coming years and is already implementing new types of visas for foreign workers (Reynolds & Roman, 2016).



Source: (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2015)

The population of Japan peaked in 2010 at 128,057,000 people, and since then, it has dropped significantly, to 127,083,000 in 2014. Still, this slight trend was halted a year later with a rebound, to 127,110,000. Nevertheless, from the perspective of overall natural population change (deaths and births) since 2007, it has been decreasing steadily; in 2010, Japan lost 105,000 people, and in 2015, it lost 251,000 people. Additionally, net migration in the last 20 years was not fruitful and marked a significant shrinkage of more than 264,000 (The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2016). Both, net migration and natural population changes, are not favourable.

MIGRATION TENDENCIES IN JAPAN

According to Castles, Miller, and Haas (Castles, Haas, & Miller, 2013, pp. 16-17) migration can be presented as a multi-layered process, characterised by six general tendencies. By accounting for these tendencies, the re-evaluation of the Japanese stance toward migration could become transparent.

The globalisation of migration is an opportunity for new countries entering the global market phase to participate and be affected by international migration on economic, social, and cultural levels.

The changing direction of dominant migration flows. The classical “Europe-centred” migrations before World War II, and post-War destinations like the US, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, are slowly being replaced by the emerging migration hubs of India, China, Japan, and Brazil.

The differentiation of migration. Each country is affected by different types of migrants (economic migrants, family reunions, refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants), which are all happening at the same time but are inconsistent in nature. After one type of migration begins, another follows quickly, and it all becomes an interconnected system, regardless of the government’s attitude. Nevertheless, a positive approach by the government can boost the effects of migration (as was seen, for example, in post-2015 Germany).

The proliferation of migration transition is a shift, in which the state changes from a land of emigration to one of immigration. In the last decade, countries like Poland, Mexico, Spain, Turkey, or South Korea transferred to this model. The rising number of transit migrants is the most important sign of the change, and of a country becoming a major immigration centre. Additionally, there is a reverse process of immigration-to-emigration countries; currently, the Latin America region is regarded as such.

The feminisation of labour migration. Historically, migration was predominantly a male-oriented movement. However, since the late 1960s, the number of women participating in immigration has increased steadily. In the Japanese case, women from the Philippines and Thailand exceed the number of men from those countries coming to Japan to work and immigrate.

The politicisation of migration. International relations at the bilateral and multilateral level, regional partnerships, domestic and external policies – especially security-based issues – are a growing concern for the new policies implemented by the government (regarding migration and refugee law).

The proliferation of migration occurred on a major scale only during the Westernisation process after the Meiji Revolution in 1868, when the Japanese government sent thousands of students, researchers, and military personnel abroad, to acquire the knowledge and technology necessary to transform Japan from a poor feudal state into a modern country that could compete with the European colonial powers. Additionally, the policy changes made by the Japanese government to accelerate the industrialisation process forced traditional agriculture and industrial workers to become jobless. The haste in which the industrial revolution occurred, affected not just the people, but in a major way, also hurt the economic stability of the country. In the 1860s and 1870s, the U.S. economy thrived, and thus began the U.S. economic prosperity which was perceived by many Japanese former farmers and workers as their only opportunity to obtain a job overseas. Moreover,

the Meiji Revolution caused a social shift in Japan due to the collapse of the Edo Class system (1615–1868), which divided the Japanese society into four classes (Samurai, Farmers, Craftsmen, and others (merchants, entertainers, and “the untouchables”), and kept them under strict feudal rules, especially the restriction of free movement. The collapse of the Edo Class system was a process that took several years and was successfully replaced with more Westernised ideas of modern society. However, the few years were enough for the Japanese people who sought to leave the mainland, as the authorities were preoccupied with the economic transformation of the whole state and fighting the last rebellious groups opposing the reforms.

The feminisation of labour migration is an element that will be hardly touched upon in this paper, due to the slim possibility of employment for foreign women. In the past, female employment was usually in the “entertainment” sector. However, today it has shifted more to health services, a sector which is in desperate need of nurses (Philipne Oversea Employment Administration, 2016), doctors, and social-service assistants, mostly from the Philippines and Indonesia (The Japan Foundation, 2015).

The globalisation of migration and its consequences swiftly affected the Japanese economy after World War 2. During the Economic Miracle (1950s-’70s), the Japanese economy required a larger workforce to sustain its growth. Thus, the changes in the legal framework since the beginning of the 1950’s can help explain the current position of the Japanese authorities – with respect to the government’s reaction then – to sustain the migration to a desirable level.

The Legal Framework of Immigration

The basic framework for immigration in post-war Japan was the Immigration Control Law of 1952 (The United Nations, 1951). However, this law, based on a U.S. model, was not designed to boost migration to Japan or allow resident foreigners to obtain Japanese nationality. Japan had created an alien registration system, which lasted until

2012, to observe and control immigrants, whether they were newly arrived or had resided in the country for years. The support for foreign nationals to become potential members of Japanese society was quite weak (Japan, 2012, p. 7).

The next phase occurred in 1989, when the Japanese government started revising the Immigration Control Law (The Ministry of Justice, 2006) in response to the growing migration movements and a significant rise in visa overstayers. The government reorganised its permit system to regulate the immigration of professional and high-skilled personnel while confirming its basic principle of limiting low-skilled foreign labour. The government introduced financial sanctions for employers to discourage and minimise “illegal” employment (The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law, 2014).

This penalisation led to a double-track system for low-skilled worker migration. The first track was a trainee system, which started with the Technical Internship Trainee Program launched in 1993 (Japanese International Training Cooperation Organization, 2016) and was officially recognised by the government. The second track involved the recruitment of migrants with Japanese descendants (Brazil, Philippines, USA, Canada). Both tracks were given access to permanent resident status, with no restraints regarding employment. Of these, the largest visible migration group that benefited from this policy were Japanese Brazilians (Higuchi, 2005, pp. 16-17).

Historical Context of Migration

The historical context of migration in Japan can be divided into two main aspects: internal island migration and human resources distribution, and the “imperial or colonial era”, in which Japan had to rely on human resources from outside Japan. This paper will primarily focus on the impacts of Korean and Chinese migration, with brief mentions of other nationalities that might gain significance in the coming decades.

First, contemporary increase of the migrant movement in Japan after the Meiji Restoration and Economic Revolution in 1868 was crucial in the background of the internal migration process. During the creation of the modern Japanese industry and the country's cultural transformation, the transfer of human resources on the islands was critical to the maintenance of its economic growth and military prowess. This was dictated by the unique traditional approach employed by the Japanese officials to keep the country unified under the banner of nationalism. However, economic growth could not be maintained by the domestic populace moving to where it was most needed at any given moment.

Second, we can clearly see the change after Japan's rise to power as a regional colonial empire. With the annexation of Taiwan (1895), and Korea (1915), the citizens of those colonies had an opportunity to migrate and work on Japan's mainland, where there was a need for hands to support Japan's economic and military expansion. Both, the Koreans and the Chinese were the primary sources of human labour used by the Japanese Empire. Japan had experienced a substantial influx of people from abroad in the previous two centuries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese immigrants began creating working communities in Japan's major cities, usually at ports (Chikako & Tsuneo, 2006). However, they were quickly overtaken by Korean migrants. The impact of the Koreans was more significant at the time. Nevertheless, the Chinese community exercised more influence on the contemporary (after 1990s) side of the migration process.

In today's Japan, most foreign residents are colonial immigrants and their descendants. Koreans and Taiwanese were officially branded as foreigners in April 1952, when Japan was regaining its independence after the end of the post-war U.S. presence (Potter, 2009, p. 6).

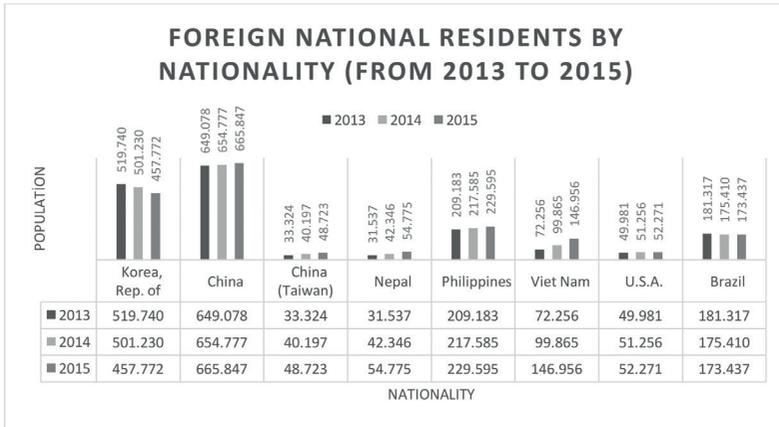
Workers who entered Japan were sent to engage in physical labour in factories and mines. The government of Japan had propagated the

idea of movement of people from the colonies, providing them with the benefits of assimilation into Japan's superior culture and way of thinking.

The Japanese Empire annexed Korea in 1915; thereafter, the migration flows between Japan and the Korean peninsula grew swiftly (Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, 2010). The Korean population in Japan increased further, as enlisted labourers were brought over during the last years of Japan's colonial empire; the Korean migrant population peaked at approximately two million in 1945.

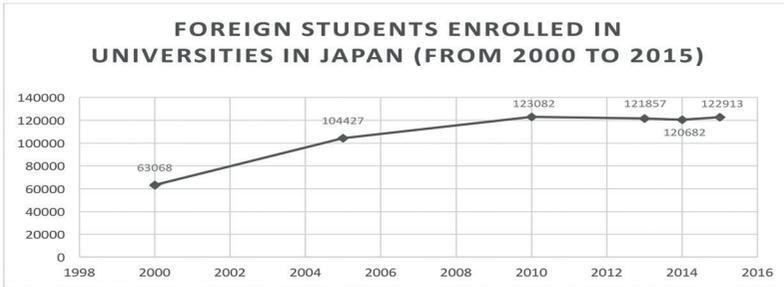
The massive migration during Japan's resurgence in the first four decades of the twentieth century was most significant for the Koreans. Many of them decided to stay in Japan after the war; thus, they became the biggest foreign community on Japanese soil for the next 60 years.

Today, Korean descendants are a part of Japanese society; however, they were not granted full privileges of naturalisation after the war. The issue arose with the new Constitution that came into effect in 1947, dictated by the United States of America's occupation forces. The Constitution included a clear statement in Article 10: "The conditions necessary for being a Japanese national shall be determined by law", in which the Japanese word national/citizen "kokumin" (国民) was understood as meaning a Japanese-born person with a Japanese parent. In this case, all the privileges and rights granted by the Constitution, and the laws that clarified and regulated the life of ordinary people, only applied to the "kokumin". This issue had been raised by many foreigners (Jones, 2015), who objected to the disadvantages created by this term and policy, which persists to this day. However, in the case of the Korean Zainichi, their population had been rapidly decreasing due to low birth rates, international marriages with Japanese, and deaths, mostly in the generation of people from the post-war period (1945-1955) that decided to stay in Japan.



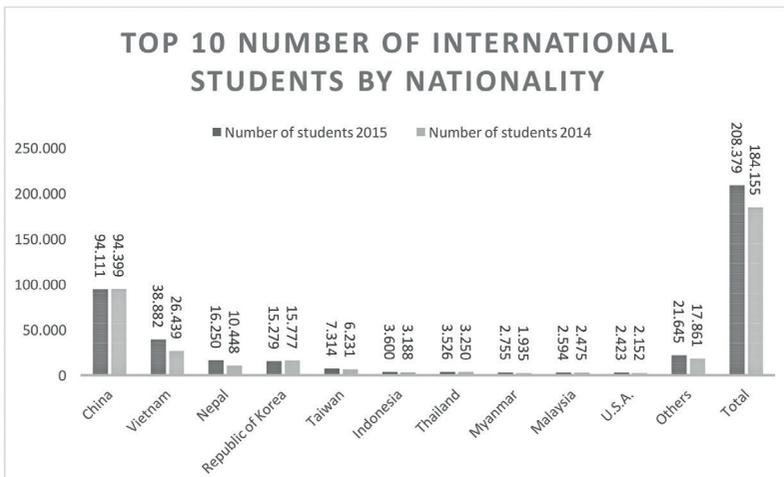
Source: (Statistical Bureau of Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016)

On the opposite side, there was Chinese migration to Japan. The recent Chinese surge was similar to the historical exchange of the workforce mentioned above, resembling Korean migration. Additionally, it was intensified; thanks to low-skill job programmes, descendants (Shinkakyō - 新華僑) of Chinese who decided to stay in Japan after the war, and the fast-growing Chinese student community that decided to study at Japanese universities. The data regarding Chinese students and overall foreign students depends on the institutions that did the research. According to the Statistical Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, in 2015, there were 122,913 foreign students in Japan (Statistical Bureau of Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016).



Source: (Statistical Bureau of Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016)

The Bureau did not segregate the international students' groups according to their country of origin. Nevertheless, research by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) indicates that the number of international students on May 1, 2015 was 208,379 persons, representing an increase of 24,224 students (13.2%) compared to 2014, when there were 184,155 students.



Source: (JASSO, 2016)

This highlights a clear disparity in the data collected by these governmental institutions. Additionally, both conducted the basic survey of schools on May 1, 2015, which is 30 days after the beginning of the university year in Japan.

In the annual JASSO report 2015 (JASSO, 2015), students are divided into two groups:

- Higher education students: 152,062 persons (an increase of 12,877 persons (9.3%) compared with the result of last year)
- Japanese language students: 56,317 persons (an increase of 11,347 persons (25.2%).

It is evident that the cooperation between Chinese citizens and the Japanese government is fruitful. The working Chinese population is increasing, and Chinese students comprise almost half of all international students studying at Japanese universities.

This new exchange of students in Japan did not start without any previous consideration; the most significant was the awareness of the Japanese government regarding the importance of international exchanges, and their future role in the country as an engine to reinvigorate the economy and restore the social security system. Thus, the surge in student migration is currently becoming one of the deciding factors of the migration acceleration process, which is reflected in the policy ideas revealed by the government. The migration policy discussion was incorporated and viewed through a bigger scope, which culminated in a unified strategy that included the issues and possibilities of an accelerated migration process.

MIGRANTS' ROLE IN THE JAPANESE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

The acceleration process is mentioned in The Japanese Revitalization Project (JRP), revised in 2014. This is Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his cabinet's grand strategy to resurrect Japan's role as a vital player in the international arena. Abe believes that only through economic

development, technological breakthroughs, reassessing the value of young and older generations, and the impact of women as well as foreign workers on the government and private sector can Japan be invigorated, and continue to be one of the world's dominant market players.

The JRP is divided into three sections, namely: a. The Industry Revitalization Plan; b. The Strategic Market Creation Plan, and c. Global Outreach.

The Industry Revitalization Plan includes structural reform programme (revitalising Japanese industries); reforming the employment system and reinforcing human resources capabilities; promoting innovation in science and technology (University Reforms); transforming Japan into the world's leading IT society; boosting Japanese competitiveness as a business hub, and revitalising middle- and micro-sized companies.

The Strategic Market Creation Plan mostly emphasises upon extending life expectancy; providing a clean and economical energy supply; creating next-generation social infrastructure; rebuilding regional communities, and enhancing tourism.

Additionally, the JRP also includes strategies for Global Outreach, which includes international trade negotiations with Australia and the EU, and doubling Foreign Direct Investments.

In this paper, discussion of The Japanese Revitalization Project will be limited to information regarding changes that directly involve migrants already living in Japan and incoming migrants to Japan. The Industry Revitalization Plan emphasises the importance of migrants, future foreign workers, and international students in employment, as well as lays stress upon innovation in science and technology, which is directly connected to university reforms.

As mentioned in the Globalisation section, there is a double-track system for low-skilled worker migration. In the case of high-skilled

workers, the Japanese Immigration Bureau advertises the need for these employees and methods that can be used to acquire them.

To assist high-skilled workers, Japan introduced a Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals, in which foreigners are classified in three categories: academicians, specialised/technical professionals, and business management professionals.

Each of those three groups has relevant sections – academic background, research achievements, and professional career or annual salary – in the point-based Evaluation Mechanism, which can help them receive job permission. If a foreign professional exceeds 70 points in the Evaluation Mechanism, his or her application is eligible to begin the Immigration Bureau's assessment process (The Immigration Bureau of Japan, 2017). If he or she is accepted, the highly skilled professional has a better chance of obtaining permanent residency.

The Japanese people and their government are constantly discussing the social and cultural unity of their state. The discussion also includes the internationalisation of universities by employing more foreign academicians as one of the principles of the section of JRP concerning Promoting Innovation in Science and Technology. In 2014, the Ministry of Education (or MEXT) began a multilayered scheme based on the JRP section, Promoting Innovation in Science and Technology, which heavily emphasises upon international academic cooperation and exchange programmes. The project was named the "Top Global University Project" and was launched in 2014 (The Ministry of Education, 2014).

The programme includes five goals: to elevate at least ten of the best Japanese universities to the top of 100 World University Ranking; provide full-time faculty positions for 1,500 young and international faculty members; double the number of Japanese students who wish to go abroad (from 60,000 students in 2010 to 120,000 in 2020); to achieve a population of International Students of 300,000 by 2020, and to obtain accreditation to offer the International Baccalaureate in

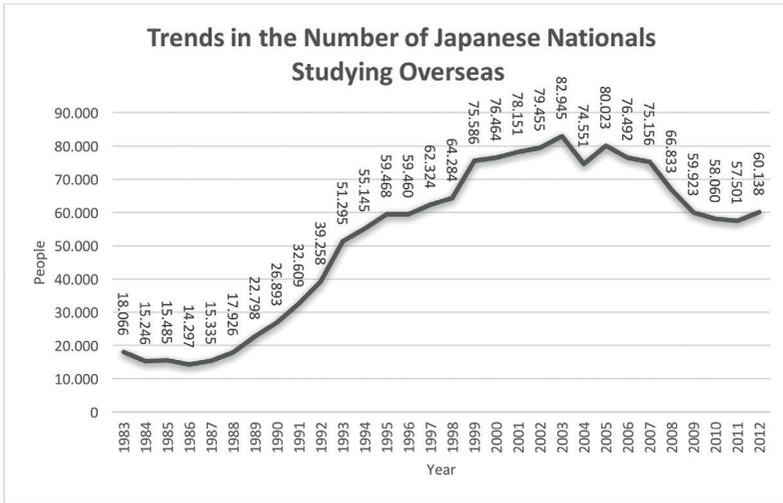
at least 200 schools in Japan (only 19 institutions in 2014 were eligible for the International Baccalaureate accreditation).

The origin of the word “internationalisation” in the context of Japanese education and language, somewhat reflects the importance of this process. The Japanese word “internationalisation” appeared in common use in 1981, and was added to the dictionary. However, today, the term internationalisation, or rather the lack of internationalisation, can be associated with the drop in the quality of university education in all fields. International students are rejecting the possibility of studying in Japan (The Japan Times, 2015). At the same time, Japanese universities are plummeting in international rankings: only four universities (Tokyo - 20, Kyoto - 32, Nagoya - 72, Osaka - 96) were on the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, 2016). By 2020, according to Ministry of Education projections, an additional six universities should be in the top 100 ranking.

To assist with employment after higher education, Japan are trying to provide opportunities for international students. The Ministry of Education is seeking to convince graduate students to stay in Japan and begin their career as salaried employees or continue their education by becoming researchers. In the past, Japanese scholarship programmes focused only on providing education and did not encourage international students to stay and work in Japan. Nevertheless, since the mid-2000s, the approach has shifted and the country is encouraging foreign students to stay and work as high-skilled foreign professionals (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2014, pp. 62-63). Retaining the best students and potential workers is key to keeping the Japanese economic revitalisation project going, as is the collaboration among selected agencies and ministries to create a system that will boost: the acquisition of foreign employees; information sharing and intellectual exchanges, especially between young and rising researchers; and the creation of internationalised research centers in, and outside, Japan.

The process of encouraging young Japanese students to participate in international exchange programmes is part of improving their English skills, which is identified as a fundamental issue by the government. The importance of communicating in English is a necessity in Japan, which is why, from primary school to the university level, all education institutions seek out possibilities for students to actively partake in homestay programmes and short-term exchanges between schools. Nevertheless, the most important ones are at the university level. Exchanges between universities for at least six months are the most valuable ones, and can help students improve their oral English, which is regarded as the most troublesome for cultural reasons, and the way the classes are conducted (Hollingworth, 2017). The speaking difficulty creates communication problems that are evident during the whole English education process in Japan.

Hence, although there is a need for Japanese students to participate in exchange programmes, the number of students wishing to go abroad is declining each year. According to data collected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (The Ministry of Education, 2015), in 2004, 82,945 Japanese students studied abroad. This was the highest number since the post-war period. However, the upward trend that began in the latter half of 1980s did not continue, and in 2011, the number hit 57,501 students, which is comparable with the numbers from 1995-96. Nevertheless, after increasing pressure from the government, and in light of preparations to launch the JRP, the numbers began to change. According to the most recent surveys analysed by MEXT for 2013, the number was 69,869 students (The Ministry of Education, 2015). Governmental intervention was, therefore, necessary to halt the downward trend.



Source: (UNESCO, 2016)

One of the JRP's goals is to obtain and maintain at least 120,000 Japanese Nationals studying overseas each year, by the year 2020. There are still six years left to improve the data analysed and presented by MEXT. However, given Japan's declining population and smaller families, achieving this goal by the deadline set by the Japanese government might be hard – but for natural demographic reasons, not because of over-ambitious policy plans.

The international student community, as mentioned above, is one of the most crucial aspects of the Japanese plan to make Japan more “open” and diverse. In 2015, there were approximately 210,000 international students in Japan, and by 2020 this number should reach 300,000 according to JRP's goals. Due to the growing population of students from China, Vietnam, and Nepal, it will be possible for the government to attain those figures. An issue around multinationals has also arisen; the international student group is now almost half Chinese, and the current model is designed to promote diversity or to help Japanese universities survive in a time of population decline. The Japanese government does not mention anything about an approach

to assist universities by filling the gaps with international students. However, it is evident that the decision to open Japan to international students could also have an additional positive effect on universities, as they will be in a better position to maintain their operations as educational institutions and delay, or even reverse the possibility of closing, due to an insufficient number of incoming students each year. This scenario will happen in the next decade, and the first to face such problems will be the private universities.

Refugees

Japan is one of the developed countries that does not provide direct aid to refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless and internally displaced people, by accepting them into their country. However, as a donor to the UN Refugee Agency, it is fourth-largest after the U.S., the European Union (without Germany), and Germany, providing aid to the tune of more than \$164 million in 2016 (The UN Refugee Agency, 2016).

This dichotomy is one of the critical issues that Japan is criticised for in the international community. In 2016, Japan switched gears and accepted 28 people with refugee status (Miyazaki & Funakoshi, 2017). This is a small number compared to any other developed country and the amount of rejected applications is also high. However, the origin of people coming to Japan and applying for the refugee status is suspicious (Ministry of Justice, 2015, p. 66). In other words, none of these people came from countries in a state of conflict, or ones where the state does not function adequately enough to provide basic social services.

The Japanese Immigration Bureau is assessing this situation through the (JRP) policies implemented by the Japanese government that clarify the country's current position regarding refugees. In the Formulation of the Basic Plan for Immigration (the integrated part of JRP) will be more accurate in giving permission for refugees or asylum seekers, with an application process based on the Refugee Conven-

tion, and will continue to build and expand the framework of all institutions directly connected with refugee cases. The government wishes to suppress any applications made by asylum-seekers who might misuse or abuse the rules of the system.

Japan will exchange information with other countries and cooperate with the UNHCR and other relevant international bodies that could help improve the already existing qualification process and examinations to determine whether an asylum-seeker is truthful and really in need of asylum.

Conclusion

The Japanese authorities realised that, through appropriate and prearranged policies regarding migrants, it is possible to create a sustainable flow of international human capital, which is genuinely needed for the future of the Japanese economy – and, in particular, for elderly people, who will need to be taken care of by migrants who will work and contribute to the pension system. Thus, the government had to begin the process of “loosening the chains” of the permanent residency requirements and citizenship.

Japan will not suddenly announce an open-door policy and allow anybody who is willing to work to come to Japan. However, the government, through its new immigration policy is giving an opportunity to selected groups (international students, and high-skilled workers). By increasing the number of international students, the Japanese authorities and companies are selecting from among a growing pool of potential workers and absorbing the most valuable ones. Additionally, international students who finish higher education and obtain a degree in Japan are aware of the Japanese culture and customs; hence, it is possible to say that the university not only prepares them to work, but also to co-exist and understand the importance of the Japanese culture. The universities provide a range of activities for students to integrate better with their peers, faculty members, and local communities; for example: engaging in free Japanese classes, cultural festi-

vals, or other group activities (Japanese group affiliation is the most crucial aspect of their life, and is opposed to “western” individualistic approach).

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the refugee issue is also being treated using similar means. Japanese migration authorities are extremely reluctant to provide refugee status to anyone who asks for it. Nevertheless, if the younger generation of people leave because of conflict or another calamity, the chance of a refugee getting financial support from the Japanese government exists in the form of scholarships. The government of Japan’s generosity is limited and requires many documents (mostly regarding the applicant’s educational background and knowledge of English), which, in some cases, cannot be fulfilled (since refugees are forced in many cases to hand in their identification documents, including the ones indicating their level of education, when they decide to travel and risk by using smugglers services). Thus, it is almost impossible to persuade the Japanese immigration officers to even begin to review a case.

Moreover, the assimilation process for foreigners will become a pressing problem in the upcoming years as increasing numbers of foreign residents begin to mingle with the Japanese population. From the societal perspective, it is hard for the Japanese to accept foreigners as equals. The lack of equality was recently reflected in the survey on discrimination conducted by the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry asked 18,500 expats about their occupation, salary level, apartment, living standards, and overall racism, religion, and country-based insults they encountered. From the responses of 4,252 men and women answering to the survey two issues were most noteworthy: renting an apartment (in Japan, many real estate companies require a “Japanese guarantor” as a form of additional insurance in case of devastation of the apartment), and securing a full-time position in a Japanese company at the same level of salary as their Japanese co-workers in the same position (Osaki, 2017). Even though a naturalisation process might be successful, in the eyes of the society, local community, or neighbours,

an immigrant will remain an external element in the healthy country's body. This kind of ostracisation will mostly likely continue, and become a rather unwelcome reality in Japan for the next several decades.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the question of voting rights is highly controversial in the Japanese public and political sphere. It has been vocalised that migrants who possess permanent residency should be able to vote in elections, since they pay taxes and contribute to society each year. This will probably remain more of a wish rather than a probability in the next few decades. The Japanese are afraid of the influence of foreign workers on their political system and will likely prolong the debate for even longer than it took to change the rules regarding permanent residency restrictions. Moreover, Japanese people's pride and sense of nationalism, even though it was constrained by the American occupation, still forms a crucial part of their identity. In that sense, it is far more conservative than Europe when it comes to country, state, society, and national unity.

Overall, the prospects for Japan to transform itself into a more open country and society still exists, but only if the government's ideas and principles are influenced and supported by a majority of Japanese people. International contributions to help war-torn countries – especially in the form of accepting asylum-seekers and refugees – will still be sporadic and infrequent, due to the minor benefits that Japan accrues from those actions. It will be more possible to migrate to Japan as a student and begin a professional career after graduating from a university, or be invited by a company or educational institution as a highly-skilled professional.

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