
Nurturing Internationally Minded People through Overseas Programs

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The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the effectiveness of overseas programs offered by universities with the aim of nurturing people with *global competence* (Hunter, 2000), able to function in a challenging and culturally diverse environment. The study involves some of the programs offered in 2010 to the students enrolled at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB). The findings are based on a questionnaire attempting to gauge the impact of such programs upon the students' perception of themselves, their country and foreign countries and people. Our findings reveal the fact that, although possibly beneficial, the effects of overseas programs are limited and therefore universities should integrate them into a more comprehensive institutional and administrative framework.

Keywords: *internationalization, overseas programs, internationally-minded people.*

1 INTRODUCTION

As more economies and political systems around the world are embracing the ideas and benefits of globalization, higher education has been facing the extremely challenging task of educating so-called "global leaders", people who would be able to function in an increasingly interdependent and heterogeneous world. Applying the ideas of globalization and internationalization at the higher education level is an extremely difficult task, requiring universities to become "responsive to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets" (Van der Wende, 1996, p. 23). In recent years, overseas programs have been an integral part in the educational framework, as they have moved towards encouraging genuine interaction with different cultures and value systems, offering students opportunities to broaden their cultural horizon and contributing to international understanding and cooperation.

There are a number of rationales for participating in overseas programs. The first would be a linguistic rationale. Teachers and students alike expect positive outcomes from students' contact with other languages. The second would be related to the cultural dimension of the programs, which would allow students to broaden their understanding of different cultures and people and become genuinely interested in other cultures than their own. Finally, the personal growth rationale is prompted by students' wish to experiment with their own limits and take a step further towards autonomy from parents and educators.

2 INTERNATIONALIZATION AND OVERSEAS PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Student mobility has been an important factor of internationalization in higher education. Internationalization and globalization have often been associated in the literature. Internationalization in higher education represents the efforts to cope with the complex challenges of globalization, while respecting one's national identity (Knight, 1997). Transforming higher education so that it can deal with globalization issues is a complex process, which springs out of a number of reasons, political, academic, cultural and social, and economic (Qiang, 2003). Internationalization in education is not strictly confined to teaching or learning, but should incorporate all aspects pertaining to the system of education, from planning and policy, up to the integration of international students. As Knight pointed out, education should move towards integrating "an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (1999, p. 8).

2.1. Benefits of overseas programs

There have been identified a number of benefits which derive from students' international experiences, such as the exposure to different social and cultural environments (van Hoof, 2005), increased maturity (Frisch, 1990), and change of cultural stereotypes. In relation to the latter, students may acquire a "new-found recognition of the extent to which their own cultural values and norms differ from those of their counterparts in their host country" (Roberts, 1998, p. 65). Allport (1956) argues that, under certain circumstances, the overseas experience may even help reduce prejudice and improve cultural understanding. In the case of Japan, overseas experience may be a good opportunity for students to improve their English communication skills, an important advantage for their future career.

2.2. Disadvantages of overseas programs

Some critics have pointed out that there are negative aspects in connection with overseas programs. First, as the present study will show, their effectiveness may be limited unless other institutional measures are taken to prepare students for the overseas experience and to ensure a smooth transition towards, and link with the post-program activities. In order for them to bring an effective contribution to the internationalization process, overseas programs must be carefully integrated in a comprehensive framework including organizational elements, such as governance, operations, support services, and also academic elements such as internationalized curricula, thematic studies, and foreign language study (Qiang, 2003). Although positive aspects, such as increased maturity and a deeper cross-cultural understanding have been emphasized in the literature, it has also been showed that the benefits of these programs are limited in scope, or fade away after a period of time (Page et al., 2009). Some authors found that besides the disadvantage of having to spend a longer time in university, the students with international experience did not benefit greatly in terms of salary after graduation in comparison with their other peers (Messer and Wolter, 2007).

2.3. Japan and overseas programs

During 1980s, at the peak of its economic prosperity, Japan jumped on the bandwagon of internationalization in education. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), unequivocally explained that Japan's internationalization effort is aimed at "[making] Japan more open-minded in order to *maintain and develop our society*" (MEXT, 2009a, p. 15, emphasis added). Moreover, the Ministry also pointed out that one of the goals of internationalization in education is "*the awakening as a Japanese* and the rearing of *kokusaijin* [internationally-minded people]" (Ishii et al., 1996, p. 237, translation and emphasis added). Critics have stressed that behind the apparent eagerness for internation-

alization, Japan had a nationalistic agenda. Suzuki (1995) points out that Japanese internationalization (*kokusaika*) is “about adding a Japanese perspective to the world order and helping people see the world through Japanese eyes” (p. 62). For Yoshimoto (1989), *kokusaika* is “yet another model of the world with Japan at the center” (p. 22). The recent initiatives of MEXT, the “300,000 international students” and the “Global 30 Project” are among the examples of the Japanese version of internationalization (Rivers, 2010). According to these initiatives, 30 select Japanese universities would internationalize their curriculum and campuses so that by 2020 they would attract a total of 300,000 international students to Japan. These initiatives are illustrative of the efforts of the country to cope with its dwindling birth rate by taking advantage of international brainpower to maintain its economic hegemony. At the same time, it has been pointed out that Japan’s shrinking younger generation has gradually become inward-looking and less willing to embark upon study abroad programs (Mizutani, 2011, Yoshitaka, 2011, Tanikawa, 2011). According to an OECD study cited by MEXT, in 2008 a number of 66, 833 Japanese students participated in overseas programs, as compared to 75,156 in 2007 (MEXT, 2010).

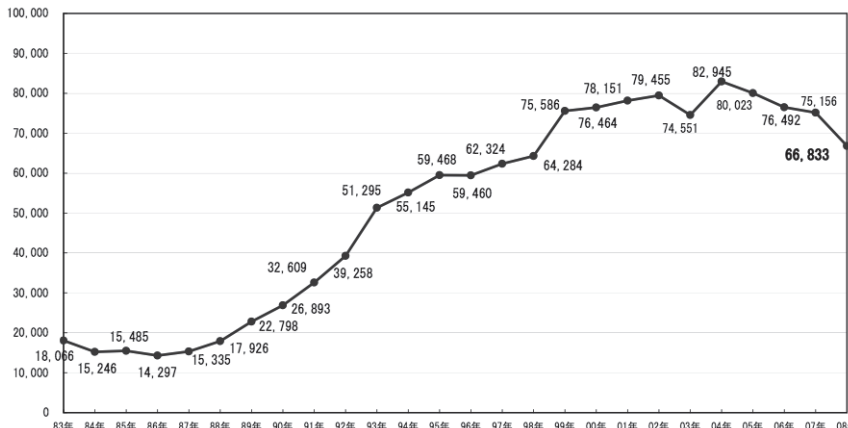


Figure 1. The situation of Japanese students enrolled in study abroad programs.

Source: OECD *Education at a Glance*, Institute of International Education Open Doors.

Moreover, as Figure 2 shows, compared to other Asian countries, from a leading position in 1997, Japan ranked fifth in 2009 in terms of number of students enrolled in U. S. universities. On the other hand, China has shown a steady growth in the numbers of students in the U. S., which is illustrative of its strong drive for economic and intellectual supremacy in Asia.

According to some authors, over the past decade Japan has been suffering from a so-called “Galapagos syndrome”, displaying an increased isolationism and a tendency of young Japanese to choose the easy option of living a comfortable life in a safe and prosperous Japan, without bothering to connect to the outside world (The Daily Yomiuri, 2011). The main reasons for the decreasing numbers of Japanese students abroad are the lack of English language skills, financial difficulties and fears that the overseas experience may hamper their job search, which in Japan starts in earnest in the third academic year.

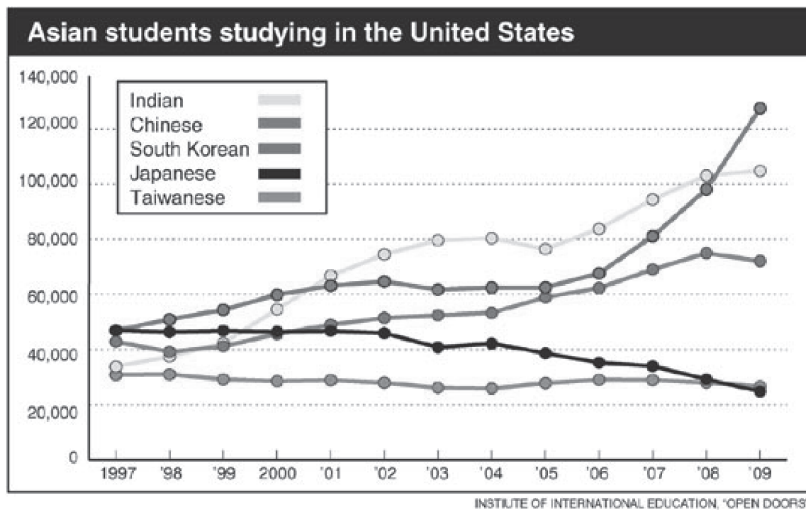


Figure 2. Asian students studying in the United States.

Source: The Japan Times, Jan. 6, 2011.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB) is one of the universities with an ambitious overseas program policy. Among the few Japanese universities accredited by the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Association of MBA's (AMBA), NUCB was in 2010 the Japanese university with the largest number of students enrolled in international volunteer projects (Asahi Shimbun, 2010).

The present study is a part of a larger project, whose aim is to identify the strategies and methods necessary for nurturing a spirit of internationalism in our university students. The study was piloted in 2009, and its findings indicated that the students return with a renewed appreciation of their native country (Nae and Fraysse-Kim, 2010). The present study was conducted on a cohort of NUCB students who participated in the programs in 2010. As shown in the table below, in 2010 a total of 131 students were enrolled in the five programs, which varied in destination, scope and duration.

The Gap Year program is a travel abroad program which has initially been offered exclusively to freshmen, but in 2010 it was made available for sophomores as well. The International Volunteer program is open to all our university students, irrespective of department or year of study. Frontier Spirit is a study abroad program, focusing on language study (English and Chinese), and is offered to English and Chinese majors in the Department of International Communication at University of Manchester and Beijing University. The Department of International Studies program (DIS) is another language study abroad program offered to second-year students in the Department of International Studies, majoring in English and Chinese or Korean. The English majors spend one semester in Canada, at Queens University, while Asian majors go to Hong Kong or Yonsei University in Korea. Finally, the Student Exchange program is a business and management study abroad program with partner universities of NUCB. With the exception of International Volunteer and DIS programs, TOEIC/TOEFL score, GPA and attendance requirements apply. For our

Table 1. Overseas Programs at NUCB in 2010

Program	Gap Year	Int'l Volunteer	Frontier Spirit	Department of Int'l Studies	Student Exchange
	Semester abroad	Summer Holidays	Semester abroad	Semester abroad	Year abroad
Type	Travel	Work/Travel	Study (language) + internship	Study (language)	Study (business, management)
Destination	Europe	Europe, Asia, etc.	UK, China	Canada, Korea, Hong Kong	Hong Kong, France, Germany
Period	Apr.-Jul.	Aug.-Sept.	Apr.-Jul. (1) Sept.-Dec. (2)	2 nd year fall semester	Sept.-Apr. (HK) Sept.-Jun. (Rouen)
Duration	11 weeks	2-3 weeks	16 weeks	12 weeks	10 months
Participants 2010 (131)	13	77	8 (1) 10 (2)	19	4

study we considered the first four programs, Gap Year, International Volunteer, Frontier Spirit and DIS, due to their relatively comparable length, scope and number of participants.

3.1. Methodology and data collection

The present study used a questionnaire to identify to what extent students' overseas experience impacted their individuality, national identity and perception of foreign countries and people. The survey was conducted during the months of March, April, June, July, September and December 2010 among the 131 students participating in overseas programs offered by NUCB.

3.1.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part gathered information about the demographics. The students were asked to fill in information about their gender, year of study, the overseas program they were enrolled in, and the country of destination. The second part asked the students to rate their perception of their own personal and social self by answering a series of Likert-scale items and multiple choice questions.

The Likert-scale and multiple choice questions in the next section referred to the students' perception of their native country (i.e. Japan). The questions in this section were aimed at identifying any changes in the way our students felt about their own country after being exposed to culturally different environments. The final section is related to the students' perception of foreign countries and people, and international issues. The questions addressed some of the students' stereotypes regarding foreign countries and people, their image of internationally minded people and internationalized countries, as well as their view of the presence of foreigners in Japan. The items in this section allowed for Likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended types of answers. We assumed that students had little, if any, overseas experience prior to enrolling in the program. The survey was written in Japanese and was administered in paper form two times, right before the students' departure and immediately after their return from the overseas program.

3.1.2. Data collection and Limitations

We obtained a total of 217 usable responses. As can be seen in Table 2, the program with the highest num-

Table 2. Demographic, academic and program characteristics of the sample (n = 217)

I. Program	Name	Period	Student percentage
Study abroad	FSP	3 months	15%
Travel abroad	GAP	3 months	8%
Study abroad	DIS	3 months	12%
Travel/work abroad	Int'l. Volunteer	1 month	65%
2. Department			
	Management		14%
	Economics		4%
	Commerce		13%
	Communication		69%
3. Grade			
	1st		22%
	2nd		48%
	3rd		26%
	4th		4%
4. Gender			
	Male		45%
	Female		55%

ber of participants in 2010 was the International Volunteer program, more than half being represented by the students enrolled in the International Communication Department (mostly English majors).

Out of the total number of respondents, almost half were in their sophomore year, when they are relatively free to pursue their hobbies and interests, before embarking in the complicated and time-consuming job search in the following year. The female participants outnumber the males due to the predominance of female students in the International Communication Department.

The main limitation of this study is the fact that we based our data collection only on the group of Japanese students who took part in overseas programs. A comparison with a control group comprised of students who have not travelled or studied abroad would be more edifying for understanding the relationship between the changes in the students' perception and their overseas experience. Moreover, given the short span of one year allocated for the study, the results are far from conclusive. A follow-up study of the participants is desirable in order to establish whether the experience was effective on a longer term.

3.1.3. Hypotheses

Based on the literature review presented earlier, we formulated the following hypotheses with regard to the impact of overseas experience on the students views.

H1: The overseas experience positively affects the students' perception of themselves.

H2: The overseas experience positively affects the students' perception of their native country.

H3: The overseas experience positively affects the students' perception of foreign countries and people.

3.1.4. Analysis and Statistical Outcomes

We compared the two independent data sets comprised of the students' responses before and after completion of their overseas program. According to the type of question (Likert-scale item, closed question), three kinds of statistical means were employed in order to find whether the differences between the two sets of responses were statistically significant.

(1) We used nonparametric statistical methods to analyze the students' responses to the Likert-scale items constituting the respondents' self, national and international perception scale. The scale ranges in value from 1 to 5, with scores under 3 representing increasingly favorable perception. The scale ranges are (1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neutral, (4) Disagree and (5) Strongly disagree. Nonparametric statistical methods were also employed for averaging the scores on the multiple response items, such as Q17 and Q18 (marked with **). In these items, the students were asked to choose as many as possible responses from the ones provided.

(2) We used cross-tabulation analysis to analyze the multiple-choice items (marked with *) in order to examine whether there are statistically significant associations between the overseas experience and the choice of response.

The present paper compares the results obtained from the whole cohort before and after the completion of the programs, with comments on our findings for each section of the survey. In a forthcoming paper we will present the statistical outcomes of the comparison between study abroad and travel/work abroad cohorts and will comment on the findings.

We compared the before and after averages obtained for the three sections. As shown in Table 3, we obtained few statistically significant results (7 out of 39); however, several comments should be made about the general tendency indicated by the students' responses.

3.1.5. Overall results

I. The perception of self

Contrary to our expectations, we have found no statistically significant changes in the way our students viewed themselves. However, we could gather some insight into their perception of themselves. Their responses suggest that they tend to see themselves as introverted and slightly self-centred individuals who value their families, prefer group-oriented activities in general, and enjoy talking with people. Moreover, the slightly higher average scores for questions 6, 7 and 9 suggest that they consider themselves as having slightly stronger socializing skills. On the other hand, the slight increase in the average for questions 5 and 10 may be an indication that after their program they considered themselves less opinionated and more confused about their future career plans.

II. The perception of native country

This section has yielded the greatest number of statistically significant results (five out of fifteen). Generally speaking, as shown by the results obtained for questions 12 and 13, there was little change in the students' positive feelings towards their country. However, we noticed certain post-program changes regarding the students' view of their country in the world and of immigration and foreign work force in Japan. The first two statistically significant changes (questions 22 and 23) suggest that our students would like to see a less apologetic, more articulate Japan on the international stage. Another statistically significant change, which appears to be recurrent in the present study, refers to the student's views of immigration and foreign workers in Japan. The figures tend to indicate a less favourable opinion after the overseas experi-

Table 3. Comparison of Mann-Whitney U-text Z-scores and Chi-square values for the students' self, country and international views on the basis of their experience with overseas programs

Items(2 groups:n = 217)	Before (n = 108)	After (n = 109)	U-test Z-score	Pearson Chi-Square
I. SELF-PERCEPTION				
Q1 Do you enjoy spending time alone?	2.71	2.67	-0.499	
Q2 Do you consider yourself self-centred?	2.71	2.70	-0.066	
Q3 Are you an assertive person?	2.58	2.51	0.344	
Q4 Do you think you have a strong personality?	2.31	2.15	-0.741	
Q5 Are you an opinionated person?	1.85	2.04	-0.913	
Q6 Do you like communicating with people?	1.70	1.68	-0.431	
Q7 Do you value your family?	1.20	1.24	-0.321	
Q8 Do you make friends easily?	2.00	1.99	-0.127	
Q9 Do you like doing things in a group?	2.46	2.70	-1.520	
Q10 Do you have a future career goal?	2.05	2.20	-0.804	
Q11* Choose one thing you value the most in life. 1. Honour 2. Power 3. Money 4. Contribution to society 5. Family 6. Health 7. Pleasure				3.150
II. COUNTRY PERCEPTION				
Q12 Do you like Japan?	1.45	1.37	-0.229	
Q13 Are you proud to be Japanese (to have been born in Japan)?	1.54	1.49	-0.518	
Q14 Would you like to continue to live in Japan in the future?	2.61	2.67	-0.226	
Q15 Do you know much about Japan's culture, history, politics, society, etc.?	3.21	3.49	-1.810 +	
Q16 Do you feel ashamed at your lack of knowledge about Japanese issues?	1.57	1.68	-0.310	
Q17** Choose the things that make you proud of Japan (multiple answers). 1. Popular culture 2. Safety 3. Science 4. Economy 5. History 6. Politics 7. Manners 8. Tradition 9. Natural environment 10. Living environment 11. Food 12. Education 12. Education 13. Social system 14. Others (specify) 15. Nothing in particular	3.20	3.39	0.372	
Q18** Choose the things that make you ashamed of Japan (multiple answers). 1. Popular culture 2. Safety 3. Science 4. Economy 5. History 6. Politics 7. Manners 8. Tradition 9. Natural environment 10. Living environment 11. Food 12. Education 13. Social system 14. Others (specify) 15. Nothing in particular	1.76	2.01	0.361	
Q19 Do you think English should become the official language of Japan?	2.55	2.58	-0.216	
Q20 Do you think legal immigrants should have the same rights and duties as Japanese citizens?	1.96	1.84	-1.330	
Q21 Would you like to see more Japanese movies, anime, music on TV?	2.70	2.95	-1.770 +	
Q22 Do you think Japanese government should apologize officially to the former Japanese colonies?	2.46	2.79	-1.920 †	
Q23 Would you like to see Japan acting more confidently on the international stage?	1.89	1.61	-2.550 †	
Q24 Do you think Japan is currently a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nation?	2.89	2.86	-0.152	
Q25 Do you think foreigners are responsible for the increasing crime rate in Japan?	4.03	3.99	-0.285	
Q26 Do you think accepting more foreign workers would solve Japan's ageing problem or help sustaining the Japanese economy?	2.64	3.05	-2.660 ‡	

III. INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTION			
Q27* Choose one attribute that best represents your image of foreign countries. 1. Strange/unfamiliar 2. Interesting 3. Free 4. Tough 5. Different			2.000
Q28* Choose one attribute that best represents your image of a typical foreigner. 1. Assertive of own opinion 2. Cheerful/friendly 3. Rough 4. Expressive 5. Dangerous			0.408
Q29* A Japanese newscaster announces on TV that somewhere in Japan three foreigners were witnessed committing a certain incident. What region in the world are the foreigners likely to be from? 1. South America 2. Europe 3. Asia 4. Middle East 5. North America			3.050
Q30* A foreigner comes to visit your school for an international exchange program. What region in the world is the foreigner likely to be from? 1. South America 2. Europe 3. Asia 4. Middle East 5. North America			5.350
Q31 Would you be pleased to find out that your new neighbours were foreign?	2.11	1.89	- 1.440
Q32* Would you like to live abroad? If yes, choose the length of your intended stay. 1. Forever 2. 10 years + 3. 2-3 years 4. 2-3 months 5. Short trip			0.989
Q33* In your opinion, an internationally-minded person ... (choose one) 1. Can communicate in a foreign language 2. Has a foreign spouse 3. Does business with foreign countries 4. Travels extensively abroad 5. Has many foreign friends 6. Is familiar with international situation 7. Is familiar with foreign cultures and people 8. Lives abroad			6.130
Q34* In your opinion, what should Japan do in order to promote internationalization? (choose one from the answers below) 1. Put effort into international volunteer programs 2. Extend financial assistance to developing countries 3. Accept immigrants 4. Promote international cultural exchanges 5. Organize international events 6. Make English a common (official) language			11.680 †
Q35 Do you know much about the international situation?	3.39	3.56	- 1.040
Q36 What should one do to become an internationally-minded person? (choose one from the answers below) 1. Become fluent in English 2. Become more interested in the international situation 3. Make many foreign friends 4. Travel extensively abroad 5. Become interested in foreign countries, people and cultures			5.905
Q37* Which of the items below is representative of Japan's internationalization? (choose one) 1. Increased number of foreigners 2. Increased cultural imports 3. Increased flow of information about foreign countries 4. Increased opportunities for overseas travel 5. More foreign loan words			3.110
Q38 Do you think foreigners who settle in Japan should try to fit into the Japanese society and culture?	2.08	1.83	- 1.800 +
Q39 Do you feel ashamed at your lack of knowledge about international issues despite being a university student?	2.42	2.52	- 0.163

Note: Scores with † are significant at $p < .05$; scores with ‡ are significant at $p < .001$; scores with + represent significant tendency at $.05 < p < .10$

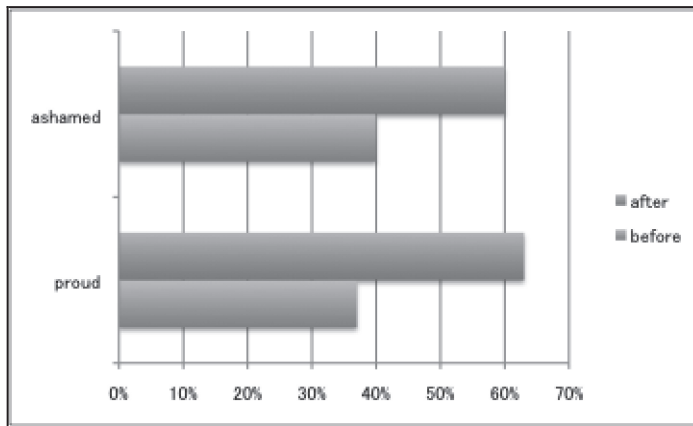


Figure 3. The percentage of students who were proud/ashamed to be Japanese

ence whose explanation may be lie in their contact with multi-cultural, multi-ethnic countries where immigration and foreign workers are serious issues. In addition, some of the responses in this section suggest that the students tended to see their country in a more positive light after their return from abroad. Thus, regarding questions 17 and 18, which asked the students to choose the things that made them proud or ashamed to be Japanese, Figure 3 shows that more students found reasons to be proud of their country after their return.

Before departure, only 37% of the students had reasons to be proud of their country; however, their number increased to 63% after return. Tradition and cuisine were among the often mentioned, while politics was considered among the most shameful aspects of Japan.

III. The international perception

The international perception section yielded one statistically significant result, which indicates a correlation between the responses obtained before and after the completion of the programs. As Figure 4 shows, more students thought that, in order to promote internationalization, Japan should increase international volunteer programs, cultural exchange and should make English an official language.

On the other hand, compared to their pre-departure responses, there appears to be less interest in immigration issues and international events as possible means of internationalization. This suggests that our students gained a better understanding of the importance of cultural exchanges and language for internationalization, but they also show a lower tolerance for the presence of foreign immigrants in Japan.

The responses obtained for other items reflected little change in their perception of other countries and foreign peoples. Our students' cultural stereotypes did not appear substantially changed; foreign countries continued to be considered "different" or "interesting" (Q27), and foreigners, "cheerful" and "friendly" (Q28). On the other hand, there were slight changes in their perception of "good foreigner" and "bad foreigner". This may be due to the fact that most of the students visited European countries. As can be seen in Figures 5 and 6, more students thought that the "good foreigner" who visits their school for international exchange is most likely a European person, whereas the profile of the "bad foreigner" would resemble that of a Middle-East-born person.

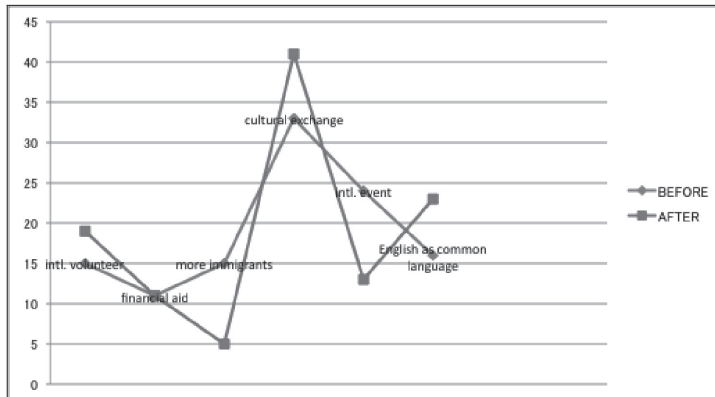


Figure 4: Q34. In your opinion, what should Japan do in order to promote internationalization?

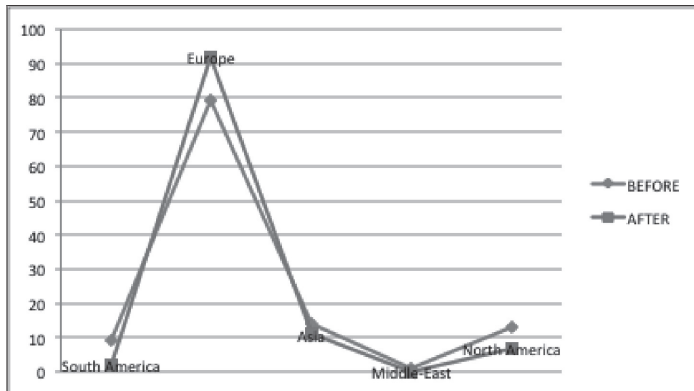


Figure 5. Q30 - Possible origins of "good" foreigners

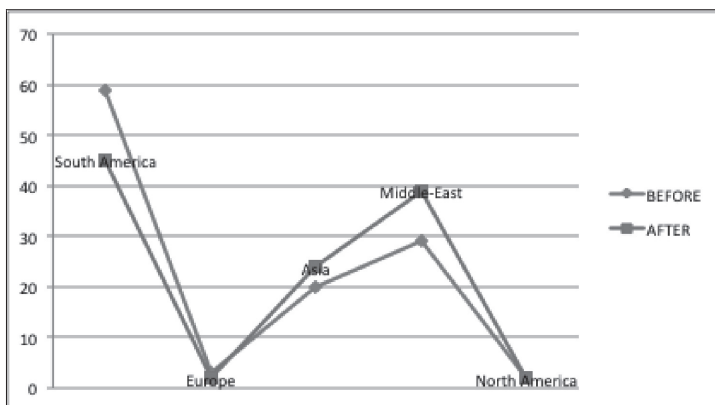


Figure 6. Q29 Possible origins of "bad" foreigners

Table 4. Q40. Which is, in your opinion, the most internationalized country and why do you think so?

United States	63%	Korea	< 2%
China	15%	Singapore	< 2%
United Kingdom	6%	Australia	< 2%
France	< 3%	Russia	< 1%
Canada	< 3%	India	< 1%
Germany	< 3%	Belgium	< 1%
Switzerland	< 2%	Japan	< 1%

Regarding Q40, as shown in Table 4 above, most of the students mentioned the United States of America, motivating their choice by the country's great racial, cultural and ethnic diversity. China ranked second, while less than 1% of the students selected Japan.

3.2. Discussion

Although the changes effected by overseas programs have been shown to be scarce, the more effective aspect of these programs has been to awaken the students to some of the issues that other countries are confronted with (immigration, internationalization/multiculturalism), as well as to the image of their own country as seen from the outside. Although the students' responses reflected a very positive opinion of Japan both pro- and post- programs, this positive trait seems to be more intensified after their return. Japan seems to appear to themselves in a more positive light after the overseas experience, possibly due to a feeling of isolation and loneliness on one hand, and due to the positive image the of country in the world, on the other. However, three things seem to be unaffected by the overseas experience: the students' awareness of their lack of knowledge of both domestic and international affairs, their view of themselves, and their cultural stereotypes. Regarding the perception of self, both in terms of individual self and collective self, the students' responses did not indicate a substantial change. As far as the cultural stereotypes are concerned, the students continue to associate 'good' foreigners with Europe, and 'bad' foreigners with South America or the Middle East. This rather simplistic association appears to be more intensified after the students' contact with Europeans and their socio-cultural issues, such as immigration and multi-culturalism. Regarding the presence of foreign workers in Japan, although the students do not appear familiar enough with the issue, there seems to be a slight shift towards neutrality from an initially positive attitude. On the other hand, as Figure 4 shows, although they appear favourable to internationalization through more international exchange activities and promotion of English language learning, less students considered the acceptance of more foreigners suitable for the purpose of internationalization.

CONCLUSION

The study found the effect of short-term overseas programs to be limited; however, the results indicated that such programs might offer the students opportunities for self-reflection, cross-cultural contact and understanding of international issues. The responses point towards an inward-looking image of Japanese students, but also indicate that the students began to reflect upon issues which they had had little opportunity to consider before, such as Japan's image, immigration, and foreign workers. The lack of change in how they perceived themselves and others may be put down to direct causes such as the brevity of programs or

their limited scope; it may also be the result of other influences, such as the values, prejudice and cultural stereotypes instilled during primary and secondary education. Unless integrated in a complex administrative and educational framework aimed at genuinely promoting the values of intercultural exchange, short-term overseas programs can only hope to stimulate some sporadic changes in the students' attitudes, but not to actually trigger them. A more detailed longitudinal study may allow us to draw more precise conclusions about the long-term benefits associated to overseas programs.

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