

ASIEN AKTUELL

The Internationalization of Japanese Universities: English-Mediated Courses as the Key to Success

Matthias Hennings

Summary

Efforts to attract more foreign students have been driving higher-education reform in Japan for decades. In 2008, the Japanese government announced its aim of reaching 300,000 international students by 2020 with the launch of its 300,000 International Students Plan. Under the scheme, the government has been providing funding for selected core universities in an initiative called the Global 30 Project. Many of the country's universities have consequently implemented degree programs held in English. This paper examines the growing number of international students in Japan and analyzes the impact that English-mediated courses have had on this increase. As the analysis shows, the growth in the number of international students at universities with a comprehensive range of such courses is significantly higher than at other universities, indicating that the use of English as a language of instruction may be a useful strategy for making Japanese universities more viable and internationally competitive.

Keywords: English courses, Global 30, higher education, international students, internationalization, Japanese universities

Introduction

In response to globalization and efforts to make societies more knowledge-based, Japan has been implementing measures under its 300,000 International Students Plan to increase the number of international students in its tertiary institutions. One of these measures, known as the Global 30 Project, is a government initiative designed to internationalize thirty core Japanese universities by promoting English-mediated courses to attract more international students. In addition to their existing short-term programs, universities designated by the government have also established English-language degree programs with the aim of attracting greater numbers of international students. This paper examines the developments since the introduction of the 300,000 International Students Plan and takes a closer look at the impact of English-mediated courses on the number of international students enrolling in educational programs in Japan. My analysis is based on data compiled by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), which records the number of international