

Comparative Studies of International and Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Programs in Japanese and Korean Higher Education

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This study will investigate how international and interdisciplinary programs are implemented in undergraduate education in Japanese and Korean universities. The author examines the data including educational visions, curriculums and the other indicators related to internationalization of all international and interdisciplinary programs in order to conceptualize the feature and issues. The study analyzes how global, regional, national and institutional factors influence on the implementation of the programs with comparative perspectives between different societies and institutions.

Abstract

As the recent worldwide re-emerging of liberal arts and science programs can be considered as a response to the demands of so-called 21st-century skills, Asian countries and universities also face the challenges to foster students to have a much broader sense of skills and global perspectives. Liberal arts education had been historically developed and recently revitalized in Western societies and their universities, but universities in Japan and South Korea also employ and innovate liberal arts education into their undergraduate programs under the needs of international and interdisciplinary education in a global age. This trend is extremely important to explore because concepts and actual practice of liberal arts education may vary in the context of different societies and institutional environment. Therefore, the objective of this research is to examine how international and interdisciplinary undergraduate programs are conceptualized and implemented in two different national contexts: Japan and Korea. As looking at the higher education under the influence of global, regional and national forces and using the concept of elite-mass stratification and pragmatic-vocational vis-a-vis liberal education discussion as analytical frameworks, this paper particularly focuses on educational visions and curriculums as well as the other indicators related to internationalization of higher education. As a

methodology, this study compiles the data of all international and interdisciplinary undergraduate programs in Japan and Korea and categorizes them according to its characteristics and features. After building conceptual models of international and interdisciplinary education, case studies in several universities in each country and qualitative analysis with comparative perspectives will be implemented. The study will discuss that different interpretation and practice of international-ness and interdisciplinary-ness in each institution and nationalistic education as a nation's soft power projection can be seen in the elite to mass universities in both countries.