John Mock, Hiroaki Kawamura, and Naeko Naganuma, eds., *The Impact of Internationalization on Japanese Higher Education: Is Japanese Education Really Changing?*

Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Sennse Publishers, 2016. 268 pages. £37.19 (eBook). ISBN 978-94-6300-168-7(hardcover), 978-9463001670 (paperback), 978-94-6300-169-4(eBook).

On the first page of the introduction to this volume of socio-anthropological essays, John Mock addresses the question of whether Japanese education is truly changing: "The short and oversimplified answer would probably be something like a qualified, yes, Japanese education is changing very slowly, somewhat erratically, and not necessarily at all in the directions that might be optimal."

The essays that follow look at this issue from multiple perspectives, each providing its own qualified "yes" to the question. Authored by researchers with long and deep experiences in Japan, the essays are divided into five categories of investigation: 1) intercultural skills and the challenges involved in their acquisition, 2) administrative and political influences affecting educational outcomes, 3) perspectives gained from experience on the lower rungs of the academic hierarchy, 4) a contextual investigation into the way Japanese internationalization translates into society at large, reinforcing boundaries of difference, and 5) an overview that suggests that Japan cannot afford to ignore the increasing role that tertiary education offers for participation in the globalized world.

One strength of this collaborative effort is that the contributors, with their varied experiences, are able to provide a broad overview of the country's educational reform efforts over the decades. These perspectives are invaluable. The collective analyses bring a richness, or to use Clifford Geertz's term, a sort of "thick description" to the difficult concept of *kokusaika* (internationalization), and its even more problematic measurement. In the intercultural section, the authors describe the need for workable programs that employ assessment and feedback to guide a student's passage toward the development of greater cultural empathy. Although the IDI (Intercultural Development Index) may not encompass the full measure of successful skill acquisition, the addition of qualitative assessments makes clear that the most effective programs are experiential, as the essays by Occhi, Naganuma, and Kawamura all demonstrate.

Eades and Cooper explain in some detail that, despite pressure on the premiere national universities to produce internationally recognized research results, those universities are often reluctant to encourage foreign collaboration and to increase the number of foreign students and instructors, which are steps that might boost their international standing. Instead, the most successful efforts in this regard are to be found at private universities such as Akita International University, Waseda University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, all of which have set up institutes that have proved capable of attracting international talent.

In addition to bringing foreign influence into the system, there is also the question of sending students out to gain knowledge and experience from the wider world. In this area, Japan has been particularly lax in preparing students. As Fukuzawa suggests, the typical student is barred from interest in studying or travelling abroad not only by language ability but by "an inadequate grasp of the realities of the neoliberal, global economy."

As Japan's economy declined from its peak in the 1980s, so gradually did the Japanese appetite for engagement with the outside world. Aspinall brings much needed clarity to the complex dynamics behind these twin declines by using a paradigm created by German sociologist Ulrich Beck in his description of a "Risk Society." The framework goes far in explaining Japan's fear of change and instability. Just as Japan's postwar industrial economy was contracting, the destabilizing effects produced in the young a contraction of interest in engaging with the world beyond Japan's physical and cultural boundaries, and this precisely at a time when that engagement was essential to stemming Japan's decline. As with other periods in Japan's history of modernization, an outside catalyst was necessary to highlight the danger. This time, it was the OECD's review of Japanese tertiary education that stimulated reforms.

How reform efforts are established and coordinated through the Ministry of Education, MEXT, is key to Japan's internationalization. In fact, most of the contributors to this volume touch on the way MEXT has mobilized the national university system to better compete internationally by creating Centers of Excellence (COE) at the best of its flagship schools. Incentives offered by MEXT were believed to be sufficient to inspire deep-seated change throughout the system, but the evidence provided in these essays suggests that MEXT's efforts have often been more aspirational than effective. Watanabe gives us a comparative account of international student life in Japan and abroad. Gonzolez Basurto shows us what it is like being a graduate student in Japan, Hardy details the experience of working on a team writing an English textbook, and Hansen conveys the worries of career instability among junior faculty members. The one takeaway from these varied accounts is that an overly international focus, at least in Japan, is often perceived in negative terms. It can appear to be a threat to a supposed unique and traditional order best suited to the internationally incompatible nature of Japanese society. This is entirely contrary to the OECD Bologna Process, which established that the goal of international exchange is the creation of global citizens. This was not necessarily meant to be an attack on traditional national identity, since as Occhi points out study abroad in many OECD countries is commonly seen as an experience that can actually strengthen national identity. Significantly this is not generally the view the Japanese have of international experience. Given the seemingly adamantine nature of Japanese identity, Poole's suggested adoption of a more flexible identity, in the mode of Pablo Freire's "cultural literacy" model, sounds highly impracticable, though Japan in its modern history has made even larger psychic jumps when the circumstances were dire enough. The critical factor is perhaps less a matter of methodology and more a matter of recognizing the danger of failing to act in the face of an imminent and unequivocal threat.

The essays here detail concretely the experience of living on the inside, or perhaps more accurately, of living on the periphery. Countries that are truly international do not employ fuzzy concepts like *kokusaika*. Such terms have a distancing effect. They take the idea and then confine it to a narrow space in the cultural conversation. It becomes a guest standing in the g*enkan* (entrance hall), not quite in the house but not outside it either. The effect is to neutralize it at the periphery. But this marginalization of the concept, and its reification, is increasingly at odds with a growing chorus of voices, among them the writers of these essays, calling for a more porous boundary between outside and in. Academic diversity aside, these voices warn of a sink or swim scenario in which, given the country's current demographic imbalance and the

demands of a global economy, Japan either becomes more accessible to the world, and the world to it, or it slips into cultural and economic irrelevance. These essays suggest Japan still has a fighting chance to swim for it.

Michelle Henault Morrone
Nagoya University of Arts and Science