

## **A Study on the International Education in Leysin, Switzerland**

### **A summary in English**

It has been observed since 2005 that less and less high school and university students in Japan express their wishes to study abroad. A sizable number of research papers have discussed why Japanese students have become less mobile in terms of taking education opportunities other than in their home country. In identifying the reason behind this phenomenon, some refer to the so-called 'lost two decades,' a severe, long-term downturn in the Japanese economy. Others refer to the challenges faced by the returnees to Japan within the Japanese educational system as there is very limited college entrance preparation for those high school students who seek to enter Japanese universities. Additional hurdles are faced by those who seek to gain employment within Japanese companies, because they have missed the window for the annual recruitment of new company employees for university graduates. However, one can immediately disagree with these advocates on causation because the Japanese society had obviously presented higher challenges to those students who engaged in educational opportunities in other countries during the 1980's. In many cases, both high school and college students were forced to remain in the same grade in Japan in spite of the total credits they had obtained at their foreign university. Therefore, "study abroad" meant repetition of an academic year upon returning to schools in Japan in those days.

One persuasive analysis of the causation would be that students are quite happy staying and studying in Japan. There are no language barriers and a lighter academic burden at Japanese university. There is no worry about personal safety, and there are no restrictions on taking part-time jobs to supplement their tuition fees. In addition, if they wish to study at Japanese all-English university programs, they can do so in Japan, and so on. They are certainly happy to enjoy their campus life with their friends. When Japanese students tend to stay within the confines of a Japanese educational system, their insular mentality will become an alarming trend for the future of a country like Japan. Japan has limited natural resources and needs to depend upon developed and educated human resources to maintain domestic and international development both economically and socially. Thus, the Japanese government has initiated active programs by which students will be encouraged to take education opportunities outside Japan in order to develop their foreign language skills and international understanding. Private and Public Initiatives have been introduced during the academic year 2014/2015 to help students study abroad so that Japan could develop future global human resources.

The author agrees that to encourage students to take education opportunities outside Japan is one thing. But, at the same time he contends that high schools and colleges in Japan need to change their 1980s' model of international understanding that has focused mainly on "passive learning" of foreign cultures. Schools and colleges need to provide more authentic international education within their academic programs that aims to develop internationally-minded and responsible members of our human societies. What is an authentic international education? The purpose of this paper is to analyze the international education of the IB program at the Leysin American School in Switzerland (LAS), and tries to understand the core meaning of international education offered by LAS. In this paper, Kumon Leysin Academy of Switzerland and the other educational institutions in Leysin are also referred to in the context of the development of the town and the international education.

In the beginning, the author introduces the history of the town and its development, and describes in detail the relationship between the internationality of the town and the international education promoted by LAS. An international culture fostered in the town over the 100 years since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century played an important role in making successful International Ranger Camps. The International Ranger Camps as the stepping-stone, LAS was founded in 1960. Since that time the internationality of the town has been further promoted, especially after LAS employed a diversification policy in recruiting students in the early 1980s. The author introduces the efforts of LAS by which the school has successfully

developed quality practices both in education and management. The international education at LAS is converged to the mission of the IB program. The author focuses on the three core areas (TOK, EE, and CAS) of the program offered at the school. Finally, the author maintains that the goals of international education symbolized by the mission of the IB program supports the efforts of Japanese schools and colleges to create more realistic ideas of what authentic international education means. The author concludes that the present symptomatic treatment epitomized by the government initiatives towards developing global human resources in Japan is the reinstallation of the 1980s' model of international understanding.

Hisashi Yoshida, Professor of Education, CAS,  
Obirin University, Tokyo, Japan  
<http://www.obirin.ac.jp/>  
e-mail: hisashiy@obirin.ac.jp

Leysin, Switzerland  
February 10, 2015

.....  
Notes:

- 1 This paper is to be published in the last week of March, 2015 in *Obirin University Teacher Education Centre, Annals, 9, 2014* (the academic year 2014 ends at the end of March in 2015 in Japan),
- 2 It is going to be sent to colleges and universities with the teacher education program in the Tokyo metropolitan area,
- 3 A copy will also be sent to high schools that are members of the High School/University Collaborative Education Forum, and
- 4 The author is scheduled to give a presentation on the international education in Switzerland on March 10, 2015 at the High School/University Collaborative Education Forum hosted by the Obirin University in Tokyo, Japan.