

Doctoral Thesis in 2020 (Abstract)

Proposals for Exchange between Universities in Japan and Thailand

Graduate School of International Studies  
International Humanities and Social Sciences  
J. F. Oberlin University  
Hironaka Tomita

## Abstract

It is said that the people-to-people exchange between Japan and Thailand began in the 20s and 30s of the Meiji era, when eight students from Thailand came to Japan in 1903. Before the beginning of the Pacific War, Thai students were continuously dispatched to Japan. Even since the closure of the Pacific War, many Thai students have been sent to Japan under various policies such as the Japanese Government Scholarships System, the 100,000 International Students Plan and the 300,000 International Students Plan. Japanese students meanwhile conduct various exchange activities at Thai universities which they are dispatched to on exchange programs. Based on the long history of student exchange between the two countries, cooperation between educational institutions in both countries has been deepening. The number of agreements between Japanese and Thai universities in 2017 was as many as 1,983 under which students were dispatched from their home universities and accepted by host universities. Although many inter-university exchange activities are being conducted in both Japan and Thailand, it is often pointed out that most of the issues related to studying in Japan are discussed from Japanese perspectives as a host country, not from the Thai viewpoint. Under such circumstances, this research is conducted in order to understand the current situation and problems of the exchange between Japanese and Thai universities by reviewing international student policies and document and survey research on Japanese-Thailand people-to-people exchange, by administering an interview with Thai universities, and by conducting a questionnaire survey with Thai students. Through this study, it is the goal to make proposals on how to create exchange and collaboration between universities in Japan and Thailand in the future while understanding the thoughts of the Thai point of view on people-to-people exchange. It is hoped that the results of this research will promote mutual understanding between Japanese and Thai universities and broaden the range of inter-university exchange.

In this study, the current situation of international student policies and inter-university cooperation in both countries were recognized through comprehensive research on past situations as well as the overview and the future direction of people-to-people exchange between Japan and Thailand. Regarding inter-university exchange with Japan, the issues that Thai universities are facing are a shortage of human resources who are responsible for international exchange, concerns about communication with Japanese people, and ongoing needs for scholarships and research fund assistance. In addition, examining the tendency of Japanese students sent overseas and the results of the questionnaire survey conducted in this study, the exchange style that suits the needs of Japanese and Thai students the most is different: for Japanese universities, it makes sense to accept Thai students on medium to long term programs so that the credit they earn on the program can be transferred, and for Thai

universities, it is best to accept Japanese students on short term programs such as language courses or internship programs.

Based on the issues revealed in this study, three measures are proposed for Japanese universities to develop exchange relationships with Thai universities: 1) to actively invite Thai students who wish to study in the doctoral degree program in Japan, 2) to reach out to local universities in Thailand to establish exchange programs, and 3) to expand medium and long term exchange programs. In addition, the proposals for Thai universities are 1) to expand short-term programs, and 2) to update and organize the number of agreements with Japanese universities. Finally, as measures to be taken by Japanese and Thai universities in cooperation, it is suggested that institutions look to 1) expand staff exchange opportunities, 2) strengthen public relations activities regarding inter-university exchanges, and 3) acquire external funding to support research funds and scholarships.

Currently, many universities in Japan and Thailand place great importance on inter-university exchanges between the two countries. Since the ideas and requests of students who wish to study abroad are diversifying, universities in both countries are expected to be ready to accept exchange students by offering various programs. It is also necessary to develop individuals who can plan, operate, and manage such programs. Promoting comprehensive exchange at all levels, including faculty joint research, staff exchanges, and student exchanges, will lead to a wider range of activities.

Even though the pandemic of COVID-19 has yet to end, Japanese universities now have to work to strengthen their system further to host international students as well as to enhance outbound programs for Japanese students to be conducted after 2020. It is expected that both countries will maintain a well-balanced exchange, not a one-way exchange such as only accepting Thai students or only dispatching Japanese students. It is also important to promote information sharing between Japanese and Thai universities so that universities in both countries can share their wisdom and build an interdependent relationship. Many exchange activities have already been carried out in both Japan and Thailand, but it is anticipated that various forms of inter-university exchange will be developed without being bound by the conventional concept. The results of this research will ideally lead to the expansion of the people-to-people exchange in all generations of both countries.