

International Student Policies in Australia and Japan: Opportunities and Challenges for International Students

日豪における留学生受入政策： 留学生への機会とチャレンジ

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Abstract

This study compares the policies for international students (IS) in Australia and Japan to highlight their similarities and differences, which shape the opportunities and challenges for these students. While both countries offer chances for IS to join their education systems and labor markets, differences exist. Australia frequently changes its policies, resulting in unstable situations for many IS. In contrast, Japan offers more stable policies, allowing greater opportunities for students to enter and settle in the country. Nevertheless, Japan still struggles to attract and retain global talent.

Key words : International students (IS) policies, opportunities, challenges, Australia, Japan

概 要

本研究では、オーストラリアと日本の留学生（IS）政策を比較し、その共通点と相違点を明らかにする。両国とも留学生が教育システムや労働市場に参加する機会を提供しているが、相違点も存在する。オーストラリアは頻繁に政策を変更するため、IS を不安な状況においている。一方、日本はより安定した政策を設けており、IS への入国や定住の機会を提供しているが、依然としてグローバル人材の獲得と維持に課題が残されている。

キーワード：留学生（IS）政策、機会、チャレンジ、オーストラリア、日本

1. Introduction

International student mobility has become a vital part of the global education system, with many countries competing to attract talented students from around the world. These students not only enrich academic environments but also contribute to economic growth and cultural diversity. Australia is a prime example, having worked hard to attract international students (IS)¹⁾ as a key resource for national development and economic success (Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018). Similarly, Japan is a strong competitor in this area. The Japanese

government has implemented strategies to welcome IS and gradually increased pathways for them to ease transition to permanent residency (Liu-Farrer, 2020).

For host countries like Australia and Japan, IS play a crucial role in various ways: they promote internationalization of education and cultural diversity, enhance the country's global influence (soft power), or provide a possible source of high-skilled labor upon graduation, or as a source of temporary labor during their studies (see for example, Liu-Farrer, 2020; Hawthorne, 2008). Policies related to IS, such as immigration control, visa requirements, governing access to labor market and permanent settlement, or those discussing the position of IS in the national education system and society in general, shape the opportunities and challenges that IS face in receiving countries (Findlay, King, and Stam, 2016).

Australia and Japan represent some of the most popular destinations for IS in the Asia Pacific region (UNESCO Institute of Statistics). Both countries have also adjusted various policies to attract more IS (Geddie, 2015; Ziguras & Law, 2006; in Brotherhood, 2023a). However, changes in social and political conditions have led to shifts in policies for IS in both countries. International education and immigration policies became closely linked, with governments increasingly controlling what IS do after graduation. This has changed the role and purpose of IS in policy and practice (Robertson, 2013, in Brotherhood, 2023b; Sabzalieva et al., 2022). The question is whether the changes in both countries were following a similar pathway in terms what the expected role of the IS in these societies is and the opportunities they allow for IS.

Both, Australia and Japan, are known for having different positions towards migration in general. While Australia has a more open immigration policy, Japan has been known for reluctance to accept more immigrants although, under the pressure of ageing society and labor shortages, it has been increasingly opening up to different forms of migration as well. Although previous studies have looked at IS related policies in either Australia (e.g., Sabzalieva et al., 2022; Hong et al., 2023; Fenton-Smith & Gurney, 2024; Sato, 2015) or Japan (e.g., Sato, 2021; Isashiki, 2013; Okada, 2011), few have compared the two countries. This study, therefore, uses a comparative case study approach to analyze and compare IS policies in Australia and Japan to identify their similarities and differences. By understanding these policies, the study provides a more comprehensive picture of opportunities and challenges that students face in each receiving country.

The remainder of this paper is presented as follows. The next section reviews the global trends and drivers of IS mobility in both countries. The following section explains the research methodology and research results and conclusion are presented in the final section. Finally, the research implications are discussed.

2. International Student Mobility (ISM): Trends and Drivers in Australia and Japan

Australia is one of the most popular destinations for IS among English-speaking countries (Zhai, Gao, and Wang, 2019). Its globally recognized educational qualifications attract many students, with 90% of Australian universities ranked globally (QS World University Rankings, in Australian Government). In 2019, Australia hosted 509,160 IS, making it the largest destination for internationally mobile students, according to UNESCO. This represented 28.37% of the country's total tertiary enrollment.

The number of IS visas in Australia has grown significantly, from about 29,000 in 1990 to over 350,000 in 2013 (Wright & Clibborn, 2017). By 2020, the number of IS reached nearly 690,000 - double the figure from 2013 - before the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions. Despite challenges during the pandemic, the numbers rebounded, with over 640,000 IS recorded in 2022-2023. By 2024, the total IS population grew to

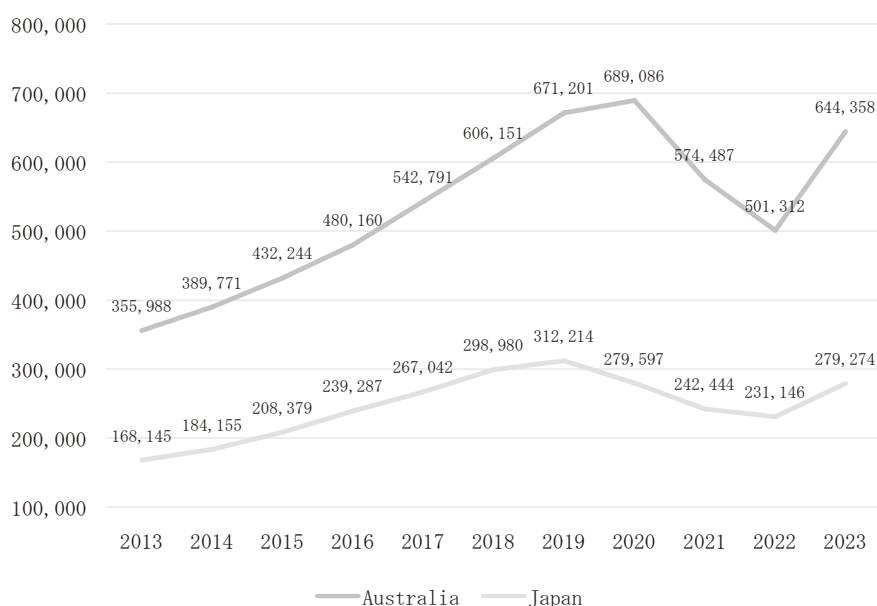


Figure 1 Total international students number in Australia and Japan (annual data 2013-2023)

Source. Created by the author from data derived from (1) International Students|Monthly Summary - Categorical Data (Australian Government|Department of Education database); and (2) Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO database)

over 790,000, with the top source countries being China (21.7%), India (16.6%), Nepal (7.8%), The Philippines (4.7%), and Vietnam (4.57%) (Australian Government database). These figures confirm Australia's strong appeal as a global education destination.

In Japan, IS numbers have grown rapidly, particularly among students from Asia, making it a promising destination in recent years. Japan ranks eighth globally as a host country for IS, following Australia, the UK, Germany, Russia, Canada, France, and the UAE (UNESCO data). It is the first Asian nation to educate many IS with globally recognized qualifications.

According to the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), student visas in Japan tripled from about 168,000 in 2013 to over 312,000 in 2019. Like in Australia, China is the top source country for Japan, accounting for 40% of IS by 2022, followed by Nepal (13.6%), Vietnam (13%), Korea (5.4%), and Myanmar (2.8%) (JASSO report, 2023). The pandemic caused a decline in student numbers between 2020 and 2022, but Japan saw a recovery in 2023, with nearly 280,000 IS. This highlights Japan's growing popularity as an education destination for students worldwide.

Many factors drive thousands of IS to choose Australia and Japan as study destinations. These factors are influenced by individual decisions and the "push-pull" dynamics between the source and host countries. Push factors from the home country include economic conditions, limited educational opportunities, family expectations, and demographic challenges. Pull factors from the host country include the reputation of universities, the variety and quality of programs, skilled faculty, strong social networks, and opportunities for career and permanent residency (see, for example, Azmat et al., 2013; Sato, 2021; Leonov, 2024). These elements particularly attract students who are seeking financial independence, a secure lifestyle, and enhanced social status.

However, the rise in IS numbers in Australia and Japan is not just based on individual preferences.

Host country policies also play a significant role in shaping the popularity of these destinations (Findlay, King, and Stam, 2016). While the expansion of post-secondary education in traditional source countries affects this trend, the policies of receiving countries – such as visa availability and opportunities for permanent residency (PR) – play a crucial role in determining student mobility (see, for example, Kharel, 2022).

In Australia, concerns about social issues led to policy changes that slowed the growth of IS. These included higher tuition fees, stricter immigration rules, and tougher language and entry requirements, discouraging some students (Chandler, 1992, in Shinn, Welch & Bagnall, 1999). Similarly, Japan’s restrictions, such as visa regulations and language barriers, impact the flow of IS and influence their decision-making (Sato, 2016, in Sato, 2021).

To get straight to the point, the role of governments as gatekeepers greatly affects IS mobility in both countries. Particularly, policy changes shape the experiences of IS and determine the opportunities and challenges they face. While there is limited comparative policy research on Australia and Japan, and updated policy analysis remains sparse, this paper aims to fill this gap by comparing IS policies in Australia and Japan. The objective is to highlight the similarities and differences between the two countries, offering insights into the opportunities and challenges students face in each.

By analyzing policy changes in these two host nations, such comparative research will present us with a more comprehensive picture of the advantages and disadvantages of each country’s international student policies and provide insights into how different policies might influence students’ mobility decisions.

3. Comparative Case Study

This research utilized the comparative case study method, focusing on Australia and Japan as the two

Table 1. Policy shifts of Australia and Japan that shape international students positions 1950s-2024

Australia				Japan		
Period	Variables	Rationales	Student positions	Variables	Rationales	Student positions
1950s	Nation	Soft power	Connectors	Nation	Soft power	Connectors
1960s		Sustainability concerns				
1970s						
1980s		Shifted from aid to trade				
1990s	Nation, labor market	Driven by economic needs	Skilled migrants	Labor market, nation	Labor shortage concerns	(Un)skilled workers
2000s	Labor market	Education-migration nexus Point-based system	PR hunters, Troublemakers		Education-migration nexus	
2010s	Social issue	Delink education-migration nexus			Point-based system	
2020-2024	Nation, labor market, social issue	Focus on point-based system			Delink the work fields from studied majors	

Source. Created by the author from data derived from academic works, government and policy organizations’ websites and reports related to inbound IS mobility policies.

Table 2. Comparing public policies towards international students in Australia and Japan.

Policy area	Australia	Japan
Immigration		
•Admissions requirements	Must demonstrate sufficient funds for study in Australia. Onshore student visa applicants were allowed. 2009: Increased English language requirements. 2024: National Planning Level (NPL) student cap will apply to international education and training sector from 2025. 1. New financial capacity requirement: up from AUD 24,505 to AUD 29,710 for primary applicant. 2. New genuine student requirement. 3. New English language requirement: minimum IELTS test score has increased from 5.5 to 6.0. 4. Reduce length of stay. 5. Limit the age: reduced from 50s to 35s. 6. Onshore student visa applicant is restricted.	2000/1: The only documentation required would comprise (1) the application form for the certificate; (2) 2 photographs; and (3) a statement demonstrating financial viability. 2003/11: Prospective students from countries which sent out a large proportion of 'overstayers' (specifically, China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Mongolia) were required to provide the Immigration Bureau (1) a detailed account of personal financial resources; (2) proof of Japanese language ability and certificate of graduation; and (3) personal and education records. 2023: Schools that are recognized as 'appropriate schools' are eligible to receive preferential treatment in the examination of student visa status (required documents from appropriate school: copy of passport and proof of Japanese language ability).
Labor market		
•Working during study allowances	2008: Automatic right to work 20h/week during term time and full time during scheduled course breaks granted. 2024: Work up to 48h for a fortnight when the course of study or training is in session (student studying a master by research or doctoral degree, and their families, have no limit)	1983 (Nakasone Plan): Foreign students first became eligible for automatic work permits (maximum 20h/week, 4h/day during the semester and 8h/day during long vacations). 1998/9: Permission to work part-time was loosened (was amended to a more flexible 28h/week). Moreover, 'work permit' could now be submitted by the student's institution.
•Post-study work allowances	1990s: 'Education-Migration nexus' policy began. 2004-2005: Policy opened further to provide higher numbers of points for in-demand trade occupations through the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) 2010-2018: IS no longer required to have a qualification in the list of national shortage occupations. 2013: Automatic right to work for 18 months to 4 years after graduation with Temporary Graduate Visa. 2023/7: The Australian Government increased the duration of post study work rights of international students to strengthen the pipeline of skilled labor (additional 2 years on their Temporary Graduate visa). From mid-2024: The 2-years extension of post-study work rights will no longer be available.	2004: College or pre-college students were approved to change from student residence status to employment-based residence status (i.e., 'Specialist in Humanities/International Services', 'Engineer'). 2014 (ended in 2019): Program to train foreign Nationals in Japanese cuisine (maximum 5 years). 2017: 'Care work' visa (maximum 5 years, renewable, allowed to bring family to Japan). 2019: Specified skilled worker (14 Government-specified industry fields; maximum 5 years). 2024: allow graduates to work in fields that are not necessarily related to the areas they majored in.
•Permanent immigration routes	2001: Point-based immigration system introduced. Students allowed to apply for PR onshore. 2010: Delink student visas from permanent migration (detaching migration points from occupations, raising the bar for English language competency).	2012: Point-based system for highly skilled professionals (<i>Kodojinzai</i>) (maximum 5 years; renewable. Transferable to unlimited period of stay).

Source. Created by the author from data derived from academic works, government and policy organizations' websites and reports related to inbound IS mobility policies.

primary cases. It examined the similarities and differences in policies regarding international students in each country, highlighting the opportunities and challenges that these students encounter. To achieve this objective, I conducted a literature review and document analysis encompassing academic works, government and policy organizations' websites and reports related to inbound IS mobility policies.

This study primarily applied an 'atheoretical' type of comparative case study method (i.e., "using cases for description") as outlined by Lijphart (1971) this method is principally interested in the case itself and typically attempts to gain a holistic picture of the event or phenomenon. This leads to a more general understanding of the case, which is meant to be an end in and of itself (Kaarbo & Beasley, 2002). Thus, in this study, such method mainly focuses on the analysis of cases (Australia and Japan) to understand the holistic picture of IS policy and their comparison itself.

Additionally, to analyze the changes in the policies that affect IS over time the study employs the 'process tracing'²⁾ method within the case analysis (Bennett, 2004). Specifically, I used the literature to identify key events and activities that could have had a direct or indirect impact on policy towards IS, thus leading to similar or different outcomes of opportunities and challenges for students.

The result of the analysis applies Mill's (Bennett, 2004:30-32) method of agreement and difference, which focuses on identifying potential causal antecedent conditions that share the same or distinct outcomes (Bennett, 2004:30). Based on comparative analysis, (1) national rationales; (2) labor market needs; and (3) social issues were identified as key causal antecedent conditions that impact the policies and thus share the same or distinct outcomes of IS positions in each host nation. Tracing policy development that shaped IS positions is presented in Table 1. Evidence for the variables, reflecting policy shifts in Australia and Japan, was collected and summarized in Table 2.

4. Similarities: Providing opportunities for international students to enter its education system and access its labor market

It is shown that while Australia's policies prioritize economic gains (Sato, 2018), often at the expense of long-term settlement opportunities for IS, Japan focuses on integrating IS into its labor workforce to address demographic challenges. Despite these different pathways, both countries are increasingly welcoming IS to enter the country for global connectivity and economic contributions.

4.1 Australia: welcoming international students while focusing on 'trade' industry

Australia has been known as an immigration country and has kept an open immigration policy for IS. This policy has two main goals: (1) to boost the country's reputation and bring economic benefits from the education export industry, and (2) to fill labor shortages caused by a shrinking population.

Enhancing reputation and economic growth

Since the 1950s, Australia has viewed IS as a way to boost its global image and improve international relations (Byrne, 2016). Initially, the government focused on providing scholarships to talented students, especially from South and Southeast Asia, encouraging them to return home after their studies. Between 1951 and the early 1980s, over 20,000 Asian students benefited from these programs, helping Australia enhance its 'soft power' and build stronger ties with the Asian region.

In the 1960s, the focus shifted towards using IS as 'cash cows' to support the domestic economy (Robertson, 2011; Sato, 2015). Policies evolved to treat IS as contributors to the 'trade' industry, positioning them as significant revenue sources for universities and the broader economy (Gallagher, 2011; in Sabzalieva et al., 2022).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2015), by 2013, international education had become Australia's largest service export (Zhang, Worthington, & Hu, 2016). In 2022–2023, revenue from IS reached AU\$15.6 billion, accounting for over 75% of all service exports (ABS, 2024). Today, IS provides 21% of university revenue (Adam et al., 2012; in Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018), making them a cornerstone of Australia's economic strategy. This shift from aid to trade (Robertson, 2011; in Sabzalieva, et al., 2022) highlights how Australia has increasingly opened its doors to IS, welcoming both offshore and onshore applicants.

Addressing labor shortages

Although Australia's primary focus has been on the economy, the government also sees IS as a potential solution to labor shortages, a key factor in their willingness to accept more IS. Since 2008, IS have been allowed to work part-time during their studies (initially 20 hours per week, now 48 hours per fortnight as of 2024) and full-time during breaks. Particularly, students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees, and their families face no work restrictions, reflecting the government's broader goal of integrating IS and their families into the workforce.

Australia has also developed a pathway for IS to stay and work in the country after completing their studies. Since 1998, international graduates have been allowed to change their visa status to become 'skilled migrants.' In the early 2000s, the government introduced a points-based immigration system to make this process more structured and equitable (The Migration Observatory, 2019). This system awards points based on the applicant's skills, level of education, and proficiency in English. The total points earned determine whether the applicant is eligible to apply for permanent residency (PR) in Australia. By implementing these policies, the government encourages IS not only to study in Australia but also to consider settling there permanently if they meet the necessary requirements (see, for example, Jackling, 2007).

4. 2 Japan: welcoming international students while focusing on labor market

Japan, in contrast to Australia, does not see itself as an immigration country and tends to avoid terms like "migration" or "migrants" (Liu-Farrer, 2024). However, similar to Australia, Japan is now relaxing its policies to attract and retain many IS to address the labor shortage. This shift also provides students with opportunities for international mobility.

Attracting international students

Japan has made it easier for IS to enter the country through three main plans: (1) the 100,000 International Student Receiving Plan (1983-2003); (2) the 300,000 International Student Receiving Plan (2008-2020); and (3) the 400,000 International Student Receiving Plan (2023-2033).

To support these initiatives, Japan has made it easier for students to obtain a visa. In the early 2000s, students needed only three documents to apply: (1) an application form for the certificate, (2) a personal photograph, and (3) a statement showing they could support themselves financially. Starting in 2023, schools recognized as "appropriate schools" will get priority when evaluating student visa applications. The only documents applicants need to provide are a copy of their passport and proof of Japanese language proficiency (see Table 2). These changes suggest that while Japan does not view itself as an immigration country, it is becoming more open to IS entering the country for education.

Retaining graduates for the workforce

Japan also has created pathways for international graduates to remain and contribute to their labor market. Since the late 1990s, due to social, economic and political changes, particularly the shrinking population, leading to labor shortage issues, the country has now shifted to concern more about their human resources and see IS as a potential source for their labor market (Sato, 2018). This became true in the 2000s when

the labor shortage worsened, and Japan is increasingly becoming one of the oldest population countries in the world. The country started to rush to attract more IS and train them to become its market's 'unskilled workers', who can quickly fill the gap in part-time positions (Mazumi, 2021), by allowing them to work part-time up to 28 hours per week during school time and full time (40 hours/week) during long vacations.

Since 2004, the status of IS in Japan has been elevated with the government's introduction of the 'education-migration nexus.' This policy links international education to migration policies, allowing graduates to transition from student status to that of 'skilled workers' and promising them a more stable future in the country. Additionally, starting in the 2010s, Japan implemented a 'points-based system' strategy that enables international graduates to become 'highly skilled workers' and attain permanent residency status.

This approach became even more apparent when, in February 2024, the government enacted a policy permitting graduates to pursue employment in fields unrelated to their majors, thereby expanding their job opportunities. This flexibility underscores Japan's dedication to integrating IS into its labor market and effectively addressing both short-term and long-term workforce needs.

5. Differences: Facing different challenges

Australia and Japan are working to attract and retain IS, but they face distinct challenges. Australia aims to appeal to IS globally but struggles with helping these students integrate into society and the job market. This difficulty impacts students' ability to settle in Australia after graduation. In contrast, Japan finds it challenging to compete with English-speaking countries, like Australia, in attracting and retaining global talent. This is mainly due to the requirement for Japanese language skills and the emphasis on cultural adaptability, which may create uncertainty for IS considering Japan for their studies and future careers.

5.1 Australia – unstable policy: facing challenges in balancing the economic benefits of international students with their societal and labor market integration

As mentioned earlier, Australia has prioritized the economic benefits of its international education sector, welcoming large numbers of IS every year. However, this focus on economic gains has led to significant challenges in integrating these students into local communities and the labor market.

Societal integration challenges

Australia has encountered challenges in successfully integrating IS into local communities. For instance, a significant rise in attacks on Indian students and the collapse of substandard private colleges in 2009 underscored serious concerns regarding student safety and support (Hawthorne, 2014). These social issues have contributed to a perception of IS as part of a problematic demographic. In response, the government has implemented stricter entry requirements, shifting its focus on attracting high-quality candidates, enhancing English proficiency, and promoting cultural adaptation.

Moreover, the current cost-of-living crisis and housing shortage have led the government to introduce a cap on student visas starting in 2025, along with a doubling of the application fee (see Table 2; Morris, et al., 2023). These measures make it more difficult for students from low-income backgrounds to access education in Australia (Wilson et al., 2023).

Labor market integration challenges

Australia has struggled to integrate international graduates into its local labor market. Since the 2010s, it has become clear that IS have not achieved the expected job outcomes. One main reason is that many

lack strong English language skills. According to Sato (2015:108), many former international students do not significantly help with the shortage of technical workers in the country because they need the required English skills, with an IELTS score of at least 6, to find professional jobs. Interestingly, many of these former students do not work in the jobs they listed when applying for permanent residency in big cities; instead, they often end up as taxi drivers. Such problems raised a concern of people coming to Australia mainly to work and stay permanently instead of pursuing their studies (often called 'PR hunters').

As a result, Australia has changed its study-migration pathway by separating student visas from permanent migration. This includes detaching migration points from job categories and raising the required English language skills from an IELTS band 6 to 6.5 (see Table 2). These changes aim to reduce the number of IS eligible for skilled migration.

Such policy changes indicate that Australia's approach to IS now focuses on 'picking winners' (Hawthorne, 2005) among 'cash cows' and leaves the rest to 'live in limbo.' This approach involves retaining selected students and sending the rest back home upon graduation, effectively leaving them in limbo (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014) as part of the vulnerable workforce (Nyland, et al., 2009). Moreover, Australian employers frequently prefer local graduates and show reluctance to hire international graduates (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012; in Tran, T.L. et al., 2020). These challenges force many to live in precarious situations, struggle to secure employment, and face difficulties obtaining permanent residency (Nguyen, C.H., 2024), forcing many to return to their home countries.

In short, while Australia remains open to IS, the challenges in societal and labor market integration and frequent policy changes create uncertainty and instability for these students. This approach leaves many in precarious situations, limiting their potential contributions and opportunities in the country.

5.2 Japan – stable policy: facing challenges in attracting and retaining international students to address workforce gaps

Unlike Australia, Japan's policies are relatively stable, with a clear goal of addressing workforce shortages by integrating IS into the local labor market, allowing opportunities for students to enter and settle in the country. However, Japan still faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining these students for two main reasons.

Firstly, Japan has struggled to compete in international education as it is not an English-speaking country. While English is the dominant global language in education (Beacco & Byram 2003:52; in Shimauchi, 2018), Japan's academic system has traditionally focused on Japanese. This stems from its unique cultural and academic history, free from colonial influences (Shimauchi, 2018).

Recently, Japan has recognized the need to offer more English-language programs to attract global talent. However, the country often remains a "second choice" destination compared to English-speaking nations such as Australia, making it difficult to draw a larger pool of IS (Liu-Farrer & Tran, 2019).

Secondly, retaining IS after graduation is another challenge, primarily due to the expectations of Japanese employers. Local companies often prioritize candidates who can seamlessly integrate into Japanese workplace culture. As Tseng (2021) explains, Japanese employers expect foreign workers to behave similarly to native Japanese workers during recruitment. Interestingly, despite their desire to find skilled workers, Japanese employers prefer candidates who demonstrate a passion for the company, proper manners, and a personality that aligns with their company culture. Such characteristics of the Japanese labor market create challenges for non-Japanese style candidates seeking employment in Japan after graduation.

In short, Japan has a more consistent approach to IS than Australia, with clear strategies to address labor shortages and integrate students into the workforce, allowing opportunities for IS to enter and remain in the country after graduation. While policies are in place to create favorable pathways for IS, Japan's mono-cultural nature still limits its ability to attract and retain a diverse range of global talent.

6. Conclusion

Australia and Japan both aim to attract as well as retain IS upon graduation, but their approaches regarding the expected role of IS differ significantly. Australia primarily focuses on the economic benefits of IS, viewing them as a driver for trade and overall national advantages. In contrast, Japan emphasizes the need to address workforce shortages, relying on IS as a vital source of skilled labor to fill gaps created by its shrinking population. Despite these distinct approaches, both nations expect IS to contribute to their socio-economic development and national priorities.

It is important to highlight the notable differences in the challenges faced by the policies of Australia and Japan. Australia is a favored destination for many IS due to its well-established education system, career opportunities and future settlement opportunities. However, Australian policies can be unstable, frequently changing in response to the public perceptions of challenges associated with integrating IS into local communities and the labor market. This results in uncertain outcomes for many international graduates, leaving them unsure about their future in the country.

On the other hand, Japan remains a secondary destination for IS, largely due to its non-English-speaking environment. Although the Japanese government has introduced sustained policies to attract global talent and meet labor market needs, local employers often prioritize candidates who meet specific cultural and language expectations. These cultural barriers make it difficult for Japan to attract and retain a diverse IS population.

This study provides valuable insights into the characteristics of international student policies in Australia and Japan, addressing a significant gap in current research. By highlighting the challenges faced by Australia and Japan in relation to IS, this study suggests that both countries must tackle their respective issues to fully harness the potential of their IS populations.

Furthermore, the research offers valuable insights for students considering their study destinations and future career paths. By outlining the characteristics and features of two popular countries—Australia and Japan—the study helps students understand each country's educational landscape and policy system. These findings can aid them in making informed decisions about their study destinations and in shaping their desired lifestyles and careers.

Notes

- 1) International students in this study are defined as those who enrolled in full-time programs lasting more than one year, such as language courses, vocational education and training (VET), or bachelor's programs and higher.
- 2) Process tracing focuses on whether the intervening variables between a hypothesized cause and observed effect move as predicted by the theories under investigation. Put another way, it looks at the observable implications of putative causal mechanisms in operation in a case (Bennett, 2004).

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