

A Study of African International Students in Japan: Analyzing the Process of Their Destination Choice

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This paper aims to examine the current situation of acceptance international students from African countries and clarify issues of Japanese strategy. In particular, this focuses on the process of selecting Japan as a study abroad destination, and analyze the issues of acquisition strategies for international students in Japanese context. Since 2008, a national strategy called ‘300000 Foreign Students Plan’ and ‘Tokyo International Conference on African Development’ have called for the need to accept African international students. Government has increased the number of scholarship programs for African students, in addition, they established the new scholarship programs only for African students known as ABE Initiatives. For this strategy, large amount of national budget has been contributed. Under these national strategy, African students are regarded as human resources expected to connect Japan and Africa.

The study utilizes the data collected from 16 African international students interviews and questionnaires from 90 foreign students. In the findings, some students come to Japan without the academic information. In addition, some students used social media as their primary means of information gathering in their destination choice. From this result, it can be considered that the image before studying abroad have become increasingly diversified from the actual situation. In the findings, the interest in working in Japan or Japanese-overseas companies was also confirmed. It means some students have career awareness that could be a bridge between Japan and Africa. However, in Japan, little career support is available among the students. Whether they are willing to build a positive relationship with their countries and Japan or not, they are just accepted and leave with little interest in Japanese society.

These results imply a microcosm of the superficial relationship in higher education between Japan and Africa. Some African students decide to study Japan due to vague image. In Japanese society, there is not much interest about African students, who can be highly talented personnel both for Japan and for Africa. Even the strategy has been promoted by a huge amount of national budget. It is required to reconsider, in what purpose Japan accept international students from Africa, and what each stakeholder can do for the improvement of higher education in Japan and Africa.