

Key developments: Abe Cabinet plans stronger focus on international education

This month's major media coverage was on Prime Minister Abe's forthcoming Growth Strategy and likely education reforms. Education will be of three priority areas of the Growth Strategy's "third arrow," to be announced in mid June. Anticipated education reforms include policies to facilitate innovation and to promote global skills in young people, including English skills.

In other developments, the Japanese Government aims to strengthen its focus on outbound student mobility through a doubling of targets for Japanese students studying abroad from 60,000 to 120,000, and strengthen English skills by testing entrants to the public service on English proficiency. This follows speculation that English may become a daily subject in schools, and the possible use of English testing for entry and on exit from Japanese universities. In university news, the government appears likely to strengthen international collaboration and encourage degrees with overseas institutions as part of its Growth Strategy. Finally, Kyoto University has become the first Japanese university to join the U.S. based non-profit online learning platform, edX.

Policy Update

Japan's New Growth Strategy

5/06/2013

Prime Minister Abe announced the third pillar of his government's economic policies known as Abenomics. The main points of the strategy included:

Education

- To reform the higher education sector and to internationalise universities to offer more programs in English
- To have 10 Japanese universities to be listed in the top 100 world rankings
- To develop a government-academic-industry roundtable to discuss ways to facilitate innovation at universities
- To promote global skills in young people
- To double the number of Japanese students studying abroad from 60,000 to 120,000 by 2020
- To develop a new scholarship and student loan for students undertaking study abroad
- To start testing entrants to the public service on English proficiency from 2015 and promote using English testing for entry and on exit from universities
- To develop "Super Global High Schools" to nurture future leaders with global skills
- To strengthen English education at Year 5 & 6 at primary schools

Science and Technology

- To aim to be at the top of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitive Index within five years (Japan was no.5 in 2012)
- To strengthen roles of the Council for Science and technology Policy (CSTP)
- To strengthen functions of research institutes
- To increase public and private R&D investment
- To focus on regenerative medicine and drug development related research

Prime Minister Abe's speech on Japan's New Growth Strategy

Japanese speech

http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0605speech.html

Japan's New Growth Strategy: Main points

English article

<http://e.nikkei.com/e/ac/TNKS/Nni20130605D05JF928.htm?NS-query=japan%20new%20growth%20strategy>

Prime Minister's Speech on Growth Strategy, 17/05/2013

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that in order to develop young people's global skills, government aims to double the number of Japanese students studying abroad from 60,000 to 120,000, with additional financial support. Prime Minister Abe also announced the goal of doubling the number of foreign academics at eight national universities in the next three years, and for 10 Japanese universities to be listed in the top-100 world rankings within the next decade.

Japanese speech

http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0517speech.html

Science and Technology

The Council for Science and Technology Policy (CSTP), led by Prime Minister Abe and the Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy, released the first draft of its Comprehensive Strategy on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) last month. It outlines five priority STI areas: economical energy; healthy long life; quake resistant infrastructure; local area resources; and recovery and reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake. It proposes new policies such as development of cross-ministry and agency programs to support STI, increasing the ratio of women researchers and universities and research institutes, and strengthening administration of S&T policy.

Priorities described in the draft Comprehensive Strategy on STI fall in line with those of Japan's 4th Science and Technology Basic Plan for 2011-2015, but with an additional focus on using local resources, and strengthening agriculture, fishery and forestry through science and technology. Japan's Basic Plan currently maintains a focus on three priority areas: green innovation; life innovation; and recovery and reconstruction from the 2011 earthquake.

Japan's science and technology budget for FY2013 has a strong focus on development of next generation energy, regenerative medicine, and the establishment of Center of Innovation to facilitate industry, government and academic collaboration. Japan is also prioritising support for *Hayabusa 2*, earth observation systems (*ALOS 2*), and research on marine science and resources.

Education Media

College seniors see brighter job prospects

Nikkei, 31/05/2013

University students graduating next spring face an improved job market, and a higher proportion of students had already received informal offer by the start of May. Job offer rates are higher this year because many large companies have accelerated their efforts to secure capable students early, in anticipation of tougher competition for talent as the economy shows sign of a recovery.

English article

<http://e.nikkei.com/e/ac/TNKS/Nni20130530D3005A23.htm?NS-query=science>

Education panel touts more global approach

The Japan Times, 29/05/2013 & similar article 23/5 and on 21/5 and 28/5 in Nikkei

The government's Education Rebuilding Implementation Council submitted a report to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe late May, urging the nation's universities to be outward-looking in order to foster global talent among Japanese. The panel's proposals include hiring more foreign academics, and increasing collaboration with overseas universities to offer joint degrees. The panel also urged the government to provide additional support to universities, enhancing partnerships with overseas institutions and offering programs in English. The panel recommended aiming to have more than 10 Japanese universities in the world top 100 within the next decade. Currently only two Japanese universities are listed in the Times Higher Education's World University Ranking, with the University of Tokyo at 27th place and Kyoto University at 54th.

The panel's proposals include establishment of a "University Future Vision Summit" to discuss higher education issues. The proposal would see summit meetings are organised by the Prime Minister with

participants such as national university presidents, governors, and industry representatives to discuss ways to reform universities to be more innovative. The panel seeks to find ways to facilitate more academic-industry cooperation, and to share R&D information among universities and private companies. The panel advocates strengthening university president's decision making power and a re-consideration of roles of often powerful faculty councils.

The Council also suggests upgrading English to an official daily course at primary schools, as part of efforts to better prepare students for an internationalised business environment. Currently one-hour a week English lessons are mandatory for students from Year five. However, the panel considers that should be extended and younger children should also learn English. The panel also proposed creating several "Super Global High Schools" across the nation, where students would study science and mathematics in English. The Central Education Council, an advisory body to the Education Minister Hakubun Shimomura, will examine the proposals.

English article

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/29/national/education-panel-touts-more-global-approach/>

Nikkei, 28/5/2013 English article

<http://e.nikkei.com/e/ac/TNKS/Nni20130528D28JF167.htm>

The Japan Times, 23/5/2013 English article

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/23/national/education-panel-urges-japanese-colleges-to-reach-outside/>

Nikkei, 21/5/2013 Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG20053_Q3A520C1CR8000/

Education ministry to increase foreign students to 300,000 by 2020

Mainichi Shimbun, 28/05/2013

The Ministry of Education has decided a strategy to designate countries and regions in the world, including India and Vietnam, as key regions, in order to secure high quality international students. Despite the government's efforts to increase the number of international students, Japanese universities have been unpopular with foreign students who are under the impression they offer few degree programs in English and the high living costs in Japan. The University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Tohoku University, the University of Tsukuba, Nagoya University, Kyushu University, Waseda University, and Ritsumeikan University, which participate in the government's "Global 30" Program, will put funds in their overseas offices in countries such as India, Vietnam, and Egypt. This will help other universities use the facilities to promote the enhancement of Japanese universities' offering of classes in English.

No online article available

Ritsumeikan University establishes a new faculty at a Chinese university in September

Asahi, 28/5/2013

Ritsumeikan University announced it will establish a new faculty, "Department of International IT and Software" with Dalian University of Technology in China in September 2013. A third of the classes will be delivered in Japanese by academics from Ritsumeikan. Forty students who complete the first two years with top grades in the programme in China would then transfer to the third year of Ritsumeikan University in Japan and obtain degrees from both universities.

Japanese article

<http://www.asahi.com/edu/articles/OSK201305270162.html>

Kyoto University joins U.S. online learning platform

The Japan Times, 22/05/2013

Kyoto University has become the first Japanese university to join a MOOC, with its joining of edX, the U.S. based non-profit online learning platform. The move is aimed at improving the quality of education at the university through competition with other institutions in attracting students registered on the platform, created mainly by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2012. Kyoto University plans to start accepting students this summer for a course titled the Sciences of Life, to be launched on edX next spring.

English article

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/22/national/kyoto-university-joins-u-s-online-learning-platform/>

Ambivalent Japan turns on its 'insular' youth

The Japan Times, 21/05/2013

Young Japanese people are often criticised for their inward-looking character, and fewer students are undertaking study abroad as they are seemingly less interested in venturing outside Japan. However, the 2010 survey by the British Council found that majority of students was still interested in studying overseas, and the main reasons for not undertaking study abroad were concerns over safety, expenses and negative influences on school and work. The problems seem less about young people - who are often blamed for all sorts of social ills - and more about society and the companies that hire youngsters.

English article

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/05/21/issues/ambivalent-japan-turns-on-its-insular-youth/>

Students planning or undertaking study abroad suffer from weak Japanese yen

Asahi, 20/5/2013

Rapidly weakening Japanese yen induced by the Abe Cabinet's economic policy is negatively affecting Japanese students planning or undertaking study abroad. A University of Tokyo student planning to study at a graduate school in the UK needs to pay tuition fees, which are 1.3 times higher than last year in the current financial situation. The Abe Cabinet is encouraging students to study abroad, aiming to develop human resources with global competencies. However, it is proving more difficult for students to come up with higher funds needed to study abroad.

Japanese article

http://digital.asahi.com/articles/TKY201305190276.html?ref=comkiji_txt_end

Private secondary school starts after-school & summer programs for students to go universities overseas

Nikkei, 18/5/2013

The Nezu Educational Foundation, which runs Musashi University and secondary schools, plans to launch after-school and summer programs for secondary school students, wishing to study at universities overseas. The program "Musashi-Temple RED Program", is developed in cooperation with Japan's largest foreign university, Temple University, and aims to teach science solely in English, focusing on research, essays and debate. It will start with 24 students, and provide a total of 1380 hour-lessons for 5 years.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG17034_Y3A510C1MM0000/

International Baccalaureate in Japanese starts in 2015

Yomiuri, 17/5/2013

Organisation du Baccalaureat International and the Japanese Education Ministry agreed to commence the International Baccalaureate in Japanese. About 20 public and private schools in areas including Tokyo, Aichi, Hokkaido and Fukui, are currently preparing for IB programs in Japanese starting in 2015. Although two-thirds of the program will be offered in Japanese, subjects such as English, mathematics, and arts, will be taught in English. The Japanese Government is aiming to increase the number of schools offering IB programs to 200 by 2018, and only 16 schools currently offer the programs.

Japanese article

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/kyoiku/news/20130517-OYT8T00377.htm>**LDP suggests flexible school systems**

Nikkei, 17/5/2013

The Liberal Democratic Party's Education Rebuilding Council has recommended the introduction of more flexible school systems. Under the current system, the school sector is organised into three levels, 6-year primary, 3-year lower secondary, 3-year upper secondary. The LDP considers a more flexible system, which facilitates advanced placements and early graduation, is required in the current education environment. The LDP also seeks to introduce an academic achievement test for secondary school students, which can be taken multiple times before graduation, and using the results for university entry.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG16034_W3A510C1CR8000/**Two private education providers jointly establish a company to offer early childhood-primary education**

Nikkei, 17/5/2013

Private education providers Gakken Holdings and Ichi Holdings, agreed to establish a new company offering early childhood and primary education services. The new company, GI Village, will open a facility later this year in Tokyo to offer day-care and after-school care service. Gakken produces educational materials, and Ichi runs cram schools. Two companies cooperate in after-school care service, and educational material development.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDD160FN_W3A510C1TJ2000/**Government, private sector to create scholarship fund to increase students studying abroad**

Asahi, 17/5/2013

In an effort to boost the number of young Japanese capable of working on the global stage, the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to create in cooperation with the private sector a fund to provide interest-free loans to students studying at universities abroad. The government hopes to double the number of the Japanese students studying overseas from 60,000 to 120,000. The fund will be financed by the government and private corporations, and the government will introduce a system to reduce taxes of private corporations that contribute money to the fund.

Japanese article

<http://www.asahi.com/shimen/articles/TKY201305160603.html?ref=reca>**Gap year students share 'real world' plans**

Yomiuri, 8/5/2013

The first group of the University of Tokyo students under the newly introduced “gap year” program shared their plans for the gap year. The University of Tokyo’s gap year is a new program allowing students to defer for one year to participate in activities to broaden their perspectives. 11 students are using this opportunity to study foreign languages abroad, or to join volunteer work in the earthquake-affected areas.

English article

<http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000219368>

The Japanese Government to use TOEFL in its employment examination

Asahi, 5/5/2013

The Japanese Government announced plan to use private-sector English tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in its employment examinations for “fast-track” bureaucrats from FY2015. The government aims to improve bureaucrats’ English proficiency level to develop global skills. The current employment examination focuses on reading comprehension in English, and the Government plans to use the scores of private-sector English tests in order to reflect candidates’ listening and conversation skills.

Japanese article

<http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/0504/TKY201305040282.html>

Education Minister willing to support all students undertaking study overseas in gap term

Nikkei, 2/5/2013

Education Minister, Hakubun Shimomura, announced his willingness to provide financial support to all university students undertaking study abroad programs during a gap term- a six month period between the completion of the upper secondary school in March and the start of the university in September. He plans to launch the new scholarship program in 2017 when the University of Tokyo aims to change their academic commencement from April to September.

The announcement was made in the US where the Education Minister held discussions with Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and agreed to facilitate mutual student mobility and to double the number of US and Japanese students studying in each other’s country.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG0200Z_S3A500C1CR0000/

79% hope for “6-day school week”

Yomiuri, 18/4/2013

A Yomiuri Shimbun’s survey on education, conducted in March identified strong public support for Saturday classes, with 70% of those surveyed supporting the proposal. The main reasons given for this was “To improve academic ability.”

Japanese article

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/20080116-907457/news/20130417-OYT1T01500.htm>

Science Media

Government plans new brain research for industry applications

Nikkei, 30/05/2013

The government is set to embark on a new research project examining the human brain over 10 years starting in FY2014 to reveal more about brain activity and apply the finds to other industries. A panel of experts at the education ministry will held a meeting on 6 June to discuss the specifics of the proposed project, and RIKEN and other research institutions are planning to join the project.

English article

<http://e.nikkei.com/e/ac/TNKS/Nni20130530D30EE392.htm?NS-query=science>

Nuclear exposure toll hits 30 in J-PARC lab accident

The Japan Times, 27/05/2013

At least 30 researchers are feared to have suffered internal radiation exposure when an experiment went awry and radioactive material was released from the Japan Atomic Energy Agency's Japan Proton Accelerator Research Complex (J-PARC) in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture. The experiment continued even after an alarm went off. The accident occurred around noon on 23 May, Thursday, but the accident was not reported to the nuclear regulatory authorities until the following night. It suggests scientists' poor sense of crisis and urgency about radiation dangers despite the Fukushima nuclear power incident in 2011.

English articles

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/27/national/nuclear-exposure-toll-hits-30-in-j-parc-lab-accident/>

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/27/national/j-parc-leak-signals-poor-sense-of-crisis/>

Venture company led by a University of Tokyo graduate developed nano-satellites

Nikkei, 17/5/2013

A venture company called Axelspace developed nano-satellites and will launch three nano-satellites in 2015. Nano-satellites will be used to obtain surface image data for services such as map production, and is considered to reduce costs of satellite developments. Axelspace was established by a University of Tokyo graduate, Mr Yuya Nakamura, who developed small satellites under Professor Shinichi Nakasuga at the University of Tokyo, to utilise the research outcomes.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDD100VO_X10C13A5MM0000/

Development of next-generation large rockets to be led by industry

Nikkei, 17/5/2013

Cabinet Office's Space Policy Council agreed in general to promote next-generation large rockets development. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), a government agency, has been undertaking design and development of rockets. However, all roles including, design, development, production and launch will be carried out by private companies such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries from 2014 to utilise its knowhow and technology of industry, and to decrease the related costs.

Japanese article

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFS17041_X10C13A5EE8000/

JAXA to reopen center to launch small satellites

Nikkei, 17/5/2013

Japan is to have two rocket launch sites after a seven-year hiatus as it reopens the formerly used Uchinoura Space Center this summer to launch satellites under 50kg. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) will start operating Uchinoura Space Center in Kagoshima as a new launch site for smaller satellites weighing under 50kg. Launches for large rockets continue in the Tanegashima Space Center, also in Kagoshima. The Japanese government set forth a plan to bolster Japan's space technology in its five-year blueprint for space

policy starting in the current fiscal year. It aims to secure rocket-launch orders from businesses and organisations around the world.

English article

<http://e.nikkei.com/e/fr/feature9.aspx>

How signs of a 'lost continent' came into JAMSTEC's underwater view

The Japan Times, 10/5/2013

The Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC) and the Brazilian government recently announced the discovery of a large mass of granite on the seafloor off Rio de Janeiro – a landmark finding that suggests a continent may have once existed there because granite normally forms only on dry land. According to experts, it is too early to conclude this is evidence that the legendary island of Atlantis existed, because the seabed where the granite mass was found is estimated to have sunk in to the sea several tens of millions of years ago, much earlier than legend has the island disappearing beneath the sea. JAMSTEC sent a mission to the area as part of its one-year around-the-world voyage project “QUELLE2013” or Quest for the Limit of Life. The yearlong mission involves exploring hydrothermal vent fields, submarine seepage sites, deep-sea trenches and other extreme environments to explore the habitable limits of life and its unique survival strategies.

English article

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/10/reference/how-signs-of-a-lost-continent-came-into-jamstecs-underwater-view/>