The Integration of International Academics at Japanese Universities

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Statement of the issue

Spurred by globalization, neoliberalism, based on economic principles, takes the world as a market and emphasizes privatization and marketization. Globalized neoliberalism is the dominant ideology of this historical moment, which has been considered to have a profound impact on nearly all aspects of government, economy, social relations, culture, and HE (Altbach et al., 2011). The adoption of new public management, identified as a reform model, suggests that the management informed by the skills and practices of private sectors should be applied in the civil service to promote their effectiveness and efficiency (Bleiklie, 2018). The new public management largely reflects the manifestation of neoliberalism in HEIs over the past decades (Leisytë & Kizniene, 2006). This implies that the dominant ideology of HEIs' governance is the corporate model, and indicates universities as corporate enterprises (Bleiklie, 2018; Hanada, 2013), which differs from the traditional ideology of HEIs governance, such as educationalism (Stier, 2004), collegium model (Hanada, 2013), and "republic of scholars" (Bleiklie, 2018).

The corporate management model, on the one hand, has led to more hierarchical and bureaucratic structures in HEIs. With the strengthening governance hierarchies, instead of the fundamental teaching and research activities, many faculty members tend to spend more time on bureaucratic processes, and administrative works, which has been well described and explained by Maassen & Stensaker (2019) in their case study of five European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Norway. Even in some universities with a historical tradition of academic freedom and governing independence, the top-down hierarchy has been substantially improved by the neoliberalism-driven management reforms (Lind, 2020). Therefore, in the current economic milieu, some researchers are found to have increased power, which is at times more than that is explicitly granted by their position in their universities (Lind, 2020). On the other hand, the economical and neoliberal ideas have resulted in a competitive and integrated world economy. Thus, many HEIs have implemented robust internationalization strategies to take advantage of the increasing access to the lucrative international market (Stringer et al., 2018), such as the Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030 in Australia (Australia et al., 2021), the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange in Poland (NAWA, 2021), and so forth.

In addition, the fact that Asia become a growing destination for international mobility of international students (Kuroda et al., 2018) has led to the increased competition in various aspects among HEIs in Asia, such as expanding the offerings of programs and courses, providing English teaching programs, and improving their world rankings. These strategies

were primarily carried out to help position the HEIs themselves as a preferred institution for international study (Deem et al., 2008). Despite the considerable criticism of global rankings across a wide variety of aspects, such as the criteria of the indicators and the quality of the data (Hazelkorn, 2014; Horan & O'Regan, 2021), they are still mostly well recognized and valued in Asian countries. For example, in order to enhance the level of China's educational development, strengthen the national core competitiveness, and lay the foundation for long-term development, the Central Party Committee and the State Council in China announced plans for the coordination and promotion of world-class universities and first-class subject building in 2015 (Guofa, 2015); in order to promote the interactions with world's top universities, reform personnel, and educational systems, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has been carrying out the Top Global University Project to provide prioritized support to 37 universities, which were divided into Type A (Top Type, 13 universities) and Type B (Global Traction Type, 24 universities) (MEXT, 2014).

Given the acknowledged desire to promote the internationalization of HE and build world-class universities, the recruitment and presence of international academics have been the subject of growing attention by policymakers and researchers in recent decades. International academics bring benefits to universities tangibly and intangibly (Da Wan & Morshidi, 2018), contributing to knowledge production in education (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017; Mahroum, 2000), global collaborations, and high productivity in research (Hazelkorn, 2007; Kim et al., 2011). Moreover, international academics have been characterized as a valuable resource to enhance the internationalization of HEIs by creating a multicultural environment. Therefore, hiring international academics constitutes a significant pathway towards those goals.

Despite the numerous criticisms of the application of neoliberalism to HEIs (e.g., Miller, 1998), it has been embedded in the university reform practices in Japan since the mid-1990s (Hosoi et al., 2014). The Incorporation of National Universities in 2004 marked the formal beginning of this process. Following the global trend toward neoliberalism, the national universities have been provided with a more autonomous legal status, enabling them to independently decide on detailed management mechanisms. However, the numerous tensions caused by the annual 1% reduction in operational grants and the fierce market competition make it difficult for national universities to achieve the government's expectations. In addition, spurred by globalization, internationalization has become an urgent issue in Japan. Those internal and external changes have profoundly impacted Japan's HE, serving as a strong incentive for international academics' recruitment since they have been considered potential

agents for university transformation (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017). Thus, increasing political and institutional attention has been paid to international academics. Various strategies have been conducted by the Japanese government, such as the "Global 30" program in 2009 and the "Top Global University Project" in 2014. The target universities were required to hire more international academics to improve the diversity and global competitiveness of Japan (MEXT, 2014). Moreover, in the Japanese context, there are several special HEIs, such as Kanda University of International Studies and Akita international university whose missions and features are closely associated with internationalization and international academics. These HEIs have also been rooted in the recruitment of international academics. Consequently, the number of full-time international academics at Japanese universities has significantly increased from 1.17% in 1983 to 5.00% in 2021 (MEXT, 2021), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The increase of international academics at Japanese universities
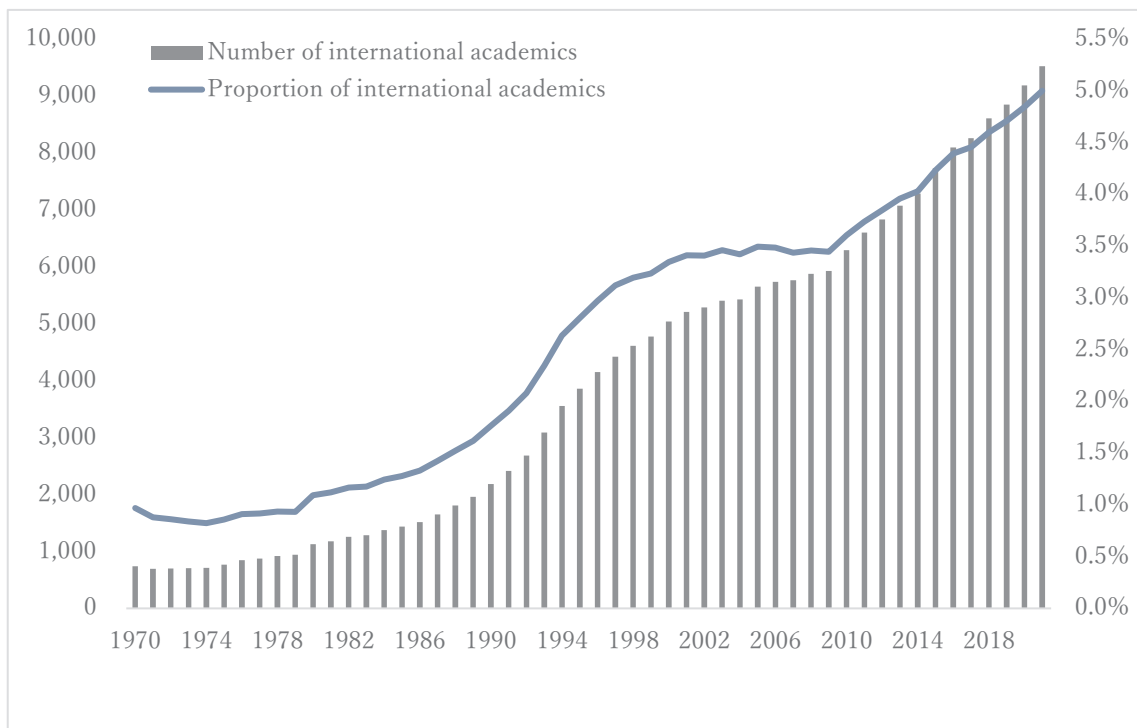

Source: MEXT. (2021). *Gakkou Kihon Chousa Koutou Kyouiku Kikan [Basic Investigation of Schools: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)]*. Retrieved from: https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&toukei=00400001&tstat=000001011528

Despite their perceived value and expansion in numbers, international academics at Japanese universities felt difficulties integrating into the Japanese academic mainstream (e.g., Brotherhood et al., 2020; Brown, 2019). Regrettably, some of them have perceived themselves as a "tokenized symbol" of internationalization (Brotherhood et al., 2020; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011). Therefore, scholars' attention has been directed to not only their recruitment but also

their integration into Japan, which is one of the most critical challenges for both international academics and the efforts toward systematic organizational reform (Oishi, 2021). However, questions about the nature and shape of integration and international academics' attitudes towards their integration remain. While most previous studies were concerned with their general characteristics (e.g., Huang, 2018a, 2018b; Huang & Chen, 2021), such as demographic situation, work roles, and motivations, scholarly focuses placed on their integration at Japanese universities have lagged behind. Moreover, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need to explore those significant issues as international academics may suffer more than ever before. On the one hand, they tend to face more barriers, such as physical isolation and discrimination towards specifically foreigners in Japan as suggested by Scott (2021). On the other hand, institutional support practices may be inefficient and ineffective due to the lack of experience in dealing with such situations and delays in administration work caused by the pandemic (Huang, 2021). Therefore, an investigation in this regard is needed, especially from the perspectives of international academics themselves, since the practicalities and difficulties of integration are largely experienced by them. When it comes to the themes concerning the integration of international academics, such as if they are integrated or if their integration is necessary, international academics' personal perceptions should be central. The thesis is structured as follows in Figure 2, which will be introduced subsequently.

Figure 2. Thesis structure.
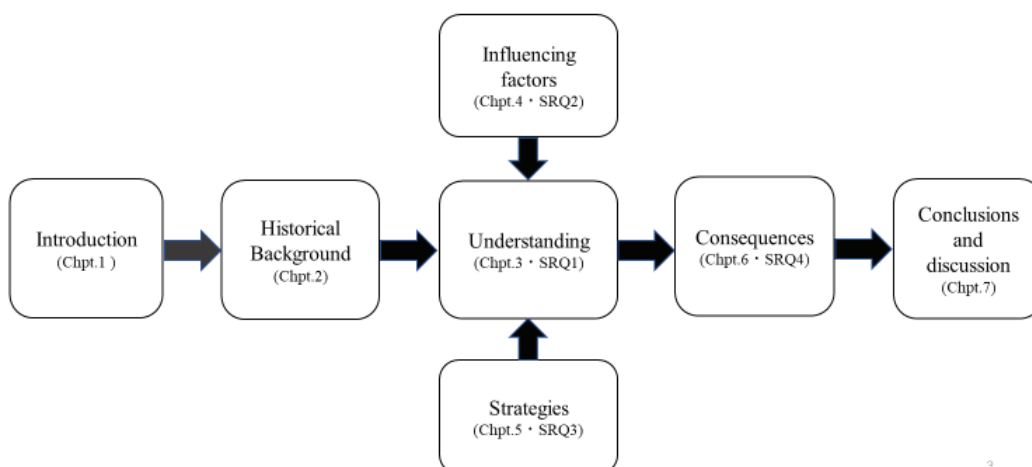
Source: Created by Chen (2022).

Chapter 1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the impetus for the thesis, aligned with the research context and the statement of the issue. Firstly, a wide variety of literature associated with the term integration, the practical integration of international academics, and the influencing factors of integration from all over the world have been reviewed, which comprises research papers, monographs, policy reports, and documents. This helps to get access to a wider range of existing evidence, contributing to positioning the study. Based on the results obtained from the literature review and the focus of the study, the research design, including objective, central research question (CRQ), Sub-Research Questions (SRQs), research paradigm, and the methodology used in the study are introduced. To be more specific, the study seeks to answer the central research question (CRQ): What is the integration of international academics at Japanese universities? In order to address this CRQ, four Sub-Research Questions (SRQs) were developed based on the aforementioned theoretical and conceptual framework, including *SRQ1: What is the understanding of international academics' integration at Japanese universities? SRQ2: What are the influencing factors impacting international academics' integration at Japanese universities? SRQ3: What are the strategies of international academics while integrating into Japanese universities? SRQ4: What consequences does international academics' integration lead to?* The concept of the post-positive paradigm and the adapted form of the classic Grounded Theory (GT) perspective of Glaser (1978) was recruited in the study. The research questions were explored by semi-structural interviews with 40 full-time international academics hired by Japanese universities, which were analyzed through a dual strategy of inductive coding and deductive exploration. The researcher in the study is being recognized as a hybrid status of both insider and outsider researcher contributes to the relationship establishment between Japan's side of "them" and the internationals' side of "us", thereby improving the quality of interview data and diminishing the research bias.

Chapter 2.   International academics in the context of Japan's HEIs: a historical perspective

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the historical development of international academics' recruitment and expansion in the context of Japan's HEIs through the review of relevant materials and previous studies in this regard. The findings indicate that international academics were officially allowed to enter Japan in 1859 (Quigley, 2004). Due to the Westernization and

Americanization of Japan's higher education, they have been actively hired since the 1860s. Moreover, faced with increasingly competitive emerging economies in Asia, the Japanese government has made significant strides to attract international students and faculty since the early 2000s, which, therefore, leads to their rapid expansion from 1.17% in 1983 to 5.00% in 2021 (MEXT, 2021). In addition to the quantitative differences, their working roles have been changed significantly from consultant or language teachers to academics who are engaged with both teaching and research activities. Moreover, a clear distinction between Chinese/Korean faculty and American/British faculty has been found.

Based on the analysis of the existing literature, the chapter suggests that in Japan, the internationalization of HE has deep roots and it is atop the historical foundation of Japan's HE that international academics operate today. After the 220 years of *sakoku* (country-closing) policy, Japan finally opened its doors at the end of the Tokugawa period. Then, Japan strived to learn advanced knowledge and technology, and establish HEIs by employing international academics from western countries. As a result, Japan improved its national competitiveness and the overall level of HE. Given the significant progress in Japan's HE, however, the ideologies of Japanese society with the Western faculty can be characterized as two polarities, which include Western hegemony or neocolonialism and nationalism (Kellem, 2021). Western hegemony or neocolonialism refers to the attitude that diverts Japan from its traditions both culturally and socially. Whereas, largely following the ideology of Confucius and Shinto collectivism, nationalism can be seen as an opposite theory, which insists on Japanese culture and traditions, and praises the superiority of the Japanese identity. International academics, thus, suffered greatly in the struggle of Japanese HEIs and society between these two ideologies. Despite the active recruitment, more diversified work roles, and better treatment of international academics since the 1980s, these ideologies remain manifested in their work and social activities.

Chapter 3.   The understanding of international academics' integration at Japanese universities

This chapter is the first empirical chapter of the study, which seeks to address the first SRQ: "what is the understanding of international academics' integration at Japanese universities?". Despite the increasing growing attention and the perceived value, due to the lagging behind research focuses, the nature and shape of international academics' integration remain unclear. In order to better respond to the question of whether and how integration should be promoted

at Japanese universities, it is urgent to capture and understand the term integration in Japan's context.

Given the acknowledgment that integration is perceived and construed in a very personal way depending on the individuals, the experiences of integration can be perceived differently according to the political, societal, and personal backgrounds of the individuals. Despite the various varieties of participants' perceptions and perspectives, the recurring themes, which ranged in concrete terms or abstract terms, or tangible terms or intangible terms, from their narratives and replies emerged. The main themes concerning the understanding of integration were generated through the analysis of the participants' perceptions and narratives in the interviews.

Despite the vagueness of the term integration, most participants used concrete examples to demonstrate their abstract ideas and intangible views towards their integration. Drawing on the interview content, firstly, the data analysis suggests that the majority of the participants agreed that it is a beneficial two-way process in which efforts by both international academics and Japan should be made. In addition, given the different interpretations of integration, it appears that the integration of international academics in Japan can be characterized as a longstanding process of acquiring equality, developing engagement, and forming a feeling of attachment toward Japan. However, impacted by the international academics' origin of country, previous experience in Japan, and their personal preferences, the data analysis identified three different intentions of international academics, namely, separation, one-way adaptation, and two-way adaption.

Chapter 4.　The influencing factors of international academics' integration at Japanese universities

Given the perceived value and significance of integration, chapter 3 explored international academics' understanding of their integration at Japanese universities. Despite challenges and issues encountered by international academics in their integration experiences, investigations into the key issues impeding their integration at Japanese universities are lacking. Based on the theoretical foundation of international academics' understanding of the term integration found in chapter 3, this chapter seeks to investigate the influencing factors of international academics' integration. The factors from various aspects were investigated in-depth, which can be broadly categorized into intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors refer to the reasons mainly from the international academics themselves, including their personal

attributes, such as nationality, gender, and age, and professional attributes, such as their academic discipline and work roles. Whereas, the extrinsic factors represent the causes from the affiliated environments of international academics, such as the type of their affiliations, their organizational culture, the management style, and so forth. According to the data analysis, the chapter identified the key issues from work, cultural, and interpersonal dimensions in the context internal to Japanese universities, and environmental dimensions in the context external to Japanese universities. Meanwhile, the study also acknowledged the perceptual differentiation of these issues depending on international academics' backgrounds. Based on the principles of Embedded Intergroups Relations Theory, it appears that the key issues differ according to the international academics' identity (country of origins), cultural backgrounds (previous experiences in Japan), and their organizational characteristics (academic ranks and disciplines). In other words, the data analysis shows that junior faculty in the Humanities who were not from countries in which Chinese characters are historically used or without previous experiences in Japan tend to perceive themselves as tokens at Japanese universities and report their inability to capitalize on their expertise. It seems that generally, they were discouraged by the institutional practices of Japanese universities from pursuing their career ambitions and investing in their affiliations, contributing significantly to their perceived tokenization at Japanese universities. In addition, the study underscores the significant influence of international academics' countries of origins and previous experiences in Japan, which help to inform their domestic knowledge of Japan, such as Japanese language, culture, and Japanese universities' mechanisms and management, and contribute to the development of their departmental relationships with their Japanese colleagues and students.

Chapter 5.　The strategies of international academics for their integration at Japanese universities

Based on international academics' understanding of their integration as identified in chapter 3 and the influencing factors that impede their integration in Japan as revealed in chapter 4, this chapter attempts to investigate the strategies of international academics while integrating into Japanese universities. Although the exploration and analysis of integration in chapter 3 and chapter 4 can largely reflect the current situation of integration of international academics in Japanese universities, these findings are more an objective description of the organizational practices of Japan's HEIs. In order to better understand the dynamic mechanisms of Japan's HEIs, it is necessary to explore the subjective attitudes of international academics toward their

integration and their affiliations, by addressing practical actions and behaviors of international academics concerning their integration at their affiliations. Therefore, the strategies applied to integrate into Japanese universities by international academics were analyzed in this chapter, which were divided into two main aspects, namely the theoretical practices and practical actions. The theoretical practices imply the actions in theory of international academics given a specific situation. Whereas, the practical actions represent the real strategies that international academics applied in practice to integrate into Japanese universities. The data analysis indicates three main categories of theoretical practices that were applied by international academics. Meanwhile, four main practical actions, namely engaging in Japan, overperforming, creating support networks, and developing personal missions, have been employed by international academics to manage their internal and external demands within their affiliated institutions.

Chapter 6. The consequences of international academics' integration

This chapter is the last empirical chapter of the study. Given the explorations regarding international academics' integration at Japanese universities as revealed in chapter 3, chapter 4, and chapter 5, its consequences that have been or are likely to be brought about need to be analyzed and examined, as they are closely related to critical issues, such as the evaluation of international academics' integration and the need to actively promote international academics' integration. Therefore, based on existing knowledge, the achieved and assumed consequences stemming from international academics' integration in Japan will be analyzed and discussed in this chapter. The consequences found in this chapter are made up of the outcomes of international academics themselves or the experiences of other people that can be described as the relevant different ideas in this regard. The data analysis suggests that despite a few negative opinions, various positive outcomes from four main levels, namely national level, social level, institutional level, and individual level, can be acknowledged from the narratives of participants in the study. Firstly, at the national level, international academics' integration was considered a great contribution to the brain drain, securing international talents, declining birthrate and aging population, shrinking workforce, tax revenue, the openness of Japan, and a greater degree of advancement in science and technology. Secondly, at the social level, the integration of international academics has been regarded as beneficial for cultural diversity and fewer disturbances in Japanese society. Thirdly, at the institutional level, the integration

of international academics has been considered to contribute to the openness and internationalization, diversity, scientific advancement, and the efficiency of Japanese universities. Finally, at the individual level, the integration of international academics seems associated with the consequences in three aspects: students, Japanese faculty, and international academics themselves. In the case of students, the integration of international academics has been viewed as contributing to broadening their horizons and perspectives, provision of more international and objective education, and the changes in Japanese students' personalities. Additionally, in the case of Japanese faculty members, they can be more open-minded and diversified by integrating with international academics. Moreover, in the case of international academics themselves, their integration is beneficial for their professional development, character building, intercultural competence enrichment, and mental health.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and discussion

Given the perceived value and the limited scholarly focus, this study is conducted to shed light on international academics' integration both theoretically and practically. The empirical chapters in this study offer contextually grounded insights and evidence of international academics' integration at Japanese universities as the research interviews were involved in most of the aspects regarding their integration in Japan. This chapter seeks to reflect on new findings that mainly yielded from chapter 3 to chapter 6, make the discussion of this study, offer theoretical and practical implications for researchers, university administrators, and policy makers, and explain limitations.

The answer of each individual SRQ can be summarized as follows. Firstly, regarding SRQ1, the research findings in chapter 3 indicate that majority of international academics perceived their integration as a beneficial longstanding two-way process of acquiring equality, developing engagement, and forming a feeling of attachment towards Japan and a state. In addition, the study proposes three integration dimensions of international academics at Japanese universities from an empirical perspective: work, social-cultural and psychological integration.

To engage with SRQ2, the findings presented in chapter 4 of the thesis suggest that, firstly, the study identified various key issues impeding the integration of international academics from work, cultural, interpersonal dimensions in the context internal to Japanese universities, and environmental dimension in the context external to Japanese universities. Moreover, the data analysis suggests that the influencing factors of their integration tend to

vary by international academics' identity (country of origins), cultural backgrounds (previous experiences in Japan), and organizational characteristics (academic ranks and disciplines). In other words, junior faculty in the Humanities who were not from countries in which Chinese characters are historically used or without previous experiences in Japan tend to perceive themselves as tokens at Japanese universities.

The results of SRQ3, investigating the integration strategies of international academics, were revealed in chapter 5. Firstly, the data analysis suggests that international academics' perceptions of their hosts seem to be varied by their working roles (language teaching), and the overall environment of their hosts. Depending on the consistency of international academics' intentions and their perceived Japan's behaviors towards them, three broad theoretical behaviors towards integration were summarized as promotional, occasional, and preventive. The data analysis indicates that when international academics' intentions and their perceptions of Japan's behaviors are separation, international academics were more likely to disfavor integration. In contrast, when their intentions and their perceptions of Japan's behaviors reached consensual interactive relations, international academics tend to promote their integration proactively. Moreover, when international academics' intentions and perceptions of Japan's behavior experience partial agreement and partial disagreement, they tend to show occasional behavior varied by individuals. Moreover, the study fills this gap by suggesting that international academics have adopted both Problem-focused and Emotion-focused strategies, namely engaging in Japan, overperforming, creating support networks, and developing personal missions to navigate their social and professional lives within the complex academic environment at Japanese universities. While existing studies emphasize the great importance of institutional support for international academics, data analysis in this study reveals the institutional and individual practices of international academics in Japan by showing that those who felt an inability to integrate into Japanese universities tend to employ individualistic strategies to overcome the constraints encountered.

The fourth SRQ was proposed to examine the achieved or assumed consequences that international academics' integration leads to, whose results were reported in chapter 6 of the thesis. The findings that emerged from the data analysis highlight the positive impacts of integration in various aspects from four main levels, namely national, social, institutional, and individual. Firstly, at the national level, international academics' integration was considered a great contribution to the brain drain, securing international talents, declining birthrate and aging population, shrinking workforce, tax revenue, the openness of Japan, and a greater degree of advancement in science and technology. Secondly, at the social level, the integration of international academics has been regarded as beneficial for cultural diversity and fewer

disturbances in Japanese society. Thirdly, at the institutional level, the integration of international academics has been considered to contribute to the openness and internationalization, diversity, scientific advancement, and the efficiency of Japanese universities. Finally, at the individual level, the integration of international academics seems associated with the consequences in three aspects: students, Japanese faculty, and international academics themselves. In the case of students, the integration of international academics has been viewed as contributing to broadening their horizons and perspectives, provision of more international and objective education, and the changes in Japanese students' personalities. Additionally, in the case of Japanese faculty members, they can be more open-minded and diversified by integrating with international academics. Moreover, in the case of international academics themselves, their integration is beneficial for their professional development, character building, intercultural competence enrichment, and mental health.

Based on the results and discussion relating to each SRQ revealed previously, this section is devoted to providing a grounded and explicit answer to the CRQ of this study: *What is the integration of international academics at Japanese universities?* It is obvious that even with the insights that emerged from this study, the integration of international academics remains a complex idea, which requires a combined consideration of the horizontal perspective of contextual environments and the vertical perspective of its historical development. In light of the interview results as summarized previously, the study suggests that the integration of international academies may be the product of the various forces in the institutional practices of Japanese HEIs, which encompasses Japanese exclusionism, internationalization, and neoliberalism.

Therefore, the study suggests that integration is not just a simple harmony that international academics want to or are expected to achieve. It is a complex notion that encompasses the manifestation and influences of social, cultural, and economic forces from the contextual environment, including Japanese exclusionism, internationalization, and neoliberalism. This explains why despite the increasing attention, a definition or description regarding the term integration remains vague. In addition, due to the differences in the migration history and national policies of each country (Council of Europe, 1997, p.8), fundamental assumptions or definition of integration still exists today. The differences in languages have also impeded common discussions on this term (Schinkel, 2018). It has proved extremely difficult to arrive at a policy-based shared concept of integration. Moreover, as outlined in chapter 3, the desires for integration vary depending on international academic individuals. One of the decisive factors in integration is the extent to which integration is a critical issue for those individuals themselves (Schinkel, 2018). Therefore, given the

acknowledged complexity of integration, the study indicates that the uncritical pursuit of integration of international academics may be problematic and that a consideration based on a more nuanced and contextualized framework is greatly needed.

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