
EDU-Port Japan –

What is it and how it emerged?

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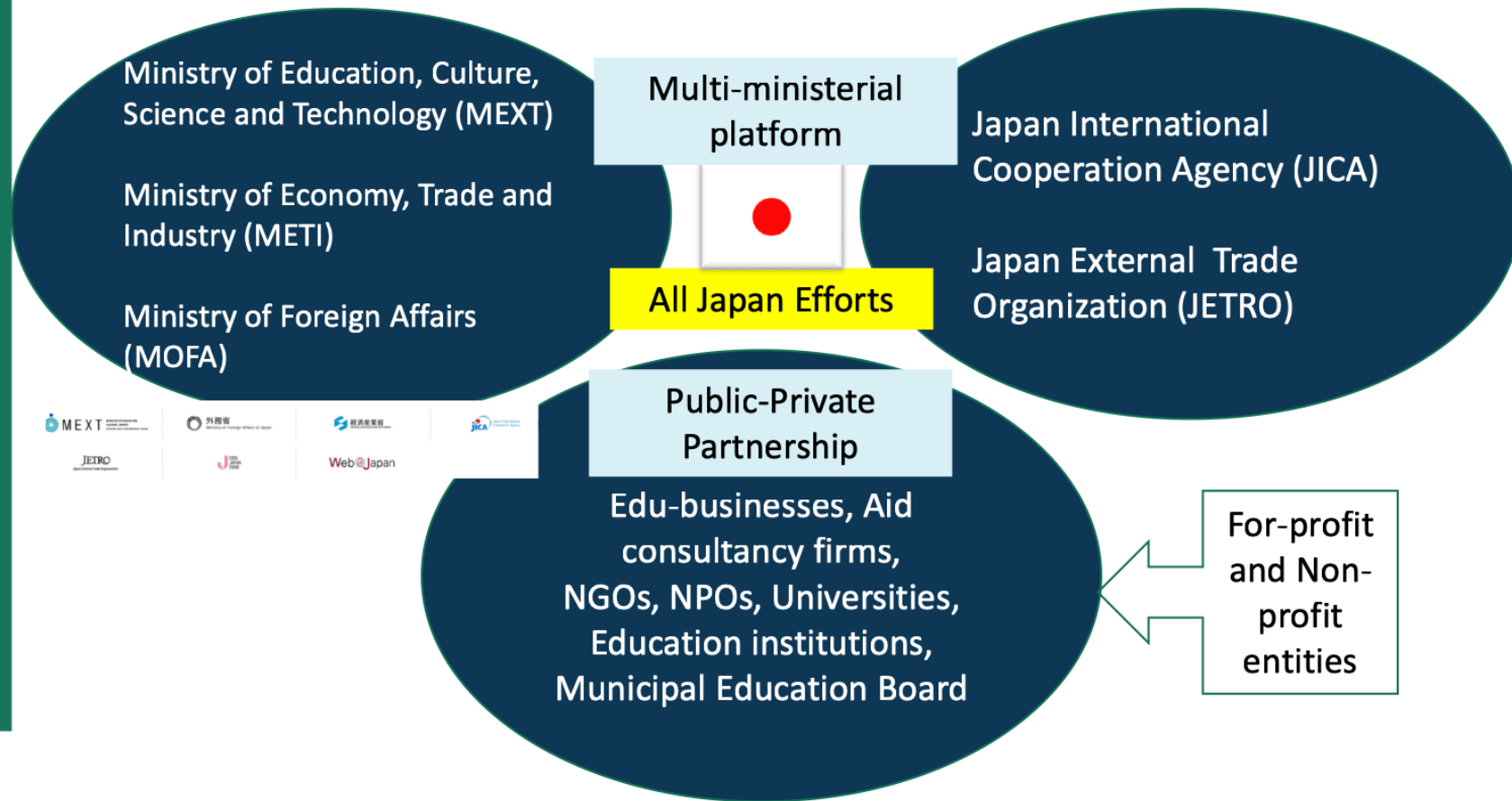
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What is EDU-Port Japan?

‘Public-private partnerships’ launched by the **Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MEXT)** in 2016, to **proactively introduce ‘Japanese-style education overseas.’**



Multiple rationales of EDU-port

Tension and contradiction?

Marketization vs learning from others

Marketization vs contributing to the interests of other nations?

① Objective # 1 : Internationalize Japanese education

Internationalization of Japanese curriculum, **global human resource** development, increase **foreign students** in Japanese universities

➔ Education/Learning rationale

② Objective # 2: Increase pro-Japanese population overseas

- Enhancement of Japan's **soft power** and international standing
- **Address global issues**, contribution to SDGs and ESD

➔ Soft-power + Humanist/Emancipatory rationale (aid)

③ Objective #3: Contribute to Japanese economic growth

- expansion of (Japanese) **edu-business's overseas operations**
- Developing **Japanese style human capital** needed for **Japanese style of infrastructure**

➔ Economic/Marketization rationale

Main functions of EDU-port (1)

Public relations about 'Japanese style of education'

- Promotional videos and brochure
- Education fairs, Edu-business expo
- Seminars targeting foreign missions in Japan
- Information Sharing/ Needs Matching



• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFNJkH0sEAg&t=19s>



• <https://www.eduport.mext.go.jp/event/international-forum/educa-thailand2017/>

Main functions of EDU-port

(2) Pilot projects

- 66 pilot projects received *either/both financial /non-financial support from the state* between 2017-2020
- **Wide range of beneficiaries**
(Edu-businesses, universities, NGOs, municipal education board, etc.)
- **Wide varieties of 'Japanese style of education'**
Lesson study, health education, school sports festival, robotics education, auto-mechanics education, Japanese-style early childhood education, online learning tools, etc.
- Targets emerging economies and 'developing' countries



<https://www.eduport.mext.go.jp/epsite/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/pilot-poster201903en.pdf>

Some issues

- **Discursiveness of ‘Japanese style of education’**
 - **Significance of support by the state to big Edu-businesses** (esp. to ‘get into’ the national curriculum of other nations)
- ➔ MEXT assumes an **entrepreneurial role** to facilitate education export for the first time?

What made this historic policy turn in Japan?



Growing external attention/attraction to Japanese education

Overseas attraction examples:

▪ **KOSEN** (colleges of technology, from Thailand, Vietnam etc.)

▪ **TOKKATSU** (non-subject students' special activities in schools such as cleaning, lunch duties, etc, from Egypt, India, etc.)



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- External attraction as a key policy driver for national education export (= Finland)
 - External attraction not necessarily driven only by OECD's PISA (≠ Finland)
 - Japan's performance on PISA used to indicate the relative superiority of Japanese education by Japanese actors
 - Universalist languages of ILSA(international large-scale assessments) used to introduce 'uniquely' Japanese education practices
- ➔ complex global-local interplay

Economic and geopolitical challenges

□ Economic challenges

- Prolonged economic recession
- Shrinking domestic market (demographic change)
- Relocation of Japanese manufacturing industries to Southeast Asia
 - ➔ Need for the state's support to new exportable goods and services
- Domestic Labor shortage and the need to develop foreign human resources (foreign workers)

□ Geopolitical changes and challenges

- Rise of China as major economic and military power
- Rise of emerging economies in Asia, Middle East, Africa, Latin America (opportunities and threat), Fierce global competition

➔ **Revitalizing Japan's economy and its standing in international society became twin agenda**

Proactive economic diplomacy under 2nd Abe administration

Behind the formation of EDU-Port

Return of Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister (2012): 'taking strong Japan back'

Political stability + Strong power centered in the Prime Minister's Office (*Kantei*)

- ✓ **Proactive economic diplomacy through strategic PPPs, PM as a top salesman**
- ✓ **Infrastructure export policy** (requiring developing 'Japanese style human resources')
- ✓ **Demand for MEXT's support expressed by Edu-businesses for their overseas activities**
- ✓ **Transnational borrowing of national education export strategy from Finland, Singapore**

EDU-port as a new form of international cooperation in education and the strategy to internationalize Japanese education

- **Change in the discourse of Official Development Assistance (ODA)**
 - ❖ **National interest foreground** [commercial/security/soft-power...] + **altruism**
 - ❖ Declining ODA budget and public support, promotion of PPPs, 'Branding' of Japanese aid

- **Discourse of 'Internationalizing' Japanese education**
 - Business's demand for 'global human resources' with English proficiency and 'global mindset' to succeed in global marketplace
 - Internationalize Japanese universities to improve global university rankings
 - Need to 'internationalize' Japanese education

The role of border crossing individual behind the scene

- **The Special Advisor to the Minister of MEXT:**
 - Former MITI civil servant turned into a politician (later turned into an academic)
 - Close links with Edu-business and Education Department of OECD, a well-known 'innovator'
- tactfully aligned divergent and conflicting national interests through his cross-over experiences to shape the EDU-port Japan.
- strategically mobilized the international policy discourses to legitimize EDU-port, by moving in and out of the global and national spaces seamlessly.

Thank you very much.