

International Education and Social Impact: Perspectives from Japan

Polina Ivanova, Ritsumeikan University

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International higher education

- Higher education (HE) as public good = collective/social benefits
- International HE as ‘global public good’ (Marginson, 2014): ‘global social justice’ (Carpentier & Courtois, 2022), ‘broadening perspectives and nurturing global citizenship’ (Huang & Horiuchi, 2018)
- Aspects of international HE: **incoming international students**, local students studying abroad, virtual exchanges (online study abroad, COIL), internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC), international staff (admin and teaching), cross-border research collaborations

Social impact of international students

- Impact on **receiving countries**: economic benefits (tuition, goods & services, job creation), soft power/IS as ‘cultural ambassadors’ (Tian & Liu, 2019), “preservation of linguistic and cultural influence and other geopolitical considerations” (Carpentier & Courtois, 2022),
- Impact on **sending countries**: human capital development, capacity building, new perspectives, international networks and better leadership (Mercier, 2016)
- Impact on **HEIs**: ‘internationalisation at home’, improved policies and practices (Tian & Liu, 2019), bringing diversity, ‘different academic cultures and intellectual traditions’ (Ryan, 2012; Karakaşoğlu et al., 2022), “long-term sustainability” and future safeguard (Marginson & Highman, 2018)
- Impact on **local communities**: focus on economic contributions (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016; Findlay et al., 2017), improving international competitiveness of local companies (Huang & Horiuchi, 2018)
- Non-economic benefits are less explored, esp. at people2people level: “universities as anchor institutions” (Ehlenz, 2018; Bell, 2019) & attempts to engage students in this process (Kebea, 2019)

Non-economic contribution: social capital

Social capital
“connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise among them”
(Putnam, 2000)

RQ:
Can social capital be built in diverse groups in the short term?

30
CSOs
in
Japan

Why Japan?

- 231.146 international students in 2022 (JASSO, 2023), peak # 312.214 students in 2019
- Most students (93% in 2022, JASSO 2023) from other Asian countries
- ->“Asianisation” (Rakhshandehroo, 2018)

Aid approach to IHE
(Ishikawa, 2011)

Attention to
foreigners
In
communities

Diverse groups: age, ethnicity, gender, language, education



Methodology

- Participant observation of public events and closed meetings
- Textual analysis of printed and digital materials
- Semi-structured interviews with CSO staff and volunteers, international students, and university staff
- Data collection in 2017-2018 and in 2020-2021
- 30 civil society organisations (CSOs) in 4 prefectures in Western Japan (wider area during the pandemic: Fukuoka and Tokyo area)

On-campus groups	Off-campus groups
Peer support groups for IS	Groups affiliated to local governments
University societies	Groups affiliated to the central government
Alumni networks	Municipal ethnic associations
Ethnic associations	Nonprofit organisations (NPOs)
	Grassroots
	Informal hobby groups

Typical events

- Cultural exchange events, Japanese language classes, providing daily life information, job-hunting support, volunteering, self-organisation among international students
- Reliance on face-to-face communication (cooking, eating)
- Most organisations apolitical and secular

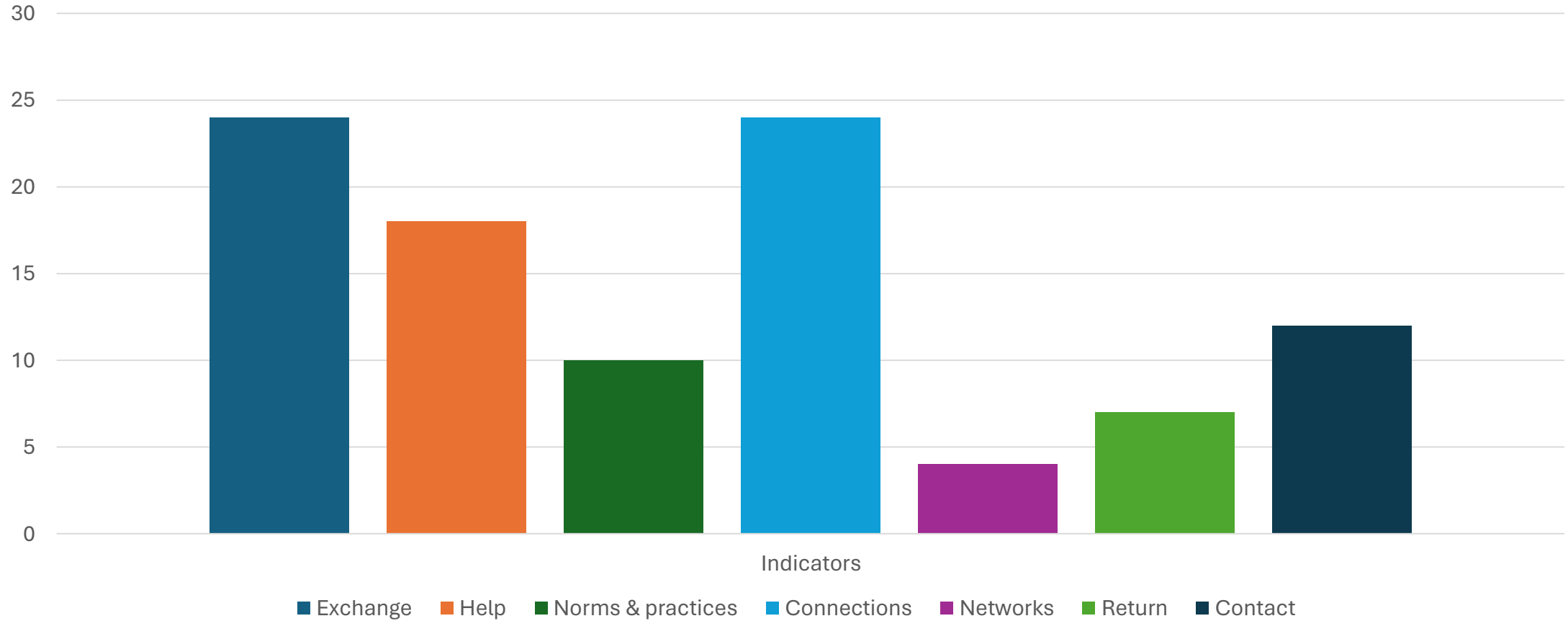


Social capital during the pandemic



Indicators of social capital

Number of groups, out of total 30 CSOs



Factors influencing social capital

Best practices

- intentionality of creating ties
- programmes/event series instead of one-time events
- value congruence among members and/or adequate mitigation (intercultural training)
- consistency in the organisational behaviour
- flexibility of the organisation's schedule and relaxed practices
- offering room for international students' initiatives (e.g., involving them in event planning and decision-making)
- international students' active membership/leadership
- shared goals to pursue
- intrinsic interest in the activity
- effective coordination among the actors

Obstacles

- Mismatch of motives among the actors
- Lack of cultural sensitivity
- Pressure to volunteer
- International students' temporary stay in Japan,
- Absence of a coordinating agency supporting international students, e.g., UK Council for International Students Affairs (UK CISA)
- Focus on entertaining, rather than integrating
- Focus on traditional cultural activities, rather than social (pizza party, movie night, coffee hour)
- Emphasis on cultural differences, not similarities

Local community & international students

Contributions:

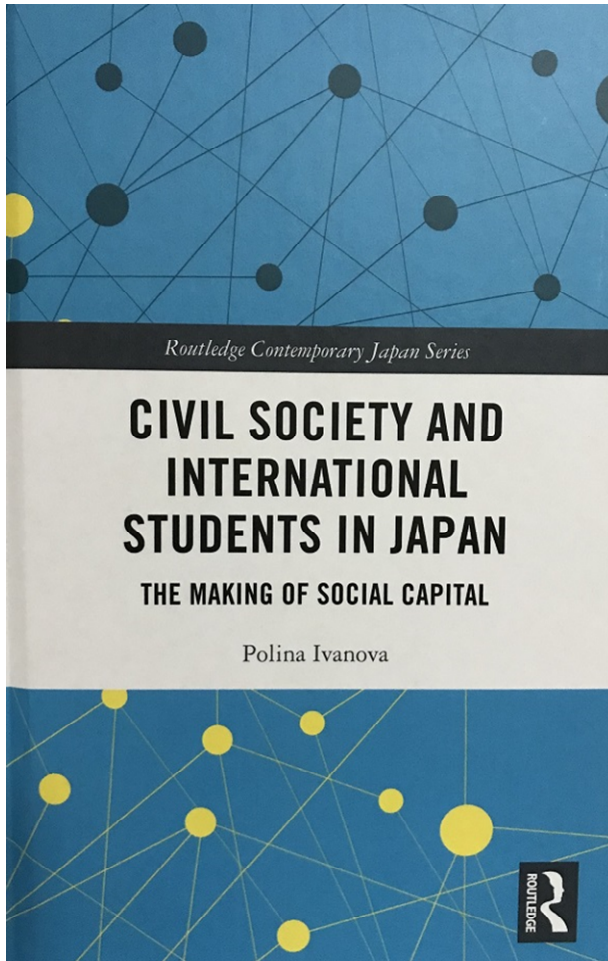
- Emotional and relational needs of both (ageing society; children and grandchildren away)
- Passing down skills/knowledge to someone
- Practical needs of the community (planting trees, cleaning rivers, taking care of shelter animals)
- Deeper emotional connections with host families (staying in touch over the years)
- Opportunities for bonding social capital

Limitations (what I would have done differently):

- Insufficient attention to intersectionality: gender, race, age and class
- Need for greater attention to structural issues: discrimination, xenophobia, racism
- More diverse solutions (e.g., not only seeing intercultural education as a panacea)

Conclusion

- Social capital can be created in the short term in diverse groups -> social impact of IS
- Comparative studies with Anglophone countries (the UK, Australia, and the US): IS are also participating in student societies, charities, volunteer organisations
- Less attention toward IS in local communities
- Japan: no political and religious groups on campus (except few universities with religious founders)
- Priority of 'harmony' over deeper discussion -> avoiding difficult topics -> superficial conversations
- Emphasis on Japanese traditional culture, rather than inclusive sociality
- Cooking, walking tours, shared hobbies, sports, arts -> more conducive to social capital
- Possible parallels across East Asia: economic contribution of IS not the top priority (Tian & Liu, 2019)
– same attention in communities?



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- Chapter 1. Theories of civil society and social capital
- Chapter 2. International students and their support groups in Japan
- Chapter 3. Expectations and disillusionment in interactions between international students and civil society organisations (CSOs)
- Chapter 4. International students and their support groups during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Chapter 5 Can social capital be generated in the short term?
- Conclusion
- Appendices

Thank you!

polinaiv@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp



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