



Title	Government Sponsored Students as Agents of National Development? Perspectives of Mongolian Alumni from Japanese Graduate Schools
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Osaka University

Abstract of Thesis

Name (ENKHTUR Ariunaa)	
Title	Government Sponsored Students as Agents of National Development? Perspectives of Mongolian Alumni from Japanese Graduate Schools (国家発展への奨学金プログラムの影響—日本へ留学したモンゴル人学生の所見)
Abstract of Thesis	
<p>This study explored the experiences of Mongolian alumni sponsored by three types of Japanese and Mongolian government funded scholarship programs who studied and graduated from Japanese universities with Master's and/or Ph.D. degrees. While all three scholarship programs share similar aims to prepare human resources who would contribute to Mongolian national development in some ways, each program has its own scheme, characteristics, selection criteria, programming, and different types of agreements with students regarding their post-program trajectories. Through sequential mixed methods research, this study elaborated the differences in alumni's learning experiences in Japan and their career path by their scholarship programs. It also found similar patterns in how alumni conceptualize their learning process in Japan, benefits of their studies, ways in which they contribute to their home country, and the challenges they face in their efforts.</p> <p>Although government-sponsored international higher education scholarship programs date back to the colonial period, it was from the latter half of 20th century when scholarships as 'a vehicle for overseas development assistance' underpinned widespread investment by governments (Dassin et al., 2017). Netherlands, Germany, the UK, or Australia have a long history of providing scholarships for foreign students to study in their countries as a form of development aid (Kent, 2017). Similarly, human resource development and self-help philosophy have been an integral part of the development strategy in Asia, particularly in Japan, Korea, and China (Yamada, 2016).</p> <p>In 2015, the United Nations (UN) recommended in number four (target b) of its Sustainable Development Goals to 'substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries...for enrolment in higher education' (UN, 2015). The rationale behind this goal and many other scholarships is that 'scholarships for individuals to pursue</p>	

international education can lead to more equitable, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous communities' (Dassin et al., 2017). Another assumption is that individuals would develop not only technical and professional skills but also critical and analytical thinking, leadership skills, build personal and professional networks, and expand their perspectives to look at issues, or become better equipped to solve problems (Campbell, 2016). However, despite growth in a number of available scholarship programs, much remains unclear about sponsored students experiences—whether their learning experience prepares them to make changes in their communities upon completion of programs and how these alumni “give back” to the home country.

Applying transformative learning theories (Mezirow, 1991; Freire, 1970), the human capital theory (McMahon, 2009), and human capability approach (Sen, 2000), this study 1) explored how Mongolian grantees make meaning of their learning experience in Japan as recipients of government-funded flagship scholarships, 2) examined the perceived contributions of scholarship alumni to the national development of Mongolia, and 3) elaborated the contextual challenges alumni face in their attempts to apply their knowledge and skills in the Mongolian contexts. Another sub-question was to examine how scholarship program agreements influence students' choices and trajectories based on alumni accounts. The transformative learning theories made it possible to explore whether these sponsored students learn in fundamental ways beyond technical skills and academic degrees but in life-changing ways that promote “action” when they complete their programs. The human capital theory and human capability approach—the foundational theories that support the rationales of these government scholarship programs, were useful to explore how alumni understand their role in the home country development.

Employing exploratory sequential mixed methods (Creswell, 2014) this study consisted of three phases—1) phenomenological study that explored alumni experiences through semi-structured interviews, 2) questionnaire study that explored the prevalence of themes from the first phase, differences between programs, areas of studies, job positions, and 3) follow-up interview phase to elaborate findings from the two previous phases. As a result, the study had four key findings.

The first main finding was that alumni developed multiple perspectives and contextual understanding in Japan (perspective transformation), in addition to other technical knowledge and skills. This includes alumni's ability to understand their own assumptions of self and others, see how their perceptions of reality shape their thoughts and actions, and an ability to see an issue from different

perspectives. The interview findings showed that alumni had perspective transformation through three types of entry-ways: 1) by experiencing disorienting dilemma that pushed them to reflect on their assumptions of self and others, 2) through observations and constant comparisons led by their existing motivations and interests 3) by trying different roles and behaviors in order to meet the social expectations. Both academic and socio-cultural factors played an important role in alumni's transformative experience. This included both challenges (that shook their beliefs) as well as supports (such as mentorship). Supervisors played an important role in challenging as well in supporting alumni. Family especially the presence of children helped alumni to get out of the structured academic world and be more immersed in other extra-education activities and ordinary Japanese society. However, lack of challenging experience that stimulated growth, ineffective communication with supervisors, lack of educational and social supports to grow, and a few opportunities to act on their learning were detrimental to their perspective transformation. While most alumni experienced initial stages of transformative learning—questioning their assumptions, only about half were able to take actions on their learning.

The second main finding was that regardless of their program types alumni were motivated to contribute to their communities, institutions, as well as the economic, political and legal conditions of Mongolia. Many found ways to do so through multiple channels such as teaching, conducting research, forming NGOs, taking over projects outside their full-time jobs. Staying in Mongolia regardless of low-pay, running business, bringing foreign investments, or just improved quality of works were viewed as a contribution to the national development. Alumni viewed themselves to be role models in morals and ethics which were understood something crucial for the national development. In addition, higher education institutions and alumni hubs such as rotary clubs provided positive platforms that encouraged alumni to act on their learning and take an action.

The third main finding was that alumni face structural and institutional challenges to find suitable jobs, apply their skills and knowledge, and make positive changes once they return to Mongolia. Alumni lacked a sustainable policy framework and mechanisms to support them beyond their education abroad. The scholarship programs did not show meaningful support for alumni either—it was up to them to utilize their education and experiences. However, without support, only a few alumni could take meaningful actions. While alumni-initiated associations existed, they lacked funding and administrative support to facilitate any meaningful discourses.

The fourth finding was that while binding scholarship agreement that required alumni to return to their home country and work for government organizations for certain period partially “worked” in the short term, these agreements did not seem to work in the long term due to absence of efficient mechanisms

and policies that support these agreements. The JDS and MGL alumni returned due to binding agreements that require them return to home country and work for government or state sector for a certain period of years; however, many struggled to find jobs at the institutions with which they made contracts. Also, working in such organizations did not mean that they could apply their learning in positive ways due to work culture and lack of supports that inhibit alumni share their voices. MEXT alumni, on the other hand, did not have any agreements that required alumni return; however, many did return to their previous institutions. The findings suggest that alumni generally struggled to return to government sector due to high perception of corruption, lack of job positions or frequent restructures, or alumni avoided to returning to these organizations due to low pay and lack of compelling work environment. On the other hand, alumni return rate was higher to higher education institutions, research centers, and hospitals. Alumni working in these organizations also felt that they have more contributions in their sector through teaching and research.

Overall, these findings illustrated the importance of intentional programming before, during, and after the scholarship programs. A shared understanding of scholarship programs goals between host university, program administrators, and policymakers in the home country is fundamental to ensure that students gain not only technical skills but also develop their agency to act on their learning and make changes in their home country. Policy frameworks that tie the scholarship programs with national development goals and administrative and financial support for alumni hubs are essential to ensure the long-term impact of these programs in the home country.

Finally, the transformative learning theories offer a promising approach to illuminate the learning experiences of foreign students abroad and for designing intentional intervention programs to foster students' self-agency. In addition, the framework helps researchers connect the learning with individual actions beyond learners' graduation.

論文審査の結果の要旨及び担当者

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論文審査の結果の要旨

Title: Government sponsored students as agents of national development? Perspectives of Mongolian alumni from Japanese Graduate Schools

This doctoral thesis explores the experiences of Mongolian alumni who received one of three government scholarships to study at graduate level in Japan: The Japanese Government Research Student Scholarship (MEXT), the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resources Development (JDS), and the Mongolian Government Scholarship (MGS). Each scholarship has different requirements and conditions, especially regards contribution to the sending country upon completion of studies. The research aimed to understand how scholarship program requirements and conditions influence the alumni's perception of their learning experiences while studying in Japan and their trajectories after graduation. Given that these scholarships are supposed to contribute to home country development a key question was the degree to which these alumni were willing and able to work in a key position to be able to realize this aim post studies.

The research set out to address three main questions: 1) How do the Mongolian alumni of Japanese graduate schools make meaning of their learning experience in Japan as scholarship students over the longer term? 2) How do scholarship grantees perceive that their home country benefits from their study in Japan? 3) Are there any challenges that limit the contribution that these alumni are able to make to their home country? To address these questions, the research design was exploratory and employed a sequential mixed-methods approach with a qualitative arm (questionnaire survey) sandwiched between two quantitative arms (pre- and post-questionnaire semi-structured interviews). The conceptual framework for understanding learning was that of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, Freire etc.). In addition, human capital theory (McMahon) and human capability theory (Sen, Nussbaum) were employed as conceptual frameworks to explore the contribution of these alumni through the three scholarship programs to home development.

The standard of the research and the output is very high. The thesis makes an excellent job of critically examining relevant scientific literature in the field and identifying an important gap in the knowledge base. The student was able to create meaningful research questions from this review and ones that she was rather uniquely positioned to address as a Mongolian scholarship student herself working in the field of education and development.

The research design is well thought out and appropriate to the objectives of the research. The approach taken is effective and allows the researcher to address in novel ways the research questions. The use of transformative theory to explore perception transformation as a result of studying in Japan was the most innovative and productive aspect of the research. The methodology chapter itself is perhaps placed rather late in the thesis and overly detailed. It may have been better positioned before the contextual chapter on scholarship programs and background. Nevertheless,

the methodology chapter demonstrates a solid understanding of what can be achieved as well as the limits of the methodological tools she has chosen.

The results section is divided between two chapters, one focusing on the initial qualitative arm of the study and the other on the survey and follow up interviews. One important and satisfying finding was that the alumni were motivated to contribute to home development whether at a community, institutional, or state level. It was clear that returning to work in Mongolia often resulted in resigning themselves to be satisfied with low pay or inferior working conditions compared to what may have been possible if they had stayed in Japan. So a second important finding was that structural and institutional barriers were commonly faced by alumni who returned to Japan limiting their capacity to contribute to home development to the fullest degree. Some returned to find their position, which should have been held, had been filled by someone else. For some positions internal networks rather than knowledge and experience determined job placements. This sometimes left alumni at a disadvantage having been distanced from local networks over a considerable period of time. Finally, the research showed that some, but not all alumni experienced transformative learning while studying in Japan. Importantly, the channel or drivers for transformation were often informal through contact with wider Japanese society. Family was a main vehicle as the presence of a spouse or children often demanded deeper contact with the host society than the research alone necessitated. This is an especially interesting insight and one that scholarship providers and host institutions may want to take note of to increase the benefits of this kind of human resource investment.

The thesis, written in English itself was highly readable. Each chapter clearly outlined the content and a final summary reminded the reader of what they had just read. The style of writing was correct to the academic genre and very accessible, albeit a little pedestrian. The student was able to publish part of her research in a Japanese studies journal and she has another part under review in a journal specializing in education and development.

Overall, the examining committee agreed that the quality of the research and output was high, and that the results make a contribution to our understanding of how and under what kind of conditions scholarship programs can contribute to home development as well as perspective transformation. The case study of Mongolian students studying in Japan makes a welcome contribution to the field that is dominated by Anglophone host countries.