

Internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions in comparative perspectives: Case studies of China, Japan and The Netherlands

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Abstract. This article discusses the major issues and character of internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions in recent years in three non-English-speaking countries – China, Japan and The Netherlands. By making a comparative analysis of curricula provided for international students and curricula with international subjects, perspectives or approach offered in both English and the local language, the author examines development and character of internationalized curricula in the three countries, describes the similarities and different aspects of how the three countries internationalized their university curricula and met the needs of different regions and social, economic and higher education systems.

Keywords: China, comparative perspective, internationalization of university curriculum, Japan and The Netherlands.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions has played an increasingly important part in reforms of higher education system in many countries. In this paper, the author is particularly concerned with internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions in three non-English-speaking countries – China, Japan and The Netherlands. The three countries are chosen in this study for the following reasons. First, international perspectives and activities are being increasingly integrated into curricula in higher education institutions in each country. Internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions has come to be regarded as a very important indicator of the internationalization of higher education. Second, the three countries can provide examples of internationalization of curricula in higher education in the non-English-speaking context: China represents developing Asia; Japan represents developed Asia; while The Netherlands offers an example in Europe, that has long offered many

programs in English. By making comparative studies, we may discover similarities and distinctive aspects of internationalization of curriculum in higher education among the different countries and obtain insights into how internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions has been undertaken in order to meet the needs of different regions and the general trend of higher education worldwide.

Internationalization of curriculum in higher education institutions can be interpreted in many ways. The definition and types of internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions by the OECD research group are widely influential and considered as most useful indicators (OECD 1996). Further, the book on *Internationalizing the Curriculum in Dutch Higher Education: an International Comparative Perspective*, based on the case study of internationalizing the curriculum in Dutch Higher Education by Professor M.C. van der Wende, is published in English and lot of information about internationalization of university curricula in The Netherlands is provided (van der Wende 1996). As for the internationalization of China's higher education, Dr. Rui Yang made an analysis of the role of the English language in the internationalization of China's higher education in his book *Third Delight: The Internationalization of Higher Education in China* (Yang 2002). Besides, Professor Anthony Welch also examined the current situation and issues of internationalization of China's higher education based on the comparative study in educational services in Southeast Asia (Welch 2004). With regard to the internationalization of Japan's higher education in recent years, Professor Ruth Hayhoe's paper based on her field study and interviews in Japan is worthwhile to be mentioned (Hoyhoe 2001).

However, as the meaning of curriculum varies greatly in different countries and the definition and typology by the OECD in 1996 cannot be totally applied to some particular countries with changing context. In this paper the author defines the term of internationalized curriculum as a group of programs with an international name, content or perspective; it can therefore be used interchangeably with programs, subjects or courses. While making a comparative study of the three countries in particular, the author makes an analysis of internationalization of curriculums in according with different target groups: programs for international students, for domestic students and programs for all students. Based on the target group, the author discusses similarities and differences in internationalized programs by field of study, by educational level, by final qualification, the teaching language, and institutions responsible for related programs in the three countries.

The cases: China, Japan and The Netherlands

China

In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in the number of incoming international students in Chinese higher education institutions. There have been however no radical changes in students' composition by country of origin. For example, from 1990 to 2002, students from Asian countries constituted 70% of all international students in China. Among them, a majority came from Japan and South Korea, indicating that students from East Asia accounted for a major group. In regard to curricula by field of study for international students, while since the middle of the 1990s international students have increasingly taken courses in economics, management, law, international politics, chemistry and mathematics, a large number of international students are still majored in humanities, mostly studying Chinese language or Chinese medicine. For example, in 1995 the percentage of international students who took courses in humanities, including Chinese language, literature and history etc., constituted nearly 90% (China Education Yearbook Editorial Board 1996) of all curricula followed by international students. Even in 2002, the same group still accounted for 86% (Table 1). In terms of institutions in which curricula for international students are provided, there has been a continuing rise in the number of institutions qualified to recruit international students (Figure 1). Furthermore, international students have moved from classes or educational structures that are specifically designated and separated from local students to departments or institutes where they can take courses in the same classes as Chinese

Table 1. Programs learned by international students by field of study in 2002

| Discipline | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|
| Humanities | 81 |
| Chinese medicine | 8 |
| Engineer | 4 |
| Western medicine | 3 |
| Agriculture | 1 |
| Science | 1 |
| Arts | 1 |
| Physical education | 1 |

Source: China Education Yearbook Editorial Board, *China Education Yearbook*. People's Education Press, Beijing, 2002, p. 337.

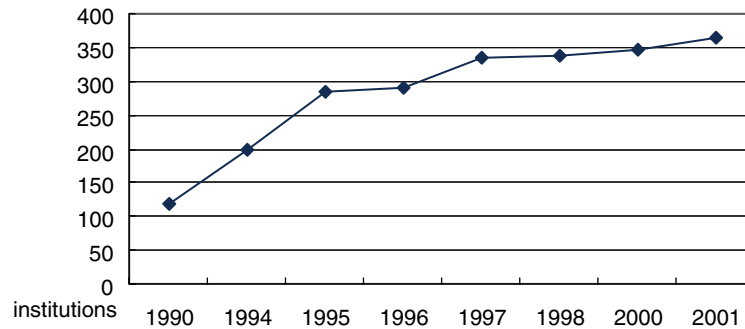


Figure 1. Increase of universities recruiting international students. Sources: China Education Yearbook Editorial Board, *China Education Yearbook*. 1991,1995,1996,1997, 1998,1999,2001, People's Education Press, Beijing, <http://www.Studyinchina.net.cn> accessed on October 9, 2003.

students. For example, by the 1990s, in Fudan University more than 90% of international students followed courses in the Section of Chinese-Language Training or the Section of Chinese Language and Culture, a structure totally separated from other departments or institutes and catering only to international students; by 2002, 35% of international students were enrolled in departments or colleges in the university (<http://www.fudan.edu.cn> accessed on August 10, 2003).

However, it should be stressed that, unlike the other two countries, in China not all higher education institutions are qualified to recruit international students; and even in institutions that are authorized to recruit international students, not all curricula in the institution are open to foreign students. In other words, programs specially designated for international students and programs that these students can attend are limited to accredited institutions. In regard to teaching language for international students, normally curricula provided for international students majoring in Chinese language, Chinese medicine and humanities are delivered in Chinese language. But in some prestigious universities, there is indeed an increase in the number of non-degree programs in Chinese language or culture that are delivered in English for short-term international students. In addition, there has been also a growth in the number of degree-conferring programs in English language at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in some leading universities, especially in natural science and engineering. For example, in Tsinghua University, at present there are about 57 professional programs that are delivered in English and it is planned that the number of English language programs will be increased to about 30% of all

programs in the university in near future. (<http://news.cic.tsinghua.edu.cn>. accessed on October 10, 2003)

On the other hand, changes are also taking place in the internationalization of curricula mainly for domestic students. As there are nearly 1200 higher education institutions in China and the situation varies greatly between different institutions, it is extremely difficult to describe the whole picture. A case study of Fudan University, one of the most prestigious comprehensive universities in China with about 2,353 international students in 2002 (Annual Report 2002, Foreign Affairs, Fudan University), is provided here (Table 2).

Table 2 indicates that about 273 new programs with international subjects or contents were introduced from 1990 to 2002, among the newly-introduced programs, the number of programs in foreign languages or linguistics and interdisciplinary programs such as regional and areas studies covering more than one country was increased most rapidly, rising by 166 and 85 respectively. What is especially worth noting is that some programs leading to joint or double degrees, in partnership with foreign countries and universities in Hong Kong, appear. For example, in recent years, six master-degree programs came into being in Fudan University, which were led to degrees of universities of Norway, Hong Kong, Australia and the USA, mostly being programs concerning international trade, accounting or MBA (<http://www.jsj.edu.cn/mingdan/002.html> accessed on October 11, 2003).

In fact, compared with internationalized curricula at the undergraduate level, at a national level, it is estimated that by July 2003 there were nearly 100 higher education institutions and about 110 joint programs in China that were approved by the government with authority to award degrees of foreign universities or degrees of HK universities (<http://www.jsj.edu.cn/mingdan/002.html> accessed on October 11, 2003). Among these, almost half of the joint programs lead to an MBA degree, and about 90% of them are delivered at the postgraduate level and awarded with master's degrees (Huang 2003).

Another important way to internationalize programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels is to import original foreign university textbooks and to teach bilingually or in English. From 2000, the most recent original English textbooks in 20 subject areas, which deal with information science and techniques, have been imported and introduced into Chinese university campuses (*China Education Daily*, September 6, 2001). A similar effort was also undertaken at institutional level. For example, in 2002 about 10 of the most famous universities in China decided to buy and utilize almost all of the textbooks now being

Table 2. Change of internationalized curricula in Fudan University from 1990 to 2002

| | 1990 | | 2002 | | Change | Program | Change |
|--|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | Specification | Program | Specification | Program | | | |
| International subject | 3 | 48 | 1 | 53 | -2 | 53 | +5 |
| Internationally comparative approach | 0 | 11 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 40 | +29 |
| Curricula preparing students for defined international professions | 3 | 37 | 1 | 18 | -2 | 18 | -19 |
| Foreign languages/cross-culture | 4 | 89 | 6 | 255 | +2 | 255 | +166 |
| Interdisciplinary region/area studies | 0 | 28 | 0 | 113 | 0 | 113 | +85 |
| Partly offered abroad (graduate) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | +1 | 7 | +7 |
| Total | 10 | 213 | 9 | 486 | -1 | 486 | +273 |
| Percentage of the total | 14.5 | 18.9 | 14.3 | 17.1 | -0.2 | 17.1 | -1.8 |

Sources: Division of Teaching Affairs of Fudan University, *A Glance of Teaching 1990*. Division of Teaching Affairs of Fudan University, December, 1990 (unofficially published). Division of Teaching Affairs of Fudan University, Plan for Undergraduate Teaching 2002 (unofficially published). <http://www.software.fudan.edu.cn/htm/jiaoxuejihua02.htm>. Access on October 9, 2003. M.C.van der Wende, *Internationalizing the Curriculum in Dutch Higher Education: an International Comparative Perspective*, University Utrecht, 1996. p.55.

used in Harvard University, Stanford University and MIT. The list of materials includes not only books, tapes and CD's concerning Natural Science, Engineering and Medicine, but also those related to Law, Trade, Management, and some Humanities (*China Youth Daily*, May 13, 2002). Further, with increased import of original textbooks in English, and China's participation in the WTO, more and more higher education institutions in China have begun to make use of English language or bilingual instruction (in most cases, referring to Chinese and English) in university teaching and research activities. In 2001, a document issued by the Ministry of Education indicates that in the coming 3 years, from 5% to 10% of all the curricula in the leading universities must be taught in English, especially in such areas as Biology, Information Science, New Materials, International Trade, and Law (*China Education Daily*, September 22, 2001).

Japan

Strongly stimulated by the government, by 2000 the number of international students in Japan had doubled over the past decade. Similarly to China, 92% of incoming international students in Japan originated from Asian countries in 2000: the biggest share, 56%, came from China, followed by students from South Korea, accounting for 16% of the total (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, *MEXT* 2001). In terms of international students by field of study, as indicated in Table 3, more than half of the students took their courses in humanities and social science. However, in contrast to China and The Netherlands, there were also many students majoring in science, and especially in engineering. Differing largely from China and The Netherlands, many private institutions in Japan also play an important role in providing a variety of curricula for international students. With some variation over time, while over half of graduate students are located in national institutions, more than two-third of undergraduate students and almost all students of short-cycle programs are enrolled in private universities (Division of International Students Bureau of Higher Education, *MEXT* 2001A). By education level, in 2000, 37% of international students entered the graduate schools, pursuing master's or Ph.D. courses, the rest of students being enrolled in either undergraduate courses (43%) or short-cycle programs (20%) (Division of International Students Bureau of Higher Education, *MEXT* 2001B).

Table 3. Percentage of international students by field of study in 2001

| Field of study | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|
| Social science | 29.7 |
| Humanities | 24.3 |
| Engineering | 15.4 |
| Health | 4.3 |
| Education | 4.2 |
| Agriculture | 3.3 |
| Visual performing arts | 2.9 |
| Home economics | 2.0 |
| Physical science | 1.7 |
| Others | 12.2 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: Division of International Students Bureau of Higher Education, MEXT, *Waga kuni no ryugakusei seido no gaiyou – ukeire oyobi haken, Outline of System of International Students in Japan- Incoming and Sending*. 2001. P.11.

With increases in the number of incoming international students, great efforts have been made in the development and implementation of programs designated for international students. Among these, increasing numbers of English language programs, specifically provided for international students, have been introduced in many institutions. In general, the English language programs are divided into two types. The degree-conferring courses or programs specially designated for international universities form one type. These special courses or programs are largely provided in national universities at graduate level, mostly being concerned with physical science, engineering, biology and medicine. For example, by 2001, such graduate programs were provided in 34 national universities and 2 private universities. The other type refers to courses in English specifically designed for students from North America, Europe and other English-speaking countries at the undergraduate level. According to the duration of programs, this type can be further divided into two groups. One group comprises the one-year programs, all provided by national universities, covering subjects in humanities, social science and science as well as other fields of study: credits of 30 units can be conferred by completion of these courses. The other group extends from 4 months to 1 year and is almost entirely provided by private universities with courses in humanities and social science. In 2001, these two kinds of non-degree-conferring programs were provided in 21 national universities and 20 private universities

(Division of International Students Bureau of Higher Education, MEXT 2001C). While many degree programs are offered in English, in graduate schools of physical science, engineering and medicine of prestigious universities, very few English language programs are provided in most other faculties or graduate schools of humanities and social science. For example, in the School of Engineering at the University of Tokyo, it is considered that English language has almost an equal significance for Japanese students as a way to communicate and conduct research work. Not only are faculty members encouraged to offer their lectures and presentations in English, but students are also recommended to make their reports or write their masters' or doctorate theses either in Japanese or in English. (<http://www.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/international/gwp02.html> accessed on October 9, 2003) However, in the Faculty of Economics of the same university, it is clearly stated that no degree-conferring programs are provided in English at either undergraduate or graduate level: all programs are delivered in Japanese and international students are strongly advised to have a good mastery of Japanese language (<http://www.e.u-tokyo.ac.jp/index-j.html> accessed on October 9, 2003).

Elsewhere, much progress has also been achieved in the internationalization of curricula that are open to both international and domestic students. In particular, since the later 1990s, various attempts have been made in private universities in providing more curricula with an international or cross-cultural communication. For example, from 1998 to 2002, 16 private universities established faculties with international or cross-cultural communication titles. Among these, curricula with an international subject and cross-cultural communication or understanding (international communication or culture, etc.) constituted 27% of the total; curricula preparing students for defined international professions (international business and international management, etc.) accounted for 18%; and curricula in foreign languages or linguistics made up of 12% of the total. In addition, the number of graduate programs closely associated with an international orientation has also increased in some prestigious private universities. For example, in the Asia and Pacific University of Ritsumeikan (APU) which was founded in 2002, as half of the students on the campus come from some 50 countries and regions, most of subjects are offered in both Japanese and English in the first and second years. In the third and fourth years, classes are offered in one of the two languages. Furthermore, two graduate schools – the Graduate school of Asia and Pacific Studies, which consists of Asia–Pacific Studies and International

Cooperation Policy, and the Graduate School of Management that offers MBA programs. As indicated in their names, many of the programs in the two schools are concerned with regional or area studies and internationally recognized professions or diplomas. (<http://www.apu.ac.jp/> accessed on September 8, 2003)

In comparison with the private sector, at the undergraduate level in national universities the number of newly established faculties or universities with international or cross-cultural names has not increased so rapidly. In the national institutions, the internationalization of curricula is mostly implemented through development of new programs or broadening the traditional or original subject areas with an international/comparative approach in the existing faculties or is based on the framework of existing specifications. Except for the newly-established special graduate programs for international students mentioned above, far fewer new faculties with international or cross-cultural names have been established at the undergraduate level than in the private sector. Similarly to China, the majority of curricula with international subjects and contents are programs in foreign languages and linguistics. According to the syllabus of Hiroshima University in the 2003 academic year by field of study in humanities and social science, at the undergraduate level, the number of curricula in foreign languages account for about 90% of all those with international subjects or perspective; while those dealing with history and culture of one country, or taught in an internationally comparative approach, or interdisciplinary programs covering more than one country, such as regional and area studies, occupy about 21% of the total. In most cases, these curricula are offered in the first or second years as selective courses, being open to any students, including international students. In contrast, at graduate level, the number of curricula focusing on one foreign country or on regional and area studies increases to about 60%, while the number of curricula in foreign languages is restricted to about 28% of the total curricula related to the international subjects or perspective (<http://www.bur.hiroshima-u.ac.jp> accessed on October 8, 2003).

As pointed out in the OECD documents, in more recent years, internationalization of curricula in Japanese higher education institutions is increasingly undertaken through institutional structures based on numerous bi-and multilateral co-operation agreements between Japanese and foreign institutions. For example, in 2002, about 600 universities were registered as engaged in a total of 10,014 such agreements, an increase from 6,133 agreements in 1995 (<http://www.next.go.jp> accessed on October 9, 2003). This type of co-operation greatly supports the

development and implementation of internationalization of curricula. Additionally, efforts have also been made in all sectors, especially in private universities, to employ more foreigners as faculty members with the purpose of facilitating development and implement of international programs. According to the data, the total number of foreign faculty members being employed in all sectors increased from 3,955 in 1992 to 9,378 in 2002; the percentage of foreign faculty members in the public and private sectors was 18% and 77%, with few changes over the decade (Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, 1992 edition and 2002 edition). In some private universities, for example, in APU, half the faculty members are employed from countries outside Japan.

The Netherlands

Compared with China and Japan, in which a majority of international students come from Asia, international students in Dutch higher education institutions from EU countries constitute the largest component (Table 4). Among curricula designated for international students, many are provided in English.

The development and implementation of English language programs is an important part of internationalization of curricula in Dutch higher education institutions. From the early 1950s, institutes for international education have been established to provide curricula specifically designed for international students and taught in English. Since the latter part of the 1980s, many more English language programs have also been introduced into Universities and Universities of Professional Education (Table 5). In particular, the number of these programs has increased much more rapidly in the universities. Normally, in both universities and universities of professional education, except for a very

Table 4. Incoming mobility by region of origins in the academic year 1999–2000

| Region | Africa | Asia | EU | Latin America | North America | Oceania | East Europe | Other |
|----------------------------|--------|------|-------|------------------|------------------|---------|----------------|-------|
| Number | 179 | 368 | 5,982 | 119 | 31 | 9 | 267 | 32 |
| Percentage of the total | 2.6 | 5.3 | 85.6 | 1.7 | 0.4 | 0.13 | 3.8 | 0.5 |

Source: Based on data from BISCN Monitor of International Mobility in Education 2001, European Platform, Cinop, Nuffic. *Compiled on Assignment for The Netherlands* Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. P. 50. With author's modification.

Table 5. Change of English language programs from 1995–2003

| | 1995 | | 2003 | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Total | 364 | 100% | 682 | 100% | + 318 |
| University | 94 | 25.8 | 281 | 41.2 | + 187 |
| University of professional education | 81 | 22.3 | 197 | 28.9 | + 116 |
| Institute for international education | 189 | 51.9 | 204 | 29.9 | + 15 |

Source: M.C. van der Wende. *Internationalising the Curriculum in Dutch Higher Education: an International Comparative Perspective*. The Hague, The Netherlands, 1996. pp. 57, 64, 66. Also based on the data from <http://www.english.uva.nl/education> accessed on April 27, 2003, but with author's modifications.

few courses specially designated for international students, almost all of the English language programs are open to any students, including domestic students.

The distribution of English programs by field of study is shown in Figure 2. In 2003 in all higher education institutions, programs

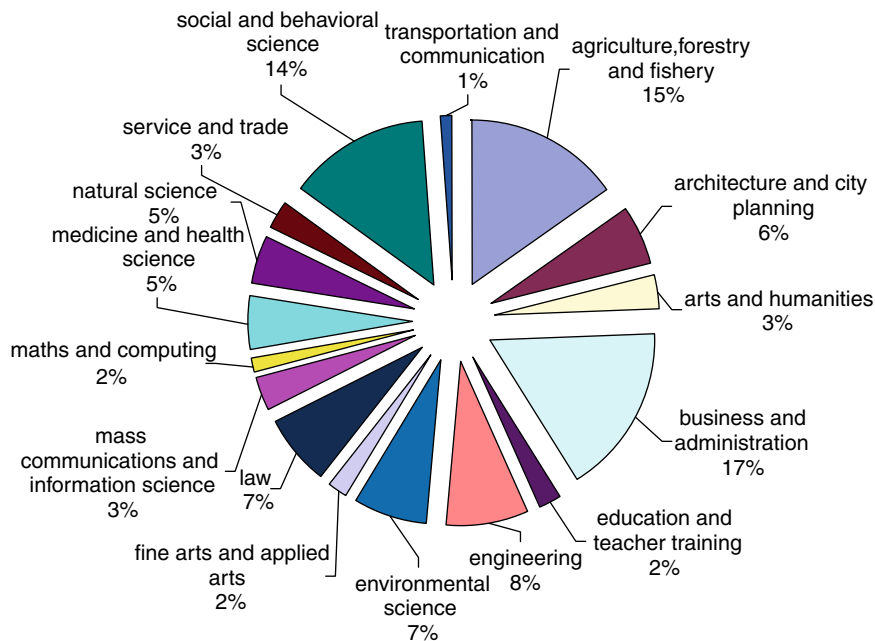


Figure 2. English language programs by field of study. Source: Based on the data from <http://www.english.uva.nl/education>, with author's modifications. Accessed on April 27, 2003.

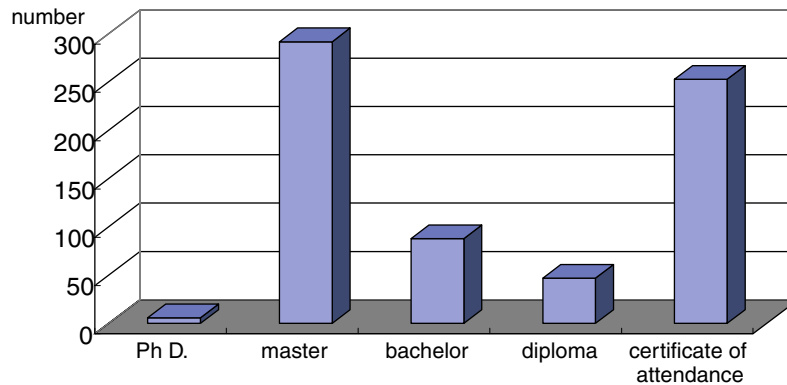


Figure 3. English programs by final qualification (2003). *Source:* Based on the data from <http://www.english.uva.nl/education>, with author's modifications. Accessed on April 27, 2003.

relating to business, administration and management rank top and account for 17%; the second largest programs are those concerning agriculture, forestry and fishery, making up 15%; and programs relating to social and behavioral science provide 14% of the total. In terms of final qualification, as indicated in Figure 3, the number of programs offered at master's level approached 300, more than any

Table 6. Internationalized curricula in Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden

| Case studies/ | Univ. of Amsterdam | | Univ. of Leiden | |
|---|--------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| | English | Dutch | English | Dutch |
| Types based on OECD | | | | |
| International subject | 3 | | | |
| Internationally comparative approach | 2 | | | |
| Preparing for defined international professions | 10 | | 5 | |
| Foreign languages or linguistics/cross-culture | 2 | 10 | 4 | 20 |
| Interdisciplinary region/area studies | 7 | 1 | 7 | |
| Curricula leading to joint or double degrees | | | 5 | |
| Total | 24 | 11 | 21 | 20 |
| Percentage of the total | 25.5% | 18.9% | 40.4% | 41.7% |

Source: Based on the data from *International Study programmes 2002–2003*. University van Amsterdam. Service & Informatiecentrum. Binnengasthuisstraat 9. 1012 ZA Amsterdam. The Netherlands. *Leiden University Programmes*. June 2002. With author's modifications.

other programs, followed by programs conferring a certificate of attendance for short-term international studies, mostly ranging from 6 months to 1 year.

Particularly in some leading universities, such as the University of Amsterdam and the University of Leiden (Table 6), the number of English language programs has exceeded that of programs offered in the Dutch language. For example, by March 2003 in the University of Amsterdam, the percentage of the programs delivered in Dutch constitutes only about 38% of the total programs: 62% of programs are all provided in English (based on the data from <http://www.english.uva.nl/education>, accessed on April 27, 2003) The same situation is seen also in Leiden University, in which the number of English language programs surpasses 50% of the total, more than those offered in Dutch language (based on the data from Leiden University Programmes, June 2002 and <http://www.leiden.edu/> accessed on April 27, 2003.)

However, it should be stressed that in both universities, while the Dutch language programs are mainly provided at undergraduate level, evidence shows that all English language programs are delivered at graduate level and in particular at masters' degree level.

On the other hand, and as in both China and Japan, of all the programs offered in both English and Dutch with international subjects or perspective, almost all of the Dutch language programs are curricula in foreign languages or linguistics and provide training in intercultural skills; in contrast most of the English language programs have curricula that prepare students for defined international professional and interdisciplinary programs such as regional and area studies.

Compared with China and Japan, a majority of the English language programs are normally introduced and implemented by faculty members at individual institutions in The Netherlands. Most recently, English language programs related to English language teaching and international administration or business in cooperation with Turkey, U.K. and Australia, have been provided in some universities for both international students and Dutch students. For example, in Leiden University there have existed joint international programs, such as the European studies program in co-operation with Istanbul Bilgi University in Turkey, International Masters Asia with the University of Melbourne in Australia, the Leiden-Oxford Diploma Program and the Medical Anthropology & Ethnobotany Program in co-operation with the Universitas Padjadjan in Indonesia (Universiteit Leiden, 2002).

Discussion and analyses

As stated above, several similarities can be found among the three countries. First, since the 1990s there has been a rapid increase in the number of internationalized programs in the three countries. In particular the number of programs in foreign languages, most of them being English subjects at the undergraduate level, has increased substantially. Second, programs specially designated for international students mostly cater to international students from a particular region or countries or from nearby countries. For example, in The Netherlands the vast majority of incoming international students come from EU countries; and in China and Japan, the majority of international students come from East Asian countries. The three case studies reflect the fact that not only foreign students in developing countries are mainly from their neighbors, as being pointed out by some scholars (Akinpelu 1994; Yang 2005), but also it is true in developed countries. Third, the internationalized curricula in the three countries are normally composed of two types: the first type represents programs concerning languages, history or culture of the host country, which explicitly address cross-cultural communication issues and provide training in intercultural skills. A majority of them belong to non-degree-conferring courses that are provided in a specially designated classes or centers for international students on short-term, courses lasting from several weeks to one year or so. Though some of them are still taught in local languages, the number of programs delivered in English language has grown very rapidly. The second type covers professional programs that are regionally or internationally recognized for their high academic quality in the host countries. These include, for example, programs of Chinese medicine provided in Chinese universities, programs of engineering and medicine in Japanese national universities and programs of agriculture, forestry or management offered in Dutch institutions. Nearly all of them belong to degree-conferring programs, mostly provided at the graduate level. In most cases, they are not especially designated for international students in a separate class but are also open to domestic students. In this second type, the language of teaching varies greatly among the countries. However, it is likely that increasingly such programs will be delivered in English. For example, in The Netherlands, as mentioned above, the number of English programs at graduate level has already exceeded 50% of the total in some research-oriented universities; In Japan, they are mostly provided in English in graduate schools of physical science, engineering and medicine both in leading

national universities and in a few prestigious private institutions at both undergraduate and graduate levels; In China, compared with the other two countries, few English programs can be found in most institutions except for a very limited number of faculties or colleges of engineering and natural science in leading universities; but since the latter 1990s, the number of English programs is growing. Moreover, since the 1990s, the English language has also been widely adopted in teaching various degree-conferring programs; especially in the most recent years, the development and implementation of English programs at graduate level. In addition, the wide use of English language as a medium of instruction in non-degree-conferring programs and development of English programs in some professional areas at graduate level are not only considered as a means of attracting more international students, and as a tool to transmit one national character and identity, but are also regarded as an effective way to improve domestic students' competency in English, internationalize educational programs of one's own country and enhance the quality of education and research.

On the other hand, difference can also be found in the development and implementation of internationalized programs among the three countries. In China, as more non-degree-conferring programs concerning Chinese language, Chinese history and Chinese medicine are provided for international students and few English language programs are offered for all students, the internationalization of curricula is language/culture-oriented, characterized by more informal and local language programs. With regard to The Netherlands, since the internationalization of university curriculums is heavily influenced by the European labor market, it is more academically and professionally oriented, and mostly delivered in English at a graduate level. Hence, it is academic/professional-oriented with a strong European and international dimension. As for Japan, on the one hand, similarly to China, there are many non-degree-conferring programs concerning Japanese and Japanese culture offered in Japanese language, mostly in the private sector and focused on humanities and social science at undergraduate level; on the other hand, as in The Netherlands, in the national institutions there has been a rapid growth in the number of degree-conferring programs at postgraduate level, in natural science and engineering, among which there has been an increase in the number of English language programs. In a sense, the internationalization of curricula in Japanese higher education institutions is moving from the traditional language/culture-oriented type to a more intensive academic/professional one, with a further

emphasis on internationally recognized professional programs and certificates.

Concluding remarks

First and foremost, over the past decades the number of programs about learning English at the undergraduate level for local students, mostly offered in the domestic language and English language programs concerning national character or culture for international students as well as professional programs have greatly increased. In other words, programs concerning English teaching and English language programs have played an increasingly important role in the internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions. Similarly, it implies that in the non-English-speaking countries there has been a growing importance of English as the language of communication, distribution of knowledge, and instruction in higher education in the internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions. A combination of courses taught in English with courses on local language, culture, and history appears to be one effective way of providing a multilinguistic and multicultural dimension (De Wit 2002). The driving force behind the development of English language programs lies not only in the ability to attract more incoming international students, but also as an important way to internationalize the curricula in one's own institution and upgrade quality and standards, and as a mechanism for facilitating the internationalization of the higher education system.

Moreover, all the three countries are making efforts to provide more academic and professional programs in English at the postgraduate level for both international and domestic students instead of relying on traditional programs especially designated for international students in language teaching or cultural understanding. Non-degree, short-term programs for international students still continue to exist and constitute an integral part of the internalized curricula. However, more emphasis has been placed on development of degree programs particularly at graduate level, which are open to all students. These programs now constitute a growing share of the internationalized curricula of higher education institutions.

Finally, due to the growing importance of the English language it is likely that in future more and more internationalized curricula will be provided in cooperation with foreign partners, especially jointly with institutions in English-speaking countries rather than, as at present, be

restricted to the national context or individual institutions in the host country. This may take the form of providing joint programs in cooperation with foreign partners, leading to both local and foreign degrees and delivered in English or bilingually, as is being done in China and the Netherlands; or it may also be implemented, as is being conducted in Japanese higher education institutions, with programs of international subjects being offered based on numerous bi- and multi-lateral cooperation agreements between Japanese and foreign institutions.

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approach. 3, curricula which prepare students for defined international professions. 4, curricula in foreign languages or linguistics which explicitly address cross-cultural communication issues and provided training in intercultural skills. 5, interdisciplinary programs such as region and area studies, covering more than one country. 6, curricula leading to internationally recognized professional qualifications. 7, curricula leading to joint or double degrees. 8, curricula of which compulsory parts are offered at institution(s) abroad, staffed by local lecturers. 9, curricula in which the content is especially designed for foreign students.

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