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# World Voices Nexus

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### Learning to Understand and Live Together through Academic Mobility and Knowledge Diplomacy

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#### **Abstract**

In our contemporary society, the internationalization of higher education through academic mobility not only prepares individuals to work in a global world but also live in it. Through tracing the shifting rationales of internationalization of higher education and the increasing importance of cultivating individuals to learn to understand and live together for the 21st century, the paper explores the intersection of the how the personal outcomes of internationalization of higher education through academic mobility form the social outcomes in terms of knowledge diplomacy through cultivating knowledge of the host country and world.



the internationalization of higher education through academic mobility. Nations not only compete but also cooperate as they are intertwined more than ever due to globalization. The social benefits of academic mobility expand upon the personal outcomes, which can include, broadened perspective and knowledge, improved foreign language competencies, intercultural and interpersonal skills, and the ability to live and work in diverse cultural settings.

While the internationalization of higher education and academic mobility in its role as a political actor is often associated with cultural diplomacy and soft power, the rationales can shift over time. As we move from a world focused on global economic competitiveness to a world that also requires cooperation in addition to competition for economic, security, and global issues, the role of internationalization of higher education and academic mobility is evolving. The potential outcomes of academic mobility place it as a pivotal strategy for knowledge diplomacy to promote mutual understanding between not only the two countries involved but also of the world. In this context, this paper examines the shifting rationales of higher education and academic mobility as we move forward into the 21st century and proposes using knowledge diplomacy as a lens to increase our understanding of how academic mobility personal outcomes form the base of social outcomes.

### **Internationalization of Higher Education through Academic Mobility**

Higher education exists in a world that is constantly in flux. The world, each country, and regions have contextual factors that influence and react to higher education. As such, we should understand the contexts where higher education exists in order to understand the international dimension of higher education (Innes and Hellsten, 2004). According to de Witt (2002), there are four rationales for the internationalization of higher education: academic, economic, political, and social/cultural rationales of the internationalization of higher education. The rationales are salient over time as the context and environmental factors change. The rationales have shifted from political rationales of peace and mutual understanding to avoid future conflict in the aftermath of World War II to economic rationales after the end of the Cold War with the rise of the Information Age and globalization that places the university at the center of educating and providing knowledge to societies to compete globally.

The internationalization of higher education through academic mobility is not a new phenomenon. The concept of students crossing borders and studying in other countries can be traced to the beginnings of higher education (Hoffa, 2007; Lucas, 2006). In the Middle Ages, individuals in Europe moved outside of their home regions in pursuit of knowledge. However, the scale of international mobility we are currently witnessing is unprecedented. According to UNESCO data, the number of internationally mobile students has more than doubled from about 2 million in 2000 to 4.6 million in 2015. Internationally mobile students partake in transnational academic mobility in a variety of ways from completing degrees outside of their country of origin to participating in one-year or one-semester study abroad programs and transferring academic credit to their home institution for graduation. There are also a growing number of options for students looking to experience another



The increase in international mobile students is a result of a multitude of forces. At the individual level, students are seeking international understanding, foreign language skills, increasing career and financial potential, and exploring subject areas not available at home institutions (Nyaupane, et al. 2010). Nations and higher education institutions also see the increasingly important value of providing and promoting transformative international experiences to its students to provide a deeper understand of the world and intercultural competencies to effectively live and work in a globalized world.

### **Shifting from Cultural Diplomacy to Knowledge Diplomacy**

In light of the shifting rationales of internationalization of higher education and the realities of the world it currently exists, what are the rationales for academic mobility and what role do internationally mobile students play in gathering, sharing, and using knowledge of the world?

In the internationalization of higher education through academic mobility, we often emphasis its role in deepening relationships between two countries while cultivating engagement with the world. This lens of understanding places emphasis on the power dimension of academic mobility and situates academic mobility within the realm of cultural diplomacy and soft power. According to Pamment (2012), cultural diplomacy is "a means of promoting a nation's values through dialogue and exchange with other cultures in the long term, and encourages relationship-building, trust, and mutuality" (p. 31). Academic mobility has also been associated with soft power (Atkinson 2010; Nye 2004). This power paradigm places importance on the potential of academic mobility to attract internationally mobile students and influence their subsequent life experiences with potential political and economic advantages primarily for the host country.

Does this traditional view of academic mobility still hold true today? Framing academic mobility through the framework of cultural diplomacy is particularly problematic because it disregards the mutuality of academic mobility and its beneficial outcomes for all actors. With the increase of internationally mobile students and the demand of to cultivate individuals to both work and live in a global society, it is timely to reframe the internationalization of higher education and academic mobility through a new lens: knowledge diplomacy. Knowledge diplomacy "takes a proactive role to ensure that knowledge is effectively used to address worldwide challenges and inequalities, by recognizing the mutuality of interests and benefits" (Knight 2015, p. 9). While the outcomes of knowledge diplomacy may result in future leaders between countries, the main intended purpose is to provide access to international experiences for all students to raise awareness and cultivate comparative understandings of the host country and world while fostering comparative understandings of themselves in a diverse, interconnected world both inside their home country and abroad.

Understanding the internationalization of higher education through the lens of knowledge diplomacy is a recent phenomenon with Knight (2014) positioning the public nature of higher



## **Academic Mobility as a Global Social Good**

In an age with growing pressure for accountable and evaluation of return investments in education, it situates the often expensive endeavor of academic mobility in a precarious situation. As we conceptualize and reframe the role of academic mobility in our global world, we must ask what are the skills we hope students will acquire during their time in higher education and what are the skills that academic mobility in particular can provide. The focus on the credential role of higher education to provide knowledge and deliver individuals ready to participate in a global workforce is just one part of the larger picture.

As we discern the skills needed for the 21st century and the role of academic mobility, there is one particular reoccurring theme of relevance: learning to understand and live together. Sustainable Development Goal 4.5 highlights the need to promote a "culture of peace and non-violence" and the "appreciation of cultural diversity." The focus in the field of education on living together peacefully in an increasingly diverse world in the 21st century is not necessarily a new concept. In 2013, the pillar of "Ways of Living Together" introduced in the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S) encompasses the placement of the individual within the wider world both in their personal and professional roles to be personally and socially responsible and intercultural competent. Going further back, one of the four pillars discussed in "Learning: The Treasure Within" by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century at UNESCO, often referred to as the Delors Report, is learning to live together (Delors, J. et al., 1996). It highlights the need to develop an understand of others while appreciating the interconnectedness of the world.

The focus one education's role in understanding and peace is also highlighted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in December 1948. The UDHR provides a base of understanding of fundamental human rights and their universal protection for people in all nations of the world. According to Article 26, everyone has the right to education and education "shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups." Although not directly connected to education, Article 1 acknowledges humans "should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The UDHR encompasses the basic spirit of humanity is inclusion and cooperation and the role of education in promoting understanding of diversity and inclusion of all types of people.

How do we cultivate and foster an environment that promotes learning to understand and live together, or in other words acceptance of diversity and inclusion? The core of promoting understand and living together is the development on non-cognitive skills, also known as soft skills or socioemotional skills. These skills can include conscientiousness, perseverance, teamwork, grit, empathy, and resilience. Within the realm of higher education, academic mobility provides a potential effective role to develop such skills.



between the United States and Japan from 1963 to 2013. The study aims to refine our understanding of knowledge diplomacy and academic mobility through systemic evidence-based inquiry. The program selected for the study has sent approximately 1,400 US students to Japan and 1,400 Japanese students to the US to study abroad for primarily one-year and supported about 200 faculty from the US and Japan to be professionally mobile between the two countries to date. This multi-stage study aims to understand the role of academic mobility in knowledge diplomacy by understanding its long-term impacts on former participants subsequent academic, professional, and personal development and their connection to the host country and world.

The study consists of four phases. Phase one, which was completed in 2017, examines US study abroad experiences in Japan and includes a quantitative online survey (n=259) and 25 follow-up qualitative in-depth interviews (n=25). The findings illuminate on how the personal impacts of study abroad form the base of social outcomes in terms of knowledge diplomacy through the creation of an in-depth understanding of the host country, familiarity of the host region, and awakened consciousness of the world through subsequent personal development. The participants of study abroad are key agents to navigate our increasingly complex and diverse world by using the skills and knowledge acquired during their study abroad to maneuver through new situations within their home country as well the host region and world. The findings of this study suggest the study abroad experience is a transformative learning experience during a pivotal time of cognitive and non-cognitive growth that leads to a domino effect on the participants' subsequent life experiences, behaviors, and attitudes.

Participants of phase one returned home after their study abroad experience. After graduating from their home undergraduate institution, some continued to receive advanced degrees while others entered the workforce. Some of the participants returned to Japan while others moved on to Asia and the world. Meanwhile, some remained entirely in the US. While some participants held high power positions and directly engaged with Japan, Asia, and the world, others engaged with these dimensions on a personal level. A key component of the outcomes how the non-cognitive skills, values, and attitudes developed during the international experience become imbedded in their personal identity. Whether the impact of study abroad is visibly apparent in life trajectories or internalized in their personal values, beliefs and actions, this is a testament to the powerful and transformative nature of the study abroad experience

Phases two and three are currently in the early stages of research. Phase two focuses on the long-term impacts of study abroad of Japanese experiences in the US and will employ the same sequential mixed-method design as phase one with an online survey and follow-up interviews. Phase three explores academic mobility of faculty between US and Japan and its impact on professional and academic development with a qualitative approach. After phase two and three are completed, phase four will commence and examine the impact of academic mobility on the local communities that host these participants of academic mobility in the US and Japan.



understanding the two-way flow of US-Japan academic mobility offers valuable insights into the understanding of the internationalization of higher education through academic mobility and its role in increasing understanding of the host country and world. A comprehensive study of all mobile actors as well as the local host community has the potential to move us closer to truly situating the personal and social outcomes of academic mobility within the umbrella of internationalization of higher education through the frame of knowledge diplomacy.

### **Moving Forward**

Knowledge diplomacy is an emerging field of importance as we reframe our understanding of the internationalization of higher education and academic mobility in a global world where nations both compete and cooperate. Issues once confined within nations have become global issues. Our future is filled with uncertainty. The skills that are needed for a workforce in the next decade will change in fifty years from now with technological advances. The anticipated Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will bring the demand for highly skilled workers. The increase of people crossing border to settle, both temporary and permanently, outside of their country of origin is transforming societies to multicultural, diverse societies that need individuals with the skills to effectively live and work together with people from diverse backgrounds, culture, ethnicities, and religions. Of even more pressing concern are the global issues we are facing.

The discussions as well as the preliminary findings of the study presented earlier demonstrate the importance of the development of non-cognitive skill-sets during the international experience to compliment the cognitive skills developed during their academic coursework at home and abroad. For our future, we need to cultivate a culture of learning to understanding and live together. The internationalization of higher education through academic mobility is one potential high-impact practice to help meet the demand of intercultural competent, internationally-minded individuals equipped with both cognitive and non-cognitive skills to live and work in a diverse world both within their home countries and abroad.

The need to cultivate individuals that can contribute meaningfully and succeed not only in the work force but in their public and private lives is not limited to our global society but also individual nations as well as societies become more diversified. A key component to cultivate individuals equipped with the skills and knowledge to understand and live with others is the development of non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal, creativity, and self-control. In higher education, the internationalization of higher education through academic mobility provides a high impact means to provide an environment for individuals to develop these skills while gaining deep knowledge of the host country and comparative perspectives themselves in the world. These personal outcomes of academic mobility provide a base for the mutual social outcomes through knowledge diplomacy that promote a deeper understand of the world and address global issues both abroad and at home.



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## Author



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Kyoritsu Women's University Tokyo  
Japan



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