<Survey Report>

The Current State of Studies of Australia in Japan's Universities

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1. Background and objectives

With the 30th anniversary of the signing of the 1976 Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and Protocol celebrated in 2006 and the 50th anniversary of The Agreement on Commerce between the Commonwealth of Australia and Japan 1957 currently being celebrated by Japan and Australia, it seemed an opportune time to grasp and analyse the current state of researching and teaching about Australia in Japan's universities. A survey was conducted on behalf of the Australian Studies Association of Japan (ASAJ).

The first objective of the survey was to gather information on the state of studies of Australia, as input for the ASAJ's planning and proposals regarding the advancement of Australia-related research in Japan. The second objective was to gather basic information, so it could be used to assist academics in their future submissions of research grant applications and to advance Australia-related research. This is because objective and basic information on the state of Australian studies is required, as is often the case, to obtain public grants for such research.

2. Survey—method and content

1) Method

Questionnaires were sent by post to a survey population of around 200 universities and research institutes known to the AJF, and to all 223 members of the ASAJ in December 2006. The survey response rate was low (15 percent); therefore, a follow-up survey was conducted from April, when a grant was received from the AJF, through until the end of May. Using telephone, facsimile and email, responses were solicited directly from a sample population of around 130 of ASAJ members, who taught university graduate, undergraduate and two-year college course subjects. Responses were received from 115 of the 130 members surveyed (response rate of 88 percent). The information provided by the 115 respondents was supplemented with information provided by universities and colleges of December survey, and from the institutions’ respective Websites, to the extent that was possible.

2) Content

Academics were asked to provide information about the course subjects they taught: student enrollment numbers; the extent to which Australia was examined in their courses (i.e., was Australia the subject of the courses or was Australia a focus of comparative study, etc); whether their

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universities had partnerships or exchange programs in place with Australian universities and institutions, and the nature of the relationships; issues regarding Australia-related teaching and research; and requests to AJF regarding the gathering of information etc.

To improve the accuracy of the survey results and obtain the most accurate picture of the current state of Australia-related studies in Japan's universities, the most ideal approach would have been to examine the course subject syllabuses on the Websites of all of the public and private universities in Japan (around 744 universities excluding two-year colleges), or to have solicited responses directly from universities who did not provide such information on Websites; however, this would have required a much larger survey, consuming much more time and many more human resources. Such a survey was not possible on this occasion. Therefore, a sample of the population—ASAJ members, who were the most passionate about Australia-related research and teaching—was surveyed. In fact, it was believed that by taking this approach, a more accurate understanding of the problems associated with Australian studies could be obtained.

3. Survey results—an overview

- Number of respondents: 115 (30 of these respondents were not offering relevant course subjects at the time)
- Number of universities and two-year colleges with Australia-related course subjects: 78 institutes
- Number of Australia-related course subjects: 228 subjects
- Number of students enrolled in Australia-related course subjects: 14,538 students
- Number of institutes with partnerships or exchanges with Australian institutes: 90 institutes

The figures include ASAJ members affiliated with the universities/colleges of other members; therefore, the number of universities and two-year colleges that had relevant course subjects are fewer than the number of respondents, which includes part-time lecturers.

- Number of courses that focused specifically on Australia (many on culture, society and economics): 43
- Number of courses that focused on Oceania: 22
- Number of courses that focused on English as a linguistics subject: 17
- Number of courses that either focused on Australia as a subject of comparative study or focused on Australia in a course subject: 146

The survey revealed that there were a considerable number of Japanese universities that had partnerships or exchanges with Australian universities and institutions. Also, there were universities that had partnerships or exchanges with multiple Australian universities and institutions. However, the substance of their relationships varied widely. There were universities which exchanged students and academics yearly; universities which had active exchanges and systems for mutual recognition of credits; and universities which exaggerated their claims about the extent of their partnerships with Australian universities to attract high school graduates.
4. Comparison with survey of Studies of Australia conducted by AJF in 2001

In 2001, the AJF—headed by the Director, Leonie Boxtel—conducted a survey similar to this one. The survey population consisted of 328 Australia-related researchers, including members of the Australia Studies Association of Japan and members of the Japan Australia Teachers' Association. The survey response rate was 51 percent. Regarding ASAJ members in particular, it was noted that there was a 30 percent change in the members who were included in the previous AJF survey population and those in our survey population. Except for some differences in the scopes of the surveys, both surveys produced very similar results, with no significant differences noted. There was almost no change seen in the past seven years.

5. Evaluation

The ASAJ believes that this survey has provided insight into the various existing issues. Conditions regarding research and teaching about Australia in Japan remain harsh; for example, the number of relevant university courses and their content is a problem. Also, partnerships between universities in Australia and in Japan need to be substantiated. Furthermore, ASAJ members who want to conduct research and teach about Australia, find it difficult to obtain research material relating to specialist fields. There are basic questions that need answers, such as how can these materials be made easily obtainable, where can we find capable advisors? These issues are currently impediments to the fostering of young scholars.

Having lost the ARC, which was an irreplaceable and important centre for Australian studies in Japan, it is now the ASAJ's mission to respond to the issues identified from this survey. During the past few years, the ASAJ has seen its numbers remain stable, with almost the same number of people joining the ASAJ as those leaving it. Meanwhile, the ASAJ has seen an increase in the number of people attending its annual national conferences, in particular, when the ASAJ has organised various symposiums on themes matching those of particular interest at a particular time. Furthermore, ASAJ's regional conference program has started in the Kanto and Kansai regions. Therefore, in addition to a stable number of members, it could be said that the activities of the ASAJ are becoming livelier.

To overcome impediments, the ASAJ is developing new proposals and lobbying the relevant agencies:

- Organise ASAJ events more effectively to increase further the number of people attending, and to learn up-to-date knowledge of Australia. Specifically, select conference themes that are both timely and common to Japan and Australia, such as security in the Asia-Pacific region, stimulating economies and the FTA.
- Hold the Open Lecture Series in the Kanto region, followed by the Kansai region, to raise an interest in Australia among postgraduate students and young researchers from various specialty academic fields in Japan.
- Invite academics from Australia who are best suited to talk about themes chosen for the events. Also, invite academics in Japan, in particular, specialists on the theme, who do not necessarily belong to the ASAJ. It is expected that this would enable participants both from Australia and
Japan to build networks across a wide range of fields.

- Make communication with the Japanese Studies Association of Australia active and promote research on issues of common interest.
- Actively conduct publicity activities to raise interest in ASAJ activities as well as Australian studies in Japan and further promote participation in ASAJ events by non-members as well as existing members.
- Enrich the ASAJ home page, in particular, the page links. Set up a web page that enables to exchange opinions and information with each other.
- Consult the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, on how to make it easier to obtain video resources to use in lessons. Discuss the same issue with the Australia Library at Otemon Gakuin University.
- Produce materials in Japanese on current topics on Australia for use in the classroom.

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