**1. Introduction**

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The term 'internationalization' *(kokusaika* in Japanese) has been used in reference to educational policy for at least three decades in Japan (Suematsu, 2018). Universities are facing pressure to address demands coming from two directions: the national government (a major source of funding) and the public (as embodied by current and potential students and their guardians). The former is pushing universities to 'internationalize', to attract international students and produce 'globally competent' human resources; the latter is demanding that universities equip students with the skills seen as necessary in an increasingly competitive working environment, with a strong focus on English language competency. At the same time, Japanese society is visibly changing. In addition to record numbers of tourists and international students, the expansion of immigration laws in 2019 to import labor to make up for the shrinking population is pushing up numbers of foreign residents. Japan's society, once typically called 'homogenous', is becoming more visibly multicultural.

Universities therefore face a challenging mission to prepare Japanese university students for life in a rapidly changing and increasingly multicultural society. However, in the midst of pressures from government and the public to 'internationalize', which are mainly directed towards dealing with the world outside of Japan, to what extent are universities able to implement educational programs that help to prepare future university graduates to live in Japan's increasingly multicultural society? How can universities equip graduates with the skills needed to adjust to a more culturally diverse living and working environment within Japan? While there are many possible methods to equip students with the skills required to live in a multicultural society, this paper focuses on intercultural contact. This concept is defined here as the provision of opportunities for interaction between people of differing cultural backgrounds. This exploratory study aims to investigate how intercultural contact is currently incorporated into undergraduate programs at Japanese universities[[1]](#footnote-1)

**2. Aims and Research Questions**

The university programs targeted in this study were two national and two private universities selected for the Top Global University project on internationalization by the Japanese government (MEXT, n. d.). Rather than providing an exhaustive overview of the state of intercultural education in Japan, I focus here on the way that intercultural contact opportunities are provided to the students of the above universities, as case studies. Through interviews with the educators who are involved in course design and instruction of the intercultural education programs at each respective university, I aim to answer the following research questions :

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文末の参考文献等：フォント(Times New Roman サイズ8.5) ページ設定(44文字×43行)

References : Font (Times New Roman with size 8.5) 44 letters per line × 43 lines per page

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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)