

## **Studies on Japanese Aid for International Student Programs: A Review of the Literature and Implications for Future Research on the ABE Initiative and other JICA-Supported Scholarship Programs**

JICA's international scholarship programs have invited future leaders from numerous low- and middle-income countries to come to Japan to acquire new knowledge and skills, empowering them to contribute more effectively to the development of their home countries. Among these programs, the ABE Initiative (the African Business Education Initiative for Youth) distinguishes itself by focusing on building and strengthening business networks between Japan and Africa and by providing internships at Japanese companies. As the first phase of a research project on the ABE Initiative, this literature review provides an overview of the academic literature on JICA scholarships and other human resource development programs with similar objectives, and presents four major research themes. The first is the 'soft power' of scholarships in promoting understanding and positive perceptions of Japanese society, finding that previous studies have had mixed evaluations of the soft power impacts of higher education in Japan. The second theme is 'program quality' in the Japanese higher education sector, which has a significant impact on the efficacy of JICA programs but has been discussed critically in the existing literature. On the other hand 'network formation' through international student programs has been discussed positively, particularly in relation to higher education institutions. Finally, there are differing evaluations in previous studies regarding the focus on the 'uniqueness' of Japanese concepts and philosophies in international student programs. This literature review has identified future areas for research via these four themes and their implications for JICA's scholarship programs and the ABE Initiative.

Author: Dr. James Kaizuka, FHEA\*

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\* Affiliation: Development Studies Program Team, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development. (Kaizuka.James@jica.go.jp)

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## 1. Introduction

Japan is at present the world's third-largest provider of tertiary education aid, behind only Germany and France (Galán-Muros et al. 2022), with a large and complex portfolio of programs targeted at different countries and regions with different objectives and operated under different auspices. ODA scholarship provision by Japan is especially diverse, with programs targeting engineering, governance, healthcare, business, and numerous others. JICA's specific stated objectives for these scholarship programs are human resource development and capacity building, the pursuit of socio-economic development, and the development of scholars to act as "bridges" between Japan and their home countries (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2024b). It is also a requirement of countries to "substantially" expand international scholarship opportunities for the poorest countries under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) target 4.9<sup>1</sup> (Ashida 2023). JICA scholarship programs can be seen as a means for Japan to contribute this wider international goal in addition to its specific program and project goals.

Japanese ODA-backed scholarships have a long history. Sugimura and Kayashima (2022) argue that there have been three "Phases" of government-backed scholarships, these being between (i) 1950-1982 when ODA scholarships were supported by the Japanese Government Scholarship Program for foreign students, (ii.) between 1983-2003 which saw a rapid expansion in international student numbers, and (iii.) from 2004-present, which saw a push for the development of universities as a means to introduce foreign perspectives to Japanese students and to build their international competitiveness to make meaningful intellectual contributions. These phases indicate shifting goals over time and changing thinking in how to approach international scholarship assistance.

This review was initially intended to inform a wider study about the ABE Initiative scholarship program. The ABE Initiative, which began in 2014 having been advocated for by Prime Minister Abe at TICAD V a year prior, has received over 1900 scholars since its inception, and is presently one of the largest scholarship programs offered by JICA. Formally titled the African Business Education Initiative for Youth, the ABE Initiative is intended to promote business exchanges between Japan and Africa and to contribute to human resource development on the continent, with the business element centred in the program from its conception. While internal reviews of the ABE Initiative have taken place within JICA in order to assess its impacts and ensure its future sustainability (Japan International Cooperation Agency et al. 2021), it has not yet attracted significant attention within the academic literature. JICA's internal findings on ABE have been broadly positive, finding benefits for the development of hard skills, networks, and positive feelings about Japan (Japan International Cooperation Agency et al. 2021), but as the ABE Initiative reaches its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and both Japan and its African partners look toward TICAD-9 in

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of SDG4 Target 4.9 is "By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries." (GlobalGoals.org 2024)

2025, it is imperative that the academic literature gap be addressed. Nonetheless, while this review was primarily formulated with the ABE Initiative in mind, many of the implications for ABE are also relevant to other JICA and ODA scholarship programs and these programs are referenced where applicable.

The ABE Initiative itself is relatively unique among international scholarship programs in focusing overtly on business and business-enabling objectives not only limited to traditional capacity development, but also including familiarization with donor-nation business practices and the gaining of practical experiences through internship programs within the host country. Indeed, to the knowledge of the author, there is no other scholarship program in the world which offers internship opportunities in host-country industries as a “baked-in” part of the program. In existing studies of international student returnees, tertiary education is widely regarded as effective in promoting both economic and social change, allowing participants to absorb values and perspectives from their host countries (Wang et al. 2024, 7–12), but it is also subject to limitations imposed by home country norms, institutions, and absorptive capacity (Wang et al. 2024, 12–13). For the ABE Initiative, which carries an overt goal of enabling businesses to invest in Africa, these factors may be of particular relevance.

The original intent of this review was to focus on the literature around the ABE Initiative specifically, but this produced few too few results to be suited to the writing of a full literature review. This review was intended primarily to generate post-hoc hypotheses to then be tested with confirmatory approaches, and so this literature review concludes with a set of eight generated hypotheses for the larger research project. A secondary objective was to be broad-based and to open new areas for inquiry, with the idea that this would then open space for further research projects beyond the initial impact assessment research project into the ABE Initiative. Considering the aforementioned constraints and the circumstances in which the ABE Initiative is carried out, the scope of the literature reviewed includes that on Japanese higher education and other HRD programs as well. ABE scholars attend Japanese universities and study within the Japanese higher education ecosystem, and so the program’s fortunes are tied closely with the outcomes of this area. With HRD programs, there are considerable overlaps in objectives relating to the improvement of the business-enabling environment. Consequently, some discussion of both HRD programs and higher education, in addition to the literature specifically on scholarships, is necessary in reviewing the effectiveness of the ABE Initiative. However, again, many of the implications are relevant more broadly for other JICA and ODA scholarship programs.

This literature review identifies four major themes on Japanese scholarship programs and, more broadly, higher education and HRD programs. These themes are soft power, program quality, network formation, and uniqueness, which were selected based on their prevalence in the literature through manual review of the papers in question. More detailed explanations of these themes and how they are related follow in Section 3. This review commences with a description of the methodology utilized before examining each of these four themes in detail.

## 2. Methodology and Limitations

This paper is a semi-systematic literature review of existing papers pertaining to Japanese scholarship programs, HRD programs, and higher education. HRD and higher education were included within the scope of the search due to the propensity for overlap between them and scholarship programs; HRD is a core aim of international scholarships, and students generally study in the same universities as regular international students and exchange students and so are likely to have similar experiences. For the same reasons, the scope was not only limited to JICA scholarships, but also to other scholarships such as those offered by the Ministry of Education (MEXT), and to discussions of Japanese HRD programs and higher education on a wider basis.

Existing academic literature on JICA scholarship programs is limited, necessitating a pragmatic approach with significant manual input. Initially, this review utilized Google Scholar searches using Boolean search strings of key phrases, which are logged in Appendix 1. This was directly based on the methodology used in Wang et al. (2024), albeit simplified due to the considerably smaller scope of this review and the availability of sources. Prior to this, it was intended to use Web of Science and SCOPUS, but this produced few results to formulate a useful literature review. This necessitated an expansion to Google Scholar which included working papers and non-indexed journal articles, although even this expansion produced only limited results and required supplementation with manual searches and snowball sampling from identified papers due to the limitations described in Appendix 1 and the small number of academic papers on the topic.

This review incorporates seven SCOPUS-indexed journal articles, nine chapters from edited books, seven non-indexed journal articles, three JICA-RI working papers and discussion papers (which are internally peer-reviewed), one conference paper, and one research report, covering both Japanese and non-Japanese perspectives. This was a total pool of 28 relevant papers. Non-indexed papers are relatively common in the literature originating in Japan, and this category also covers the outputs of the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute itself, which while subject to internal peer review are not subject to third-party peer review. While this expansion to non-indexed outputs presented a potential limitation, it widened the search pool considerably and allowed for perspectives to be captured from Japan-based authors (whether themselves Japanese or otherwise) which would have otherwise been ignored.

An additional 21 sources provided background information without making significant thematic contributions, largely taking the form of histories or broader analyses of Japanese foreign policy for contextualization purposes, with one (Mpaso 2024) being a direct testimonial about a participant's experiences of the ABE Initiative. Articles were manually reviewed, and the identified themes were manually coded. As this review was conducted as preparatory work for a larger research project and is still work-in-progress, the focus is on materials which were freely available either as open access or held within the JICA or National Diet Libraries. This consequently excludes some papers which are only available on a closed access basis. A table of the works utilized and themes identified from them is

available in Appendix 2.

### 3. Overview of Identified Themes

As previously noted, this literature review identifies four key themes in soft power, program quality, network formation and uniqueness. This section defines these themes in more detail and provides an explanation of their conceptual relevance, with a brief summary in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Major themes on JICA-supported scholarship and HRD programs and their definitions.

Theme	Definition
1: Soft power	The ability of scholarship programs to promote Japanese culture, cultural affinity, and formulate pro-Japan views among recipients.
2: Program quality	The ability of scholarship programs to achieve their goals in relation to the effectiveness of teaching and support in Japanese higher education contexts.
3: Network formation	The ability of scholarship programs and higher education to promote long-term networks among stakeholders, including participants, Japanese universities, and industry collaborators. In practice, there is a significant focus on student-university and research networking.
4: Uniqueness	The unique concepts and philosophies which make Japanese scholarship programs different to their global counterparts. In practice, there is an emphasis on business philosophies such as <i>Kaizen</i> (continuous self-improvement) and <i>Monozukuri</i> (Japanese production processes), and on the extensive incorporation of the private sector.

“Soft power” is an overarching concept with a great deal of overlap with the other themes, so it is discussed first. It is widely accepted that international scholarships and higher education are commonly utilized as a means of soft power promotion, with authors citing their widespread use to build cultural affinity and credibility for host countries, promote dialogues and networking, and develop pools of friendly elites in recipient countries (Enfield 2019; Trilokekar 2010; Habru et al. 2024; Chia 2015; Wojciuk 2018). Broadly speaking, soft power is defined as the ability to affect others by attraction and persuasion (Nye 2017, 2). In this review soft power is used to refer to the ability of scholarship programs to promote pro-Japanese views and to create tangible policy shifts which favour Japan.

“Program quality” refers to the role of the Japanese higher education sector as an essential intermediate through which scholarships are experienced. If program quality is high, then outcomes are likely to be improved, and the converse is also true. While arguably the least prevalent of the themes identified in this literature review in terms of breadth, the cross-cutting nature of program quality thus has direct

ramifications for the other themes identified, and consequently is important to incorporate.

Themes 3 and 4, network formation and uniqueness, relate more to the specific manner of implementation of JICA scholarships and how they are linked with various objectives. Both are related closely with the objective of creating “navigators”, or alumni who can successfully facilitate Japan-Africa business linkages through both networks and through understanding of Japanese business practices.

“Network formation” is consistently identified as one of the key strengths of JICA’s aid scholarship programs, matching the broader scholarly literature on international student returnees and international scholarship programs. While numerous forms are discussed in the existing literature, most focus on linkages in the higher education sector itself, particularly on student-professor and inter-institutional linkages, with some papers also defining network formation in broader terms.

“Uniqueness” refers to the emphasis placed on Japanese business concepts and philosophies across various higher education and HRD program settings and to the presence of the private sector in Japanese ODA settings. This incorporates concepts such as *kaizen*, *hitozukuri*, and *monozukuri*, which are heavily emphasized in the literature originating in Japan. In the pursuit of creating “navigators” and smoothing the entry of Japanese businesses into Africa, this theme is of great relevance in its implications for how scholars are prepared for absorption into Japanese business environments.

In summary, soft power is identified in this review as an overarching theme, program quality as an intermediate theme, and network formation and uniqueness as implementation and objective-related themes. The subsequent sections review the literature on these themes with reference to the implications for ABE Initiative scholarships, referencing the relevance to other scholarships where applicable.

## 3.1 Theme 1: Soft Power

In JICA and Japan-funded scholarship programs, soft power promotion is termed as “the development of scholars to act as bridges”, with discussion of the development of human networks (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2024b; 2024a). This is further reflected in the ABE Initiative, and as previously noted this carries an objective of fostering scholars as so-called “Navigators” of Japan-Africa business links (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2024a). Indeed, ODA and even reparations scholarships have a long history of being used to support soft power development and to build human connections between Japan and other countries (Sugimura and Kayashima 2022, 218). This section focuses on soft power for cultural attraction and persuasion, with networking and the promotion of Japanese business philosophy covered in subsequent sections. While some cases indicate success in fostering pro-Japanese perspectives and cultural affinity, overall, soft power promotion in scholarship programs and higher education receives a mixed reception in the existing literature in terms of its perceived efficacy.

Three papers were identified which indicate broad successes from the perspective of promoting affinity with Japan. Thapa (2023, 281) notes that many Nepalese alumni have “become effective transmitters for the language and culture of their home country in Nepal”, and Mubah (2019, 44–45) cites the significant



growth in Indonesian student numbers in Japan with reference to Japan's broader powers of attraction through culture. More broadly, this is also observable in Central Asia, with cultural affinity being a core component of the HRD approach even outside of university-level education, and with public affinity towards Japan being notably high in the region (Dadabaev 2016, 225–26). These are indicative of positive results in the realm of soft power as it is traditionally defined, and it can be inferred from these examples that scholarships are successful in promoting affinity with Japan at least in cultural terms. Nonetheless, neither of these examples necessarily denotes shifts in national policy or in the tangible promotion of business links; this is a significant limitation of the soft power discourse, and indeed Dadabaev (2016) specifically notes that Japan has lacked focus in harnessing the potential benefits of soft power even where successful in general terms.

There are also considerable limitations identified in the literature to the broader objective of developing soft power. For example, Mubah (2019) argues that insofar as there is an objective of creating “bridges” between Japan and foreign countries, that these efforts are one-sided. Citing student numbers as evidence, Mubah (2019, 45–46) argues that public diplomacy efforts are made less effective by both the numerical imbalance. Mubah (2019, 44–45) notes that in 2017, 4630 Indonesians studied in Japan while just 217 Japanese students studied in Indonesia, making exchanges very one-sided, and argues that these Indonesian students will not necessarily be motivated to assist what, to them, is a foreign country in promoting its global image. It is further argued that these students are primarily motivated by their own career outcomes, accompanied by a sense of scepticism or even cynicism about Japanese scholarships as being primarily a self-serving enterprise (Mubah 2019, 44–45). Green (2016) supplements this view citing evidence from other Japanese programs relating to soft power. Citing Japanese expectations that the JET Program would create a pro-Japan cohort of alumni, Green (2016) notes that in practice results tended to be considerably more nuanced with alumni not necessarily viewing all aspects of Japan favourably, and argues that this is likely to be true of higher education contexts as well. Dadabaev (2016, 37) while only mentioning university level education as part of the wider landscape of Japan-Central Asia interaction, argues that Japanese ODA has been generally successful in promoting cultural affinity and the image of Japan in Central Asia, but that Japan has not taken advantage of the potential soft power benefits of this positive image to stimulate deeper cooperation. Wojciuk (2018, 355) notes that Japanese educational institutions themselves were frequently criticised by international students in the past. These are significant issues even for the promotion of cultural affinity, but they could even be counterproductive in the sense of developing higher-level linkages if replicated elsewhere.

Program quality and international academic competition are also seen to further limit the efficacy of soft power in scholarship programs, a point which is discussed in detail in the subsequent section and which is raised by Yonezawa (2008) and Green (2016). If, as Yonezawa (2008, 65) argues, Japanese universities are viewed as an academically unattractive and unserious “leisure land” by foreign audiences, then this may reflect poorly on the long term impressions of alumni and the way they reflect on Japan

abroad. The issue of scholarships being perceived as “self-serving” for Japan in mercantilist or commercial terms rather than being recipient-focused is a further limitation, reflecting longstanding academic criticisms of Japanese ODA practice. This is reflected across several of the papers addressing this topic, whether neutrally (Green 2016; Sugimura and Kayashima 2022) or with more vociferous criticism (Mubah 2019) and while Thapa (2023) is more positive, if Japan is viewed as excessively self-serving or motivated primarily by commercial needs, then that in turn may be counter-conducive to soft power not only in the sense of cultural affinity but in the more tangible sense of developing pro-Japan leaders in business and government who may be cynical of Japan’s motives.

The papers examined here are highly varied in scope and focus, and offer insight into a wide variety of programs and institutions. While none of the aforementioned academic works focus specifically on ABE scholars, ABE scholars come to Japan under similar pretexts and study in the same institutions. This raises the question of what ABE scholars thought of the quality of their programs in addition to the more obvious HRD implications. This also raises the question of whether ABE scholars would truly value their education in Japan in comparison to other countries; if some of them leave with negative impressions of Japan having also studied elsewhere, then it may again have a counterproductive effect in developing human networks and raising interest in doing business with Japanese firms. The existing literature leaves open a significant gap for exploring these issues in relation to Africa specifically, and in exploring the specific impacts and effectiveness of the ABE Initiative in soft power promotion. While JICA internal reports have explored the issue of soft power in relation to scholarship programs, and in relation to ABE specifically they have found positive results (Japan International Cooperation Agency et al. 2021) there is little academic literature on the subject overall, and this is a significant limitation in assessing the overall soft power impacts of JICA scholarship programs. The wide variety of papers examined also raises the relevance for other JICA and ODA scholarship programs; many of the same conditions and caveats apply, and the implications are broadly the same as for the ABE Initiative.

This section has explored the broad concept of soft power to generate cultural attraction. The subsequent section focuses on the intermediate of program quality and its implications for soft power, while sections 3.3 and 3.4 focus on the themes of network formation and uniqueness.

## **3.2 Theme 2: Program Quality**

While far from universal, there is a segment of literature critical of Japanese higher education with significant implications for effectiveness and impact. While papers with this theme do not directly address the issue of scholarships, they are of significant relevance when the entire purpose of scholarship programs is to have students attend Japanese universities, and the criticism can be vociferous. For the ABE Initiative, and for other scholarships targeting African students, this is also important as the perception of a better quality education is a key motivating factor in interest in Japan, and because this perception is directly tied to the job prospects of graduates upon their return (Babirye and Kinyua 2021,



225–26). Yonezawa (2008; 2023) is the most prominent voice of criticism, arguing that Japanese universities do not enjoy strong reputations either in or out of Japan (Yonezawa 2008, 65) and that Japanese higher education policy has largely not achieved its goals (Yonezawa 2023, 234). Tsuneyoshi (2018) is also critical of perceived unique aspects of the Japanese higher education system, arguing that Japanese universities contrast to western universities in that the Japanese employment system holds back the globalization of Japanese education and that program quality is *laissez-faire* and highly dependent on the individual lecturer for quality control purposes as a direct result of Japan's unique circumstances (Tsuneyoshi, 2018, 28). Tsuneyoshi (2018) further argues that systems are largely tailored to the needs of the private sector, which could bring a side-effect of leading to the impression that any scholarships taking place in such institutions are self-serving. Again, this has direct implications for the potential effectiveness and impacts of JICA Scholarships, including ABE scholarships, possibly providing a spoiler effect to the other strengths identified. Negative impacts on scholars could be both in direct terms vis-à-vis the skills which are meant to be acquired and in indirect terms via the loss of soft power or even the cultivation of a negative reputation for Japanese higher education. While ABE scholarships are at the postgraduate level and may not face the same precise issues as the wider sector, this theme nonetheless merits attention due to these potential ramifications.

A number of papers argue that Japanese universities have struggled to compete in a fraught and competitive Asian and wider global educational race to attract international students, or that international students were initially critical of Japanese universities and their practices (Green 2016, 92; Wojciuk 2018, 343; Yonezawa 2008, 55). As previously noted, Tsuneyoshi (2018) argues that course programs are highly lecturer-dependent; the implication is that with little standardization, quality is inconsistent on them. Certainly, this has been the case in terms of global academic metrics; only two Japanese universities<sup>2</sup> are ranked within the top 50 globally, and of these, the highest ranked (the University of Tokyo) is only seventh within Asia (QS World University Rankings 2024). Even universities considered prestigious in Japan, such as Waseda University and Keio University, rank relatively uncompetitively by global standards at 181<sup>st</sup> and 188<sup>th</sup>, respectively (QS World University Rankings 2024). While the limitations of these rankings are well-publicized and cannot necessarily be taken at face value as sole indicators of quality, they nonetheless underscore the challenge for Japanese universities which have struggled to maintain their once-dominant position within the wider Asian higher education landscape. This may impact not only Japan's ability to recruit, but also its ensuing soft power (in the sense of Japan developing a reputation for being academically weak or "overrated") and ability to influence socio-economic development due to a loss of prestige and academic credibility if Japanese-trained scholars come to be seen as less qualified and having received a lower-quality education than those with academic credentials from elsewhere. These limitations are true of both ABE and the wider landscape of JICA scholarships, since regardless of the type scholarships are conducted within standard university course programs in

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<sup>2</sup> University of Tokyo and Kyoto University.

normal universities which are also open to regular non-scholarship international students and Japanese domestic students. Neither ABE nor other JICA students receive special treatment in these institutions beyond normal pastoral support, and so it can be expected that the quality of the “regular” experience can be translated directly to JICA scholars’ experiences as well with ensuing impacts on soft power potential and HRD efficacy.

Several papers argue that the problem in Japan lies with poor standardization and overall quality control. In line with Tsuneyoshi’s (2018) observation that course quality is highly lecturer-dependent, there is recurring observation that Japanese universities have been hesitant or unable to adopt standardized quality assurance frameworks in line with international models (Ozeki et al. 2023; Kiyoko Saito and Kim 2019). Tsuneyoshi (2018) and Bradford (2013) raise the additional point that English-medium teaching presents an additional barrier to quality control, a particular dilemma for a country such as Japan with a native language not widely used outside its own borders. This is specifically highlighted in relation to the English language training received by HELP and LEPP program graduates, which was found to be “deficient” (Koda and Yuki 2013, 32). These pressures are multifaceted and are in themselves beyond the scope of this review, but they nonetheless have ramifications for both HRD and soft power promotion. If scholars studying in Japan are receiving a quality of education that does not meet their expectations, then the scholarship programs may not be impactful or effective in either HRD or soft power. However, in what is perhaps a silver lining, Kayashima (2022, 214), in arguing for greater internationalization, notes the successes of ODA-linked Japanese universities specifically in promoting it. Again, as outlined in the previous paragraph, this is of relevance to both the ABE Initiative and to the wider field of JICA scholarships due to the fundamental day-to-day classroom experience being the same. ABE does perhaps offer additional value over other ODA scholarships as a program with a uniquely business-focused character beyond traditional capacity building programs, providing a unique experience in addition to the university experience, but it cannot be assumed outright that this alone is enough to overcome potential program quality limitations.

Overall, program quality is widely regarded as a barrier in Japanese higher education contexts. As previously outlined, since ABE and other JICA scholars study within the same institutions as other students in Japan, there is a potential onward risk that program quality could negatively impact the wider effectiveness of such programs in promoting HRD and by extension socioeconomic development and soft power. A limitation is that much of the existing work focuses on undergraduate programs, and most JICA scholarships are at the postgraduate level; it requires further exploration to identify if these issues are replicated in JICA scholarship programs. Program quality has also not been explored by existing non-academic JICA studies, including in relation to ABE.

### 3.3 Theme 3: Network Formation

As previously noted, network formation is considered one of the most successful areas of international higher education. JICA has long prioritized the development of academic networks; Kayashima (2022, 212) notes the success of educational institutions which have received funding to conduct ODA and technical cooperation projects in building lasting and effective networks, including outcomes such as the development of advanced technologies as a result. Moreover, Sugimura and Kayashima (2022, 232–33) note the specific success of the ASEAN University Network/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network in this regard, having contributed significantly to higher education development. Sugimura and Kayashima (2022, 232–33) argue that ODA scholarship programs have been effective in developing human connections and academic networks across Southeast Asia. These are primarily focused on inter-institutional and student-professor networks. There are also significant overlaps within these since many alumni of Japanese university graduate-level scholarships go on to work in higher education, transforming student-professor networks into inter-institutional networks.

Speaking in a broader sense, Thapa (2023), discussing Nepalese alumni of Japanese higher education institutions and JDS scholarships, is highly positive about their roles in both developing Japan-Nepal cooperation and in addition to the positive impacts on socio-economic development in Nepal. Thapa (2023) particularly emphasizes the role of alumni associations and argues that they are a highly effective means of soft power promotion for Japan. Thapa (2023, 268) also makes the crucial point that the cultivation of academic networks is a goal laid out in the 2015 Development Cooperation Charter which was formulated in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Again, if Japan's efforts can be seen as a means to achieve the SDGs, then the development of international higher education networks can be seen as a contribution to both SDG4 (A Quality Education for All) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals, which explicitly mentions increasing access to science and technology via global cooperation). This focus on network formation was carried forward into the 2023 Development Cooperation Charter, which places an equal emphasis on both international network development and on cooperation with universities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023, 14).

Even papers with a more critical leaning tend to note that networking has been emphasized as a point of success, albeit with the local impacts being context specific. Ogawa, Ahmad, and Akbari (2024) notes the success enjoyed by JICA and JICA scholars in network formation in Afghanistan prior to 2021. Citing the PEACE scholarship program, it mentions the existence of various networks in the fields of governance, education, health, agriculture, gender and reproductive rights between Japan and Afghanistan (Ogawa, Ahmad, and Akbari 2024, 90). These go beyond the higher education networks which are the focus of other areas of the literature into intergovernmental and private sector networks, receiving a positive evaluation. Likewise, Mubah (2019) cites Japan's long and successful history in network creation through its various scholarship programs even while critiquing the imbalance of student numbers on Japan-Indonesia exchange programs, and Yonezawa (2023, 227) argues that international network

creation has superseded academic achievement as core goal of the Japanese higher education system and the Global 30 program. Yonezawa and Meerman (2012, 60) state emphatically that programs carried out as development assistance have been very successful in creating an extensive network of governmental and academic leaders across East and Southeast Asia, again expanding beyond only the higher education sector.

Moreover, the literature strongly argues that any benefits are mutual between the Japanese and recipient sides. Scholars benefit from building connections to Japan when finding employment in Japanese businesses and when seeking business partnerships with Japanese companies, but conversely Japan itself is also a significant beneficiary of these networks; Yonezawa and Meerman (2012) are clear on the benefits of creating a network of academic and governmental leaders with ties to Japan, and Thapa (2023) notes the soft power benefits to Japan of cultivating pro-Japanese views through scholarship programs and their post-return networks.

This is in broad accordance with the wider literature on international scholarship programs and international student returnees, with international network formation being identified as a core theme across the wider literature in the systematic literature review by Wang et al. (2024). Among the articles referenced in Wang et al. (2024), Campbell and Baxter (2019) and Campbell (2016) explore the impacts of the construction of alumni networks in Mongolia, Georgia and Moldova, arguing that they have had a strengthening effect in producing social change and even become something akin to social pressure groups in their own right, although this caveated by issues such as the relative strength and activity of each alumni group. There is a slight difference in emphasis; these papers tend to focus on the alumni themselves, rather than the international connections they created, which is more strongly the case in the papers on Japanese scholarships. Nonetheless, in the broader study, Wang et al. (2024) does identify several papers which argue that, like in the Japanese case, the international networks have been beneficial in securing resources, sharing ideas, and providing platforms for activism, and it can be inferred that Japanese scholarship programs would produce similar results.

A significant limitation of the existing work on Japanese scholarship programs specifically is that it has primarily focused on Southeast Asia, and this is reflected especially strongly in the international networking theme. Aside from the papers by Ogawa, Ahmad, and Akbari (2024) and Thapa (2023), most of the reviewed papers mentioned case studies in this region (Sugimura and Kayashima 2022; Yonezawa and Meerman 2012; Hirosato 2014; Mubah 2019). Japan-Southeast Asia higher education networking is significantly more institutionalized, such as with the AUN/SeedNet program, which features 18 Japanese partner universities and is a region-wide initiative with 26 ASEAN universities (ASEAN University Network 2024), and which is referenced extensively by Sugimura and Kayashima (2022). There is only one very brief mention of network formation in any African context from Shimoda (2024, 89), who notes that Japan has not yet become a “key contact point for South African institutions in their internationalization drives”.

This leaves open a question for the ABE Initiative and other non-Asia focused scholarship programs in whether it has been *equally* successful in network formation – whether in higher education or in business contexts – in Africa. While JICA has conducted and commissioned non-academic assessments of the ABE Initiative, and while this did find positive results in relation to networking (Japan International Cooperation Agency et al. 2021), this previous study did not delve into specific case studies into the types of networks created beyond the self-reporting carried out as part of its survey component. Most of the established academic literature examined for this review has not specifically examined an Africa-focused program, leaving a significant literature gap. Additionally, for the ABE Initiative specifically, much of the existing ASEAN-focused work has examined the impact on higher education and governance, with relatively little attention paid to business networking; while some ABE scholars have of course gone into higher education and governance as well, since the ABE Initiative is primarily intended to be business-focused, this leaves open another literature gap in assessing its impact on business network formation. In short, while the literature generally bodes positively for the network creation aspect of ABE Initiative scholarships, both in higher education and elsewhere, there is little literature targeting Africa, business networking or the ABE Initiative directly, and so further investigation is required to determine whether or not Japanese successes in promoting networking in Asia can translate to Africa.

### 3.4 Theme 4: “Uniqueness” and Japanese Workplace Norms

The facilitation of investment into Africa by Japanese businesses is a core objective of the ABE Initiative. This objective is shared with other HRD programs, and a commonality between both is the emphasis on Japanese business practices and philosophies and participants with their *modus operandi*. While not always focused on scholarship programs specifically, there is a rich literature exploring the promotion of *monozukuri*, *hitozukuri*, and *kaizen* in Japanese HRD programs. These philosophies have also been linked with scholarships in other JICA reports as an opportunity to add value and emphasize the ideationally Japanese origins of these concepts (Japan International Cooperation Agency and Japan Development Service 2023), again linking to soft power promotion. Considering the shared objectives of traditional HRD programs and scholarship programs, and the shared emphasis on practical work experience with Japanese companies, this section reviews the HRD literature as it relates to these concepts, both in terms of specific scholarship programs and higher education contexts and as part of Japan’s wider catalogue of HRD efforts. While this is perhaps more closely related to ABE than other scholarship programs, there is perhaps some wider applicability in the examination of non-scholarship HRD programs or in scholarships which allow study on MBA or similar programs.

Japanese business concepts receive wide promotion for their uniqueness within the Japanese higher education sector. Japanese university programs aimed at overseas scholars promote *kaizen* as a concept which can be studied as part of their programs (Nagoya Institute of Technology 2024; Japan International Cooperation Agency 2023; International University of Japan 2024). *Monozukuri* also has a significant

presence, including in the JICA-supported Vietnam-Japan University (Vietnam Japan University 2024), the Monozukuri Program (Nguyen 2022) and the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund-backed JENESYS exchange program (Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). Across all of these, there is an extensive emphasis on the uniqueness, and King (2016) argues that they are synonymous with “Japan-brand ODA”. Many of the papers covering these business philosophies lean toward conceptual understandings focusing on uniqueness, with a particular focus on the need for adaptation.

*Kaizen* – the business philosophy of continuous, proactive improvement – receives the greatest prominence and is presented in the HRD literature as a kind of “unique selling point” for Japanese ODA, receiving highly positive evaluations from authors citing experiences of promoting it in Ethiopia, Thailand, and Turkey in terms of improving productivity (Otsuka, Jin, and Sonobe 2018; Sonobe 2017; Shimada 2023; Kuloglu 2021). The uniqueness of *kaizen* is frequently emphasized in the literature. Kikuchi and Suzuki (2018) argue that Japanese applications of *kaizen* and western applications of *kaizen*, even when directly based on the Japanese concept, are quite different in practice, and that this carries into development assistance and cooperation. (Sonobe 2017, 2–3, 10) argues that *kaizen* is uniquely Japanese due to its emphasis on practical, bottom-up decision making, and that it is an important tool in raising the reputation of Japanese ODA as something that is both Japanese ideationally and also in terms of marketability. All of these authors argue that the concept needs to be adapted specifically to the foreign contexts in the short term, all citing experiences in Africa (Kikuchi and Suzuki 2018, 135–36; Sonobe 2017, 10–11). The view that *kaizen* requires adaptation to local conditions is also promoted by Shimada (2023, 18), who argues that since *kaizen* was formulated in Japanese business contexts, it is not necessarily transferable without modification, again indirectly emphasizing the uniqueness of *kaizen* in practice. Shimada 2023 (13–14) also notes the contradiction in how *kaizen* is simultaneously advocated as both a uniquely Japanese and a universal management technique, which is reflected in HRD programs being divided between those teaching *kaizen* as a cultural concept and those teaching *kaizen* in terms of practical business methods such as lean production.

The literature further emphasises the uniqueness of the *monozukuri* and *hitozukuri* concepts and the exceptional nature of Japanese approaches to product and business development as well as wider business culture. Kanda and Kuwajima (2006) discuss both *hitozukuri* and *monozukuri*, and are emphatic and unequivocal in again pointing out the uniqueness:

*“Hitozukuri is often translated as Human Resource Development (HRD). However, it is not necessarily confined to human resource development in the realm of economics; but rather, a concept that is **unique to Japan** containing various elements such as, person-to-person exchanges and mutual understanding, which have been emphasized in aid activities”* (emphasis added by author).



Saito et al. (2011) argue that *hitozukuri* and *monozukuri* are deeply rooted in eastern philosophy and are “deeply rooted in Japanese culture”, along with *kaizen*, and they argue that these concepts have been instrumental to Japan’s success in business, mirroring the themes in the *kaizen* literature. A more critical appraisal is given by King (2016) who argues that since the 2015 Development Cooperation Charter Japan and JICA have heavily promoted the unique “Japaneseness” of its ODA practice, again employing *kaizen* and *hitozukuri* as examples of this.

While the discourse on these concepts is tied to largely Japanese authors promoting them in relation to Japan’s own development experience, there are some which examine specific case studies. While these are not scholarship programs *per se*, their objectives are often shared with the ABE Initiative in that they seek to prepare recipients for Japanese work environments and place great emphasis on practical work experience in Japanese companies. Nguyen (2022) analyses the Monozukuri Program in Thailand, and views it as an effective example of university-business cooperation which has been effective in improving Thai human resources and in facilitating the spread of unique Japanese cultural principles in the workplace. Nguyen (2022) notes that the goal is specifically to train Thai students to work for Japanese investing companies and to introduce them to Japanese working culture, which again is a goal very much shared with the ABE Initiative. Likewise, the promotion of *kaizen* in Ethiopia is cited as having been both successful and well-received, with the country seen as offering a potential model for elsewhere (Mekonen 2018; Otsuka, Jin, and Sonobe 2018). In-company training programs with Japanese companies were seen as beneficial by participants of *kaizen* programs in familiarizing participants with the concept of *kaizen* both practically and culturally (Mekonen 2018). Finally, examining the ABE Initiative directly, Nakamura et al. (2019) argue that the internships aspect of the ABE Initiative is a useful means to build hard skills and facilitate links between Japan and Africa. Again, while in different country contexts and offered under different modalities, the results of these programs and their emphasis on practical experience make them relevant to this literature review.

With *kaizen*, *hitozukuri* and *monozukuri*, the emphasis is on their unique qualities and how they distinguish Japan and its private sector from those of other countries. This is of particular relevance to an overtly business-focused program like the ABE Initiative which is specifically intended to facilitate Japanese investment and the entry of Japanese companies into Africa by developing personnel who can “understand the contexts of Japanese society and systems of Japanese companies” (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2024a). This is echoed by Babirye and Kinyua (2021, 226) who note the unique value of education in Japan in helping graduates to secure employment in Japanese companies or organizations, citing examples from Kenya and Uganda.

Japanese companies consistently cite shortages of human resources as a challenge in African contexts (JETRO 2023), and providing not only training in terms of hard skills but also training in terms of working culture is likely to be beneficial in addressing this concern, with the successes seen in the Thai and Ethiopian cases supporting this assertion. Indeed, Kato (2017) argues that a *kaizen* “attitude” is

considered an indispensable quality by Japanese companies and has already been promoted successfully in some African HRD programs, which also bodes positively for their inclusion in scholarship programs.

Boosting private sector engagement and investment is generally considered to add significant value to Japanese HRD efforts and is seen as part of the “uniqueness” of the Japanese model of ODA (Babirye and Kinyua 2021, 226; Magadlela 2016; Nakamura et al. 2019), and so the promotion of these business philosophies as being unique can be seen as part of a broader, dual strategy of boosting cultural affinity at the same time as contributing to HRD. Of course, this also hinges on the reception of these concepts and how they are taught to HRD program participants, both among participants themselves and among potential Japanese investors in Africa, with this reception requiring further exploration in future research.

## 4. Conclusion

This literature review has identified four themes for further exploration in relation to Japanese scholarship programs and, specifically, the ABE Initiative. Of these, soft power, an overarching conceptual theme, was considered to have had somewhat mixed results; while cultural affinity was seen to have been promoted successful in some contexts such as Nepal (Thapa 2023), it had a more mixed reception in others, such as Indonesia (Mubah 2019). Moreover, the efficacy of soft power was seen to have been limited by issues of program quality (Yonezawa 2023), and the expected impacts were viewed as overly optimistic (Green 2016) with other soft power promotion tools having been noted to have had less impact than expected. Program quality, an intermediate theme, also received a significant amount of critical coverage, with concerns raised that this could limit impact and effectiveness (Yonezawa and Meerman 2012; Yonezawa 2008; Tsuneyoshi, 2018). Conversely, greater successes were identified in promoting network formation (Kayashima 2022; Sugimura and Kayashima 2022; Ogawa, Ahmad, and Akbari 2024) and in promoting the uniqueness of Japanese business concepts (Saito et al. 2011; Kato 2017; Mekonen 2018; Nguyen 2022), although with these both being subject to the caveats explored in their respective sections. While it is generally regarded that individual programs are successful, such as the examples given in Sugimura and Kayashima (2022), these limitations and caveats on issues such as the limited networking data available on Africa mean that the applicability of these cases in Africa cannot be taken for granted. These are issues which must be addressed in assessing long-term impacts if Japanese scholarship programs are to truly maximize their value and their ability successfully fulfil their objectives in HRD, socio-economic development, and soft power. Considering the limited existing work on the ABE Initiative, it is also important to test in further research whether those areas considered successful elsewhere are replicable in the African context.

In line with the objective of being a foundational basis for wider discussion of the ABE Initiative specifically, this literature review identifies eight hypotheses as future directions for research on the ABE Initiative. These are organized according to the identified themes, with two hypotheses having been generated for each for testing in subsequent research. It is important to note that due to the cross-cutting

nature of the identified themes, hypotheses are based on synthesis of the different literature across the different themes rather than being exclusively drawn from the literature relating to that specific theme. This section provides a detailed overview of the generated hypotheses from this literature review.

- **Theme 1: Soft Power**

1. *Soft power promotion may be more limited in efficacy than is commonly assumed.*
2. *Japan's attractiveness derives from the practical opportunities it gives in terms of career advancement, rather than simply from uniqueness or perceived generosity.*

For soft power, it can be hypothesized that it may be more limited in efficacy than is commonly assumed. This is based on the papers by Mubah (2019), Green (2016) and the body of works by Yonezawa (Yonezawa 2008; 2023; Yonezawa and Meerman 2012) which raise concerns about imbalance, program quality, and the extent of the positivity which is developed in practice. Moreover, it can also be hypothesized that Japan's inherent attractiveness will not necessarily derive from its uniqueness or generosity, but from the practical opportunities it gives. This hypothesis is based on the work by Mubah (2019), who cites the issue of cynicism among Indonesian students about Japan's motives in giving scholarship aid, on the works by Thapa (2023) and Mpaso (2024) which cite practical opportunities to study and pursue internships, respectively. It is also based on the wider literature around networking, which is arguably a practically-focused element of soft power compared to cultural attraction.

- **Theme 2: Program Quality**

1. *Levels of satisfaction will vary based on program and university.*
2. *Negative experiences may negate soft power and HRD benefits in some cases.*

On program quality, it can be hypothesized that levels of satisfaction regarding scholarship outcomes will vary based on program and university, and that negative experiences may negate soft power and HRD benefits in some cases, or at least be more nuanced than expected. These are both broadly based on the works of Yonezawa (Yonezawa 2008; Yonezawa and Meerman 2012; Yonezawa 2023) and Tsuneyoshi (2018), with consideration given to the arguments made in some additional related works such as Green (2016) and Ozeki et al. (2023).

- **Theme 3: Network Formation**

1. *The network formation effects of scholarship programs are mutually impactful and effective and create positive outcomes for all stakeholders.*
2. *Network formation will have strong traditional soft power impacts.*

For network formation, it can be hypothesized that it is impactfully and effectively incorporated into

scholarship programs for both Japan and for scholars. Almost all the papers discussing this theme were positively-inclined (Sugimura and Kayashima 2022; Hirokato 2014; Kayashima 2022; Mubah 2019; Ogawa, Ahmad, and Akbari 2024; Thapa 2023; Yonezawa and Meerman 2012; Yonezawa 2023), and this was also in accordance with the wider, non-Japan focused literature on the matter (Wang et al. 2024). Consequently, there is a high likelihood of this being replicated for the ABE Initiative as well. Moreover, it can be hypothesized that network formation will have strong traditional soft power impacts; again, this is mentioned in numerous papers, citing examples in Nepal (Thapa 2023), Europe and the Middle East (Yonezawa and Meerman 2012), and ASEAN (Sugimura and Kayashima 2022). Long-term networking is considered a success elsewhere, such as in ASEAN countries, but while the small existing body of evidence is positive (Shimoda 2024; Mpaso 2024), further empirical data for the African context is necessary.

- **Theme 4: Uniqueness**

1. *It is primarily Japanese stakeholders which are interested in Japanese business philosophy in Africa.*
2. *Reception among African stakeholders may be slower or more mixed.*

For uniqueness, it can be hypothesized that Japanese stakeholders are the ones most interested in pursuing Japanese business philosophy in Africa and that reception among African stakeholders may be more mixed. These are based on the overwhelming prevalence of Japan-based authors among those promoting this theme and the relative lack of papers from elsewhere discussing them. Wang et al. (2024) notes the issues of cultural absorption and receptiveness to “foreign” business concepts, and if concepts such as *kaizen* are indeed uniquely Japanese then the ability of ABE scholars to successfully distribute them in Africa, especially in conservative business and bureaucratic environments, requires further testing. Conversely, if they are not in fact seen to provide a unique contribution, then this raises the question of the effectiveness of incorporating them into scholarship programs at all, and raises the question of whether the “marketing” of ABE scholarships matches their practised reality both within and post-program.

With these hypotheses in mind, it is again worth emphasizing the origins of the ABE Initiative; it was explicitly created with the objective of assisting the Japanese private sector in formulating skilled human resources in Africa, an issue which had been raised by business groups such as the *Keidanren* as a reason why Japanese investment in Africa had been slower than anticipated, and they promoted ODA as means to achieve successful expansion into Africa long in advance of TICAD V (Yamada 2015, 45). This is in addition to more traditional ODA objectives in creating socioeconomic, human resource and soft power impacts on the recipient side. If the ABE Initiative can be deemed successful across each of these objectives, then it may serve as a replicable model for other countries considering the overtly business-based orientation and pro-entrepreneurial spirit which define its character.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Utilized Search Strings

("scholarships" OR "scholarship") AND ("Japan" OR "JICA" OR "Japanese") AND ("Africa" OR "ABE Initiative" OR "Nigeria" OR "Ethiopia" OR "Egypt" OR "Congo" OR "Tanzania" OR "South Africa" OR "Kenya" OR "Uganda" OR "Sudan" OR "Algeria" OR "Morocco" OR "Angola" OR "Ghana" OR "Mozambique" OR "Madagascar" OR "Ivory Coast" OR "Cote D'Ivoire" OR "Cameroon" OR "Niger" OR "Mali" OR "Burkina Faso" OR "Malawi" OR "Zambia" OR "Chad" OR "Somalia" OR "Senegal" OR "Zimbabwe" OR "Guinea" OR "Rwanda" OR "Benin" OR "Burundi" OR "Tunisia" OR "Sudan" OR "Togo" OR "Sierra Leone" OR "Libya" OR "Central African Republic" OR "CAR" OR "Liberia" OR "Mauritania" OR "Eritrea" OR "Gambia" OR "Botswana" OR "Namibia" OR "Gabon" OR "Lesotho" OR "Guinea-Bissau" OR "Equatorial Guinea" OR "Mauritius" OR "Eswatini" OR "Djibouti")

Google Scholar does not permit searching by abstract or keywords, only by title or by the full contents of the article. In this case, to broaden the search to the greatest possible degree, the search strings were applied to the full contents. After the initial search, the search was repeated with the Africa focus left blank since this garnered few results. This is a relatively limited approach to literature searching, but it was the only option considering the already small sample pool. Additional robustness checks were carried out after themes had been identified by appending the search string with keywords relating to the themes. These used the following strings:

("scholarships" OR "scholarship") AND ("Japan" OR "JICA" OR "Japanese") AND ("ODA" OR "aid" OR "development assistance") AND ("network" OR "networking" OR "international" OR "business" OR "private sector" OR "kaizen" OR "hitozukuri" OR "monozukuri" OR "soft power" OR "economic" OR "interests" OR "strategy" OR "soft power" OR "program quality" OR "course quality" OR "support").

The words utilized presented two significant challenges. "Scholarship" often appears in literature review sections (in phrases such as "existing scholarship indicates that...") and so searching generates significant numbers of articles about Japanese aid to Africa more broadly which require manual verification for relevance. Additionally, "ABE" on its own generated mostly results about *Prime Minister* Abe, so it was necessary to specify "ABE Initiative".

## Appendix 2: List of Sources Used for Thematic Analysis

Name and Year	Title	Material Type	Themes Identified
Bradford, 2019	English-medium degree programs in Japanese universities: learning from the European experience	Indexed journal article	Program quality
Dadabaev, 2016	Japan's ODA assistance scheme and Central Asian engagement: Determinants, trends, expectations	Indexed journal article	Soft power
Green, 2016	Top Global Soft Power? Japanese Higher Education and Foreign Policy Goals	Non-indexed journal article	Program quality, soft power
Hirosato, 2014	Subregional Collaboration in Higher Education: Harmonization and Networking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)	Edited book chapter	Long term network formation
Kanda & Kawajima, 2006	The Overview and New Orientation of Technical Cooperation of JICA—In the Framework of Capacity Development and Human Security	JICA-RI working paper	Uniqueness
Kato, 2017	Japan and Africa: A Historical Review of Interaction and Future Prospects	Indexed journal article	Uniqueness
Kayashima, 2022	Japan's ODA for the Development of Higher Education Institutions in Developing Countries: Supporting Leading Universities for Human Resource Development and Knowledge Creation and Diffusion	Edited book chapter	Network formation, program quality
Kikuchi & Suzuki, 2018	Kaizen and Standardization	Edited book chapter	Uniqueness
King, 2016	Lenses on 'Japaneseness' in the Development Cooperation Charter of 2015: Soft power, human resources development, education and training	JICA-RI working paper	Uniqueness, soft power
Kiyoko Saito & Kim, 2019	Internationalization of Japanese Higher Education: Effective Organization of Internationally Cooperative Higher Education Programs	Indexed journal article	Program quality



Koda & Yuki, 2013	The labor market outcomes of two forms of cross-border higher education degree programs between Malaysia and Japan	JICA-RI working paper	Uniqueness, program quality
Kuloglu, 2021	Sustainable Competitive Advantage And Continuous Quality Improvement In Higher Education: A Kaizen Philosophy Approach	Edited book chapter	Uniqueness
Mubah, 2019	Japanese public diplomacy in Indonesia: The role of Japanese agencies in academic exchange programs between Japan and Indonesia	Non-indexed journal article	Network formation, soft power
Nakamura, et al., 2019	Human Resource Development in Africa	Conference paper	Uniqueness
Nguyen, 2022	Human Resource Development of Vietnam Manufacturing Industry: Support from Japanese Organizations and Firms	Non-indexed journal article	Uniqueness
Otsuka, Jin & Sonobe, 2018	Applying the Kaizen in Africa: A New Avenue for Industrial Development	Edited book chapter	Soft power, uniqueness
Ozeki, et al., 2023	Towards the Establishment of Program Evaluation System in Japanese Higher Education: Learning from the Quality Code Adopted in the United Kingdom	Indexed journal article	Program quality
Ogawa, et al., 2024	The Experience of Becoming a Refugee: Evacuation and Resettlement of Afghanistan Citizens in Japan	Non-indexed journal article	Network formation, program quality
Saito et al., 2011	Hitozukuri and Monozukuri: Centuries' Old Eastern Philosophy to Seek Harmony with Nature	Non-indexed journal article	Uniqueness
Shimada, 2023	Is Kaizen Effective in Developing Countries? The Universality and Distinctiveness of Kaizen	Non-indexed journal article	Uniqueness
Sonobe, 2017	Industrial Development: Strategic Assistance for "Japan Brand ODA"	Research report	Uniqueness
Sugimura & Kayashima, 2022	Japan's ODA Scholarship Programs for International Students: Supporting Japan's Intellectual Contribution to the International Community	Edited book chapter	Network formation, soft power

Thapa, 2023	Soft Power and the Role of Higher Education in Shaping of Nepal-Japan Relations	Non-indexed journal article	Network formation, soft power
Tsuneyoshi, 2018	"Exceptionalism" in Japanese Education and its Implications	Edited book chapter	Uniqueness, program quality
Wojciuk, 2018	Higher education as a soft power in international relations	Edited book chapter	Soft power, program quality
Yonezawa & Meerman, 2012	Multilateral initiatives in the East Asian arena and the challenges for Japanese higher education	Indexed journal article	Network formation, program quality
Yonezawa, 2008	Facing Crisis: Soft Power and Japanese Education in a Global Context	Edited book chapter	Soft power, program quality
Yonezawa, 2023	Japan's Higher Education Policies under Global Challenges	Indexed journal article	Network formation, program quality

## *Additional Sources used for Contextualization*

Name and Year	Title	Material Type
Arase, 1994	Public-Private Sector Interest Coordination in Japan's ODA	Indexed journal article
Ashida, 2023	The Role of Higher Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals	Edited book chapter
Babirye & Kinyua, 2021	East African Youth in Motion: Exploring Opportunities in Asia	Preprint
Beri, 2017	AAGC: Towards India-Japan Development Cooperation in Africa	Discussion paper
Beri, 2018	The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor: Towards Indo-Japanese Development Cooperation in Africa	Indexed journal article
Campbell, 2016	International scholarship graduates influencing social and economic development at home: The role of alumni networks in Georgia and Moldova	Indexed journal article
Campbell & Baxter, 2019	Exploring the attributes and practices of alumni associations that advance social change	Indexed journal article
Czerep, 2020	Ahead of the 2021 EU-Africa Summit, Africa Looks East Once Again	Research report
Furuoka, 2008	The 'Honne-Tatemaie' Dimension in Japan's Foreign Aid Policy: Overseas Development Aid Allocations in Southeast Asia	Indexed journal article
Galán-Muros, et al., 2022	Exploring international aid for tertiary education: recent developments and current trends	UN report

Hoshiro, 2024	Bringing the National Interest to the Forefront of Foreign Aid Policy	Indexed journal article
Japan International Cooperation Agency, et al. 2021	Thematic Evaluation FY2020: Analysis of Evaluation Methodologies for Scholarship Programs Final Report	Research report
Kayashima, Kuroda & Kitamura, 2022	Japan's International Cooperation in Education: An Overview	Edited book chapter
Koga, 2020	Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' question: countering China or shaping a new regional order?	Indexed journal article
Liff, 2015	Japan's Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary	Indexed journal article
Magadlela, 2016	"Can You Teach a Lion to Roar?" Selected African Skills Development and Capacity Building Perspectives: Breaking Down Old Paradigms and Creating New Opportunities	Working paper
Mpaso, 2024	A Glimpse into a Master's Degree and an Internship Programme of African Business Education Initiative for Youth: A Case Study of International Partnership between Japan and Africa	Edited book chapter
Ogawa, 2019	Normality of International Norms: Power, Interests, and Knowledge in Japan's ODA Politics	Non-indexed journal article
Shimoda, 2024	The Impact of Japanese Universities in an African Context	Edited book chapter
Yamada, 2015	From humanitarianism to trade promotion: the changing emphasis of Japanese development co-operation to Africa	Non-indexed journal article
Zappa, 2017	Japan as "thought leader" : the Japanese grant scholarship for human resource development and its implications in Vietnam and transitional economies in Asia	Doctoral thesis

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## 要約

JICA 留学生事業は、数多くの低・中所得国の将来のリーダー達が新たな知識・スキルを習得し、自国の発展により効果的に貢献することを可能にしてきた。JICA 留学生事業の中で、「ABE イニシアティブ（アフリカの若者のための産業人材育成イニシアティブ：African Business Education Initiative for Youth）」は、日本とアフリカのビジネスのネットワーク構築・強化と日本企業の職場におけるインターンシップに重点を置いている点で他の JICA のプログラムと異なる。ABE イニシアティブに関する研究プロジェクトの第一段階として、本文献レビューは、JICA 留学生事業に加え、同様の目的を有する人材育成プログラムに関する主要な先行研究に関し、その概要とともに、4つの主要な研究テーマを提示する。主要な研究テーマの一つに、日本社会についての理解や肯定的な見方を促す留学生事業の「ソフト・パワー」が挙げられるが、ソフト・パワーを意図した留学生事業について先行研究の評価は分かれている。第二に、JICA 留学生事業のプログラムにとって重要な要素である「学位プログラムの質」が挙げられるが、先行研究では学位プログラムの質について批判的に論じられている。留学生事業を通じた「ネットワークの形成」については、特に高等教育機関の関連において肯定的に論じられている。他方で、留学生事業のプログラムに日本独自の概念や哲学を含めること（「プログラムの独自性」）については先行研究の評価が分かれている。本文献レビューは、JICA 留学生事業のプログラムに関し、上記の4つの研究テーマにおいて、それぞれ今後の研究課題を明らかにした。

本稿の目的は開発協力の議論を広く紹介することにあります。本稿の掲載情報は信頼できると考えられる情報源から作成しており、作成には万全を期しておりますが、その正確性、完全性を保証するものではありません。詳しくは原論文をご参照下さい。また、記載された付加価値、政策含意や留意点は作成者個人の責任で執筆されており、作成者が属する組織の見解とは必ずしも一致していません。