

The report pointed out, however, that this had been a recent development and that some older established Japanese studies programs do not allow this flexibility in degree structure. Even in major centres of commercial and business dealings, such as Sydney and Melbourne, there is inadequate opportunity for students to combine a specialisation relevant to business and public management employment. In order to ensure wider opportunities for students in many parts of Australia, the study suggested more activities in the direction of intra-institutional and inter-institutional cooperation.

..while there is a desirable trend towards intra-institutional and inter-institutional cooperation aimed at providing skills useful in securing Japan-related employment, there is much scope for inter-institutional cooperation to provide special courses in Japanese business and management studies. (ibid.:1)

Australia's developing relations with Japan in the 1980s was increasingly multi-dimensional. In order to contribute towards national interests, as well as enhancing their career opportunities, graduates of Japanese studies have to be multi-skilled. The specialisations required of graduates ranged wide, from economics, finance and law to a variety of technology fields. It would be impossible for any single university to develop a program to cater for all these needs. Intra-institutional and inter-institutional cooperation, therefore, would be the rational answer. In this aspect, the study concluded that, in the 1980s, there remained much scope for improvement.

The general findings of the study, however, portrayed a picture that by the mid 1980s, the majority of Japanese programs in Australia's tertiary institutions were progressing well. Evidence was presented that a number of universities, particularly those in and around major cities, had begun designing Japanese programs with clear consideration of vocational relevancy.

3.5 Defining Academia's Contribution

The 1970s through to 1980s was the time for Australia's Japanese Studies

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academia to make a serious assessment on what the country needed in terms of Japan skills and literacy. Substantial efforts were made to analyse and identify Australia's emerging needs, and to define what would be academia's role in meeting those needs. The outcome of these efforts resulted in the extensive revision of existing Japanese programs and the creation of many new programs. In this process, Australia's Japanese academia assumed an even stronger role in shaping and guiding the country's Japan-related education. The undertaking of a major survey at the end of the 1980s symbolises academia's combined efforts in this era.

Between April 1988 and June 1989, the Australia-Japan Research Centre (AJRC) at ANU carried out a major survey on Japanese studies in Australia. The project had been commissioned by the Japan Foundation and was undertaken by a team headed by Peter Drysdale. The results of the survey were published by AJRC in 1989 as *Japanese Studies in Australia*. The publication is considered by far the most comprehensive account of Japanese studies in Australian tertiary education of the day.

In the book, Arthur Stockwin laid out three principal purposes 'to which the teaching of Japanese and Japanese studies in Australian tertiary institutions seek to contribute' (Stockwin 1989:14-24).

- Intellectual development
- Vocational relevance
- National interest

In discussing intellectual development, Stockwin observed that many centres of Japanese studies had concluded that students of Japanese studies require intellectual development in three areas: language competency, one specialised discipline, and general aspects of contemporary Japan. The main issue was how best these three could be combined in an existing degree structure and in the limited time frame.

In Australia, the majority of students are expected to complete an undergraduate degree in three years. Furthermore, Australian degree structures are generally built around a series of majors, and students have a

wide range of courses from which to choose. Under these circumstances, it will be very difficult to design a Japanese program which will concentrate on all three areas of intellectual development. Taking the language competency alone, compared with Latin-originated languages, such as French and Italian, Japanese language requires much more time and effort for students of English background to achieve the expected level of competency. Stockwin pointed out that most centres of Japanese in Britain already worked on a four-year basis for all undergraduates.

Stockwin emphasised the importance of high-level language training from several viewpoints. He recognised that language teaching had shifted from traditional methods used thirty to forty years ago, to the modern method in which 'priority was placed on the training in functional fluency'. Acknowledging that some Japanese studies scholars were sceptical that such language training would contribute towards intellectual development, or 'the development of mind', Stockwin argued that such concerns were unwarranted.

My impression ...is that approaches currently being taken in Australian tertiary institutions to the teaching of Japanese (language) seek to present students with an intellectually challenging environment of courses that stretch the mind.
(ibid.:16)

He further argued the importance of language competency in terms of vocational relevance. If a graduate is to be employed as a Japanese specialist, language competency would be a part of what employers expect of him or her. If the graduate was unable to demonstrate his/her language competency in functional situations, the credibility of the graduate would be in jeopardy. He compared the level of language skills expected of Japanese studies graduates with the skills expected of other professional training such as law and accounting.

... if the principal reason for employing a graduate in Japanese is competence in the language, then that competence needs to be amply demonstrated in practical situations, as much as law and

accountancy graduates are required to demonstrate their skills.
(ibid.:18)

Discussing further the vocational relevance in a Japanese studies program, Stockwin portrayed the type of graduates 'who have proved themselves most readily in the job market'. They would be those who have combined a high level of language competency, an understanding of how Japanese society works, and training in a vocationally relevant discipline.

A diversity of programs had been created by different universities to enable students to achieve the level described above. An ever-present dilemma experienced by creators of university programs was how to balance the development of students' practical skills with the development of their minds. As the nation's highest level of educational institutions, universities' primary concern should be on the widening of students' intellectual horizons. In creating new programs, therefore, primary consideration had to be given to the enhancement of students' intellectual development in the same three areas identified by Stockwin. Stockwin offered his assessment on the validity of these new programs in terms of students' intellectual development.

My personal view is that when a degree structure based on these broad principles is well designed, its best graduates should be at least as intellectually sophisticated and 'stretched' as those from the more traditional or 'classical' degree programs and certainly broader in outlook. (ibid.:17)

In conclusion, Stockwin cautioned government and the business community as well as academia on the easy assumption that it would be in the national interest to produce an ever-expanding supply of Japanese graduates. He warned that educating a large number of people in rudimentary knowledge of language and culture would achieve little in the promotion of bilateral understanding between Australia and Japan. If Japanese programs were to contribute to the national interest in that environment in which Australia was forming ever closer ties with Asia, and with Japan in particular, the quality of the programs would be of vital

importance.

Because reputation for quality is so important in this environment, the quality of Japanese studies, and not just the numbers involved, should be kept in the forefront of the debate.
(ibid.:21)

The idea in this statement, very sound as it was, was soon to become the largest challenge to those involved in Japanese education, as the onslaught of the major *Tsunami* was just around the corner.