Development of Credential Evaluation Systems for Japanese Universities: Comparative Perspective

JAFSA session
May 30, 2008
NAFSA 2008 Annual Conference & International Expo
Chair: Miki Horie, Nagoya University

This session

- Sponsored by JAFSA: Japan Network for International Education

- Topic: Foreign credential evaluation system in Japanese higher education
  - (Almost) No professional services or relevant agencies in Japan at this moment
  - Increasing needs for professional approach
  - Possible ways of developing this field in Japan? Learning from European and U.S. models
Session outline

- Shingo Ashizawa, Keio Academy of New York
  - Foreign credential evaluations in Japanese higher education

- Jessica Stannard, Nuffic
  - European perspective

- Mariam Assefa, WES
  - U.S. perspective

- Hiroshi Ota, Hitotsubashi University
  - Policy updates in relation to credential evaluation in Japan

- Discussion

What we need as a system...

- Necessity of FCE in various context
  - Admissions
  - Credit transfer (UCTS, ECTS)
  - Professional credentials and certificates
  - Immigrants and employment

- Information Center for Japanese higher education system

- Creation of Information platform (Database) and profession a network

- Professional training in FCE
In Japan, there needs to be a more systematic approach to FCE.

We need...

1. a more competitive environment for recruiting international students

2. mobile admission (Documentation Screening) rather than one-shot entrance examination (Paper Tests & Interviews)

3. more flexibility in academic credentials for student exchange
Foreign academic credential evaluation in higher education in Europe

- To stimulate *internationalization* in higher education and to foster mobility of students
- European Commission, Council of Europe, and UNESCO have taken several measures to foster recognition of formal learning (diplomas, qualifications, or credentials).
- (1) To enhance *academic recognition*: admission to or enrolment in a study programs.
- (2) To enhance *professional recognition*: permission to conduct a resulted profession as well as entrance to labor market.

The ENIC and NARIC network

- European Commission has established the network of National Academic Recognition and Information Centres as part of the mobility program *Erasmus in 1984*.
- **To promote the mobility** of students, staff, and researchers by giving advice about the recognition of credentials and study programs.
- The NARIC encompasses the countries of European Union, European Economic Area and Associated Countries (about 30).
- The network of European National Information Centres was formed in 1994 as a result from a fusion between the earlier networks, one from Council of Europe and one from European Higher Education Department of UNESCO.
- The ENIC network covers all countries in Europe as well as Australia, Canada, Israel, and US (about 55).
- **Nuffic** is designed by the Dutch Ministry of Education to serve as the Dutch ENIC/NARIC.
Recognition Instrument

- Lisbon Recognition Convention in February 1, 1999
- Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures the Assessment of Foreign Qualification in 2001
- A qualification is recognized, as long as there is no evidence of **substantial differences** in terms of:
  1. learning outcomes,
  2. access to further activities,
  3. key elements of the study programs,
  4. quality.

Credential Evaluation in US

- Strong needs from international community for the purpose of admission (H.E. institutions)
- Institutions conduct evaluation to determine eligibility for admission and placement level of students (for internal use)
- Result in decision to grant or deny admission
FCE in US (External Services)

- Based on request of an individual or a third party
- Service providers produce report for the use of the person who ordered the evaluation
- Provide training programs for admission officers
- Create professional associations (sharing information, set standard of professional development program)

Framework of FCE Comparison between US & Europe

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Europe</th>
<th>US</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of Government</td>
<td>Gov. Involvement, Set FCE Standard, Regional Network (EU)</td>
<td>Very limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Initiative</td>
<td>Cooperation with ENIC / NARIC Center</td>
<td>Some institutions have capacity to have own FCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Party (NPO)</td>
<td>Many ENIC/ NARIC centers are public organizations</td>
<td>A number of third parties, Network of FCE professional organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In the case of UK, NARIC center is a private third party</td>
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Survey on status of FCE in Japan

- Conducted a survey of Japanese Universities (December, 2005 – February, 2006)
- 30 Major Universities Targeted
  - 193 surveys were sent to 156 departments
- Number of Responses:
  - 26 universities
  - 96 departments
  - 101 total responses
- Percentage of Responses
  - 52.3% Response Rate

Result
Q3: Educational Background of International Applicants

- Graduate Level
  - “Research Students”
- Undergraduate Level
- Japanese Language School Extension
- Universities
- High Schools

NAFSA 2008
Shingo Ashizawa
**Q10: What Items are Reviewed?**

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<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Sample Size | 184 | 100.0% |
| Duplicated Answers | 100 |
| No. of Responses | 84 |

| a. Authenticity of credentials |
| b. Academic record of applicant |
| c. Number of credits obtained by applicant |
| d. Contents of courses taken by applicant |
| e. The educational and academic level of the relevant educational institution |
| f. Organizational background and history of relevant educational institution |
| g. Ranking of relevant educational institution |
| h. Other |

**Q12: How is the Authenticity of the Credentials Verified?**

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<td>g</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Sample Size | 100 | 100.0% |
| Duplicated Answers | 45 |
| No. of Responses | 55 |

| a. Relevant faculty determine, based on their experience and knowledge. |
| b. It is determined based on a database and manuals accumulated by the university. |
| c. Inquiries are made to faculty within the university who come from the same national origin as that of the applicant. |
| d. Inquiries are made to the embassy/consulate of the national origin of applicant. |
| e. Inquiries are made to relevant ministries and agencies of education of the national origin of applicant. |
| f. Utilize information service agencies AACRAO and WES, etc. |
| g. Other |
Q13: How are Transcripts Verified?

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<td>Sample Size</td>
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<td>No. of Responses</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- a. Assess the academic records of applicant obtained at overseas educational institutions by adopting our own appraisal standard, while quantifying the degree of the record.
- b. Relevant faculty staff determine, based on their experience and knowledge.
- c. Inquiries are made to faculty within the university who come from the same national origin as that of the applicant, and then assess individually.
- d. Utilize information service agencies (such as AACRAO and WES, etc.), regarding the validity of foreign academic degree and credential evaluation.
- e. Other

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Role of Third Parties & Governments in Internationalization (US)

- Government Funding: emphasis is on support for individual students and scholars.
- Third parties offer diversified services and programs for universities.
Role of Governments & Third Parties in Internationalization (JAPAN)

- Significant government initiative
- The role of third parties is vital, but limited.
- Further institutional initiative towards internationalization is expected.

Current Status of FCE in Japan

1. High reliance is placed on personal experience and knowledge. There is no systematic method for FCE.

2. Authenticity of credentials is taken quite seriously in FCE.

3. Faculty members are deeply committed to the entrance exam and credential evaluation for International Students.
Thank you for your attention.

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International Credential Evaluation: The European Perspective

Development of Credential Evaluation Systems for Japanese Universities

Jessica Stannard

NAFSA Annual Conference
Washington, D.C.
May 30, 2008

Topics

➢ Key Features of Credential Evaluation in Europe
➢ Criteria and Methodology
➢ Relevant Trends in International Recognition
Credential Evaluation: Key Features

➢ Terminology:

- “Recognition” vs. “credential evaluation”
- “Academic” vs. “professional” recognition

➢ Legal framework

-National educational legislation in place that affects credential evaluation practice

Credential Evaluation: Key Features

➢ Important networks:

- ENIC / NARIC network
- European Association for
- International Education (EAIE)
- EAIE Professional Section for Admissions Officers and Credential Evaluators (ACE)
- national networks
Credential Evaluation: Key Features

- Main Actors
  - ENIC/NARIC offices
  - Higher education institutions
  - Ministries

- Main Clients
  - Higher education institutions
  - Diploma holders

- In most countries free of charge

- Incoming / outgoing mobility

Recognition Procedure

1: application form
2: file
3: copy of file
4: evaluation
5: decision
Criteria and Methodology


Advocates fair recognition while respecting the differences between foreign and domestic educational programmes

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Criteria and Methodology

- Instruments of recognition
  - ECTS
  - Diploma Supplement
  - ENIC / NARIC network of information exchange
Relevant Trends in International Recognition

- Bologna Declaration and the ensuing Bologna Process
- European / National Qualifications Framework (EQF / NQF)
- Quality assurance

A Selection of Useful Websites:

- www.enic-naric.net
- www.eaie.nl
- http://www.aic.lv/ace/
- http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Recognition/leg_aca/Lisb_con.pdf (LRC)
- www.nuffic.nl
Are there any questions?

Thank you for your attention!

Jessica Stannard: stannard@nuffic.nl
The U.S. Environment

- Credential evaluation rests entirely within the private sector.

- Evaluations are performed by academic institutions and private organizations.

- Evaluations are advisory only: they have no force of law.
### Evaluation Users

- Foreign-educated persons wishing to study or work in the US
- Institutions that enroll international students or recruit foreign faculty
- Employers that hire foreign-educated candidates
- State boards of professional licensing that receive applications from foreign-educated individuals

### Evaluation Purpose

- **Mitigate risk**
  - confirm the authenticity and validity of foreign credentials
  - verify recognition of institutions in home country
- **Provide transparency**
  - allow users to understand foreign educational credentials
  - allow comparison with US-educated candidates
- **Provide opportunity**
  - allow foreign-educated individuals gain access to jobs and education
  - expand pool of skilled workers
Evaluation Limits

- Evaluation alone is not evidence of an individual’s skills or competence.
- Evaluation does not guarantee that the individual will gain the benefit (admission, employment, licensing) that is sought.

WES Evaluation Approach

- WES adheres to the principles embodied in the 1997 Lisbon convention on the recognition of educational credentials
- Recognizes that educational systems are inherently different
- Provides functional rather than absolute equivalencies
WES Evaluation Bases

- Authentic documents from legitimate institutions
- Extensive database of information about educational system and programs
- Consistent methodology

WES Credential Standards

- Documents must be issued by legitimate, recognized institutions
- Documents are accepted only when submitted according to WES specifications by country
- Documents are verified with the institutions that issued them
**WES Process: Step #1**

Document Recognition

- Credentials and envelopes are imaged into database
- Files are assigned to evaluators by country/region of specialization
- Evaluators examine to determine whether they meet WES standards

**WES Process: Step #2**

Credential Evaluation

- Evaluator matches document and links image with appropriate credential in the WES database
- Evaluator enters elements specific to the particular credential: dates of attendance/graduation, field of study…
- WES database proposes generic equivalencies based on the data elements
WES Process: Step #3

Quality Control

- Draft evaluation report is sent for proofing
- Proofed evaluation is released for printing and mailing

WES Evaluation Database

WES uses a custom-built electronic evaluation system. AICES (Automated International Credentials Evaluation System). It contains information on:

- 200 countries and jurisdictions
- 40,000+ institutions
- 20,000+ credentials
- 2,000+ grading scales

- AICES data is maintained and updated by a dedicated team
Work Flow & Tracking

- Evaluators are organized in six regional groups.
- AICES system assigns files to individual evaluators by expertise and workload.
- System monitors evaluation status and timeline.
- System allows applicants and institutions to track the status of evaluations 24/7.

WES Evaluator Role

- Checks documents to ensure validity
- Matches and links documents with appropriate credentials
- Verifies and enters candidate-specific data
- Assembles and proofs evaluation report
- Researches new information
### WES Evaluator Training

Training focuses on:

- WES values and procedures
- WES database applications
- Document standards and recognition
- Researching information not found in database

### WES 2007 Output

- 50,000 individual evaluations
- Delivered to 2000+ end users
- Trained 350 university personnel
- Distributed information to 6000 individuals through WENR, bi-monthly electronic newsletter
Three Policy and Situational Changes

1. 300,000 International Student Plan
2. MEXT’s Crackdown on Faculty Members Holding Bogus Degrees
3. Japan’s Commitment to UNESCO’s Project
Japan’s new target to increase the number of international students enrolled in Japanese higher education institutions: **300,000 by 2020**

- Stagnated inflow of international students to Japan since 2004
- Deteriorating national demographic climate and increasing the number of universities (523 in 1992 to 756 in 2007): “an age when all are accepted to college”
- PM Fukuda’s initiatives and MEXT’s Special Committee for International Students within the National Council for Education: linked to highly skilled immigration
- Drastic reforms and innovative steps needed to achieve the new target: diversify source countries of int’l students and recruiting methods, e.g. “document screening only”
Crackdown on Faculty Members Holding Bogus Degrees

- **MEXT’s investigation into bogus degree holders in all Japanese universities and colleges in 2007**
  - Whether a universality hired or promoted faculty members on the basis of credentials that were later found to be bogus, from 2004 to 2006: 57 institutions and 62 faculty members
  - Whether university’s prospectus or website features faculty members whose qualifications were obtained from overseas degree mills: 49 institutions and 53 faculty members
  - Has increased the recognition and needs of foreign credential evaluation
  - Merely the tip of the iceberg…

Japan’s Commitment to UNESCO’s Project

- **UNESCO Portal on Higher Education Institutions**
  - [http://www.unesco.org/education/portal/hed-institutions](http://www.unesco.org/education/portal/hed-institutions)
  - “Offers access to on-line information on higher education institutions recognized or otherwise sanctioned by competent authorities in participating countries”
  - “Provides students, employers, and other interested parties with access to authoritative and up-to-date information on the status of higher education institutions and quality assurance in these countries”
  - Participating countries: Japan and other 12 countries including US, UK, and China
  - Japan: too basic, unclear, and misleading, e.g. the competent body of foreign credential assessment and recognition in Japan is MEXT, really?
In 2008, JAFSA celebrates the 40th anniversary of its foundation.