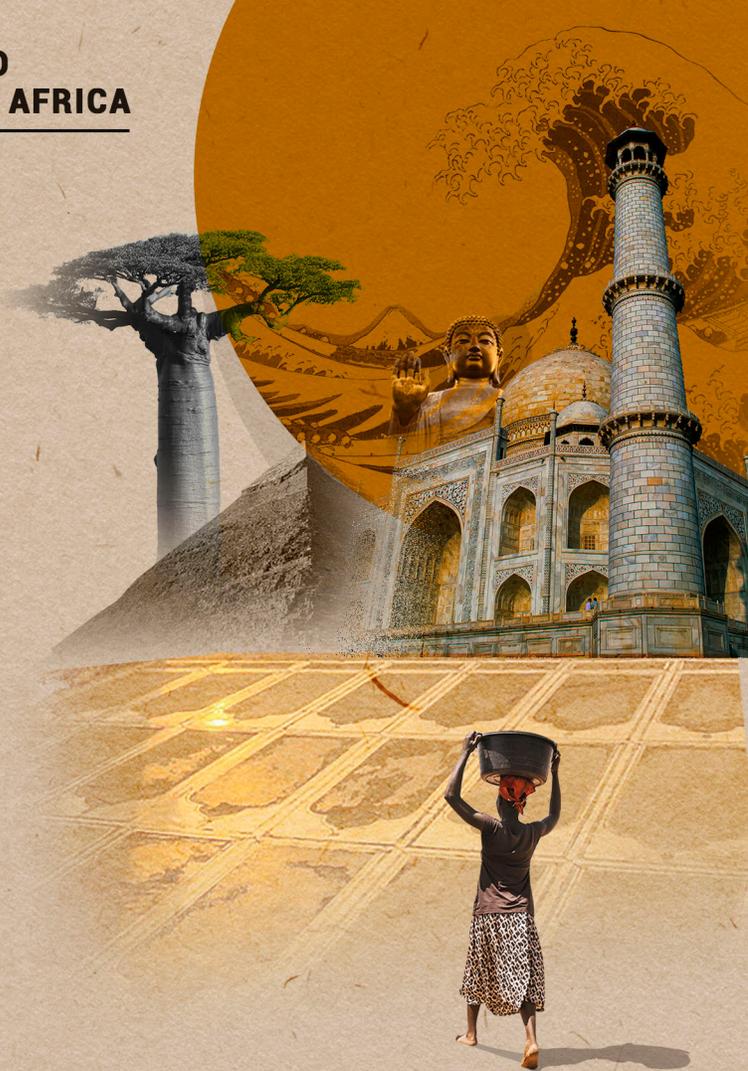


“WORKING PAPER 14”



***Evaluating long-term cultural diplomacy between Mexico
and Japan: examining former participants
in a governmental bilateral student exchange program***

Kazuyasu Ochiai



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Evaluating long-term cultural diplomacy between Mexico and Japan: examining former participants in a governmental bilateral student exchange program

Kazuyasu Ochiai

RESUMEN

Este documento resume los resultados del proyecto de investigación titulado “Long-term outcomes of bilateral student exchange program between Mexico and Japan: 50 years of governmental cultural diplomacy”; este proyecto realiza un análisis de los programas de intercambio estudiantil enfocado en los jóvenes que se implementaron desde 1971 entre México y Japón. De tal forma, se realiza un breve recuento del proceso de las negociaciones entre el gobierno mexicano y el gobierno japonés para implementar e impulsar el programa de intercambio estudiantil. Además, se realiza un análisis de los resultados cuantitativos y cualitativos de los programas de intercambio entre México y Japón a través de las décadas; para obtener los datos cuantitativos se hace un recuento de cuantos alumnos han participado en dichos programas, y para obtener los datos de los resultados cualitativos se toman en cuenta las experiencias personales de ex becarios que estudiaron en México o Japón para conocer los efectos que ocasionaron estas estancias estudiantiles en la vida diaria de los estudiantes. Finalmente, el autor considera que los programas de intercambio entre ambos países es una herramienta para lograr el desarrollo a través de la cooperación.

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a research project, titled “Long-term outcomes of bilateral student exchange program between Mexico and Japan: 50 years of governmental cultural diplomacy”. The project provides an analysis of the youth exchange program that was implemented in 1971 between Mexico and Japan. In this way, paper describes the negotiation process between the Mexican government and the Japanese government to implement exchange programs. Apart from this, the author analysis the quantitative and qualitative results of the youth exchange program between Mexico and Japan through decades. To obtain the quantitative information, it considers how many students have participated in this program; for obtaining quantitative results, it considers the students’ personal experience for knowing the effects of studying in Mexico or Japan in their lives. Finally, the author believes that studying the exchange program between Mexico and Japan is a means of achieving development through cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

This paper summarizes a research project, titled “Long-term outcomes of bilateral student exchange program between Mexico and Japan: 50 years of governmental cultural diplomacy,” proposed by the present author and his collaborators to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and funded by JSPS.¹ The project provides an analysis of self-assessment data gathered from former participants in the exchange program (ex-becarios, hereinafter) based on their experience of living and studying in either Mexico or Japan as students.

The youth exchange program started in 1971 under an initiative by the then Mexican president, Luis Echeverría Álvarez, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding and friendship between Mexico and Japan². It all started with 100 young people being sent to each country. Today, 50 people each year participate in the program. By August 2017, there had already been more than 4,700 Mexican and Japanese participants in the program (MOFA 2018).

The long-term impact of studying abroad has been one of the central issues in international education (*e.g.*, NAFSA, 2013). Research projects such as SAGE (Study Abroad for Global Engagement), conducted by R. Michael Paige and the Minnesota University since 2006, show that studying abroad may change one’s values, vision, behavior, and life satisfaction, among other things (Paige *et al.* 2009).

However, there is little qualitative knowledge about the exchange program between Mexico and Japan, which has benefited thousands of participants over almost half a century. With the exception of a preliminary study by Kyoko Tanaka (2004), the program’s meaning and impact on the participants have scarcely been studied.

¹ This research proposal was presented in May 2018 to the “Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research – Fostering Joint International Research (B),” a new category of Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from JSPS. This new category is designed to advance international joint academic research headed by Japanese scholars. The proposal was accepted in October 2018, and the project started in December 2018 to continue till March 2022. The project members are Prof. Kyoko Tanaka (Nagoya University; the principal investigator), Prof. Akinari Hoshino (Nagoya University), Prof. Yukiko Shinmi (Tohoku University), Prof. Francis Peddie (Nagoya University), and the present author, Prof. Kazuyasu Ochiai (Meisei University). Prof. Sylvie Didou Aupetit (CINVESTAV) and Prof. Juan José Ramírez Bonilla (El Colegio de México) participate as collaborators from Mexico.

² From 1971 to 2009 the program was carried out under the “Student Exchange Agreement” (el Convenio de Intercambio de Estudiantes) between the two countries. Reflecting the objective of sending Mexican students to Japan, the program was called in Mexico “the Young Technicians Exchange Program” (el Programa de Intercambio de Jóvenes Técnicos). Since 2010, the program has been renamed “Mexico-Japan Exchange Program for the Strategic Global Partnership (El Programa de Cooperación para la Formación de Recursos Humanos en la Asociación Estratégica Global entre México-Japón).

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This project addresses several questions. First, we are interested in the lifelong effects of living and studying abroad during youth on the participants in the exchange program between Mexico and Japan. The study takes into consideration the self-assessment of the Japanese ex-becarios in their later years: after returning home, after graduation, when starting a family, 15 years later as middle-aged administrators or workers, and 30 years later as senior members of society.

Second, Prof. Didou and Prof. Ramírez will conduct research on Mexican ex-becario students. Combining their data with the study on Japanese ex-becarios, it will be possible to evaluate the exchange program from both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Third, we are interested in cases of ex-becarios, Mexican or Japanese, who have had another study abroad experience (either before or after participating in the exchange program), and those who did not. The experience of studying abroad during youth may enable a more objective comparison of experiences between the native country and the “second native country” (Mexico or Japan).

Fourth, the author is particularly interested in confirming whether the exchange program has given rise to Mexicanists or Latin Americanists in Japan. Membership of the Japan Association for Latin American Studies has increased 3.6 times, from 160 members in 1981, when it was founded, to 574 in 2018 (see Figure 1)³. Japan has more specialists in Latin American Studies than ever before. The author has become acquainted with a number of Japanese ex-becarios who are members of the Association and intends to uncover the impact of the exchange program on Latin American area studies in Japanese academia.

Fifth, the project members find it important to take into account the differences between this specific exchange program, which has been in place for decades as an element of cultural diplomacy, and study abroad programs more recently launched by Japanese universities. Today, many Japanese universities promote exchange programs for students in an attempt to encourage positive engagement in today’s globalized world. For this purpose, over the last ten years, Japanese universities have tried to establish agreements to send or exchange students with foreign universities, including Mexican institutions.

³ Of all Association members, past and present, 48 studied in graduate courses in Mexico. This is the second largest group internationally, just behind the US, with 64 former graduate students (Miyachi, 2018).

Finally, the study will apply some important concepts in recent scientific research, such as “portability,” “dependability,” and “sustainability” of knowledge and experience, to the data gathered in order to confirm their validity.

THE RECENT BOOM OF INTEREST IN MEXICO AND THE SPANISH-SPEAKING WORLD IN JAPAN

Before engaging in a discussion on the long-term effects of the Mexico-Japan exchange program, it is important to summarize the recent “Mexican and Latin American boom” in Japan.

First, there was a rapid increase in trade between Mexico and Japan in the first three years after the effectuation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2004, as shown in Table 1. More specifically, there was a 178% increase in trade between the two countries between 2004 and 2016, as Table 2 registers.

Table 1. Trade between Mexico and Japan after the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) came into effect in 2004

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007 compared to 2004
Import from Mexico	2,230	2,497	2,814	3,938	177%
Export to Mexico	5,514	7,302	9,615	11,475	208%
Total amount of trade	7,744	9,799	12,429	15,413	199%

(year: Japanese fiscal year, i.e. 12 months April next March)

Source: Ministry of Finance (n.d.). For this chart, statistics in Japanese Yen were converted into US\$ at the exchange rate at the end of each fiscal year.

Table 2. Total amount of bilateral trade before and after the EPA

	2004	2016	2016 compared to 2004
Total amount of the bilateral trade (million US\$)	7,744	21,530	278%

Sources: Japanese Embassy in Mexico (2017a). Table represented by Prof. Shuichiro Megata, former Japanese Ambassador to Mexico, at the Third Japan- Mexico Rectors Summit, November 2017, Hiroshima, partly modified.

Trade is sustained by people and organizations, and this is also reflected in the numbers. As shown in Table 3, Japanese residents living in Mexico and companies operating in the country increased by 24% and 36%, respectively, between 2014 and 2016.

Table 3. Japanese residents living in Mexico, companies operating in Mexico and mutual trade amount, 2014-2016

	2014	2015	2016	2016 compared to 2014
Japanese residents living in Mexico (as of October 1 st)	9,186	9,437	11,390	124%
Japanese companies operating in Mexico (as of October 1 st)	814	957	1,111	136%
Mutual trade amount (million US\$)	20,153	20,386	21,530	107%

Sources: Japanese Embassy in Mexico (2017b). Table represented by Prof. Shuichiro Megata, former Japanese Ambassador to Mexico, at the Third Japan- Mexico Rectors Summit, November 2017, Hiroshima, partly modified.

This “boom” has also been observed in the number of academic exchange programs between both countries. Table 4-a reveals the recent increase (31%) in exchange agreements between Mexican and Japanese universities. The increase in the number of youth studying in each country from 2014 to 2016 is shown in Table 4-b: there were 21% more Mexican students in Japan and 51% more Japanese students in Mexico over this period.

Table 4a. Recent increase in the exchange agreements between Mexican and Japanese universities

	as of March 2013	as of October 2017	2017 compared to 2013
Total number of agreements	7,744	21,530	278%

	Nov. 2013 -Oct. 2014	Nov. 2015 -Oct. 2015	Nov. 2015 -Oct. 2016	Nov. 2016 -Oct. 2017
Newly signed agreements	6	8	14	12

(Research by Prof. Megata)

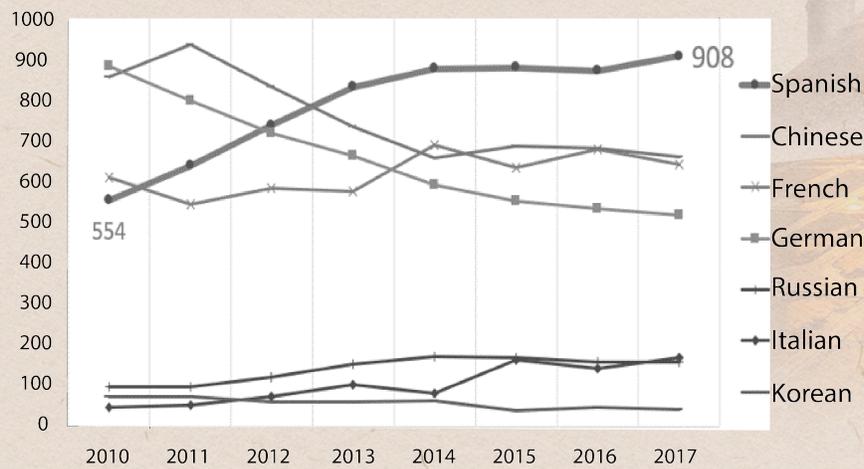
Table 4b. Recent increase in the number of students in each country

	2014	2015	2016	2016 compared to 2014
Mexican students studying in Japan	247	270	298	121%
Japanese students studying in Mexico	213	288	321	151%

Source: Takayama (2011).

At the same time, the movement of youth between Mexico and Japan has soared, and Spanish has become one of the most taught languages at Japanese universities and colleges. As shown in Table 5, more than 30% of higher education institutions, which means approximately 250 institutions, offer Spanish language classes to students. Indeed, Spanish has recently become the most popular foreign language among students after English. At the University of Tokyo, most first-year students (908 in 2017) choose Spanish as their second foreign language (Figure 1); this is also the case in other institutions. The Japan Association of Latin American Studies (AJEL) was born in 1980 with 160 members, and its membership has become more than tripled and counts 576 in 2017 (Figure 2). It means that there are in Japan more specialists in the studies on Latin America than ever. The question then arises: why has the Spanish-speaking world become so appealing to Japanese people?

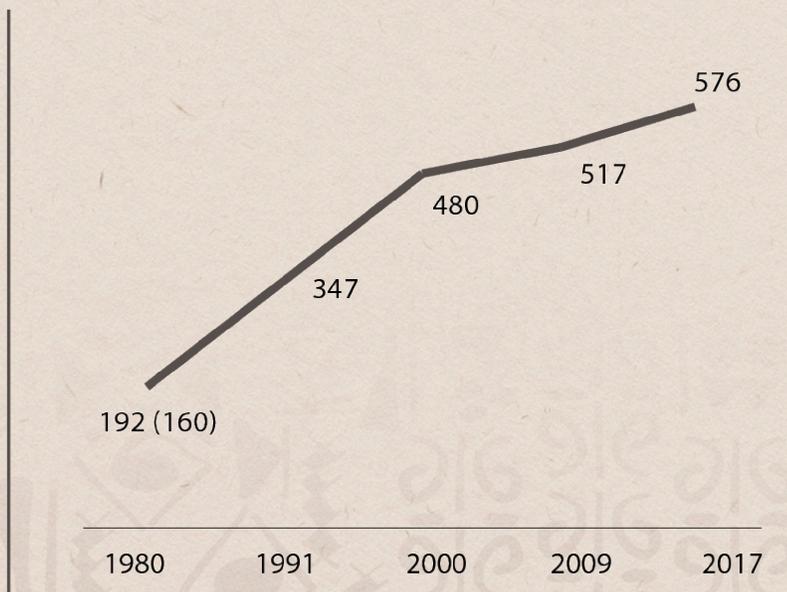
Figure 1. The second foreign language course chosen by first-year students at the University of Tokyo, 2010-2017



(Data provided by Prof. Tadashi Haneda at the Third Japan-Mexico Rectors' Summit November 29, 2017, Hiroshima)

Source: Haneda (2017).

Figure 2. Growing number in AJEL membership



Membership number at the end of March in the indicated year (except for 160, measured in June)

Source: Miyachi (2018).

There could be several explanations for the phenomenon, such as:

1. Strengthened economic relations between Japan and Latin America;
2. The presence of Nikkei, or diaspora returnees, from Mexico and Latin America in Japan;
3. Rising interest among Japanese youth in Latin American music, football, and culture in general, including Latino culture in the US; and
4. Positive results of long-term cultural diplomacy, such as the youth exchange program between Mexico and Japan that we focus on here.

In this article, we would like to consider this last possibility. Although it is difficult to measure an abstract influence that spreads invisibly and non-cognitively throughout society, the outcomes of cultural diplomacy are determined by their impact on those involved.

THE GOVERNMENTAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM BETWEEN MEXICO AND JAPAN

Agreement outline

The program started in 1971 and its outline was as follows:

(1) Each country pursues its own objective in the student exchange program. The Japanese study humanities and social sciences related to Mexico and Latin America such as Spanish language, history, geography, economy, as well as literature at Mexican universities. Mexican government, meanwhile, calls for aspirants who would take courses offered by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) which include natural and applied sciences and technologies at Japanese companies and institutes, as a part of a general program: “the Young Technicians Exchange Program” (cf. Endnote 2).

(2) The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs selects candidates to be dispatched from Japanese universities, companies, and public offices based on exam results. They are recommended by the Ministry to the Mexican government, which needs to authorize them.

(3) The Mexican CONACYT (National Council of Science and Technology) selects candidates to be authorized by the Japanese government.

(4) CONACYT pays the airfare and living expenses of Japanese students in Mexico, while JICA takes on the expenses of the Mexican students.

(5) The duration of the period of studying abroad is between 8 and 12 months.

(6) Japanese students are expected to study at Mexican universities to learn the Spanish language and Mexican history, culture, politics, and economy with the intention of becoming future specialists in those fields. All of them live with Mexican families.⁴

FROM THE START UNTIL TODAY

The agreement outline above may seem rather dry and bureaucratic. However, there has been a dramatic development in the agreement from its start until today, which much resembles a film script. The protagonists of this “drama” were Mexican President Luis Echeverría Álvarez and the late Japanese ambassador to Mexico, Eikichi Hayashiya. The negotiations between the two, a Mexican nationalist politician and a Japanese diplomat deeply committed to cultural exchange, made it possible for the project to be set in motion in just a few months.

The process of establishing the agreement is only known because Ambassador Hayashiya left a memoir about the negotiations (Hayashiya, 1996), which can be summarized as follows:

1) On Friday, August 28, 1970, President-elect Luis Echeverría Álvarez invited Hayashiya, then director of the Japan Cultural Center attached to the Embassy of Japan, to his private residence, where he explained his plans to strengthen ties with Japan as well as his will to visit Japan for his first official visit as the new Mexican president.

⁴ In the first years, the Japanese students were sent to the universities in Mexico City, Veracruz, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Monterrey and Mérida. The author is to research the corresponding information on the Mexican youths sent to Japan in this exchange program.

2) Echeverría was interested in launching an exchange program for Mexican and Japanese youths. He explained that Mexicans should learn about the development of Japan after the Meiji Restoration, and take home to Mexico what they could learn about diligence from the Japanese.

3) Echeverría planned on sending more young Mexicans to Japan than to the US. He would send Mexican engineers to Japan and receive the same number of Japanese youths to become familiarized with Mexico. His plan was to start with 300 students from each country per year, reaching up to 500 in subsequent years.

4) The scale of the idea astonished Hayashiya. He replied to the president-elect that an exchange involving 30 students would be possible, but that 300 would be too many and impossible to organize in a short period of time. Echeverría stressed that he desired a large-scale exchange.

5) Echeverría then proposed 100 in the first year, growing to 300 in subsequent years. The stay would be with local families for one year. He demanded that big Japanese companies accept young Mexicans into their offices, production systems and factories.

6) Echeverría requested Hayashiya to inform the Japanese government of his plans and to return with an official answer from the Japanese government by 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, August 31.

7) Hayashiya, with only three days to give an answer, swiftly communicated with the head office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, although it was the weekend. On Sunday, August 30, he called an emergency meeting with the member companies of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Mexico to share the plan of the president-elect and discuss how to proceed.

8) Hayashiya explained that the president-elect's determination to go ahead with the plan was quite firm. As a diplomat, he believed the plan would be highly beneficial and profoundly meaningful for Japan. The members reached almost unanimous assent and went back to their offices to promptly contact the Tokyo headquarters.

9) The section manager of Latin American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo sought a budget to receive 100 Mexicans. Of these, the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship decided to accept 50 Mexicans each year in their training programs and Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (later known as JICA) another 50 Mexicans

10) On Monday, August 31, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Hayashiya paid a visit to Echeverría's residence to report that the Japanese government had accepted his request with much enthusiasm and wanted to discuss the details with their Mexican counterparts. The president-elect was delighted and introduced Hayashiya to Eugenio Méndez Docurro and Víctor Bravo Ahuja, who would become department head of CONACYT and SEP (Secretary of Public Education), respectively.

11) At his inauguration ceremony on December 1, 1970, the new president, Echeverría, announced the plan to strengthen the relationship with Japan and mentioned the launch of the new youth exchange program.

12) On June 3, 1971, a Japan Air Lines charter flight carrying 100 Japanese youths arrived in Mexico—the first JAL flight to Mexico City. Hayashiya recalled watching the arrival of the 100 Japanese youths at the airport and said he could not restrain his tears.

Who was Ambassador Eikichi Hayashiya (1919–2016)? He began serving as a diplomat in 1941 after graduating from Osaka University of Foreign Studies with a degree in Spanish. He was sent to the University of Salamanca (1941–44) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further specialize in Spanish. Hayashiya arrived in Mexico for the first time in April 1952 as a member of the office which, as the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force in that month, became the first Embassy of Japan after the Second World War. Hayashiya recalls that he met in the spring of 1954 Octavio Paz, acting Director General of the Directorate General of International Organizations at the Chancellery (Hayashiya, 2005, p. 85). Hayashiya also played a major role in signing of the Cultural Pact between Mexico and Japan in October 1954. After his second stay in Mexico as director of the Japan Cultural Center and minister-counselor at the Embassy of Japan in Mexico (1969-75), he was appointed ambassador to Bolivia (1978–81) and Spain (1981–84). Ambassador Hayashiya passed away in 2016 at the age of 96.

He was also a prolific man of letters. With the help of Octavio Paz, he translated Oku no Hoshomichi or Narrow Road to the Deep North (a chronicle by Haiku master Matsuo Basho) into Spanish (1957). He also translated into Japanese The Popol Vuh (1961), Yucatan Before and After the Conquest by Diego de Landa (1982), and Christopher Columbus' chronicles of his four voyages (2011), among many others.

As a diplomat, Hayashiya believed the exchange of people and ideas between cultures to be of utmost importance. It can undoubtedly be said that he was the founding father, on the Japanese side, of the exchange program between Mexico and Japan.

Table 6 summarizes the number of students from Japan and Mexico who participated in the program between 1971 and 2017. The program continues to date, due to the will and endeavors of those involved in. In spite of some difficulty between 1984 and 1990, including one year in which no exchange took place (1986) due to the economic recession in Mexico after 1982 and the earthquake in Mexico City in 1985, the cumulative number of students exchanged has grown steadily and should reach 5,000 in a couple of years (Figure 3).

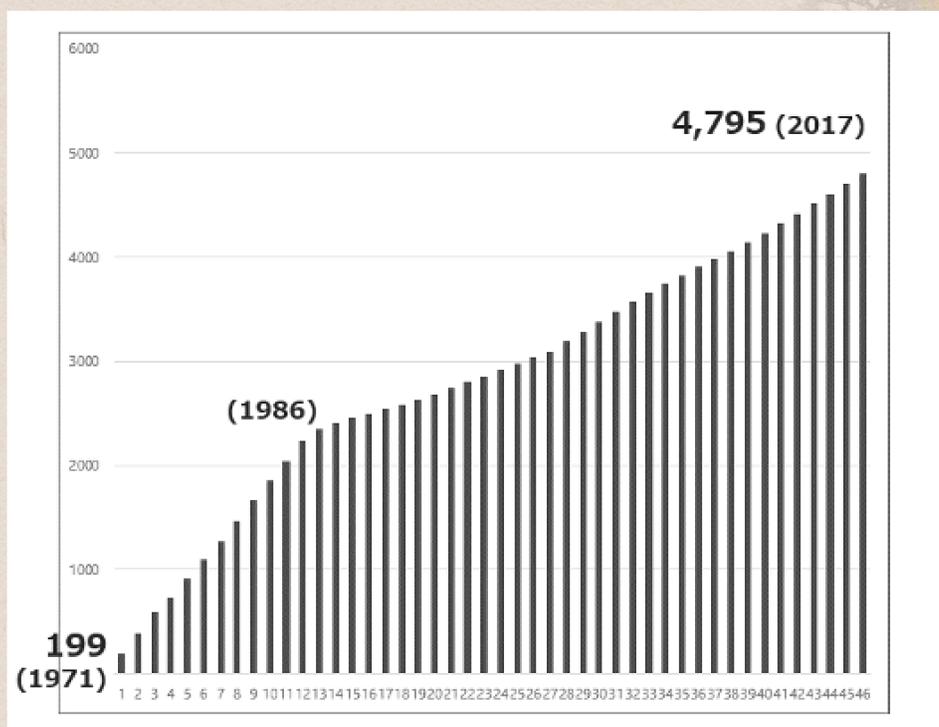
Table 6. Mexican and Japanese participants in the exchange program (1971-2017)

	Year	From Japan to Mexico	From Mexico to Japan		Year	From Japan to Mexico	From Mexico to Japan		Year	From Japan to Mexico	From Mexico to Japan
1	1971	99	100	17	1988	22	20	34	2005	49	29
2	1972	100	97	18	1989	27	16	35	2006	50	28
3	1973	99	99	19	1990	30	16	36	2007	45	41
4	1974	65	71	20	1991	30	24	37	2008	49	25
5	1975	100	82	21	1992	30	27	38	2009	40	35
6	1976	100	83	22	1993	30	30	39	2010	41	46
7	1977	98	84	23	1994	30	28	40	2011	46	46
8	1978	100	92	24	1995	30	30	41	2012	42	50
9	1979	100	94	25	1996	30	28	42	2013	42	49
10	1980	99	92	26	1997	30	27	43	2014	46	50
11	1981	100	90	27	1998	30	29	44	2015	44	49
12	1982	99	95	28	1999	49	43	45	2016	47	49
13	1983	55	50	29	2000	50	42	46	2017	46	46
14	1984	51	16	30	2001	50	50	47	2018		
15	1985	22	28	31	2002	47	47	48	2019		
	1986	-	-	32	2003	49	47	49	2020		
16	1987	22	19	33	2004	49	47	50	2021		

(Data: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, by courtesy of Prof. Yasuhiro Tokoro)

Sub total	2509	2286
Grand total	4795	

Figure 3. Cumulative sum of exchange students (Mexico / Japan)



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (MOFA) (2018).

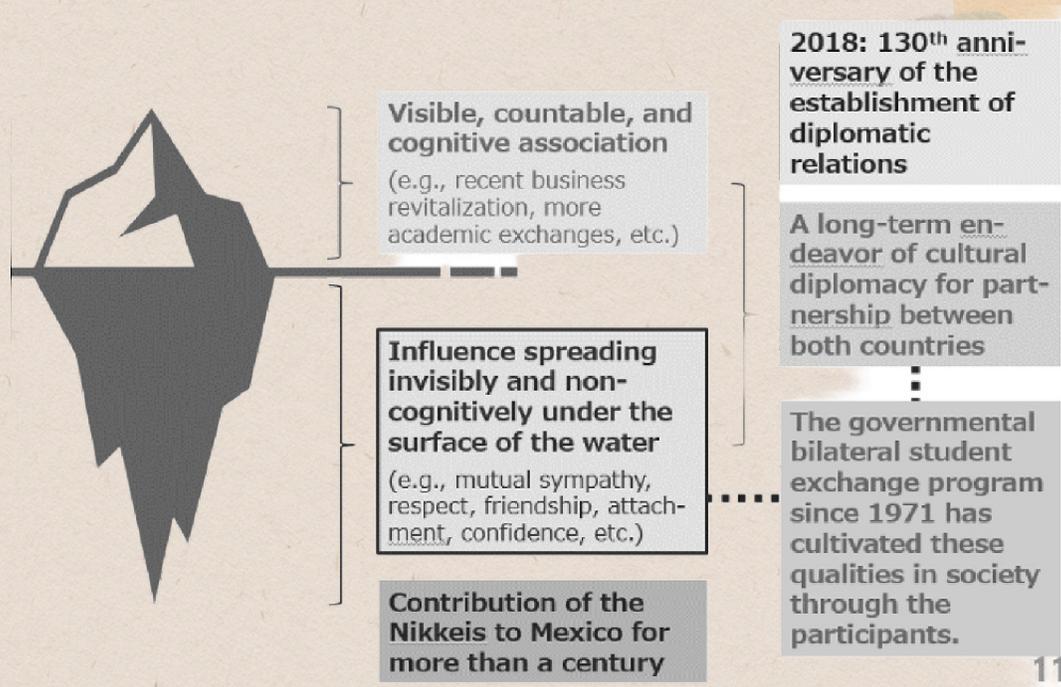
PROJECT IMPLICATIONS

As we have seen, the strong political will of Echeverría, combined with the zealous diplomacy of Hayashiya, made it possible to launch an epoch-making program in nine months. They were propelled by the belief that diplomacy should not only be about knowing one another, but also about understanding each other by living together.

Almost half a century has passed since the start of the program. The time has come to review the program not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, by speaking to ex-becarios. Based on this recognition, we have designed a project to review the program by collecting testimony of the ex-becarios on both rims of the Pacific Ocean.

The research team uses the metaphor of an iceberg for the cultural diplomacy between Mexico and Japan (Figure 4). A long-term endeavor of cultural diplomacy for partnership between both countries, it covers not only actions at the surface of the water but also those underneath it. In our project, we pay attention to both, but emphasize the activity below the water's surface.

Figure 4. An iceberg as a metaphor for the cultural diplomacy between Mexico and Japan



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (MOFA) (2018).

On the surface of the water, there are the numbers we have already discussed: visible and countable exchanges, recent vitalization of business ties, and additional academic exchange programs. The official public celebration of the 130th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Japan in 2018 is another example of visible activity on the surface.

Under the water, we have the contribution of the Mexican Nikkei, or Mexicans of Japanese origin, to Mexico’s development for more than a century. Moreover, beyond quantitative results on the surface, the governmental bilateral student exchange program has also cultivated mutual sympathy, respect, friendship, attachment, confidence, and familiarity between these two societies, which are significant non-cognitive qualities that remain invisible “under the water” and hard to be quantified.

In our study on the learning outcomes of the ex-becarios, we apply essential assessments of learning outcomes, such as change in evaluation criteria and portability as well as dependability and sustainability of learning outcomes, as proposed by Japanese cognitive scientist Nahomi Miyake (2013), as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Essential assessments of learning outcomes to be applied to the research on the learning outcomes of exchange students

Learning assessment essentials:	Questions to the former exchange students:
Evaluation criteria If the learner evaluates his/her post-learning quality higher than the pre-learning quality and why	If the former exchange students regard themselves to be better than before and why
Portability Of the learner can bring the learning outcomes out of the time and space of learning	If they can take the exchange outcomes out of the Japanese/Mexican context of their original experience
Dependability If the learner can use the learning outcomes when needed in the future	If they put the exchange outcomes into use in new situations
Sustainability If the learning outcomes produce new questions and are revisable if needed	If their exchange outcomes have produced new questions, and if they can renew them when needed

Source: Miyake (2013).

Finally, the author believes that studying the exchange program between Mexico and Japan is a means of achieving development through cooperation.

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