Inclusion and equity in the context of higher education diversification: An examination of higher education policies and quality assurance systems in Taiwan and Japan

Following the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, higher education systems worldwide have been working towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, with inclusion and equity as core pillars. The focus and practices of inclusion and equity vary across regions and countries. This study examines how the governments and quality assurance (QA) agencies of Taiwan and Japan promote inclusion and equity in higher education, offering insights from an Asian context, while also addressing the challenges they face. The research primarily employed document analysis and focus group interviews as methodology. The research findings indicate that both Taiwan and Japan have incorporated the principle of inclusion and equity into their education regulations, but their priorities differ due to distinct social contexts. In terms of policy, both nations respond to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a higher government level, promoting a more holistic approach to inclusion and equity issues. They also advance higher education diversification and support disadvantaged students through subsidy policies and diverse admission pathways. However, challenges remain, the balance of professional expertise and gender in governance and review panels, as well as regional and resource disparities in the implementation of inclusion and equity across higher education institutions. Through this international comparison, the study provides references for governments, QA agencies, and higher education institutions in promoting inclusive and equitable education. It also offers recommendations for HEEACT to refine

its QA standards and continuously advancing inclusion and equity in the future.