

Twenty Years of NISTEP: The Navigator for Japan's Science and Technology Policies

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Abstract

The National Institute of Science and Technology Policy was founded in 1988 as a tiny research lab designed to promote S&T policies under the aegis of the Science and Technology Agency. Twenty years later, it is still small, with only 54 people on staff; however, it has evolved into one of the most significant and influential research institutes in the area of science and technology policy studies, and that influence is felt not only in Japan, but throughout the world.

Over the past two decades, NISTEP has conducted continuous and successful research and surveys, including the Science and Technology Foresight Studies and the S&T Indicator Studies. Such long-term engagement has allowed NISTEP to develop these methodologies, and to fully implement these methodologies in a practical fashion in the real world.

In 2004-2005 for instance, NISTEP conducted the 8th Foresight Studies, in tandem with a full review of the 1st S&T Basic Plan and the 2nd S&T Basic Plan. The results of those studies were fully utilized as the government compiled its 3rd S&T Basic Plan, which is currently the fundamental S&T strategy in Japan.

Another important achievement of NISTEP over the last 20 years has been the discovery of embedded problems in the various fields of science and technology. Such discovery has occasionally triggered large and important discussions in the scientific community and, in some instances, has led the government to tackle the problem at hand and implement new S&T policies. The long list of such efforts includes studies on postdoctoral fellows, studies on the importance of math research and the unpopularity of science and math among young people, and regional S&T development.

NISTEP continuously explores new research opportunities. Recent examples include the Science Map, *teiten* (fixed point) research, study of the world's top-class research centers, and the Study on the Measurement of Innovation.

During the current year, NISTEP has been conducting a large follow-up study of the 3rd S&T Basic Plan, which will be the foundation for the 4th S&T Basic Plan.

NISTEP will continue to carry out research that contributes directly to the formation of Japanese S&T policy. Needless to say, international collaboration is the most important pillar of the NISTEP strategy, and that is why the Institute has concluded MOUs with 15 foreign entities, including the University of Manchester, CAS/IPM, and STEPI.

NISTEP employs an open policy. It willingly shares its know-how, skill, and technologies with other nations around the world.