Employment of International Students in Japan: Opportunities and Challenges

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IEAA International Research Roundtable 2016
“The Social Impact of International Education”
CQ University Melbourne
October 18, 2016
No immigration policy so far...

• In Japan, the population will decline about 10M. over the next 10 to 15 years, and 30 percent of the population will be 60 years of age or older.

• The number of non-Japanese workers is reaching 1M in 2016. It is getting easier to obtain a permanent residency.

• There are a large number of non-skilled foreign workers under the training visa. Language schools often abuse a work permit for int’l students -> 3D jobs.

• 200,000 international students

• Officially, the country has no immigration policy.
Policy change

• 100,000 International Students Plan (1983 – 2004)
  ➢Aid approach: Supposed to return home countries upon graduation

• 300,000 International Students Plan (from 2008 onwards)
  ➢Skilled-migration approach: Promotion of post-graduation employment in Japan responding to its demographic changes

• Japan Revitalization Strategy 2014
  ➢“Attract highly skilled international students to boost the country’s competitiveness and to revitalize the economy”

• Local governments and business associations promote the recruitment and employment of int’l students in collaboration with HEIs.
New trends

• Increasing the need of “global HR/personnel”
  ➢ Japanese students with study abroad experience
  ➢ International students studying in Japan

• Hiring international students from Asian countries as “bridging HR/personnel”, e.g. Bridging SE

• Background
  ➢ Globalizing economy and emerging markets in Asia
  ➢ Shift from a manufacturing economy to a consumer and service-based one
    → communication skills are important
  ➢ To support the business expansion and growth outside Japan, esp. in Asia, companies needs global HR/personnel and bridging HR/personnel
Reasons for hiring international students

- To cultivate and expand overseas business in the home countries of international students: 23.1%
- To cultivate and expand overseas business in general: 44.7%
- To enhance business by acquiring human resources with specialized skills: 28.1%
- To stimulate the workplace by increasing diversity within the company: 55.8%
- They were simply hired as a result of passing the selection process without regard to nationality: 55.8%
- Because we could not find enough Japanese employees: 4.0%
- Other: 1.0%

“Vitality” is defined as one’s strength to overcome hardships and obstacles whereas “enthusiasm” makes people want to enter the company.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Trait (%)</th>
<th>Manufacturing industry (%)</th>
<th>Nonmanufacturing industry (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese language skills</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language skills</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the applicant attended university</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University academic record</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some positive data

• Successfully changed visa status from student to work: 7,831 (2010) -> 12,958 (2014)
  Source: Immigration Bureau

• 34.3 percent of major companies hired int’l graduates in 2015

• 57.1 percent of major companies have a plan to hire int’l students in 2016
  Source: DISCO Inc.

• 52 percent of SME in Japan were positive in hiring int’l students (2013)
  Source: Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry
Gaps

• 65 percent of int’l students want to work in Japan (2014)
• 27 percent of int’l graduates got a job in Japan (2014)
  Source: Japan Student Services Organization

• 65.5 percent of int’l students want to get employed by leading and large-scale companies (more than 1,000 workers)
• 40.6 percent of int’l graduates got employed by SME (less than 50 workers)
  Source: Japan Student Services Organization and Immigration Bureau

• STEM students are in high demand.
• 20 percent of int’l students majoring STEM field.
Difficulties int’l students face while looking for a job

• Employers tend to require native-equivalent level Japanese language ability.

• Peculiar recruitment and employment system: time-consuming recruiting and job-hunting process
  ➢ Job-hunting period: once a year from March to October
  ➢ Detailed resume and application (entry sheet): be filled out in polished Japanese
  ➢ Aptitude test: examine academic skills and personality
  ➢ Several rounds of interviews (by junior level officials to by CEO)
  ➢ Too many manners and etiquette including “recruitment suits”
Favorable Job Hunting Styles

- Hair style
  Long hair is not preferable. Be careful not to have any sleep-mussed or unruly hair, or any dandruff!
- Face
  Be clean shaved. Extremely thin eyebrows are not preferable. Pay attention to your teeth and breath.
- Glasses
  Avoid colorful and loud frames. Watch out for dirty lenses.
- Cologne
  It is better not to wear any cologne.
- Nails
  Be sure to trim your nails short and wash them to remove any dirt.
- Shirt
  White is the basic color. Be sure to choose a shirt that fits you around the collar and sleeves. Pay attention when wearing a colored or patterned T-shirt or dark undershirt, because they can be seen through a white shirt. Watch out for a dirty collar and cuffs. You should wear a clean, washed shirt.
- Accessories
  Do not wear any accessories.
- Tie
  Avoid flashy ties.
- Suit
  Dark blue, gray, or black are the basic colors. Choose a solid or finely striped tie. Ordinarily, wear your tie with a single knot, not a double knot.
- Trousers
  Trousers with a standard width and single-fold hems are preferable. Be sure to iron them to make creases. Your belt and shoes should match.
- Shoes
  You should choose simple and comfortable black shoes. Be sure to choose for comfort on the hunt, and polish your shoes properly.
- Socks
  White socks and sneaker socks are taboo. Choose socks that are the same color as your suit, or that are black or dark blue.

Companies do not intend to hire students who stand out with their appearance and unique characters. They are checking to see if you are well-groomed and dressed based on social common sense. There is no need to dress yourself up with expensive items. Be sure to dress, behave, and speak nicely so as to give a better impression to the other party.

- Hair style
  If you have long hair, bind it with an elastic band or a hair pin. Be careful not to have any sleep-mussed hair!
- Face
  Heavy makeup is not preferred. Pay attention to your teeth and breath as well.
- Glasses
  Avoid colorful and loud frames. Watch out for dirty lenses.
- Perfume
  Avoid wearing strong perfume.
- Nails
  Nails should not be too long. It is not good to wear flashy nail polish or nail art.
- Blouse
  White is the basic color. A shirt in a solid, pale color is also acceptable. Avoid wearing a shirt in a primary color or with patterns. Be sure not to wear a shirt that is cut too low. Choose something pleasant and clean.
- Accessories
  Simple pierced earrings should be fine. You should remove all your rings.
- Suit
  Solid dark blue, gray, or black suits are the basics. As a rule, wear a single suit with two or three buttons, not a double suit.
- Skirt/trousers
  Your skirt must be of a length that allows your knees to be half covered when you are standing. Wearing trousers will give an active image. Trousers with single-fold hems are mainstream. Be sure to iron them to make creases.
- Shoes
  You should choose simple and comfortable black shoes. Be sure to polish your chosen shoes. Mules with heels that are from three to five centimeters high are best.
- Pantyhose
  Choose something plain with no patterns, and a color similar to your skin tone.
Difficulties int’l students face while working at a Japanese company

• Japanese business culture
  ➢ Long-term (life-time) employment and seniority-based wage system
  ➢ Vague assessment system and slow promotion
  ➢ Complicated communication style, e.g. high context culture
  ➢ Strict work ethics
  ➢ Long working hours
  ➢ Unequal treatment of foreign workers
  ➢ Hierarchical structure
  ➢ After-work socialization
Concluding remarks

• Gaps between concept and reality, policy and practice, and executives and HR department.

• To internationalize a company, they hire int’l graduates -> internationalized company can attract int’l graduates.

• To diversify its workforce, a company hires int’l graduates. However, in reality, they hire int’l graduates like Japanese (looking for more Japanese than Japanese).

• Japan as a whole is not doing enough to encourage int’l students to work for Japanese firms.
Thank you for your attention!

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