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## Japan's Challenge of Fostering "Global Human Resources": Policy Debates and Practices

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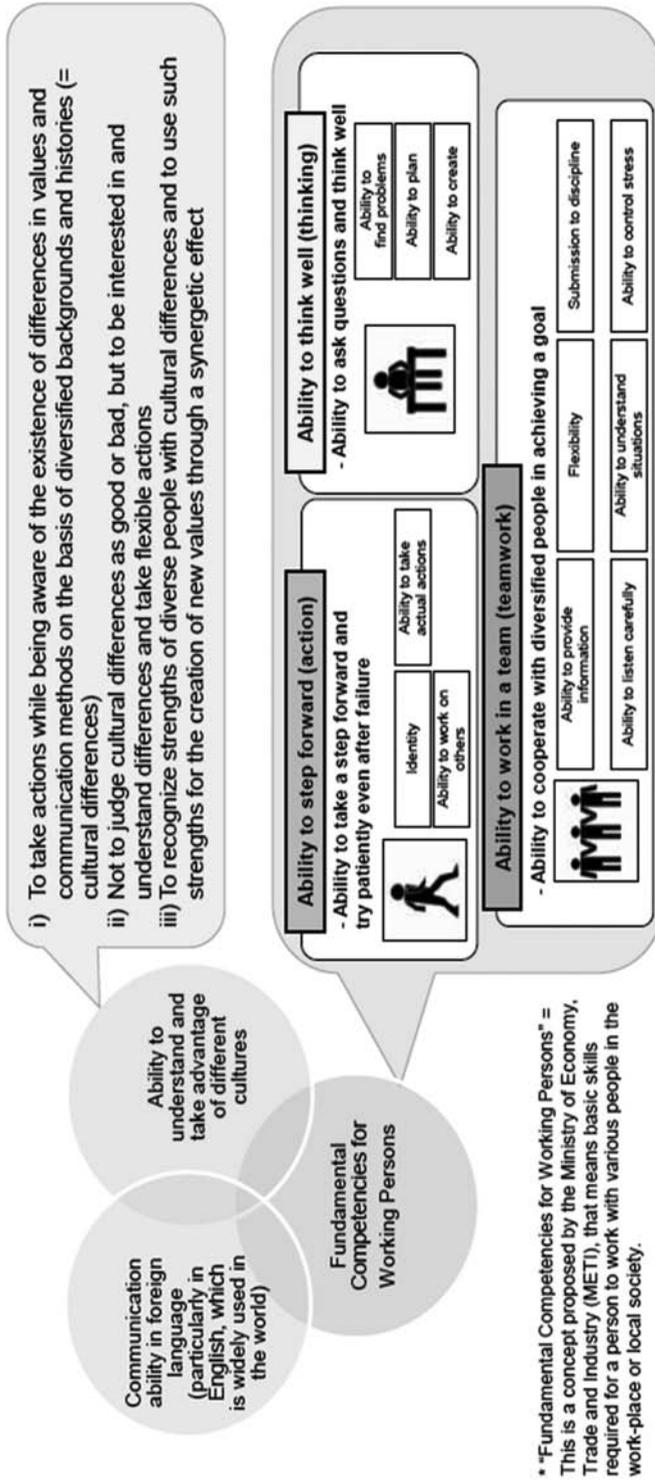
In recent years in Japan, "global *jinzai* (Global Human Resources)" is a term appearing most frequently in the discourse of human resource development through tertiary education. This article aims to analyze the policy debates and actual challenges of Japan's challenges in fostering "Global Human Resources." Firstly, the author explains the background on why the Japanese government and society find it important to stress the necessity of "Global Human Resources," focusing on the lack of policy level initiatives and individual level incentives for studying and working outside of Japan. Secondly, the article examines how policy debate on "Global Human Resources" has started as an initiative to encourage Japanese youth to study and work abroad. Thirdly, the actual practices for fostering "Global Human Resources" through various initiatives by education institutions and industries are examined. Finally, the author concludes with the achievement and remaining challenges of this national level movement of fostering "Global Human Resources."

### I. Introduction: What Are "Global Human Resources"?

Japan is a country facing a significant challenge of the rapid aging society phenomenon. According to the national survey by the Ministry of International Affairs and Communication, 25.2% of the total population was 65 years and over in 2013; and the youth and working age population is decreasing continuously, mainly because of the low birth rate. In order to sustain a well-advanced economy, Japanese enterprises feel the necessity of expanding their businesses further to the global market. In this context, the arguments for fostering globally competitive human resources through the national education and training system have become lively in Japan recently.

In recent years in Japan, "global *jinzai* (Global Human Resources)" is a term appearing most frequently in the discourse of human resource development through tertiary education. The most widely referenced definition was provided in the report by the Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Human Resource Development (2010), jointly released by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The definition set by the report was summarized as in Figure 1.

Later, the Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development, an advisory council directly under the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, was established in 2011. The Council was composed of a wide range of ministers, namely the Chief Cabinet Secretary; the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare; the Minister of Economy,



Source: Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Human Resource Development (2010).

Figure 1. Abilities Commonly Required for Global Human Resources

Trade and Industry; and the Minister of State for National Policy, newly appointed under the Cabinet led by the Democratic Party of Japan. In the report released by the Council (Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development 2012), the more simplified definition as follows was released;

Factor I: Linguistic and communication skills

Factor II: Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and mission

Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese

As seen in these definitions above, the concept of "Global Human Resources" used in the government documents is directly related to the national, economic, and social development of Japan. Factor I, the requirement of the linguistic and communication skills in widely used international languages such as English and Chinese, reflects the general weakness of Japanese workers in global business communication. In the Cabinet's Council report, linguistic communication skills were defined by the following levels:

- (1) Communication skills for travels abroad.
- (2) Communication skills for daily life abroad interactions.
- (3) Communication skills for business conversation and paperwork.
- (4) Linguistic skills for bilateral negotiations.
- (5) Linguistic skills for multilateral negotiations.

The reports argues that the steady increase of human resources with skills up to level 3, namely basic communication in the business scene, is observed in Japan. Human resources with international language skills for bilateral and multilateral negotiation should then be developed in earnest.

Factor II indicates the requirement of generic skills, the skills generally requested for business workers. Discussion on the importance of generic skills for enhancing employability itself is not unique to Japan. Actually, discussion on generic skills themselves has developed within the long history of the research and practices of skill development in the UK and other countries. At the same time, these skills have also drawn attention recently, facing the changing characteristics of higher education graduates through the realization of university attendance to higher education in Japan. More concretely, Factor II is based on METI's proposal for fostering human resources with the basic skills necessary for today's industries. The skills are defined as (1) the ability to step forward, (2) the ability to think well, and (3) the ability to work in teams, as shown in Figure 1.

Factor III, originally described as intercultural competence or cross-cultural competence, has developed as the concept of analyzing the skills and attitudes of intercultural or and cross-cultural understanding. In the more business-oriented definition shown in Figure 1, global leadership, another concept more toward for enhancing competency as leaders in globalized organizations or networks, was also included in its original definition by the

Committee of METI and MEXT. In the Cabinet's Council report, instead of global leadership, identity as a Japanese citizen was stressed.

This article aims to analyze the policy debates and actual challenges of Japan's challenges in fostering "Global Human Resources." Firstly, the author explains the background on why Japanese government and society find it important to stress the necessity of "Global Human Resources," focusing on the lack of policy level initiatives and individual level incentives for studying and working outside of Japan. Secondly, the article examines how policy debate on "Global Human Resources" has started as an initiative to encourage Japanese youth to study and work abroad. Thirdly, the actual practices for fostering "Global Human Resources" through various initiatives by education institutions and industries are examined. Finally, the author concludes with the achievement and remaining challenges of this national level movement of fostering "Global Human Resources."

## **II. Background**

After its economic prosperity culminated with the "bubble economy" in the beginning of the 1990s, Japan has been struggling to develop human resources suited to the globalized economy and labor market. Japan started a full-scale discussion on the internationalization of education around 1980, faced with the rapid expansion of exports of Japanese high technology products (Yano 2000).

These efforts started as attracting and accepting youth from outside the country. Firstly, through the program titled "Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme," the government has invited youth, mainly from English speaking countries, and offered them jobs as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) at secondary schools for supporting classes in English and other foreign languages, from 1987. Secondly, the government set up guidelines for promoting universities and schools to accept "returnees," children with Japanese citizenship who experienced education outside Japan, from 1979 (Goodman et.al. eds. 2012). Thirdly, the Japanese government started to allow non-Japanese faculty to get full tenure at national (public) universities, in 1982 (Yonezawa, Ishida, and Horta 2013). Before that, only Japanese citizens had been allowed to be a full faculty member of national universities, because employees of national universities had to possess status as national civil servants, until national universities were incorporated in 2004. Fourthly, and most importantly, in 1983 the government set up a plan to accept 100,000 international students by the end of 2000 (Horie 2002). In 1983, Japan accepted only 10,428 international students, and the plan suggested that the government would support scholarships for around 10% of international students. That goal was achieved in 2003, and then in 2008, the government set up a new plan to accept 300,000 international students by 2020. Fifthly, the Japanese government set up a technical intern training program for providing foreign workers, mainly from the developing countries, internships and training opportunities for skill development, from 1981. Lastly, in 2012 the Japanese government commenced the Points-based Preferen-

tial Immigration Treatment for Highly-Skilled Foreign Professionals, for attracting highly-skilled foreign professionals from outside Japan.

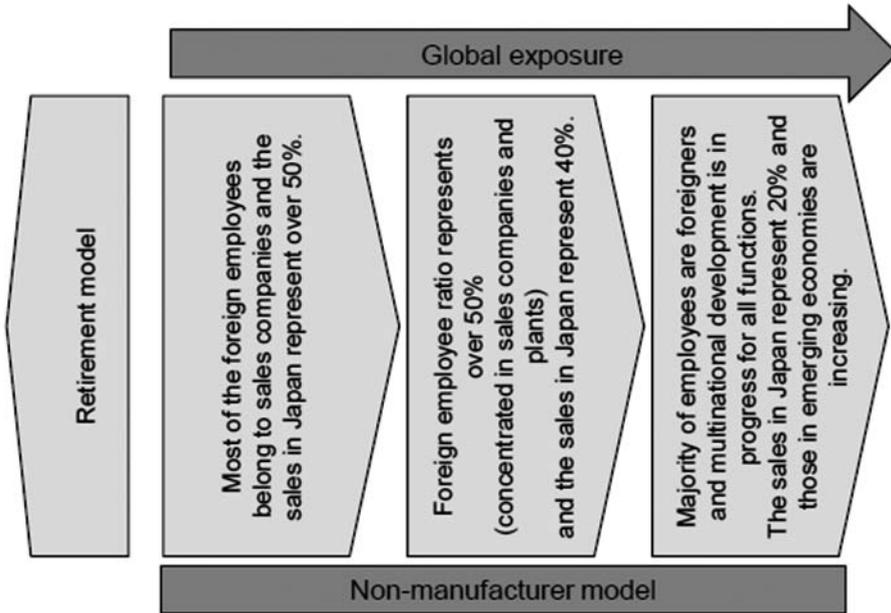
As seen above, the major policy action taken by the Japanese government was accepting youth with an international background into the Japanese education system. This is based on the assumption that Japanese enterprises were strongly orientated to in-house training; and that Japanese universities and the schooling system, especially in the field of natural science and engineering, have strong international competitiveness. Japanese industries, the research and development community, and society felt the necessity to attract talented human resources from Asia and all over the world, and foster them so as to bridge Japanese labor and business customs with those of other countries.

At the same time, the government and industries have also provided support systems for the study and training of Japanese youth in an international environment for a long time. The government has provided training and study opportunities in graduate schools of other countries, and in international organizations for national civil servants, with financial support. Private enterprises have also sent their executive staff members to study at business schools in the US and other countries, under the cover of paid tuition and living expenditures by the companies. The Japanese government also provided financial opportunities to study abroad, adding to external scholarship opportunities such as the Fulbright Program of the United States. The Japanese government has also actively promoted programs to work in international organizations among young Japanese citizens, under the Young Professionals Programs of the United Nations and other international organizations. Based on the support of the government and industries, some universities started university education in English as co-education programs between Japanese and international students. Prestigious national universities, namely Nagoya University, Kobe University, and Hiroshima University established graduate schools for international development and cooperation, and have provided social science programs in English both for Japanese and international students (Kitamura 2010).

However, the number of people who can access this support for executive elites has been highly limited. At the same time, mainly because of relatively high salaries, as well as culturally and linguistically protected working communities inside Japan, the incentive of youth to study and work outside Japan has not been high (Kaneko 2000). Male graduates from prestigious universities especially tend to be protected more through the established career patterns inside the domestic labor market, while the transformation of the Japanese labor market is through the increase of young workers under non-regular contracts among both men and women.

### **III. Global Human Resources as Policy Debate**

The debate on "Global Human Resources" started as a requirement of Japanese industries. The long-term recession of the domestic economy from the beginning of the 1990s



Sources: The 16th Corporate White Paper (Keizai Doyukai 2009) and Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Human Resource Development (2010).

Figure 2. Future Perspectives of Japanese Enterprises under Globalization

and the structural change of the world economy has gradually changed the working environment among workers in Japan. Namely, Japanese enterprises, especially the most competitive, the manufacturing sector; expanded their sales market all over the world and then moved their research and development unit and factories outside Japan. The rapid development of higher education systems and the progress of technology transfers into emerging economies also worked as a factor in those shifts.

The Japan Association for Corporate Executives (JACE) is a representative association of business leaders, issuing the corporate white papers every few years for setting up the vision of Japanese enterprises. In 2009, the JACE published the 16th Corporate White Paper for showing a vision after the financial crisis in 2008. Figure 2, shown on the white paper, indicates the future scenario of Japanese enterprises that need to employ the majority of their workers, including executives, outside Japan. Here, Japanese enterprises show the clear vision for how they should survive as global enterprises, and clarified their concern about domestic human resources fostered through the Japanese education system.

Actually, there was some criticism on the ignorance of the government and society in supporting Japanese youth to study abroad, even before the financial crisis. After achieving the goal of accepting 100,000 international students in 2003, the policy of internationaliza-

tion of higher education went into a period of reflection. The Central Council for Education, the advisory board on educational policies under MEXT, issued the report on the policy on the acceptance of international students. They indicated the pursuit of quality in the internationalization policy of Japanese higher education, while there was no clear consensus on the meaning of "quality." At the same time, the diversification of the geographical origins of international students was also recognized as a policy challenge. According to MEXT, in 2003 93.2% of international students came from Asia, and within these, 64.7% came from China, 14.5% from South Korea, and 3.9% from Taiwan.

Facing with the rise of neighboring economies in East Asia, Japanese higher education policy shifted again toward the quantitative expansion of the acceptance of international students, for securing the international presence of Japan in the rapidly increasing international students' market at the global level. Namely, the number of international students in the world increased from 2.1 million in 2000 to 3.0 million in 2005; and then 4.1 million in 2010 (OECD 2013). The IDP, the Australian agency for supporting international arrangement in higher education, published a report forecasting the number of international students in the world in 2025 as 7.2 million (Böhm et al. 2003). Japan tried to follow this global game of acquiring international students, and set a new plan in 2008 to accept 300,000 international students by 2020.

However, the situation of the Japanese economy and society at that time was completely different from that of 1983, when the plan for accepting 100,000 students was drafted.

Firstly, the Japanese economy was faced with the increasing pressure of regional and global competition. Japan lost its distinguished status in East Asia as an economy based on advanced science and technology, although it still maintains a competitive status. New industrial economies such as Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore started to be competitive rivals as globally competitive economies, with rich human resources trained and educated internationally, and strong international social networks through those academic and business ties and the diaspora network. At the same time, China became a new industrial driver by activating its manufacturing sector, and also through national investment to invite offshore diaspora to accelerate their science and technology development. ASEAN countries are also trying to develop their economies by strengthening their economic and social links within and across the region.

Secondly, these East Asian countries transformed themselves as places to send students, aimed toward countries with bilateral student exchanges. This started mainly through the rapid development of their higher education systems in both quantity and quality. In particular, East Asian countries started intensive public investment to support their top universities for achieving world class status. Through the drastic financial improvement in science and technology fields, and the international ties through the study abroad experiences of top academics, the international prestige and the research performance of the top universities in these East Asian countries improved dramatically. Attracted both by improved aca-

democratic standards and their robust economies, South Korea and China started to accept large number of international students.

Thirdly, university education with English as the medium of instruction spread widely at the global level. In Europe, they activated student and academic mobility through the systemic efforts of developing European Higher Education Area, started after the Bologna declaration in 1999. Many non-English speaking European countries increased programs in English, for attracting international students and to prepare their home students to study and work across borders. In the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore and Hong Kong have a long history of quality higher education in English, and they became recognized as higher education hubs that attract both students and academics from all over the world (Knight 2013). Other major Asia-Pacific countries have also increased university programs in English, both for meeting the needs of home students to work and study across borders, and also for attracting international students. Adding to this, in 2013 the business and academic opportunities of human resources who were educated through English-based higher education systems, such as India and the Philippines, increased dramatically both in the engineering and service industries. Malaysia invited overseas branches of UK and Australian universities, accepted international students both to home universities and foreign university branches, and became a transit point in the cross-border student flow (Sugimura 2011).

Fourthly, the oversupply of higher education for the domestic student market became apparent and serious by the beginning of the 21st century. Some universities and colleges started to enroll international students to compensate for the shortage in enrollment of home students, and extreme cases became social scandals. The diversification of the academic and social status among international students became apparent (Liu-Farrer 2014). Namely, elite international students with competitive intellectual competency and bilingual and trilingual communication skills started to be treated as desirable human resources, especially by enterprises. On the other hand, competition among the increased number of international students in the labor market of their home countries became harsh, and most started to feel difficulty in adding value by studying in Japan (Moriya 2011).

Fifthly, the mismatch between accepted skills and ability in firms and enterprises under the increasing pressure of the global economy, and the actual learning outcomes of most of the university graduates in the age of universal enrollment without a severe screening process became apparent. METI and industries started to require universities and higher education institutions to make efforts to improve the basic generic skills for business workers. MEXT also stressed the importance of education reforms for assuring learning outcomes suitable for university graduates.

Lastly, the prioritized resource allocation for attracting competitive international students, especially among the top universities, stimulated some controversy under increased financial pressures both in public and private universities. For example, Hitotsubashi University, a top national university in social sciences, offers a quality MBA program in English, and most of the international students there get some type of scholarship. Ritsumeikan

Asia Pacific University, a unique private university offering bilingual education in Japanese and English by attracting half its students and faculty from Asia-Pacific countries, have provided scholarships for most of the international students with the support of industries. Their international students, who have acquired communication skills both in English and Japanese, have been welcomed by Japanese enterprises seeking human resources who can bridge Japanese and international society. Under increased financial pressure toward home students through a long term economic recession, however, requests became vocal for providing international learning opportunities to Japanese students also.

As a main policy instrument in the plan for accepting 300,000 international students, and also for improving the international status of Japanese universities, the government started a project titled "Global 30," selecting 30 or so universities as core bases of the internationalization of Japanese universities. In the first round, seven national and six private large comprehensive universities with high research capacity were selected, and these universities set up and expanded the programs taught in English both at undergraduate and graduate levels. However, especially among national universities, these programs in English were mainly used for attracting international students, not for home students. After facing the financial crisis in 2008 and the large scale policy changes through the replacement of ruling parties in 2009, the second round selection of universities was not implemented. Adding to this, the new government ruled by the Democratic Party of Japan put a negative result on the Global 30 project in their budget screening. The project thus changed its focus to international networking, adding the mission to provide an international learning environment for Japanese students also from 2011.

At the same time, according to MEXT, the number of Japanese students studying abroad started to decrease after peaking at 82,945 in 2004 to 58,080 in 2010. Ota (2013) identified the factors that led to the decrease. The factors he raised can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Oversupply of domestic higher education. After peaking in the early 1990s, the youth population of Japan has decreased due to the low birth rate. The increase of enrollment and the state of oversupply of domestic higher education diminish incentives to study abroad, because they can find enough higher learning opportunities inside Japan.
- (2) Decrease of financial affordability. Due to the long-term economic recession, the average monthly expenditure of students of universities has continuously decreased. On the other hand, the tuition fee of overseas universities, especially those in the United States, has substantially risen in the last decade.
- (3) Obstacles related to university education. Japanese universities do not respond to international trends of academic curriculums, credit transfer, and the provision of preparatory programs for international learning.
- (4) Lack of incentives to study abroad due to job hunting within Japan. Japan has a long tradition where the absolute majority of university graduates finish the job hunting

process before graduation, which tends to start earlier and create conflicts on study abroad periods. At the same time, study abroad experience, including post-graduate degrees, is not necessarily well-recognized nor rewarded.

- (5) Increasing global competition among students and workers. The increase of international students at global levels and the competition among higher education providers for assuring high level learning outcomes, led to a higher requirement in language ability that cannot be met by most Japanese students under the current education system in Japan. The polarization of the attitudes of Japanese youth on working abroad is ongoing.

The last point, namely, the polarization of the attitudes of the young workers on working abroad, is pointed out based on widely-known survey data by the Sanno Institute of Management. The share of newly employed workers (18–26 year olds) not wishing to work abroad has risen, from 28.7% in 2004 to 58.7% in 2013. At the same time, for the first time in 2013, the majority (29.5%) of those who wish to work abroad (41.3%) responded that they are willing to work anywhere in the world. The survey also asked the reasons for their preference. Namely, the reasons for the positive response on working abroad in the 2013 survey were the experiences unavailable in Japan (74.0%); to widen their own perspectives (65.6%); for improving language communication skills (47.7%); and for opportunities to work with non-Japanese (24.2%). On the other hand, the reasons for negative responses were a lack of confidence in language ability (65.2%); the uncertainty of life in foreign countries (50.4%); not feeling attracted to foreign countries (35.5%); lack of confidence in their own work ability (27.3%); additional burden to their families (18.6%); and the uncertainty of the influence of overseas work on their career (14.1%) (Sanno Institute of Management 2013).

These results above clearly indicate that for Japanese youth, global competition among young highly-skilled workers provides both wider opportunities for challenging life and a threat to their survival in such an open, internationalized labor market. Thus the domestic labor market, protected by the language and cultural barrier, as well as its established labor customs, appears to be attractive at least from a short-term perspective.

These “inward looking attitudes,” those being the tendency to avoid study and work experiences abroad among a part of Japanese youth, started to become a national concern among a wide range of industrial, academic, and policy leaders; especially after the financial crisis of 2008. This became one of the rationales for national support for fostering global human resources.

As mentioned previously, the government set up a cabinet level council for discussion on how to foster “Global Human Resources,” following the requests of industries and related Ministries. A new government that began in 2009, led by the Democratic Party of Japan, also indicated their idea to increase the number of Japanese youth studying abroad by up to 300,000 by 2020. The other stakeholders, such as the leaders of universities and industries,

also supported the idea of fostering Japanese youth to be more internationally competitive human resources. After the Liberal Democratic Party regained ruling party status at the end of 2012, the government set a more realistic achievement goal, namely to double the number of Japanese studying abroad to 120,000 by 2020.

#### **IV. Global Human Resource Development in Practice**

In order to analyze the actual practices related to the development of "Global Human Resources," the author must clarify that there is a significant amount of available literature and information on the proposals, suggestions, and case studies referring to "Global Human Resources." Many of them simply mention this as a catchy phrase for sales promotion or to draw public attention. The definition and interpretation of the term also varies. Some mention it as a global elite education, and others for more mass and universally-oriented education and training, related to any kind of international experiences.

This could be also applied to the requirement from industries. In the midst of transformation toward a national economy open to global business opportunities, a wide variety of trials and challenges are ongoing among respective small, medium, and large enterprises. Although there is a widely shared perspective that Japanese society faces a shortage of human resources who can work internationally, the actual approach toward recruiting and fostering such human resources are quite different among respective industrial sectors and even among respective enterprises in the same sector.

Part of the transformation had already started long before the spread of "Global Human Resources" as a discourse. Trading companies, manufacturing sectors and most leading enterprises have expanded their businesses all over the world. Many foreign investment companies in various industrial sectors have also entered the Japanese market, and have employed Japanese youth as local and global staff. Some leading Japanese companies such as Nissan or Yamaichi Stock Company also underwent international M&A, and the senior staff inevitably have had to work under a globalized working environment, in many cases through communication dominated in the English language.

However, partly because of the strong domestic economy and consumer market, the majority of workers inside Japan have continued to work without feeling the necessity to work in a foreign language. Based on a large scale survey of university graduates working in enterprises in Japan, Yonezawa (2010) pointed out that more than 70% of these workers do not use English in their daily work at all.

Under the ongoing policy debates on "Global Human Resources," however, some of the visible changes among leading companies were highlighted. For example, Panasonic, a leading Japanese enterprise in electric appliances, declared its policy to shift the recruitment of university graduates to more from outside Japan. Newly established leading companies, such as Rakuten in the e-commerce business and Fast Retailing in the fashion industry operating UNIQLO, changed their official business language to English. Many other compa-

nies also clarified their policy of active recruitment of new non-Japanese staff and those with a high level of international experiences and foreign language skills (Tokunaga and Momii 2011).

The leaders of universities, industries, and the government also started active exchange and collaboration for encouraging youth to be actively engaged in international experiences. The University of Tokyo and other leading universities, mostly selected to be in the Global 30 project, started dialogues to business leaders; and the Keidanren, a representative association of business leaders, started offering scholarships for studying abroad for the students of universities selected for the Global 30 program.

In this process, Akita International University (AIU), a local public university located in a rural area drew social attention as a unique case (Nakajima 2010). AIU was founded in 2004, as an experimental 'international liberal arts' university, by inheriting the campus and a part of the staff of a closed offshore branch campus of the Minnesota State University. It offers almost all its programs in English, and provides every student a study abroad experience through their student exchange programs. For realizing effective learning for the students mostly recruited from ordinary high schools in Japan, they provide a half-year program of language training, and also provide a strong support of job placement toward enterprises seeking Japanese youth who want strong international experience. This means that AIU's academic calendar begins a half-year after the newly admitted students graduate high schools in March, following the Japanese school calendar that starts in April. The students who already have enough English proficiency for university study are allowed to have some experience such as overseas travel, under the monitoring and supervision of the AIU staff.

Waseda University, a top comprehensive private university based in Tokyo, also started Colleges of International Liberal Arts that carry out most classes in English. These universities made a consortium with Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University; International Christian University, with a long history of liberal arts education partly in English; and Sophia University, which also transformed its long-established undergraduate program of comparative culture toward an international liberal arts program.

Partly referring these existing instances, President Hamada of the University of Tokyo made a proposal to shift the start of the academic calendar of top universities, including the University of Tokyo itself, to autumn. This follows the trends of advanced, mostly North American and European countries, for smooth student exchange with world-class universities. This partly utilizes the occasion to start undergraduate programs in English as a part of the Global 30 program, as other Global 30 member universities did. One of the rationales was enhancing student exchange through summer programs that are typically implemented in June to August among North American and European universities. The University of Tokyo started to attract top university students all over the world in their summer programs and provides the exchange experience to its own students. Waseda University solved the academic calendar issue by replacing the semester system with a quarter system, for more flexibility in study abroad experiences. The University of Tokyo and other universities are

also considering the introduction of the quarter system.

The government is also actively engaged in encouragement of university reforms to provide wider international experiences among students. The government started compulsory English language education in primary education in 2011, while Japan is almost dead last among major countries in Asia. English teaching itself is also under transformation from instruction in Japanese toward instruction in English. The government will also encourage the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, while significant expansion will be done mainly by ongoing efforts to develop the IB program in Japanese. The government also started discussion on the drastic reform of university entrance examination systems, to reform the foreign language subject examinations into those that stress practical communication skills.

At the university level, MEXT started various program funds for encouraging students to acquire international experiences. After the tsunami and nuclear accidents in Fukushima in March 2011, the Japanese government started a new project fund for large scale financial support for sending and accepting short term study and visit toward a variety of programs proposed by a wide range of universities. The government also started the project to provide financial support to model programs of student exchange with China, South Korea (under the name of CAMPUS Asia), and North America in 2011; with ASEAN countries in 2012, for participation to the AIMS, the credit transfer and student exchange programs among ASEAN countries led by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) in 2013; and Russia and India in 2014. Within these programs, the active engagement of sending Japanese students abroad and improving their language proficiency have been required as clearly-set goals. Also, as a scheme for vocational tertiary and lifelong education, the government issued a report for developing vocational and professional human resources, and started pilot programs in 2013.

As a major program to support leading practices among universities, MEXT provided the Project for Promoting Global Human Resources Development, selecting 11 university-wide programs and 31 faculty/school based programs in 2012. These programs are not always from top research universities, but rather from the universities that have made strong efforts for introducing international programs. Most of the programs focus on giving incentives and support to study abroad through educational programs and academic and career support. The government holds events for sharing these good practices, and universities and experts have also held significant seminars and workshops for improving educational practices and demonstrating accountability. Adding to this, the government is starting a new support program called "super global" high schools and universities from 2014, for providing a world-class learning environment to foster global leaders and human resources.

On the other hand, these practices in the education sector do not necessarily lead to direct application toward job opportunities outside of the country. Actually, most of the globalized enterprises, especially the larger ones, have already developed established re-

recruitment channels suited to the respective countries and regions. For example, a leading Japanese medical and pharmaceutical products company started to make a global strategy for recruitment, but basically follow the recruitment custom of, for example, the US or Europe, when they recruit staff from these countries and regions (Ishiwatari and Yonezawa 2012). It may also be true that many foreign investment enterprises operating in Japan do not necessarily follow agreements on the recruitment period and processes among Japanese enterprises. However, including these foreign investment companies, the absolute majority of Japanese graduates from universities in Japan try to apply for the Japan-specific recruitment system and try to secure employment before graduation.

Ishiwatari and Yamanouchi (2013) criticize how industries have responded in assessing international experience and the competencies within the existing Japanese style recruitment system. There, some Japanese students only aim for superficial international experiences and better scores on language communication tests for improving their employment opportunities. After getting into the company, especially a typical Japanese one, job positions are decided by the employers, and workers are not sure whether they can make use of their competency as “Global Human Resources.”

On the other hand, Japanese universities and higher education institutions do not assure the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are universally viable in the global labor market, especially those in the English-speaking world. For example, even graduates of AIU, where the full-scale undergraduate education instructed in English is provided, the absolute majority of graduates find jobs through the Japanese-style recruitment process. For AIU, sending their graduates to the graduate schools of top universities in English-speaking countries is still the next challenge. Science and technology experts trained at the graduate level in Japan may have more possibilities for internationally viable employability. On the other hand, the majority of international students at Japanese universities are still studying in Japanese language at the undergraduate level, and seeking job opportunities somewhat related to Japanese industries either in Japan or their home countries.

## **V. Conclusion**

The nationwide campaigns and movements for fostering “Global Human Resources” certainly changed the perspectives and attitudes of universities, industries, and even the students, more for being active in gaining international experiences through university education to be better employable in a globalized labor market. However, the fear to be exposed directly toward increasing international competition is shared among the majority of young workers, and this tendency is becoming even stronger than before. Although many trials are ongoing, it is still too early for getting concrete evidence that Japan is actually developing “Global Human Resources.” At the same time, this movement and its actual practices are basically active within the links between universities and industries inside Japan. In other words, the situation is completely different with, for example, the Philippines, where uni-

versity graduates easily leave the country to seek professional job opportunities, such as in engineering and health care services.

At the same time, the findings above remind us of the nature of labor market customs embedded within a social context with long-standing continuity. At least at the entry level, the transition from education to employment is still based on the respective national or regional context. On the other hand, especially at the senior management level, it is becoming more likely to be involved in the working environment that requires the competencies of "Global Human Resources."

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