Japan's trial: Developing “global human resources” through collaboration between universities, businesses, and the government

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Features of Japan’s HE

- Relatively large population (127 million)
- Highly developed and diversified HE system based on relatively strong economy (No 3. as to GDP after US & China)
- Concentration of public investment into limited number of national public institutions
  - Research: visible considering the disadvantage to be a non-English speaking country
  - Limited visibility in university education
    - Language barrier, HE as a screening device, Tradition of in-house training and promotion esp. in a large enterprises
    - Not exactly true for engineering field
    - High graduation rate (90%) under over supply condition
Impact of emerging economies in Asia and other regions

- Rapid increase of high skilled human resources at global level
- Development of huge consuming market in emerging economies
- Lack of human resources who can manage multi-nationalized Japanese enterprises
- Opportunities and risks for current Japanese students
  - Stability in a matured domestic labor market: inward looking among significant share of youth (small opportunities and large risks in the long run)
  - Undeveloped career path for those who wish to work actively in a global labor market
- Increased mismatch and unemployment among graduates from Japanese universities under the decrease of young population
Possible scenario of globalization among Japanese enterprises (report by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry: METI 2010)

- Retirement model: Most of the foreign employees belong to sales companies and the sales in Japan represent over 50%.
- Foreign employee ratio represents over 50% (concentrated in sales companies and plants) and the sales in Japan represent 40%.
- Majority of employees are foreigners and multinational development is in progress for all functions. The sales in Japan represent 20% and those in emerging economies are increasing.

Source: The 16th Corporate White Paper by Keizai Doyukai
Identification of ‘global human resources’ as industrial policies (METI 2010)

1. To take actions while being aware of the existence of differences in values and communication methods on the basis of diversified backgrounds and histories (= cultural differences)
2. Not to judge cultural differences as good or bad, but to be interested in and understand differences and take flexible actions
3. To recognize strengths of diverse people with cultural differences and to use such strengths for the creation of new values through a synergetic effect

- Ability to step forward (action)
  - Ability to take a step forward and try patiently even after failure
  - Ability to work on others
  - Ability to take actual actions

- Ability to think well (thinking)
  - Ability to ask questions and think well
    - Ability to find problems
    - Ability to plan
    - Ability to create

- Ability to work in a team (teamwork)
  - Ability to cooperate with diversified people in achieving a goal
    - Ability to provide information
    - Flexibility
    - Submission to discipline
    - Ability to understand situations
    - Ability to control stress

* "Fundamental Competencies for Working Persons" = This is a concept proposed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), that means basic skills required for a person to work with various people in the work-place or local society.
Approach from the Education Policies

• Reform of university education started from 1980s (under economic booming of Japan)
  – Internationalization through acceptance of international students mainly from Asia, and opportunities of studying abroad by large companies among executive workers
  
  <- Strategies of the students: first get into a prestigious Japanese companies and get an opportunity to be sent abroad

  – Restructuring of the curriculum design
    • Communication oriented language education, IT skills and critical thinking

  <- not seriously demanded by traditional Japanese company and traditional university professors
• Universal assess to HE by the end of 1990s
  – Stress of basic & generic skills (not anymore assured at the entrance level)
  – Financial stringency both from public (NPM) and private resources (stagnated economy)
  – Introduction of systemic quality assurance system

• Various project funds for stimulating internationalization of HE (under the idea of functional diversification among HEIs)
  – World Class University policies (Global COEs)
  – Fostering management capacity for internationalization (SIH)
  – Supporting internationalization of HEIs (Global 30 and others)

• Shift towards support for sending Japanese students abroad (2010s)
Reaction by HEIs

• Liberal arts undergraduate education in English (or bilingual)
  – Ritsumeikan APU, Waseda, Akita International University, International Christian University (G4)

• Increase of programs in English mainly at the graduate level
  – Public research universities (started undergraduate programs in English pushed by G30 scheme)

• Simplified HE curriculum in Japanese catered for international students
  – Japan University of Economics

• Ad hoc or No reaction (Kudo 2011)
Booming of ‘global human resources’ as a magic term

• Task force committees set up by Ministry of Education (MEXT), and then Cabinet Office
• Research Universities 11 & Global 30 members started campaigns for developing global human resources collaborated with industry and the government
• University of Tokyo started to discuss on changing Academic Calendar started from April to September → possible emergence of ‘gap term’ and change of too systemic transition from university education to working life
Challenges

• Shortage of financial resources
  – Most of the HEIs and families do not have enough financial affordability to support study abroad and international experience

• Shortage of human resources
  – Most of HEIs do not have teaching staff with rich international experiences (quite different from Korea, Taiwan & Singapore)

• Shortage of academic competency for learning in English among Japanese students
  – K-12 English language education unfit for two way communication
  – Still lack of strong incentive (and confidence) to study abroad among students although they started to feel strong pressure

• Shortage of clear rewarding system and lack of the discussion on ‘brain drain’ (probably more serious than the fear of brain drain at this moment)