

Thoughts on Student Mobility: Why Japanese Students are more “Immobile”

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Once a Western researcher called Japan’s education system as “immobilist” (Shoppa, 1991) describing conspicuously incremental education reform processes. Now the number of Japanese university students studying abroad has been on the gradual decline since 2004, showing another kind of immobility (OECD, 2008). For instance, approximately 46,000 Japanese went to the United States to study in 2002, but that number shrunk to 34,000 in 2007. Yet the total population of Japanese students at 4-year colleges has been stable even under the lowering birth rate. What are the reasons for this phenomenon? In this article, I will focus on major barriers facing Japanese students.

I would like to use my college as a case in point. My college is a small liberal arts college for women, located in the suburb of Tokyo. I sometimes feel sorry for Japanese students because their college life is too focused on career planning, especially after entering the junior (third) year. They have to be prepared for the coming job hunting season, which is in fall of the junior year. Many students spend hundreds hours contacting sometimes more than 100 companies to get that best job available. At the same time, they start spending much less time on campus (coursework and extracurricular activities). My college is not an exception. Basically all students who seek jobs at corporations do the same thing all over Japan. This means Japanese university students can only focus on their studies essentially for the first two years, and in the junior year, corporations gradually take over their lives. Thus, students who were initially interested in studying abroad (exchange programmes) for a year or a semester have to give up studying abroad due to the heavy work required towards securing jobs. This issue is especially true for science and engineering, medical, dental, and pharmaceutical degree programmes which have demanding workloads.

In the past, the job hunting fiasco used to occur in the senior (final) year, but over years aggressive corporate recruiters competed to seize the best and brightest students as early as possible. This led to reducing the 4-year college study time almost by half. At job interviews, poor students have to answer questions such as “what did you learn at your college?” while they just finished first two years of study at a higher education level. There have been many attempts to stop this type of early recruitment, but in vain. It appears that universities and faculty members have reluctantly accepted this peculiar landscape in Japanese recruitment exercise.

The Japanese labour market operates quite differently from most OECD countries. Unlike countries where hiring is in principle position-based, Japanese recruiters hire employees not for particular positions, but for the

organisation as a whole. Japanese recruiters (either from the private or public sectors) have strong preference for new graduates (22-24 years old) who fit well the lifelong pay scales of the organisations. The recruitment for mid-career people has in fact increased; however, this Japanese tradition of hiring new graduates is still quite strong. Therefore, students cannot afford to “miss the boat.” I believe that this tight job hunting process is one of barriers for the international mobility (short- or long-term) of Japanese students.

Some commentators point out that young generations are so comfortable in Japan that they avoid risky and time-consuming study abroad which requires foreign language study and living in different cultures. Some call this as “inward-looking” attitude. Probably, Japan has a large domestic market where international experiences are not essentially important. In fact, Yonezawa (2009) argues that while women have more international experiences than men during college years in Japan, men have more international work opportunities than women after graduation. Perhaps, this stems from the different treatment of men and women at work (men have more international opportunities than women just because they are men). The old population constantly demand, at policy or practical levels, young people to go outside Japan and compete internationally, referring to globalisation, internationalisation, worldwide competition, etc. However, it is not so easy to change people’s thinking, attitudes and behaviours.

References

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- Shoppa, Leonard J. (1991). *Education reform in Japan*. New York: Routledge.
- Yonezawa, Akiyoshi. (2009). *Overseas experience of university graduates and its impacts*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Japan Association for Higher Education Research, May 24, 2009.

Malaysia-Cambodia Workshop on Higher Education and Developing Human Capital: Towards Strategic Partnerships and Alliances

Reported by Ooi Poh Ling

The Malaysia-Cambodia workshop on Higher Education and Developing Human Capital which was held on 25-26 February 2009 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia is part of the effort by the Malaysian government to strengthen collaboration, particularly in the domain of higher education, with four Southeast Asian countries namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam. It was organised by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia with co-operation of the Cambodian Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the respective departments/agencies overseeing the higher education sector in Cambodia, while the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), Universiti Sains Malaysia provided intellectual and technical support. Seventeen delegates from Malaysia and fifty participants from Cambodia were present.

The two-day workshop was officiated by the Honourable Dr. Phoeurng Sackona, the Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The five topics of the workshop are as follows:

- Higher Education: Present and Future Directions;
- Partnering and Alliances in the Academic Sector;
- Partnering in Quality Assurance;
- Linkages, Staff and Student Exchanges;
- Partnering and Alliances in the Research Sector.

The breakout session on the second day of the workshop yielded a lot of suggestions from participants from both



Malaysian delegates having friendly conversation with Cambodian counterpart.

countries. It showed the determination from both sides to make the collaboration a successful implementation of plans. The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia expressed its strong commitment in ensuring that actions will be taken based on realistic measures. One of the projects identified is agricultural research and the collaboration entails experts, staff, and student exchange. The Malaysian government will provide the necessary financial and technological support.

Y.Bhg. Dato' Professor Mohd. Yusof Kasim in closing the workshop highlighted several critical points which are not only key issues towards a successful collaboration, but also heralded the resolutions made.



Delegates and participants of the Malaysia-Cambodia Strategic Dialogue in a group photograph with the Secretary of State, MoEYS, H.E. Dr. Phoeurng Sackona.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Invitation to Participate



13-16 December 2009 • Parkroyal Hotel, Penang, Malaysia

GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION: CURRENT TRENDS, FUTURE PERSPECTIVES



Sub-themes of the Forum

- 1. Sub-theme 1: HE Regionalisation and Harmonisation: One Model Fits All?**
 - Diversity of HE models, either existing or that existed in the recent past
 - Current trends in regional harmonisation of HE systems
 - Challenges and issues in regional HE cooperation
- 2. Sub-theme 2: HE in a Globally Competitive World – From a Tradable to a Competitive Commodity**
 - Should HE be a tradable commodity?
 - Cross-border HE and internationalisation: Are there losers?
 - Global ranking and benchmarking of HE institutions: Who benefits?
- 3. Sub-theme 3: HE in Times of Global, Financial and Economic Turbulence**
 - Repercussions of the economic crisis on the HE sector: Funding, student enrolment, quality, etc.
 - Will HE in the South be affected in the same way as in the North? What will be the impact on national growth and development?
 - How can challenges be overcome? Are there avenues for North-South HE collaboration?
- 4. Sub-theme 4: Scenarios for HE Futures**
 - HE to serve local or global needs, or both?
 - Alternative models of HE futures
 - Embedding values and service to humanity in HE futures

Approach

The GHEF2009 will deliberate on all of the above sub-themes from both global and regional perspectives. We plan to organise plenary sessions and/or panel discussions based on (1) a global perspective, (2) a single region and (3) a comparative perspective of several regions.

Important Deadlines

Pre-GHEF 2009	13 December 2009
Submission of Full Paper	31 August 2009
Closing Date for Registration	15 November 2009

Papers will be uploaded onto the website by mid September 2009.

Participation

The Global Higher Education Forum (GHEF2009) brings together scholars, policy makers, researchers, academics and administrators to reflect, analyse, discuss and debate on a wide variety of issues pertaining to global higher education in a south-south context. In particular, GHEF2009 will focus on the theme of Global Higher Education, seeking to ponder and reflect on the benefits and challenges and at the same time, envision the way forward for emerging and expanding, rather than for established, higher education systems.

Registration Fees

Category		Early bird registration (before 15 Sept. 2009)	Normal registration (15 Sept.-15 Nov. 2009)
Local	Participant	RM800.00	RM900.00
	Group (3 & above from the same organisation)	RM700.00 each	
	Student*	RM300.00	
International	Participant	USD800.00	USD900.00
	Group (3 & above from the same organisation)	USD700.00 each	
	Student*	USD300.00	

* Please send a photocopy of student ID together with the Registration Form.

Registration fee covers conference materials, four tea-breaks, two lunches and one dinner.

- Payment for early bird registration should be made before **15 SEPTEMBER 2009**.
- Full payment must be made on or before **15 NOVEMBER 2009**.
- Closing date for registration is **15 NOVEMBER 2009**.

Method of Payment

1. By Bank Transfer in RM/USD in favour of "Bursar Universiti Sains Malaysia"

Account Number	070-20001054-716
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Reference Remarks	GHEF2009 and name & institution of participant(s)

2. By Bank Cheque in RM/USD in favour of "Bursar Universiti Sains Malaysia"

Please send your cheque with a cover note indicating participant's name, institutions and payment for GHEF2009.

Social Visit–Heritage Enclave, George Town

A social visit will be organised for forum participants on 16 November 2006. Participants will be taken on an enlightening three hour leisurely stroll around the inner city of George Town – an 'open museum' showcasing displays of Penang's rich cultural history and past migration, significant buildings and landmarks.

Registration and Further Information

Detailed programme on the GHEF2009, on-line/off-line registration, hotel information, etc., is available on the GHEF2009 website: <http://www.gheforum.usm.my>. If you wish to be in the mailing list for updated information, please e-mail to: gheforum@usm.my or ipptn@usm.my.

Invitation to Participate & Call for Papers

University-Community Engagement for Sustainability

UCEC

University-Community
Engagement Conference 2009

23-26 November 2009
Bayview Hotel, George Town Penang, Malaysia

Organised by



in collaboration with
Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research (GACER)
and UNESCO-APEID



Objectives

1. To discuss the social responsibility and changing roles of universities
2. To explore methods, experiences and strategies of community engagement
3. To network, share experiences and showcase good practices in university-community partnerships
4. To promote and legitimise the scholarship of engagement in the Asia-pacific region

Sub-themes

- Changing roles and social responsibility of universities for sustainable development
- Challenges and experiences of engagement of academe/ university with community/industry
- Approaches, methods and strategies in engaging with communities
- Theory and practice in the scholarship of engagement

Who Should Attend?

- University academics and administrators who are involved or interested in engaged scholarship and service learning
- Workers, volunteers and trustees from community and public sector organisations
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Anyone interested in university-community engagement
- Government, non-government and corporate organisations
- Funding bodies and policy makers
- Service users and community members

Conference Fees

Early Bird Registration (On or before 15 Sept. 2009)	Local RM300.00 International USD300.00
Registration (After 15 Sept. 2009)	Local RM350.00 International USD350.00
Post-conference Workshop	Local RM100.00 International USD100.00

Keynote and Plenary Speakers

- Prof. Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
- Dr. Rajesh Tandon
Society for Participatory Research in India (PRIA), India
- Prof. Budd L. Hall
University of Victoria, Canada
- Prof. Shirley Walters
University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Mr. Tan Jo Hann
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For more information, please contact:

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For participants from developing countries, a discount can be considered upon request.

RESEARCH UPDATES

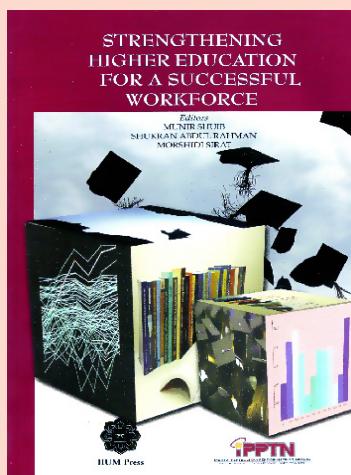
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1. University Rating System for ASEAN/Southeast ASIA
2. Impact of APEX Status on USM: Transformation and Achievement
3. The Financial Sustainability of the National Higher Education Funding Corporation (PTPTN)
4. Strategic Roadmap for the Private Higher Education in Malaysia
5. The Acceptance Level of Entrepreneurship in Institutions of Higher Learning
6. International Students in Malaysia
7. Nurturing Learning and Higher Education Transformation: Academia Accountability
8. Malaysian Teacher Quality for Human Capital Development
9. Social Cohesion and Higher Education
10. OECD/IMHE Review of Higher Education Institutions in Regional Development - Presenting the Penang Region/ City-Region
11. Future Directions of Academic Programmes in Higher Education Institutions

External Grants

1. Employability of University Graduates (Malaysia/Indonesia/Philippines), UNESCO Jakarta
2. Employability of ICT Graduates (Indonesia/Philippines/Malaysia/India/Korea), UNESCO Bangkok
3. Building Asia-USA-Europe Collaborative Knowledge, Learning, Innovation, Capacity Research for a Sustainable Development: Bridging the Divide. Funded by UMAP Research-Net (URN), Bangkok
4. Diversification of Post-Secondary Education to Expand Access and Improve Relevance. Funded by Governance and Management in Education, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO)

PUBLICATION



Strengthening Higher Education for a Successful Workforce is a timely collection of thought-provoking articles for educators and policy makers in higher education in determining the direction to set in the future with regards to producing a successful workforce. It also seeks to complement the existing discussion on HE-related issues particularly the ones that emphasise on unemployment among HLI graduates. The book features in-depth discourses by academic members of different disciplines, who present their critical views and research findings, discuss pertinent issues and challenges and identify strategies to strengthen the higher education sector. *Strengthening Higher Education for a Successful Workforce* is especially recommended for educators and administrators seeking to chart a successful future for the students in their HLI and ultimately for their nation.

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4. Citations in the text should include the author's last name and date of publication, e.g. (Ashton, 2001). If quotations are used, page numbers should be indicated, eg. (Ashton, 2001: 30).
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Watkins, D. (1998). A cross-cultural look at perceptions of good teaching: Asia and the West. In J. J. F. Forest (Ed.), *University teaching: International perspectives*. New York: Garland.

Wolfe, R. N. and Johnson, S. D. (1995). Personality as a predictor of college performance. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 2, 177-185.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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11. Submission of a manuscript will mean that the author agrees to transfer copyright of his/her article to the publisher if and when the article is published. Authors who wish to send their articles to be published elsewhere should seek the written agreement of the publisher.
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