

The Experiences of Foreign Faculty Working in Japanese Higher Education

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Abstract: Japan has an extensive higher education system which has grown over the last several decades. The government has in recent years been trying to make Japan more “international” by encouraging study abroad for students (both incoming and outgoing) and offering more content courses in English. One of the goals of these endeavors is certainly to raise the status and reputations of Japanese universities globally, which in recent years is reported to have declined vis a vi other universities within Asia and around the world. Therefore, despite the many government-based programs, to create “Super Global Universities” and cultivate to foster “Global Human Resources”, the results have been mixed at best.

One aspect of Japanese international higher education that has not received adequate attention is the relatively low number of foreign national academics working in Japanese higher education. This indicator in is in part responsible for universities in Singapore, Korea and elsewhere to raise the reputations of their universities in the international ranking league tables.

Indeed, one of the main indicators of quality and competitiveness of universities lies in their ability to attract excellent educators and researchers. So the question remains, why is Japan, which on many levels has a high quality of life and is now attracts over 200,000 international students annually is unable to attract large numbers of top-level foreign academics?

This study focuses on foreign academics working within Japanese higher education institutions in order to better understand their experiences of working and living in Japan, and hopefully to determine why an academic career in Japan is often not considered a viable option for international faculty. This report is from a workshop held in autumn of 2018 that discusses foreign faculty from the viewpoint of mainly Japanese faculty, in the attempt to gain a broader perspective of issues most relevant to foreign faculty at Japanese universities.

Keywords: International higher education, foreign faculty, integration.