

Developing Global Leader: The Key to Enhance Japanese University Students' Participation in Overseas Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Prompted by a shortage of global talent, Japan is making efforts to nurture the necessary human resources. The role of any university education cannot be ignored; however, various hurdles associated with several training programmes must be overcome, in particular the implementation of overseas programmes. If any overseas programmes are able to execute successfully, they can provide significant contributions to developing global minds of university students. This study empirically examines the degree of Japanese university students' participation in overseas training programmes with teaching staff as companions. A total of 91 students from a national university in Japan were asked to complete a questionnaire and an independent sample t-test was used for data analysis. This study's findings suggest that female students and students who had experience abroad prefer to have a teaching staff companion during their participation in overseas programmes. Japanese universities should consider increasing their support by using teaching staff to enhance the development of global talent through overseas education programmes.

Keywords: Global leader, Globalisation, Overseas programmes, Teaching staff

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation refers to the spread of products, goods, services, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest and fastest decline in international flows, it has not undermined globalisation as much as some have predicted. In contrast, trade, capital flows, and global internet traffic are back at or even above pre-pandemic levels. As no significant global player is changing its business plan, the pandemic has prompted a new wave of predictions of the demise of globalisation. However, the latest data and forecasts imply that leaders should plan for both globalisation and anti-globalisation pressures to remain enduring features of the business environment.

Globalisation has facilitated major changes in higher education, leading Japanese universities to address the need to strengthen their international competitiveness. Although there has been growing awareness of the importance of universities becoming more internationalised in Japan, there are still several obstacles that must be overcome. A critical issue is increasing human resources through a global mindset. The role of universities cannot be neglected, and various overseas programmes are expected to train Japanese students to acquire relevant knowledge and experience in terms of internationalisation along with basic subjects within the curriculum. Due to several common challenges faced by most Japanese students, such as language barriers or lack of confidence in going abroad alone, support from faculty members or teaching staff is significant to those students who want to participate in overseas programmes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the functions of faculty members or teaching staff joining Japanese students in overseas programmes and to determine relevant solutions for improving the participation rate of universities' overseas programmes in Japan. This paper first discusses the issues of Japanese university students' participation in overseas programmes and clarifies the role of teaching staff through a variety of relevant studies. Next, data analysis was conducted to verify the tendency of Japanese students to rely on teaching staff during their participation in overseas programmes, using a survey conducted at a national university in Japan. The findings from the analysis revealed the effect of gender differences and experience abroad on the preferences of Japanese students. The paper concludes with recommendations expected to contribute to improving Japanese students' participation in overseas programmes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Initiatives to Increase Globalisation of Education in Japan

From the end of World War II, the Japanese economy achieved rapid growth while enjoying the benefits of globalisation and free trade, amid the deepening of its connectedness with the global economy. However, in recent years, Japan has been at risk of losing competitiveness in the global business world. Over the past 25 years, the number of Japanese Fortune 500 companies has dropped by more than 64%, and in 2010, China surpassed Japan as the second largest global economy. Additional pressures from an aging population, COVID-19, and local talent shortages are compelling Japanese companies to diversify and amplify their workforce through globalisation.

With limited business opportunities anticipated locally, most growth opportunities for Japanese companies lie outside the country. To achieve this growth, companies must realign business and talent strategies with ever-evolving competencies and skill requirements. In doing so, talent strategies must evolve to access, engage, and develop "globally minded" human resources and realign organisational culture accordingly. Globally minded human resources demonstrate soft skills, such as cultural intelligence, empathy, collaboration, inclusivity, and diversity of thought, which play a fundamental role in bridging the gap between different cultural contexts (Deloitte, 2022). A leader with a global mindset can effectively lead across borders and serve diverse stakeholders in an ever-changing, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. This means being open and understanding cultural diversity, differences in business fields, and their impact on all types of stakeholders (Bettina, B., & Michael, S. 2014).

Although many Japanese companies recognise the necessity of embracing talent profiles that support global ambitions, accessing and retaining talent is becoming increasingly challenging. In addition to obtaining practical overseas experience in the global business world, universities play an important role in educating and nourishing the younger generation to develop their global mindset. Low economic growth, labour shortages due to declining birthrates, and lagging competitiveness in science and technology have prompted the government to set new targets. Consequently, many Japanese universities are likely to promote exchanges with their counterparts in the G7 and other nations. Efforts to globalise national education are expected to increase. After the COVID-19 pandemic that drastically reduced the number of Japanese students travelling abroad and the arrivals of foreign students, Japan is once again focused on the drive to internationalise higher education (Yoshida 2017).

The Japanese government's role in this process should not be overlooked. The industry-Academia Partnership for Human Resource Development was initiated by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) in 2007. The task of developing global human resources sought by companies was imposed on universities, and METI began considering its plan of action in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). As a result, new demands were issued stating that universities should implement their own organisational reforms in line with global standards (Yoshida, 2016).

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has cited the need of raising a globally minded workforce of highly skilled professionals to establish his "new capitalism" concept. Meanwhile, the government is set to expand mid- and long-term study plans for Japanese students, improve the environment for encouraging acceptance of promising foreign students, promote international exchanges, review residency requirements, facilitate employment, internationalise universities, and create an attractive educational environment for foreign talent. Kishida made these statements following a council meeting in April 2023.

Various overseas education programmes, such as internships or business visits, can provide invaluable training for Japanese students to gain overseas technical or business experience and develop their global mindset. Internships are used internationally as a platform for training and educating future global elites. However, the government's new numerical targets came after the 2008 goal of 300,000 foreign students by 2020, which was surpassed in 2019, immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic. By last year, this number had dropped to 230,000. Several hurdles hinder the expansion of overseas programmes in Japan.

Factors Associated with Japanese University Students' Decisions to Study Abroad

Various factors that make this latest attempt at internationalisation challenging include the low desire among Japanese students to study abroad or join overseas programmes. In particular, English proficiency among students in Japan have fallen short of government goals. Additionally, students face the hurdle of overcoming cultural differences inherent in Japan. Several surveys have revealed that Japan's English proficiency has decreased in non-English-speaking countries. A 2022 survey by the Swiss International Education Company Education First (EF), which measures the English proficiency of people in 112 non-English-speaking countries and regions, found that over the last year, Japan had fallen a further two places, from seventy-eighth to eightieth. In the first survey conducted in 2011, Japan placed fourteenth; however, at that time, only 40 countries provided testing data. As the number of countries in each survey gradually increased, Japan continued to fall in rank.

Japan's English language curriculum is often faulted for its failure to develop communicatively competent or confident students who can gain admittance and succeed at foreign institutions (Hayase, 2017). Despite substantial investment and effort in English education, the average combined TOEFL score of Japanese students (72) is lower than that of students from other non-English-speaking countries in Southeast Asia such as Korea (83), Taiwan (83), and China (81) (Education Testing Service, 2019). Several studies on Japanese students have revealed a lack of language competence and confidence to be the first or second most common reasons cited by Japanese students for not studying abroad (British Council, 2014; Takehara et al., 2016). Some of the common factors identified in these studies are the prohibitive financial burden,

incompatibility with the Japanese academic calendar, lack of English proficiency and confidence, and the "inward tendencies" of contemporary Japanese students.

The Significance and Role of Teaching Staff in Overseas Programmes

Since there are many issues to be solved to improve the desires of Japanese students participating in overseas activities, conventional study abroad programmes alone cannot meet these social needs and the challenges faced by students. However, it is difficult to solve both problems simultaneously. In general, study abroad or overseas education programmes are predominantly long-term (approximately one year), medium-term (approximately half a year), and short-term (a few weeks to half a year). One countermeasure is the implementation of a short-term overseas programme within a week to less than a month.

Short-term overseas programmes differ greatly from other traditional study-abroad programmes in two aspects. First, it minimises the time constraints and financial burdens that hinder university students from studying abroad or joining overseas programmes. In addition, many short-term study programmes have been customised to develop students' practical abilities. Next, the participation of faculty members or teaching staff who have strengthened administration, management, and safety capabilities can be made available in terms of budget and time allocation. Since the implementation of the short-term overseas programme is brief, from the beginning to the end of the programme, faculty members or teaching staff can take charge of the lead work and be involved with students to deepen their learning. To clarify the roles of faculty members or teaching staff joining overseas programmes with students, three stages—preparation, implementation, and post-training follow-up—are explained in the following paragraphs (Yamaguchi et al., 2016).

Initial enthusiasm is crucial for students to participate in overseas programmes. One of the roles of faculty members or teaching staff in the initial stage of preparation is to motivate students to participate. Even if it is only for a week in a short-term programme, the knowledge and expectations of the students participating vary greatly depending on the teaching staff. To motivate students, it is important to precisely explain the background of the programme design and advocate for the skills and abilities that can be obtained by actively participating in each activity. To ease the tension of meeting people for the first time abroad, it is necessary to implement appropriate icebreaking activities and incorporate activities that increase group interaction. In addition, during the preparation stage, practising language skills for individual students, academic guidance on projects and research methods, advice on improving cross-cultural communication and understanding, and provision of safety information for studying abroad can relieve anxiety about their first time travelling. They play an integral role in security and crisis management.

The role of the teaching staff during programme implementation is to encourage student awareness and ensure thorough security and crisis management. Many students who participate in programmes find themselves overwhelmed by cultural and social differences. However, as they gain experience, it is important for them to consider the differences in their individual cultures and societies, and appropriate advice from faculty members is essential. Regarding some overseas business programmes, teaching staff can follow up with students after each daily visit to any companies, discuss what they have learned, and answer any

questions during their visit. This can enhance the overall effectiveness of overseas programmes. In addition, it is of great significance for teaching staff to take the lead in responding to any emergency in terms of security concerns and crisis management. Teaching staff take charge of escorting students and ensuring their health and safety in their daily lives, and social safety when conducting activities. In case of an emergency situation, they must report, contact, and consult with the person in charge of the home country to ensure thorough security and crisis management during the course of the programme.

Finally, the teaching staff in charge of leading the post-programme training also play two main roles. First, they reaffirm the knowledge obtained in the field by interacting with students. Next, it is necessary to make students think about how to connect the acquired knowledge and experience to their future studies or occupations. After studying abroad, students experience changes in various directions such as their understanding of cultural differences, foreign language practice, improvement of interpersonal relationships, and a change from abstract images to tangible things (Ikeda, 2011). Guidance is necessary for students to understand the various changes and use them in their future education, research, and employment. Taking on the above roles, the teaching staff who have participated in the programme themselves are more suitable in terms of providing guidance to the students afterwards.

Program Introduction: Short-Term Programme of Overseas Training

Miyazaki University was founded in 1949 through the merger of Miyazaki Advanced Agricultural and Forestry School, Miyazaki Prefectural Normal School for Primary Education, and the Miyazaki Prefectural Advanced Technical School. In October 2003, following the merger of Miyazaki University with Miyazaki Medical College (founded in 1974), the University of Miyazaki (UoM) was formed. UoM is one of national universities located in southern part of Japan that consists of the faculties of Education, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, and Regional Innovation. UoM strives to provide education of the highest quality to our undergraduate and graduate students, and to act a leading role to play on both the domestic and international stage. "Look at the world, start with the community" is the philosophy of UoM in order to pursue education and research that starts from an awareness of what might seem trivial, everyday matters in order to bring the sort of positive changes to human activities that will contribute to significant improvements in the world. UoM continues to be a thriving institute of higher learning that maintains strong ties with the local community and cultivate future talents being globally active.

The Faculty of Regional Innovation was established as a 5th faculty of the UoM in 2016 for the purpose of fostering social innovators as future leaders for its objective of contributing to regional and industrial development on the basis of the natural and social resources and developing their global mindset with essential international management knowledge and skills as well. Along with the philosophy of university, training up more international leader with global mind is one of the missions of the faculty. In order to strengthen students' knowledges and skills to meet the global standard, a comprehensive curriculum was made to provide an environment for students to improve their English language proficiency and participate international programmes. Several fundamental and business levels of English subjects are required to enroll for all students of the faculty, as well as compulsory attending international

standardized test of English (TOEIC) twice a year. In addition to domestic internship program, students have a choice to select any programmes of short-term overseas training.

Since an internship is defined as a learning experience for students in a real-life working environment that is relevant to the students who completes their internship prior to academic graduation, the scope of short-term overseas training in the faculty of Regional Innovation of UoM is broadened in order to cover various kinds of overseas programs not limited to internship in overseas countries. Therefore, a short-term overseas training in the faculty with credit unit comprises of not only working in overseas countries, but also other academic or business programs like field work, survey, language study, cultural sharing, etc. Due to COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, majority of overseas activities were suspended no matter business or academic field. Since all COVID-19-related entry restrictions for all international visitors to most countries had been eased, the global travel and overseas activities are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Therefore, several overseas programmes of the faculty are ready to be launched during Spring holiday in 2024.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

As discussed above, the importance of providing support for Japanese university students participating in overseas programmes cannot be understated. It would be interesting to analyse their attitudes towards teaching staff as companions. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were developed to test the data in the quantitative analysis:

- H1: Students tend to prefer having teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes, regardless of their gender.
- H2: Students without overseas experience have a higher degree of preference for teaching staff companions during an overseas training programme compared with students with overseas experience.

Sample and Procedure

The sample for the study were randomly selected by using a systematic sampling method, consisting of 91 students who studied in the faculty of management in the second semester of the first academic year at UoM in 2022. All students are eligible to enrol in the short-term overseas training programme in the second year of their study.

Measurement

A 5-point Likert scale was used in the question with the aim of collecting relevant information. Students were asked to indicate their attitudes toward overseas training programmes (1 = not important, 2 = less important, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, and 5 = very important). A higher score implied a higher degree of the need for a companion during the training programme. Another question was asked to understand whether students had overseas experience. For further analysis, basic demographic data such as gender, was collected (Table 1).

Data Analysis

This study utilized descriptive statistical analysis to corroborate the data. The Microsoft Excel Software package was used to transform the primary data into information. To fully represent the data, information was summarised, categorised, and calculated using means, standard

deviations, and variances (Cooper & Schinder, 2011). Based on the preliminary results, further quantitative analysis was performed using an independent-sample t-test to verify whether there were any significant differences between the means of each group of data.

Table 1: Summary of samples (By abroad experience and gender)

	Gender	Male	Female	Total:
Abroad experience				
No		24	42	66
Once		7	11	18
Twice		0	1	1
Three times or above		4	2	6
Total:		35	56	91

RESULTS

The preliminary statistical results of the ratings are summarised in Table 2. In general, the mean score of the total sample was 4.0879, which indicates that most respondents tended to prefer having a teaching staff companion when they joined an overseas training programme (maximum score: 5). This result is consistent with those of previous studies showing that the role of the teaching staff is of significant importance in overseas programmes in Japan. Although both detailed results of the respondents are close to the mean of the total, there are some differences between male and female students and between students with and without overseas experience. According to the results of gender differences, the group of female students (N=56) was associated with a preference for joining an overseas programme with teaching staff (M=4.080(SD=0.7362)). In comparison, the group of male students (N=35) had a lower score (M=3.8273(SD=0.7488)). It is necessary to test this further to verify the effect of gender differences on the results. The group of students without any overseas experience (N=66) was associated with a preference for joining an overseas programme with teaching staff (M=4.2273(SD0.2362)). In comparison, the group of students with overseas experience (N=25) had a slightly lower score (M=3.720(SD=0.9216)). These results imply that female students prefer having teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes in comparison with male students. Meanwhile, students without overseas experience had a greater tendency to reply to teaching staff in overseas programmes than did students with overseas experience (Table 2). Therefore, we focus on the quantitative analysis of gender differences and overseas experience to further test our hypotheses in the next paragraph.

Table 2: Summary of Statistical Result of Analysis (By abroad experience and gender)

	Gender		Abroad Experience		Total:
	Male	Female	No	Yes	
Count	35	56	66	25	91
Mean	3.8273	4.0800	4.2273	3.7200	4.0879
Standard derivation	0.7488	0.7362	0.2362	0.9216	0.4341
Variance	0.8653	0.8580	0.4860	0.9600	0.6589

To test the hypothesis that students' preferences for participating in overseas programmes with teaching staff vary significantly between gender, as well as among students with and

without any overseas experience, an independent sample t-test was performed to examine the differences in means. The two-sample t-test is among the most used hypothesis tests and is applied to determine whether the average difference between two groups is statistically significant or merely a result of random chance. A one-tailed test is a statistical method where the critical area of a distribution is limited to one side, either greater than or less than a certain value, but not both. If the sample being tested falls within this one-sided critical area, the alternative hypothesis is accepted instead of the null hypothesis. Due to unequal sample sizes and variance in the two sample groups, the analytical tool employed for data analysis is the t-test Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variance in Excel (Welch's t-test). Based on the preliminary results above, the two hypotheses are re-stated below, indicating the null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis for further analysis purposes.

H1-R: Female students have a higher degree of preference for teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes compared with male students.

Null Hypothesis:

H1-Ra (Female students) $\leq$ H1-Rb (Male students)

Female students have a lower degree or no difference in preference for having teaching staff companion during overseas training compared to male students.

Alternative Hypothesis:

H1-Ra (Female students) $>$ H1-Rb (Male students)

Female students have a higher degree of preference for having teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes than male students.

H2: Students without overseas experience have a higher degree of preference for teaching staff companions during an overseas training programmes compared with students with overseas experience.

Null Hypothesis:

H2a (Without experience abroad) $\leq$ H2b (With experience abroad)

Students without overseas experience have a lower degree or no difference in preference for teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes compared to students with overseas experience.

Alternative Hypothesis:

H2a (Without experience abroad) $>$ H2b (With experience abroad)

Students without overseas experience have a higher degree of preference for teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes compared with students with overseas experience.

Regarding the test result of Hypothesis 1-R, the one-tail probability (0.052) denoted as $P(T \leq t)$ provides the likelihood of observing a t-Statistic value (1.64572) that is not larger in absolute

value than the critical t-value for one-tail (1.66543). Because the t-Statistic value does not fall within the rejection area, we cannot reject the null hypothesis, and the alternative hypothesis is not supported in Hypothesis 1-R. We conclude that female students have a significantly higher degree of preference for teaching staff companion during overseas training programmes compared with male students, which is not supported by the evidence.

Conversely, regarding the test result of Hypothesis 2, the one-tail probability (0.01177), denoted as $P(T \leq t)$, indicates the probability of observing a t-Statistic value (2.37127) that is larger in absolute value than the critical t-value for one-tail (1.69092). Because the t-Statistic value falls within the rejection area, we reject the null hypothesis, and the alternative hypothesis is supported in Hypothesis 2. We conclude that students without overseas experience have a significantly higher degree of preference for teaching staff companions during overseas training programmes than students with overseas experience, which is supported by the evidence (Table 3).

Table 3: Results of t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 2	
	Female	Male	Never	Got
Mean	4.19643	3.91429	4.22727	3.72000
Variance	0.66981	0.61008	0.48601	0.96000
Observations	56	35	66	25
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		0	
Df	75		34	
t Stat	1.64572		2.37127	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.05200		0.01177	
t Critical one-tail	1.66543		1.69092	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.10401		0.02353	
t Critical two-tail	1.99210		2.03224	

CONCLUSION

The above discussions and data analysis demonstrate the importance of teaching staff accompanying students joining overseas programmes, which cannot be ignored. This study provides important insights for Japanese universities seeking to train more global talent. Although participation in short-term overseas programmes is not the only option among the numerous training methods for developing students' global mindsets, students can make their own observations and experience directly through a wide variety of customised trips that cannot be taught in the classroom. For Japanese students with insufficient English language proficiency or a lack of overseas experience who hesitate to make the first move, relevant support from the university is imperative. A variety of overseas programmes provide different types of training for various lengths of time. Short-term overseas programmes can be considered the first step for students who do not have enough confidence to travel abroad. Several issues must be addressed to promote such programmes in the future.

Financial Burden

One obstacle for students in joining overseas programmes is financial issues. Travelling abroad can become expensive; therefore, sponsors or any financial assistance from the university is important to relieve financial burdens. Therefore, to attract more students to participate in overseas programmes without hesitation, universities must secure funding and streamline the application process for financial assistance. As highlighted in the above discussion, universities must also receive a certain budget for facilitating teaching staff to join overseas programmes to provide students with significant support.

Unit of Credit

Currently, participation in overseas training is not a prerequisite in most Japanese universities. To promote the importance of developing a global mindset, the curriculum for incorporating overseas training as a subject capable of obtaining a unit of credit must be reviewed. It is also necessary to enhance the benefits of joining student-exchange programmes, such as credit exchanges with overseas universities.

Teaching Staff Own Experience and Knowledge

Teaching staff have many roles to play when providing a safe and effective learning environment overseas. This ranges from preparing and negotiating with students to directly instructing them; however, conducting these roles also helps teachers hone their ability to respond to globalisation. To foster the development of students capable of responding to globalisation, teaching staff may gain an experiential understanding of the significance of globalisation in nursing, for example. This helps them realise the need to broaden their international perspectives. Through these experiences, teaching instructors can share a desire to improve their language skills as a tool to convey their ideas as they study and teach the same discipline to students.

Through our data analysis, clear evidence was provided to support the argument that students prefer to have a teaching staff companion when they join overseas programmes. While the results of hypotheses testing have provided significant insights into gender differences and the influence of students' overseas experiences on their preference for accompanying teaching staff, this study only targeted students at one university and may not be generalisable. Therefore, further research is necessary, including an increase in sample size and data from other universities.

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