

*On Campus Support and Satisfaction of International Students:
A Review of Japanese Literature*

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Abstract

Japanese universities are popular destinations for international students. A lot of efforts have been made to provide supporting services and activities to international students such as Japanese classes, counseling and consultation, job hunting and career education, exchange events, summer school, culture experience tours etc. These activities bring satisfaction to international students, which is contributed indirectly as a pulling factor for attracting international students into Japan. However, little has been known about the approaches used by different universities for supporting international students as not many reports are published in English regarding this topic. This study investigates the variety of on campus supporting services and activities provided to international students in Japanese universities and satisfaction of international students as recipients of these services. The literature for review was mainly collected from Japanese sources using Google Scholar. Data was reviewed qualitatively by comparative analysis, comparing approaches applied by different universities with regards to the elements of 300,000 international students plan and other pull factors. The results showed specific approaches, results in providing campus supporting services by different institutions. The results also imply obstacles and potential solutions to the Japanese universities to attract international students.

Keywords: Study in Japan, International Student, On Campus Support, Pull Factors, Satisfaction

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Introduction

Until before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the number of international students studying in Japan, especially students who come from Asia, has increased drastically, making it one of the top host countries in the world. In 2021, Japan was ranked the 8th top host country of international students, with 218,783 students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate and non-degree courses at its higher education institutions (HEIs) (IIE, 2021). As the host of international students, the HEIs in Japan have put a huge number of efforts to prepare the infrastructure, human resources, and managerial system for better supporting international students to enjoy their study in Japan. The international students' policies of Japan are strongly government-driven (Lassegard, 2016) with approval and implementation of national-scale programs. To name a few, it should mention the "Plan for 300,000 international students" to be achieved in 2020, considered as a part of a global strategy for increasing global competitiveness of Japan and cultivating global human resources of domestic students. The Global 30 is also a major government project aims to internationalize higher education of Japan, investing in a selected 13 member universities to take the lead. This project was succeeded by the Top Global University project since 2014, supporting 37 leading universities to reforms for becoming the world and national leaders in education and research (Takagi, 2016; Tran & Jin, 2021). The reforms made by these flag-ship universities could be seen as lessons to the other universities to plan their campus internationalization.

As specified by the Plan for 300,000 international students, the globalization of Japanese universities could be realized by promoting study in Japan by activities such as Japan study fairs abroad or establishing foreign offices. Then comes the facilitation of the recruitment process such as promoting admission by EJU, facilitate procedures for acceptance and arrival of students. The campus then to be transformed for a global image with more foreign staff and English-tough courses. Then providing supportive environment to support campus life of international students. Finally, the international students can get employment in Japan as the final products of higher education. For the concepts, we simplified the MEXT's outline into the conceptual framework in Figure 1 (MEXT, 2008).

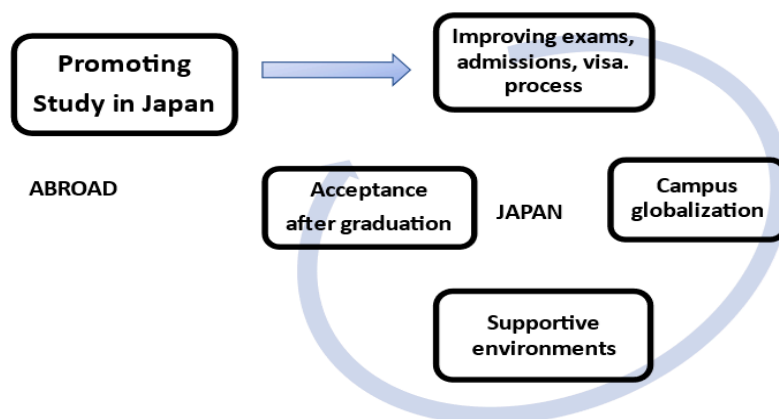


Figure 1: Attracting international students according to the Plan for 300,000 international students (drawn and simplified by the authors)

It was reported that for maintaining competitiveness, universities should deliver their services very well for satisfying their students, as the satisfied students will help to attract more potential students to the respective university (Arambewela & Hall, 1994). Students' satisfaction may come not only from academic achievements, but also from how they could enjoy the campus life apart from their study. It was reported that satisfaction of campus life

and the studying abroad outcome may be strongly related to the level of support the international students received. Moreover, in case of international students who have different cultural background, their satisfaction is not only depends on how good the university's services are provided, but also depends on how they adjust to the new environment (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2017). Therefore, supportive environments may not mean merely delivering services, but it also includes helping international to adjust well to the settings.

In our previous study, we investigated the pull factors that attract international students to Japan (Tran & Jin, 2021). There is still little understanding about the connection between the support services provided to international students and the pull factors that make international students to choose a particular university in Japan. In this paper, we pay attention on the supportive environments to international students in Japan as specified in Figure 1. In this context, the supportive environments mean the service systems and initiatives of a particular HEI to provide support to international students during their campus life. In Figure 2, we suggested a conceptual framework that we could use to systematically look for evidence from the available literature. By looking at the evidence from different perspectives, we may understand more about the challenges, potential solutions, and implications for better providing services for international students.

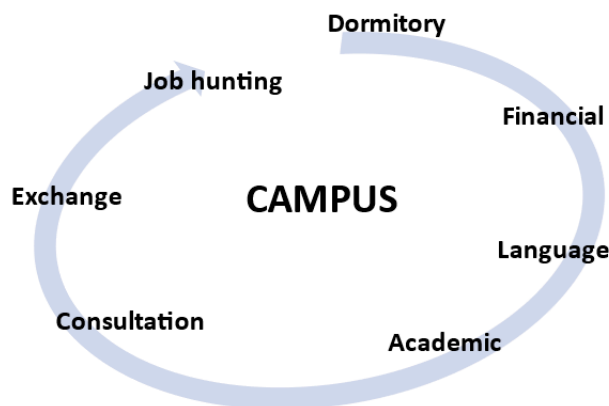


Figure 2: On campus support for international students (proposed by the authors)

Method

We investigated the facts related to on campus support to international students from available literature. The literature search was conducted by Google Scholar as well as by other search engines. The search ranged mainly from 2000 to present. We did a literature review from documents, publications and reports published in Japanese language by Japan's public institutions, research institutions as well as public media, new articles, study abroad forums and other internet sources. We found a huge number of papers by the keywords selected. Then we selected the papers that have full text that met our needs.

Results

Services provided to international students vary by every site, but they may share some common features for being a Japanese university. A study conducted at Kanazawa University on the satisfaction of international graduate students was shown that regarding academic and research life, 48% answered "satisfied", while 11% of the respondents answered, "somewhat dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied". Regarding the international student service, 41% choose

"satisfied". Some respondents reflected that it was difficult to receive services such as information, events, and dormitory for international students. When talking about "international student services" some students may think about something more general, such as closeness of the relationship with the academic advisor (Kishida, 2004).

Dormitory

Dormitory is the first place that a university could offer to newly enrolled international students, who have little experience of Japan. Basically, most of the universities provide some limited number of dormitory rooms for arriving international students. Dormitories could be international student-only, female-only, or mixed types. Based on room availability, students may be allowed to stay only for the first year or longer. Living in dormitory offers some advantages such as cost-effectiveness and convenience. Although ensuring dormitory for international students has long been an issue, little has been reported about the situation.

Shared house was one of the schemes aiming to increase cross-cultural experience among international and Japanese students in a mixed type of dormitory. Okayama University, a national university placed among the Top Global Universities group, operates share house dormitory since 2016 (Uzuka et al., 2018). The lead role played by Japanese students in daily problem solving. In addition to giving detailed guidance and advice, the university's vision to utilize dormitories as educational resources was emphasized with an aim to foster Japanese students for the new role. In this environment, international students grow from a resident to a sense of autonomy, gain understanding of Japan, Japanese culture, and cross-culturalism.

Resident Assistant (RA) system is another scheme utilized for promoting autonomy of students living in dormitory. At Ritsmeikan APU, a private university with over 3000 international students, the international house host about a half of the international students, while a major of the residents are first year student. For RA system, experienced students are recruited, trained for helping to manage dormitory. In 2018, 83% respondents reported that they could deepen their multicultural understanding, had friends from over five 5 countries, and 90% satisfied of dormitory (Tsuji, 2000). In Shizuoka University, a national university, international students appraised the advantages of living in International House such as having furniture, can move in before admission, can cook, and has a manager. However, it was reported that very few students choose living in a shared unit with multiple people, as long as single rooms are available (Matsuda, 2021). Regarding satisfaction about living in dormitory, a report from Konan University, a private university showed 48% "satisfied", 23% "very satisfied", in total 71%. However, this satisfaction rate was lower than staying in homestay (T. Harada, 2012).

Providing on campus ethnic food is also considered a part of the services. There are about 10,000 Islamic international students, mainly come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Turkey (JASSO, 2019), who have specific needs in terms of foods and praying. It was reported about efforts put in providing halal foods, as well as arranging the time and place for praying as part of the efforts to enhance the interaction with Muslim students at Yamaguchi university (Nakano & Tanaka, 2017). Since 2014, Doshisha University as well as the other Top Global Universities were reported to start introducing halal foods in the COOP (Abe, 2019). However, in some instances, it seemed that for economic reasons, religious reasons, self-catering and alternate cooking are the most common among international students, as observed at Shizuoka university (Matsuda, 2021).

Scholarship

From economic perspective, for students in neighboring countries, study in Japan is becoming more and more affordable while domestic education becomes more expensive, which may drive more students to choose study in Japan. In near past, high living cost is the biggest challenge of self-funded students in Japan (Fujii & Masami, 2003). However, recently, a smaller number of international students perceived a high living cost, and economic situation of international students seems improved, as number of international students need counseling on financial problems is declining. A study conducted at Okayama university in 17 years has shown that among 465 cases who came for consultation, 255 international students had complained about having financial problems, while 193 of them complained of constant living difficulties such as admission fee exemption, tuition exemption, and scholarship (Oka, 2018).

In accepting international students, the scholarship system plays a major role as part of the strategy. Japan is well known for its generous variety scholarship for international students (JASSO, 2022). Besides the famous MEXT-type scholarship (Huang, 2016), international students could apply for many public-funded scholarship schemes such as JDS (for young officials from developing countries), JICA (under various schemes), Japan-Korean scholarship (for Korean students in science), JSPS (for Ph.D. or postdoctoral study), EPA (for nurses from Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam) etc. Basically, only a few scholarships, such as MEXT, cover full costs of study; most aim to cover just a portion of the student's living expenses and/or tuition fees. Furthermore, while some scholarships scholarship can be applied before actual arrival in Japan, most of the scholarship are open for application only after the students being enrolled. As most international students come to Japan as self-funded students, the private organization scholarships and on-campus scholarships are very important. With government's policy, number of international students received scholarships and covered their expenses with scholarships increased, and the number of respondents claimed about "I had difficulty finding a good place to live" decreased (Y. Sato, 2010). Some localities implement policy of giving scholarship to students for regional revitalization (Funyu & Watanabe, 2019). Although improvement, there are some criticisms about the system of scholarships for self-funded international students has not changed radically since the 80'. This delay in reforms may put Japan at a disadvantage in the competition for human resources (Zhu & Takahashi, 2016). The status of receiving scholarship also influence the satisfaction of students. It was reported that students who had made efforts to apply for scholarship but could not get it could experience dissatisfaction and some sense of injustice (Maki, 2006).

Tuition exemption system is another support scheme for international students in Japan, while most of whom are self-funded students from Asia, who are qualified for a full or a half tuition exemption depending on their income status (Yasue, 2018). In case of public university, the tuition in Japan is relatively high at about US\$5000 (Huang, 2016), but the self-funded international students usually can get a half of the tuition fee exempted, which is in some case is still being perceived high for some students from abroad who may have intention to go to Japan (Morita, 2020). A survey revealed that Bulgarian students hope to get MEXT scholarship for study in Japan, but they may not go self-funded to Japan (Tran & Marinova, 2020).

Japanese Language Education

Interest in learning Japanese is increasing over the world. International students are often motivated to learn Japanese priorly to their actual arrival in Japan. A study in university students in China had specified some motivation factors for learning Japanese such as “for study in Japan, interesting in language learning, for job hunting, for self-esteem, Japanese pop culture, knowing about Japan” (Guo & Quan, 2006). However, students studying Japanese abroad often face difficulties in later stage, which eventually decreased motivation. In a study in Ukraine, students shown various patterns of motivation in learning Japanese including for study or employment in Japan which decreased over the time (Onishi, 2010). Similarly, a study in Thailand, data have shown some learners have difficulty catching up with Japanese, and even if they have a high motivation to learn at the beginning, their enthusiasm may decrease. In addition, there are some learners whose motivation to learn decreases as the learning period becomes longer (Consatler, 2021).

After arrival in Japan, basically, most of international students in Japan enjoy some sort of Japanese language courses provided free-of-charge by the host university. General Japanese language class are being provided at all levels of proficiency, from beginner class to advanced class (Hashimoto, 2017), in addition to some special purpose classes such as kanji, medical Japanese, business Japanese, Japanese for job hunting. Besides general Japanese courses, the intensive Japanese is being provided in a preparatory course to students who expected to enroll in a degree course. Motivation for studying Japanese after arrival is usually high, even for students who enrolled in English-tough programs or graduate students who can use English for doing research at laboratory. A review of 30 papers has shown that although these students may not need to study Japanese, they still want to study Japanese (Takahashi & Hirayama, 2014). At more advanced level, it was reported that Academic Japanese using task-based language teaching (TBLT), or classes for accomplishing the tasks of writing reports and giving presentations in Japanese were given in Japanese courses for international students in the first year of the undergraduate program (Okuyama, 2020).

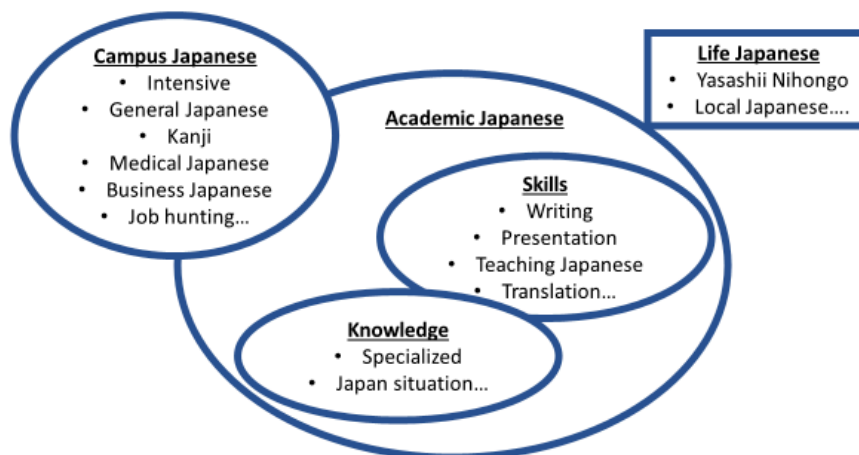


Figure 3: Japanese language education for international students

Sometimes, students also enjoy Japanese classes tough by teachers or organizations outside campus, or classes using adapted materials for disaster prevention such as simple Japanese (yasashii nihongo), which was thrived as a universal language during disasters after Kobe earthquake 1995 (Sugiyama, 2019). In local settings, to help international students to integrate with local life, it was reported that local Japanese learning materials for international students in Sendai city at A1/A2 level was used to help them become familiar

with Sendai, and to have a more active life (Hotta & Sugaya, 2017). Figure 3 summarizes the types of Japanese courses or learning contents that international students can join during their time in Japan inside or outside the campus, based on the concept by Horii (Horii, 2002).

Besides providing Japanese classes, autonomous learning is encouraged at some sites. An example is the International Student Support System at Waseda University, which aims to create a personal learning environment in which all international students can realize autonomous Japanese learning by self-accessing Japanese language learning resources. The International Student Support System is challenging to open up new learning opportunities for international students outside the classroom (Kuroda, 2012).

Academic Support and Tutor System

Usually, academic supervisors are responsible for the international students during their graduate study. In case of undergraduate students, this responsibility could be heard by the faculty head. At some universities, international students are assigned in pairs with Japanese students for group activities. It was found that this initiative, which started with the improvement of the Japanese language ability of international students, has had a positive effect on Japanese students from the perspective of international understanding (Qiu, 2020).

In some cases, tutor system is used to facilitate the job of the academic supervisor as well as to promote cross cultural mindset of the students. Ideally, one of the reasons for the existence of the tutor / international student system is to expand opportunities for communication with other students. And it can be of great benefit to both international students and tutors. Specifically, international students will be able to meet more Japanese people through tutors, and Japanese people will also be able to make more international friends with her. In some cases, especially if the international student does not speak Japanese, the tutor's presence is invaluable, as the tutor is the only Japanese acquaintance to the international students. Tutor activities include "cross-cultural understanding and building relationships", "promotion of interest in language", and "approach to self-study", "reflection on teaching methods" (Tanaka & Wataru, 2019). Tutors are Japanese students assigned to support international students in their daily lives in Japan in tasks such as filling out paperwork, guiding on campus, help with housing decisions, and giving advice and explanations when needed. Tutors also help international students with their academic tasks such as practicing Japanese, doing homework, and preparing for tests and presentations. In a study about the relationship between tutors and international students at Akita University, some international student may show a positive or a negative reaction regardless of their language ability. This showed that achieving human relationship is not so easy, even with high language skills, interaction, and good intentions. The relationship between tutors and international students does not always seem to be good. Understanding each other and gaining insights into other cultures needs a mutual effort. It can be achieved with proper attitude and by adapting well to the other party with compassion. Sometimes it is difficult to develop such a relationship into a natural friendship (Ioana, 2019).

Consultation and Counseling

University students in Japan, as anywhere in the world, face many challenges during their campus life, including stress. Studies had shown that factors related to acculturative stress among Asian international students are being female, stay length 2-3 years in Japan, studying in vocational school, self-funded student, low Japanese proficiency (Park, 2012), age (Nguyen et al., 2019). How international students can cope with stress during their studying

abroad has been in the focus of many studies. In Japan, consultation and counseling services for international students are part of the internationalization, which is considered an important task of the university. At Hokkaido university, the counseling service is provided by a special unit – the Institute for International Collaboration (IIC), including individual counseling, crisis services, group work, and psychoeducational programs to international students and scholars. It also provides consultation and training for the faculty and staff to support international students. Most frequent issues raised in individual counseling were psychological, mental health, academic career, interpersonal problems (Ishii, 2019). Most of the universities provide similar services to international students and supporting staff.

Since 2020, university students in Japan, including international students are exposed to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic (Kondo, 2020). With unprecedented transformation of higher education, we have observed international students to become prone to the impacts of the pandemic in terms of physical and mental health (Chen et al., 2021). A study has shown that international students are worrying about their career (advancement / employment), education (cannot keep up with online classes, etc.), lack of communication with friends and seniors, shortage of income (no money), poor physical and mental conditions, can't visit home country temporarily (Ozaki & Kuno, 2021). So far, institutions and organizations in Japan have designed and implemented numerous schemes for supporting international students in Japan to cope with COVID-19, including providing daily life support, consultation, information (Nishiura, 2021). It has been reported that international students need more life skills and enhancing the activities experience of international students studying in Japan would lead to improved life skills (Chen et al., 2021). During the pandemic, international students experience impacts on their study and daily life, and therefore adjusted their social network into online (Murata, 2022). Universities also adapt to this situation and provide online, phone, e-mail consultation services during the lockdown periods. The impacts of the pandemic on counseling and communication with international students may urge for new measures for crisis situation (Nishiura, 2021). Stress Coping Seminar was an initiative model for supporting international students to strengthen their mental health status and increasing their motivation in the prolonged pandemic period. These seminars were designed for students to learn simple skills that could help them to cope with various stresses. These seminars are potentially to be an effective strategy, in addition to individual counseling and other activities, to improving stress resilience of international students for long term (Inosaki et al., 2022).

Exchange Activities and Culture Experience

In recent years, many students have become attracted to Japanese culture and decided to study abroad in Japan. Many international students are interested in Japanese subcultures such as anime, manga and cosplay, they are also interested in traditional cultural properties such as tea ceremonies and calligraphy, and other cultural properties such as Japanese architecture (Baba, 2021). People study Japanese because they are interested in manga, anime, J-Pop, history, literature, culture, sightseeing (Japan Foundation, 2012). Among international students who already enrolled, Japan has an image of easy life, anime, Sakura, beautiful house, politeness, cuteness (Yang & Yasuhisa, 2019). In order to meet the needs of international students in experiencing Japanese culture, universities provide various services such as cultural tour, industrial tour, disaster prevention tour, by which students can visit famous sites, temples, shrines, factories, museums, hot springs, disaster centers at no fee. These tours also create a chance for multicultural exchange among international students and sometimes with Japanese students. Students reported to learn a lot from these cultural tours

and the tours can trigger their motivation to learn about Japanese culture (Tran & Jin, 2019). For conducting events such as kimono festival, tea ceremony, calligraphy, it needs to establish volunteer groups with necessary know-how for conducting the events (Kumai, 2021).

Countryside of Japan are rich of nature and tradition but need human resources for revitalization. Studies have shown that foreign residents enjoy more exchange activities, human relations, and Japanese learning in rural areas, however there are also inconveniences such as transportation (Fukada, 2019). Recently in countryside, Japanese people became more active in leaning diversified foreign languages and cultures, while providing community support to foreigners in Japanese language, culture exchange, disaster, job hunting (Tran & Matsuura, 2020). Exchange activities with local people such as homestay is highly appreciated by international students. Short-term students tend to be more eager in experiencing Japanese culture. It was reported that 86% short-term foreign students hosted by Konan university satisfied with homestay, evaluated their homestay as an opportunity to learn intercultural understanding and intercultural adaptation and participate in a warm and kind family environment, to communicate in Japanese and to understand culture (N. Harada, 2012). A report from short term Eastern Europe international students has shown that Japanese students may not be interested in foreigners, but their attitude changed afterwards. Japanese people seem reluctant to interact with foreigners but become very kind to foreigners when they are in trouble (An, 2018).

During COVID-19 pandemic, many universities conducted international exchange activities online. However, these events are mainly targeting students joining online study abroad programs with foreign university partners. Involving international students in online exchange events seems still a challenging task.

Job Hunting Support

The need of international students about for job hunting is on an increasing trend. In 2017, 63.6% of international students wanted an employment in Japan, but only 30.1% found job (JASSO 2017). Various measures are being implemented to support international students to find employment in Japan. Since 2016, the program for promoting employment of international students has been implemented in 12 universities, aiming at increasing the employment rate of international students in Japan from the current 30% to 50% (MEXT, 2017).

Business Japanese class is considered as an important part of job-hunting support (Horii, 2013), as it was introduced in "Asia Human Resources Fund" in 2007 and in "300,000 Plan" in 2008 to promote the employment in Japan needs to be revised (Kame 2019). According to a survey, international students want to learn about honorifics, knowledge about business operations and practical things for job hunting (Fukutomi & Sato, 2019). Some universities provide comprehensive career program support as a package to international students from the 1st year to the last academic year, including business Japanese courses, business and industry know-how courses, guidance sessions, internship, on campus job fair, a typical example of such a program is the program of Ritsumeikan APU (T. Sato et al., 2014). For job hunting in Japan, the highest hurdle seems to be the Japanese proficiency needed for getting an employment, regardless of the technical skills students may possess. Job hunting support program needs to start intervention as early as possible. In Figure 4, we propose a framework for job hunting support that already implemented fully or partly by many universities. This

support continues from the first to the last academic year and will cover all language, communication, business skills as well as job hunting skills and information needed.

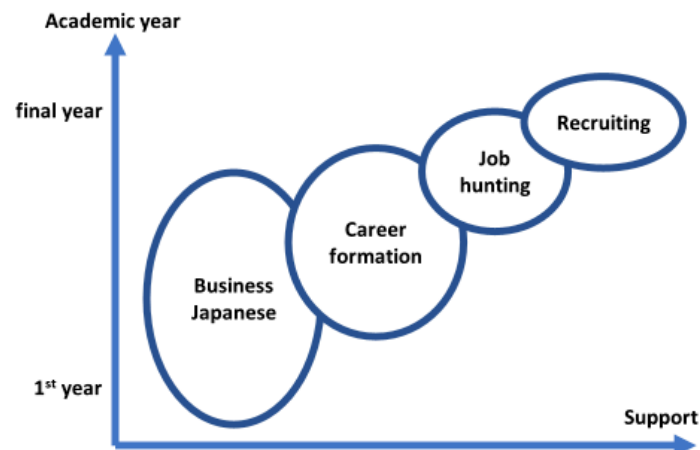


Figure 4: Job hunting support framework (drawn by the authors)

Previous studies reported some of the challenges that international students may face when working at Japanese companies such as gaps in cross-cultural understanding, discomfort when working for a Japanese company, dissatisfaction with complicated recruitment process, not considering the previous experience, abilities and job expertise (Moriya, 2012). For job hunting, social support from local communities to international students has become an important factor for promoting job-seeking intention of international students. Studies have shown that who succeeded in employment had won the social support and they were able to hunt job similarly as Japanese students (Fujimoto et al., 2014). There is an increasing trend of job hunting in Japan 35% of the respondents have found job in Japan in 2017 compared to 25.2% in 2010. However, most of the graduated students have found job in metropolitan areas. This fact shows a need for supporting employment at rural areas to international students.

Students also have a choice to work for a Japanese company at their home country. A boom of Japan investment and Japan-owned companies has led to higher chance for employing student-returnees with higher salaries (Hirasawa, 2019). The open economic market in foreign countries brings better economic conditions for returnees.

Conclusion

The quality of education in Japan is not only including the high level of training and research at the campus but it also encompasses the on campus supporting services. Enormous efforts have been made to provide supporting services and activities to international students such as Japanese classes, counseling and consultation, job hunting and career education, exchange events, summer school, culture experience tours etc. These activities bring satisfaction to international students, which is contributed indirectly as a pulling factor for attracting international students into Japan. Our findings include a review of approaches and cases used by different universities for supporting international students. We looked at the variety of on campus supporting services and activities provided to international students in Japanese universities, satisfaction of international students as recipients of these services, as well as gaps, difficulties and challenges that Japanese universities need to consider in the future in order to provide better supporting services to international students in Japan.

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