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Author(s)	Khanna, Varun
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平成 27 年度学部学生による自主研究奨励事業研究成果報告書

ふりがな 氏 名	ばるん かなな Varun Khanna	学部 学科	人間科学部 人間科学コ ース	学年	3 年
ふりがな 共 同 研究者名		学部 学科		学年	年
					年
アドバイザー教員 氏名	山本 ベバリーアン	所属	人間科学研究科		
研究課題名	Internationalization of universities: Exploring ‘job satisfaction’ of international academics in Japan				
研究成果の概要	研究目的、研究計画、研究方法、研究経過、研究成果等について記述すること。必要に応じて用紙を追加してもよい。				

### **Research Aim**

Attracting and retaining international academics to work in Japanese universities is a key challenge for Japan. Currently, around 4% of Japanese faculty is international, a figure that is still relatively low when compared with leading research universities in other countries with a competitive higher education sector, such as the United Kingdom and United States. Nevertheless, the internationalization agenda of the Japanese government and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has set targets for the recruitment of foreign faculty in order to compete in global rankings and the knowledge society.

In order for the leading research universities to recruit and retain an international professoriate in today's global climate, it is imperative that we understand the needs, expectations and factors that affect job satisfaction level for this global mobile workforce. In light of this, our research has attempted to explore the characteristics of the international academic labour market already working in Japan, focusing particularly on the seven former imperial universities to map emerging patterns in 'job satisfaction'.

### **Research Plan**

While there has been much research on the satisfaction and experience of foreign students, we know little of how foreign academics perceive and navigate their time at Japan's universities. To explore the characteristics of the academic labour market from the perspective of international academics, we have focused on the leading national universities which we define here as the seven former imperial universities. These were chosen as we can expect these universities to be most likely able to attract the top academic talent, at the same time they may have trouble retaining this talent in a highly competitive environment.

An analysis of the satisfaction and experiences of foreign faculty should be able to highlight different dimensions of respondents' experiences and show the way that the different components interact with each other. Some of these components are motivation(s) to come to Japan, social mobility, peer relationships, type of contracts and incentives, whether the academics see Japan as 'home' or a 'stepping stone'. Given the lack of empirical research that directly examines the attitudes and perceptions of international academics in Japan (rather than simply counts the numbers of foreign faculty at Japanese universities), findings of this research project may make a contribution to contemporary discourse on the internationalization of higher education in Japan, and more broadly, to questions of the impact of globalization and internationalization on the knowledge society.

Detailed analysis and discussion of the our findings from the qualitative data we have collected will be submitted, at a later stage, for possible publication to suitable peer reviewed journals, international and local academic conferences, and general media publications.

## **Methodology**

In order to get in-depth data, we took a qualitative approach. We gathered data using a semi-structured interview methodology, applying a phenomenological approach. Drawing on already established networks, we contacted key international academics or administrative staff at Japan's national seven universities. From these contacts, we were able to make contact with 22 international academics at seven national universities – Hokkaido University, Tohoku University, University of Tokyo, Nagoya University, Kyoto University, Osaka University and Kyushu University - who were willing to be interviewed. Due to time and budgetary limitations, two interviews at Tohoku University were conducted on Skype. The rest were conducted face-to-face. The interviews lasted anywhere between twenty six minutes to a hundred and twenty five minutes, and were taped. Some, but not all the data has been transcribed.

Among the twenty-two academics were six professors, nine associate professors, three lecturers and four assistant professors from both the arts and science faculties. The small sample size and lack of scholarly data in this area limits the scope of this research to an exploratory study so it does not have the ability to be an exhaustive account. The narratives of these academics represent constructions of their identity at a Japanese national university, their goals and intentions, the connection of events in their academic professional life that is often connected to their personal life and the way they make sense of broader social changes like university internationalization. As we now interpret and analyze interview data from twenty two academics, we aim to provide a sense of personal context woven into broader discussions of patterns and changes occurring in the top national universities in Japan.

## **Summary of Results**

**Characteristics of the respondents** (Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for a table and charts that provides an overview of the participant data)

We interviewed 22 academics at different stages of their academic career. Over sixty percent of our participants had received some form of education at a Japanese university. In agreement with the existing literature, our findings suggest that most international academics who teach in Japan already have some kind of a relationship with the country- they might have a Japanese spouse, an interest in Japanese studies or in a science field where Japan excels. Over half of these academics found their current job through a network or pre-existing connection with a supervisor or senior faculty member of a Japanese university.

Contrary to the view given in some of the literature, over half our respondents were tenured or on a tenure track and expected to be tenured in the near future. It is noteworthy, that some of these academics with tenure did not necessarily want to stay in Japan. Major reasons for wanting to leave were family. For some, schooling in Japan was considered an issue. Some were happy with their children attending a Japanese or international elementary

school, but felt that it was better to go back home for the higher levels of schooling. Some also mentioned the high cost of sending children to international school or the lack of options in their area for this type of schooling.

On the other hand, for some academics, family was the reason they were here. In this case, the spouse was usually Japanese and it was seen a right or appropriate that the children were schooled here. An additional attraction of staying in Japan was usually linked to the academic's field of research. So those who saw they could further their research by staying expressed a desire to be here over the long term.

One associate professor mentioned that the bureaucracy that he experienced was an impediment to staying as he could not freely conduct his research. Bureaucracy at national universities that tends to be overly 'bureaucratic' was a clear example of a frustration for almost all participants. In addition to that, lack of transparency in the general workings of the university, the work contract, job requirements, salary and unclear career path clearly emerged as a major negative that affected the overall experience of the international academics.

Japanese language ability, or lack of it, has been mentioned in the literature as a cause of '*dejimaization*' or the isolation of foreign staff and also as a barrier to engaging in governance in the form of committee work. An academic's level of Japanese can influence the term of the contract and their position at the university. In our study, respondents with a high level of Japanese language ability were more likely to have a tenured or a tenure-track position. They experienced a more positive career trajectory. Respondents with less Japanese proficiency reported more frustration about their situation. They were often on short-term contracts without job security. Without sufficient Japanese language proficiency it was harder to function on committee or to take more mainstream roles. Surprisingly few committees even for international programs are run in English.

In one university, academics involved in former Global 30 programs had started having their own regular meetings to share ideas and experiences in English that could then be fed back to the wider university through those members with Japanese. There was a high level of satisfaction with this body. The value that universities give to international professors hired on short term contracts is questionable. Academics, even those who are in a senior position in the academic hierarchy might not be encouraged or expected to carry out scholarly research. Such academics might only be valued as educators who can provide teaching in English-medium courses. A few professors hired on teaching only, short-term contract based positions expressed concerns about job security, and that even though they were not encouraged to carry out research, for promotions within the university and for career-advancement elsewhere, research output is a major competitive and selecting factor. These academics generally reported lower levels of satisfaction with their work roles and higher levels of anxiety about the future. However, one female associate professor we talked to was quite happy with the teaching only position, for the time being, so that she could

maintain a good work-life balance.

Overall, most academics at these seven national universities were positive about their experience and expressed satisfaction with their position. For most, the positives outweighed the negatives. Some were happy with the support available for their research field in Japan; others expressed satisfaction with the academic freedom and autonomy. In over three-quarters of cases where the international academic was hired for both a teaching and research position, and was research active, they were satisfied with basic research grants from the university and other research funding like *kakenhi* (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research). The position of Japan as a growing knowledge society, a safe and peaceful country added to the satisfaction level of many academics.

### Conclusion

We know from this study that the situation of international academics in the top tier national universities may be better than painted in the limited literature that is out there. There is scope for improvement to make the attraction and retention ability of the universities stronger. These areas are related to tenure (social mobility and job security). For international academics who want to focus on research there are frustrations to do with limited or no time allotted for carrying out research activities so that piles up on top of teaching load and paperwork. Moreover, Japan is currently not attracting those without previous links to the country.

Hiring on short-term positions is reported as common in the literature, but our study found many foreign academic staff on tenure tracks or in tenured positions. Those who were on short-term contracts, especially if they were non-renewable, were in unstable positions and worried about their future. They tended to feel underutilized. This may not be a productive use of these academics.

Various other upsides and downsides can be discussed in detailed analysis of participant interaction, however, that is beyond the scope of this short summary. As we use pre-existing networks and a snowballing technique, this small study is limited in mapping the number of variations in the field. We have focused only on the top universities and the situation in the second and third tier universities due to less freedom, lack of research money and status, might be very different. As scholars at a top national university, the questions we have asked reflect our bias in understanding what we see as larger social phenomenon of internationalization within the contexts of higher education in Japan.