Globalisation, Societies and Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cgse20

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‘Inward-looking youth’ as scapegoats for Japan’s failure to secure and cultivate ‘global human resources’

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Published online: 17 Oct 2014.

To cite this article: Chris Burgess (2014): To globalise or not to globalise? ‘Inward-looking youth’ as scapegoats for Japan’s failure to secure and cultivate ‘global human resources’, Globalisation, Societies and Education, DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2014.966805

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.966805

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To globalise or not to globalise? ‘Inward-looking youth’ as scapegoats for Japan’s failure to secure and cultivate ‘global human resources’

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(Received 14 March 2013; accepted 12 September 2014)

In Japan in recent years, there has been much discussion of the need for global human resources alongside criticism of Japanese youth as having an ‘inward-looking’ (uchimuki) orientation. Drawing out the contradictions apparent in a youth apparently reluctant to leave Japan and companies, universities and government seemingly desperate to nurture and attract global talent, this paper frames the uchimuki discourse as a cover for an insular Japan and its failure to attract and foster ‘global human resources’. As such, the two discourses shed a great deal of light on Japan’s complex relationship with globalisation.

Keywords: inward-looking; global human resources; highly skilled migration; globalisation; Japan; knowledge economy

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that knowledge-based capital is a key driver of economic growth in an increasingly interconnected global economy (Wyckoff 2013). The idea that the global economy is in transition to a knowledge-based economy where skills, expertise and especially innovation are critical resources for economic growth has become accepted wisdom. This is particularly true for developed countries with ageing populations and dwindling natural resources, of which Japan is a prime example. Thus, it is no surprise that the term gurōbaru jinzai (global human resources) has gained hegemonic status in recent public discourse in Japan. However, at the same time that the importance of globally competent human capital is (belatedly) being recognised, the idea that ‘insular’ youth are responsible for Japan’s failure to secure and cultivate such resources has become increasingly dominant in the public discourse.

One example came six months after the triple disaster of March 2011, when then Prime Minister Noda warned against becoming ‘inward-looking’ (uchimuki) and stressed the importance of developing ‘global human resources’ (Kantei 2011a). The appearance of the two terms side by side in a policy speech
illustrates the way the two discourses have increasingly featured together in discussions on Japan’s globalisation. As Figure 1 shows, the term gurōbaru jinzai itself only emerged in Japan in 2007, the year when the housing bubble burst in the USA, signalling the start of global recession.

Figure 1 also shows that uchimuki and gurōbaru jinzai have become closely connected terms, both emerging at roughly the same time and then mirroring each other’s growth. This paper examines why discussions on the importance of securing global human resources – resources which are increasingly portrayed as absolutely crucial for Japan’s future in the face of its global competitive decline – are often accompanied by hand-wringing over an (apparently) inward-looking passive Japanese youth. The results reveal much about Japan’s complex relationship with globalisation.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I provide some background on the fall in Japanese studying and working abroad (Section 2) and the drop in foreign students and migrants coming to Japan (Section 3). The apparent phenomenon of youth reluctant to leave Japan and foreigners reluctant to come is often framed as undermining increasingly strenuous government, business- and university efforts to attract and nurture global human resources. Government, business and educational moves to secure external and cultivate internal global human resources are detailed in Subsections 4.1 and 4.2, respectively. In the conclusion, I argue that the uchimuki discourse is less a reflection on changing youth values and more a cover for an insular Japan and its failure to attract and foster ‘global human resources’.

![Figure 1. Number of articles containing Uchimuki Shikō (inward-looking orientation) and Gurōbaru Jinzai (GHR) 2007–2011.](image)

Note: The first reference to uchimuki shikō in the context of young people (wakamono) was in 2008; the 2007 references were unrelated to young people. Source: Asahi Shimbun database.
2. Japanese reluctant to leave: the uchimuki phenomenon

The notion of Japan as a ‘closed’ island nation (shimaguni) has long featured in Nihonjinron writings on Japan. However, although foreign criticism of Japanese market and other barriers has not been uncommon, specific criticism of Japanese youth as having an ‘inward-looking orientation’ (uchimuki shikō) is relatively new. Japanese Wikipedia (2012) offers the following definition:

A term that suggests a bleak future for Japan due to a fall in international human resources and a reduced desire among young people to challenge themselves as reflected in increasing numbers of Japanese youth not wanting to work or study abroad. [My translation]

Central to this definition is the suggestion that Japanese young people no longer wish to work or study abroad. The sections below examine this premise by looking at data and attitudes on study abroad (Subsection 2.1), work abroad (Subsection 2.2) and overseas volunteer activities (Subsection 2.3) by Japanese youth.

2.1. The fall in Japanese students studying abroad

The key driver of the uchimuki panic in the media is the recent drop in Japanese students studying abroad.

As Figure 2 shows, since a peak of 82,945 Japanese studying abroad in 2004, numbers have fallen significantly, returning to the level they were in 1995. Since the most popular destination for Japanese students has always been (and remains) America, the rapid fall in Japanese students attending American universities has been the focus of attention: Japanese students

![Figure 2](image_url)

Figure 2. Number of Japanese students studying abroad, 1983–2011.
Note: ‘Japanese students’ refers to Japanese citizens enrolled in tertiary education institutions outside Japan.
Source: MEXT (2014, attachment 1).
studying at US universities ranked seventh in 2012–2013 at 19,568 (Institute of International Education 2013), down 60% from the peak of around 47,000 in 1997–1998 when Japan was America’s largest source of students (Japan Times 2012a). Media reports have also tended to focus on the rapid rise of Chinese and Korean students studying in America, the implication being that Japan is being left behind by its closest neighbours in the race to train global human resources (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012b). ‘In a Japan which is showing signs of being pushed aside by China and Korea’s focus on the economic sphere’, writes the Yomiuri Shimbun (2012d), ‘it is said that the youngsters who have to shoulder the burden of the next generation are uchimuki’.

Not all analysts agree that uchimuki is a negative phenomenon or even that it is the main reason behind the fall in Japanese studying abroad. Many commentators point out that given the highly developed and peaceful nature of Japanese society, it is entirely natural that many young people see less need to travel outside a technologically advanced, comfortable and secure Japan, a trend made to appear more dramatic by a shrinking youth population (shōshika). For example, Shiina (2010, 51) notes that the increasing sotomuki shikō (outward looking orientation) of countries like China and India is hardly surprising given the large populations and nature of society and government in these countries; in the case of South Korea, Shiina points to the North Korean situation as a key factor in young people leaving. Certainly, this may partly explain the sharp rise in international students from China, India and Korea, particularly against the background of a growing middle class more able to fund their children’s study abroad. Nevertheless, it avoids the question of whether Japanese youth are really becoming more ‘inward-looking’. A survey by the British Council (2010, 1) found that a majority of Japanese high school and university students are actually interested in studying abroad and if anything have become more interested over the past five years. The British Council survey highlighted worries over safety, expenses and negative consequences for school/work as reasons why youngsters ultimately did not go abroad. A more recent survey by the PTA Federation showed that parents were much more negative than their children about studying abroad – less than half wanted their children to become ‘global citizens’ – again due to fears over safety and cost (Yomiuri Shimbun 2014).

2.2. The drop in Japanese employees wanting to work abroad

While the drop in Japanese studying abroad has tended to drive the talk of uchimuki youth, some commentators have also noted that workers too are losing their enthusiasm to be posted abroad. For example, a series of surveys taken by the Sanno Institute of Management (2010, 2) on the ‘global consciousness’ of new employees show a polarisation of attitudes towards working overseas. Whereas in 2001, the majority of respondents’ desire to work abroad (or not) was based on where they would be working and was thus
rather variable, in 2010, attitudes had hardened: 49% replied they did not want to work overseas at all (up from 29.2% in 2001), whereas 27% replied that they did want to work abroad (up from 17.3% in 2001). The most common reason given for not wanting to work overseas was the ‘risk’ involved, followed by a lack of confidence in their own abilities and not feeling any attraction towards the foreign (Sanno Institute of Management 2010, 2). Although ‘risk’ was not specified, the deterioration of the economic situation from 2008 – a period which saw the number adverse to going abroad jump from a third to almost a half of respondents – suggests financial risk, echoing the British Council and PTA Federation surveys above.

2.3. The decline in interest in overseas volunteer work

One of the most well-known programmes dispatching young volunteers (20–39) abroad is the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (seinen kaigai kyōryūkutai) scheme (Figure 3) operated by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). However, since the peak of 1994 when over 11,800 applicants were received, in 2006, applicants fell below 6000 for the first time and dropped under 4000 in fiscal 2007 and 2008 (Asahi Shimbun 2008). The Asahi Shimbun (2008) observes that the finger is being pointed at young people’s ‘inward-looking orientation’ and goes on to note a tendency for student travel abroad to be shorter against a background of fear of terrorism (held by youngsters and parents).

![Figure 3. Japan overseas cooperation volunteer applicants 1990–2012. Source: Kobe Shimbun (2011); JICA (2014).](image)

Although showing a slight upturn in 2009, summer applicants for 2012 were the lowest since 1989 (2674). JICA put this down to the need for domestic volunteers post 3.11, young people’s ‘inward-looking orientation’ and the poor economy making people worry if they can find employment after coming back (Kobe Shimbun 2011). What is interesting here is how the
uchimuki mentality is again offered as the reason for falling numbers when social and economic conditions may offer a better explanation. Indeed, Nikkei Business (2011, 36) argues that the problem is less about young people and more about society and the companies which hire youngsters. In particular, the rigid Japanese job-hunting system – which disadvantages the many students who return to Japan in May/June and so miss companies’ recruitment sessions – has been picked out as particularly problematic (Asahi Shimbun 2010; Nikkei Business 2011, 36).

3. Foreigners reluctant to come

Just as fewer Japanese youth have been studying and working abroad, the number of foreigners coming to live and work in Japan has also fallen in recent years. In 2010, the foreign population stood at only 1.7% of the total population, the third lowest of the 34 OECD countries (Mexico was the lowest at 0.7%, followed by Korea at 1.1%, neither of which can match Japan’s economy in terms of size; United Nations 2009). Even more worryingly, in 2009, the foreign population fell for the first time since 1961 (Daily Yomiuri 2012d); even before then, the number of new entrants coming to work had been in decline since 2005 (OECD 2013, 266). The most important category of entry for employment in Japan remains ‘entertainer’ while the bulk of foreign workers employed in Japan are still of Japanese descent (nikkeijin; OECD 2011, 294; 2013, 266). The decline has continued, exacerbated by the triple disasters of 3.11: at the end of 2012, the number of registered foreigners had dropped to 2,038,159, only 1.6% of the total population (Ministry of Justice 2013b).

One reason for the decline in foreign migrants in general and foreign workers in particular is a toughening of immigration controls. Tougher penalties against undocumented foreigners began with the immigration law revisions of 1990; 10 years later, a further set of revisions saw the creation of ‘unlawful stay’ as a new criminal offence in stark contrast to countries like the USA where illegal stay is a civil offence (APFS 1999). In 2003, the Ministry of Justice and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government joined forces to ‘crack down’ on illegal foreigners, with a five-year plan to cut the number of illegals (Daily Yomiuri 2003). Other measures have included compulsory fingerprinting and photography for all foreigners entering Japan since November 2007 (Japan Times 2007). Certainly, there have been signs of a loosening of restrictions in other areas, such as the changes to the Immigration Control Act, implemented in July 2012, which at the same time as introducing a more centralised system of residence management extended the maximum period of stay for some visa types and abolished the re-entry permit system. Moreover, as will be discussed in Section 4, Japan has introduced increasingly lenient immigration policies for highly skilled migrants. On balance though, the impression remains that Japan is more interested in temporary short-term stay –
tourists and international students – than long-term permanent settlement (Burgess 2012, 53).

Moves to bring in more foreign students have been a key engine driving education reform since the 1980s. Nakasone’s ambitious 1983 target of bringing 100,000 foreign students to Japan was the first step in his plan to ‘internationalise’ Japanese education (Ishikawa 2006, 8–9). More recently, then Prime Minister Fukuda, in his opening address to the Diet in January 2008, announced a plan to increase the number of foreign students studying in Japan to 300,000 by 2020. The plan, presented under the heading ‘an open country Japan’ (hirakareta nihon), aimed to bring in ‘top-class talent’ (yūshū na jinzai) and high-quality international students (shitsu ga takai gaikokujin gakusei) from overseas to Japan’s graduate schools and industries (Kantei 2008).

As Figure 4 shows, spurred by the Ministry of Justice deregulatory drive of the late 1990s, the goal of 100,000 foreign students was eventually reached in 2003. Post 2003, growth stagnated, the result of a stricter admission policy triggered by fears of dropping academic standards and (illegal) foreigners as a threat to Japanese public security (Ishikawa 2006, 16). The 2008’s 300,000 plan represented yet another policy U-turn, a reversion to the pre-2004 ‘positive acceptance’ mantra, although recession and 3.11 have seen growth stall. The policy flip-flops of the past few years concerning acceptance of foreign students reflect an ambivalence in general in Japanese society over whether to ‘open up’ or ‘close in’ in the face of globalisation (Burgess et al. 2010). This ambivalence is personified in recent discussions on ‘global human resources’.

Figure 4. International students in Japan, 1983–2013.
Note: ‘International students’ refers to non-Japanese citizens enrolled in a tertiary education institution (excluding Japanese language schools) inside Japan as of 1st May of that year.
Source: (MEXT 2014, attachment 2).
4. ‘Global human resources’

In a 2009 survey by the Japan Association of Corporate Executives asking what concrete measures can be taken to develop globally, by far the largest response was ‘to secure and cultivate human resources to promote globalisation’ (Japan Association of Corporate Executives 2012, 4). Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) defines global human resources (hereafter GHR) as ‘Japanese or foreign talent who are able to take on the burden of globalising Japanese companies’ business activities and take an active part in global business’. While Japan has long been open to highly skilled migration – the 1988 Sixth employment Policy Basic Plan recommended Japan should accept as many such foreigners as possible (Oishi 2012, 1082) – the intensity of what has been dubbed the ‘war for talent’ is a rather new. This final section examines the steps taken by government, business and universities since 2007 to secure or attract external resources (Subsection 4.1) and cultivate or foster internal resources (Subsection 4.2).

4.1. Securing external ‘GHR’

4.1.1. Government policies to attract ‘GHR’

One of the first government initiatives in the push to attract GHR was the establishment of the Industry-Academia Partnership Human Resource Development by METI in October 2007 (METI 2012). The goal was to increase collaboration and communication between industry and universities with an eye to better developing and utilising talent (jinzai). One offshoot of this body was the Global Human Resource Development Committee (Gurōbaru Jinzai Ikusei Iinkai), set up in 2009 to directly address the need for Japanese industry to globalise against the background of a declining population and falling domestic demand (METI 2010a, 3).

Aside from METI, other initiatives have taken place within the framework of the government’s 2010 ‘New Growth Strategy’ (Shin Seicho Senryaku). One pillar of this strategy is acceptance of ‘highly skilled foreign professionals’ (kōdo jinzai) to boost Japanese technological innovation and economic growth and ultimately revitalise Japan (Daily Yomiuri 2011; Kantei 2010). As part of government efforts to realise the New Growth Policy, the Council on Promotion of Human Resources for Globalization Development (Gurōbaru Jinzai Ikusei Suishin Kaigi) was established in May 2011 with the goal of ‘cultivating “GHR” who will drive Japan towards future advancement’ (Kantei 2011b, 2012). A June 2011 interim report frames this as an ‘urgent issue’ that is of ‘great necessity’ (Kantei 2011b, 3).

One concrete outcome of the moves to attract foreign talent is a ‘points system’ introduced in May 2012 with the aim of attracting more highly skilled foreign nationals who could contribute to economic growth and creation of new demand and employment in Japan. Under the system, which resembles
those in Canada and Australia, anyone earning more than 70 points based on academic, technical and business activities will be recognised as a ‘highly skilled foreign professional’ and will be given preferential immigration treatment (Immigration Bureau of Japan 2013). Initial response was far from promising, however; in the first 11 months, only 17 applicants were accepted from outside Japan despite a quota of some 2000 entrants (Japan News 2013); a new system, with less strict criteria, went into effect in December 2013.

The fact that the new points system was not (initially at least) aimed at international students currently studying in Japan might be one reason for the low numbers. Although more points are now given for fluent Japanese in the new system (15, up from 10) and for completion of a Japanese university or graduate school (10, up from 5), the emphasis is still on length of professional career (the longer, the better), annual income (the more, the better) and research, technical or business achievements (Immigration Bureau of Japan 2013). Indeed, in a FAQ section, it is made clear that the system is not aimed at international students who would like to work in Japan after graduating: applicants would have to leave Japan temporarily and are advised that the ‘burden of paperwork will be heavy’ (Immigration Bureau of Japan 2012). As the JASSO Job Hunting Guide for International Students notes, ‘[i]t is difficult for international students to find employment in Japan’ (JASSO 2012, 4).

The failure of the new point system to target international students currently graduating from Japanese universities – individuals with Japanese language and cultural skills – is difficult to understand given that many of these students would like to remain in Japan after they graduate. The Yomiuri Shimbun (2009) estimates that although more than 60% of the 30,000 or so foreign students who graduate each year want to stay and work in Japan, only half that number are able to do so. This corresponds roughly with Ministry of Justice (2013a) figures: in 2012, only 10,969 international students’ applications for a change of visa status with the object of working at a Japanese company were accepted (729 were rejected, despite an employment contract being a condition of application). Over 40% of job offers are in translation and interpretation (JASSO 2012, 4). The OECD (2011, 67) puts Japan in the bottom range of countries in terms of the percentage of international students changing status and staying on. In comparison, in 2013, 14,170 ‘skilled labour’ (gijutsu) and specialist in humanities/international services (jinbun chishiki/kokusai jigyō) visas were issued to foreign professionals wanting to come and work in Japanese companies, a 11.8% rise from the previous year (Ministry of Justice 2014).

4.1.2. Business measures to attract ‘GHR’

With more Japanese businesses aiming to expand their global market share, the number of companies positively recruiting non-Japanese is increasing.
Table 1. Examples of Japanese companies’ foreign hiring 2011–2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company name</th>
<th>Total recruits</th>
<th>…of which non-Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panasonic</td>
<td>1390&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1100&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast retailing (Uniqlo)</td>
<td>1200&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; 1500&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>900–1000&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; 1200&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakuten</td>
<td>410&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>120&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitachi</td>
<td>750&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5–6%&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawson</td>
<td>99&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Eleven</td>
<td>250&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>187&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>56 (30%)&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamato transport</td>
<td>100&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshiba</td>
<td>500&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>50 (10%)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>2011 figures; <sup>b</sup>2012 figures; and <sup>c</sup>2013 figures.
Source: Yomiuri Shimbun (2011); Japan Times (2012c); Asahi Shimbun (2012); Nikkei Business (2010).

As Table 1 shows, many Japanese companies are stepping up efforts to recruit non-Japanese. For example, polling by career consultancy DISCO Inc. found that 48.4% of firms say they plan to hire foreign students in the 2014 fiscal year (Japan Times 2013), up from 24.5% and 13.1% for 2013 and 2012, respectively (Japan Times 2012c). Interestingly, among those companies hiring foreign recruits, although overseas expansion is a key factor in the hires, the most important reason given in the survey was revitalising the company and having a positive influence on their Japanese employees (Asahi Shimbun 2012).

4.1.3. Educational moves to attract ‘GHR’

Section 3 already touched on the 2008’s 300,000 foreign student plan. The engine for this plan is known as the Global 30 Project, a government initiative that aims to upgrade a number of existing universities to form a select hub of elite universities for receiving and educating international students. I have already detailed the problems surrounding this initiative elsewhere, particularly the withdrawal of funding (Burgess et al. 2010). A new MEXT project to fund 40 universities is aimed not at attracting foreign students but encouraging Japanese students to study overseas, although the criteria for selecting universities – adding foreign instructors, increasing the number of English language classes and setting up transfer credit systems – may also result in Japanese universities becoming more appealing to international students (Japan Times 2012b). The aim of these projects is to ‘conquer’ (kokufuku) the younger generation’s uchimuki shikō (www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/24/04/1319489.htm). However, neither of these projects are likely to significantly affect the lowly position of Japanese universities in international world rankings, an important factor in attracting international students.
For example, even though Japan’s top ranking university, Tokyo University, scores highly on most academic indicators in the 2013–2014 ranking, it scores only 29.6 out of 100 on ‘international outlook’ which measures the ratio of international to domestic staff and the ratio of international to domestic students as well as international collaboration in research (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2013-14/world-ranking). This weakness has been highlighted by METI’s Global Human Resource Development Committee as one of the key factors in the ‘delay’ in the globalisation of Japan’s universities (Table 2, overleaf).

What stands out from this data is the low percentage of international staff at Japanese universities. Abe, like METI, is acutely aware of this, hence the promise in his May 2013 growth strategy speech to recruit 1500 talented foreign researchers within three years, an ambitious ‘first step’ in securing 10 Japanese ‘super global universities’ (SGUs) among the world’s top 100 (Kantei 2013). Critics have pointed out, however, that little has changed in terms of actual job offers (Rappleye 2013). It is difficult to escape the conclusion that although universities are extremely keen to attract (temporary) foreign students, they are reluctant to employ (permanent) foreign faculty, reflecting the attitude towards migration in general as discussed in Section 3. The irony is that without permanent foreign faculty creating an ‘international’ learning environment, international students are much less likely to come (Sawa 2011). Faced with this bottleneck, efforts have increased to foster local ‘GHR’, but, as we shall see below, this has resulted in a different set of problems.

4.2. Cultivating internal ‘GHR’

Despite generous incentives and relatively lenient immigration policies for highly skilled migrants, Japan has not been successful in attracting foreign professionals. Oishi (2012) highlights problems with integration, multiculturalism and tax/pension systems together with corporate conservatism as reasons for the low level of highly skilled migration. This lack of success has prompted a subtle shift in recent years towards fostering domestic human resources to operate globally, a change in focus which has thrown theuchimuki stereotype even more into the spotlight. As with Subsection 4.1, this section is divided into three areas: government (Subsection 4.2.1), business (Subsection 4.2.2) and education (Subsection 4.2.3).

4.2.1. Government policies to foster ‘GHR’

Against the background of a drastic fall in Japanese studying abroad, one feature of the government’s 2010 ‘New Growth Strategy’, mentioned in Subsection 4.1.1 during discussion of the new ‘points system’ for foreign workers, is the dispatch of 300,000 Japanese students overseas (kaigai haken
Table 2. Score by index of major universities in Europe, the USA and Asia, 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 rank</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Peer review score</th>
<th>Employer score</th>
<th>Staff/student score</th>
<th>Citations/staff score</th>
<th>International staff score</th>
<th>International students score</th>
<th>Overall score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>85 (29.5%)</td>
<td>78 (19.2%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>98 (26.7%)</td>
<td>96 (26.7%)</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85 (31.0%)</td>
<td>77 (15.9%)</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28 (5.4%)</td>
<td>42 (8.5%)</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100 (57.9%)</td>
<td>95 (24.1%)</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Kyoto</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>31 (6.5%)</td>
<td>26 (4.6%)</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100 (51.8%)</td>
<td>100 (34.9%)</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data are originally from the QS World University Ranking 2009. In the 2013/14 rankings, Tokyo has fallen to 32nd and Kyoto to 35th (http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2013). Source: METI (2010b, 3). Highlights as in original.
30 man nin) – including doubling the number of international students – by 2020 (Daily Yomiuri 2012b). The interim report of the Council on Promotion of Human Resource Globalization Development phrases this objective in a slightly different language, aiming to increase those with overseas study experience of a year or more to 10% of all 22-year-olds by an unspecified date (Asahi Shimbun 2011). Abe is even more ambitious, stating he wants to give ‘all’ youngsters the chance to study abroad (Kantei 2013). Underlying all these projects is the explicit ‘truth’ that the Japanese younger generation have an ‘inward tendency’ that must be overcome (MEXT 2013).

In order to realise these goals, in the 2012 financial year, ¥3.1 billion (up from ¥1.9 million the previous year) was earmarked for scholarships to send some 9000 Japanese overseas for study and short stays. In the 2014 academic year, significant funding was put aside for the ‘Super Global High School’ project (http://www.sghe.jp/). However, the government has indicated that without support from private companies and individuals ‘it can do no more to foster global human resources’ (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012f). A new scholarship fund – known as GiFT or Globalised Independent Future Talents – aims to provide ¥1 million to 1000 Japanese students studying abroad (Daily Yomiuri 2012b). A new public interest corporation is also planned to assist Japanese study and intern programmes abroad, as well as providing job-seeking advice to students after they return to Japan (Daily Yomiuri 2012b).

4.2.2. Business measures to foster ‘GHR’

According to the Asahi Business Club (2011), measures undertaken by Japanese companies to foster GHR can be split into three categories: adopting English as the official language of the company (eigo no shanai kōyōgoka), making promotion reliant on language skills and dispatching workers abroad/hiring more foreign workers. Some concrete examples are given in Table 3.

In terms of hiring, there is some evidence that more Japanese companies are interested in employing those with overseas experience. For example,

Table 3. Some Japanese companies’ measures to foster GHR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Measures (beginning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>English as the official company language (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMK</td>
<td>English as the official company language (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakuten</td>
<td>English as the official company language (2012) Management positions require TOEIC 700 or above (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast retailing (Uniqlo)</td>
<td>English as the official company language (2012) Management positions require two foreign languages (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidec corporation (Nihon Densan)</td>
<td>New recruits require TOEIC 730 or above (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeda pharmaceutical</td>
<td>New recruits require TOEIC 730 or above (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

although the ‘Tokyo Summer Career Forum’, aimed at English-speaking Japanese job-hunters, has been running since 1999, it has only recently attracted major interest from Japanese companies, with 82 companies attending in 2009 and 124 in 2010 (Nikkei Business 2010). Even major banks have been ramping up efforts ‘to develop workers who can effectively work abroad’ (sekai de tsūyo suru jinzai) to aid in the expansion of their overseas operations (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012a). Measures include setting up English conversation classrooms in branches, increasing personnel exchanges with overseas branches and offering foreign students work experience and home stays to change the ‘mindset’ of Japanese employees (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012a).

Although a number of high profile Japanese companies have taken concrete measures to cultivate GHR, there are suggestions that not all Japanese companies are eager to move away from traditional employment models and embrace those with international experience and values. A recent article in Yomiuri Shimbun (2012h) titled ‘Are those Coming Back from Study Abroad Cheeky?’ suggests that Japanese hierarchical corporate culture is not necessarily a good match with confident and outspoken return students: ‘Most Japanese companies want Japanese who are only good at English but obedient Japanese’. This is echoed in a report by the Global Human Resource Development Committee (METI 2010a, 44):

In particular, the lack of a ‘global sense’ among management is a big problem. As well as lacking global consciousness, there seem to be a lot of managers who think that Japanese domestic business is somehow enough. For this committee we want to stress that that is the same thing as ‘waiting to die’. Japanese companies should make strenuous efforts to foster human resources who will become future ‘global leaders’. [My translation]

Japanese companies’ lack of global awareness of the need to increase GHR has been echoed by Jennifer Stout, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Discussing the drop in Japanese students studying in the USA, Stout goes beyond conventional discussions on uchimuki youth, suggesting that perhaps Japanese corporate culture does not always rate overseas experience and English ability (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012c). Indeed, overseas experience can even be a disadvantage for job-hunters. A long article in the New York Times (2012) described the experiences of a number of Japanese with study abroad experience who found Japanese companies unenthusiastic and reluctant to hire them. The article cites a survey of 1000 Japanese companies on their recruitment plans in which less than a quarter said in fiscal 2012 they planned to hire Japanese applicants who had studied abroad.

The apparent ambivalence of some companies to embrace Japanese with international experience seems to contradict Keidanren’s stance that Japanese
companies desperately need GHR, but that that demand is not being met. In a report on how to foster GHR, Keidanren (2011, 2) notes that although globalisation has increased the aptitude and ability required to compete, currently, the needs of industry are not being met by Japanese society. Specifically, Keidanren lays the blame on a decline in quality of university students and the spread of an uchimuki orientation creating a gap or disassociation (kairi) between what industry wants and what the university sector is providing (Keidanren 2011, 2). While we have already noted that a focus on uchimuki young people is more to do with society’s failure to meet the sudden changing expectations and needs of Japanese industry than any changes in young people’s values, the role of Japanese universities in fostering – or failing to foster – individuals with the skills – particularly English skills – required to deal with globalisation will be discussed in the next section.

4.2.3. University moves to foster ‘GHR’

As mentioned in Subsection 4.1.3, projects such as the Global 30 and SGU project have been at the forefront of efforts to ‘internationalise’ Japan’s universities, although these projects have been framed more in terms of attracting foreign students and teachers than nurturing local students. In contrast, the much broader 2012 ‘University Action Reform Plan’ is more firmly focused on fostering talent within Japan: a key pillar of the new project is to ‘nurture students to be capable of corresponding with globalisation’ (gurōbaruka ni taiōjinzaikyōiku; MEXT 2012b). This shift from attracting foreign talent to nurturing local talent can be seen in moves by universities themselves. For example, in August 2012, five of Japan’s most ‘international’ universities signed an agreement to work together to foster ‘international people’ (kokusaijin ikusei; Yomiuri Shimbun2012e). The first step is to provide training to staff on how to ‘deal with globalisation’ (gurōbarukanitaiō), with the long-term goal to improve global competitiveness (kokusai kyōšōryoku).

Improving Japanese students’ English ability is one of the most common practical proposals for nurturing local talent, a goal often based on the claim that Japanese students’ English ability is falling behind that of its Asian neighbours. Indeed, the low level of Japanese people’s English skills is a common refrain in GHR policy documents, with Japan’s low international TOEFL score frequently cited in policy documents (Kantei 2011b, 8). Although the use of TOEFL for international comparative assessment is problematic given the vast difference in who is taking the test in different countries, the need to reform English education in Japan is widely recognised. Thus, in policy discussions on GHR, linguistic and communication skills are defined as central (Kantei 2011b, 7). Specific policy goals include using TOEFL and TOEIC scores as part of entrance examination reform and the doubling of classes held in English (MEXT 2012c, 11). In terms of practical measures, Tokyo University has taken the lead with the establishment of a new
‘Global Leadership Program’ to cultivate students with advanced linguistic skills and nurture ‘future Asian leaders’ (Daily Yomiuri 2012a). What stands out in these discussions is how English dominates measures to internationalise Japanese universities, often at the expense of all else (Yomiuri Shimbun 2012g).

5. Conclusion: the uchimuki red herring – Japan’s failure to secure and cultivate ‘GHR’

Writing about the relationship between Japan and the English language – particularly Japan’s slowness, compared to its Asian neighbours, in introducing English as a regular subject in primary schools – Honna suggests that there is a deep-seated notion in Japan of English not as a global language but as something that belongs to Britain and the USA (Daily Yomiuri 2012c). This attitude epitomises Japan’s ambivalent attitude towards globalisation in general. On the one hand, the country is aware that in order to remain economically competitive it must open up, instigate reforms and embrace globalisation in all its aspects; on the other hand, there remains a strong tendency to close in, reject global norms and standards, and retreat inwards. The discussions over GHR capture the dilemma of a country caught in two minds, a quandary which explains many of the contradictions in rhetoric, policy and concrete reform detailed in this paper.

One of the biggest ironies in these discussions on GHR is how young people have been made scapegoats for Japan’s failure to resolve this dilemma. Thus, Japan’s problems in attracting and securing gurōbaru jinzai are typically explained not by the rigid job-hunting system, parochial immigration policies or conservative corporate culture but by inward-looking uchimuki youth. The notion that Japanese government policies, for example to encourage international students to stay in Japan after graduation or to recruit permanent foreign faculty, may be lacking or that many Japanese companies do not actually evaluate international experience very highly is rarely discussed. In sum, it may be more accurate to talk of an uchimuki government or even society, one that remains rooted in an insular world view that sees globalisation as an external process even as it recognises that it has little choice but to embrace such movements and genuinely open up.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Tomoko Hoshino and all of my 2012 fourth year seminar members at Tsuda for their insightful and stimulating discussions on this topic. You are a living proof of the fallacy of uchimuki youth.
Notes
1. Although this paper focuses on the Japan situation, the projection of structural issues onto the moral and emotional ‘deficiencies’ of youth is certainly not limited to Japan. Imoto and Toivonen (2012) do a good job of situating the moralising and psychologising discourse on youth in a broader global context.
2. A new plan aims (rather optimistically) to increase the annual number of foreign visitors to 18 million by 2016 (up from 8.6 million in 2010), turning Japan into a ‘tourism nation’ (Japan Times 2012d). Interestingly, the earlier ‘Visit Japan’ campaign which aimed to double the number of tourists to 10 million by 2010 was opposed by one in three Japanese citing fears of a rise in ‘foreign crime’ (Japan Times 2003).
3. The events of 11 March 2011 caused some 40% of foreign university students in Japan to leave the country in the following month (Japan Times 2011). And although the vast majority of these eventually returned, numbers of short-term international students have dropped, with a number of summer programmes cancelled and a ‘dramatic decline’ in foreign students applying to study at Japanese language schools.
4. Ironically, as foreign students become ‘rivals’, job-hunting for Japanese students becomes more competitive, exacerbating domestic students’ worries over jobs which is one reason for the reluctance to study abroad.
5. This is billed as a ‘two-way’ mutual exchange programme, the new 300,000 Japanese student proposal complementing the 2008’s 300,000 foreign student plan (MEXT 2012a).

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British Council. 2010. “Jakunensō (15–34 sai) e no Ryūgaku Ishiki Ankēto Chōsa: Kaigai Ryūgaku ni Kyōmi aru ga, Chian, Hiyō, Genzai no Gakkō/Shigoto e no Eikyō ni Fuan [A Questionnaire Survey on Attitudes towards Study Abroad among Young People (15–34): Interest in Study Abroad, but Concern over Safety, Expenses,


Yomiuri Shimbun. 2012f. “Ryūgakusei 1000nin ni Nen 100man en [A Million Yen for 1,000 Students to Study Abroad].” Yomiuri Shimbun, June 1. p. 1.

