Chapter 10

Some Aspects of the Growth of University Student Internship in Japan

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the recent development of internship in Japanese universities to identify some characteristic aspects of the growth of internship in the universities. The government initiated promoting internship in the late 1990s and now almost all universities provide some internship programmes. The author focuses on the policy papers for the last 20 years, especially the successive reports of the education minister advisory body, which have led the direction of the promotion of internship. Authorizing internship in curriculum was aimed from the beginning. Career education also attracted educators and policymakers while internship was a policy focus, and internship was thought to be a useful means of quality career education. Internship has turned employers’ attention while Japanese-style employment and recruiting systems were reconsidered. Internship has been settled down in university curriculum as general education rather than specialized education. However, how internship is set in a curriculum is the university’s discretion.
INTRODUCTION

‘Internship’ is the most widely-used term here in Japan, which explains university students’ work experience and they go to the real world of work as a part of their learning during the term or long holidays no matter what subject they read to gain work experience. Internship is a relatively new concept university and economy sector people use as well as academics and educational ministry use. Here is no practice such as Sandwich course in UK universities. For the last twenty years since the late 1990s, university student internship has become popular with the policy strong support. This chapter tries to identify the features of the internship in Japan through examining government policies to promote internship mainly and with some employers’ and universities’ attitude and efforts and their initiatives to promote university student internship.

Up until the collapse of the bubble economy at the early 1990s, in the massification of higher education and the strong demand for university graduates at the labour market, there was a few to question on university education quality, in which academic education by lectures was dominant. Then the economic climate changed and younger people became fewer because of aging in society but more new universities were established, so that in higher education the sellers’ market became buyers’ market. Universities had to add value to their students for job market in order to attract university applicants. Policymakers, university people and employers discussed about how university education was able to fit with the new unknown situation. Employers gradually looked for the graduates who were industry-ready and showed positive attitudes about receiving internship. Introducing internship attracted lots of attention.

This chapter examines the policy documents on promoting university student internship for the last twenty years. Japan Society of Internship (an academic organisation on internship study) looks back around at the time the Society was found in 1999. In 1997, then ‘Prime Minister Hashimoto proposed to start so called “Creation and Reform” movement, in which introduction of internship system was one of the main pillars of Educational Reform’ (JSI, 2010). The author examines the relevant policy documents since the late 1990s, of which the reports from the Central Council for Education are central because the Council has often discussed the topics which are related with promoting internship and influenced on the direction of the promotion of the internship largely. The Council published many leading reports on education policy which was set up in the Ministry of Education to discuss key issues in the development of education, sports, and the cultivation of human resources via the promotion of lifelong learning, in response to the request of the Education Minister. Among several sub-committees is the subdivision on universities, which
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