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日本文學碩士畢業生就業的背後邏輯 ——幻想與現實

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摘 要

本文透過訪問日本九家大公司的人資部門主管，闡釋為何在日本勞動力市場上文學碩士畢業生不受到重視，而理科碩士畢業生卻獲得相當程度的賞識之原因。研究結果發現，一、一般公司仍對文學碩士畢業生有刻板的印象，認為他們的專業知識不夠實用。二、假設碩士畢業生的專業學習讓他們太自傲，公司則對其人格特質有負面的評價。三、公司相信聘用無過錯紀錄的應屆大學畢業生並提供公司內部培訓是最短的途徑。然而，這些都是假象，因為公司幾乎很少有機會細查文學碩士畢業生的真實狀況。也因為如此，我們必須找出讓恆久不變的日本就業市場結構能夠轉變的因素。而本文認為，全球經濟是其中一個因素。

關鍵詞：日本勞動力市場、文學碩士畢業生、雇主邏輯、專業知識、內部培訓

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The Logic Behind Employment of MA Holders in Japan—Illusions and Realities

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to elucidate the reasons why MA holders were less valued in the Japanese labor market as compared to MS holders, who received a greater degree of appreciation during interviews with executive Human Resource officers from nine of Japan's major corporations. The conclusions are as follows: 1. Companies held the stereotype that the specialization and knowledge of MA holders were not useful for their organization; 2. Companies evaluated the personal characteristics of MA degree holders negatively due to the assumption that their specialized learning resulted in pride; and 3. Companies believed that employing fresh college graduates and providing in-house training was more efficient than hiring MA holders. These illusions resulted from companies having had few opportunities to evaluate MA holders' actual job performance. Future research should evaluate which factors may serve to overcome these immutable stereotypes within the Japanese labor market. It is suggested that the global economy may play a role in transforming existing structures.

Keywords: Japanese labor market, MA holders, employers' logic, specialized knowledge, in-house training

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the reason why those who have completed a Master of Arts degree (MA holders) are not valued in the Japanese labor market while those who have completed a Master of Science degree (MS holders) are receiving a certain level of appreciation by interviewing executive officers and managers of human resources of Japan's major companies.

First of all, I will briefly show the size of MA and MS by specialized fields in Japanese higher education. The specialized fields in Table 1 is the classification by the Ministry of Education in Japan.

Table 1 The Size of MA and MS by Specialized Fields (%)

Degree	Specialized Fields	The Ratio of New Entrants	Entrance Ratio Into Master Courses of Study ¹
MA	Humanities	5.7	4.1
	Social Sciences	6.7	2.2
	Domestic Sciences	0.8	2.7
	Education	4.0	5.2
	Art	2.1	8.4
	Other MA	4.1	6.9
MS	Natural Sciences	12.6	42.1
	Engineering	52.8	36.2
	Agriculture	6.9	25.1
	Health Sciences	4.2	6.1
	Marin Sciences	0.1	30.1
	Total (N)	100.0 (60,015)	11.0

Note. The Ministry of Education (2018). Basic Survey of Education.

¹ Each number is the ratio of MA or MS students of each specialized field divided by number of students who graduate from undergraduate corresponding to the field in the same age cohort. Total number 11.0 means that the ratio of MA or MS students divided by number of students who graduate from undergraduate in the same age cohort.

As shown in the left column of Table 1, the biggest part of new entrants in Master courses of study is Engineering (52.9%) and the ratio of MS courses are 72.5%. Each field of MA students is very few and its total is only 37.5%. The center column shows entrance ratio into Master courses of study. There is a hypothesis in these ratios that undergraduate students in a certain specialized field enter into the same specialized field in Master courses of study. Many undergraduate students in Natural Sciences and Engineering enter into Master courses of study. However, the ratio of undergraduate students in BA who enter into Master courses of study is very low. Basically the size of MA compared with MA is quite small in Japan.

Because of its small size of MA, the number of MA holders who newly enter into the labor market is also few. As shown in Table 2, the ratio of MA holders who enter into the labor market is only 3.4% among bachelor degree holders and master degree holders. Specialization fields and degree levels are not basically considered at the time of employment in Japan. The recruitment category is only divided into Arts and Sciences. Due to these recruitment customs, recruitment staff in private companies have few opportunity to meet MA holders at the time of recruitment and they may have no concern who has MA holders. Based on this overview, I will analyze the aim of this paper.

Table 2 Newly Entrants Into the Labor Market

Degree Level	BA Holders	BS Holders	MA Holders	MS Holders	Total (N)
%	64.8	23.8	3.4	8.0	100.0 (499,245)

Note. The Ministry of Education (2018). Basic Survey Education.

First, let us confirm the number of employees by Japanese companies based on the academic degrees. “*The 2021 Shushoku Shikiho (就職四季報) (integrated*

version)”) lists the number of female and male employees by 1,303 companies in 2018 based on their academic degrees (Table 3). Companies listed here are mostly big and prestigious ones in Japan. Such companies employ more humanities/social sciences students than science/engineering students when employing those with bachelor’s degrees (bachelor’s degree holders), but when it comes to employ those with master’s degrees, they clearly employ a limited number of MA holders for both male and female. For male graduates of science, more people are employed as MS holder than bachelor’s degree holders. Make up of academic degrees at major companies in Japan is as follows: bachelor’s degree holders are employed for clerical posts, and half MS holders and half BS holders constitute technical posts when males and females are combined.

Table 3 The Number of Employees by Gender, by Academic Degrees, and by Arts/Science in 2018 (number of people)

	BA Holders	BS Holders	MA Holders	MS Holders	Total (N)
Male	42.9	25.9	0.9	30.3	100.0(46,337)
Female	69.3	17.9	1.7	11.1	100.0(24,837)
Total	52.1	23.1	1.2	23.6	100.0(71,174)

Note. Calculated from Toyo Keizai Inc. (2019) “*The 2021 Shushoku Shikiho (integrated version)*” by the author.

The ratio of students in master’s degrees in 2018 was 1:3.4 for humanities/social sciences: science/engineering, but the ratio of master’s degree holders employed (Table 1) is 1:20 for humanities/social sciences: science/engineering. It clearly shows how MA holders are not being employed by companies. Why are MA holders so underappreciated by the Japanese labor market?

² It runs the information of Japanese companies for college students who seek jobs and is published every year.

To that question, Yoshida (2014) proposed an analytical framework in which she assumed graduate school, students, and company as three actors associated with this problem, and examined the relationship of two adjacent corners of a triangle made of three actors. She hypothesized that inconsistency within each relationship may be inhibiting the employing of MA holders by companies. It showed that in terms of the relationship of students and companies, when focusing on students based on the interview on the awareness and behavior of MBA holders with work experience, though he/she studied hard with strong desire to learn at graduate schools and recognized the usefulness of graduate school education, awareness of directly linking the contents and results of their learning with work was weak. To companies that see such awareness and behavior of graduate degree holders, it appears unclear what their employees learned in graduate schools and what skills they have. This may be a cause of keeping the perception of MA holders low among companies.

Some researches that analyzed evaluation of MA holders by companies included those by Deai (2005), Hamanaka (2014, 2015), and Yoshida (2015). These articles are characterized by clearly showing that companies negatively view MA holders. Deai clarified through interviewing managers of human resources that companies have an idea, where since it is unclear how learning in graduate schools impacts the work and internal evaluation is based on the achievement on tasks, master's degree alone is not enough for evaluation.

Hamanaka (2014) used the interview on MBA holders and human resources supervisors. According to her, master's degree holders increase their critical thinking skills along with acquisition of disciplinary knowledge in graduate schools, but companies tend to avoid employing them because companies recognize their increased critical thinking skills as lack of honesty.

Hamanaka (2015) also analyzed the questionnaire survey conducted on the

job interview supervisors of companies and indicated that those who actively learned during college years and those with more experiences of interviews evaluated MA holders higher; and thus, as interviews with such background increase in number, evaluation of MA holders might increase.

Yoshida (2015) used the same data as Hamanaka (2015) to analyze the relationship between the level of globalization and desired human resources at companies, and showed that compared to foreign-owned companies, Japanese companies (even with higher level of globalization) had less desire to employ minorities such as women, foreigners and advanced degree holders than majorities such as men, Japanese and bachelor's degree holders. She also showed that demand for master's degree holders was especially low for clerical jobs.

These researches which analyzed evaluation of master's degree holders by companies are summarized in Table 4, except Yoshida (2012) who argued based on the characteristics of students. Among those, Deai (2005) and Hamanaka (2014) can be grouped as researches that focused on disciplinary knowledge and skills acquired in graduate school, while Hamanaka (2015) and Yoshida (2015) can be grouped as researches that focused on difference in characteristics of companies.

These researches clarified the difference in evaluation of master's degree holders based on characteristics of companies and recruitment supervisors; however, they did not look at evaluation of master's degree holders from the logic of work at companies, especially the relationship with how clerical work is performed. When employing, companies tend to choose Bachelor of Arts over Master of Arts, and Master of Science over Bachelor of Science. This is not a decision based on difference between bachelor's and master's degrees themselves but instead is a result of focusing on specific manners with which

Table 4 Companies' Perspectives on Employing MA Holders

Previous Studies	Deai (2005)	Hamanaka (2014)	Hamanaka (2015)	Yoshida (2015)
Companies' evaluation of master's degrees	Learning in graduate school is different from achievements at work	Critical thinking skills of master's degree holder is the hinderance	Negative of MA holders	Negative of diversity (including MA holders)
Characteristics of companies and recruitment supervisors			Those with less learning at college and interview experiences	Japanese companies compared to foreign-owned companies

clerical work and technical work are performed within companies when evaluating master's degree holders. By elucidating the relationship with logic of work, we hope to further investigate the reason why MA holders are evaluated critically.

Here, logic of work is examined in Figure 1. We can set three dimensions as an analytical framework: (1) recruitment, (2) tasks and method of allocating work by employers, and (3) training and treatment of employees. Each dimensions are examined for the logic from both sides: A. company's logic for work and B. evaluation of MA holders by executive officers of human resources. As needed, we make comparison with MS holders and technical posts to clarify the structure of the reason why MA holders are not actively being employed.

To answer this question, this paper used the interview conducted on executive officers and managers of human resources at nine major companies in Japan between June and October 2014, as an analytical data. As shown in Table 3, companies that participated in the interview are diverse in their company types. As for the interview, there was a case where staff other than those requested to participate had been present, which made the total more than nine;

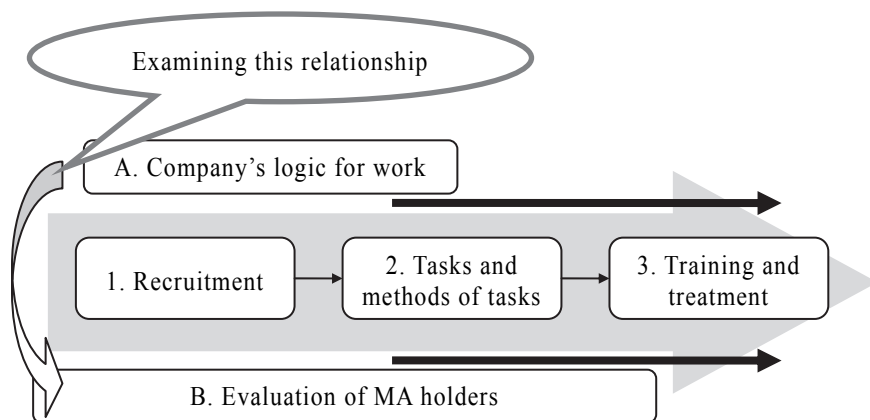


Figure 1 Analytical Framework

however, responses from multiple members of the same company are treated as responses of one company. The number of companies we interviewed was only nine; however, the details of responses were surprisingly similar relative to minor difference in their company types. Therefore, we assume that their responses present the perspectives of major Japanese companies beyond company types.

Table 5 shows the number of employees by interviewed companies based on types of academic degrees in 2018 (there are one company each that had data from 2016 and 2017). This table shows that there are more BA holders and MS holders being employed, which was especially noticeable for construction, machine, and chemical manufacturers. For all companies, employing of MA holders is clearly rare.

According to the analytical framework (Figure 1), we examine (1) the relationship of employment policy for MA holders during recruitment policy and evaluation of master's degree holders, (2) the relationship between company's tasks and methods of work, and evaluation of MA holders, and (3) the

Table 5 The Company Types, Positions, and Number of New Employees for the Interviewees

Company Type	Positions	BA Holders	BS Holders	MA Holders	MS Holders
Construction	Human resources manager	43	85	0	119
Machine	Executive officer of human resources and labor	28	19	0	139 ^a
Chemistry	Executive officer of human resources	31	13	0	151
Food 1	Executive officer of human resources	27	5	0	12
Food 2	Human resources manager	26	2	0	15
Bank	Recruitment leader	No information			
Stocks	Human resources development manager	285	26	8	20
Insurance	Executive officer of human resources and manager of marketing human resources	133	10	3	12 ^b
Air transportation	Executive officer of human resources	45	33	3	41

^a2017 data, ^b2016 data

Note. Source for the number of employees: Toyo Keizai Inc. (2019) “*the 2021 Shushoku Shikiho (integrated version)*”.

relationship between company’s practice during in-house training and their treatment of MA holders. Then we structurally show why MA holders are not appreciated in the labor market in Japan.

Recruitment

Recruitment Policy — Academic Degrees Do Not Have a Specific Significance

Japanese companies separate clerical jobs and technical jobs when employing college graduates, but there is no employing that separates between bachelor's degree holders and master's degree holders. All nine companies interviewed did not separate employees based on their academic degrees, and emphasized how their recruitment policy did not differentiate employing based on academic degrees.

Recruitment concept of bachelor's degree holders and master's degree holders is basically the same. There is no preference to graduate degree holders, and the process is exactly the same. (Construction) (underline added by the author for the remainder of the manuscript)

If applied at the same window, we make our selections in the interview without any bias. (Food 2)

Despite these statements, ultimately, MS holders are preferentially employed for technical positions, while clerical positions mainly employ bachelor's degree holders. A company explained this by arguing that there are more applicants with master's degree for technical positions.

Actually, graduate students in sciences are really fast [at starting to look

for a job]. Because of that, positions tend to get filled by graduate degree holders. For engineering, bachelor's degree holders are somewhat more acceptable [for employee], but.... (Food 1)

In sciences and engineering, there are a lot of graduates from civil engineering and architecture in my company. We would like to employ bachelor's degree holders for these majors, but majority of students looking for a job is graduate students, so we end up employing more people with graduate degrees. (Construction)

There is a following reason why bachelor's degree holders are preferred to master's degree holders.

Universities barely teach about construction management (omission). We prefer that our employees intended for construction management quickly gain work experience and learn in OJT. Someone full of book knowledge in graduate schools is not useful anyway. (Construction)

It is not necessarily true that master's degree holders are preferred for technical jobs, but they end up being employed for such positions. On the other hand, MA holders are negatively evaluated in the first place.

It has been like that in the past, and I do not believe that we purposely or actively employ people with master's degrees now or in the future in clerical jobs. (Machine)

As seen in Table 3, this company in machines employed 140 MS holders in

2018, but did not employ any MA holders.

Master's degree holders employed for clerical positions have some characteristics to note. One is that they are not limited to MA holders. There are some MS holders applying for clerical positions.

Only two people [with master's degree were employed for clerical positions] in the past five years. This table says total of four, because two of them graduated from graduate school of science/engineering but took on clerical jobs. (Construction)

At this company, total employees for clerical positions in the last five years is 488. Let us look at another example of a MS holder applying for a clerical position in marketing.

There are employees graduating from veterinary medicine or medicine applying for "marketing". In the last five to six years as diversification has progressed greatly, more MS holders have been applying for clerical positions outside of their expertise. (Food 2)

In cases of clerical positions, academic departments were never questioned in the first place; thus, having science background is not questioned at the time of applying. Since there are many MS holders, it does not appear odd when they apply for clerical positions.

Another case where master's degree holders are seen normal is foreign students who completed Japanese graduate schools. Foreign students are more common in graduate programs than in undergraduate programs, and there are cases where master's degree holders were employed for clerical positions.

About 20% of our employees are foreign students, meaning, people with foreign nationalities who graduated from Japanese graduate programs, especially those from China and Korea (omission). However, we hardly ever employ Japanese people who graduated from Japanese high school, went to Japanese university, and completed graduate program (omission). We happen to have one person in human resources who has a graduate degree in law, but that is very rare. (Air transportation)

Employing of people with master's degree for clerical positions is a happenstance, such as they were foreign students with master's degrees or a Japanese employee that happened to have a master's degree.

Desired Elements for Employees — Communication Skills and Educational Degrees

Under such employing policy, how do they select the new employees? Especially during the interview, is there a difference because of academic degrees and expertise in terms of the interview methods and expectation for students' skills? There have been several articles on this topic. Based on the interview conducted on recruitment supervisors of companies, Iwawaki (2006) showed that in terms of recruiting BA holders for management track positions, they aim for higher level of basic and general skills necessary for all types of jobs instead of skills useful for specific tasks.

According to the logic of recruitment, it is interpreted as "personal character."³ Among companies interviewed, Insurance, Food 2, Air

³ Using personal character as the employing criteria is not limited to Japan. American employers are said to look for overall personality traits. Studies have

transportation, Stock, and Machine used these same words. Meanwhile, construction used the word “personality” to mean the same thing. “Personality” in this case is identified by repeating interviews. Employing is decided after at least three to four interviews, or even five to six interviews, with each of them being about 30 minutes. But who has the right “personality”? Everyone will answer that the important point is whether it is someone you want to work together or not.

There is whether I want to work with the person as my subordinate or not and if I want to buy financial products from this sales person if I were a customer. (Stock)

Image of students we desire is someone I would like to follow me into my company and work together. (Insurance)

This means someone who they get along with, which comes from executive officers of human resources finding commonality in these students⁴.

When asked how they determine if they want to work with applicants or not, all companies list what you call communication skills which are recently recognized most important skills among college students. Let us examine what communication skills are, and what other skills it is compared with.

shown that it reflects social class, and it has been criticized as the source of inequality (e.g., Bowls & Gintis (1976/1986) and Collins (1979/1984)).

⁴ Recruitment supervisors talk about how employing criteria is ultimately whether they want to work together or not (e.g., Hirose (2015) and Kusunoki (2010)). Interestingly, there is no study from a viewpoint of whether social class has any impact. In addition, there is little attention on social inequality existing in such viewpoint. The fact that there are so many manuals explaining how to appeal to employers indicates that there is an idea that there is no impact of social class and students can change themselves with their own effort.

First, it is communication skills as interpersonal service skills to customers and consumers.

I try to have as much conversation as possible during interviews, to check if they have good communication skills. It is basically a service job, where we transport customers, so we tend to look for communication skills, a backbone, and an ability to speak out with confidence. So, we don't ask what they studied in colleges at the interview. (Air transportation)

Bank is a customer service, and it is very important to create business through communication with customers. So that is the type of communication skills we are looking for. (Bank)

Next, it is interpersonal skills to work in a team.

We cannot help but work in a team, so we do not want anyone who has poor communication skills or self-centered. (Stock)

We look for communication skills, which we consider the emotional side. It is not limited to being able to get along with others but also means to have both subjectivity and initiative, and ability to get along with others. We look for communication skills, expressed emotional side, and also desire, like motivation. (Insurance)

Interestingly, these communication skills are compared with academic degrees and grades at colleges.

If the person has communication skills, environmental adaptability, logical thinking skills, and motivation, we don't particularly care about academic degrees and grades at colleges. (Construction)

Especially in case of clerical positions, communication skills are most important, which cannot be measured with grades at colleges. It is difficult to figure that out. We try to find out through their circle activities at colleges, and so on. (Chemistry)

A technique of measuring communication skills is posing classic questions such as below during the interview.

The classic and typical question is "what is your achievement during college life?", isn't it? I suppose we are trying to find out if they are able to finish the tasks when given a job. (Food 2)

We ask what they focused on during college lives, what role, what position, how long, and with what purpose (omission), how they overcame obstacles (omission). (Insurance)

It is fine if they said, "I have been studying." I think what is important is to be able to say "I have not been studying and my grades are not great. But I achieved these things at college." We want to see that they can prove what they have achieved during the interview. Therefore, having all A' is not a bad thing. They can just say "I studied very hard." (Chemistry)

What interviewees are looking for to the question of what they focused on during college years is not academic achievements of students in case of humanities/social sciences. This is discussed in comparison to science degrees. We can find it in the following.

What we focus is slightly different. Bachelor's degree, especially in case of humanities/social sciences, common questions are "What did you do as circle activities at college?" and "What kind of a circle did you join?". We choose our employees based on their vitality, communication skills, and potential in these areas. But in case of science degrees, though these things are still important, we often ask about their academic achievements. Especially if they have MS degrees, we know they had additional two years of education, so we ask about their studies and how they plan to utilize their academic knowledge and skills at our company. (Construction)

Science degree holders are often asked about their academic achievements whether their degrees are BS or MS. BA is acceptable, but interviewees are trying to find out their "personality" from activities they engaged in during college years. The following question clearly states that specialized or disciplinary education is not at all valued for clerical positions.

[In case of clerical positions] we do not value specialized or disciplinary education at college at all for selection of our applicants. Of course, we value how they grew through their academic focus and how they overcame obstacles. Interestingly, for example, when applicants say they studied economics and pursued it to a certain level, then all we can say

is “that’s it.” (Air transportation)

What is interesting here is that in case of humanities/social sciences, common logic among companies is that they do not blatantly dismiss academic achievements at colleges, but they do not value it.

Does it mean academic skills are unquestioned? As an interviewee in a machine manufacture company said, “Basic academic skills are more necessary than disciplinary knowledge,” basic academic skills are desired. How are basic academic skills judged? In short, it is the name of universities in Japan.

In terms of universities, we employ from a wide range of universities, which includes the University of Tokyo, Hitotsubashi University, Waseda University, Keio University, and Tokyo Institute of Technology, and in the Kansai area, Kyoto University, Osaka University, and Kobe University. (Insurance)

I try not to dismiss the fact that students managed to get into top universities and graduated. The achievement of passing the entrance exam and studying in such universities gives a solid track record. If an applicant says, “I can beat someone from the University of Tokyo,” how can he/she explain and show the evidence? (Machine)

Interviewed companies employ a large number of graduates from the top universities. They said they employ students from a wide range of universities, but they mainly mentioned former imperial universities, while only mentioning Keio or Waseda as private universities. Being accepted at these top universities is the proof of basic academic skills which applicants have, and with that, added

value of four years of studying is not important. When employing for clerical positions, level of universities they applied is used as an index of screening, and training potential for employees is found in there. Yoshida (2014) argued that the reason MA holders are not appreciated by companies is because the level of universities is highly valued as the employing criteria, while not assessing the academic achievements from four years of learning. She called this “Hensachi (偏差値)⁵ Screening Hypothesis,” which is verified by the above response.

Perspectives on MA Holders

When employing for clerical positions, rather than specialized or disciplinary education at college, companies are using other college life experiences as the decision-making criteria. Under such a circumstance, MA holders who spent additional two years of academic work are often evaluated negatively.

It is true that we see MA holders at interviews. We can't help but ask "why did you go to a graduate school?" during the interview, and it is hard to step away from that (omission). We can't help but wonder "Didn't you want to be a researcher?" Why do you apply for my company? (Construction)

We suspect someone who studied that much must have hesitations about working for a mere private company. They must be hard to study at graduate schools to be a researcher. (Machine)

⁵ Henasachi is a deviation value which is created by education industries based on mock test scores of applied students. We can compare university's rank with using this score.

Companies seem to have a preconception that those who pursue master's degrees in humanities/social sciences are aiming to become researchers, who would not choose to work at private companies upon completing their master's degrees. Because of such prejudice, recruitment supervisors view specialized and disciplinary learning at graduate schools as a factor that inhibits acquisition of skills which companies desire.

I think the skills we are looking for in students from humanities/social sciences are responsiveness and adaptability. [MA holders] have a pride that they studied more than others. That's fine, but some of them try to base answers on their expertise. They can't seem to simply admit and say "That's one way of looking at it." (Construction)

It is fine that they use what they [learned in MA program] as a weapon, but then we expect that having that weapon makes them more capable. Yet if they only focus on their own expertise, that makes us less likely to employ someone like that. When someone "wants to pursue one path," and if their desire is too strong, their weapon can cause a negative reaction. (Food 2)

It would be ideal if someone has good logical thinking skills combined with tolerance to stress and flexibility, but these skills often seem to conflict with each other. Thinking too much makes them less flexible, and they cannot take an action without thinking (especially for MA holders). (Food 2)

In the mind of interviewees, there is a formula that those who gained

specialized and disciplinary knowledge in master's program = those who lacks responsiveness, tolerance to stress, and flexibility. Since the latter skills are necessary to work in a company, the formers are not actively employed. It is not that they have no need for people with disciplinary knowledge, but they view those with disciplinary knowledge as people without skills that company needs. But is this relationship based on the actual experiences of past employees? Or is it an answer derived from a preconception about unfamiliar MA holders?

In contrast to negative evaluation of gaining disciplinary knowledge, the following response shows that some believe that learning at graduate schools does not improve disciplinary knowledge or skills and view them negatively.

Looking at those who applied for clerical positions, I don't feel that two years of graduate school has dramatically improved their disciplinary knowledge and skills. I haven't felt that ability of them to express expertise and individual opinion well has added much in case of clerical positions. (Chemistry)

These opinions are contradictory. This seems to show that evaluation of MA holders is simply based on the images. Both views assume that graduate schools in humanities/social sciences are places for those aiming to become researchers and have nothing to do with companies. Based on this same thinking, one end assumes disciplinary knowledge narrows their thinking while the other end assumes their expertise is not that advanced. Based on these ideas, they negatively evaluate MA holders. As shown in Table 3, the number of MA holders is extremely limited, and it is difficult to believe that interviewees observe MA holders in their daily work. They were probably not familiar with graduate students in humanities/social sciences when they were college students.

Under such a circumstance, their excessive beliefs about MA holders created such illusions.

Strangely, such belief is not applied to MS holders. Even companies that would like to employ BA holders rather than MA holders do not say that MS holders are lacking in skills that company needs or have not acquired disciplinary knowledge. With enough MS holders working in the company, their illusions about MS holders and science/engineering graduate programs must have been sufficiently eliminated.

Tasks and Methods of Task Allocation

Tasks — Disciplinary Knowledge that Cannot Be Utilized

However, it is not only the illusions of MA holders that prevent increasing demand of companies for MA holders. In fact, the relationship with tasks and allocation of tasks for clerical positions in companies, which are different from technical positions, must be considered. As seen below, clerical positions work in versatile manner, which makes it difficult to utilize specialized and disciplinary knowledge.

In Japan, those in [clerical positions] work alone in versatile manner. I think that's a better deal. We just have to train them once they join our company. If we want to make the best of their expert skills in a specific position only, say accounting or advertising, we should employ someone who acquired specialized or disciplinary knowledge and skills at graduate schools, but in all honesty, ordinal companies, including us, aren't looking for those experts. (Construction)

Specialized knowledge is required for clerical positions only in limited areas as shown below.

For example, in case of legal affairs or accounting, we could employ applicants of graduate degrees in economics or law with specialized expert knowledge, but we wouldn't need that much expert knowledge for sales staff. (Machine)

We have two ways to employ graduate degree holders for clerical positions. One is for sales engineering. If they have knowledge in biotechnology or sales of brewing process, it would be advantageous when visiting our customers. The other is legal affairs, accounting, and marketing. We employ individuals so we can utilize expertise of master's degree holders. For example, we might employ one or two with expertise out of 20. But that is about it. Our need for master's degree holders for clerical positions is limited to that. Generally, we prefer nurturing bachelor's degree holders. (Food 1)

They say that legal affairs and accounting require expert knowledge, which was echoed by most companies. Sales engineering is a unique sales that require technical knowledge, and MS holders are often employed for such position. For other clerical positions, graduate level of expert knowledge is not necessary.

Method of Task Allocation — Job Rotation System

Then how do they learn necessary knowledge for their jobs? In a case of clerical positions in Japanese companies, job rotation system is employed. By experiencing various positions within the same company, employees can gain a

wide perspective on how they work⁶. Companies that were interviewed used this method of task allocations, and no one has any doubt about this method.

Clerical positions mean sales, human resources, accounting, PR and so on. What we focus on is the sales. We tend to place new employees in sales first and build their careers regardless of directions they end up going. In that case, bachelor's degree holders are much easier to train, honestly. (Food 1)

We believe that potentials of new employees come to the surface after a while. We understand that it is possible to employ someone as an expert of finances, for instance, right away, but we don't do that. We rotate [tasks] somewhat. We decide their best fit once they start working for us. (Air transportation)

If tasks are already determined, master's degree holders might be able to jump right in, but if they need to learn the job through experience, they are not necessarily going to be able to use what they learned in graduate programs right away. (Science)

As seen, clerical positions are considered to be positions that do not require expert knowledge, and OJT (on the job training) during the job rotation is believed to be the method to increase task performance. Under such a

⁶ The utility of job rotation in Japanese companies was acknowledged during the period of high economic growth. It is characterized by the fact that it was put to widespread use as an education method for employees on the management track. It is different from job rotation in western countries, which is intended to prevent boredom in blue collar workers repetitively doing the same task (Eshi, 2015).

circumstance, majority of companies believe that instead of employing MA holders who are two years older, employing and training bachelor's degree holders would be more useful for the company. In order to increase task performance, they believe that "experience" within the company is better than learning in graduate schools.

Task Performance of MA Holders — Illusion of MA Holders Being Difficult to "Handle"

The logic of thinking that disciplinary knowledge of graduate programs in humanities/social sciences is unnecessary for work can stretch to negative evaluation of task performance of MA holders.

Just because they finished master's programs doesn't mean that their two years of experience is better than two years of experience employees gained at work. What employees gain through work is more useful for us.
(Chemistry)

[The difference of MA holders from undergraduate] may be something other than their age difference, but we don't have evidence to clarify their differences. (Food 2)

We hear from human resource staff of other companies that two years of disciplinary learning is such a minute addition and is useless in actual work. If that's true, younger people that is bachelor's degree holders, would be more useful. (Food 1)

As seen, based on companies' logic of work, having master's degrees does

not mean that they have good task performance. However, what we need to pay attention here is the statements highlighted with the wavy underline. They respond as hearsay: “we don’t have evidence to clarify their differences” and “we hear from human resource staff of other companies.” As it was for images they had about the level of specialized knowledge students gained in graduate schools, evaluation that MA holders have no ability to execute tasks is discussed without having their own experience.

Fostering and Treatment

In-House Training — Confidence in Fostering System

There is less effort in the in-house training of Japanese companies on assumption of long-term employment in recent years. However, many companies are still offering such training with care. From “the Survey of ‘Human Resource Development in Companies’” conducted on 199 companies in 2014 by Japan Institute of Lifelong Learning, we can find the implementation of the in-house training in Japan as follows: new employee training (97.5%), new employee follow-up training (72.4%), mid-level employee training (60.8%), junior manager training (section head, chief, project manager, etc.) (62.3%), and mid-level manager training (section chief and managers) (69.8%). When the size of company exceeds 1,000 staff, the ratio of such in-house training increases more. This is the characteristics of Japanese companies that have an in-house training system of carefully fostering their employees.

We do quite a lot of fostering of human resources in their 20s. There is training to learn their jobs, and there is training on leadership such as

how to unite the organization. Especially for management track positions, such training is provided in the year 1, 3, 5, and 7. We combine these specific training with general human resource training, such as logical thinking, negotiation skills and so on and put focus on training staff in their 20s. (Air transportation)

We train young staff for the first eight years as a career development program. We transfer them twice during the first eight years in order to work in two different positions. We have a stratified training style, and in the seventh year, we provide a career training and have them look back on the past and discuss their future at an interview. We use the three pillars of transfer, training, and interview for employees' career development. (Food 1)

We verbalize necessary skills for each stage, say years 4, 5, and 1, 2, and 3. We want them to be able to guide others by the third year, so if possible, we want them to take on a position of an instructor in the third or fourth year and gain a solid image of what it takes to foster human resources. (Stock)

As shown, many companies have their own training system, through which employees become independent after seven to eight years. Training is carefully catered to the year employees joined the company, which is systematically structured as a whole. Companies are confident in their training system⁷.

⁷ Japan Institute of Lifelong Learning (2014) showed that 86.9% of companies have responded that employee training builds skills that are needed for work in each employee (knowledge, skill, and attitude), indicating their confidence in their own training program.

Compared to such a long-term in-house training system, two years of education at graduate schools are too short, and companies admit no significance in the education of specialized knowledge at graduate schools that has no clear relationship to actual tasks.

Reacquisition of Academic Degrees — The Power of MBA is Networking

Separately from training systems and OJT, how do companies view people who join the company with bachelor's degrees and then acquire master's degrees at graduate schools? Though it has become less popular, there are still many companies sending their staff to the U.S.A. to let them acquire MBA. In recent years, some companies are sending their staff to Japanese professional schools. However, most companies feel that getting MBA does not make them directly useful for actual tasks.

Just because [they got MBA after joining our company], it doesn't mean that they can utilize disciplinary knowledge they learned in MBA at work. But we are not expecting that. We are more interested in how much they are able to grow in the future. (Air transportation)

Why is there an MBA studying system? There is a case where company acknowledges the significance of MBA in increasing the motivation of their employees.

We don't think that achieving MBA would immediately open up their talents. Actually OJT would be more useful than MBA. But we hope to create a system where we present opportunities to study overseas as an

option of career development for the staff, and when someone takes the challenge and finishes MBA, we give them advantage to motivate their career development. (Machine)

There is a case that recognizes significance in the area other than improvement in task performance.

Networking among MBA holders is effective and useful, and its effectiveness may continue for a long time, even five years or ten years from now. In that sense, I think MBA is valuable. (Insurance)

The impact of reacquisition of academic degrees improves motivation of employees, and its positive impact on networking over mid to long period of time is acknowledged. It looks like an investment without a lot of expectations for the return. In the gridwork of a training system that employs bachelor's degree holders and trains them through OJT and in-house training, companies believe that acquisition of MBA is still inferior to their own training system.

However, we should not say that such reacquisition of academic degrees is not evaluated negatively. Compared to negative opinions about employing MA holders and their ability to execute tasks, while complaining that reacquisition of academic degrees does not directly add value to their job, they also do not complain that they would be lacking in skills companies need. This is because these are already their employees.

Evaluation of MA Holders from the Viewpoint of the Training System — Are MA Holders Unreasonable Existence?

Such precise in-house training system is designed for each year for new employees; thus, everyone hired in the same year are trained together regardless of their academic degrees. In other words, MA holders are trained in the same manner as bachelor's degree holders who joined the company in the same year. Because of this system, MA holders are negatively evaluated further.

[MA holders] are paid more because of the two years of additional education. Though they are paid more for the two years, they start at the exact same spot in sales. In that case, I'm sorry to say it but two years of education is meaningless. Even with their two years of education, the company still has to pay the same amount to train them while we have to pay extra for that two years. (Food 1)

The starting salary of master's degree holders would be the same as employees who joined the company two years earlier, meaning, the same as someone who graduated from an undergraduate program at the same time. This is slightly higher than those with bachelor's degrees who join the company at the same time. However, all new employees of the same year will go through the same training system regardless of academic degrees. This is considered unreasonable since they earn more, but they incur the same training cost. The salary based on their age and training system based on the year they join the company do not assume anyone who do not fit the framework. Therefore, whenever someone does not fit the system, instead of considering problems with

their system, the blame is put on the person who does not fit the system.

Since Japanese companies do not acknowledge the result of two years of education at graduate schools, they would not consider a possibility that their training cost could be reduced.

Since we don't know what they learned at colleges and what they got specific skills, basically all new employees should be trained in business fundamental in the same way. (Air transportation)

They do not know what employees learned and gained at colleges. Therefore, regardless of academic degrees, they believe the company has to start the training from the beginning. Company has little trust in college education whether bachelor's or master's degrees. This may be a reflection of company's pride in their recruitment system and training system. This is seen in the following response.

The question is whether employing advanced degree holders and bet that they would be superior employees in the future or employing clean slate and training in the manner the company desire. I believe that the later way is actually a short cut after all. In western countries, they focus on the skills, so they employ those with advanced degrees. Whether young or old, if someone can do the job of human resources manager while in their 20s, they can be employed as the human resources manager. This is the difference in training method. (Machine)

They believe that employing bachelor's degree holders who are "white canvas" with no unwanted color and educating and training them with in-house

system would end up being a “short cut.” Japanese companies do not see the cost of training system as “cost,” but they believe that paying for training is more effective. From the viewpoint of such system, MA holders are branded as unreasonable existence.

Conclusions and Discussions

Conclusions — Negative Evaluation Caused by Clerical Positions

Firstly, although there is a system of not differentiating or discriminating candidates based on academic degrees, there is no policy of actively employing MA holders. This is because unlike technical positions, clerical positions are based on the idea that communication skills are more important than college education. It is commonly believed that graduate education do not provide MA holders with various knowledge and skills desired by companies, and two years of education is not enough to provide them with sufficient expert knowledge. Specialized and disciplinary knowledge provided at graduate schools and various skills desired by companies are seen as trade off, but this is not based on years of experience, but is an illusion constructed on stereotypes. Recruitment data of companies do not know that there are enough MA holders on their rosters to make such a decision.

Secondly, in terms of tasks and allocation of tasks, clerical positions are usually not positions that require high level of expertise, and companies use job rotation so that their employees experience diverse positions. This approach is the hurdle for master’s degree holders. In other words, companies do not have positions that could utilize expert knowledge learned at graduate schools, or

expert knowledge is not useful for learning diverse tasks at work. In addition, instead of believing that it is a problem with tasks and allocation systems, companies blame personal characteristics of master's degree holders assuming that their specialized learning gave them too much pride and negatively evaluate them.

Thirdly, in terms of training and treatment, precise in-house training system and the age-based salary make it difficult for master's degree holders to fit in the system. Training system spans over many years and is based on the entry year, and companies believe that this training system is what fosters their employees. Lack of trust in college and graduate school education is rooted in their faith in their training system. They believe that employing new college graduates on clean slate and providing in-house training is the shortest path.

Our examination showed that such negative evaluation of MA holders in the labor market in Japan is based on the tasks of clerical positions and logic behind clerical positions rather than actual personal characteristics of MA holders.

Discussions — Would Globalization Lead to Change Companies?

How immutable of a structure is the labor market evaluation of MA holders? Is there any chance it could change in the future?

To consider this issue, a paper by Kobayashi (1989) that clarified how smoothly employing of master's degree holders in technical positions went is a good reference. He argued that employing of MS holders increased and became established during the expansion of engineering graduate programs since 1960s as master's programs in major university became massive as it led to a lack of the main source of staff, undergraduate graduates, and companies that were

employing graduates of major universities had shifted to employ master's degree holders. Following this, Hamanaka (Manmi) (2002) analyzed the expansion mechanism of master's degree programs in social sciences in 1990s, and showed that expansion of master's programs in social sciences in 1990s occurred since private universities began establishing master's programs in addition to major universities, but there was no corresponding growth in demand for the labor force.

These two contrasting arguments show that in both cases, lack of labor force and prestige of universities master's degree holders graduated from were the key in increasing the number of master's degree holders being employed. If that is the case, since the 1990s when master's programs in social sciences expanded was after the collapse of bubble economy and number of new university graduates were increasing, there was no lack in labor force, and graduate programs were being expanded both in major universities and less prestigious universities. Thus, this was the reason why societal opinion of MA holders did not improve. This situation has continued to today, and there has not been any change in employing for clerical positions.

Although "global human resources" has been a key issue in government and industry, Japanese companies are moving slowly (Yoshida, 2015 above-mentioned). Their belief in clerical positions not needing specialized knowledge and the separation in academic degrees and task performance is solid. This logic may be the reality of the relationship between tasks and academic degrees, or illusion of those who have no experience of employing MA holders for clerical positions. To verify these points, a long-term panel survey of BA and MA holders and their career paths would be useful, but such a survey cannot be conducted until the number of MA holders becomes large enough to be compared to BA holders.

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