

Fixed Term Contracts: An Exploration of Employment Conditions in Japanese Universities

Adam L. Miller

Department of Global Culture and Communication, Aichi Shukutoku University, Japan
almiller@asu.aasa.ac.jp

ABSTRACT

This study looks at current employment practices and terms in the field of tertiary education in Japan. The importance of this study is highlighted by the growing prominence of the academic underclass, or university teachers who are undervalued and underappreciated by their employer and in turn lacking in motivation and fearful of their lack of job security. This research focuses particularly on international university teachers in Japan, who are hired under the terms of FTCs (Fixed Term Contracts). The significance of this study is drawn from the importance on securing a strong and steady teaching staff, who can in turn be a foundation on which the quality of a university can be assured.

The findings are based upon qualitative data collected from a semi-structured interview with a native Japanese staff member at a Japanese university, whose opinions and experiences offer a clear insight into the impact FTCs and employment practices have on employees at Japanese universities. This data is also triangulated with existing studies and contemporary Japanese journalism. These findings point to the potential dangers of FTCs and the drawbacks of universities in Japan viewing their staff as an expense instead of an asset.

Keywords: tertiary education, tertiary education Japan, employment laws Japan, faculty development, pedagogies

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1. Introduction

Japan is no stranger to controversies surrounding their educational system, with “death by overwork” being a very serious concern, and 70% of public Junior High school teachers working up to the precipice of this threshold (Mainichi, 2022). As will be discussed in subsequent sections of this paper, overwork is a problem also facing university teachers in Japan, although to a lesser extent than those working in public Junior High schools. Another source of stress facing educators in the tertiary sector in Japan is the proliferation of “fixed-term contracts” (hereon referred to as FTCs), which limit the employment term for staff members at universities, most commonly between 1 and 5 years. As will be discussed, this can have a detrimental effect on motivation and can also jeopardize continuing professional development (hereon referred to as CPD) amongst staff.

FTCs have become common place due to a labor law that was put in place in an attempt to curb a company’s reliance on temporary workers in Japan, and perhaps even limit the ways in which these types of employees could be exploited:

"If a fixed-term labor contract concluded with the same employer is repeatedly renewed over a period exceeding 5 years, the said contract can be converted to a labor contract without a fixed term upon application by the worker." (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2022)

However well intentioned this measure may have been, it consequently means that if an annual contract is repeated for more than 5 years, universities (and other employers) are legally obliged to offer said staff member a permanent position; which could be equated to a tenured position at a university. To avoid offering staff members such prestigious positions, universities may instead opt to willingly encourage staff turn-over, finding new staff members who are willing to enter into an FTC without the expectation of continued job security beyond the 5 year threshold.

This paper aims to explore how this process can be both stress inducing to employees, but also ultimately costly and detrimental to employers as well, with FTCs demotivating individuals, and high staff turnover having a broader impact on the university's working environment and budget. Findings will be based upon existing literature in the fields of Japanese tertiary education, human resources management (hereon referred to as HRM), and CPD. Furthermore, qualitative data was also collected from two long-form, semi-structured interviews with a full-time Japanese member of staff working at a public university in Japan, and a full-time English as a Foreign Language (hereon referred to as EFL) teacher working at a private university. This data offers an insightful and detailed explanation of the impact of FTCs in Japanese universities, and their potential connection to levels of motivation and staff retention. By offering the perspectives of both a native Japanese and an international member of staff, it is hoped that this primary data can allow for a more accurate description of the implications of these practices.

2. Background of Study

As previously mentioned, FTCs have become more prominent in Japan in recent years, but the devaluation of university teachers' positions has been a long process that reaches back to the 1990s, during which time Japan became more liberal in regards to what constitutes a university, and in turn the number of graduate and postgraduate degrees surged, meaning that there was a plethora of people who were qualified to teach at universities. At the same time, Japan has been faced with an "aging population" with a predicted 30% of the population being 65 or older in the year 2025 (Osamu, 2021). This means that the pool of potential students has shrunk, whilst the number of universities they can apply to has increased, leading to an "over-saturation of the market for undergraduate education, forcing universities into what could easily be described as an environment of hyper-competition" (Breaden, 2017). This surplus to requirements has meant that some universities have decided to cut budgets, or increasingly rely on part-time teachers, who earn less money, are afforded less benefits, and are even referred to as the "academic underclass" (Itakura, 2021).

It is in this climate that this study will explore the impact FTCs have on working environments in Japanese universities. This study will argue that there are a number of demerits in regards to Japan's reliance on FTCs, both for the teacher and the employer, which will be explored in further detail in subsequent sections of this study.

3. Methodology

The findings in this study are dependent on both existing literature and qualitative interviews with experts in the field of tertiary education in Japan. For the sake of clarity, the literature has been divided into two broad categories, international studies concerned with employment and human resource management, and literature specifically concerned with education in Japan.

3.1. Texts Concerned with Employment and HRM

One of the central texts that will be drawn on in this study, especially in regards to HRM practises, is the sixth edition of Gary Dessler's *Human Resource Management*. While this does not focus on education, let alone tertiary education in Japan, it does offer insightful explanations of fundamental and universal HRM approaches that can be applied to this study. It not only looks at optimal approaches, but also the benefits or drawbacks if said approaches are followed or neglected.

Human Resource Management in Education: Recruitment and selection of teachers by Cameron and Grootenboer is far less extensive than Dessler's text, but it is focused on HRM and its role in the sphere of education, so it has obvious ties to this study. In particular, Cameron and Grootenboer's research looks at the importance of initial hiring practices, and how the role of HRM is integral to a successful working environment even before staff begin working at an institution.

Assistant Professor with an Asterisk: Conflicting tensions in the workplace experiences and professional identities of university faculty on fixed-term contracts by Gosine et al looks at the particular problem of the proliferation of FTCs in higher education, and some of the problems that seem to arise from a dependency on these contracts. This research looks at the areas of North America and Britain, and shows that this is not a problem unique to Japan, and there is a commonality between teaching communities around the world in regards to FTCs.

3.2. Texts Concerned with Education in Japan

Lilan Chen has contributed two texts to this field of study that are directly connected to the focal point of this research, namely the impact of FTCs on international teachers working in Japanese universities. The paper titled *Key issues impeding the integration of international faculty at Japanese universities*, which was published in the *Asia Pacific Education Review* in 2022, and *The integration experiences of international academics at Japanese universities*, which was co-authored with Futao Huang in 2022, are both based on interviews with 40 international teachers based at Japanese universities, in particular, their assessment of the qualitative research will be especially useful in this study.

One particular issue that arose from Chen and Huang's studies is the importance of involvement in the working community, and how isolation (be that actual or perceived) can have a very strong, detrimental impact on staff motivation. These texts show that university teachers often build strong ties by sharing research projects, or other responsibilities. As will be explored later, one of the key motivators highlighted by the key informants was the importance of research, and how if an institute offers opportunities and support staff in exploring independent research, this can act as a very strong motivator for staff.

Although not solely concerned with Japanese tertiary education, Dafouz and Gray's 2022 study, *Rethinking the roles of ELT in English-medium education in multilingual university settings*, explores how the role of the English Language Teacher (hereon referred to as ELT) needs to be constantly considered and reviewed, to ensure the position remains relevant. Much like the findings of Chen and Huang, Dafouz and Gray also point out the benefits of open communication between teaching staff, especially how fruitful mutually beneficial relationships between ELTs and native teachers can be.

To gain a better understanding of the macrosystem of the tertiary education in Japan, Jeremy Breaden's book, *The Organisational Dynamics of University Reform in Japan*, paints a very clear picture of how rapidly and drastically the higher education sphere in Japan has changed since the 1990s, and how political policies have had long-lasting effects. To further this

fundamental information in regards to HEIs in Japan, the official website for the Japanese government offers clear and concise explanations of laws and mandates that alter teaching practices in Japan. Contemporary articles, from sources such as Nippon, The Mainichi and, The Japan Times will also help build a better understanding of the public zeitgeist in regards to HEIs in Japan.

4. Interviews

The interviews with both the international teacher (hereon referred to as T) and the native Japanese staff member (hereon referred to as NJS) were conducted via Zoom, the software offering a multitude of benefits that made it preferable to a face-to-face interview. Firstly, it allowed for more flexibility in regards to scheduling the interview, as the interviewees were both full-time workers and only available in the evenings or weekends. Furthermore, Zoom allows for the recording of the interview, which makes the process of transcribing the conversation much smoother; the video file was uploaded to YouTube as an “Unlisted Video” which helped maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, while also allowing for them to be easily shared with the interviewees, who could then raise any concerns or request sections of the interview to be removed, edited, or censored (no such requests were made). The autonomized closed captions from the YouTube video were then downloaded, checked, edited, and formatted into verbatim transcripts (see Appendix 1 and 2), repeated words and grammatical mistakes were not corrected in the hopes of maintaining full transparency.

The anonymity of the interviewees was maintained so that they could share their thoughts and experiences freely, without the fear of repercussions from their employer. However, the following profiles of the key informants was deemed to be both reflective of their expertise, but also not at risk of compromising their anonymity. Again, this profile was shared with the interviewee to allow them the chance to raise any concerns, but no such concerns were made:

NJS:

Position: Full-time staff

Institution: Public university in Japan

Years of experience: Over 5 years

Responsibilities: Maintaining the “Global Lounge” and facilitating activities and connections between Japanese and international staff, as well as students

T:

Position: Full-time staff

Institution: Private university in Japan

Years of experience: Over 10 years

Responsibilities: Specializes in the planning and teaching of English language classes

5. Framework of Data Analysis

The process of data analysis can be broadly divided into three sections:

1. Preparing Data for analysis: As previously mentioned, the interviews were conducted on Zoom, and a video file was created for the entire interview. This file was uploaded to YouTube as an “Unlisted Video” so that it could be shared with the interviewees for checking, whilst not allowing for it to be seen by anybody with the direct link. YouTube offered the dual purpose of also being able to automatically generate closed captions, which were downloaded, edited and formatted into a verbatim transcripts (see appendix 1).

2. Initial analysis: The transcripts were first studied to see if any recurring themes or ideas became apparent; this included field notes in the form of hand-written notes that were made on a printed version of the transcript, as well as a digital codebook that was altered and perfected throughout this step in the process.
3. Coding: The transcript was then studied more precisely, and categories were identified and labeled. Further details of these codes were also written on the digital version of the transcript (a Word document), using the "Add Comment" function. These codes were then exported from Microsoft Word to Microsoft Excel using the "Extract Function" of the program "DocTools". In Excel it became possible to sort the data in a number of different ways, allowing for clearer and more efficient examinations and comparisons.

After this initial process of acquiring, sorting, and studying themes and codes, descriptions of these themes and how they interact with each other could be generated; furthermore, this data was actively studied alongside the existing literature in this field. This process is represented in Figure 1.

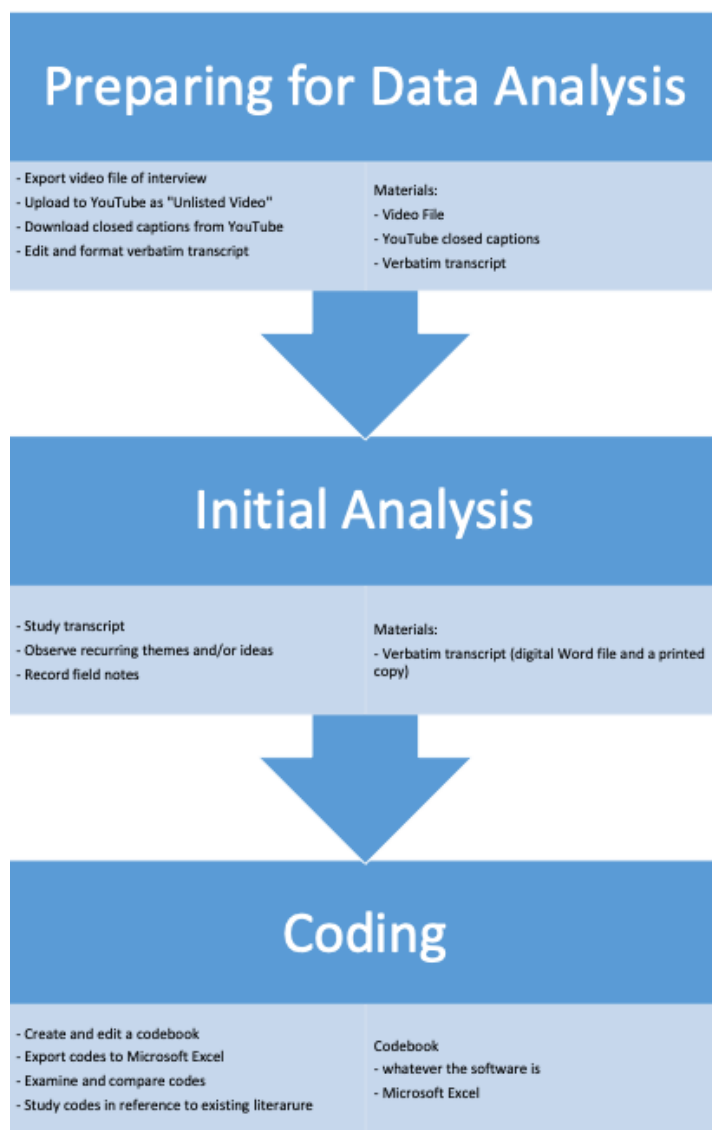


Figure 1. Framework of Data Analysis

6. Findings

The interview with NJS was insightful in that it offered a unique view on the issue of FTCs and what impact they can have on staff morale and motivation. Being in a distinctive position that acts as a liaison between international teachers, native Japanese teachers, administrative staff, and students, the interviewee was able to offer an overview of the handling of academic staff at her university. The interview with T gave first-hand experience of working full-time as an EFL teacher in Japan and within the boundaries of an FTC. Below are some of the key findings that arose from the interviews, which will later be triangulated with existing studies in the subsequent "Implications" section of this study.

6.1. Employment Terms

While neither of the interviewees were involved with the hiring of staff, nor aware of the specific contracts employees were beholden to, it was stated that "some of them are based on the contracts that you renew every year" (NJS, lines 21-22), the "them" referring to teachers at the university. The interviewees went on to state that there may be some inherent benefits to the university following this annually renewed contractual system, namely that if staff are underperforming or do not seem to have good cohesion with the culture of the university, their contract can simply not be renewed, allowing universities to easily let go of staff and replace them with new workers. As NJS pointed out, this may well have some benefits, but it can lead to staff feeling "disposable" (NJS, line 202). Some classes may not require specialised skills, training or experience, for which being a native speaker may be qualification enough and universities may well believe that "teachers are easily replaced for certain classes" (T, lines 268-269) and "there might be certain situations where they don't particularly need or want [...] loyalty." (T, lines 274-275) There also seems to be tension between the university's desire for highly qualified and experienced staff being juxtaposed with their aim to spend as little as possible, as many universities wish to "hire qualified people but don't want to pay them very much" (T, lines 221-222).

In recent years it has been reported that many universities in Japan are increasingly relying on part-time teaching staff, and their working conditions have become less and less tenable, with stagnating wages, higher workloads, and a research budget that is increasingly difficult to acquire (Itakura, 2021). This proliferation of overworked and underpaid university teachers have born rise to the moniker "academic underclass" (Itakura, 2021), showing that this is not merely an underappreciation of international teachers, but a systemic problem in many universities throughout Japan that seem to value saving money in the short-term over gaining value from teachers' development in the long-term.

It is notable that T pointed to the support of an institution in regards to independent research, and he went on to state that even when such support is not offered, he felt it important to continue researching independently, as he recognized the importance of professional development in regards to maintaining his career; a decision in line with existing thoughts on CPD as "it is expected that professionals will reflect on their own practice and try to achieve continuous improvement" (Collin et al, 2012). Even full time university teachers may not have a sense of security in Japan, due to the proliferation of FTCs; this may mean that full-time staff that are not given easy access to research budgets may need to invest in their own CPD in order to find employment after their current contract has expired.

Again, this inevitability of a teacher moving to another position could be another reason why some universities in Japan may not lay much emphasis on CPD. T raised similar concerns, stating that although he was happy in a previous position, and his employer was pleased with his work, the very nature of his FTC meant that he was forced to move on:

“They thought I did decent work and I received positive feedback from co-workers and supervisors and so they wanted to keep me [...] I would have been rather happy to stay there actually.” (lines 183-187)

But this system is not only detrimental to the teachers, but also to the universities, who have their hands tied in regards to keeping teachers they feel are beneficial to their institute:

““Perhaps they wish to keep somebody [...] and it becomes more problematic for them.” (lines 188-189)

This could well be a sign that faculty members, even those in leadership roles, may not have the power to make decisions in regards to extending contracts, and the responsibility and power to make such decisions may rest more on the human resources department:

“In general, faculties and other academic units cannot make policy and implement operational decisions independently of the administrative offices that support them. On the other hand, administrative offices can often present proposals and make operational judgements without the need to consult academics.” (Breaden, 2017)

This indicates that faculties within Japanese universities can only make "operational decisions" under the guidance of or with the approval of the administrative departments; however, that responsibility is not shared both ways, and the administrative department in Japanese universities can make decisions, such as refusing to extend a contract beyond the 5 year threshold, without needing the agreement of the teacher's colleagues or direct superiors. This may well mean that any roles in which the teacher thrives, be that teaching, independent research, material development or inter-departmental cooperation, may well go unnoticed by the administrative staff, as they are not working alongside the teacher on a regular basis, so their CPD efforts may play no bearing on their continued employment.

6.2. Professional Responsibilities

NJS pointed out that the distribution of responsibilities is also skewed when permanent staff are compared to full-time staff on FTCs; the consensus seems to be (supported by not only the interviewee, but by the existing literature that will be explored in the following section) that international teachers on FTCs are more likely to have a fuller timetable in regards to teaching classes, in turn giving them less time to concentrate on independent research or other responsibilities outside of teaching. When asked about the responsibilities of permanent staff compared to those of FTCs, the interviewee stated that they may be “teaching less classes and of course you can spend more time on research” (NJS, lines 212-214).

As previously stated, the importance of independent research becomes a prescient point for many teachers in Japan, as it could well bolster their resume and make them more desirable when their current contract ends and they begin searching for a new position. But as NJS points out, teachers with permanent and secure positions may well be given more freedom to explore their research. Not only does actively encouraging independent research improve the employee’s future prospects, it can have the immediate effect of motivating the staff and improving the learning environment of the institution. While speaking of a former employer, T stated “one reason I liked working at that place is that that university did [...] appreciate the value of [...] personal development” (T, lines 188-189). The university in question supported CPD in a number of ways, including “a research budget [...] for going to conferences” (T, line 199), which the interviewee reacted to very positively, stating “it was really a very supportive kind of place that I really appreciated.” (T, lines 201-202)

6.3. Recruitment and Orientation

Lastly, the interviewees spoke about hiring and orientation practices, a costly and time consuming element of FTCs and the inevitable high staff turnover. It seems that initial training is as low a priority as nurturing and retaining staff, as NJS speaks of her initial time in her position when “No one taught me anything [...] It was very hard because I didn’t know what to do.” (lines 151-156). This could well be another example of staff being seen as disposable and therefore not worth the initial investment comprehensive training would entail. Secondly, it could point to how universities in Japan may sooner save money by refusing to hire staff permanently, investing in the research, training them sufficiently, and encouraging the staff to undergo continuous professional development. Furthermore, the potential costs of high-turnover, be that purely fiscal or less tangible, are perhaps viewed as acceptable collateral damages when compared to stringent hiring practices, orientation and ongoing support for staff development.

7. Implications

According to the data explored by Chen and Huang, FTCs can have a number of very detrimental effects on teaching staff at Japanese universities; in the interest of retaining focus, this study will just focus on two central aspects of their research that is not only supported by the existing literature in this field, but also raised during the key informants' interviews, namely job security and workload.

The indifference to staff retention does seem to be noticeable from the very beginning of a staff member’s journey at universities, as NJS pointed out, even at her university, which she spoke of fondly and in general being a supportive working environment, there were clear gaps in her orientation process, with a nonexistent approach to initial training. This lack of consideration given to the orientation process is seemingly systematic in HEIs that rely on FTCs, as pointed out by the existing literature:

"[C]ontingent faculty are often hired without a rigorous search process and earn lower salaries, are assigned ill-equipped and unsatisfactory office accommodations, experience taxing teaching loads, and have tenuous job security." (Gosine et al, 2021)

This shows an initial lack of care in regards to ensuring a lengthy and fruitful working relationship with the new hire, as it indicates from the very first encounter that resources will not be allocated for the development of the staff. NJS stated that she either had to depend on her own skills to acquire the appropriate skills and expertise, or the responsibility fell to other parties besides the HRM department, as the interviewee stated she had to rely on “the record that was left” (NJS, line 157) by the previous employee in the position, as well as volunteer “students teaching assistants” (NJS, line 159). So, while the university did have plans in place to help with orientation, the responsibility was shifted away from HRM to the outgoing staff and volunteers.

Such a stressful and turbulent beginning to a position may well cause rapid turnover amongst many hires, but even for those that do stay, lacking this foundational knowledge of the culture and approaches favoured by a workplace can mean there will be a continued disconnect between the staff and the employers, one which cannot be overhauled so easily:

"No amount of staff professional development can compensate for inadequate recruitment, selection and employment practices and poor hiring decisions." (Cameron & Grootenboer, 2018)

As Cameron and Grootenboer highlight, the very first step in an employee's journey is often the most important, and employers finding the right staff for their institution is a paramount decision in ensuring their continued success. However, if universities are merely looking for staff who are both qualified and willing to enter into an FTC, they may well be resigned to the fact that they will be with the institution for only a limited time, and investing in CPD programs or entering into a thorough and lengthy employment process may be deemed too costly for a non-permanent member of staff.

Even if HEIs can find staff who willingly enter an FTC, and can weather the turbulent and isolated orientation process, there are still many demerits to FTCs that seem to be consistent amongst Japanese and Western research; for example, employees recognize the insecurity of their position, and this lack of loyalty is therefore reflected back to the employer, as "fixed-term contracts largely lead to employees' insecurity, which militates against commitment to their affiliations." (Chen, 2022)

The lack of loyalty shown by the employers was corroborated by the key informants, who, as previously stated, suspected that employees are often seen as "disposable" (NJS, line 202) by HEIs in Japan. Instead of nurturing any single employee and investing in mutually beneficial CPD, the university is perhaps more likely to simply replace a teacher who has approached the end of their FTC with another employee with a similar skillset who is also willing to enter a form of temporary employment. This is clearly a far cry from recognizing that "people are key to quality" (Goldbach et al, 2018), and alludes to the ideas that HEIs in Japan are tackling immediate problems, such as cutting costs and tightening budgets, instead of concerning themselves with long-term goals. In short, it could be argued they are more focused on saving money than investing in their staff.

It should be pointed out that this "disposability" is not reserved for international teachers, as even highly qualified, native Japanese staff are struggling to secure full-time employment in a market that is increasingly dependent on part-time and FTC workers, as now "adjunct instructors decisively outnumber full-time faculty members at most private universities, sometimes accounting for 60% or more of the school's teaching staff." (Itakura, 2021)

This lack of job security is often paired with a lopsided distribution of responsibilities at work. For many teachers, their role is not isolated to the classroom, and independent research plays an important role to CPD and ensuring their knowledge and skill set are both honed and primed for the learning environment, with teachers "engaging in research on an ongoing basis." (Binder, 2012) As the interviewees alluded to, many teachers who are subject to FTCs may find themselves teaching far more classes than their permanent counterparts, which in turn limits the amount of research they are able to undertake.

"[H]eavy teaching loads make it hard for part-time and non-tenure stream faculty to plan a long-term research agenda, make scholarly contributions to their disciplines, and assemble the publication record required to compete for tenure-stream jobs." (Gosine et al, 2021)

This may lead to some teachers finding themselves in a vicious circle of not being able to complete research substantial enough to be considered for promotion, limiting them to FTC based positions which will continue to curb their opportunities to conduct independent research; they are unable to conduct research while working within an FTC, and are unable to find a position that is not an FTC without substantial research. As upper-tier positions are most commonly held by native Japanese teachers in Japanese HEIs, the potential for promotion amongst international teaching staff is already very limited, so without the opportunity to conduct research and distinguish themselves from their colleagues, they may well find they are

destined to remain within the FTC system. This in turn makes this glass ceiling amongst international teachers a systemic pattern that seems deeply rooted and unlikely to change in the near future:

"[G]iven the acknowledgment that the predominant upper echelons of Japanese universities are primarily Japanese academics, the principles of Japanese exclusionism, serving as a boundary schism, make the professional promotion of international academics precarious." (Chen & Huang, 2022)

According to existing literature, employees on FTCs may have heavy teaching loads, fewer opportunities to explore independent research and may still be expected to take on similar roles to their colleagues who are hired on a permanent basis, as many of the employees on FTCS "undertake similar academic activities to Japanese faculty, including both research and teaching. Moreover, some are even strongly expected to conduct the work roles that Japanese faculty can hardly play." (Chen, 2022) Here Chen is alluding to the unique role international teachers play in Japanese universities, namely the fluency of their mother-tongue playing a key role in not only offering more engaging and accurate language lessons, but also opportunities to share another cultural perspective with the students (and staff), giving the university a better understanding of the global community. This desire to reap the rewards of international teaching staff is not unique to Japan, as "[g]lobal competition for international academics has intensified all over the world, especially in some non-English speaking countries. Japan is no exception." (Chen & Huang, 2022)

However, simply employing an international teacher does not guarantee an improved learning environment; like any asset, these staff members must be utilized correctly, otherwise their hiring will be little more than a squandered opportunity:

"The introduction of greater language variety does not automatically result in greater discourse variety, just as the presence of a foreign member of staff does not inevitably make a workplace more internationally orientated." (Breaden, 2017)

If universities do not invest the time, energy, and funds to allow these teachers to grow their potential will not be realized. One method that seems to be favoured and potentially fruitful is the idea of interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration, which NJS pointed out was a practice her university was actively pursuing:

"[T]he school [...] wants us to work together with departments more to develop the school." (NJS, lines 123-124)

Indeed this seems to be a practice that is supported by existing studies as being a way to improve the learning and working environment of schools and universities:

"[C]ollaboration is consistently emerging as one of the best ways we can help each other navigate the challenges and opportunities of teaching, leading, and learning; take greater perspective on our work and our selves; and grow the individual and organizational capacity to do more - together." (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018)

If a university can successfully realise a program that encourages cooperation between a variety of stakeholders, the benefits can encompass not only the individual teachers, but the institution as a whole. Furthermore, it need not be a large scale program or a shift in pedagogical practices, it could simply involve opening up channels of communication between native Japanese and international teachers, and encouraging them to communicate with each other; as even informal and relaxed discourse tends to have a plethora of benefits:

“Knowledge of classroom discourse, the nature of teacher talk, patterns of communication, interactional competence, scaffolding, elicitation, and managing feedback in multilingual settings are key aspects of expertise which can be drawn on to enhance teaching and learning.” (Dafouz & Gray, 2022)

However, while NJS pointed out her institute's enthusiasm to encourage cooperation, and existing research does support its merits, it cannot remain a passive desire, but an active plan of action that the university must invest in. Just as simply having an international teacher within a faculty does not ensure benefits will be seen, nor will lip service to cooperation bring about the merits listed above. For collaboration to be realised, there needs to be a shift in the institute's culture, that gives teachers the opportunity and desire to not only share, but also receive feedback and advice, as "collaboration requires logistical coordination *and* courageous vulnerability to engage genuinely and authentically with and for one another." (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018)

Such a shift would undoubtedly take a large investment in regards to both time and energy, as it would be essential that all teachers be aware of the collaboration, and fully knowledgeable of the potential benefits and why they should personally alter their teaching approaches for the benefit of the school and the students:

"When a school aspires to quality, it must deliver this message to the entire staff and to ensure that all employees are partners along the processes that will take place." (Goldbach et al, 2018)

The idea of the teachers feeling as if they are "partners" in a communal effort seems to be a fundamental step in ensuring cultural and practical shifts within an HEI succeed or fail. So while it may be true that "[e]ffective teachers rarely work in isolation" (Ormrod et al, 2020), the very nature of an FTC will make it apparent to teachers that their time at an institution is limited and they may lack the motivation to invest in a program they will not see come to fruition. Furthermore, any progress that staff do make will be squandered once they are asked to leave the institute.

8. Conclusion

Although the anxiety caused by FTCs is well reported, it is perhaps not yet known what percentage of staff turnover in Japanese universities is due to contracts simply not being extended. Further studies may include an active pursuit of exit-interviews, which could give tangible and studyable data that may give insights into the direct impact FTCs have on staff turnover, as "exit interviews provide useful insights into turnover problem areas." (Dessler, 2020)

Beyond that, it could be argued that FTCs are not the sole problem in regards to HEIs in Japan, merely a result of the attitudes in Japan towards tertiary education. Looking at the existing literature, it could be argued that HEIs in Japan see international teachers as merely a tool to be utilized rather than an intrinsic part of the school's community, in short they are apart from the school, not a part of it. This is seen in the cyclical trappings of FTCs that limit the potential for independent research and in turn make it less likely for these teachers to gain a permanent position. Furthermore, with focus being drawn away from research, many of these teachers are expected to undertake extremely challenging teaching loads, which can have detrimental effects on the teachers, but also the students who find themselves under the tutelage of a demotivated and exhausted teacher, as teachers "cannot continue to grow - and we cannot continue to give indefinitely - if we're struggling perpetually to catch our breath." (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018)

It is therefore important to distinguish that merely abolishing FTCs will not solve the problems facing HEIs in Japan, instead a cultural shift must be made so that tertiary education teachers are seen in a different light, not as an expense, but an asset. In so doing, schools will see the worth, and not the cost, in investing in teachers; helping them to develop their research interests, encouraging them to join the educational community in which they find themselves, nurturing opportunities for collaboration, and fully embracing the potential benefits of CPD.

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Appendix 1: Sample of Verbatim Transcript of Interview with a Native Japanese Staff member

Download the full verbatim transcript via this link:

<http://www.sb-publishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/hpem7063q2transcript.pdf>

Appendix 2: Sample of Verbatim Transcript of Interview with an EFL university teacher in Japan

Download the full verbatim transcript via this link:

<http://www.sb-publishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Hpem7063-q1-transcript.pdf>