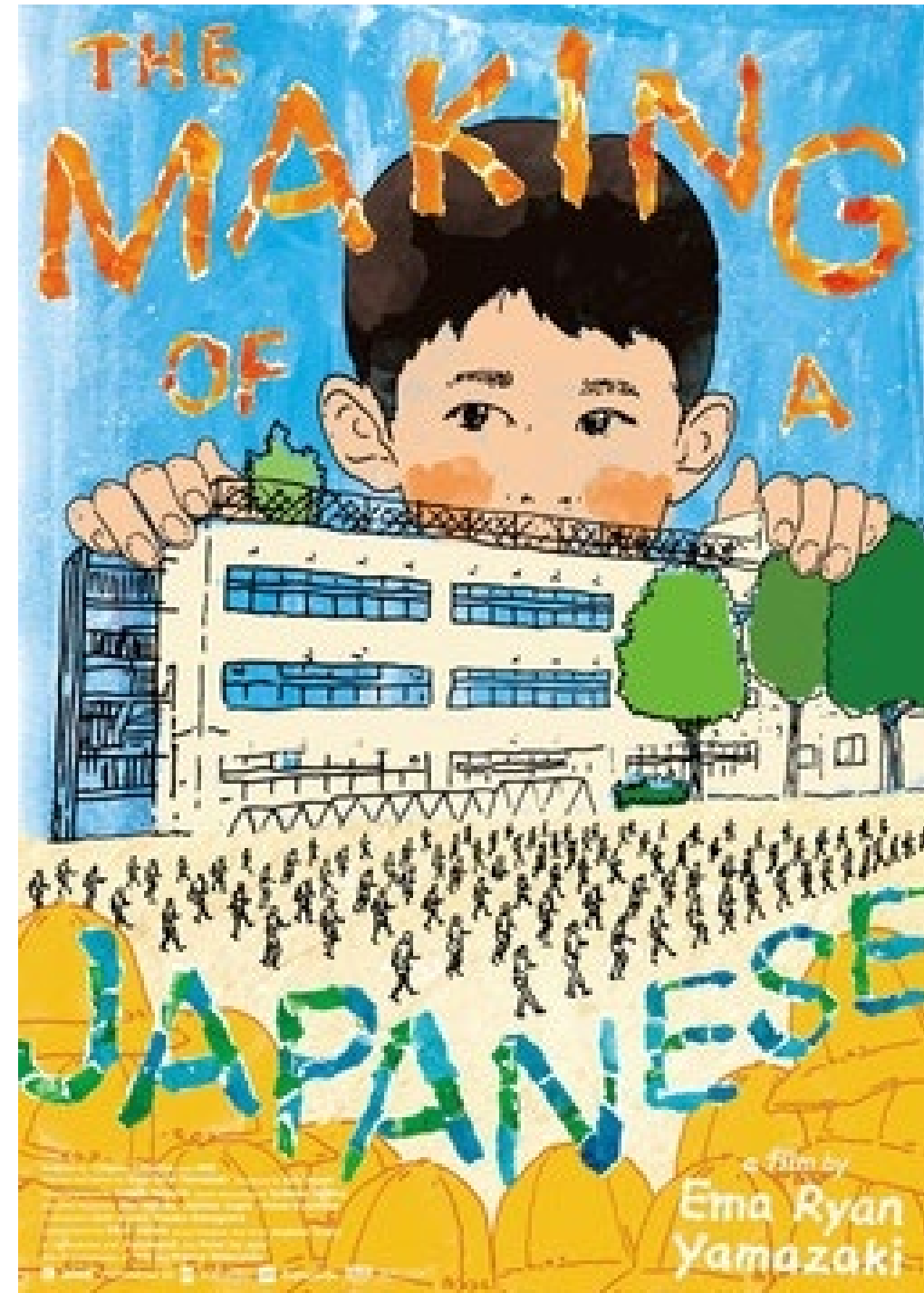
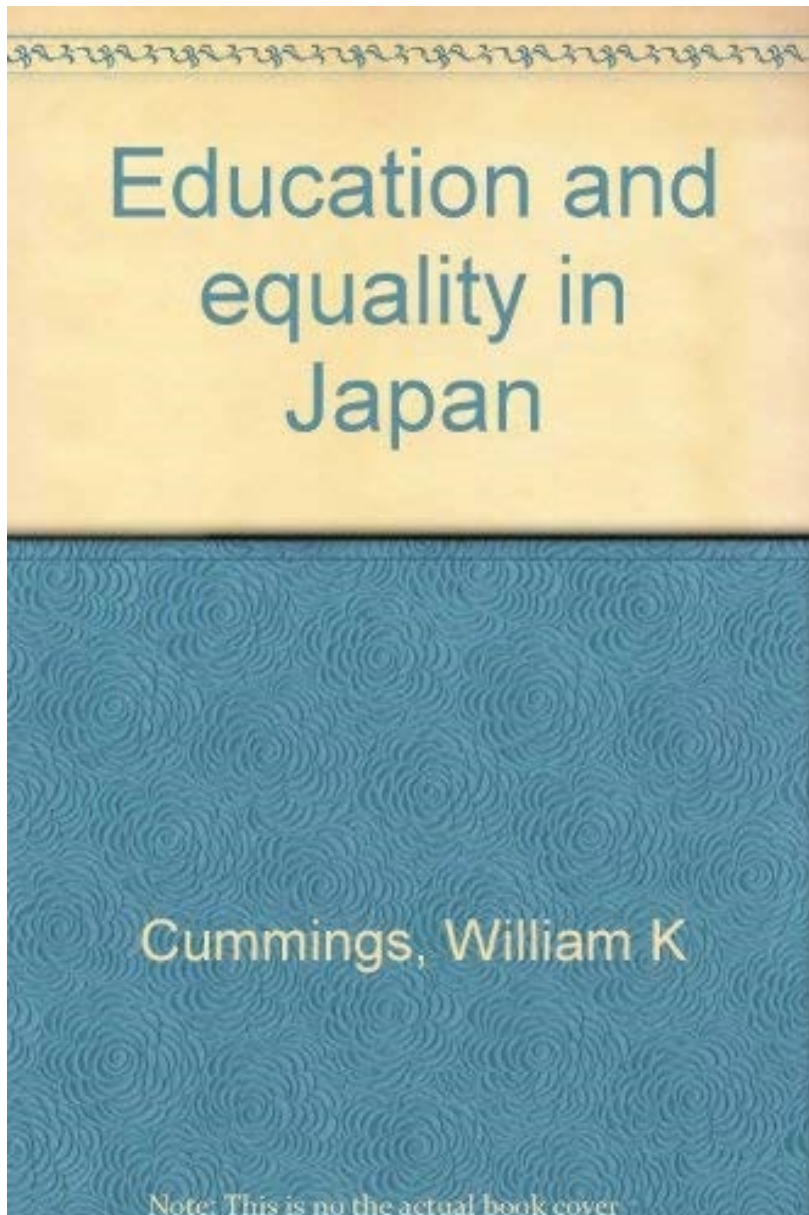


Japan's context of Micro-Credentials



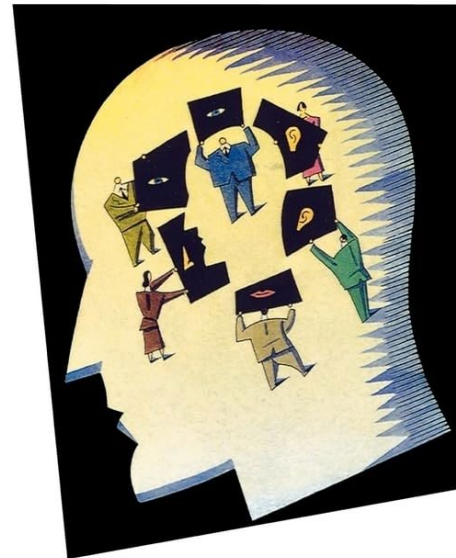
Akiyoshi Yonezawa, Tohoku University, Japan



1980

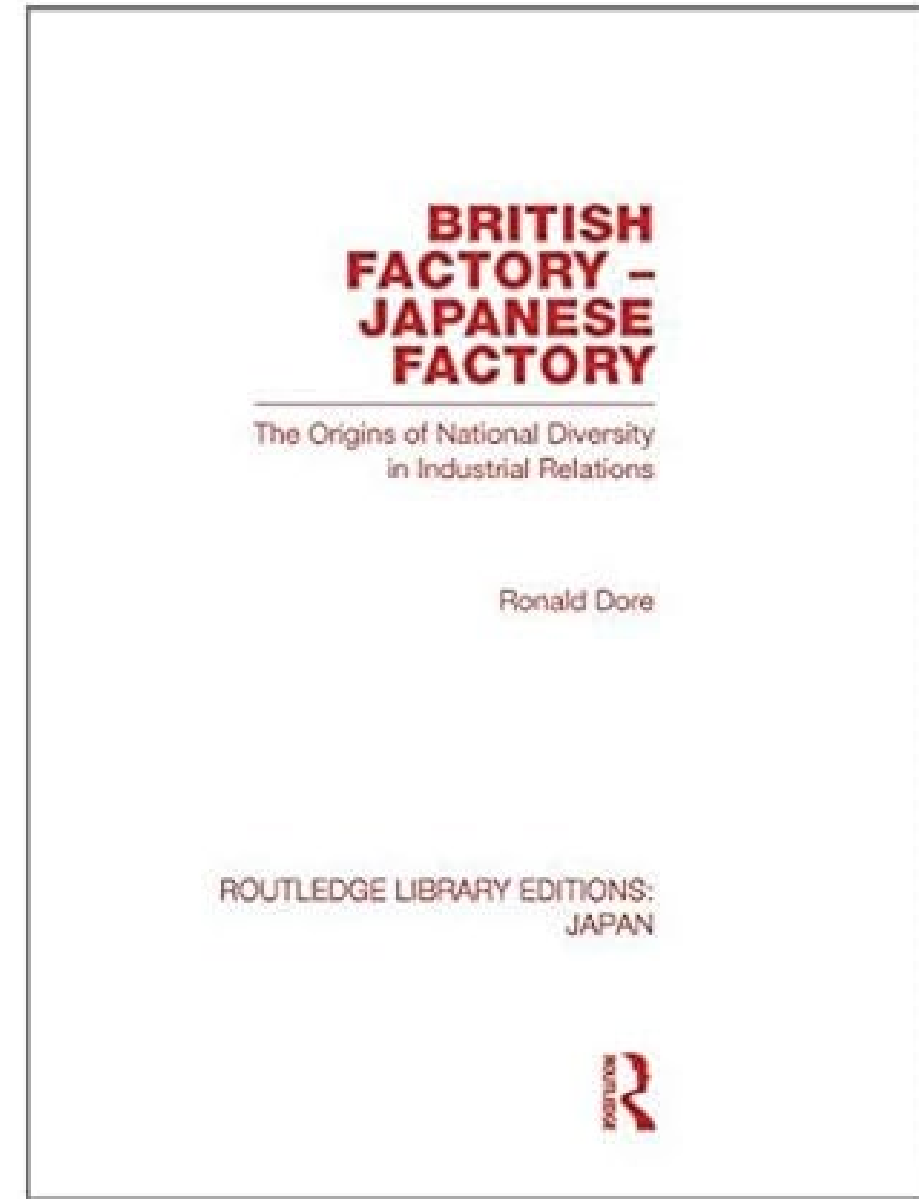
THE KNOWLEDGE- CREATING COMPANY

How Japanese
Companies
Create the
Dynamics of
Innovation



IKUJIRO NONAKA
HIROTAKE TAKEUCHI

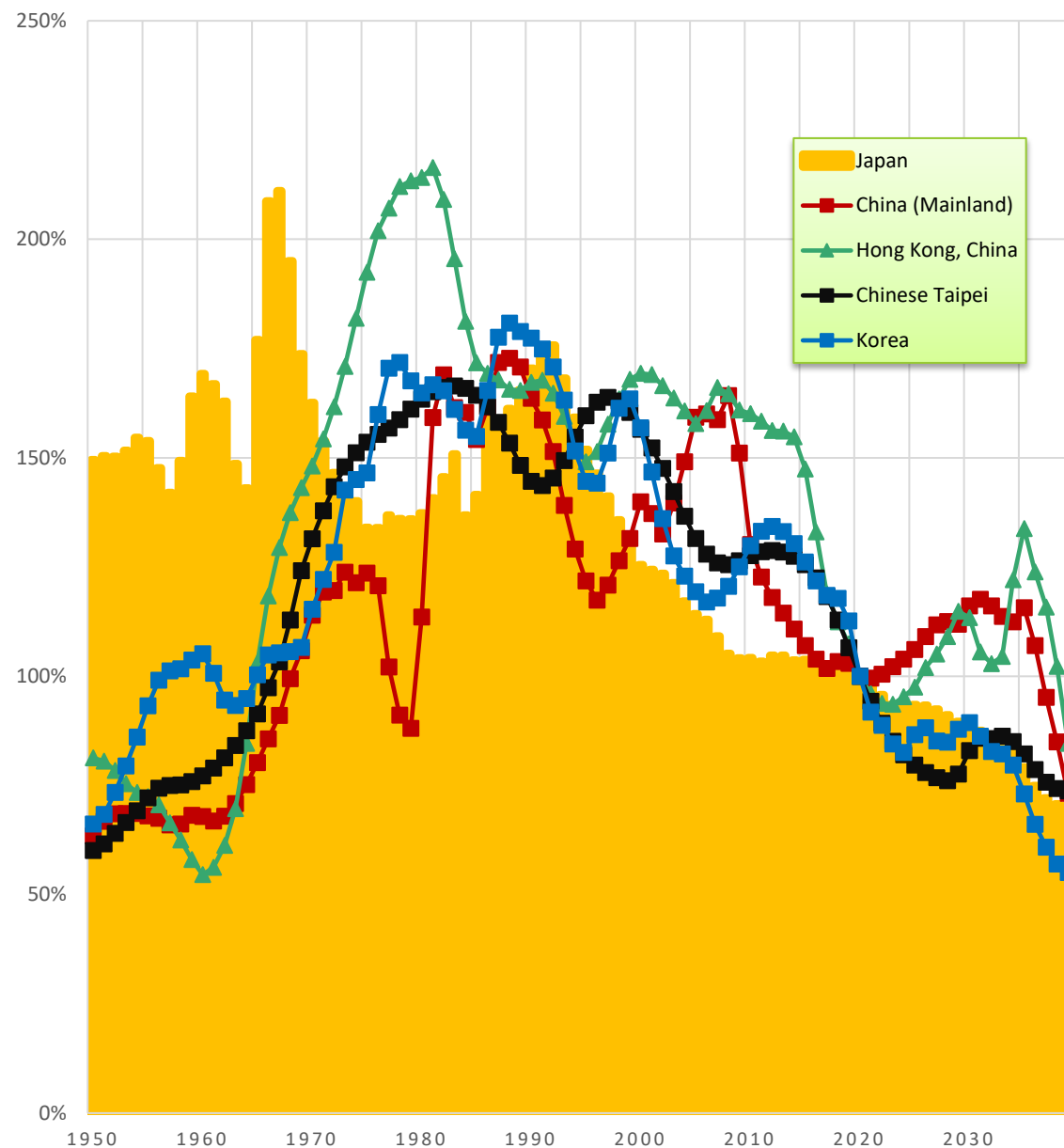
1995



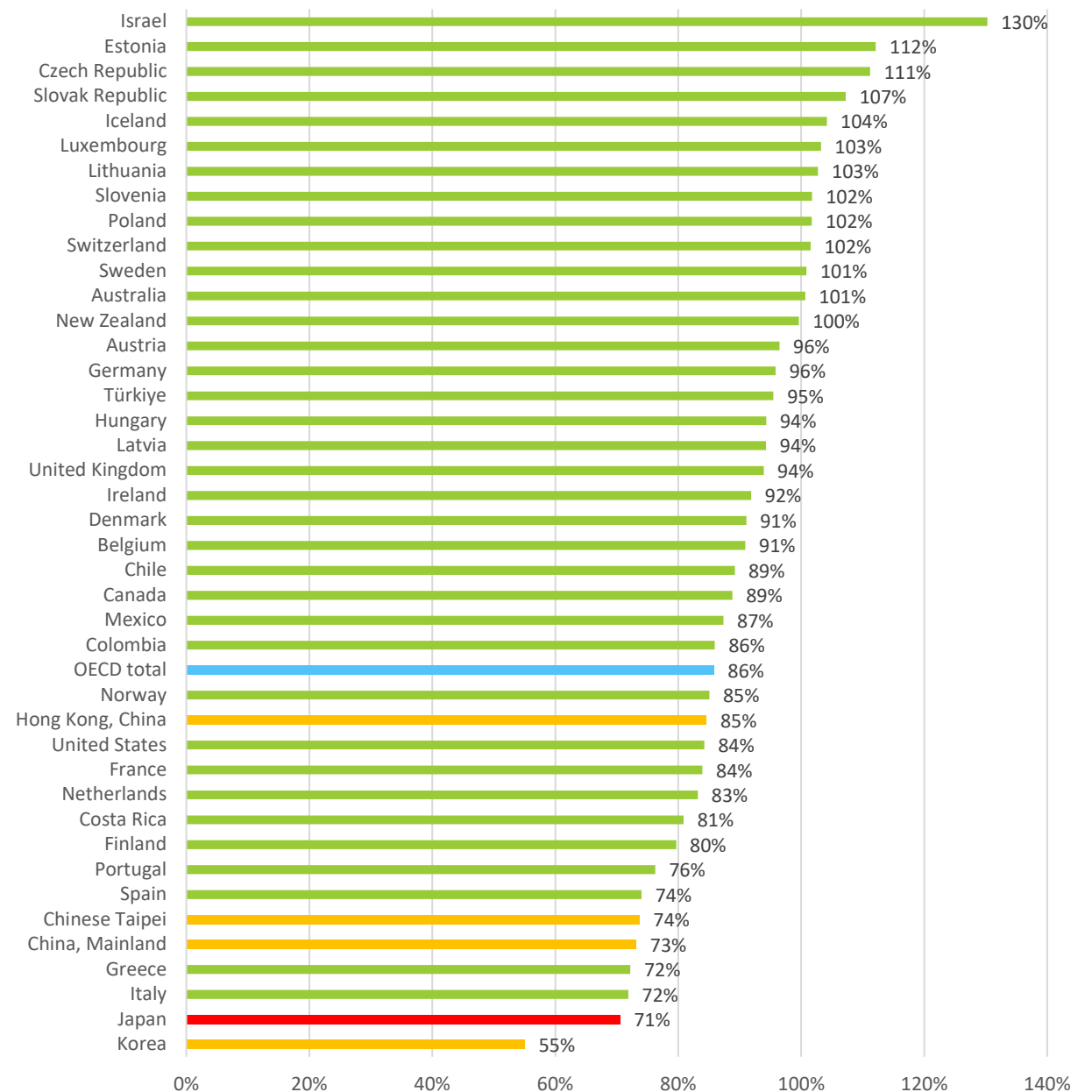
1973

Estimated change in 18-year-old population

East Asia (1950-2039)



OECD and East Asia(2020-2039)





source: Bloomberg/Getty Images, Bloomberg/Getty Images



thejapan times

Jobs vs. membership: Making sense of Japan's system of employment



LIFE SHIFT

ライフ
シフト

100年時代の 人生戦略

リンダ・グラットン / アンドリュー・スコット 著
Lynda Gratton / Andrew Scott

池村千秋 訳
Chiaki Ikemura

全世代の必読書
大絶賛45万部

東洋経済新報社

Goals for 2033



Outbound Japanese Students

500,000 students

222,000 students pre-COVID-19

To a level comparable to France and Germany(non-English speaking countries)

Inbound/Retaining International Students

400,000 students

318,000 students pre-COVID-19

Maintain the growth rate of Plan for 300,000 Exchange Students

Internationalisation of Education

Develop an **international educational environment** and promote **in-person and online interactions**

Universities, vocational school, etc.

Number of students studying abroad long-term 62,000 ▶ 150,000

Number of students studying abroad middle and short-term 113,000 ▶ 230,000

High schools, etc.

Study tour (less than 3 months) 43,000 ▶ 110,000

Studying abroad (more than 3 months) 4,000 ▶ 10,000



Universities, vocational schools, Japanese language schools, etc.

Number of international students 312,000 ▶ 380,000

Percentage of international students
Undergraduate: 3% ▶ 5%
Master's: 19% ▶ 20%
Doctorate: 21% ▶ 33%

High schools, etc.

Number of international students 6,000 ▶ 20,000

Percentage of international students 0.2% ▶ 0.7%

Post-graduation employment rate

Post-graduation employment rate of international students in Japan 48% ▶ 60%

*Programmes based on inter-university exchange agreements with overseas universities

Universities, etc.

English-only programmes
Undergraduate: 86 ▶ 200
Graduate School: 276 ▶ 400

Universities that have exchanges with overseas universities based on exchange agreements 48% ▶ 80%

Number of joint degree programs* 27 ▶ 50

Number of double degree programs 349 ▶ 800

Junior high and high schools, etc.

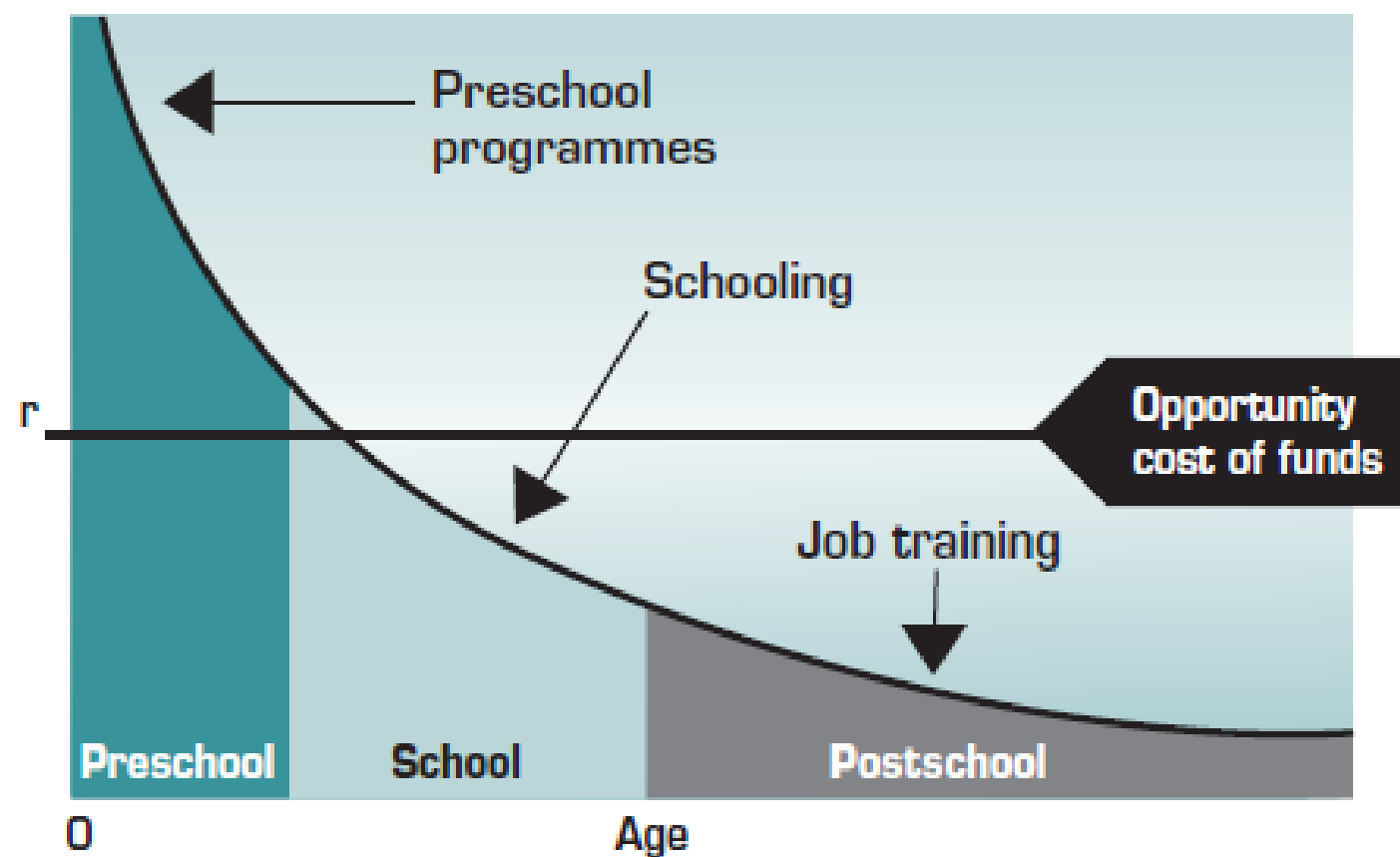
Schools where students can take multiple subjects in English 50 schools ▶ 150 schools

Conducting international exchanges in-person 18% ▶ 50%

Online international exchanges, etc. 20% ▶ 100%

INVESTING FOR LIFE

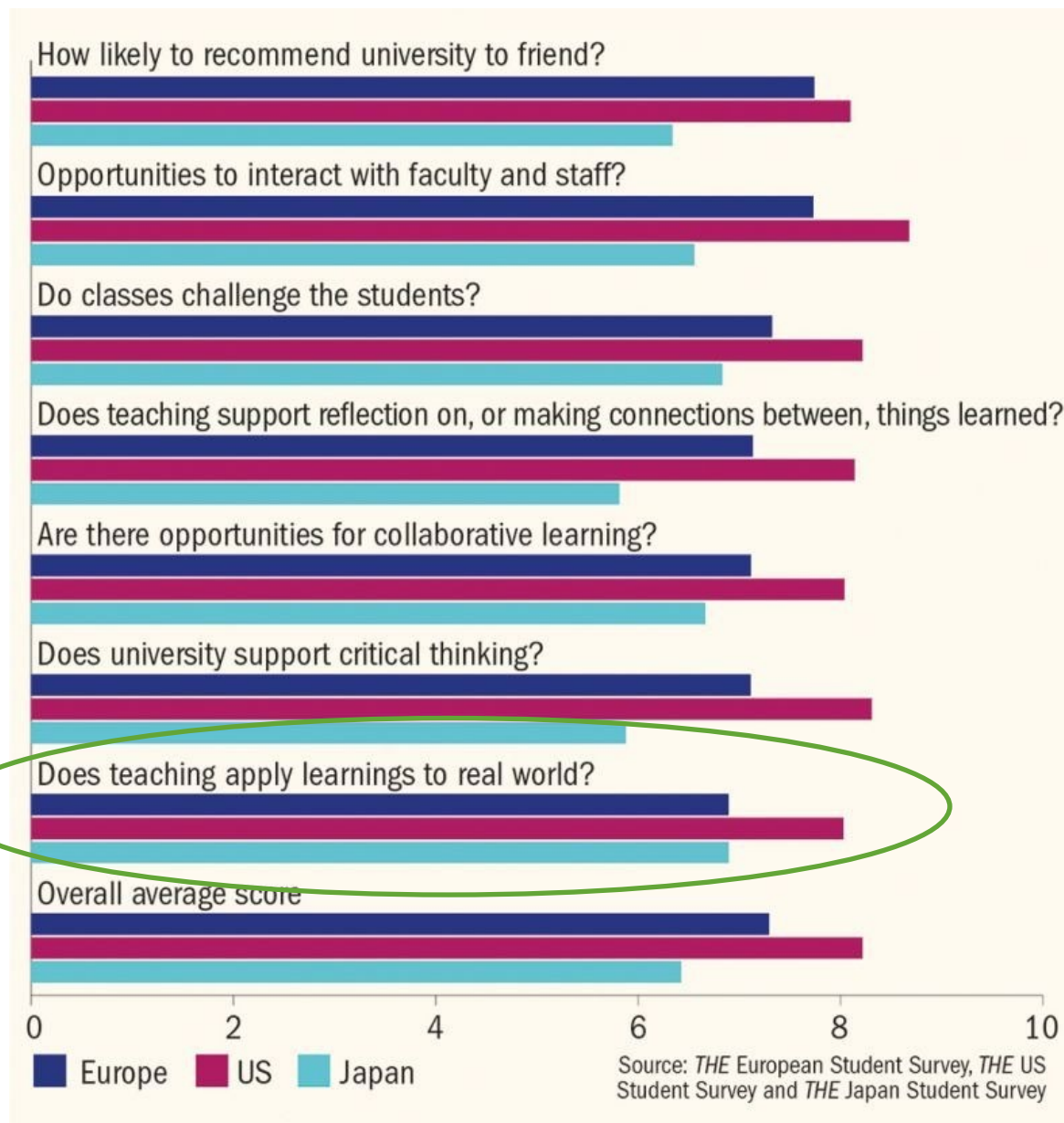
Rates of return for investment in human capital at various stages of life



Nobel laureate James Heckman argues that money spent on preschoolers brings returns that can't be matched at any other stage of life. Why? First, the earlier we're educated in life, the more time we have to earn returns on that investment. Second, learning young makes it easier to go on learning throughout life, which increases human capital and, thus, earnings.

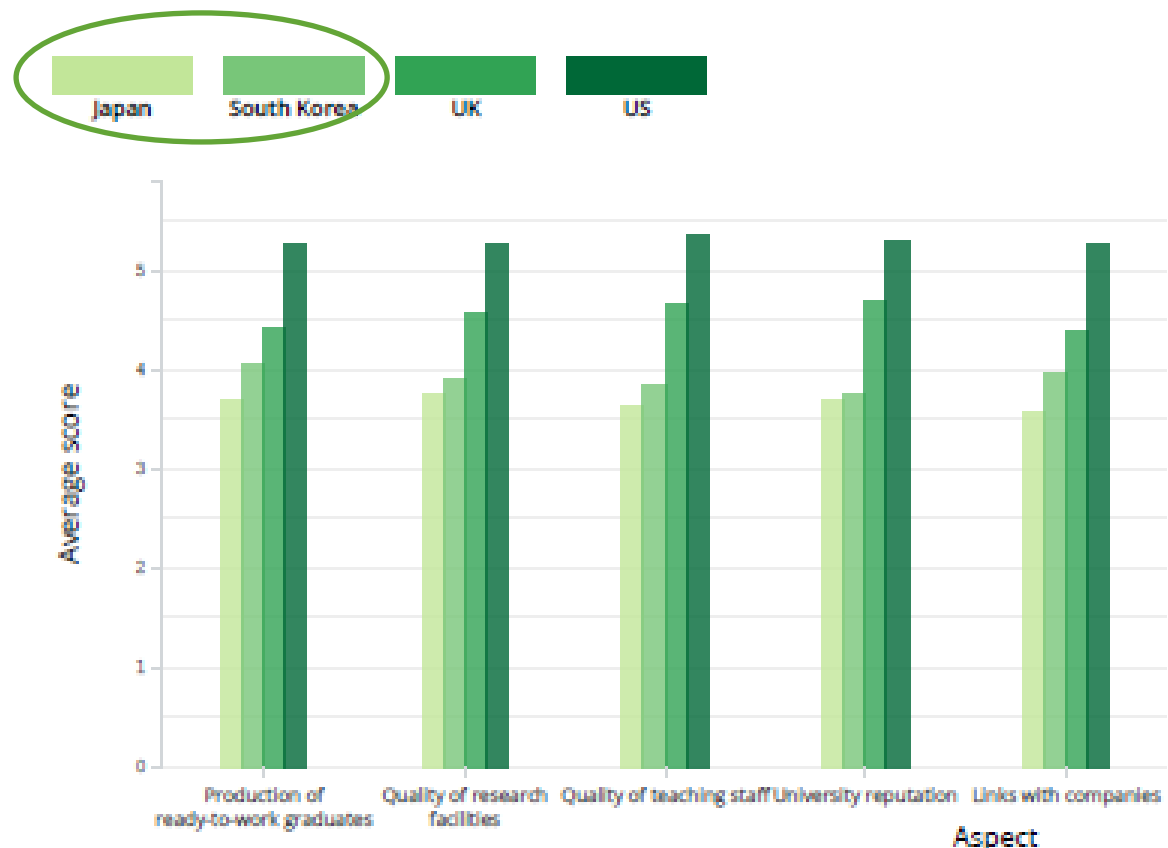
Source: Keely, B. (2007) Human Capital: How what you know shapes your life. Paris: OECD, p42.

The era of direct international comparisons of student and employer surveys



Average employer satisfaction with country's universities on different aspects (1-6 scale)

Hover over bar for details or key to filter by country



Source: Global University Employability Survey 2017 © Emerging.

Times Higher Education 2020.1.7.
Student engagement: how do the
US,
Europe and Japan compare?

Times Higher Education 2017.11.22.
US and Japan poles apart on their view of graduate
ability

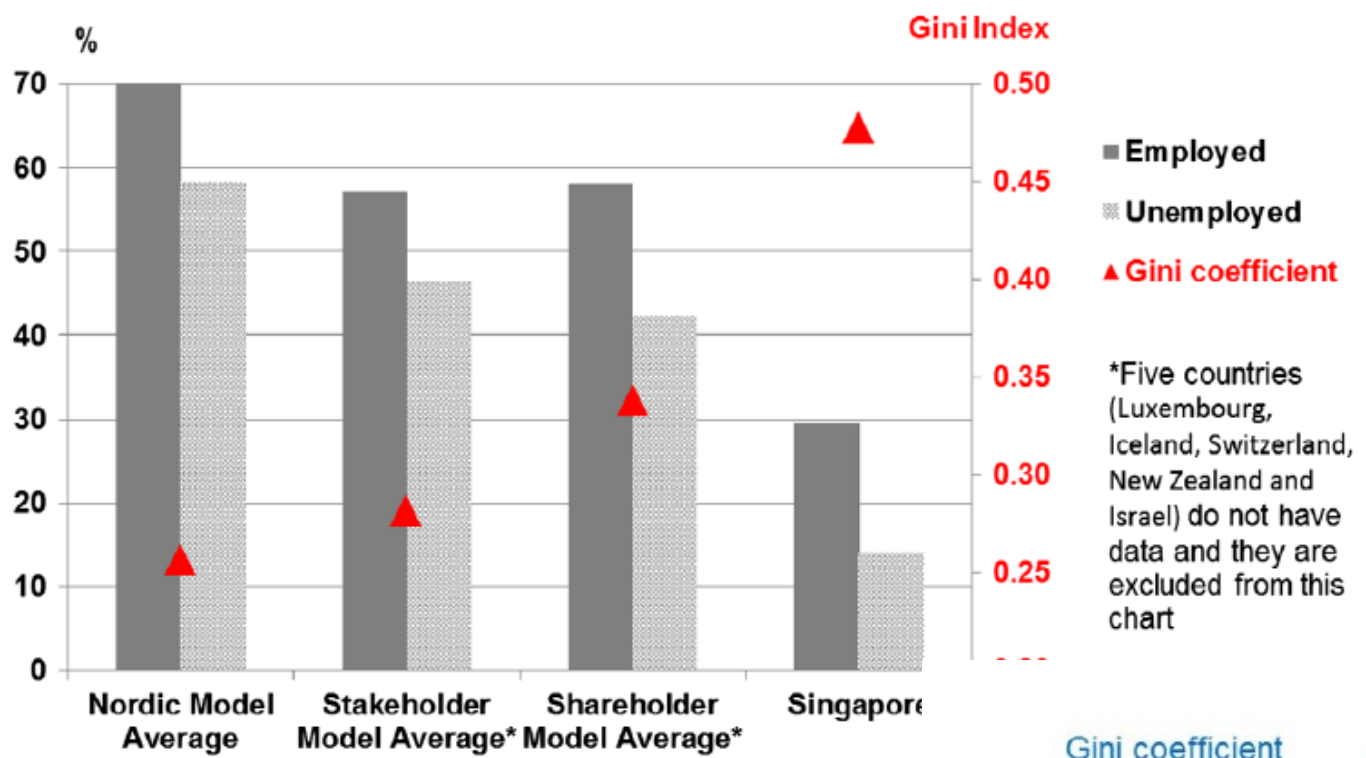
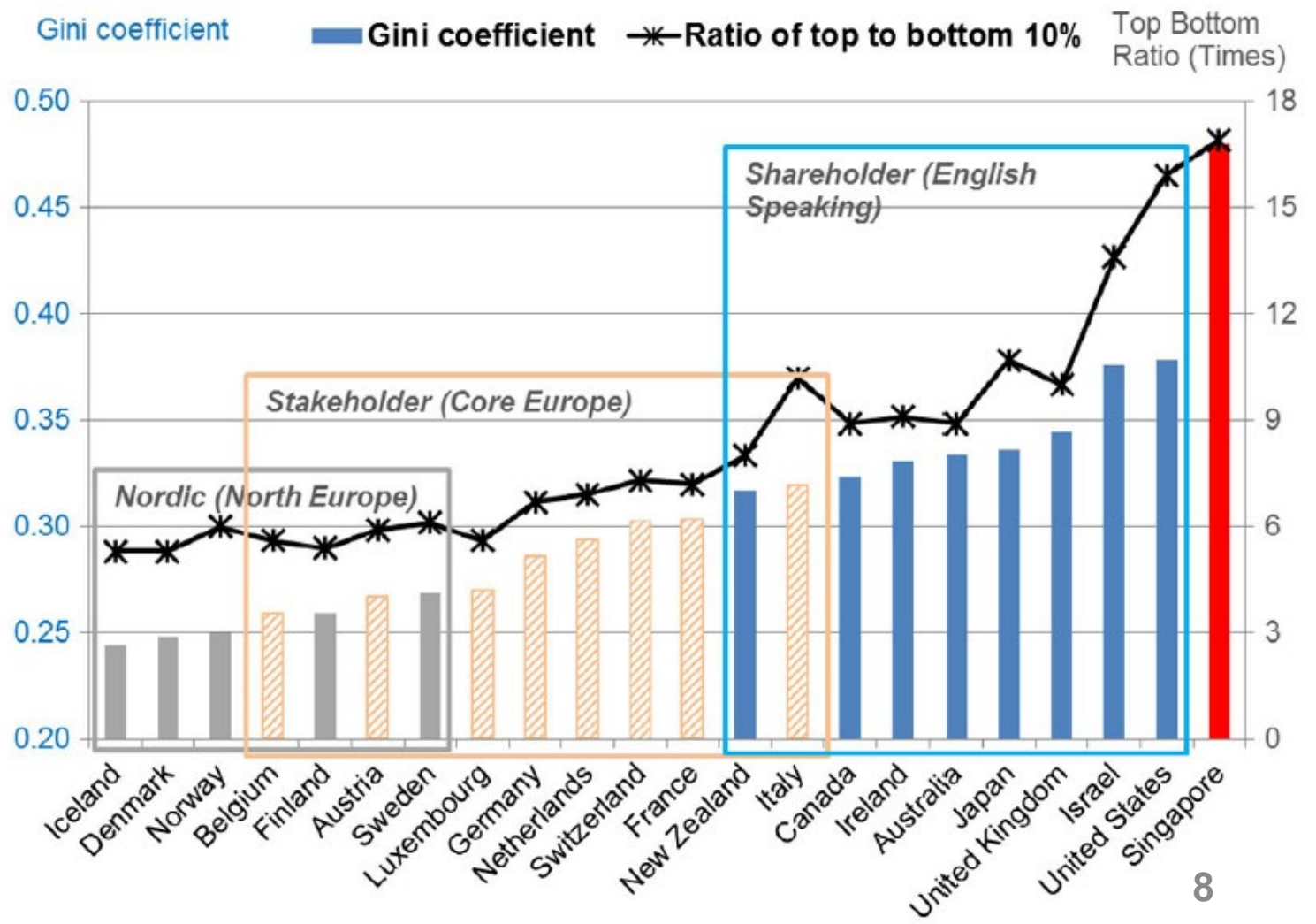


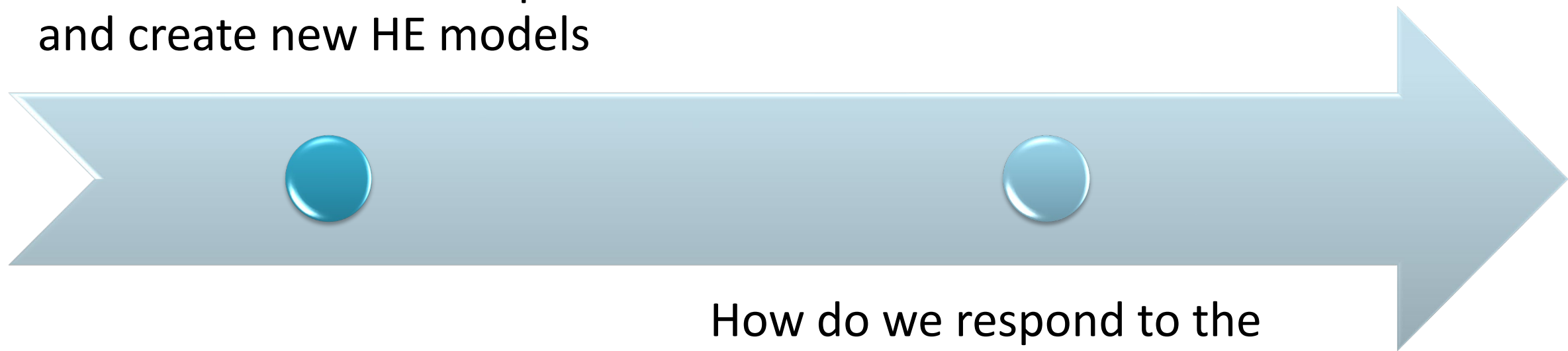
Figure 3. Lifelong learning participation rates by employment status (OECD, 2014c, p. 390).

Source: Lee, M. & Morris, P. (2016) Lifelong learning, income inequality and social mobility in Singapore, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35:3, 286-312, DOI: 10.1080/02601370.2016.1165747



The Big Bang in MCs and Quality HE

Micro-credentials disrupt
and create new HE models



How do we respond to the
growing global motivation to
learn and upgrade skills through
quality higher education?

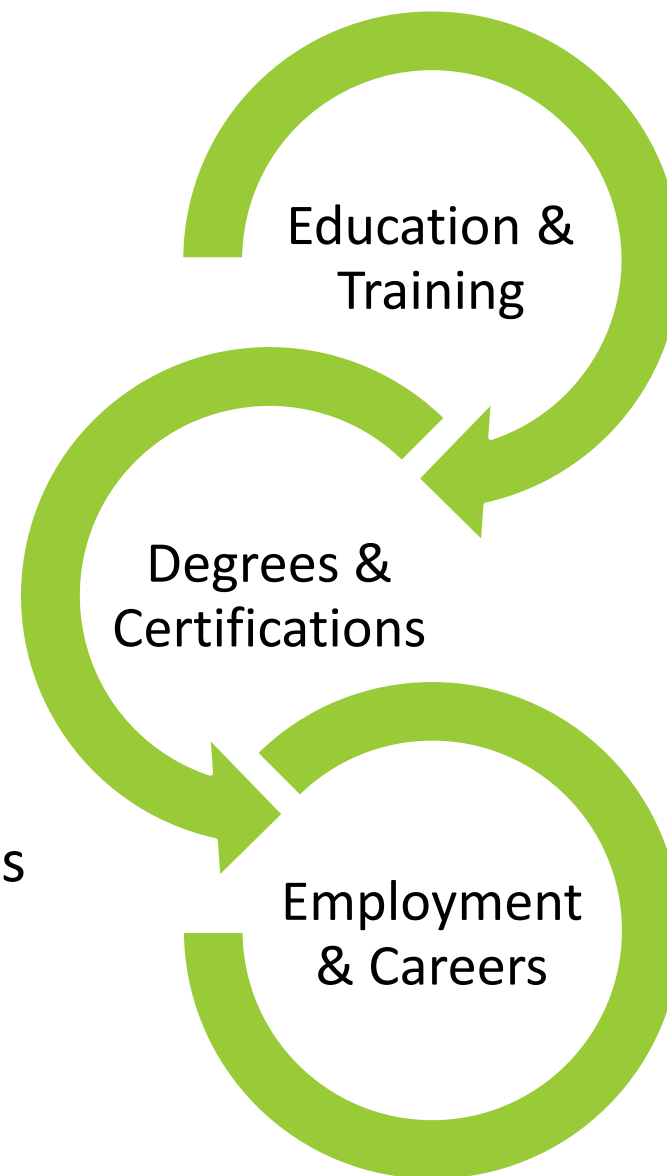
Different developments and perceptions of micro-credentials in different countries and regions

- East Asia:

- Japan
- China
- Korea
- Taiwan



- North America
- Europe
- Commonwealth countries
- ASEAN
- ...



Diversity of providers: formal educational institutions (including universities), professional associations, private companies and organisations (for-profit and not-for-profit)

Micro-credentials: a qualification or credential that certifies short-term study and outcomes related to a specific domain/outcome.

Users:

- Learners (including a wide range of adults and working adults)
- Employers
- Government & local community

Development of National MCs & MOOCs in East Asia

Establishing HE
systems in own
language

Labour system:
different labour
markets and career
systems in different
countries

Lack of link between
national higher
education system &
international NQF
systems

Highly advanced digital
infrastructure

What makes a microcredential different from a traditional degree or credential

Economic policies

- Aging population combined with the diminishing number of children
- Globalization
- Digitalization and technological innovation

Diversification of learner/worker values

- Collapse of lifetime employment and seniority system
- Changing attitudes among young people: pursuing clear career paths and expertise

Labor policies

- Work-style reform
- Promotion of "job-based employment"

Industry

- Optimal allocation of human resources
- Recruitment and retention of excellent human resources
- Culture of Diversity

Potential for job-based employment to expand outside of traditional membership-based hiring of HE graduates

**Micro-credentials:
New signals for
matching learning
and employment**

言易行難

Easier said than done.

Shunso Hishida 1909



Internationalization of Higher Education and Micro-Credentials for Promoting Inbound Mobility to Japan

Hiroshi Ota, Ph.D.

Professor and Director, Hitotsubashi University Global Education Program

Center for General Education

Hitotsubashi University

Email: h.ota@r.hit-u.ac.jp

INQAAHE 18th Biennial Conference 2025

Akasaka Intercity Conference Center

May 15, 2025

Changing Int'l Student Policies in the West

- Due to **domestic problems**, e.g., housing and immigration issues, major host countries are moving to **restrict or reduce** int'l students.
 - Australia: Increased visa rejection rate (40%), visa application fee from A\$710 to A\$1,600, and IELTS scores from 5.5 to 6
 - Canada: Setting an upper limit on the number of new student visas (study permits) issued ⇒ Expected to see a 28% decrease in int'l students admitted to UG programs.
 - UK: Most int'l students are no longer allowed to bring dependents. The introduction of a 6% levy on tuition fees paid by int'l students.
 - US: 41% of the student visa applications (nearly 280K) were rejected in 2023/24.
 - Norway: High tuition fees for int'l students were introduced.
 - Netherlands: 14 unis. announced plans to reduce EMI courses and int'l students

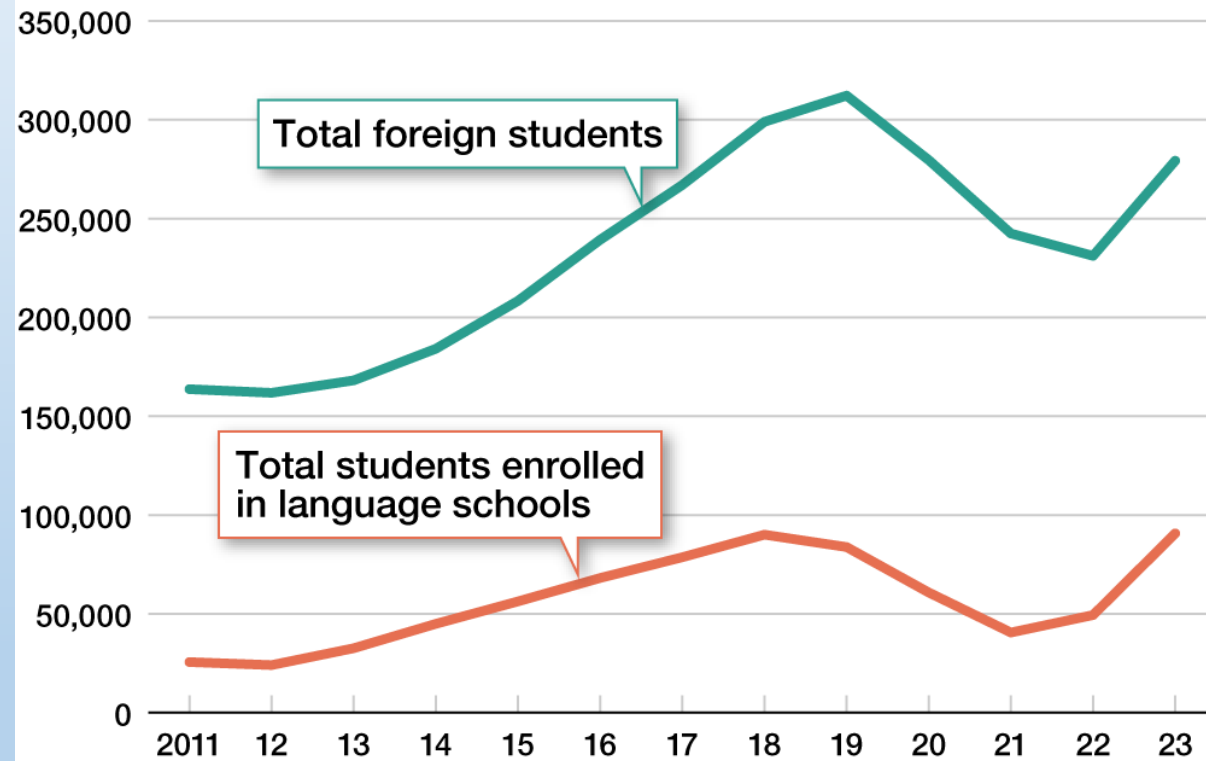
Ambitious Targets for Attracting Int'l Students in East Asia

Country /Region	Current and <i>pre-pandemic</i> numbers of int'l students	Target number of int'l students	% of private unis.	Population
Japan	336,708 (2024) *312,214 (2019)	400,000 by 2033	77% (74%)*	124 million
South Korea	208,962 (2024) *160,165 (2019)	300,000 by 2027	87% (76%)*	51 million
Taiwan	123,188 (2024) *130,000 (2019)	320,000 by 2030	70% (60%)*	23 million
Hong Kong	64,200 (2023/24) 23,100 in 8 UGC-funded unis. *75% of them are from Mainland China	Double intake of non-local students from 3,000 (20%) to 6,000 (40%) starting in 2024	8 public & 4 self-financed	7.5 million

* Percentage of students enrolled at private universities.³

International Students in Japan (2023)

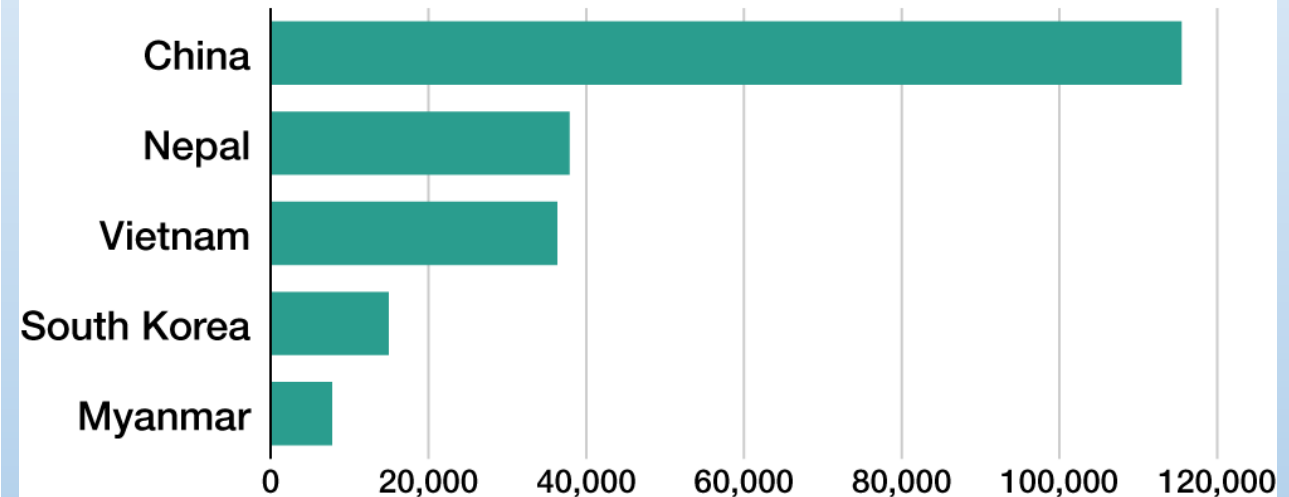
Number of Foreign Students in Japan



Created by Nippon.com based on data from the Japan Student Services Organization.



Country of Origin of Foreign Students



Created by Nippon.com based on data from the Japan Student Services Organization.

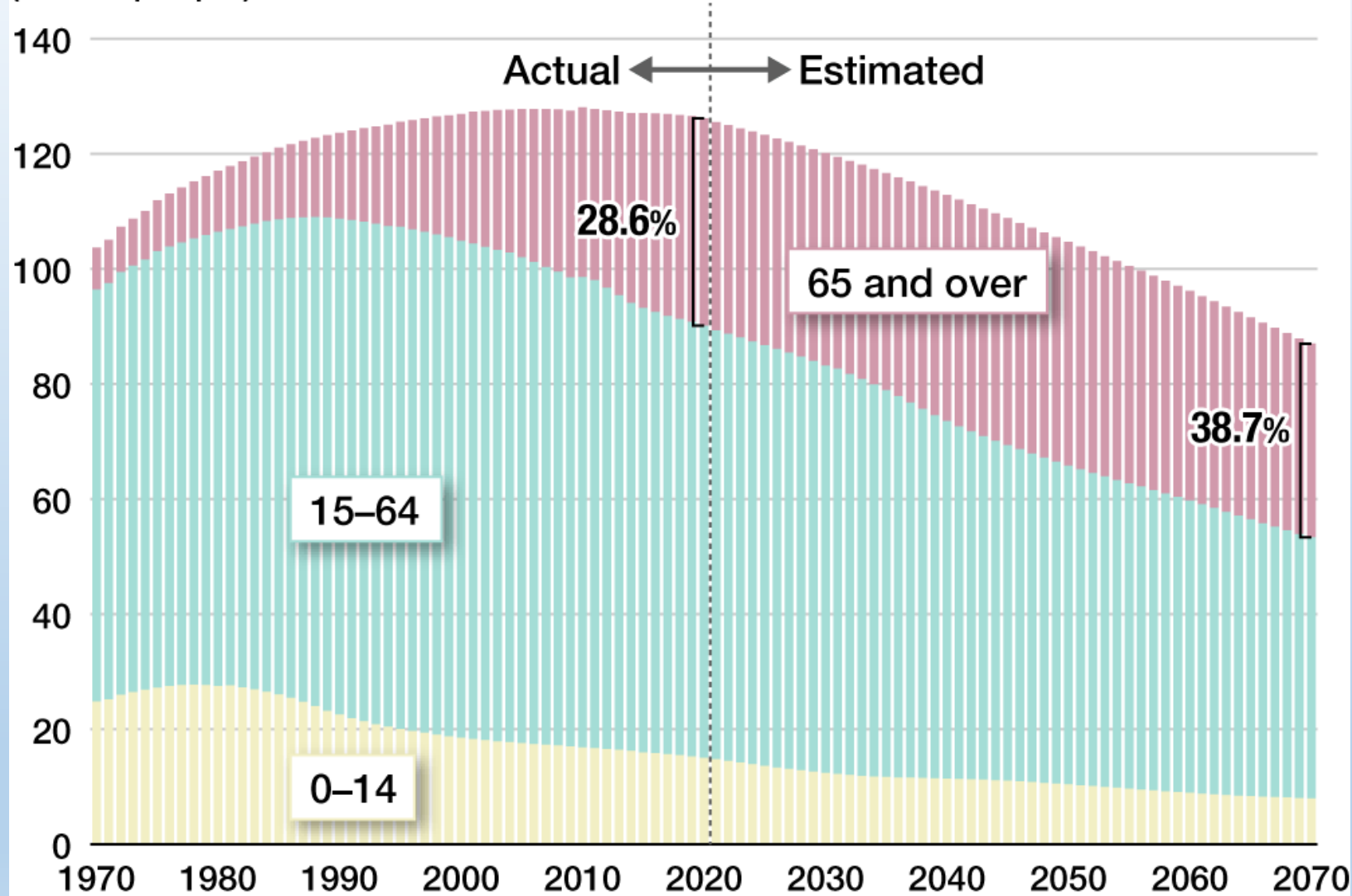


Int'l Student Policies in East Asia

- Common backgrounds
 - Demographic crisis: **Low birthrate** and aging population
 - **Enrollment problems** (*enrollment cliff*) in HEIs: Due to the **large private sector**, many private unis. are unable to recruit enough students.
 - Severe **labor shortages** have a significant negative impact on the economy.
 - **59% of private unis.** in Japan, possibly 70 to 80% of unis. including national ones in Korea, do not meet their student enrollment quotas.

Population Change in Japan

(million people)



Created by *Nippon.com* based on data from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

Japan's Population 50 Years from Now (2070)

	2020 (actual figures)	2070 (estimated figures)
Total population	126.2 million	87 million
Elderly	36.0 million (28.6%)	33.7 million (38.7%)
Working-age	75.1 million (59.5%)	45.4 million (52.1%)
Children	15.0 million (11.9%)	8.0 million (9.2%)
Foreign residents	2.8 million	9.4 million
Total fertility rate	1.33	1.36
Life expectancy (women)	87.7	91.9
Life expectancy (men)	81.6	85.9

Created by *Nippon.com* based on data from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

Diversifying Routes to Study Abroad Destinations

- The paths to study abroad destinations, including language learning and preparatory study, are becoming increasingly diverse, e.g., pathway and foundation programs
- The number of students who study abroad after participating in part of their post-secondary ed. in their home country is increasing, e.g., articulation, twining programs, and transfer
- **However, transfer admissions and foreign credential recognition are not widely practiced at Japanese universities.**
 - Universities, particularly private ones, want students to complete their programs from scratch.
 - Transfer students: 0.3% of UG students in Japan, 13.1% in the US
 - On-campus entrance exams are still the standard method for screening international student applicants.

If MCs are widely utilized and recognized,

- Japan will become a more attractive study destination for international students.
 - The connectivity between prior learning in home countries and studying in Japan is expected to increase.
 - Lateral mobility of students, including transfer from vocational schools to universities, will be facilitated.
 - The financial and time burdens on int'l students will be reduced.
 - Foreign credential recognition will be enhanced.
 - Distance learning, MOOCs, and JV-Campus will be integrated into studying in Japan.

If MCs are widely utilized and recognized,

- Pathway programs to universities will be developed.
- The transition from studying at universities to post-study employment for international students will be facilitated efficiently.
- MCs would be able to take full advantage of promoting study in Japan under the current situation where major host countries restrict or reduce the number of international students.



Hitotsubashi University
Global Education Program

Thank you for your attention.

“Be a smart risk-taker!”

Hiroshi Ota, Ph.D.
Professor, Center for General Education
Hitotsubashi University
E-mail: h.ota@r.hit-u.ac.jp



HITOTSUBASHI
UNIVERSITY