

The Increasing Implementation of Early Retirement: Pushing to Reshape the Orientation of Formal Education in Japan

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Abstract

This article reports some results of a survey on white-collar workers attitudes toward values strongly promoted through formal education along workers life. The main argument of this article is that the current increasing implementation of early Retirement Programs (sokitaishoku yugu), which breaks a promise of long-term relation between employers and employees, turns into obsolete some functions that education has been performing in benefit of companies. The promotion of values such as loyalty, familism and obedience to hierarchical organisation; and, the acting as a selective social filter to provide companies with the best workers. The sample was 86 male white-collar workers (in their 30s, 40s, and, 50s). The research focuses upon: 1) attitudes to work values; 2) attitudes toward the relation lifetime employment-education. The results suggest that in the current environment of increasing implementation of early retirement formal education is been pushed to change the orientation of the promotion of values. Therefore, if education is still to play the role of promoting values, its orientation has to change to create a more independent and creative worker, able to compete for a job. Also, it seems that formal education is facing the challenge to keep the attention of students when the possibility to access a lifetime employment is decreasing.

Introduction

From the perspective of the orthodox concept of citizenship, education is an important element that leads to accomplish the three sorts of rights included in citizenship: civil, political, and social. From such a perspective, only educated citizens are able to choose their governments, defend their rights and perform their tasks in conformance of responsible citizens. In the case of Japan, formal education and the employment system have been in a close relationship, only educated men can achieve a privileged citizenship through getting lifetime employment (*shushin koyo*). Thus, enjoying job security has been a sort of prize for those who have successfully completed a highly competitive educational path. From observing the relationship between formal education and the access to good job, it is undoubtedly that the implicit promise to be hired by a large size company contributes to endure the tough competence to get a place into a prestigious university, a competence that starts at elementary school level.

However, the recently increasing implementation of early retirement programs manifests that the promise of getting a job for a lifetime is falling apart. Therefore, it seems that formal education has to reshape some of the functions it has been performing in order to match new demands of a current economic and social context of Japan. This article reports results of a survey carried on in Japan during ten months of stay in 1997. The article divides into five sections. The first section identifies two functions that formal education has been performing. These functions are related to providing companies with the best possible labour force. From this section it is evident that there has been a close relationship between the rank of education and the rank of the job. In order to identify the impact that the introduction of early retirement programs might have on such relationship, the second section explores some given explanations to the implementation of early retirement by Japanese companies,

including large size companies traditionally considered as more stable work places. The third section introduces the characteristics of the research. The fourth section introduces the results of exploring statistically (ANOVA) the attitudes of the sample toward: 1) these values promoted by education, and useful for a long time work at a company, within the current context of early retirement programs; 2) their attitudes toward the need to change the orientation of additional functions of formal education. The fifth sections introduces the conclusions.

1. Additional functions of education in Japan

This section explores briefly how education in Japan accomplishes two functions, additional to academic formation of the student. One, it prepares the student to become an integrated element of his group. Second, it works as a selective filter to provide with the best labour force to companies. However, before starting discussing these two functions, it is worthy to mention that in Japan there is a dual welfare system. One is the so called occupational, provided by companies where the size of the company determines the quality and quantity of benefits. This system distinguishes by its high quality services. The other is the welfare system provided by the state. This system distinguishes by restricted accessibility and low quality services. It is evident that people prefer to enjoy the best benefits provided by large size companies. However, access to such services is restricted, since the 1950s, to a small proportion of the working population⁽²⁾. Those who are graduates from prestigious universities. It is at this point where the discussion of the additional functions of education makes sense.

According to Rohlen (1996) education in Japan is provided through three modals, formal, no formal, and informal. I will focus on additional functions of formal education. Formal education is provided by official schooling⁽³⁾. It seems to cultivate attributes in the students which will turn into necessary for a long-term permanence as workers in a company. It focuses mainly on the socialisation of the child, cultivating the value of being integrated to a group. This is done through a process of homogenisation of the children, their clothes and their appearance, to eliminate individual differentiation. Also it is done through daily school activities performed in groups (*kumi*). Thus, school develops group loyalty since the first day of the first grade when the child is included to a *kumi*. The integration to *kumi* develops *ties that bind the individual to his group* (Duke 1986:25). Such an emphasis on group integration prepare the future worker to have a long-term relation employer-employer. It is until junior high school where the transmission of relevant curriculum information starts, though the *kumi* is still important. Extra-classes activities are also shared by the *kumi*, even in the graduation ceremony students are grouped by *kumi*.

Despite of such cultivation of values, there is a generalised idea that university education do not promote, as strongly as necessary, values beneficial to companies. Therefore, companies provide training to fresh workers. An extreme example, that shows the essence of such intention of instilling values, is the called Sensitivity Training. It focus upon endurance of the self throughout sharing suffering and hard experiences in a collective way. There is little available information about these training, which seems to be similar to rituals of initiation in secret societies. A recent article compares the resources used in this character-building training, with the ones used by the Japanese sect founded by Asahara, planner of the sarin gas spells in the subway of Tokyo in 1994 (Fukumoto, 1995)⁽⁴⁾.

As we have seen, through accomplishing the first additional function education of promoting values as groupism, and loyalty to the group, contributes to shape a citizen oriented to work in-group, loyal to that group, and able to share hard experience within the group. This conclusion is confirmed by Kiyoshi (1994) argument that Japanese is more concerned with his attitude and behaviour in the collective community than with his individuality:

See the self as being part of a network of social relations in which they live, stressing the view that humans are seen inside their essential connection with other people'.

(Kiyoshi 1994:2).

Regarding the second additional function, education works as a social filter selecting those who will get access to the occupational welfare. It has been observed a relation between the rank of the school where the worker is graduated and the size of the company where he is hired. In other words, *education is one of the traditional determinants of the worker's career* (Imada 1995:5). It remains now a days that a male graduate from a prestigious university has more opportunity to be hired by a large size company or a government post. In the case of graduates of Kyoto University and Tokyo University, there is a tendency to obtain employment in companies and government respectively⁽⁵⁾.

The relationship between the rank of school and the size of the company, leads to strong competence to get a place in such prestigious universities. Such competence starts from primary school and goes on along until college or university. In the latest 1990s, 60 per cent of senior high school graduates took colleges entrance examinations. Notably increased from the latest 1980s where this figure was 40 per cent (Christopher 1983:89). This is the 'selectional path' described by some scholars (Christopher 1983:88, Dore 1987:99). According to this path, a graduate from a first rank senior high school has greater opportunity to enter to a first rank university; therefore, he will have the opportunity to get a lifetime position in a first rank company, or governmental post. A graduate from a second rank senior high school will see restricted his opportunities to a second rank university; consequently, to a second rank company. Such determinism has been institutionalised through the implementation of National Tests in 1980. Those who get a lifetime position in a large company enjoy higher status in the society. Nakane (1973) refers to this characteristic as a value of the Japanese society:

The rank of the university which he (the worker) has graduated more or less determines the range of an individual's activities, the accessibility to certain levels of status and the degree of success he may expect' (Nakane 1973:107).

Even though lifetime employment is for all university graduates, the quality of benefits and the security of job strongly depend on the rank of the university⁽⁶⁾.

We have seen that formal education in Japan has been performing a double function. First, it contributes to shape values such as integration and loyalty to the group into which the student, future worker, belongs. Therefore, education has shown to be more concern to group integration than to the development of individuality. Second, it works as a filter to select the best elements to large size companies or government posts. This is due to the direct relation between the educational background and the size of the company, or importance of governmental office, where the worker is hired. Even though society is changing, it is possible to say that this relation is still prevalent.

2. The increasing implementation of Early Retirement

Early Retirement basically means to get retirement before the mandatory retirement age. Its current increasing implementation, even by large size companies, seems to place the lifetime workers into a vulnerable situation. These workers were identified as privileged citizens due to benefits that companies offered to them. After all they were those who successfully passed the highly competitive educational path. The target group for early retirement is the longest seniority white-collar workers. Figures published in 1991 by the Japan Institute of Labour shows that 53 per cent of companies were implementing this program. As example of its spreading, it is mentioned Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) and International Business Machine (IBM). Therefore, even large size companies considered as *secure* place to work are implementing this program. It is said that early retirement program is implemented as a response, from the part of the companies, to the economic crisis. Since 1992, Japan has grown less than 0.5 per cent in its Annual Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Katz 1998:4-5). It seems that in this new scenario, lifetime employment is unaffordable.

There is another cause for the implementation of early retirement. It is an structural one, omitted in the public version but widely recognised by affected workers: the restructuring of organisations. This structural cause is independent of the economic situation; therefore, it will not change when the economic situations improves. This cause goes back to the early 1980s when posts in organisation of companies were eliminated to respond rapidly to international market demands and when computers were introduced into a high proportion in companies. This restructuring created a surplus of white-collar workers⁽⁷⁾ with the longest seniority (Sato 1994). 85 percent of companies included in a survey (Sato 1994) pointed to this structural cause as the main cause of surplus managerial and clerical workers age 45 and older.

The increasing implementation of early retirement seems to lay a more profound social debate: the current pertinence and affordability of values traditionally linked to lifetime employment, preserved along the educational life of the worker. Some of these values are, loyalty, company as a family (*familialism*) and obedience to the hierarchical organisation prevalent in Japan. In the current economic and restructuring context, facing the risk to be included in early retirement program, workers might perceive these values as non useful any more.

2. 1 The importance of getting a lifetime employment

In order to establish the problem and understand its magnitude, it is necessary to explore briefly the relevance of lifetime employment within the Japanese welfare system and the social context. First, the Japanese welfare system is identified, because of its political model, as hybrid Liberal-Conservative. This means few transfers in an universal scope, and benefits provided basically by companies (Esping-Andersen 1990:27). In the case of Japan, there is a direct relation between the size of the company and the level of benefits provided by this to the worker (Asahi Shinbun 1997:83). Based on cultural background, Jones names the Japanese welfare system as a Confucian model (Jones 1993). In this Confucian welfare there is a high sense of group, giving priority to activities that are best for the society as a whole, restricting individuality: *there is far too much social direction and too little sense of individual rights* (Jones 1993:214). In this context of few universal social benefits and extended provision of benefits through companies a high competition to get a position in a large size company takes place, mainly between graduates from prestigious universities and colleges. Second, regarding the social context, lifetime employment is considered a principle of labour management relations. Thus the act of dismissing a worker is a sort of *destruction of worker's life* (Kettler and Tackney 1996:74). Therefore, the long term permanence of lifetime employment system in Japan to be a result of the need that companies had to cut costs in training, social customs (Cole 1979:12) and worker's activism in courts (Kettler and Tackney 1996:74).

2. 2 Values attached to the lifetime employment system.

Some researchers have detected that there are values associated to the well performance of the lifetime employment system. These are loyalty (Benedict 1982:52, Kondo 1990:202), company as a family (*familialism*) (Clark 1979, Nakane 1972:20) and obedience to the hierarchical organisation of the company (Benedict 1982:49). Up to here, we have seen that the rank of education is in direct relation with the rank of company where he will get a lifetime employment. Into this dynamic relation education-job, the additional function of formal education of promoting some values are useful to endure such permanent job. Among these values are: loyalty, *familialism* (an extension of groupism), and obedience. However, the increasing implementation of early retirement, affecting mainly those who have shown to be the most loyal and obedient workers by staying longest length of service, might push to modify the promotion of such values by formal education.

2. 3 The problem

The increasing implementation of Early Retirement programs in Japan, might affect how workers perceive values traditionally linked to lifetime employment system. Being such values cultivated along worker education,

it could be expected to have an impact in the orientation (to shape a integrated worker, loyal and obedient to a group) that formal education has had during the past years. The importance of researching this problem is that if the perception of such values are changing then a change in the orientation of education could be smoothly implemented. Such a new orientation would address towards shaping a more creative and individualistic citizen, one who is prepared, in skills and abilities, to compete for a job and a promotion within a company.

3. This survey

This survey intends to explore the impact that current increasing implementation of early retirement is having in the perception of some values linked to the lifetime employment and promoted by formal education. Even though there are other studies focused on reasons to implement early retirement (Mirkin 1987), on social costs (Clark and Barker 1981), and on levels of satisfaction (Hardy and Quadango 1995; Cliff 1991, there is a lack of attention how this program might affect other spheres of the society, such as the orientation of formal education.

3.1 Method

To explore the current state of these three values it was used a Likert-scale questionnaire (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh 1990). Two parts composed the questionnaire. The first part identifies some demographic characteristics of the respondents: age, length of service, and size of the company where they were employed. The second part explores the three values included: loyalty, *familialism* and obedience to the hierarchical organisation. Once collected, the questionnaires were classified into three categories: 1) age (sub-divided into three groups: 30s, 40s, and 50s); 2) company size (sub-divided into three groups: small, medium, and large size); 3) length of service (sub-divided into <10 years, >10<20 years, and >20). The three categories were analysed statistically (ANOVA by SPSS) to find out whether or not there were significant differences in the attitudes that could be attributed to such characteristics of the respondent.

3.2 The sample.

The sample is 86 male graduates form a highly prestigious public university located in Kansai. The random sample included graduates of the school of Law and Engineering. There were three classes: 1983, 1973, and 1963 (Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents). They were hired as white-collar lifetime employees. These three classes allowed us to explore three degrees of vulnerability for being included in early retirement program, from the more to the less vulnerable group. As we have seen, the main target of this program are older workers.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents

Age group I (respondents)	Age group II	Age group III
35 (3)	45 (7)	55 (7)
36 (13)	46 (13)	56 (19)
37 (3)	47 (4)	57 (9)
38 (2)	48 (4)	58 (2)
Total (21)	(28)	(37)

3.3 The questionnaire.

The original questionnaire contains 32 questions because it explores attitudes toward several characteristics of the lifetime employment. However, this article reports results of exploring attitudes toward the three values already mentioned. and, attitudes toward the relation between education and lifetime employment achievement. These two aspects were explored through 8 questions. The format of the questionnaire was a Likert-Scale where each question offered four possibilities of answer: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree', 'strongly agree'. A

numerical value was attached to each answer: 1, 2, 3, and, 4 respectively. Initially 300 questionnaires were sent, out of them 86 were replied.

The questionnaire was derived mainly from theory generated from empirical research on lifetime employment system. There are two major opposed interpretations of this system. The first is exemplified in the book of Akio Morita (1988) former president of SONY, a leading Japanese company. He describes lifetime employment as a good deal for both employee and employer where the company is responsible for creating a stimulating working environment in order to enable the worker to give his best. This description can be taken as an example of the traditional view that stresses mutual and reciprocal loyalty, obedience to the hierarchical organisation of the company and sees this as leading to a sense of company as family. The second interpretation of lifetime employment, is exemplified in the book of Jon Woronoff (1983). It is a critical view of this system where worker's abilities are wasted in the hierarchical organisation. Thus, hierarchical organisation is perceived as an obstacle to the most talented workers who have to wait until their time to be promoted arrives. From this perspective, the values of loyalty and obedience seem to be detrimental to the worker. These two opposed visions are shared by other scholars in some degree. Nakane (1972) presents lifetime employment in a very similar way to Morita. Clark (1979) seems to have a less critical position than Woronoff but is still critic. Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) see lifetime employment as a tool for controlling workers.

3. 3. 1 Validity

These two interpretations were included in the formulation of the questionnaire in order to cover all the possible aspects of the lifetime employment and the values associated to its performance. An index of main characteristics and values were drawn out of the theory. From that index, the design of questions started. The design included several aspects, however this article reports on two: values and lifetime employment-education relationship. The phrasing of each question was checked by a Japanese speaking person in order to avoid bias caused by language differences. The questionnaire is in Japanese. The validity of the questions are content-related validity (Ary D. Jacobs L.C. Razavieh A. 1990).

3. 3. 2 Regarding attitudes toward values:

Three values were explored: loyalty, company as family and flexibility to accept changes in the hierarchical system within the company.

Loyalty has been identified as a value associated with the long-term permanence of a worker in a company. Loyalty is defined as *the return upon the indebtedness* (Benedict 1982:101). It manifests in two directions. Loyalty *ON* manifests in the recognition of sacrifices and favour received from a superior. This loyalty is an important part of the working life (Nakane 1972, Kondo 1990, Clark 1979, Woronoff 1983, Dore 1973). The other direction is loyalty *AI*. It implies love from a superior towards his dependants (Morita 1988). This loyalty attaches to the employer responsibility of caring the worker. This loyalty has been seen as justification for providing protection to the worker (Woronoff 1983, Kondo 1990, Kettler and Tackney 1996, Garrahn and Steward 1992, Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990). However, such explanation seems to be inadequate in the current circumstances of early retirement implementation.

Obedience to the hierarchical organisation seems to be an important element in the Japanese promotion system based mainly in length of service. Also some scholars observe a recurrent manifestation of obedience to hierarchy, *there is a general need to have hierarchy* (Dore 1987:89). Therefore, the questionnaire explores how flexible is the worker to accept changes in such a hierarchical organisation. The extreme example, is having a younger boss, than himself. Such a situation would be unacceptable in the context of hierarchical organisation based mainly in age and length of service.

Company as a family is observed as a central idea to the performing of the lifetime employment system. To

motivate people, you must bring them into the family and treat them like respected members of it (Morita 1988:153) Other scholars observe *familialism* as strong characteristic of the Japanese company (Cole 1979, Clark 1979, Nakane 1972). *Familialism* seems to stimulate the sense of the group so important in the affirmation of the self (Ando 1994).

3. 3. 3 Regarding attitudes toward the relation life-time employment-education

As we have discussed previously, in theory, lifetime employment is a culmination of a highly competitive path, which starts at junior high schools. Each educational level serves as a filter. Only the best student get access to the best schools in the next level. The result is that only few students gain access to the more prestigious universities (Christopher 1983:88, Dore 1987:99). Since large companies mainly recruit their personnel from these prestigious universities, there is a clear association between lifetime employment and education. *'Lifetime employment in large companies is for those who have studied'* (Nakane 1972:107).

3. 4 Variables and Questions

There are four variables as follows:

Variable 1. It refers to attitudes toward the value of loyalty in two directions. Loyalty from the company to the worker (ai) is explored in:

Question 1: *'Companies must provide its employees with employment until they reach the mandatory retirement age'*.

Question 2: *'Companies should no dismiss workers even during strong economic crisis'*.

Loyalty from the worker towards the company (on) is explored in:

Question 3: *'Employees must be devoted to their company (working until late, earning less, etc.) in economic crisis'*.

Variable 2. It refers to attitudes toward the value of company as a family:

Question 4: *'Company must be like a family, where managers take care of employees and employees do their best for the company'*.

Variable 3. It refers toward accepting changes in the promotion and payment system within the hierarchical organisation :

Question 5: *'Employees must share profits when the company becomes successful and do not profit when the company has no profits'*.

Question 6: *'I would agree to have a younger boss than me'*

Question 7: *'To be appointed into a manager post, age is irrelevant'*.

Variable 4. Attitudes toward the relation lifetime employment-education:

Question 8: *'Because lifetime employment is not a guarantee any more, it is not worth the effort to study hard in order to get this kind of employment'*.

3. 5 Statistical Analyses

A total of 86 questionnaires were analysed statistically (ANOVA) with a SPSS. Three analysis were carried on in order to find whether or not some characteristics of the sample were significant. These three analyses were pertinent in accordance with the theoretical review. The first analysis was by age. It is justified by information that points to the older group as the most vulnerable to be included in early retirement programs (Seike 1996:7). This analysis intended to find out whether or not differences in the expressed attitudes could be attributed to

differences in age. The results and distribution are showed in Table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes by age (means of questions)

Question	Group I (30s)	Group II (40s)	Group III (50s)	Sig. of F
Q 1	2.52 (21)	2.89 (28)	3.08 (37)	0.69
Q 2	2.52 (21)	2.64 (28)	2.89 (37)	0.274
Q 3	2.5 (20)	2.86 (28)	2.57 (37)	0.145
Q 4	2.05 (21)	2.29 (28)	2.43 (37)	0.184
Q 5	2.55 (20)	2.79 (28)	2.69 (35)	0.616
Q 6	2.86 (21)	2.57 (28)	2.72 (36)	0.45
Q 7	3.15 (20)	2.96 (28)	2.95 (37)	0.682
Q 8	2.58 (19)	2.21 (28)	2.54 (37)	0.33

The second analysis was by size of the company where the worker is. This analysis intended to find out whether or not differences in the size of the company influenced significantly their attitudes. We have to remember that the larger is the company the best are the benefits the worker receives. There are three categories: *small*, with less than 100 employees; *medium*, from 100 to 999 employees; *large*, above 1000 employees. Table 3 shows the distribution and results.

Table 3. Attitudes by company size (means of questions)

Question	Small	Medium	Large	Sig. of F
Q 1	2.83 (12)	2.8 (10)	2.93 (57)	0.877
Q 2	2.5 (12)	3.3 (10)	2.65 (57)	0.057
Q 3	2.33 (12)	2.22 (9)	2.75 (57)	0.029
Q 4	2.08 (12)	2.4 (10)	2.26 (57)	0.617
Q 5	2.5 (12)	2.7 (10)	2.7 (54)	0.749
Q 6	2.5 (12)	2.8 (10)	2.79 (56)	0.506
Q 7	2.67 (12)	3.33 (9)	3.02 (57)	0.223
Q 8	2.62 (11)	2.56 (9)	2.4 (55)	0.735

The third analysis was by length of service of respondents. This analysis allows to find out whether or not attitudes could be attributed to differences in the length of service. Other studies suggest that the length of service in a company is related to loyalty (Clark 1979). Even though this analysis may seem to be a duplicate of the analysis of attitudes by age, that is not true. It is because it could be expected to have some portion of the sample with certain mobility. The result of this analysis allows us to avoid bias due to not taking into account this fact. The sample was divided into three groups. Table 4 shows the distribution and results of this sample.

Table 4 . Attitudes by length of service

Question	<=10 years	>10>20	>=20	Sig. of F
Q 1	2.89 (19)	2.65 (20)	3.02 (42)	0.281
Q 2	2.84 (19)	2.45 (20)	2.79 (42)	0.391
Q 3	2.42 (19)	2.53 (19)	2.79 (42)	0.122
Q 4	2.21 (19)	2.2 (20)	2.31 (42)	0.827
Q 5	2.58 (19)	2.37 (19)	2.88 (40)	0.074
Q 6	3 (19)	2.65 (20)	2.63 (41)	0.227
Q 7	3.11 (19)	3.11 (19)	2.93 (42)	0.674
Q 8	2.56 (18)	2.47 (17)	2.38 (42)	0.815

4. Findings

This section introduces the results of the analysis of variance (SPSS) and the interpretation of this results:

4. 1 Attitudes toward values

The respondents attitudes toward the statements that explores values of loyalty, familialism, and obedience.

1) Loyalty. Age seems to be significant regarding the value loyalty (Table 4):

Table 4 . Loyalty by age group

Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F.
29.188	2	14.594	5.352	.007
86 cases	Age group I=20	Age group II=28	Age group III=37	

Therefore, age seems to be a characteristic that makes significant difference regarding to this value of loyalty. The older group seems to expect that the company keep them until retirement age. On the other hand, this group is more willing to work until late and earn less money at a time of economic crisis.

The size of the company was not significant (Table 5):

Table 5 . Loyalty by company size

Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F.
6.86	2	3.422	1.157	.320
86 cases processed, 8 cases were missing				

This result suggests that the provision of high benefits associated to large size companies makes not significant difference concerning attitudes toward loyalty.

The length of service is significant (Table 6):

Table 6 . Loyalty by length of service

Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F.
24.89	2	12.448	4.532	.014

This result suggests that the value of loyalty expresses strongly in those who have been working in the same

company for long length of service. The factors that promotes such loyalty are not explored here.

2) Company as a family:

Overall, differences in age, size of the company, and length of service, are not significant. The respondents regardless these characteristics show similar attitudes toward the idea that the company must be like a family, where management take care of the workers, and these make their best for the company (Table 7).

Table 7. Company as a family

By age (86)	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sign. of F
	1.985	2	.992	1.725	.184
By company size (86)					
	.567	2	.284	.486	.617
By service (86)					
	.221	2	.111	.191	.827
5 cases were missing					

These results suggest that workers have similar attitudes toward company as family, regardless the benefits that large size could provide to them.

Regarding flexibility to accept changes in the hierarchical and promotion system, this is expressed in statements of accepting a younger boss, payment based on profits (directly related to performance), and the discarding of age as relevant factor to be promoted. Out of the three analyses, only the size of company is significant. This suggests that for workers of large size companies (the larger group of the sample) the introduction of payment and promotion by merit seems to be more difficult to accept (Table 8).

Table 8. Flexibility

By age	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sign. of F
	.740	2	.370	1.472	.237
By company size					
	1.303	2	.652	2.59	.082
By length of service					
	1.013	2	.506	2.014	.141

4. 2 Attitudes toward lifetime employment-education relationship.

As we have discussed previously, lifetime employment is a culmination of a competitive path. Those working for large size companies have more job security, therefore they compete more in this path (Christopher 1983, Dore 1987. Since large companies mainly recruit personnel from prestigious universities, there is an association between graduating from prestigious universities and getting lifetime employment in a large size company. The question 8, explores this relation: *Because lifetime employment is not a guarantee any more, it is not worth the effort to study hard in order to get this kind of employment*'. According to an observation of a Japanese researcher, this question might be interpreted by the respondents as, *it is not worth to study hard to get a lifetime employment but it is worth to study hard for other purposes*. Even when the respondents gave the latter interpretation to the question, it still measures whether or not it is worth to study hard. Due to the reviewed theory that suggest that students studied hard for obtaining a lifetime employment at a large size company and due to only graduates from the best universities access lifetime employment at large size companies (enjoying more job

security) it is still valid use this question (Table 9).

Table 9. Lifetime-education

By age	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sign. of F
	3.039	2	1.520	1.501	.230
By company size					
	.818	2	.409	.409	.669
By length of service					
	1.065	2	.532	.526	.593

The results point that regardless the characteristics of the respondent (age, company size and length of service) they tend to agree that it is not worthy to study so hard. This suggests that changes in the educational system has to be introduced in order to stimulate students to study hard even when lifetime employment is not a guarantee for them.

5. Conclusions

This article reports the results of a survey on white-collar worker attitudes toward 1) values strongly promoted by formal education during the formative years of the worker; 2) the relation between lifetime employment and education. The main argument is that facing the current environment of increasing implementation of early retirement programs (*sokitaishoku yugu*) the orientation of education has to change to match current needs of the labour market. The increasing implementation of early retirement programs is placing, indirectly, into debate the validity and pertinence of continuing promoting values such as loyalty, familialism and obedience to hierarchical organisation within the company. These values have been strongly promoted by formal education. The results suggest that it is time to shift the orientation of education from these values to others such as creativity and the promotion of individual talents aimed to get and keep a job in the current environment of payment and promotion based mainly on results.

Regarding the value of loyalty, the sample shows significant difference when age and length of service are considered. The older group seems to expect continuing working until the mandatory retirement age. This group is willing to make an extra effort for the sake of the company. Ironically, this group is the most vulnerable to be included in early retirement programs. Regarding company as a family, the attitudes of respondents were similar, regardless respondent's characteristics. This suggests that this value has been strongly cultivated in the workers that even at a time of economic crisis is still present in the respondents. Regarding flexibility to accept new management styles, workers of large size companies seem to have more difficulty to accept changes such as, having a younger boss.

The results suggest that in the current environment of increasing implementation of early retirement formal education is been pushed to change the orientation of the promotion of values. Therefore, if education is still to play the role of promoting values, its orientation has to change to create a more independent and creative worker, able to compete for a job. Also, it seems that formal education is facing the challenge to keep the attention of students when the possibility to access a lifetime job is decreasing even for those graduates from prestigious universities due to changes in the labour market.

- (1) The author is full time researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Autonomous University of Puebla, Mexico. Following institutions provided the means for this research: CONACYT-Mexico, the Fuller Bequest Research Found of the University of Essex, UK; and, the Center on Higher Education, University of Kyoto, Japan.
- (2) Mainly male.
- (3) No formal education is provided, among other sources, by tutoring schools (juku), monasteries and companies. Tutoring schools supplement the education provided in official schools preparing students to pass high competitive entrance examinations, desirable in first rank school. Monasteries focus upon the self-perfection of the individual through meditation on aspects such as boundary, beauty, patience and perfection. (Rohlen 1996, Fukumoto 1995).
- (4) Fukumoto mentions, as extreme practices, immersion in ice water, weariness, oral and even physical abuse of the participants (1995).
- (5) Women are generally speaking, expected to rear children meanwhile men are expected to be the main breadwinner. Under this premises education choices are made. This includes the selection of the university in accordance with this role. Even though women have tended to work until marriage, this tendency has been changing since the mid 1980s. Women are still expected to accomplish the rearing of children but they combine this responsibility (and household work) with paid work. In 1996, double income homes surpassed single income homes (Japan Labor Bulletin, Vol.36, No.08, August 1, 1997:3).
- (6) However, the company decision to hire a lifetime employment is based not only on the candidate's academic records but also in his personal history provided by academics. Also his qualities are observed in the recruiting interview (Eccleston 1989:66).
- (7) Although target for early retirement was initially blue-collar workers, in recent years this sort of adjustment has affected white-collar workers (Seike 1996, Sato 1996, Araki 1995).

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