

Part-time worker trend worries Japan

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Job-hopping young prefer such work, but this could cause havoc to the Japanese pension and medical insurance schemes.

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TOKYO - Japan's long recession is not the only thing making it difficult for many college students to find permanent jobs upon graduation. A change in attitude among employers towards recruitment is also contributing to the problem.

According to a Labour Ministry survey, 92.8 per cent of students who graduated this year after two or four years in college had found jobs by April 1, the day that many new employees start work in Japanese companies.

But the influential Nihon Keizai Shimbun business daily frequently puts the percentage of unemployed new graduates at one in five. Many graduates are forced to join the two million or so young Japanese who work in part-time or temporary jobs.

The rise in the number of such workers has started to worry the authorities. They fear the drop in full-time employees could lead to the collapse of the national pension and medical insurance systems in future.

To help college students find jobs and to ease the difficulty that small companies have in finding good staff, employment agency Recruit Staffing initiated a new internship programme last year. It attempts to 'match-make' final-year college students with prospective employers. The company dispatches a registered student to a potential employer to work for about two weeks during the summer holidays. If the student is successful, he or she receives an offer of full-time employment just before graduating in the spring of the following year. According to a spokesman for Recruit Staffing, half of the 100 or so students who took part in such internships have found permanent jobs. 'Students see our internship system as an additional means of securing a job, while companies that participate welcome it as it

saves them the trouble of doing their own recruitment,' said the spokesman.

Even if students find a job with a large company, many are not likely to secure a permanent position these days. Best Denki, a Fukuoka-based home appliances chain store, intends to put all new employees on annually renewable contracts from next year to cut costs. Only outstanding employees will be offered full-time or permanent status. From past experience, the company expects 15 per cent or so of new employees to resign within a year.

Big business lobbies see such job-hopping as the result of students not having a clear idea of what they want to do in the first place. The Nippon Keidanren and the Japan Chamber of Commerce recently made a joint announcement of their intention to work with the authorities to ease the problem. Both bodies are also promoting the greater use of internship systems to help students to decide what sort of job they want after graduation. 'Many students do not know what they want to do,' said Nippon Keidanren spokesman H. Nitta. 'By helping them to make up their minds, we hope to stem the large number of young people who resign their first jobs within three years of joining a company.'

But it may be difficult to change the minds of young Japanese. Students in the past saw employment with a major corporation as an ideal and were prepared to remain with the company until retirement. But many young Japanese these days do not see themselves staying with one employer throughout their working life.

At the same time, many employers are shedding lifelong employment practices and favouring a higher percentage of contract employees in order to reduce personnel costs.

<http://www.jobbankusa.com/News/Jobs/jobs62903a.html>