

JRTR

Japan Railway & Transport Review

Feature

Human Resources Development in Railways (part 2)

- JR East's Human Resource Development
- Work of Railroad Department at Woosong University, Korea
- Efforts in Human Resources Development at JR West
- Keeping Pace with Changing Requirements for Human Capital at Malaysian Railways (KTMB)
- KORAIL Human Resources and Infrastructure System Towards 'World's Best, Korean Railroad'

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Editorial

Education in Japan

Unearthed artefacts and other sources suggest that educational facilities already existed in Japan in the 8th century, with their curriculum focusing on literary education. Various theories debate the timing of the foundation of the Ashikaga School, Japan's oldest academic institution in present-day Tochigi Prefecture, with dates ranging from the 9th to 12th centuries. Missionary Francis Xavier in the 16th century noted that it was the largest and most famous university in the country at the time. The Shizutani School, established in the 17th century in what is modern-day Okayama Prefecture, gained recognition for being open to commoners as well as the warrior class. Additionally, small private schools in the Edo (Tokugawa) era taught commoners practical subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, along with general topics. The school enrolment rate in mid-19th century Tokyo was greater than 70%, and there were about 15,000 such schools across Japan. The high literacy rate of the population as a whole was a significant factor in propelling the modernization of Japan to success in the late 19th century. National recovery after World War II is also probably deeply related to an emphasis on education.

It is no overstatement to say that Japan has traditionally put great emphasis on education. That is demonstrated by the '100 bales of rice' anecdote where impoverished warriors after the Boshin War* sold rice given to them for hunger relief to found schools instead of simply eating the rice. This education-first philosophy is also evident in corporate internal training. Of the three resources of management—money, material, and people—many managers put the most emphasis on people. It is internal education and training that raises the quality of those human resources. However, systems such as lifetime employment and promotion by seniority derived from people-first management have almost entirely collapsed today. I am concerned that the collapse of these systems is a result of a recent trend by Japanese society as a whole to underestimate the value of education. I hope that railway companies take the lead in preserving an important Japanese tradition of stressing education.

* Boshin War

War from 1868 to 1869 between new government army putting Emperor as highest authority and former shogunate army putting Tokugawa Shogun as highest authority

K. Aoki

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