

ADVANCED JAPANESE STYLE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAM IN FOREIGN TRADE UNIVERSITY: INITIAL PERSPECTIVES FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND BUSINESS THROUGH TRAINING

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Abstract:

This paper presents the way to promote sustainable production and business through training by taking an example of Advanced Japanese Style International Business Program in Foreign Trade University. Based on the analysis of the Program's determinants, SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman (1988) which is based on 05 dimensions namely curriculum framework, lecturers, infrastructure, learning environment, outcome result, as well as information related to the decision of enrolling in this program. Upon that, implications are drawn for other business management training programs in order to promote sustainable production in Vietnam.

Keywords: *sustainable production, sustainable production development, international business program.*

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1. Introduction

Increasing competition due to globalization leads to urgent needs for high quality human resources from domestic and foreign enterprises, which is considered the key to every enterprise's success and sustainable development. Over 15 years of experience in implementing Japanese-style business management training programs at Vietnam - Japan Human Resources Cooperation Center, Foreign Trade University has launched Advanced Japanese Model-based International Business Program. The program equips students with comprehensive, in-depth knowledge of modern international business following Japanese thinking and style. There,

Japanese business philosophy and business culture honor core values, defining center-focused human factor as the foundation for sustainable development, and promoting the meaning of community that is suitable with society standards towards values honored by society. The program is expected to be an important turning point marking the birth of a new business education model at Foreign Trade University, providing high quality human resources towards Japanese style-based sustainable business thinking. This paper will focus to clarify some basic features of Advanced Japanese Model-based International Business Program in order to explain the merits and differences in training to develop quality human resources for businesses towards sustainable business and production.

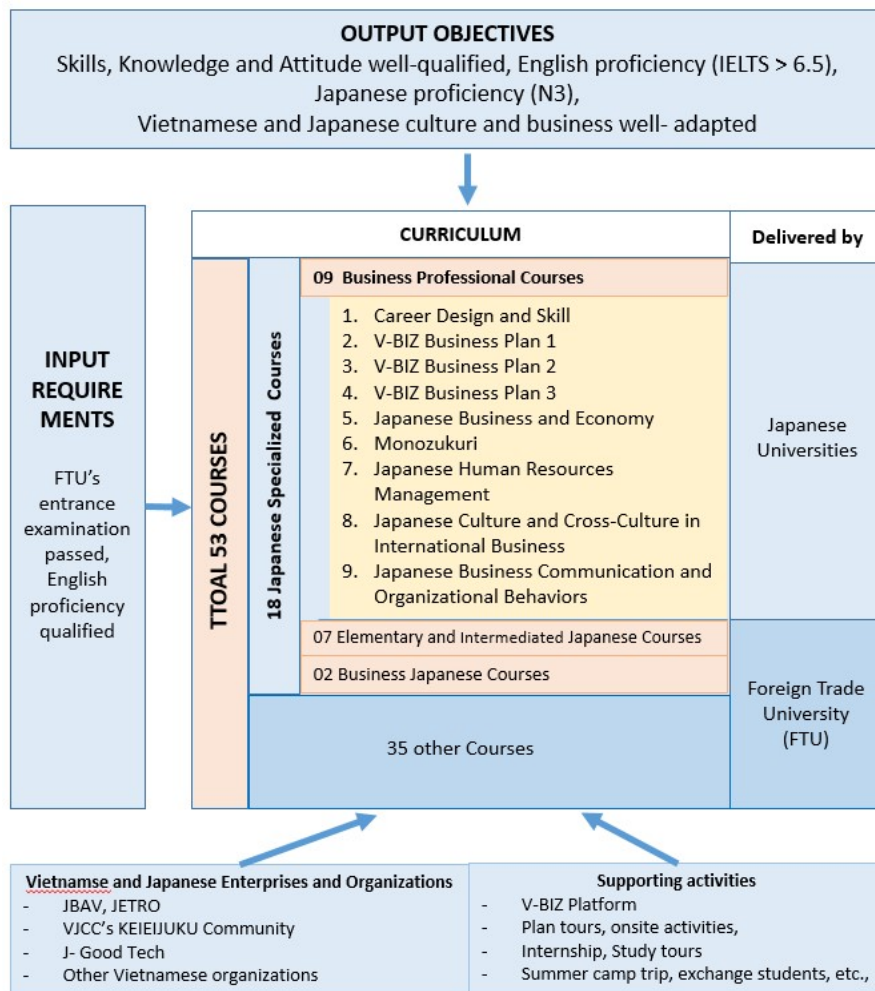
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2. Advanced Japanese Style International Business Program (JIB) and its determinants to promote sustainable production

Advanced Japanese Style International Business Program is a full-time student training program organized by Foreign Trade University, basing on the superiority and advantage of ongoing implemented International Business Program. The program is based on advanced Japanese Model that focuses to equip students with comprehensive, in-depth knowledge of modern international business following Japanese thinking and style. According to that,

Japanese business philosophy and business culture honor core values, defining center-focused human factor as the foundation for sustainable development, and promoting the meaning of community that is suitable with society standards towards values honored by society. Students have chance to experience in real business environment throughout 4 years of V-BIZ based training. Therefore, besides knowledge and professional theoretical background, students would acquire practical skills to apply theory into practical situations, negotiation skills, culture and business ethics, etc. under Japanese style.

Figure 1: Determinants of Advanced Japanese Model-based International Business Program



Source: Recapitulate from approved JIB program's project

The program focuses on developing foreign language skills in English and Japanese in that it is based on the increasing demand of foreign language skills for human resources from Vietnamese and Japanese enterprises; meanwhile take fully advantage in English of Foreign Trade University as well as training experience of Japanese Language Department and VJCC Institute. The amount of knowledge as well as the content distribution of each session ensure to be consistent and fit students' ability. In addition, students always have chance to improve their English skills to deeply understand English-taught subjects. At the same time, students also have access to learn Japanese in a modern and appropriate approach in line with international business program.

Besides using advanced Japanese model training, the program welcomes the participation of professors from Japanese partner universities and experts from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in teaching knowledge of the business sector in Japan covering 13 subjects, which accounts for about 25% of the content of the program. This content about Japanese business sector includes *specialized business knowledge under Japanese thinking and style*, such as: corporate culture, business ethics, business communication and organizational behavior, corporate governance, production management, human resources management, etc., following standards of a bachelor degree program in Japanese universities. Japanese elements-included subjects would orient students to business philosophy and ways to run a business and operate production towards sustainable development that always pays attention to community interest and individuals related to their business. The program uses original outlines from partner

universities.

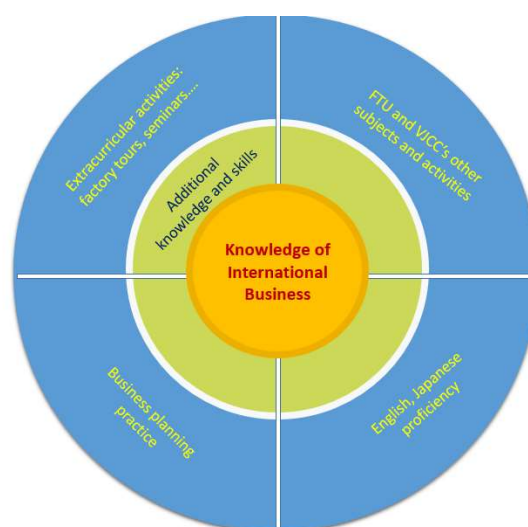
- Lecturers and teaching materials are from Japanese universities as partners of Foreign Trade University.

- Standard subject assessment criteria are in line with Foreign Trade University's standards and refers to standardized output of Japanese partner universities for each learning content.

This training model prospects a new and effective way of international cooperation in training bachelors heading to sustainable business, reaching the Asian and international standards.

In current context, business-focused Japanese universitie design training program in two ways. One is to maintain a theory-centered bachelor's degree in Economics (also known as traditional training approach) and second is to develop a practical bachelor degree program (also known as practical business)

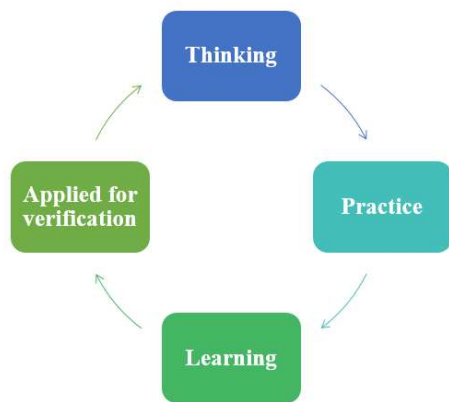
The Advanced Japanese Model-based International Business Program is built on the second way that is to emphasize practicality of business education for undergraduate students.



- The program curriculum is specialized in knowledge of International Business and also

includes other business-related knowledge and skills that help students reach business community and be familiar with business environment. On that basis, students would be fully aware of the business Japanese business philosophy, the sustainability of community benefits, environment, society ... when they are firstly learn and understand business philosophy of large corporations like Panasonic under viewpoint of its founder Matshushita

- Highly practical activities such as business planning, business visit tours, Japanese cultural and language learning as well as other extracurricular activities provide students opportunities to interact with business philosophies, business behaviors in practice. From that, students would broaden their vision to integrate early with sustainable business environment that Japanese enterprises have applied.



- The method to allocate the program's content is improved compared to the traditional one as follows: in the first year, student would learn to build business plan based on their initial perception after studying foundation subjects, namely Economics, Business Administration, Japanese Economics and Business, etc. Each student group's business plan would continue

to be completed in the next semesters after students acquire more knowledge and practical skills in such fields as business strategy, marketing, finance This business plan is jointly commented by professors, lecturers and businessmen. The ultimate goal of the plan is to let students make products from their business plan through proactively interacting with the V-Biz Business Floor.

From perspective of student development, during 4-year study, students' knowledge and skills would be continuously fostered to more develop in an active cycle of thinking, practicing, learning and applying to confirm theory as well as practice results.

This training model is being currently applied in some of the most prominent Japanese universities such as: Rikkyo University, Ritsumekan University, Hitosubashi University, Kanto Gakuin University, etc.

3. The participation of Japanese and Vietnamese enterprises during program implementation (following V-Biz Model)

With the aim to ensure the practicality of the program as well as help students fully aware of philosophy of sustainable production and business from Japanese enterprises models, the program design study tours to typical businesses in Japan and Vietnam. Vietnamese enterprises participating in these tours have experienced in Japanese-style business management training programs at VJCC Institute for quite a long time, such as Keieijuku, production manager, human resources director ... Therefore, they really acquire Japanese ideas, business philosophy. As a result, students in Advanced Japanese Model-based International Business Program would be invited to participate in reality at companies,

international organizations, and take part in workshops to interact with professionals and business owners. Thanks to that participation and interaction, students in the program would have practical chances earlier than students in other standard programs. In addition, they would quickly develop critical thinking, be more responsive in dealing with professional tasks, and have ability to give more possible solutions. Besides study tours, students would participate in mid-term and final-term internship programs at Japanese companies operating in Vietnam through the support of the Japan Business Association in Vietnam (JBAV) or the support right from the Japanese partner universities.

That mentioned practical training model at Japanese universities is well-received by society as an efficient model, increasing business resources for Japanese economy. In fact, many business plans and workshops for practicing students' business ideas have been put into practice in start-up companies or start-up projects of corporations, contributing to improve business efficiency, helping Japanese enterprises to develop more sustainably in international business environment.

4. Research methodology

Selection of model

This is a descriptive research. The analysis makes use of information on students' decision to enroll in the program, and the assessment model for business's training quality by Merican, F; Zailani S. and Ferrnando (2009) in which SERVQUAL measuring scale (Parasuraman (1988)) is applied. The author uses 5 criteria which are 5 dimensions of quality: program curriculum, lecturers, infrastructure, learning environment and outcome results. Attributes of these dimensions are built upon

the purpose of improving students's capacity through criteria such as knowledge, skills, attitude and signature features of Advanced Japanese Style International Business Program (practicality of V-BIZ model, Japanese style course content, strengths of FTU's educational system. Adtributes illustrating for each dimension have been clarified. On that basis, 5 adtributes of practicality, strength of FTU in training international business, Japanese style subjects, and the consistency are presenting for curriculum; 11 adtributes such as proper manner, professional knowledge, inspiration, good interaction with students ...are presenting for lecturer dimension; 5 adtributes such as building cleanness, modern and adequate facilities, polite staff manner, and other learning supporting facilities like library, open room for .. are illustrating for infrastructure; there are 8 adtributes illustrating for learning environmen, such as the connection among members in class, oppotunities for connection with Keiejuku Club enterprises, Japanese business communities in Vietnam... are used in the panel; and the final of expectation for outcome dimension was conducted with 4 adtributes relating to human resources competencies in terms of knowledge, skill and attitude nowadays.

Data collection and analysis

In order to assess quality of training program, direct survey was used in this research with questionnaires in Vietnamese version. By taking direct survey, the author have conducted survey on 70 students during the time they take courses. Total number of observations is 70 students as a whole number of program with 66 out of 70 correspondents collected with validity. The survey was taken on 8th Sept 2017, just 1 week long after starting for academic studies. The content of survey is

available at Appendix 1. In order to measure the feedback of JIB's students, likert scale is used to group of authors applied the measuring scale with 5 levels from 1 to 5, equivalent to "Disagree" to "Strongly agree".

5. Findings and discussion

After conducting survey, the author has come up with following results:

Firstly, in terms of channels to access JIB course, the result shows that it is the university's website that mainly leads 48 out of 66 students (accounting for 72%) to know

about the program.

Secondly, in terms of reasons for choosing JIB program, 90% of students explained that it is because of the appealing course introduction, their love for Japan as well as attractive opportunities to work with Japanese partners.

Thirdly, there are 52/66 students (79%) choosing the program before entering FTU, while the rest (21%) making their choice afterwards.

Regarding the students' evaluation on the program after 02 weeks of entry, the results are illustrated in Table 1 and Chart 1 as follows:

Table 1: Report on students' evaluation on JIB quality program at VJCC- Foreign Trade University after 2 weeks of enrolment

Elements of JPIB's training quality	Perceived value	Expected value	Gap
Quality of curriculum framework (5 observed variables reflecting international standard level, modern update, practicality, Japanese style model ...)	4.00	5	1.00
Quality of lecturers (11 observed variables reflecting in-depth professional knowledge, management experience, teaching methodology, inspirational spirit ...)	4.16	5	0.84
Quality of facilities (5 observed variable reflecting facilities, infrastructure, supporting equipment)	4.58	5	0.4
Quality of learning environment (7 observed variable reflecting support for students from FTU and VJCC and opportunities for new relationships in business and management)	4.38	5	0.6
Expectation for outcome results (5 observed variable reflecting the improvement in personal competencies through knowledge, skills and application ability)	4.75	5	0.2
Average value	4.38	5	0.6

Source: Surveys results.

In Table 1, quality of facilities ranks first in all of the attributes assessing the program's quality. This absolutely makes sense thanks to the fact that VJCC building was built and being operated under Japanese style, its facilities,

classrooms and other utilities strongly support demands of students. Classrooms of ample and hygiene space are operated under Japanese style. VJCC, a public training center, welcomes a diverse range of students and

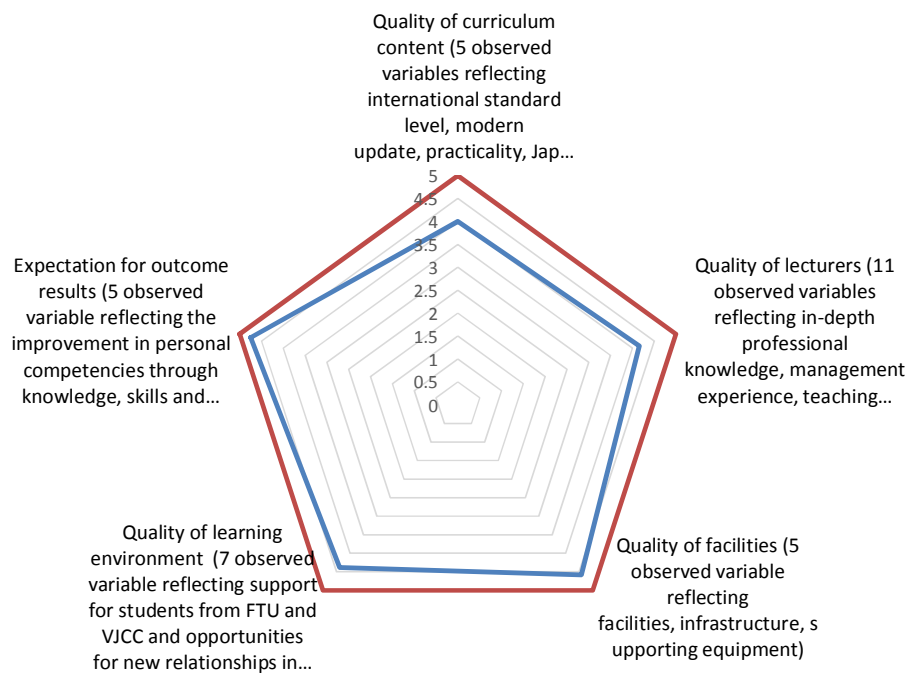
learners every single day, therefore, still unable to meet 100% of expectation from students for a more professional and quite learning space. The average perceived value is, thus, (4.58) compared with 5.0 of the expectation, creating a gap of 0.42.

Due to the short and limited period of time for experiencing learning environment at FTU in general and VJCC in specific, reviews that students got on quality of lecturers and learning environment are at normal level, 4.16/5.0 and 4.38/5.0 respectively. This result is understandable since at this beginning phase, everything is strange, new and even a bit mesed up for any freshmen as they have to leave family to experience their student lives alone in a totally new environment. Moreover, it has been only 01 week studying major subjects at VJCC Institute, thus, it is probably unlikely for students to already have any appropriate feedback on their lecturers and the connection within a new learning

environment. In short, students have not had enough opportunities to acknowledge VJCC’s advantages in connecting students with Keiejuku and Japanese business community. The results received from this survey are surely valuable suggestions for FTU, VJCC Institute, lecturers and management staffs to make better efforts in creating more helpful activities to enhance student’s feelings about learning environment in near future.

When it comes to lecturers, VJCC will invite top Japanese experts and professors who are of more than 20 years of experience working for big enterprises or from such prestigious universities in Japan and around the world, to join the JIB program. The majority of them are top managers in manufacturing enterprises in Japan, or lecturers with years of experience in consulting and managing production and business in enterprises but currently working for well-known universities in Japan and Vietnam.

Chart 1: JIB students' Perception vs Expectation gap on program quality



Source: Survey’s results

As mentioned above, up to 90% of students choose JIB program because of their love for Japan, opportunities to work with Japanese partners and belief in the program's attractiveness. According to Chart 1, however, the gap between expected value and perceived value in curriculum is rather big (1.0). This result is objective since almost what students know about curriculum are from media as well as introduction from FTU and VJCC. They just began their journey with not much reality exposure which can be received from learning V-BIZ model with experienced and inspirational JICA experts or professors of top Japanese universities with modern teaching methods. From management point of view, nevertheless, this result can be considered as a constructive suggestion for FTU and VJCC on the completion the program, enabling students to acquire practical knowledge and to gain the best experience in learning. Hopefully, after 04 years in JIB, students will insatiably and effectively acquire and apply into their management and business in the future, especially in manufacturing field. It is not to mention the fact that students of JIB are promisingly equipped with knowledge about production and business management following Japan style business methods from Japanese experts and lecturers. Hence, students will step by step have their Japanese style business skills enhanced, successfully applied into their working competencies after graduation.

Considering the expectation about outcome result, the perceived value almost matches the expected one (4.75/5.0), which is absolutely reasonable. Thanks to VJCC's available resources, effective training methods, and especially lecturers who are experts and top professors from both Japan and Vietnam, students of JIB have reasons to believe in their

perfect preparation for the upcoming journey after graduation.

Besides, JIB students, under the patronage of Japanese organizations such as JICA, JETRO, JBAV, JBAV, have many business networking opportunities in the future. This is what distinguishes JIB program from other programs.

4. Suggestions for program implementation to promote sustainable production

Currently, many Vietnamese enterprises have been well promoting knowledge and practical learning from Japanese business models, and above all the sustainable development based on and business philosophy and culture that consider people is the most important factor. From the practical implementation of management training programs for business in general and for JIB program particular, the author proposes the following suggestions to develop training programs so as to meet business demand and promote sustainable production and business foundation.

Firstly, it is necessary to start from reality and take it as the basis for building training program's objectives with special concentration on sustainable business model in practice as a training model for students/participants. In the above-mentioned JIB program, choosing a Japanese style-based business as a training model of business philosophy and sustainable production is the right choice to help students form perception, understand business philosophy with social responsibility. With short-term business and management training programs, it is necessary to clearly define target participants from the beginning in order to clarify the demand, business philosophy to fit to what enterprises, especially business leaders would like to develop sustainably in each specific socio-economic context;

Secondly, attention should be paid to selecting partners, lecturers, experts suitable with the training program's objectives. One of the factors contributing to the quality of a training program is the lecturers. For business and management training program, lecturers / experts who have experiences in business and management with their philosophy and thinking style towards the sustainable development would be priority for program implementation. Especially, lecturers / experts having vision and inspiration would leave a strong impression on students / participants in delivering sustainable business philosophy;

Thirdly, it is vital to create supporting activities besides the training program. With follow-up activities, the program would

support students from the first year to have opportunity to familiarize with typical enterprises' production and business in reality. Thanks to this opportunity, students can share their experiences and connect their business ideas to Japanese and Vietnamese business communities and this would create the program's uniqueness. Additional to main subjects are supporting activities for students such as non-profitable Japanese sessions, university clubs, internships at enterprises... which create the consistency of the program, helping students deeply understand the philosophy, vision and business strategy of enterprises. On that basis of consistency, it is possible to implement sustainable business plans for a particular business. □

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF ADVANCED JAPANESE STYLE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAM

Dear our beloved students,

VJCC Institute would like to congratulate and welcome all of you to Advanced Japanese Style International Business Program!

After 2 weeks of experiencing learning environment in Foreign Trade University and VJCC Institute, we would love to hear from you on your reasons for choosing JIB program and your feedback on the training quality in this beginning phase. All of information provided from you will be very helpful for Foreign Trade University, Japanese experts and professors, FTU's lecturers as well as VJCC's staffs to innovate and improve the quality of training in our program.

There are 2 parts: General Information on your choosing JIB program; and Information on your feedback on the training quality of JIB program.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. You know about JIB via:

- FTU's official website
- Public media channels (TV, newspapers,...)
- Your relatives, teachers, friends
- Others (please clarify):.....

2. Reason for choosing JIB:

- The program's appealing introduction
- Reputation of Foreign Trade University
- Your love for Japan and opportunities to work with Japanese partners
- Reputation of VJCC as a well-known training institute for enterprises
- Reputation of JICA
- Others (please clarify):.....

3. You decided to choose JIB:

- When you were working on the university's application form
- After you completed your application form; Before the graduation examination
- Before you entered FTU

- After you entered FTU
- Others (please clarify):.....

What kind of person do you expect to become after 4 years joining this program? (Knowledge, skills (especially English, Japanese), attitude, responsibility for yourself, for your family and for the whole society?)

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II. INFORMATION ON YOUR FEEDBACK ON JIB PROGRAM’S QUALITY

Please circle the numbers from 1 to 5 (meaning “Disagree” to “Strongly agree”) to mark the criteria.

1. About curriculum framework:

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 1.1 | You feel that it is the practicality in conjunction with enterprises, especially in the business planning model V-BIZ that makes the program stands out. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 1.2 | You feel that it is strengths of FTU in training international business combined with Japanese style training methods that makes the program unique. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1.3 | You feel that it is knowledge of international business in Japanese style that makes the program different from other training programs. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 1.4 | You feel that subjects in the program curriculum are properly, logically and consistently distributed. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 1.5 | You feel that schedule for subjects is suitably designed. | 1 2 3 4 |

Please share your specific opinions/expectation about the program’s content:

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2. About lecturers :

Despite the short period of time to learn and interact with lectures in JIB program, you feel that your lecturers:

- 2.1 Have respect and proper manners towards students

1	2	3	4	5
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- 2.2 Have in-depth professional knowledge

1	2	3	4	5
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- 2.3 Have real experience in firm management

1	2	3	4	5
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- 2.4 Have modern teaching methods

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---
- 2.5 Motivational and inspirational towards students

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---
- 2.6 Understand clearly about students' capacity

1	2	3	4
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- 2.7 Understand clearly and be able to meet students' demands right in each semester

1	2	3	4
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- 2.8 Have good interaction with students

1	2	3	4
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- 2.9 Conduct lectures strictly following the scheme and schedule

1	2	3	4	5
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- 2.10 Properly distribute time between theory and practice

1	2	3	4	5
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- 2.11 Effectively make use of teaching equipment (table, projector...)

1	2	3	4
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Please share your specific opinion/expectation about lecturers :

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3. About Infrastructure, you feel that :

- 3.1 VJCC building and classrooms are always kept clean in Japanese style

1	2	3	4	5
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- 3.2 Proper arrangement of classrooms and laboratories

1	2	3	4	5
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- 3.3 Modern and adequate learning equipment

1	2	3	4	5
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- 3.4 Polite and professional staffs' manners

1	2	3	4	5
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- 3.5 Useful learning materials, library and DVDs

1	2	3	4
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Please share your specific opinion/expectation about Infrastructure and Learning environment:

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4. About learning environment (student supports during and after classes), you feel that:

- 4.1 Connection among class members are very good.

1	2	3	4
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- 4.2 Connection between students and managers/ coordinators of the program (from VJCC) is very good.

1	2	3	4
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- 4.3 There are opportunities for learning from each other through discussion, practice and group assignments.

1	2	3	4	5
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- 4.4 There are opportunities for learning from sharing on successful Japanese business models in Vietnam

1	2	3	4
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- 4.5 There are opportunities for connecting and learning how to apply business lessons into reality from Keiejuku community of VJCC

1	2	3	4
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- 4.6 There are opportunities for part-time jobs or internships in both Japanese and Vietnamese firms.

1	2	3	4	5
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- 4.7 There are opportunities for working in Japanese economic/business organizations or enterprises after graduation.

1	2	3	4	5
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- 4.8 There are opportunities for joining FTU's clubs to have many skills enhanced.

1	2	3	4	5
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5. About the outcome result after 4 years of training, you expect to:

- 5.1 Gain knowledge about modern international business on the basis of Japanese business philosophy and Vietnamese culture.

1	2	3	4	5
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5.2 Gain knowledge about business planning, building business vision, mindset and mission for yourself and your organization.

1	2	3	4
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5.3 Have adequate working skills, good adaptability, flexible manners, and good problem-solving and analyzing skill; good English and Japanese; understand Japanese business culture.

1	2	3	4
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5.4 Have good working attitude and responsibility for yourself, your family and the whole society.

1	2	3	4	5
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Please share your specific opinion/expectation about outcome result:

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Please give some suggestions for the betterment of JIB program:

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Thank you for your cooperation!