

CROSS-BOUNDARY LEARNING FOR WORKERS' LIFE CAREERS

— THE POTENTIAL FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMPANIES AND SOCIETY —

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SUMMARY

- The average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy of Japanese people continue to grow, and the employment rate of seniors is also on the rise. If a career as a worker becomes prolonged, it is also necessary to reconsider the balance of their entire life career (an accumulation of roles and experiences that an individual plays in their life as a whole, such as work, family, community involvement, self-development, and hobbies).
- Cross-boundary learning is considered an effective ways to develop a life career. It allows people to learn and reflect on the details of their work through going back and forth between the inside and outside of the organization to which they belong. It differs from conventional human resource development methods such as self-development, off-the-job training (Off-JT), and on-the-job training (OJT).
- Pro bono activities and side jobs, which are specific examples of cross-boundary learning, have spread in response to economic crises and large-scale disasters. Cross-boundary learning is meaningful for both workers and employers, and it even may help build relationships between companies and society.

1. RISING IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING LIFE CAREERS (AWARENESS OF ISSUES)

1-1. Trends in Japan's average life expectancy, healthy life expectancy, and employment rate of seniors

According to a report by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, indicators for the average life expectancy, healthy life expectancy, and employment rate of seniors in the country each show a rising tendency (Figures 1 and 2). In particular, the employment rate of seniors is expected to continue to rise for the time being, partly due to measures to secure employment opportunities for people who desire to work until the age of 70¹ and the option to defer receiving old-age pension benefits until the age of 75². Longer life expectancy and healthy life expectancy create free time, and people will also have longer careers as workers.

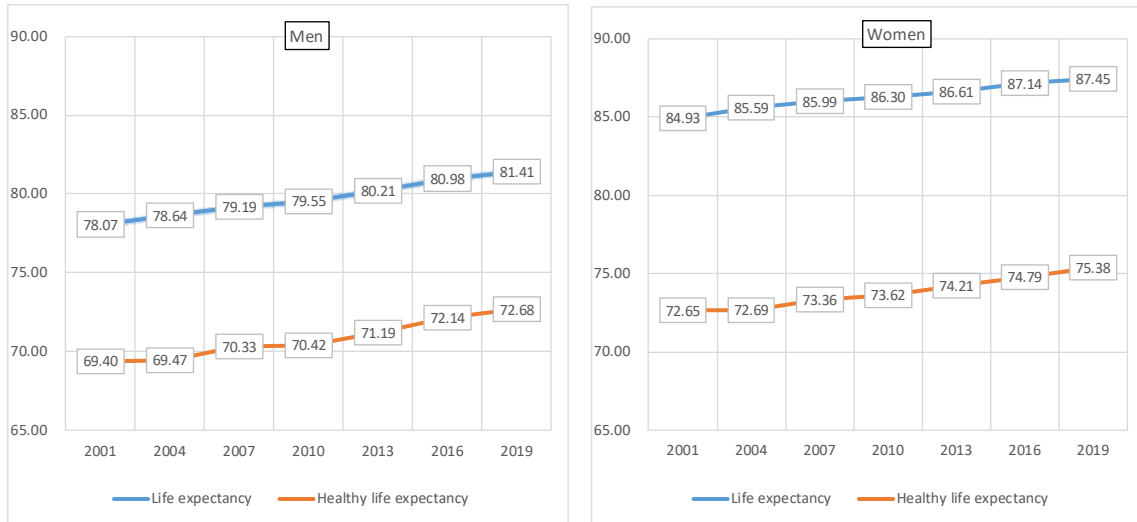
As a help to understand the current situation, there is reference data released by the World Values Survey Association of Austria. According to the data, Japanese people attach greater importance to leisure time over

¹ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2021), "Amendment to the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons-- Ensuring Employment Opportunities Until Age 70" [in Japanese], https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/koyou_roudou/koyou/koureisha/topics/tp120903-1_00001.html. Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

² Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2020), "Pension System Revision Law (2020 Law No. 40) Has Been Enacted" (4) Expanded options for the start of receiving pension benefits [in Japanese], www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/0000147284_00006.html. Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

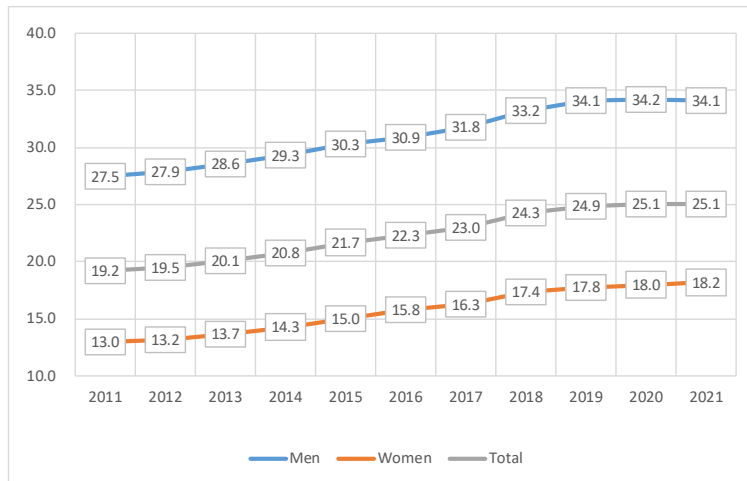
work; nevertheless, they do not think lightly of work.³ In addition, Japan’s Cabinet Office conducted a comparative survey among Japan, the United States, Germany, and Sweden. It found that 40.2% of Japanese people aged 60 and over “want to do (or continue) a paid job”—the largest percentage among the four countries.⁴ A worker’s life career with emphasis on leisure is an accumulation of roles and experiences that an individual plays in their life in general, such as work, family, local community involvement, self-development, and hobbies. As the weight of work careers in one’s life increases, one will also need to review the overall balance.

Figure1: Trends in Japan’s average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy



Source : Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, White Paper on the Labour Economy 2020 Summary, *Social Security and Work Styles in Reiwa Period* [in Japanese], p17, etc. (<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/kousei/19/dl/1-01.pdf>) Accessed February 8, 2022

Figure 2: Trends in the employment rate of people aged 65 and older



Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Labor Force Survey (Basic Tabulation) 2021*, p.5, *average results summary* [in Japanese] (<https://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/sokuhou/nen/ft/pdf/index.pdf>) accessed February 8, 2022

³ Awareness survey involving research institutes from about 100 countries and regions around the world. The survey targeted about 1,000 people aged 18 and over in each country and region, while the survey items covered more than 290 questions, including political, economic, labor, education, religious, and family views. Since the first survey in 1981, the survey has been conducted about every five years until 2019 for a total of seven times.

Source: Dentsu Institute (2021), *World Values Survey Wave 7—Distinctive Trends in Japan Revealed by Comparison of 77 Countries* (<https://institute.dentsu.com/articles/1706/>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

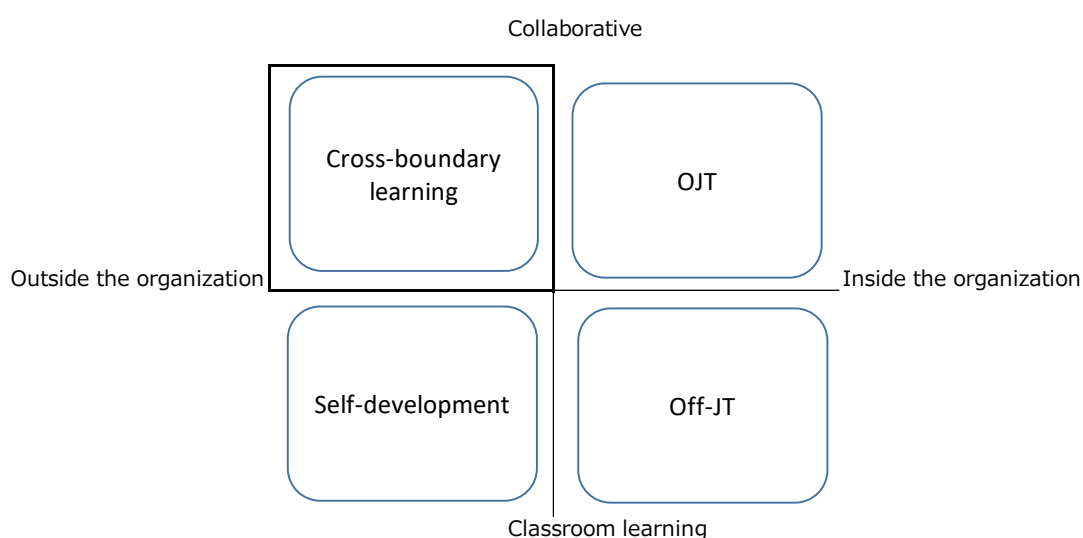
⁴ Cabinet Office (2021), *Annual Report on the Ageing Society in FY2021 (full text)* [in Japanese], p. 57, (https://www8.cao.go.jp/kourei/whitepaper/w-2021/zenbun/pdf/1s3s_02.pdf). Accessed Feb. 10, 2022.

1-2. Growing interest in human resources development

If one's career as a worker is prolonged, the knowledge and abilities that one has acquired by the time of undergraduate education may become obsolete due to changes in the economy and society that take place during the course of one's career. According to a survey by the IMD of Switzerland, Japan's international competitiveness in human resources has been declining since 2018, and in 2021 it ranked 39th out of 64 countries.⁵ In response to this situation, there is growing interest in re-learning among industry, government, and academia, such as recurrent education at professional graduate schools and reskilling related to digital technology. As for industry, one of the reasons for interest in human resource development is that it corresponds to "S" (social) in ESG factors attracting the attention of institutional investors⁶.

Both recurrent education and reskilling involve classroom learning. The former (which is often performed outside the affiliated organization) is self-development, while the latter (which is often done within the affiliated organization) is considered Off-JT. On the other hand, cross-boundary learning has been attracting attention recently as a method of human resource development different from those methods above. It is known as learning and reflecting on the content related to one's job and duties while crossing back and forth over the boundary between the inside and the outside of the organization to which the individual belongs.⁷ Cross-boundary learning helps workers grow by gaining diverse experiences through collaborative activities outside the organization, and its effect is drawing attention. Previously, OJT by companies and organizations has prevented the obsolescence of workers' knowledge and abilities, but valuable experiences such as involvement in new businesses, overseas assignments, and temporary transfers to other companies are opportunities not always accessible to everyone in an organization. Cross-boundary learning can also supplement OJT, which may have a limited range of effects. An overview of the relationship between traditional human resource development methods (such as self-development, off-JT, and OJT) and cross-boundary learning is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Positioning of cross-border learning in human resource development



Source: Compiled by MGSSI based on *Cross-border Learning, NPOs, and Third Places* [in Japanese], Takeru Nagaoka and Satoshi Hashimoto(2021)

(<https://www.jil.go.jp/institute/zassi/backnumber/2021/07/pdf/031-043.pdf>)

⁵ International Institute for Management Development (2021), World Competitiveness Ranking - Country Overview (<https://worldcompetitiveness.imd.org/countryprofile/JP/talent>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

⁶ "2022 Stock Market's Attention to 'Diversity of Human Resources': Focus on Reliable Profits" [in Japanese], *The Nikkei Online Edition*, Dec. 27, 2021.

⁷ Jun Nakahara (2021), *Management Learning Theory Supplementary New Edition—Science of Human Resources Development* [in Japanese], University of Tokyo Press, p. 186.

This paper discusses cross-boundary learning, assuming that Japan's average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy will increase, as will the employment rate of seniors. The following chapters will organize the concept of cross-boundary learning and look into its significance for both workers and employers through examples. At the same time, this paper will attempt to illustrate the constructing of life careers and explore whether it could lead to building relationships between companies and society.

2. CONCEPT AND EXAMPLES OF CROSS-BOUNDARY LEARNING

2-1. What is cross-boundary learning?

The definition of cross-boundary learning used in this paper is shown in Figure 4.⁸

Figure 4: Definition of cross-boundary learning

1	The targets of cross-boundary learning according to the broad definition are <i>all people who are in between different situations</i> .
2	The targets of cross-boundary learning according to the narrow definition are <i>working persons with a relationship with the organization and persons willing to work</i> .
3	The boundary of cross-boundary learning refers to that between <i>the situation in which we are compliant and other situations</i> .
4	The scope of cross-boundary learning is the entire process in which an individual crosses back and forth over the boundary and bridges that boundary.
5	Cross-boundary learning is established when the individual is aware of crossing back and forth over the boundary.

Source: Nobutaka Ishiyama (2018), *Mechanism of Cross-Boundary Learning: The Realities of Knowledge Brokers in the Practical Community Building Careers* [in Japanese], Fukumura Shuppan Inc., pp. 38-39.

To add to this, it allows one to transcend organizational boundaries, generate new ideas that one would not have noticed in an organization, acquire knowledge and skills that cannot be acquired within an organization, and rethink a career through self-evident findings in daily work.⁹ If a worker's service period at their organization becomes long, the arrangement of work is familiar, and therefore the community and the office become "home." Cross-boundary learning, where one goes away from the organization and comes back to that home repeatedly,¹⁰ enhances workers' self-understanding.

Specific examples include volunteer activities, community activities, side jobs, external study sessions¹¹, and cross-industry networking sessions.¹² Of these, volunteer activities, specifically pro bono work and side jobs, will be discussed in this paper, considering their significance for both the employer and the employee. The following section will introduce the situation of these two examples.

2-2. The situation surrounding examples of cross-boundary learning

(1) Pro bono work

Pro bono work originates in the Latin word "Pro Bono Publico," which means "for the good of the public." It refers to volunteer activities that provide knowledge and abilities cultivated by occupation to society.¹³

One of the leading organizations in this area is the American Bar Association (ABA). Lawyers provided legal

⁸ The source of Figure 4 consistently uses the notation "cross-boundary (type) learning," but in this paper, the term has been unified as "cross-boundary learning" considering other reference sources.

⁹ Nakahara, op. Cit. (Footnote 7), p.185.

¹⁰ Nobutaka Ishiyama (2020), "Recommendations for 'Cross-Boundary Learning' That Can Be Applied in the Main Business" [in Japanese], *CEL: Culture, Energy and Life 125*, The Research Institute for Culture, Energy and Life, Osaka Gas, pp. 34-37. (https://www.og-cel.jp/search/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2020/06/25/08.pdf). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

¹¹ A hackathon is one example. Hackathon is a term coined from "hack" and "marathon" and it is used as one of the tools for open innovation. A hackathon involves engineers and designers in the software development field forming a team to exchange opinions on specific themes, develop applications and services within a certain period of time, and compete for results.

¹² Ishiyama, op.cit. (source of figure 4), p. 130.

¹³ Ikuma Saga (2011), *Pro Bono-New Social Contribution New Work Style* [in Japanese], Keiso Shobo, p. 24.

services for those facing difficulties due to the global financial crisis around 2008, supporting them in rebuilding their lives, which led to a more organized response.¹⁴ This pro bono work has been serving as an opportunity for legal professionals belonging to the ABA to balance professional responsibility with individual ethical commitment.

In Japan, Panasonic has been engaged in an NPO/NGO Support Pro Bono Program since 2011, through which 330 of its employees have supported the formulation of management plans for 56 organizations. According to a participant survey conducted in 2021 on the 10th anniversary of the program, it provides an opportunity for participants to consider their careers and feel an increased attachment to the company.¹⁵ In addition, since 2015, Kawasaki City has launched the Kawasaki Pro Bono Department project, matching citizens seeking opportunities for pro bono work with organizations aiming to improve the level of their activities to solve social issues such as childcare and welfare. The spread of telework appears to be a tailwind for such activities.¹⁶

Through these long-lasting efforts both in Japan and overseas, participants can also see that they have acquired a wide range of learning. A survey conducted by the Cabinet Office for NPOs in Japan found that 713 (18.7%) of the 3,809 valid responses reported they received technical support from companies by means of pro bono work.¹⁷ The degree of spread in the future should be closely monitored through changes in the survey results.

(2) Side jobs¹⁸

In 2017, after the Japanese government formulated the Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare changed its policy from banning to permitting side jobs. In 2018, the guidelines for promoting side jobs were formulated, and related clauses¹⁹ were newly added to the Model Rules of Employment. Although not legally binding, these guidelines highlighted operational considerations, citing judicial precedents.

Meanwhile, in the private sector, the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) released a report in 2021 on the promotion of side jobs aiming for phase II of work style reform and improved engagement. The report points out that self-driven career development and second career development for seniors are significant for both workers and employers (Figure 5) and that combining them with other measures such as telework and flexible working hour systems will allow for more effective functioning.

¹⁴ ABA Groups - Center for Pro Bono, Why Celebrate Pro Bono?

(<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/center-pro-bono/celebrate-pro-bono/>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

¹⁵ Panasonic Corporation, “Panasonic NPO/NGO Support Pro Bono Program,”

(<https://www.panasonic.com/jp/corporate/sustainability/citizenship/pnsf/probono.html>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

¹⁶ Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture, “Parallel Careers during COVID-19—The Time for Telework to Make its Community Debut” [in Japanese], *Kawasaki Pro Bono Department 2020 Report*

(<https://www.city.kawasaki.jp/250/page/0000125931.html>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

¹⁷ Cabinet Office (2021), *2020 Report of a Fact-Finding Survey on Specified Nonprofit Organizations* [in Japanese], p. 51.

(https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/uploads/R2_houjin_report.pdf). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

¹⁸ This paper defines side job as a way of working with multiple jobs to enhance the skills of the desired person.

(Source) Atsuyuki Kawakami (2011), *Study on ‘Side Jobs’* [in Japanese], Keio University Press, p. 21, p. 213.

¹⁹ Article 68 (Side Jobs) Workers may engage in the business of other companies, etc. outside of working hours.

2. Based on a notification from a worker to the effect that he/she will engage in the business set forth in the preceding paragraph, the Company may prohibit or restrict such worker if he/she falls under any of the following items by engaging in said business.

(1) In case of hindrance in the provision of labor

(2) In case of the divulgence of company secrets

(3) In case of actions that damage the Company’s honor or trust or actions that undermine the Company’s relationships of trust

(4) In case the interests of the Company are harmed due to competition

(Source) Supervision Division, Labor Standards Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *The Model Rules of Employment*, April 2021 edition, Chapter 14.

(<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000496428.pdf>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

Figure 5: Purpose of seeking side jobs



Source: Japan Business Federation (Keidanren), *Promotion of Side Jobs—Aiming for Phase II of Work Style Reform and Improved Engagement* [in Japanese], p.8.

(https://www.keidanren.or.jp/policy/2021/090_honbun.pdf) Accessed February 8, 2022.

A good example is Fukuyama City in Hiroshima Prefecture. In 2018, the city announced side-job openings for “strategy promotion managers” (25,000 yen per day per week) who would analyze and solve issues such as population decline, and it hired five people from the private sector. As a result, the city made use of its scenic location that became the setting of a popular anime movie, attracting people who desired workcation and female travelers. In 2020, the city added two to the original hires who desired to renew their employment.²⁰ This became a forerunner for other local governments: Kyoto City also hired two persons for side jobs in 2021. As the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited remote work, applying this work style to side jobs is said to be a solution to labor shortages in rural areas²¹ and lead to an increase in related populations²².

Some view that side jobs could lead to workers changing jobs—a problem for the employers in their main jobs from the perspective of talent retention. However, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare stipulates that it shall be tasked with facilitating the development of working conditions and other workplace environments and securing occupations.²³ In addition, Keidanren, a representative group of employers, are promoting side jobs, and local governments and other organizations are adding to examples of offering side jobs. This reflects that side jobs are becoming widely recognized as an employment option and working practice. The survey results of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications indicate the percentage of side job applicants has risen moderately (Figure 6). The survey results for 2022 represent the latest situation since the previous survey five years earlier. Side job placement services are also flourishing.²⁴ The survey results are useful in the sense of grasping the actual situation of cross-boundary learning.

²⁰ Fukuyama City, Hiroshima, “About a strategy promotion manager,” August 6, 2021.

(<https://www.city.fukuyama.hiroshima.jp/soshiki/kikaku/147296.html>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

²¹ “Exerting Abilities Locally Gives Back to the Community With Spare Time and Abilities Through Hometown Side Business” [in Japanese], *Asahi Shimbun Weekly AERA*, Dec. 27, 2021.

²² It refers to people who are diversely engaged with the community, not the “resident population” who has moved, nor the “non-resident population” who came for tourism. In rural areas, due to the declining and aging population, there is a problem of shortage of people who are responsible for regional development, but in some communities, human resources who create change, mainly young people, are beginning to enter, and it is expected that human resources outside the region called “related population” will play a leading role in community development.

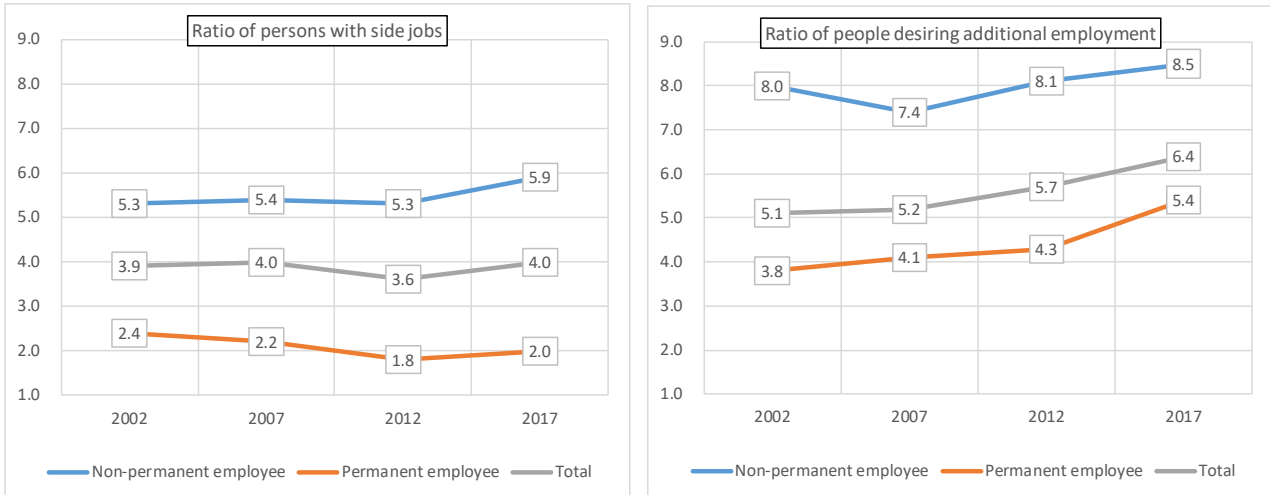
(Source) Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “New entrance to the area, portal site for the related population” [in Japanese] (<https://www.soumu.go.jp/kankeijinkou/about/index.html>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

²³ Act for Establishment of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (1999 Law No. 97) Article 3, Paragraph 1 Duties [in Japanese]

²⁴ In October 2020, the Nikkei Group launched a service called “NIKKEI SEEKS” as work styles have changed dramatically in recent years when working from home has become mainstream. It supports remote work styles of individuals with specific skills who want to start side jobs or work as freelancers, and connecting them with companies that recruit for job openings.

(Source) Nikkei, Inc., “Over 10,000 Users Registered in Skill Share Service NIKKEI SEEKS” [in Japanese], Press release Dec. 16, 2021. (<https://www.nikkei.co.jp/nikkeiinfo/news/information/>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

Figure 6: Trends in the ratio of persons with side jobs and people desiring additional employment



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2017 Employment Structure of Japan, p.11 (<https://www.stat.go.jp/data/shugyou/2017/pdf/kgaiyou.pdf>) Accessed February 8, 2022

3. BUILDING LIFE CAREERS VIA CROSS-BOUNDARY LEARNING (FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE THE SPREAD OF CROSS-BOUNDARY LEARNING)

The following is a summary of this paper up to this point. As mentioned in Paragraph 1-1 above, if a worker's career is prolonged, they are more likely to encounter various events during their career, while being affected by changes in the external environment, such as economic crises and large-scale natural or man-made disasters. For example, the Global Financial Crisis around 2008 encouraged the spread of pro bono work (Paragraphs 2-2 (1)), and since 2020, telework has, in a sense, promoted the spread of side jobs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a means of responding to events that can upend the life careers of workers, cross-boundary learning has become an effective approach to building good relationships with society, which may be meaningful for employers.

Harvard Business School (HBS) established the Immersive Field Course (IFC) in the second year of a two-year master's program in business administration during the Global Financial Crisis around 2008. For about 10 days, students immerse themselves in specific fields and work to solve community problems by utilizing the theories and frameworks learned in the classroom. While balancing *knowing*, *doing*, and *being*, that program focuses on learning toward *being* in particular in order to foster respect for social norms, which is required when making decisions in the face of difficulties in one's life and career. This is because knowledge of theory and frameworks will not be useful without practice using techniques and skills, and there will be no positive impact on society without the conviction and values appearing as *being*²⁵.

In cross-boundary learning, workers themselves can choose from a wide range of subjects and repeat their

²⁵ HBS graduates have gone on to the U.S. financial industry, the epicenter of the Global Financial Crisis around 2008. Faculty determined that the reason was in their educational curriculum and found that to develop leaders and entrepreneurs in society requires regaining the balance between the three by focusing on values and being forming the ego in addition to knowing, technique, and doing. One of the subjects actually introduced in education is IFC. The implementation of IFC in Japan began in 2012 with the desire to support Tohoku in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and it has continued to this day. In January 2020, 42 students came to Japan and stayed in Tokyo and Tohoku for a total of 10 days. (Source) Harvard Business School Japan Research Center, "The Global Classroom: Student Immersion in Japan," and others. (<https://www.hbs.edu/global/about/Pages/japan-jp.aspx>). Accessed Feb. 8, 2022.

experiences through practice and introspection. OJT is also a place to practice knowledge and skills cultivated through self-development and Off-JT. In a case where this OJT is limited, cross-boundary learning will not only compensate for that shortage, but it will also be an opportunity to review one's *being* in light of one's daily life. It can be said that cross-boundary learning is one of the effective ways to develop a life career.

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