

TEXTE

Schoolchildren in China work overnight to produce Amazon Alexa devices

Leaked documents show children as young as 16 recruited by Amazon supplier Foxconn work gruelling and illegal hours

5 Interviews with workers and leaked documents from Amazon’s supplier Foxconn show that many of the children have been required to work nights and overtime to produce the smart-speaker devices, in breach of Chinese labour laws.

10 According to the documents, the teenagers – drafted in from schools and technical colleges in and around the central southern city of Hengyang – are classified as “interns”, and their teachers are paid by the factory to accompany them. Teachers are asked to encourage uncooperative pupils to accept overtime work on top of regular shifts.

15 The company defended its use of schoolchildren, however, claiming that “it provides students, who are all of a legal working age, with the opportunity to gain practical work experience and on-the-job training in a number of areas that will support their efforts to find employment following their graduation.”

A spokesperson for Amazon, which is headed by Jeff Bezos, the richest person in the world with a fortune estimated at more than \$100bn, said the company would not tolerate violations of its supplier code of conduct and regularly assessed suppliers, often using independent auditors, to monitor compliance and improvement.

20 The documents reveal how the factory has turned to schoolchildren to fill the gaps after struggling to recruit permanent staff. One document describes how a factory needs roughly 7,000 workers to handle production from April to October, but says that it is only able to recruit an average of about 30 workers a week and needs to hire agency workers and interns to fill the gap. Interns can account for up to 15% of the workforce.

25 Company documents show that Foxconn pays interns a total of 16.54 yuan an hour (£1.93) inclusive of overtime and other add-ons, with a basic salary of £1.18 an hour.

30 The leaked documents also reveal that Foxconn has faced problems as a result of the trade war between the US and China, with the cost of raw materials increasing and some orders lost.

Adapted from The Guardian, August 2019

** Foxconn: the largest provider of electronics manufacturing services in China.

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