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アジアにおける介護従事者の国際移動と協調体制の構築に関する研究

平成22年度 総括研究報告書

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アジアにおける介護従事者の国際移動と協調体制の構築に関する研究

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研究要旨

この研究は人口構成の変化に関する将来予測をもとに、女性や高齢者などの潜在労働力の活用の問題点を指摘し、外国人労働者の導入の問題点について論じた。また、EPAを通じた看護・介護福祉士候補者の状況について概説した。EPAを通じた受け入れを通じ、ケアの質が低下したかについて、厚生労働省の調査によると、家族やケアを受ける当事者はケアの質が向上したと考えている者が多い。

ケア需要が増大する中であっては日本だけではなく、高齢化が本格化するアジア NIES においてケア人材の獲得競争が激化する懸念がある。ベトナムや他のアセアン諸国といった送り出し国においても人口構成が急激に変化しており、互惠性に向けた国際協調体制の構築が求められる。

A. 研究目的

先進国における急速な高齢化、女性の労働力化に伴う「ケアの不足」について構造的問題を概観し、日本における EPA の事例から多文化状況におけるケアに関する課題を提示する。また、人の国際移動がもたらす問題点について、アジアレベルにおいて考察する。

B. 研究方法

既存の統計資料を整理し、看護師候補者・介護福祉士候補者、施設関係者などに対するインタビューから構成した。

C. 研究結果

EPA における外国人看護師・介護福祉士候補者の導入は、ケアの質の低下など労働市場に悪影響を及ぼすものとして考えられている。しかし、それほど単純なことではない。

ケアの質に関しては、入所者や家族から高い外国人介護者に対して評価が与えられている傾向にある。

しかし、EPA のそもそもの目標とされている国家試験対策については、日本語学習の継続困難、就労との両立の困難といった学習上の問題を抱えている。試験対策重視の受け入れ枠組みが日本の大きな特徴となっている点で台湾やその他受け入れ国との大きな違いである。

送り出し国においては、送り出しの促進と労働者保護の両立が政策目標となっている。特に看護師協会などは看護師の地位の下降につながるような受け入れについては反対しており、EPA の枠組みはインドネシアやフィリピンから反対を受けた。韓国や台湾においては看護師の受け入れを行っていないが、結婚移民が介護に従事するケースや台湾においては家事労働者が家族介護に従事するケースがみられる。ケアに関する需要の増大により、ケアをめぐる人の国際移動は活発化している。

D. 結論

ケアをめぐる人の国際移動は景気動向に左右されない点が、従来の国際移動と大きく異なる。雇用吸収力が大きいため、定住外国人などが就業しやすい職種となっており、移民の高齢化も合わせて考えると、多様性における質の向上は重要な課題である。外国人介護者による介護の質は低いとは言えないが、人の国際移動の加速化が送り出し国の社会の再生産を犠牲にする懸念がある。人口構成の変化は長期的な現象であることから、送り出し国社会の再生産の維持を前提とした移動マネジメントのための国際協調体制を構築することが求められている。

Social Reproduction, Care and Immigration in Ageing Societies with a Declining Population

Wako Asato

Questioning social reproduction of the future

The 21st century is an era that questions the sustainability of society. In a mere 15 years from 2010, Japan's current 81 million working-age population (ages 15–64), which comprises its main workforce, is expected to decrease by 10 million and the 14 million population of people above the age of 75 is expected to increase by 7 million. The 10 million decrease in the working-age population denotes a significant cutback on labor necessary to support the society, and the 7 million increase in population of people over age 75 indicate that more people will be dependent on society. By 2055, around the time when current college students will reach old age, the working-age population is expected to decrease by 35 million and approximately 30% of the entire population will be over the age of 75¹.

Moreover, the dependency ratio in 2000 indicated that one elderly person was supported by four people in the workforce; however, this will fall to two by 2025 and 1.3 by

2055. In other words, the burden of each member of the workforce will double from 2000 to 2025, and triple by 2055. An increase in the dependent population leads to an increase in social security costs. In European nations, it is not unusual for social security costs to increase at a faster pace than that of economic growth (Adema, W. and M. Ladaïque 2009). The case of Japan, however, is unique because its economy has already been sluggish for the past 20 years and social security costs are rising at a considerably faster rate than that of economic growth. No wonder people are beginning to doubt the sustainability of the social security system.

Social security is a system that utilizes a country's redistribution function in order to control risks held by all citizens, such as illness, disabilities, or unemployment, by guaranteeing income and providing medical or welfare services. The social security system, which covers various risks in life with programs like medical insurance, pension service, unemployment insurance, nursing care insurance, public assistance, and elderly welfare, is the foundation that supports reliable and secure living. When considering the imminent change in the demographic configuration, this social security system will be increasingly important, but the country's economic foundation is weak

¹ Ministry of Labor, Health and Welfare *Population Statistics*, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/index.shtml> (accessed in May 5, 2011) And see population projection at National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. http://www.ipss.go.jp/site-ad/index_english/population-e.html (accessed in May 5, 2011).

and sustainability seems difficult.

A new trend of increasing risks is being witnessed in the area of employment as well. Japan's unemployment rate surpassed 5% in 2010, and the number of unemployed Japanese people is approaching 4 million. The trend of non-regular employment has given rise to the number of the “working poor”—people who earn less than half of the average income. This is no longer an era where you can survive as long as you have a job. The term “Nettocafe nanmin (Internet café refugees)” is now an established word in society, and during a visit to an Internet café at night, it is not unusual to meet people who seem to be staying there on a long-term basis. It is no longer rare to be in a situation where one cannot find work even when one tries, or cannot earn enough to eat even if one has a job. The situation suggests that the future of Japan may involve a war of survival.

The economic growth in post-war Japan witnessed a long period of low unemployment rates, guarantee of employment, and increase in income. Economic growth and redistribution systems ensured income and mitigated people's risks. In Japan, working extremely hard is a matter of dignity. In a society that honors work, the state of not being able to work or not being able to earn enough is not easily accepted and often considered an act of deviance from society. This may have a connection with more young and middle aged men committing suicide due to employment-related issues in recent years, because more people find themselves unintentionally turned “deviant” and have nowhere to go.

The harsh situation in Japan is easier to comprehend when the country's geopolitical position and changes in its demographic configuration are considered. The pressure from Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Southeast Asian countries, and China has changed Japan's position. From the late 1980s, the trend has been to move production, if possible, to other Asian countries where the workforce is abundant and costs are low. Thus, Japan's industrial world is being hollowed out. Many companies that did not move to overseas locations had to maintain competitiveness by accepting foreign workers, such as trainees of the industrial training program or the Japanese diaspora originally from Brazil, Peru for example, and also by promoting non-regular employment of the Japanese people. Non-regular employment of much younger men, in particular, is a new risk that did not exist earlier. The rise in non-regular employment of such workers is understood to be caused by the competition from the globalized economies of other Asian countries as well as the change in demographic configuration due to the aging baby-boomer generation. An increase in wage costs due to the aging workforce became a pressure that caused companies to rationalize the employment of younger segments. This promoted non-regular employment. Facilitation of safety net for this new risk is still inadequate. Although internal training is popular in Japan, developing the skills of non-regular employees is difficult. Hence, these employees may continue to earn a low income throughout their lifetimes. It is assumed that if non-regular employees do not pay enough toward the pension service and receive public assistance in

the future, the financial burden caused by non-regular employment will be 20 trillion Japanese yen in total (National Institute for Research Advancement (2008)). To handle these new risks, maintaining and strengthening the social security system becomes necessary.

Let us look at the ways in which other Asian countries are dealing with changes in demographic configuration. The rate of aging in Singapore is approximately 9%, but because it is increasing faster than in Japan, the country is expected to nearly overcome Japan by 2030, at approximately 30%. Singapore, however, concludes that economic development is the best possible welfare policy. It has announced its intention to limit social security measures to the minimum and refrain from becoming a welfare state. In fact, Singapore ranks at No. 1 in the global competitiveness index² and exhibits immense interest in strengthening competitiveness. A Singaporean cabinet member, during his Japan visit, remarked that the two things to learn from Japan were the high productivity of its manufacturing industry and the social security policies that put pressure on finances. In other words, Japan's social security system served as an example of what not to do. Singapore, a country that attempts to keep a balanced demography by accepting human resources from around the world and offering permanent residency to competent workers, intends to overcome the problem of aging society with a firm stand. Although levels vary, other Asian countries share this governmental stance of minimizing social security policies,

² <http://gcr.weforum.org/gcr2010/>(accessed in May 5, 2011)

emphasizing households units, aiming for economic growth and liberal immigration policy.

Revival of economic growth statement

Is there a remedy? One remedy agreed by both the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is economic growth by free trade. The plan is to use revitalized trade to revive Japan's craftsmanship that has hitherto supported Japanese economy. Japan has conventionally invested in Asian countries; therefore, a foundation already exists. The idea is that eliminating more obstacles to economic activities should have greater economic effects.

The concept of using the growing Asian countries is highly persuasive. East Asian countries rank high in the global competitiveness index, with Singapore at No. 1, Hong King at No. 2, Taiwan at No. 8, Malaysia at No. 10, China at No.18, South Korea at No. 23, and Thailand at No. 26. Japan stands at No. 27. These countries not only are globally competitive but also have young demographic configurations that are a leading force in global consumption. If Japanese companies can be more active in other Asian countries, Japan can expect further economic growth. This is one of the specific remedies on which the Japanese government relies.

Many multinational free trade agreements have been signed, including ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) and the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (TPP). Japan attempted to lead free trade on the

occasion of ASEAN+6; however, taking the lead was impossible without regulating agriculture. Agriculture in Japan is considered to be important because of food security and national land conservation; therefore, opening up the field of agriculture requires significant political changes. External policies depend on internal regulations. Korea is able to make successive agreements with the US and EU, because the problem of agriculture is not obvious in the country.

Nevertheless, it is not necessarily true, however, that Japanese agriculture cannot sustain unless free trade is developed because the farmer segment is aging at a fast pace. A delay in the implementation of free trade, however, has two demerits. First, there is a possibility of losing overseas markets because of less competitiveness due to tariffs and other barriers. Second, Japan will have to face establishment and standardization of rules unfavorable to the country, because it cannot participate in the initial rule-setting.

Thus, promoting “strong economy” and “strong social security” in the new growth strategy is a persuasive argument. Some people may consider it too late to talk about a strong economy; ironically however, economic growth is essential particularly at present, when the country is facing the problem of contradictory demographic configuration. It is essential for the support of the elderly as well as the next generation on whom this support depends. Economic growth cannot, however, be achieved by simply letting the market move in its natural way. This is because no one can be sure whether benefits of free trade will be returned to Japan.

In fact, domestic demand has fallen, Japan has lost its appeal to investors, and the current trend is to reinvest in other Asian countries or internal reserves of Japanese companies in other countries. Utilizing Asia’s growth may not necessarily lead to the rescue of Japan’s financial affairs.

Changes in demographic configuration and “mobilization of women and the elderly”

The UN Population Division announced in 2000 that in order to compensate for the decline in Japan’s working-age population, Japan must accept 600,000 immigrants annually³. Many people criticized this announcement, saying that it ignored the existence of a potential workforce in the form of women and older people, who are not “mobilized.” Thus, the need to improve productivity was ignored. This theory to use potential labor, however, is not something new and has been around since the 1980s.

Labor force participation rate of women is increasing at a faster pace in other East Asian countries with continuing growth than in Japan. Why is this plan not progressing smoothly in Japan? It is often pointed out that many women give up work because of the difficulties of maintaining both family life and work at the same time. This will, however, become even more difficult in future years, as the dependent population increases and the country’s financial affairs force the government to reduce welfare services. Consequently, more

³ Accessible from the below (accessed in May 5, 2011)
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/migration/execsum.pdf>

family members will need to be taken care of at home, and because Japan has strong gender division of labor, it is highly possible that women will be socially expected and pressured to take on the duties of family care. Care can be provided by government services, families, the market, or companies as fringe benefits, and it is necessary to rethink the roles and responsibilities of each. This includes implementing programs such as childcare leave and family care leave as well as substantiating the domestic job market.

Another obstacle to mobilization of women in the workforce is the country's employment customs. Roughly speaking, companies have considered women as risks in Japan: Women may resign from work when they marry, give birth or raise children; therefore, companies refrain from providing women with adequate training and from obtaining promotions that result in gender wage differentials. Once a woman resigns, she is removed from the mainstream path, and when returning to the workforce, she often must abandon hope of a good career. The male-breadwinner model, in which men form the core workforce, was reasonable to some extent during Japan's rapid financial growth; however, now that the population is declining, ensuring a more diverse workforce makes more sense.

On the other hand, regarding the mobilization of the elderly, Japan already has the highest labor force participation rate for older people when compared globally. At around 2025, however, the baby-boomer generation will be over the age of 75, which is considered the old

elderly who are in higher percentages of needing care. Therefore, we must understand that there is a limit to the theory of mobilization of retired workers.

We must be wary of this mobilization-type theory of using women and older potential people. This "mobilization theory" has been around since the 1980s, and the reason of it not having achieved much success is difficulty in removing the restriction factor that hinder people from acquiring work even when they desire to do so. It is necessary to keep a more normative perspective of providing equal opportunity for work. Unless a society embraces diversity in human resources, the workforce will inevitably be limited and rigid. If we consider the restricting factors of equal opportunity for work, it is gender division of domestic work for women and language competency for foreign worker. Companies should stop vicious cycle and shift their focus to the potentials of a diverse workforce from the risks of women resigning from work that facilitate gender differentials wider.

Because of the correlation between birth rates and gender equality, we recognize that workforce diversity is a key solution for societies with declining populations. It was once believed that the higher a household's income is, the lesser children it will have; however, now it is acknowledged that when gender equality is low, the labor force participation rate of women and birth rates remain low as well. According to the Institute for the Institute for Human Diversity Japan, municipalities that have active policies for women also have active policies for foreign nationals.

Battle of care deficit: the overlooked problem

As the demographic change emerges new risk of labor force deficit, so do the demographic change puts new risk on care deficit. Care is the paid or unpaid work necessary for maintaining regular daily life. Nursing, elderly care, childcare, and overall domestic work is deeply related to paid and unpaid care work that are provided by family, community, market and government. The sustainability and security to care is significant issue for ageing societies while population is declining.

Unlike manufacturing, care provision cannot be automated, cannot be transferred offshore and hence cannot easily raise productivity. Thus securing the care provider is a crucial matter for ageing societies with declining workforce.

According to the National Council on Social Security, between 2007 and 2025, the demand for elderly care workers will double, and that for nurses will increase by 30%–60%(National Forum on Social Security 2008). Elderly care and nursing are two fields with a chronic lack of workforce; an issue shared by all the developed countries to a certain extent. The field of elderly care has potential for creating more opportunities for work and, thus, is expected to help in bringing down unemployment rates. The DPJ government set a goal of turning the fields of elderly care and nursing into a 50 trillion Japanese yen market and creating 2,840,000 more jobs in the field by 2020.

Nevertheless, there is a strong concern

about these promising fields because of demographic dilemma. First, it is hard to believe that the country can find about additional 2,840,000 people to take on these jobs when the working-age population between 15 and 64 is expected to decrease by 8 million in a mere ten years (2010–2020) and thus cause a lack of workforce.

Second, the ability to supply this workforce is an unstable issue that depends on changes in the economic climate. As the economy recovers, people will move to other works that offer higher additional value, and as it turns downward, people will return to carework. In particular, as more of the baby-boomer generation will require elderly care, the demand for elderly care will dramatically increase. In other words, contrary to the steadily rising demand in elderly care, the ability to supply the care is unstable. Unless an adequate number of workers in the care sector can be guaranteed regardless of the economic climate, the quality of elderly care is bound to fall.

Third, lack of elderly care providers will not necessarily lead to higher wages. Wages in the medical and welfare sectors are insurance system-based and, to a certain extent, already established accordingly to medical and long-term care insurance systems. System-based wages are not flexible as in labor market and do not increase much even when the workforce is inadequate.

Two reasons can be given for the mobilization of the potential workforce for elderly carework. One is the problem of compatibility between unpaid carework at home

and paid work outside home. The pressure for family care is expected to increase in the future particularly considering the future slashes of care related services under the Longterm Care Insurance⁽⁶⁾; therefore, utilizing the potential workforce will be more difficult⁴. In order to allow women to continue working, compensation is necessary. This includes securing outsourcing methods in the market, within community, and/or in the workplace, and reconsidering gender division of labor. The second reason is the wage standard that remains potential workforce being less mobilized. This is related not solely to compensation for elderly care under Longterm Care Insurance. In Japan, the minimum wage is often lower than the standard of public assistance, that discourages people to be willing to work. Thus minimum wage is set at lower point of reservation wage. Unless the contradiction of these systems is resolved, attracting potential workforce into labor market would be difficult.

In general, “deficit of care”⁽⁵⁾ makes it hard to utilize potential workforce, a problem not limited to elderly care. If we attempt to compensate for the deficit of care at home through other outsourcing method including public facilities, we will be required to compensate for the deficit of care generated by people working at those outsourcing facilities. This can be called “care chain dilemma” implying that outsourcing may not solve care deficit. The problems of an increase in both care

⁴ This is as the case of slash of in-home services for those who live with family despite the fact that MHLW mentioned that slash of service should be determined based on availability of family members on care.

demand due to the change in the demographic configuration and workforce demand due to the decline in working age population will become even more obvious in the future and may be difficult to solve within the country’s labor market.

Why consider personnel from overseas?

The principal of popular sovereignty places foreign workers as supplementary. Following a severe workforce deficiency in the late 1980s, Japan began to accept foreign workers as trainees in the industrial training program. One of the reasons for this was to ensure that the country was equipped with the necessary workforce. Theoretically, the issue of inadequate workforce can be solved by actions such as moving operations to overseas locations or labor saving with mechanization and automation; however, not all companies will choose to move overseas. In addition, some industries such as construction or service sectors cannot move operations overseas and hence cannot solve the workforce deficiency by this strategy.

Industries such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries can transfer their production sites to overseas locations with bigger benefits for consumers; however, these are required to remain within the country to a certain extent for food security and national land conservation. These industries are also facing difficulties in securing next generation workers as more than 60% of the primary agricultural workers are over the age of 65. Even without the development of free trade, these industries are moving toward decline. It is difficult to

streamline food security and community sustainability; therefore, these are fields in which an adequate workforce must be secured.

Nursing and elderly care are also the fields that are difficult to streamline. Some attempts have been made to develop and implement robots; however, elderly care robots only replace a part of the care process, and there is a limit to promoting an overall mechanization in the field.

As can be seen from the above, we must compensate for the decline in workforce population by making changes to the industrial structure, transferring operations to overseas locations, and improving productivity via mechanization. Nevertheless, labor-intensive work will still remain, and it is essential to secure the workforce to shoulder this work.

The second reason to consider overseas workers is to improve the quality of service. For example, in 2008, Japan invited nurses and careworker candidates from Indonesia. This has caused some apprehension that quality of care may fall due to language and cultural differences (Hasegawa 2006, Kawara 2005); however, some institutes that accepted these workers have reported that their Japanese employees learned to communicate more carefully and politely without omitting subject, object and so forth as Japanese often do. Moreover, foreign workers' enthusiastic work attitudes encouraged others and reenergized the workplace (Asato 2011). According to a questionnaire survey that the author conducted on Taiwanese nursing care facilities that accepted foreign care workers, approximately 40% of the care workers were foreigners and

40% of the facilities noted that the foreign care workers were necessary for maintaining the good quality of service. A little less than 50% of the facilities employed care workers with nursing certifications from their original countries(Asato 2008). Employing nurses as care workers has many issues; however, we know that generally the facilities acknowledge an improvement in quality.

The third reason is to reduce costs. Many users consider employing foreign workers as a way to cut costs.

We must, however, be aware of the dangers of employing personnel in order to cut costs. When depending on workers that require less labor costs, the user is possibly neglecting efforts to improve productivity. If not being improved by mechanization, automation, and labor management, productivity becomes stagnant. In order to compensate for low productivity, users will then attempt to cut the cost by depending on low-wage workers even more. Thus begins a vicious cycle. If this happens throughout the industry, innovation will be made no more and the overall industry will face stalemate. Sweatshops in the U.S. are marked with low productivity by illegal immigrants and poor work environments are examples. To prevent such a labor market, Japan has implemented the condition of paying foreign workers the same amount of compensation as is being paid to Japanese citizens, and Singapore and Taiwan have implemented employment tax systems to prevent dependency on low-cost laborers.

Moreover, agency costs for foreign workers are high, which also decreases

productivity because of high fixed cost. Businesses that do not have adequate educational functions charge education and training fees and oblique miscellaneous fees, which increases agency fee and which increases the burden on laborers and users. To counter such malpractices, Korea and Taiwan have begun to revise their agency rules. Korea cut back agency costs to one-third, and Taiwan began a direct employment system as well as agency evaluation and publicizing system. This is a revision of recruitment process that prevents labor market dichotomization between high and low productivity.

The fourth reason is to use the “crowding-out effect” to push employees with higher skills to work in departments with higher productivity. Management entities that do not accept new employees end up employing veteran employees to the duties that new employees should be doing. This causes wasteful personnel allocation, high turnover rates, and difficulties in securing successors. Opening doors to a diverse workforce and permitting them to become new successors creates higher internal movement and allows skilled workers to focus on more appropriate work. For example, having nurses change bed sheets and provide mealtime assistance is inefficient from an economic and personnel perspective. It is more desirable to let the nursing assistants perform the work that they can do and let the nurses focus on nursing duties. The 670,000 positions of domestic workers in East Asian countries, that allow women to participate in the workforce, is a good example of the crowding out effect. According to the

author’s calculations, it is presumed that the foreigners working as domestic workers have caused at least a 2% increase in labor force participation of women in Taiwan, and over 10% in Singapore (Asato 2011 forthcoming). A society with a declining population has to be supported by fewer people; therefore, reconsidering personnel allocation is an imperative issue.

The fifth reason is to maintain industry. When there are not enough people to work, companies cannot continue business. In fact, during the bubble period, some collapses occurred because of personnel deficiency. If this happens at an industrial level, the entire industry is unable to sustain. Japan’s personnel deficiency in the past was part of the economic cycle; however, hereafter the situation will be determined by population factors in addition to economic factors. In the past, economic trends influenced the adequacy or inadequacy of personnel; however, henceforth Japan will be faced with a real and chronic personnel deficiency. For example, in the field of fisheries, once a business shuts down, it is extremely difficult to reopen that business because of the large amount of initial, personnel costs and human resources that can succeed the business. Revitalizing the industry, by changes in the demographic configuration, will be more difficult regarding the personnel deficiency caused.

In Japan, discussions regarding foreign workers have continued for over 20 years. We are far from a consensus on the acceptance of foreign workers. This is because emotional arguments are taking priority and also

because we do not have enough detailed analysis based on globally relative unbiased data. In the past, the issue of foreign workers was merely a workforce problem as part of economic phenomena. From here on, however, we must face the fact that we will be forced to deal with a very different problem: the new demographic configuration that will last for almost a century.

System for Accepting EPA Nurses and Care Workers into the Country

- **Acceptance program of the economic partnership agreement (EPA)**

As of 2010, a total of 686 Indonesian candidates for nurses and careworkers have come to Japan in three separate batches, starting with the first batch of 208 Indonesians in August 2008. A total of 438 Filipinos have also arrived in two batches. Although some have returned to their countries for various reasons, more than 1000 of these foreigners are currently working while being trained to become qualified nurses or careworkers in Japan. In this section, we shall consider the type of system to which the nurses and care workers candidates are introduced and the issues related to the acceptance program.

In 2004, the government of the Philippines proposed that Japan accept overseas workers. This proposal was part of a free trade agreement (FTA) that focused on bringing down tariffs. Negotiations for free trade agreements

typically become tough when entering discussions on agricultural produce. Because adjusting internal matters for diplomatic negotiations becomes difficult, it was necessary to promote free trade as smoothly as possible while avoiding negotiations regarding agricultural produce, which involves the de facto rule of “protecting what must be protected.” These negotiations with the Philippines initiated Japan’s negotiations with other ASEAN countries and were the basis of creating the framework for Japan’s trade negotiations. In the end, opening up trade of agricultural produce was kept to a minimum by accepting overseas workers and technical cooperation instead.

One of the core of the economic policy in Japan since that time was to expand consuming market of Japanese goods within Asia where purchasing power is rapidly growing accordingly to the economic development. This is in sense a natural policy choice as the domestic market has been shrinking as aging and declining labor force take place. Expansion of manufacture goods has been a target for Japan, which provides one of the viable choices that sustains economic growth in an super-aged era. Since agriculture trade friction was avoided by healthcare workers, utilization of healthcare sector as political medium for the trade agreement was stringent. The feeling of national profit at the sacrifice of healthcare was also perceived by craftsmanship organizations and the Ministry of Health, Labor. Therefore, this political process was deemed manufacture priority at the sacrifice of healthcare sector.

The Philippines also proposed sending

domestic workers and baby sitters; however, Japan only considered the acceptance of nurses and qualified careworkers, which are not considered unskilled laborers on the ground of current Immigration Law. However, since national qualifications are required for nurses and care workers in Japan, this raised the issue of whether Japan should recognize Filipino qualifications.

After deliberations, it was decided not to permit mutual skill recognition, and a special case system to allow unrecognized skill holders into Japan was developed instead. In this system, qualified Filipino nurses with over three years of experience (or Indonesian nurses with over two years of experience) are given the right to take Japan's national nurse examinations and permission to work in Japan with the purpose of preparing to obtain Japanese qualification (Figure 1).

They are given three years of stay, and examinations are held every year. Thus, they have three chances to clear the examination; however, if they are unable to acquire the qualification during this time, they must return to their countries.

In Singapore and some Middle Eastern countries, where English is the primary medium of communication in nursing services, Filipino qualified nurses are immediately able to work as nurses if they pass examination held in the Philippines⁵. In Japan, however, examinations must be taken in Japanese language. Whether three years are enough to study and learn the

Japanese language is still a matter of complex debates.

Identification of certified careworker qualifications is even more difficult than that of nurse qualifications. This is because certified careworker qualification is unique to Japan, and there are not many examples of equivalent qualifications in other countries in that Japanese qualification took three years of work experience. Furthermore, most developing countries have “younger” demographic configurations and family care customs are predominant; therefore, the concept of paid professional elderly care within a qualification system is still new. The Philippines, however, has the “Caregiver” qualification, which was created to encourage people to work overseas. This qualification includes not only elderly care but also childcare and domestic work and can be obtained after 800 hours of classroom study and practical training. The Japanese government does not permit mutual skills recognition; however, it decided to designate this caregiver qualification as one of the conditions for coming to Japan as a careworker candidate. Indonesia has no such equivalent qualification; therefore, in 2008 Japan decided to err on the side of caution and listed nurse qualification as a condition to come to Japan as a careworker candidate.

In order to acquire the right to take the care worker examination, as in laws and regulations, it is required that candidates have more than three years of experience, with at least 540 working days, in caregiving. Careworker candidates are given a period of four years, a little more than nurse candidates

⁵ The examination process varies by country. For example, since Singapore adopt point system, the government recognizes certain “good school” graduates.

due to the aforementioned requirement. However, it also means they only have one chance to take the examination after three years of experience. Considering that this is a one-shot chance, these conditions are more severe than the ones for nurse candidates.

- **Obstacles to continuing study**

Nurse and care worker candidates from the Philippines and Indonesia, trying to obtain a Japanese national qualification, face various obstacles. One is the Japanese language.

Candidates must acquire a high level of Japanese in order to understand and answer examination questions; however, many candidates have no experience in the language. We can easily assume that language skill acquisition takes a considerable amount of effort particularly those from non-Chinese-character origin. Candidates take extensive Japanese courses before and after coming to Japan, for a total of six months, before being assigned to various hospitals and care facilities across Japan. This is almost N-3 level of Japanese language competency that requires “the ability to understand basic Japanese”⁶ that requires 300 Chinese letters and 1500 vocabularies. The level is very short of the national licensure examination. Therefore, they must continue with the language studies after being assigned even with enough experience and knowledge about nursing.

The language problem is not only about examinations. Once assigned, candidates

must get used to colloquial Japanese. There are many examples of misunderstandings, such as the difficulty of differentiating between “*un* (yes)” and “*u-un* (no)” or the difficulty of understanding when “*iie* (no)” means “yes.” In a culture that has phrases such as “*KY* (someone who cannot read between the lines)” and “*chinmoku wa kane nari* (silence is golden)” and where many things go unexpressed or expressed ambiguously, candidates face numerous language difficulties. Further, there have been cases of institute employees feeling distressed because of the many questions asked by candidates regarding contracts—something that is usually tacitly exchanged between Japanese people. Candidates stationed in rural areas must get familiar with the local dialect as well. As can be seen, candidates are faced with a multifaceted language problem, having to learn standard Japanese, colloquial Japanese, Japanese medical and workplace terminology, Japanese dialects, and examination contents in Japanese.

The second obstacle is the struggle with the status of “candidate.” Nurse candidates are already qualified nurses in the Philippines and Indonesia; however, they cannot engage in nursing practice in Japan because they are not yet qualified in the country. They are only allowed to provide nursing assistance, which includes cleaning, personal care of patients, throwing away garbage, handing out drinks, assisting patients with bathing and eating, assisting patients with toilet, putting away tools used for treatment, and taking care of patients being admitted to and discharged from the hospital. When first assigned to their positions, candidates must struggle with getting used to the

⁶ See HP of the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test.
<http://www.jlpt.jp/e/about/levelsummary.html>

work in which they have no experience. Moreover, because many are under the impression that Japan's medical care is highly developed and come to Japan with expectations to learn advanced medical skills, the situation becomes very disappointing. Nursing associations in the Philippines and Indonesia have expressed their opposition to this type of employment, stating that it lowers the status of their nurses. This type of downward mobility of social status or sometimes called deskilling, however, is often seen when people cross borders.

The third obstacle is goal-setting in Japan. The purpose of this program is to obtain national qualifications; therefore, candidates are required to study during their stay and institutes accepting them are required to create an environment that assists them to acquire qualifications. Not all candidates and institutes, however, are able to put enough effort to the goal of obtaining qualifications. In some cases, candidates give up on taking the examinations because they find the language too difficult and become "allergic" to Japanese kanji characters. Moreover, in some cases, an individual's purpose of participating in the program is merely to be able to work in Japan. In such cases, creating a good environment would not result in higher motivation to pass the examination. Conversely, some candidates strongly wish to study but are not given the opportunity to receive training because their institution does not want to shoulder the extra burden and high costs. In all these cases, the problem lies in the differences of expectations between candidates and institutions, and this can cause relations to

deteriorate.

One difficulty faced particularly by the nurse candidates after passing the examinations is the process of learning to satisfactorily perform the duties of a nurse. In 2010, three candidates and in 2011, 16 passed the national nursing examination, however, they now need to familiarize themselves with nursing practices, because during their stay in Japan, they have only performed nursing assistance duties. This also applies to Japanese nurses who have newly graduated from school; however, the skills that require to be developed differ for candidates who have nursing work experience abroad without competent Japanese and new Japanese speaking fresh graduates with no experience. Thus, training and education must be provided in different ways to the two groups. This requires a new perspective on human resources development.

The three candidates who passed the nursing examinations proved that people with non-kanji backgrounds can also acquire national qualifications; however, the examination pass rate is a mere 1%. One candidate commented, "If we come to Japan only to engage in nursing assistance duties, shouldn't the country invite candidates without qualifications instead of qualified nurses?" There is also a concern that nurse candidates may find their nursing skills become rusty while in Japan, because they are not allowed to practice their skills until they acquire national qualification. Many candidates are left wondering how they benefited from their experience in Japan.

The future of careworker candidates is also very opaque. Many careworker candidates

are already qualified nurses in their own countries, and they apply to be careworker candidates because a nurse candidate must have two to three years of experience. In other words, nurses who do not have the required experience (such as new graduates) participate in the program of careworkers. For the inexperienced nurses who come to Japan as careworker candidates, fail to acquire the national qualification, and return to their countries, it is uncertain whether they can find work in their own countries after a four-year gap.

- **Evaluation of services provided by foreign healthcare workers**

Before foreign candidates were accepted, many had pointed out that accepting foreign healthcare workers would cause the quality of service to fall. Let us consider how, up to this point, foreign nurse and careworker candidates are evaluated. Unlike the expectation, many positive assessments have been provided by hospitals and facilities. For example, some have commented that staff members became more careful with communication and built good teamwork and employees were positively influenced by the enthusiastic work attitude of candidates. On the other hand, the accepting institutes have also commented on the additional burden and costs, because one person must constantly attend training. Furthermore, the institutes consider it an important issue that careworker candidates are not acknowledged and counted as employees within a staff-resident ratio stipulated by regulation.

Let us now look at evaluation by users and families. According to a 2010 survey regarding careworker candidates, conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, institute directors gave the lowest rating, followed by trainers-in-charge, employees, users, and family of users, in that order. Only 1% of all users said that the quality of service fell, whereas 33% said that it improved. In addition, none of the family members said that the quality of service fell, and 45% said that it improved. Why are the candidates evaluated highly by users and their families? One cause may be that the candidates spend more time with users and their family members and, as many comments confirm, they are always smiling and cheerful. Moreover, candidates who are qualified nurses in their own country may be providing more specialized care for users. The assumption that foreigners are lower-level workers than the Japanese is common prejudice, although there are individual differences in the level of this belief. We must not overlook the fact that the results differ greatly depending on the accepting institutes' approach.

Importance of attracting diverse personnel to workforce market

When considering minorities such as foreign residents and immigrant workers, the issue of human rights must be addressed. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish an integration policy based on long term social policy vision on the ground of equal opportunity to maximize potentials and to prevent social exclusion that brings higher social cost in the future. South

Korea puts emphasis on family, as can be seen from their coined phrase, “multicultural family,” and Taiwan gives importance to labor. Japan, without legal basis for multicultural society, must apply this matter to the future prospects and positions of foreign residents within social policy.

The imminent workforce deficiency is not just a predicted result of population decline; it is a matter that has been repeatedly pointed out since the 1980s. One reason for the country to have yet been unable to improve workforce participation rates is its inability to attract diverse workers into the workforce market.

The main reason for this is the inequality of opportunities for people outside the core male workforce. Restricting factors must be removed. For instance, employment custom in Japan such as the fresh graduates priority need to be reconsidered to help younger generations to be excluded and likewise, foreign residents should be offered more opportunities to learn Japanese and better access to the workforce market.

This aforementioned economic strategy in response to a declining population is not for the purpose of reinstating Japan’s hegemony in Asia but for sustainability to social reproduction.

A global approach

The declining population is a phenomenon witnessed not solely in Japan. A decline in young demographics has already been confirmed in many Asian countries. Countries that provide labor are also facing increasingly

aging societies. Asia is expected to see further movement of human resources; however, international mobilization of people must benefit all concerned parties: the people, accepting institutes, receiving countries, and sending countries. In other words, international mobilization should be a mutual matter so that it has no negative impact on the sending countries’ social reproduction. In this sense, the structuring of an immigration system can be considered a global approach (governance) for creating a sustainable society.

There is urgent need to the establishment of the global approach. Due to development of free trade, revisions of geographical configuration of multinational companies, changes in foreign direct investment, and revisions in ODA, more sending countries are now emphasizing providing labor to be a source of foreign currency, generating employment, reduction of poverty, and development. As a labor market expands in many fields, labor policy should be planned considering global labor market. Otherwise, contradiction of global labor market such as hollowing of workforce cannot be prevented.

It is not easy to construct mutually beneficial migration management.

Firstly, care transfer to compensate for the deficit of care in the aged society might cause deficit of care in the sending countries. Secondly, not to cause the deficit of care in the sending countries, human development program in the sending countries in collaboration with both sending and receiving countries might be considered.

Secondly, care deficit is not the only

matter of quantity. But this is related to waste of human resources due to downward mobility of newly recruited careworkers or nurses. There is a great gap of expectation between sending and receiving countries. Sending countries, not to mention, would like to send talented workers because of its higher economic impacts. However, receiving countries usually need low skilled workers such as nursing aides, domestic workers and even spouses. The mismatch of high demand for low skilled workers and high sending pressure for highly skilled workers indicate that highly skilled workers may often end up with low skill workers. This is also related to uncommon skills recognition that makes many migrants start from the bottom in the receiving societies and related to the

resisting craftsmanship union such as nursing association. In case of EPA nurse migration in Japan, about 95 percent of Indonesian and Filipino end up with nursing aide. This is in a way a waste of human resources in many ways; 1. Some good nurses were recruited from the sending countries; 2. They cannot perform nursing during their absence; 3. They cannot perform nursing while working in destination countries; 4. They may not have skill-up opportunity while working as nurse aide or skill-down because of absence of nursing practice. This indicates that though deficit of care has been pointed out, international migration of health worker may add to the problem due to the abovementioned reasons. Therefore, it is obvious that international

Framework of Indonesian Candidates(2009)

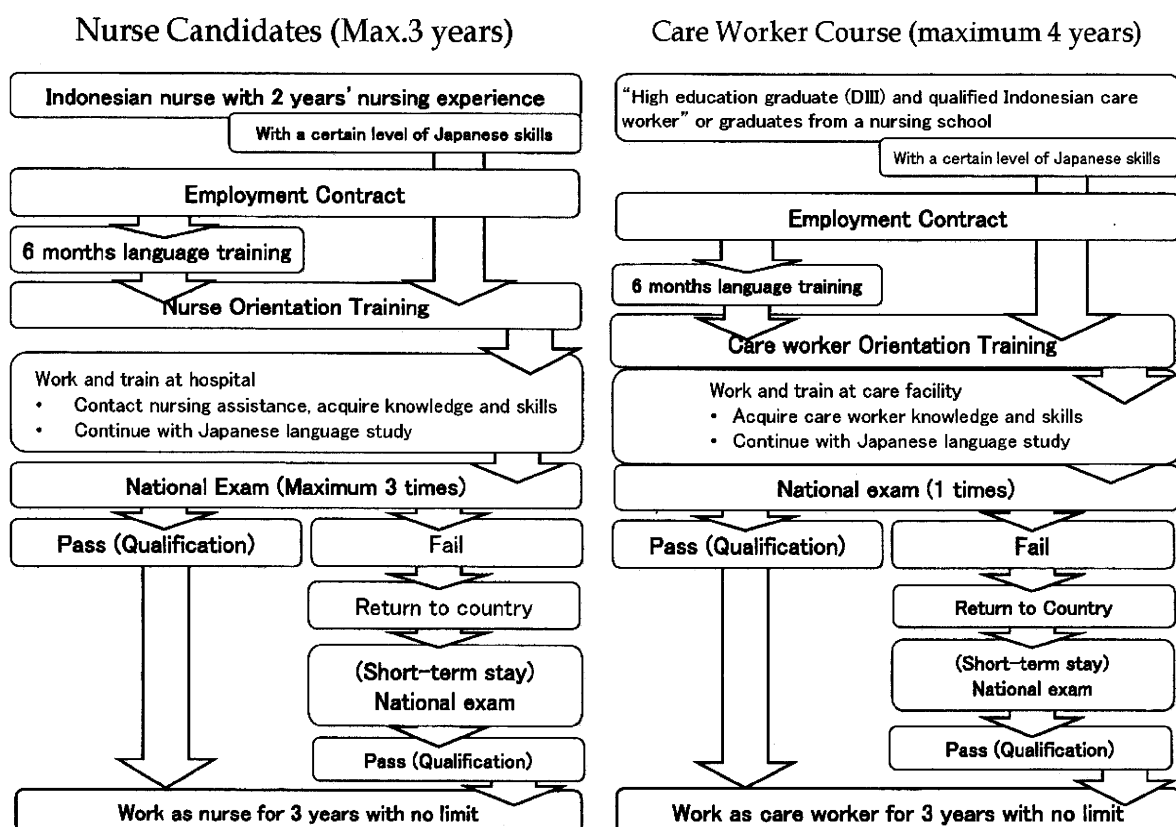


Figure 1. EPA system