

Career Formation and Utilization of Temporary Agency Workers

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There is a possibility that white-collar temporary agency workers have been core workforce recently due to relaxation of the Worker Dispatching Act, lowering of dispatching fees, increase in the number of highly-educated temporary agency workers, etc. Therefore, this paper analyzed (i) the extent to which utilization of temporary agency workers has progressed and (ii) whether or not skills are developed and utilization progresses by developing career as temporary agency work. Regarding (i), it became clear that temporary agency workers have been core workforce to a large extent at white-collar workplaces. Regarding (ii), the longer the experience as temporary agency workers becomes, the more their skills are developed regardless of “fixed-type” workers who work for one company only or “transverse-type” workers who work from company to company in the short term. However, fixed-type workers show a higher degree of this tendency than transverse-type ones due to the difference of business formation between them. Therefore, it is necessary for developing skills of transverse-type temporary agency workers to select user firms so that a wide range of skills can be developed.

I. Introduction—Why We Are Concerned with Utilization of Temporary Agency Workers

1. Debate about Temporary Agency Work

Temporary agency work has been legally recognized for 24 years in Japan and the number of temporary agency workers has increased significantly during this time. Especially this tendency has been remarkable since the late 1990s. According to “Worker Dispatch Business Report” of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the number of temporary agency workers was about 860 thousand in 1996 and reached about 3.81 million in 2007; it has increased more than fourfold during the past decade.

What is temporary agency work which is of increasing importance in the labor market? There are two opposing points of view. One point of view positively evaluates that it increases options of job opportunities and provides “flexible way of working” while sense of labor has changed. Another point of view, however, negatively evaluates it as “involuntary way of working,” saying that temporary agency work provides unstable employment, poor working conditions such as low wage and many low-skilled occupations, and therefore, it is not good employment format.¹

In addition, regarding temporary agency workers’ way of working, there is debate about how to utilize temporary agency workers by user firms. In particular, the issue be-

¹ For “flexible way of working,” see Furugohri (2002) and Hiroki Sato (1998). Wakita (2001a, 2001b) is one of the leading figures who ask for protection of temporary agency workers defining temporary agency work as “involuntary way of working.”

comes whether temporary agency workers or standard general-staff workers (hereinafter referred to as general-staff workers) who are utilized by user firms. Based on the fact that before temporary agency work emerged, female general-staff workers were in charge of many jobs such as filing and handling of office automation equipment in which the current temporary agency workers are in charge of, temporary agency workers as substitutes for general-staff workers as well as expansion of temporary agency work have been discussed.²

According to past findings, there are two opposing points of view. One is that since general-staff worker is just a subsidiary workforce and in charge of jobs which do not require any high knowledge or skills, skills would not be developed even if he or she gains experience.

On the other hand, another point of view has been actively studied in recent years and it has been pointed out that general-staff workers' jobs are not only routine tasks but are highly advanced (Asami 2001; Senda 2000). If general-staff workers' jobs are highly advanced, who will be in charge of conventional general-staff workers' jobs? Senda clarified that 30 % of conventional general-staff workers' jobs have been shifted to temporary agency workers giving an example of a major trading firm. That is, the reason why general-staff workers' jobs are highly advanced is because about 30 % of career-track workers' jobs and general-staff workers' jobs have been shifted to general-staff workers and temporary agency workers respectively, and Senda says that this situation has also increased the level of temporary agency workers' jobs at the same time.

On the other hand, Wakisaka (1996) argues that strong workforce as substitutes for general-staff workers is not temporary agency workers but part-time workers. The basis for his argument is that under current dispatching system,³ temporary agency workers are replaced with other ones shortly and users have to tell those new comers how to work there each single time, but costs of temporary agency workers are high and are inadequate for substitutes for general-staff workers. Regarding substitute relations between general-staff workers and temporary agency workers, Abe (2001) argues that many of general-staff workers' jobs are non-routine tasks and highly advanced and some user firms are successful in utilization of temporary agency workers but some have failed in it. He also points out the problem that many of companies have promoted outsourcing of jobs by utilization of temporary agency workers, etc. ignoring that there is no training system in the external labor market.⁴

² For companies and flexible organization strategy, see Atsushi Sato (2003).

³ Wakisaka discusses in his paper based on the system of the Worker Dispatching Act in 1996 that whether temporary agency workers can be substituted for general-staff workers or not depends on "future revision of the Worker Dispatching Act."

⁴ Atsushi Sato (2001) and Hara (2003) discuss substitute for regular employees. Although they analyzed whether non-standard work is a substitute or supplement, they did not focus on temporary agency work and even Hara excluded temporary agency work from her analysis.

2. Desired Revaluation of Temporary Agency Workers—Possibility of the Utilization of Temporary Agency Workers

As above, temporary agency workers' way of working has been discussed from the perspective of substitute relations between general-staff workers and temporary agency workers, but a concrete conclusion on this point has not been made yet. Therefore, experimental studies are required to clarify detailed job descriptions of temporary agency workers, but studies from this viewpoint have not been conducted.⁵ Behind this background, it may be widely-recognized that "temporary agency workers' jobs are routine tasks which can be compiled in a manual." In fact, most of temporary agency workers' jobs in the past studies are routine tasks.⁶

However, the view that temporary agency work is routine task should be reconsidered because it is possible that temporary agency work is highly advanced based on the recent changes in the situation. There are three major changes as follows:

⁵ The past research studies on work contents of temporary agency work are roughly divided into the following three. One is a survey on work contents from the viewpoint of substitute for general-staff worker, and this was discussed in this paper. Second is a survey on user firms from the viewpoint of businesses. "Worker Dispatch Report" (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) is a typical one. However, obtained information is just compositions of temporary agency work such as "filing," "operation of business equipment" and "preparation of trade documents" and particular work contents that temporary agency workers are in charge of in user firms are unknown. Third is a survey on work contents clarified by questionnaire survey for individual temporary agency workers. "Actual Conditions Result on Temporary Agency Workers" (Japanese Electrical Electronic and Information Union) is a typical one. Since work contents were surveyed from the viewpoint that "the extent to which temporary agency workers are in charge of jobs equal to regular employees," the survey just clarified that "many of registered agency workers are assigned to main jobs equal to regular employees." Regarding contract and temporary agency works for manufacturing, surveys such as "Actual Condition Survey on Contract Work for Manufacturing" (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2002), Institute of Social Science (the University of Tokyo 2005) and Hiroki Saito (2001) have been accumulated recently. Especially the survey conducted by Institute of Social Science of the University of Tokyo is valuable: it clarified that the longer the young contract and temporary agency workers work, the more the number of experienced manufacturing-related jobs increases. However, these survey results were limited to manufacturing jobs and there is no research analyzing detailed work contents of white-collar temporary agency work which makes up the largest number of current temporary agency works. Regarding foreign papers, EIRO (1999) is a typical foreign research on temporary agency work. It surveyed actual conditions of temporary agency work in Europe. It has surveyed existence or nonexistence of collective bargaining in countries and made international comparisons such as situations of social security and regulatory frameworks. Those will also be important issues for temporary agency work in Japan, but are not quoted in this paper since points of argument are individual career and utilization. Attention is focused on Houseman (2001) and (Houseman, Kalleberg, and Erickgek 2003), paper on temporary agency work. Particularly as paper focusing on assignment of temporary agency work, Houseman (2003) clarified the reason why employers used temporary agency workers in tight labor market in the United States in the 1990s with case studies of hospitals and auto parts manufacturing. Although it analyzed work contents dividing into "high-skill" and "low-skill," their assignment and career were little described.

⁶ Although Abe (2001), Senda (2000), etc. argued that partial jobs of general-staff workers have been shifted to temporary agency work, the work contents were regarded as miscellaneous duties or routine tasks which cannot be automated.

Firstly, the Worker Dispatching Act (Act for Securing the Proper Operation of Worker Dispatching Undertakings and Improved Working Conditions for Dispatched Workers) was relaxed. As Wakisaka (1996) argued, under the conventional Worker Dispatching Act, utilization of temporary agency workers was difficult. However, taking advantage of the occasion that the restriction of jobs which are allowed to use temporary agency workers was abolished by the relaxation of the Worker Dispatching Act in 1999, the market of temporary agency workers has been greatly expanded. In addition, three-year-limitation of dispatching period was abolished by the relaxation of regulations in 2005. This enables user firms to utilize temporary agency workers for a long time establishing a foundation to utilize them as core workforce. Therefore, they may be utilized for more advanced and important jobs.

Secondly, dispatching fees lowered. Although temporary agency work was considered to be relatively expensive before, the fees are lowering due to recent expansion of human resources business markets and increase in the number of temporary agency workers. It is expected that temporary agency workers are utilized for more jobs than before based on the movement that companies are making labor cost as variable one.⁷

Thirdly, conditions of the supply side which promotes the utilization of temporary agency workers are being improved. One of the reasons may be increased number of professional temporary agency workers who have experienced temporary agency work for a long time, over 20 years have passed after the enforcement of the Worker Dispatching Act.⁸ Another reason may be increased number of highly-educated temporary agency workers. Although there are no accurate data about this, many of highly-educated women have selected temporary agency work as an alternative way of working due to hiring slump caused by recession or changing attitude toward work.

Given such changing situations, it is highly possible that temporary agency work has been highly advanced. That is, it is possible that “utilization” in which temporary agency workers are in charge of “highly advanced core jobs” has progressed beyond “substitutes for general-staff workers,” which means that they are in charge of “routine tasks in which general-staff workers were engaged” discussed in the past studies. The definition of utilization will be described in detail later. This paper considers the extent to which temporary agency workers are in charge of highly advanced jobs from the perspective of “utilization of temporary agency work” and clarifies the following two points based on the interview survey conducted by the author:

⁷ Other than Worker Dispatch Report, Yokoyama (2005) made an analysis on wages of temporary agency workers.

⁸ At this time, “Actual Condition Survey on Career Development of Youth” (Mitsubishi-UFJ Research & Consulting 2003) is data to understand total period of individual temporary agency work. According to this, average total period of temporary agency work is 34 months. By period of temporary agency work, the most common period is 25 to 36 months (24.0%), the second most one is 13 to 24 months (22.7%) and the third most one is 61 months or longer (16.0%). That is, while the number of workers entering into the market of temporary agency work has increased recently, the number of workers working for a long time has also increased.

The first point is “to what extent utilization of temporary agency workers has progressed.” Regarding this point, the extent to which temporary agency workers have been core workforce at white-collar workplaces in companies will be clarified using an index to measure the utilization level made by the author.

Secondly, based on the above, “whether or not skills are developed and utilization progresses by developing career as temporary agency worker” will be clarified. In the past studies, it was tacitly considered that developing skills while working as a temporary agency worker is almost impossible based on the recognition that temporary agency workers are replaced shortly and in charge of routine tasks only. Based on above recent changes in objective circumstances, however, it is significant to consider whether there may be a possibility to develop skills while working as temporary agency worker, and if it is possible, how it affects the utilization of temporary agency work. Furthermore, if this is the case, it would be a significant finding to enable us to take measures to complement “weakness of training function” which has been pointed out as a disadvantage of temporary agency work.

3. Outline of Survey Method and Respondents

To clarify above points, an interview survey of temporary agency workers was conducted. This survey was conducted from May to August 2002 mainly for temporary agency workers in the Tokyo metropolitan area. It took about 90 minutes for the interview per capita. The number of surveyed temporary agency workers was 51.⁹ Since this survey was mainly conducted for general white-collar registered temporary agency workers, “part-time temporary workers”¹⁰ who were often utilized for banks, etc. were not included in the analysis. Interviews were conducted on: (i) individual attribute (academic background, marriage status, etc.), (ii) work experience as a temporary agency worker (job contents at workplace, how his/her skills were developed, period of temporary agency work experience, the number of user firms, etc.), (iii) property of the temporary agency in which he/she is currently registered (in the case where the user firm and the temporary agency are in a same business group [hereinafter referred to as “in-group dispatching”], and the case where he/she is registered in an independent temporary agency [hereinafter referred to as “inde-

⁹ 51 samples were collected by asking persons in charge of personnel transfer and purchasing in manufacturing, trade and service industries to introduce temporary agency workers of preferably different departments and persons of temporary agencies to introduce their own temporary agency workers. To clarify “career and utilization of temporary agency work,” the first priority was to obtain cooperation of temporary agency workers as many as possible this time. Therefore, interview survey for user firms was difficult and passed. The next issue is to survey user firms’ information and actual conditions on utilization.

¹⁰ Bank branches recruit part-time workers and register them with a temporary agency of their own group after hiring. Only their employment status is of temporary agency workers. Since they are in the older age group and work shorter hours per day compared to general registered agency workers being differentiated themselves from their counterparts in many ways, they were excluded from this survey. In this survey, three persons are employed agency workers and rest of the 48 persons are registered agency workers.

pendent dispatching”], etc.) and (iv) property of user firms (industry, department, etc.).

Characteristics of analyzed temporary agency workers are: sex (female 98.0% and male 2.0%), average age (29.0 years old), and marriage status (married 19.6% and unmarried 80.4%). Property of temporary agencies in which interviewed persons are registered is: in-group dispatching 19.6% and independent dispatching 80.4%. Academic backgrounds of analyzed temporary workers are: college graduates 56.9%, junior college/career college graduates 23.5% and high-school graduates 19.6%. Industries of user firms are: both “wholesale, retail and restaurant businesses” and “information service, service and education businesses” account for 31.4% respectively, “manufacturing” 23.5% and “finance, insurance and real estate” 13.7%. Current departments of user firms are: administrative offices 43.1%, sales offices 31.4% and other office duties (office center, SE, sales and reception) 23.5%.

II. Utilization and Current Status of Temporary Agency Workers

1. Individual Utilization

In order to analyze utilization of temporary agency workers, it is important how to define and how to measure the utilization. Much of the debate about utilization of non-standard workers has been revolved around that of part-time workers. However, the concepts and standards are varied. There are two major concepts, “qualitative utilization” and “quantitative utilization.” Especially it is difficult to establish criteria for qualitative utilization, some of which are: “degree of confidence and degree to which temporary agency workers are allowed to influence key decisions” (Kobayashi 2000), “method to make closeness to or substitute for jobs of regular employees as a proxy indicator” (Honda 1993, 2001), “the case where a temporary agency worker works for a job which is virtually identical to that of a regular employee with little career, or he/she was originally introduced as a substitute for a female regular employee but only part-time workers are working now” (Nakamura 1990) and “either case of engaging in (i) administrative work, (ii) coaching work or (iii) work with judgment” (Takeishi 2006).

This paper considers utilization from two aspects, “individual utilization” which shows utilization at individual level and “collective utilization” which shows utilization at workplace level. Firstly, individual utilization is explained.¹¹

Definition of individual “utilization” is that individual temporary agency worker is “in charge of core tasks at workplace” and “utilization level” means the degree of utilization. Therefore, in order to measure the utilization level, it is necessary to analyze jobs of temporary agency workers and clarify how much core tasks are included in them. As a measure of the degree, difficulty levels of office work are set up as shown in Table 1. Work with a high

¹¹ In this survey, levels of individual and collective utilizations were determined by the temporary agency workers themselves during the interview after explaining the definitions and gaining understanding.

Table 1. Utilization Indicators for Temporary Agency Work

Utilization indicators	Standard	Level
Individual utilization	Work contents	Level 1 Accessory service Level 2 Arrangement/procedure operations Level 3 Non-routine task associated with judgment such as negotiation, adjustment and response
Collective utilization	Situation of work sharing between regular employees and temporary agency workers at workplace	Level 1 Temporary agency workers engage in assistant work which is completely different from regular employees' work. Level 2 Temporary agency workers engage in work which is similar to, but is basically separated from regular employees' work. Level 3 Temporary agency workers engage in work which is completely same as regular employees' work.

difficulty level is regarded as core task, i.e., the utilization level is high when a temporary agency worker is in charge of work with a high difficulty level.¹² In particular, the levels of difficulty are: Level 1 for “accessory service,” Level 2 for “arrangement/procedure operations” and Level 3 for “non-routine tasks with judgment such as negotiation, adjustment and response.” The levels of job contents above are based on Asami’s findings (Asami 2001).

To explain those difficulty levels with an example of sales office work for placing an order, the difficulty level is: Level 1 for data entry operations for products, Level 2 for answering calls from customers and taking necessary procedures for orders and Level 3 for responding to inquiries about delivery date and products from customers as well as tasks of Level 2. The utilization level obtained by this method shall be “individual utilization.”¹³

The current status of individual utilization for temporary agency workers using above indicators (see Table 2), consists of Level 1 “accessory service” 25.5%, Level 2 “arrangement/procedure operations” 45.1% and Level 3 “non-routine tasks” 27.5%. Overall average point of individual utilization is 2.0, i.e., Level 2 on an average. Therefore, the current status of individual utilization is “arrangement/procedure” level. In addition, Level 3 in which temporary agency workers can be completely substituted for regular employees reaches 27.5%, i.e., nearly 30% of temporary agency workers engage in work equivalent to that of regular employees.

Looking at the individual utilization in the context of properties of temporary agencies

¹² Utilization levels were also measured by measuring job difficulty levels with rate of participation in meetings and time for business transfer. However, since white-collar regular employees may not participate in meetings depending on workplace and time for business transfer can be shortened if the temporary agency work is excellent, they were judged as unstable indicators and excluded from this analysis.

¹³ Asami’s difficulty levels of white-collar workplace are classified into six stages including office work, expert office work and sales. Average white-collar worker is mainly in charge of Level 1 “accessory miscellaneous duties” and Level 2 “arrangement/procedures” in both office work and expert office work. Above-average personnel has achieved Level 3 even among white-collar regular employees. Level 1 to 3 were used as utilization indicators this time.

Table 2. Indicators for Individual Utilization and Properties of Temporary Agencies and User Firms

			Level 1 (%)	Level 2 (%)	Level 3 (%)	Unknown (%)	Score of individual utilization (points)	Total (persons)
Total			25.5 (26.0)	45.1 (46.0)	27.5 (28.0)	2.0	2.0	51
Property of temporary agencies	Management properties	In-group dispatching	30.0	50.0	20.0	0.0	1.9	10
		Independent dispatching	24.4	43.9	29.3	2.4	2.1	41
Properties of user firms	Industry of user firms	Manufacturing	0.0	41.7	50.0	8.3	2.5	12
		Finance, insurance and real estate	28.6	57.1	14.3	0.0	1.9	7
		Wholesale, retail and restaurant services	37.5	37.5	25.0	0.0	1.9	16
		Information service, service and education	31.3	50.0	18.8	0.0	1.9	16
	Department in user firm	Sales office work	43.8	50.0	6.3	0.0	1.6	16
		Administrative office work	9.1	50.0	40.9	0.0	2.3	22
		Other office work (work center, SE, sales/reception)	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0	2.0	12

Notes: 1. Degree of individual utilization shall be: Level 1 for accessory service, Level 2 for arrangement/procedure operation and Level 3 for non-routine task with judgment such as negotiation, adjustment and response.

2. Scores of individual utilization are calculated by the formula: $([Level\ 1] \times 1 + [Level\ 2] \times 2 + [Level\ 3] \times 3) / (100 - Unknown)$.

3. Figure in parenthesis in Total column is a ratio calculated by excluding Unknown.

4. One case in which user department is unknown is excluded from the table.

and user firms, the flowing characteristics are discovered (see Table 2).¹⁴

- (i) Looking at temporary agencies' properties, the utilization of independent dispatching has progressed more than that of in-group dispatching.
- (ii) Among user firms, the utilization has progressed more in manufacturing industry.
- (iii) From the viewpoint of relationship with user departments, the utilization has progressed more in administrative work.

2. Collective Utilization

Collective utilization indicates "to what extent temporary agency workers are in charge of core tasks collectively at workplace," and in this section it is reviewed from the viewpoint of work sharing between regular employees and temporary agency workers at workplace. Indicators prepared are: Level 1 when "temporary agency workers engage in assistant work which is completely different from regular employees' work," Level 2 when "temporary agency workers engage in work which is similar to, but is basically separated from regular employees' work" and Level 3 when "temporary agency workers engage in work which is completely same as regular employees' work" (see Table 1). The indicators regarding the way of work sharing with regular employees shall be called as "collective

¹⁴ The relationship between management properties, industries, departments and utilization is not a representative result but introduces survey conditions only. Since the sample size is too small to clarify the relationship between them, they were not analyzed more than necessary.

Table 3. Degree of Collective Utilization and Properties of Temporary Agencies and User Firms

			Level 1 (%)	Level 2 (%)	Level 3 (%)	Unknown (%)	Score of collective utilization (points)	Total (persons)
Total			17.6 (24.3)	21.6 (29.8)	33.3 (45.9)	27.5 —	2.2	51
Property of temporary agencies	Management properties	In-group dispatching	20.0	10.0	20.0	50.0	2.0	10
		Independent dispatching	17.1	24.4	36.6	22.0	2.3	41
Properties of user firms	Industry of current user firms	Manufacturing	16.7	33.3	50.0	0.0	2.3	12
		Finance, insurance and real estate	14.3	14.3	42.9	28.6	2.4	7
		Wholesale, retail and restaurant services	25.0	25.0	37.5	12.5	2.1	16
		Information service, service and education	12.5	12.5	12.5	62.5	2.0	16
	Current department	Sales office work	18.8	25	43.8	12.5	2.3	16
		Administrative office work	4.5	22.7	36.4	36.4	2.5	22
		Other office work (work center, SE, sales/reception)	41.7	8.3	16.7	33.3	1.6	12

Notes: 1. “Share” shall be Level 1 when temporary agency workers engage in assistant work which is completely different from regular employees’ work, Level 2 when temporary agency workers engage in work which is similar to, but is basically separated from regular employees’ work and Level 3 when temporary agency workers engage in work which is completely same as regular employees’ work.

2. Scores of collective utilization are calculated by the formula: $([\text{Level 1}] \times 1 + [\text{Level 2}] \times 2 + [\text{Level 3}] \times 3) / (100 - \text{Unknown})$

3. Figure in parenthesis in Total column is a ratio calculated by excluding Unknown.

4. One case in which the department is unknown is excluded from the table.

utilization level” hereinafter. The higher the figure is, the more advanced work they are sharing with regular employees.

As shown in Table 3, the current collective utilization level excluding 14 unknown cases is that Level 1 (completely different work from regular employees) accounts for 24.3%, Level 2 (similar to work of regular employees) accounts for 29.8% and Level 3 (completely same as work of regular employees) accounts for 45.9%, and the average of collective utilization is 2.2 points. It is found that work of temporary agency workers is completely same as that of regular employees at nearly half of the workplaces and therefore, temporary agency workers have been important core taskforce at white-collar workplaces.

There can be found following characteristics in terms of properties of temporary agencies and user firms (see Table 3).

- (i) Looking at temporary agencies’ properties, the utilization of independent dispatching has progressed more than that of in-group dispatching.
- (ii) Among user firms, utilization has progressed more in finance, insurance and real estate industries.
- (iii) In relation to departments in user firms, the utilization has progressed more in administrative work of departments such as secretary, general affairs and purchasing.

The results of above individual and collective utilizations show characteristics in

common that both indicators reveal that the utilization of independent dispatching has progressed more than that of in-group dispatching among registered temporary agencies and the utilization has progressed more in administrative work in the dispatched department.

III. Career and Utilization of Temporary Agency Workers

1. Classification of Temporary Agency Workers by Career Development

Up to now, current utilization of temporary agency workers has been analyzed. Then what is the factor to facilitate utilization? The focus will be placed on individual utilization in this section. As described above, the major concern of this paper is whether or not it is possible to get experience as a temporary agency worker and develop his/her career resulting in boosting individual utilization, and the relationship between individual utilization and career development will be closely examined here.

Initially, assuming that “career development” is to develop skills through job experience as temporary agency workers, three facets of career development are clarified as follows: Firstly, it is the way of getting job experience. Temporary agency workers’ career development can be classified into two types, “fixed-type career development achieved in a specific company” and “transverse-type career development achieved in several companies.” That is, they are classified by how to develop career, working for a specific company for a long time or going from one company to another. In particular, they are classified by the number of experienced user firms, one or more than one; the former shall be called “fixed-type” and the latter “transverse-type.”¹⁵ In this case, since some of those who have just become temporary agency workers are included in fixed-type and it is not yet clear whether they will take fixed-type career or transverse-type career with experience as temporary agency workers, those workers with six months or shorter period of experience are excluded from fixed-type.¹⁶ In addition, fixed-type and transverse-type are classified by the period of temporary agency work experience into “mid-level (seven to 18 months)” and “expert level (19 months or longer).”

Secondly, it is classified by the way of developing skills; “improved-type” in which their skills are improved by accumulating experience as temporary agency workers or

¹⁵ The breakdown of the number of user firms where 29 transverse-type workers experienced is: 16 workers for two companies, six workers for three companies, five workers for four companies, a worker for five companies and a worker for six companies. Since the sample size was small, they were divided into fixed-type workers working for one company or transverse-type workers working for two or more companies in this paper.

¹⁶ When classifying into fixed-type and transverse-type, if the workers are classified into these two categories by the number of experienced user firms, one or more, those who have just become temporary agency workers are also included in fixed-type. Therefore, temporary agency workers whose experience period is six months or shorter were deleted from fixed-type and excluded from this analysis. Since many of temporary agency work contracts are renewed every three months, fixed-type may require at least two times of renewing. Therefore, eight cases (fixed-type: 8, transverse-type: 0) were excluded.

“fixed-type” in which their skills are not improved but fixed. Moreover, “improved-type” is classified into “vertical-type” and “horizontal-type” depending on the spread of jobs. “Vertical-type” means that the workers’ experience expands from easy (low level) tasks to advanced (high level) tasks in a specific job, while in “horizontal-type” the sphere of their experience expands to related peripheral jobs.

Classifications are organized and shown in Table 4.¹⁷ The composition of respondents by classification is: transverse-type is 69.0% (29 persons) and fixed-type is 31.0% (13 persons) in the classification by “how to develop career.” Regarding the classification by way of “skill development,” improved-type is 72.5% (37 persons) and fixed-type is 27.5% (14 persons). Among improved-type, vertical-type is 43.2% (16 persons) and horizontal-type is 56.8% (21 persons) in the classification by “spread of jobs.”

In particular, examining career development in reality in terms of properties of temporary agencies and user firms focusing on fixed-type workers and transverse-type of workers, some characteristics can be seen as below (see Table 5):

- (i) As for the fixed-type workers, in the temporary agencies they are more likely to be seen in the in-group dispatching, while in the user firms the manufacturing and information service/service/education industries tend to have more fixed-type workers. They also more often engaged in the office work in the administrative department.
- (ii) As for the transverse-type workers, in the temporary agencies they are more likely to be seen in the independent dispatching. In the user firms more transverse-type workers work in the wholesale/retail/restaurant and finance/insurance/real estate industries and they are mainly doing the office work in office centers, the SE department, the sales department and the receptionist's office.

2. Career Development Type and Individual Utilization

(1) Career Development Type and Current Situation of Utilization

The relationship between the classification of career development and the utilization level is shown in Table 6. Comparing fixed-type and transverse-type of career development, the individual utilization level of fixed-type is higher than that of transverse-type. Regarding fixed-type and improved-type in skill development, needless to say, the individual utilization level of improved-type is higher than that of fixed-type. As for spread of jobs, the level of horizontal-type is higher than that of vertical-type in individual utilization.

Figure 1 shows the comparison of individual utilization levels for “mid-level” and “expert level” in terms of fixed-type and transverse-type. It reveals that the scores of fixed-type rapidly increase from 1.8 to 2.8 in accordance with length of service as temporary agency worker. On the other hand, the scores of transverse-type decrease from 2.1 to

¹⁷ The temporary agency workers themselves determined into which categories of improved-type, fixed-type, vertical-type or horizontal-type they fell during the interview after explaining definitions of all types. This is because nobody but they themselves can tell how they acquired their individual skills for jobs.

Table 4. Classification of Career Development

Classification of career	Type	Definition of classification	Classification	Class	Definition of classification
Classification of career development	Transverse-type (29 persons, 69.0%)	Worked for more than one company	Classification by period of temporary agency work experience	Mid-level (8 persons, 19.0%)	Experience period of temporary agency work is seven to 18 months.
				Expert level (21 persons, 50.0%)	Experience period of temporary agency work is 19 months or longer.
	Fixed-type (13 persons, 31.0%)	Worked for a company		Mid-level (8 persons, 19.0%)	Experience period of temporary agency work is seven to 18 months.
				Expert level (5 persons, 11.9%)	Experience period of temporary agency work is 19 months or longer.
Classification of skill development	Improved-type (37 persons, 72.5%)	Skills are improved while working as a temporary agency worker.	Classification by spread of jobs	Vertical type (16 persons, 43.2%)	Assigned tasks are mainly limited to specific work and they expand from easy (low level) tasks to advanced (high level) tasks.
				Horizontal type (21 persons, 56.8%)	Tasks spread from core jobs to peripheral jobs.
	Fixed-type (14 persons, 27.5%)	Skills are more or less fixed while working as a temporary agency worker or skills are not improved beyond a certain level.			

Table 5. Classification of Career Development and Properties of Temporary Agencies and User Firms

		Classification of career development					
		Fixed-type		Transverse-type		Total (persons)	
		% (persons)	% (persons)	% (persons)	% (persons)		
		31.0	(13)	5.0	(29)	42	
Property of temporary agencies	In-group dispatching		80.0	(8)	20.0	(2)	10
	Independent dispatching		15.6	(5)	84.4	(27)	32
Properties of user firms	Industry of user firms	Manufacturing	50.0	(4)	50.0	(4)	8
		Finance, insurance and real estate	16.7	(1)	83.3	(5)	6
		Wholesale, retail and restaurant services	15.4	(2)	84.6	(11)	13
		Information service, service and education	40.0	(6)	60.0	(9)	15
	Current department	Sales office work	21.4	(3)	78.6	(11)	14
		Administrative office work (secretary, general affairs and purchase department)	55.6	(10)	44.4	(8)	18
		Other office work (work center, SE, sales/reception)	0.0	(0)	100.0	(10)	10

Table 6. Career Development Type and Degree of Individual Utilization

Career Type		Score of individual utilization (points)		Total (persons)
		Fixed-type	Transverse-type	
Career development type	Fixed-type	2.2	13	
	Transverse-type	1.9	29	
Skill development type	Improved-type	2.1	37	
	Fixed-type	1.9	14	
Work composition expansion type	Vertical type	2.0	16	
	Horizontal type	2.2	21	

Note: As for calculation method of scores of individual utilization, see note in Table 2.

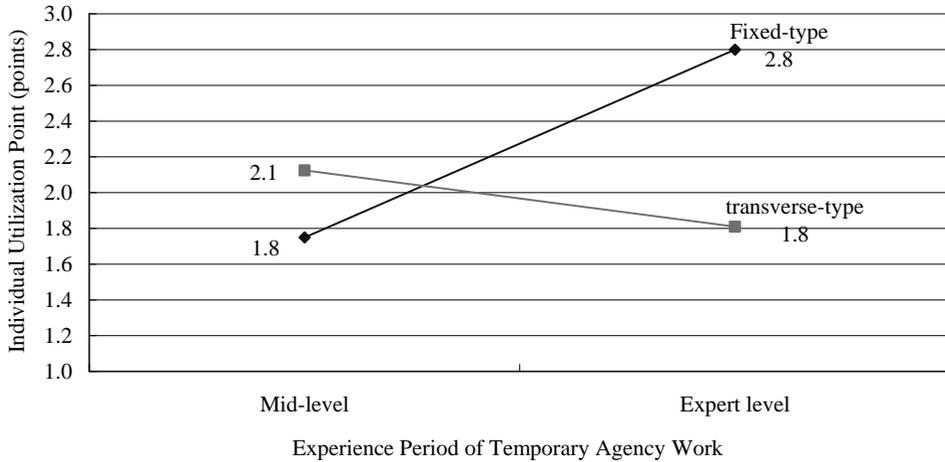


Figure 1. Individual Utilization Level by Type and Period of Temporary Agency Work Experience

1.8 point, that is, when working as temporary agency worker, there is little difference in the individual utilization level up to mid-level period regardless of fixed-type or transverse-type. However, the difference in the utilization level between fixed-type and transverse-type is getting wider as mid-level workers become experts.¹⁸

(2) What Is behind Difference of the Utilization Level between Fixed-Type and Transverse-Type

Then why individual utilization level in transverse-type becomes lower than in fixed-type as the period of temporary agency work experience becomes longer? One possible reason for the difference may lie on how to develop career. Table 7 shows the relationship with career development type. Although the percentage of improved-type in

¹⁸ Regarding the relationship between career in the past and utilization levels, impacts of academic background and career developed before going into temporary agency work could be taken into account other than career argued in this paper. However, there was no significant relationship between academic background and utilization levels in this survey results (see table below). It may be also important whether or not the respondents have work experience as a regular employee before starting temporary agency work. However, since all respondents once worked as a regular employee soon after graduating from school, the impact cannot be confirmed. Moreover, the work experience before temporary agency work is also important, but obtained data do not contain enough information to confirm the impact. These remain challenges for the future.

Academic Background and Individual Utilization Level

	Individual Utilization				Points	Total
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Unknown		
High school graduate	40.0	30.0	30.0	0.0	1.9	10
Junior college/Career college graduate	33.3	58.3	8.3	0.0	0.7	12
College graduate	24.1	27.6	44.8	3.4	2.2	29

Table 7. Composition of Classification of Skill Development by Type and Period of Temporary Agency Work Experience

		Classification of career development (%)				Total (persons)
		Fixed-type	Improved-type			
			Classification of job expansion (%)			
			Vertical type	Horizontal type		
Total		28.0	72.0	44.4	55.6	51
Fixed-type	Mid-level	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	8
	Expert level	20.0	80.0	25.0	75.0	5
Transverse-type	Mid-level	37.5	62.5	60.0	40.0	8
	Expert level	14.3	85.7	38.9	61.1	21

- Notes: 1. An unknown case and eight trainee cases are excluded from Total.
 2. 20 Others/unknown cases (fixed-type: 11 and unknown: 1) are excluded from Classification of job expansion.
 3. Ratios of vertical and horizontal types are based on the ratio of improved-type as 100.

transverse-type is slightly higher than that in fixed-type in spite of the period of mid-level or expert level experience, the percentages of improved-type both in transverse-type and fixed-type become higher as the period of experience becomes longer from mid-level to expert level. That is, when working as a temporary agency worker, one can have opportunities for capacity building regardless of transverse-type and fixed-type.

If the opportunities for capacity building are not responsible for low utilization level of transverse-type, another reason is possibly the way in which assigning jobs expand. According to Table 7, horizontal-type accounts for 40.0% and 61.1% of mid-level and expert level respectively in transverse-type and 50.0% and 75.0% of mid-level and expert level respectively in fixed-type. It reveals that the percentage of horizontal-type increases as mid-level workers become experts regardless of fixed-type or transverse-type, but the disparity between them is widening and the scope of work for fixed-type further expands horizontally.

What is revealed as a result of these is that when working as a temporary agency worker for a long time, regardless of working for one company or more, improved-type increases and one can grow in capability. However, as service of length is getting longer reaching to expert level, fixed-type’s utilization level becomes higher than that of transverse-type. What is behind of this may be the difference in the composition of jobs which user firms assign to temporary agency workers. When a temporary worker moves from one company to another, user firms delegate limited specific jobs to the worker, who eventually ends up with having vertical job composition and narrowly built capacity. On the other hand, when working for one company for a long time, the temporary worker wins a trust at workplace resulting in increase of his/her experience and being delegated various tasks. The worker’s job composition expands horizontally and a wide range of skills are developed. These differences in vertical and horizontal job compositions and capacity composition may

be a reflection of the difference of the utilization level between fixed-type and transverse-type.

(3) Verifying Actual Utilization by Examples

To confirm above points, this section gives examples of most and least progressed utilization of temporary agency workers and particularly clarifies what kind of jobs they have experienced and how to build their capacity. As an example of most progressed utilization, the cases of temporary agency workers where both individual and collective utilizations are high (i.e., both indicators are Level 3) were extracted and as an example of least progressed utilization, the case of a temporary agency worker where both indicators are Level 1 were extracted.

Example of most progressed utilization of fixed-type

There is an example of most progressed utilization, 26-year-old Ms. A. After graduation from college, she worked for a major foreign-affiliated foreign language school as a regular employee for two years. After that she registered herself with a temporary agency and was dispatched to a major auditing firm as a secretary. In the first week, she received off-the-job training for entire organization, company outline, manners in the industry, documentation formats, etc. The department where she was assigned was a general affair department responsible for secretary service and 9 secretaries other than Ms. A were all regular employees. Her initial task was to manage her manager's schedule, and she started to write and translate greetings to clients for her manager. Although she had no specific knowledge on accounting initially, since it was necessary for preparing accountant reports, she voluntarily studied and asked other secretaries in each case and gradually acquired knowledge on flow of settlement, bookkeeping, etc. She also gradually became able to respond to unforeseen situations such as replacement of accountant reports, and she came to be in charge of eight managers after six months of her dispatching. The department provides secretary services for 70 managers in total and 10 secretaries including Ms. A are in charge of the services. So her duties are completely same as regular employees.

Example of transverse-type as a non-core worker

There is an example of a transverse-type worker without utilization, 30-year-old Ms. B. After graduation from high school, she engaged in the reception service at the bank counter as a regular employee for two years and three months. After that she registered herself with a temporary agency and was dispatched to a drug company for the first time. She was in charge of data entry for preparing documents to be submitted to the then Ministry of Welfare. After the 3-year expiry, she was dispatched to a sales company. She began with sales office work such as part number registration and data input of orders, and came to answer phone calls from customers afterward. After the 3-year expiry, she moved to a casualty insurance company. She engaged in input of accounting receipts and filing of contract

documents in the general affair department. After the 3-year expiry, she was dispatched to the current workplace, a merchandise department of a wholesale company. After one-week training session for data entry, she was assigned data input operation to register product numbers. As above, Ms. B's temporary agency work experience is mostly of data entry. Although her work seems simple, she has to acquire vast knowledge on products specific to each company. For instance, the sales company which is her second user firm supplies music media, storage media for computers and digital cameras to general merchandising stores dealing with more than 200 products. As she gets used to her new job, she has to learn product information from latest to discontinued products in order to properly respond to inquiries and orders from customers. However, knowledge which is specific to such a company as this is rarely used in the next user firm and she has to learn from the beginning every time when she moves to a new company.

Example of transverse-type as a core worker

Are there any temporary agency workers who move from one company to another, develop skills and become core workforce? According to this survey, more than 20% of transverse-type temporary agency workers reached Level 3 of individual utilization. Here is an example of transverse-type with utilization:

After graduation from college, 28-year-old Ms. C worked for a supermarket and was in charge of transaction at the cash register, inventory and placement of order as a regular employee for a year. Then, she worked for an editorial service company as a contract writer for computer magazines for six months. The job was to actually use and compare various computer softwares, and write articles about the comparison. She learned a lot about how to use the computer there. She registered herself with a temporary agency and worked for a university for 11 months to engage in office work for a department. Next, she worked for a major auto manufacturer's factory to do an administrative office work such as preparing data for reports, materials and drawings created with software like Microsoft PowerPoint, Word and CAD. Her computer skills obtained at the previous workplace were fully used there. In addition, since only two worked in the office, she had to do anything due to a shortage of workers. Here, she learned how to draw with CAD from seniors. After four months of working there, she move to a laboratory of a major communications company by her request. She was in charge of preparing materials for meetings and discussions with PowerPoint and Visio for three months. Next, she worked for a foundation for space development by her request. She engaged in preparing materials with Microsoft Access and Excel, schedule management for professor's lecture, preparing request papers, managing websites and sometimes went on a business trip. Her job there was equivalent to or even more than that of regular employees. The job made her physically exhausted, and six months later, she moved to a school by her request. She worked there for four months creating posters and preparing lists made using Ichitaro and Page Maker. After coming back to work for her first workplace, the university, by its request and working there for three months, she was dis-

patched to a career college, the current workplace. She is in charge of revision and updating of educational materials there.

As above, Ms. C has been dispatched to seven different companies in four years. Once she learned the business and skills at some level, she changed the company by her request in order to obtain wide range of skills through various job experiences. As a result, she experienced data management with Excel and Access, drawing with CAD and preparation of technical documents, preparation of business materials with PowerPoint, Visio, etc., and management of websites, and obtained a wide range of computer skills through such experiences. She was also willing to attend a computer school to systematically understand skills obtained from work in user firms and obtained a related vocational qualification. In this way, she obtained a wide range of skills with which she can respond to various uncertain cases by experiencing many workplaces. Now, she quickly and accurately prepares educational materials and does the page layout perfectly in the current workplace. She was highly regarded as an excellent and reliable person and even helps other departments by doing the work and solving the computer problems for them.

To summarize above three examples, in the case of Ms. A as a core worker, she settled to a company and won the trust there because of her high proficiency in her work. She gradually expands her contributions to peripheral jobs such as accounting. On the other hand, in the case of Ms. B as a non-core worker, even though her knowledge on products and skills are improved in a company, these are often specialized for the company and are little used in the next user firm. Also, when she moves to the next company, her job tends to be limited to data entry work, presumably, because of convenience for the user firm such as reducing mistakes on the job. This might be an obstacle for the transverse-type worker to develop career being prevented from improvement of skills and boost of utilization. Meanwhile in the case of Ms. C, though she is a transverse-type worker, too, she is willing to select companies to work for so that she can gain much wider and deeper job experiences and raise the level of utilization. That is to say, the transverse-type worker can develop his/her skills and capability by consciously selecting the companies or jobs to work for.

IV. Conclusions and Issues

1. What Is Clarified in This Paper

Based on above results, two points raised in this paper will be discussed focusing on individual utilization.

Firstly, as mentioned above, regarding “the extent to which utilization of temporary agency workers has progressed,” there was a common belief that temporary agency work is routine task only. According to utilization indicators, however, average individual utilization level is “arrangement/procedure operations” level, and the percentage of temporary workers doing non-routine tasks (Level 3) is 27.5%, i.e., nearly 30% of temporary agency workers can be substituted for regular employees. The same is true of collective utilization and it is

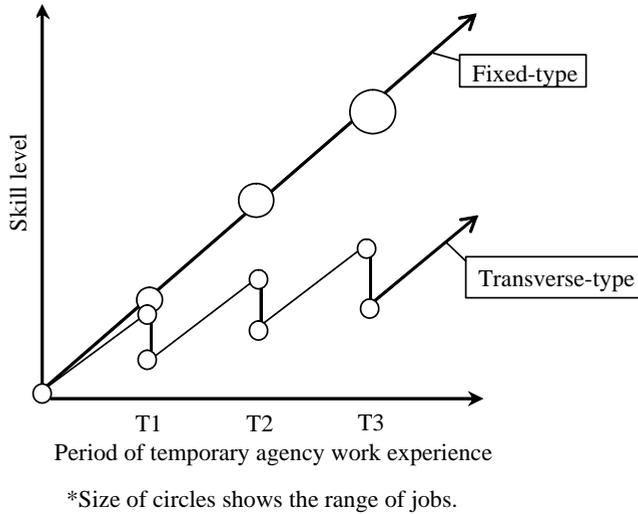


Figure 2. Models of Career Development and Skill Development

found that temporary agency workers have been core workforce at white-collar workplaces to a large extent.

Secondly, regarding “whether or not skills are developed and utilization progresses by developing career as temporary agency work,” the following three points were found.

- (i) The longer the experience as temporary agency workers becomes, the more their skills are developed regardless of “fixed-type” workers who settle in and work for a company or “transverse-type” workers who work for several companies in the short term. However,
- (ii) Utilization level of fixed-type is higher than that of transverse-type.
- (iii) The reason for this may be because of the differences of job and skill compositions between them. That is, when temporary agency workers work for several companies in the short term, the user firms assign them jobs which are limited to a certain range, and their skills are build narrowly and vertically. On the other hand, when working for one company for a long time, the user firms delegate them various jobs depending on their experience and dedication and, as a result, a wide range of skills are developed. It would appear that the differences of jobs and skills composition expressed in the notions “transverse-type tends to expand jobs and skills vertically” and “fixed-type tends to expand jobs and skills horizontally” are reflected to the difference of utilization level.

Considering to above points, the differences of skill development between transverse-type and fixed type are shown as models in Figure 2. Regarding utilization level as the total indicator of skill level, there is no much difference between them at the time of T1 but the job range of fixed-type is slightly larger. However, once the transverse-type worker

moves to the next company, some of his/her skills accumulated in the previous company often become useless for the other company. Furthermore, since the length of service for each company of the transverse-type worker is relatively short, the assigned job to them tends to be limited to a certain area, i.e., the work experience is accumulated vertically. On the other hand, the fixed-type worker develops skills consistently and also experiences a wide range of jobs. As a result, both skill level and the range of jobs of fixed-type exceed that of transverse-type at the time of T3.

2. Issues of Human Resource Development through Temporary Agency Work

Taking above conclusion into account, the following points would be important for human resources development through temporary agency work. One of the reasons why companies utilize temporary agency workers is need for “just-in-time human resource system” i.e., “necessary human resources at the time of need.” This can be interpreted that companies shift the risk of employment as well as the risk of internally developing necessary human resources to outside (temporary agencies and temporary agency workers). For that reason, temporary agency work has been pointed out its weakness in education and training, which, as this paper clarified, may be shown in the fact that utilization level of temporary agency workers with transverse-type career is lower than that of their counterparts with fixed-type career.

In order to improve this point, the temporary agencies should enhance education and training system for upgrading the skills of temporary workers paying attention, at the same time, to OJT functions of temporary agency work. As explained earlier, skills of temporary agency workers are improved through OJT and accordingly, jobs assigned to them come to be of highly-skilled when the length of service as a temporary agency worker becomes longer. To what extent their skills are improved depends on the way of working. Even though the length of service as a temporary agency worker is the same, utilization level of workers who work from company to company in the short term is lower than that of workers who work for a company for a long time. That is, a part of improved skills is useless in the next user firm and accumulated skills are not fully utilized. If user firms are selected for temporary agency workers in consideration of their career development just like personnel transfer done within a company, their skills would be more utilized and improved.

To that end, it is crucial that the matching function of temporary agencies should be enhanced in order to utilize improved skills as well as that temporary agency workers themselves should be willing to develop their skills and career. If such conditions are right, even the temporary agency worker like Ms. C will be able to develop skills moving from one company to another.

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