

Abstracts

Temporary Migration Policy, Transnational Labor Market, and Japan

Shinobu Sato (Professor Emeritus, Kagawa University)

Transnational labor exchange is, by its very nature, just-in-time. There are temporary migration policies (TMP) in order to secure labor in short supply in the national labor market (NLM) across borders at the appropriate times in the necessary quantity and quality. A typical example is SAWP in Canada. On the contrary, Japanese TMP is oddly enough oriented toward human resource development (HRD) based on Technical Intern Training (TIT). Its HRD oriented approach is rooted in the intersection of Japan's NLM and the transnational labor market (TLM). This kind of policy simultaneously focuses on two goals: "filling labor shortages" and "human resource development." Progress in human resource development must be examined from multiple perspectives. As a simple indicator, we have created the "HRD Index". What remains entirely unexplored are theoretical and empirical works on TLM. In order to address this issue, steady research on the reality of "transnational social spaces" should be accumulated. There are different types of transnational labor exchanges. How do the actors involved relate to each other, influence each other, and develop their relationships across borders in TLM in response to Japan's TMP? Here in lies a new horizon for migration research in Japan.

Wage Disparity between Japanese and Foreign Workers: An Analysis of the Basic Survey on Wage Structure 2019

Kikuko Nagayoshi (The University of Tokyo)

Wage disparity between Japanese and foreign workers has rarely been tested due in part to a lack of data. In addition, the few previous studies have focused on the disparity in average wages between these two groups. However, the disparity may differ between high and low-wage earners because the employment conditions of immigrants are diverse. From this viewpoint, this paper uses 2019 data from the Basic Survey on Wage Structure and conduct the quantile regression analysis. The analysis revealed that in a model controlling only for the prefecture where the business establishment is located, foreign workers of all categories of status of residence were paid less than Japanese workers at all percentiles of the wage distribution. Wage disparity is particularly large at the high end of wage distribution. The wage gap between Japanese workers and foreign workers in the "professional/technical" category seemed to be caused by the fact that the latter were younger and had shorter tenure. On the other hand, the disparity between foreign workers with other statuses and Japanese workers was related to the accumulated disadvantages of foreign workers in the Japanese labor market. Furthermore, a relatively large gap remained between Japanese and "technical intern/specified skilled" foreign workers in the middle to the high end of the wage distribution, even after controlling for these attributes. These results suggest the importance of the influence of structural factors such as the immigration system on regarding wage disparity between foreign and Japanese workers.

To Improve Domestic Employment Assistance for International Students: From the Perspective of Students from Non-Chinese character-using areas and English Course Students

Takashi Kumon (Institute for Asian Studies, Asia University)

This paper examines the difficulties for international students to find employment in Japan through the mismatch between the needs of companies and international students and the challenges faced by universities and government agencies in providing employment support, to explore the direction of employment support needed in the future. This research is important because it analyzes the employment intentions of international students and the problems they face in finding employment, from a perspective shared by people from non-Chinese character-using areas and those enrolled in English courses, a sample that has been increasing in recent years. This study mainly uses the results of an interview survey conducted from February 2020 to April 2022 for

international students who are enrolled in English courses, and a questionnaire survey on foreign students from multiple universities in the Hokuriku/Kyushu region with large international student populations. The following three points were identified in the conclusions of this study. First, international students from non-Chinese character-using areas who are enrolled in universities and graduate schools in Kyushu and the Hokuriku region have strong intentions to find employment in Japan. Second, they have relatively low Japanese proficiency and thus often have difficulty finding employment. This may be due to the fact that many of them are enrolled in English courses. Third, there is insufficient career support for international students from non-Chinese character-using areas and in English courses. From the above points, we recommend that government, universities, and companies collaborate to provide employment support, including learning Japanese and understanding the procedure to find employment in Japan and Japanese companies before coming to Japan.

Managing Cultural Diversity in Teams with Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals

Kenta Koyama (Tokyo Keizai University)

Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals (HSFPs) are expected as “knowledge workers” to contribute to innovation creation and productivity improvement as Japan’s working population declines. Even though the number of HSFPs employed by Japanese companies has been increasing, many companies have yet to realize the full potential of their HSFPs. In this paper, I first review the recent policies and the results of a fact-finding survey, and then examine measures that can be taken to enable HSFPs to play an active role in Japanese companies. This paper does not focus on systems of human resource management systems, but rather on more micro-level issues such as communication in the workplace, including recent research on cultural diversity in teams, and new roles that career consultants are expected to play. This paper concluded that it could be important to consider the concepts including “cross-cultural synergy,” “inclusive leadership,” “global leadership competencies” (especially “managing self”), and the roles of “career consultants” in “self-career dock” as the effective factors to manage HSFPs. In the future, there is a need to create and share practical knowledge by accumulating practices and enhancing research for the more effective management of cultural diversity in Japanese companies.

Foreign Workers and Policy Issues in Social Security

Sayaka Dake (Tohoku University)

Japan’s public pension system and public medical care system have no nationality requirements, and their coverage extends to foreigners who reside in Japan. However, with regard to the public pension system, many foreign workers who stay in Japan for a short period of time are already enrolled in the systems of their home countries due to social security agreements, and the problems associated with the international movement of workers have only been partially resolved. On the other hand, public medical systems are rarely covered by social security agreements, so foreigners residing in Japan are covered by Japanese medical insurance. The question of whether dependents residing abroad should be covered by Japanese medical insurance has arisen, and the law has been revised in recent years, but there are other problems such as fraudulent enrollment and improper receipt of benefits. These problems have been triggered by the emergence of internationally mobile workers, especially foreign workers who stay in Japan for short periods of time, leading to a reconsideration of the nature of social solidarity that should properly drive the concept of social insurance. In addition, medical institutions often face difficulties in recovering the costs of medical interpretation and medical treatment itself. In order to improve access to medical care for foreign residents in Japan, it is necessary for individual medical institutions to make their own efforts, and support from the government and other public organizations will become increasingly important. At the same time, it is necessary to consider an effective cost-sharing system, including a collective sharing method, to ensure that the costs associated with medical treatment for foreign patients are not borne disproportionately by medical institutions.

A New Perspective for Foreign Workers in Japan: From the Perspective of the International Labor Market

Yu Korekawa (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research)

There has been much research in Japan focusing on the exclusion of foreign workers from the mainstream of the Japanese labor market. However, most of the studies have focused on the discriminatory attitudes of Japanese society as the reason for the exclusion of foreign workers from the mainstream of the Japanese labor market and have not clarified the specific mechanisms involved. This paper aims to shed light on a new aspect of international labor migration by clarifying the theoretical characteristics of the international labor market and the actual situation in Asia, based on the “Comprehensive Study on the Pressure to Sending Workers from Asian Countries” conducted by the authors in FY2021 and FY2001. The results indicate that Japan is a major destination for international labor migration in Asia, with a high preference level, especially among middle- and higher-educated groups. In addition, the problem of excessive fees for foreign technical intern trainees is universal in the international labor market, and it is difficult to attribute the cause of the problem solely to the Japanese system. The “moderate social integration” among foreign workers is likely due to the high selectivity effect seen among workers who have come to Japan. Finally, we should not only focus on the exclusion of foreign workers, but also analyze the characteristics and problems of Japanese-style employment, including its internal dualism and its medium- to long-term merits and demerits, by viewing the acceptance of foreign workers as a means that Japanese-style employment, characterized by membership-based employment, is adopting to replace its core members amid the declining birthrate and aging population.