

11 Vocational Skills Development Policy

Japan's policy on vocational skills development can be broadly divided into developing and improving vocational skills, on the one hand, and evaluating and promoting vocational skills, on the other. For these, the following six policy measures have been identified.

1. Providing opportunities for vocational training in public vocational skill development facilities, as well as private education and training institutions.
2. Using grants to promote education and training provided by private employers and others.
3. Using grants to promote self-motivated skill development by workers themselves.
4. Developing a foundation for objectively evaluating vocational skills possessed by workers, and operating a system of skill testing.
5. Utilizing "job cards" to promote individual career development and assist a diverse range of capable people in smoothly securing employment and other aspects of their careers.
6. Supporting work by NEETs and other young people.

Figure V-15 shows the ways in which public vocational training has been implemented in Japan. Graduates from school are offered mainly long-term training lasting one to two years, while unemployed workers receive mostly training of six months or less and employed workers primarily receive short-term training of only a few days. By act, vocational training is offered to those changing occupations (and currently unemployed) and the physically disabled free of charge, but the cost of texts and other materials is borne by trainees. Some training courses for those changing occupations (and currently unemployed) are entrusted to private sector education and training institutions. Training subjects taught at public human resources development facilities are mostly vocational and technical subjects for industries

such as manufacturing and construction, but among the training commissioned to the private sector, courses are established in various subjects like computers and social welfare. Short-term vocational training for the employed is implemented based on the needs of employers or employers' associations of the region.

The Polytechnic University, a public vocational capacity development university, provides training and education to cultivate public vocational training instructors and develops textbooks for that purpose.

Figure V-16 shows how private-sector education and training are promoted. In particular, career development promotion grants assist employers, employers' organizations, etc., with part of the wages and costs incurred when providing education, training, and other services for their workers based on internal vocational ability development plans. Under the Subsidy for Career Advancement (Human Resource Development Course), meanwhile, employers who implement or support vocational training to promote internal career advancement and others by so-called non-regular workers (i.e. fixed-term contract workers, part-time workers and dispatch workers) will receive subsidies including the costs incurred for training, etc., and part of the wages paid during the training period. The aim of this is to encourage effective career formation for workers within companies. Career development promotion grants and subsidies for career advancement (Human Resource Development Course) are funded by two programs established as separate from unemployment insurance within the employment insurance system. They are characterized in that funds levied broadly from employers are broadly returned to employers as grants for education and training.

Assistance with self-development is provided by the education and training benefits scheme for general education and training introduced in December 1998. With this, persons who have been enrolled in

employment insurance for at least 3 years (or at least 1 year in the first instance) are subsidized for an amount equivalent to 20% of the cost of attending and completing an education and training course designated by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, up to a maximum of 100,000 yen. Meanwhile, an education and training benefits scheme for specialist practical education and training was introduced in October 2014. Now, workers who have been enrolled in employment insurance for at least 10 years (or at least 2 years in the first instance) and who attend specialist and practical education and training courses designated by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare (Specialist Practical Education and Training) can be subsidized for an amount equivalent to 40% of the cost of course attendance, up to a maximum of 320,000 yen per year (with an additional amount equivalent to 20% for those who have obtained qualifications, etc., up to a maximum of 160,000 yen).

In October 2015, the scheme was applicable to 9,865 courses at 1,902 general education and training facilities, and was available for numerous courses ranging from those designed for computer-related qualifications and bookkeeping examinations to training for entry-level careworkers. In specialist practical education and training, 1,839 courses at 891 institutions were eligible for the scheme. These includes 1,087 courses aimed at qualifications for specific vocations or job titles such as nurse, careworker or childminder, 680 specialist courses in occupational practice such as commercial practice and information at specialized training colleges, and 72 courses for MBA, MOT and others.

Measures for vocational ability evaluation implemented by the government include the formulation of vocational ability evaluation criteria as a basic tool for objectively evaluating vocational ability, and the skill test system for testing and authenticating the level of skills possessed by workers.

Vocational ability evaluation standards are used to organize and systemize the skills needed by trade and

occupation or job in four skill levels, ranging from junior staff to those responsible for organizations or divisions. They have so far been formulated for 53 trades and 9 clerical occupations. Companies are encouraged to customize these and use them, for example, when developing systems of personnel evaluation, wages and conditions, or showing workers the vocational ability required by the employer.

The National Trade Skill Test system, created in FY1959 to improve the skills and status of workers, is carried out for different categories of trades and grades. As of April 1st, 2015, it covered 128 targeted trades. The grade categories, depending on the occupation, include ① those categorized by grade (Advanced Grade, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Basic Grade 1 and Basic Grade 2) and ② those not categorized by grade (single grade).

The “Job Card System” promotes the use of “job cards”, documents that provide clear information on the work experience and vocational abilities of workers, etc., and other details regarding how they develop and improve their vocational abilities. The job cards serve as a tool for lifelong career planning when developing lifetime career paths, and act as evidence of vocational abilities when seeking employment, etc., in turn promoting individual career development and assisting a diverse range of capable people in smoothly securing employment and other aspects of their careers.

For NEETs and other young people, networks of local young people’s support organizations are being created in collaboration with local authorities. These are being used as centers for the operation of “Regional Youth Support Stations” (known as Support Stations), which provide support to help NEETs and other young people find employment.

In FY2015, Support Stations are to be positioned within measures for employment, and links with Hello Work as bases for support of NEETs are to be strengthened. As well as this, all Regional Youth Support Stations will support workplace establishment, providing powerful support for the employment of NEETs and other young people.

Figure V-15 Implementation Status of Public Vocational Training

1. Public Vocational Skill Development Facilities	243 colleges (as of April 1, 2015)
National (Employment and Human Resources Development Organization of Japan)	57 colleges
Polytechnic University	1 college
Prefectural	165 colleges
Municipal	1 college
Vocational Skills Development Center	19 colleges

2. Implementation Status of and Plans for Public Vocational Training

(Persons)

	FY2012 results	FY2013 results	FY2015 plan
Training for unemployed people	151,552	140,934	155,049
Of which, number outsourced	109,822	100,110	116,782
Organization	30,363	29,961	28,000
Of which, number outsourced	41	62	1,000
Prefectural	121,189	110,973	127,049
Of which, number outsourced	109,781	100,048	116,782
Training for employed people	103,001	102,178	126,713
Organization	49,555	50,124	57,000
Prefectural	53,446	52,054	69,713
Training for graduates	18,561	18,809	21,808
Organization	5,903	5,764	5,860
Prefectural	12,658	13,045	15,948
Total	273,114	261,921	303,570
Organization	85,821	85,849	90,860
Prefectural	187,293	176,072	212,710

Outsourced training includes outsourced training utilization-type dual systems, while training for graduates includes ordinary and specialist course utilization-type dual systems.

(Persons)

Training for disabled people	FY2012 results	FY2013 results	FY2015 plan
Training for unemployed people (within institutions)	2,192	2,164	2,995
Training for unemployed people (outsourced)	5,477	4,733	7,130
Training for employed people	442	484	1,200
Total	8,111	7,381	11,325

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

Figure V-16 Overview of Support for Vocational Training at Private-sector Companies

<Support for the Formulation of In-House Vocational Ability Development Plans>

○ Support Through Vocational Ability Development Service Centers

At Vocational Ability Development Service Centers, the development of vocational abilities within companies is promoted through the services such as the following:

- Advice and guidance concerning the formulation of in-house vocational ability development plans
- Implementing training for those promoting the development of vocational abilities concerning advice and guidance regarding career formation for workers.

<Support for the Implementation of Vocational Training>

○ Support Through Subsidies for the Promotion of Career Formation

In order to effectively promote the career formation of workers within companies, subsidies will be provided to cover part of the training costs and wages during training periods of workers whose employers and employers' organizations, etc. implement vocational training with clearly-specified goals and support the independent development of their vocational abilities.

○ Support based on subsidies for career advancement (human resource development course)

Employers who implement or support vocational training to promote internal career advancement and others by so-called non-regular workers (i.e. fixed-term contract workers, part-time workers and dispatch workers) will receive subsidies including the costs incurred for training, etc., and part of the wages paid during the training period.

○ Support Through Accredited Vocational Training Systems

Vocational training undertaken by employers that meets the standards stipulated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in regard to its subjects, training periods, and equipment, can be accredited as such by the governor of the relevant prefecture, based on an application for accreditation. Vocational training that has received this accreditation is called accredited vocational training, and subsidies are provided to the operators of small and medium-sized enterprises implementing such training, to cover the cost of running accredited vocational training.