

Rebuilding the Environment to Develop Workers' Capabilities for Sustainable Career Development

(Temporary translation)

The Eighth Basic Plan for Human Resources Development

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Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare

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1. Purpose of the Plan

Facing an increasing need for development of diversified human resources as a result of the transition of Japanese economy to a service economy, and the transition of its society to a knowledge-based society, etc. and also facing the decrease in population, it becomes essential to enhance productivity by improving capabilities of individual workers.

In the area of career development, however, a number of issues are becoming increasingly serious, including the uptrend in jobless youths, Freetersⁱ and NEETs, stricter selection of target workers to provide the chances for HRD by enterprises and a resulting increase in the number of workers who have fewer opportunities for HRD, increased constraints on time and access to information for the sake of workers who are trying to develop and improve their vocational capabilities on their own accord, etc. At the same time, it becomes a concern that “on-field excellence,” which has supported Japanese economy is weakening.

In order to respond to these issues and enhance vocational capabilities of workers, it is prominent not only to conduct vocational training but also to make the policies more focused to support a smoother career development

Recently, taking this approach, (1) Practical System for Human Resources Development was established to develop and improve practical vocational abilities, (2) provisions for reducing working hours and provisions on taking leaves in order to prepare for re-employment, etc. were additionally formed as measures which employers should take for workers to promote development and improvement of vocational capabilities spontaneously, (3) regulations on measures which employers should take to promote skills development of workers were additionally established, and (4) other measures were taken in the “Law for Partial Amendment of the Human Resources Development Promotion Law and the Act on the Promotion of Improvement of Employment Management in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for Securing Manpower and Creating Quality Jobs” (2006 Law No. 81, hereinafter referred to as the “Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law”).

Based on the above situation, the Eighth Basic Plan for Human Resources Development aims to promote supportive policies for full-scale career development, as responding to changes which are composed of the issues of career development; changes in the labor market, changes in treatment of employee by enterprises, changes in workers' attitudes and working styles, and structural transformation including deterioration of educational capabilities at workplaces and the society.

In particular, the Plan aims at promoting the support for career development within and outside enterprises in order to put sustainable career development into practice and at promoting a variety of efforts for rebuilding the environment to develop workers' capabilities, including restructuring of educational capacity of workplaces and the society.

When new measures are needed in association with economic fluctuation during the duration of the Plan from a short- or medium-term point of view, appropriate measures will be taken in light of the purpose of the plan, etc., and the plan will be revised, where necessary, paying attention to changes in the industrial structure and the trend in the employment/unemployment situation.

2. Duration of the Plan

This plan is designed for five years, from FY 2006 to FY 2010.

Chapter 2 Economic and Social Changes with Regard to Human Resources Development

1. Structural Changes in Labor Supply and Demand

(1) Changes in Labor Supply with the Advent of the Depopulating Society, etc.

In Japan, the population is increasingly aging as a result of increased average life expectancy, the birthrate is declining such as its total fertility rate falling to 1.25 in 2005, and the working-age population between 15 and 64 years old started to decrease in 1996. According to annual estimations in the population dynamic statistics, etc., excluding the period between 1944 and 1946 for which statistical data are unavailable, the number of deaths surpassed the number of births for the first time in 2005, leading to natural attrition in the population.

In particular, “the year 2007 problem”, the decrease in workforce and non-inheritance of skills and know-how which will be caused by mass retirement of baby boomers is causing concern in Japan. The approximately seven million baby boomers, who were born between 1947 and 1949 and accounted for 5.4% of Japan’s total population in 2000, will retire from the labor market gradually upon reaching 60 years of age in and after 2007, 65 in and after 2012, etc.

In the area of the increasingly diversifying workers’ attitudes toward work, in particular, there are situations such as an increased number of young people who have difficulty in establishing a sense of professionalism as a result of the decline in human resources development functions of local communities, families and other factors, an increased number of people who hope to harmonize their career with their family life including child-raising, and an increased number of people who seek a working style which allows voluntary development/improvement of vocational capability and participation in community contributing activities. Elderly people in Japan are very willing to work when compared to those in foreign countries, and disabled people are becoming more willing to work.

In order to minimize the decline in the number of workers given the downtrend of the labor force, it is the challenge to promote employment of elderly citizens, young people, and women, including taking measures for women who hope to harmonize child-raising and their career.

In addition, in the area of career development, in fact career means accumulation of VET and practical experiences in line with workers’ career plans, the number of workers depending on their companies to build their own career development is decreasing, while more workers intend to consider it on their own. There are also an increased number of people, chiefly middle-aged and elderly people, who hope to change their jobs or start their own businesses, seeking new opportunities where they can demonstrate their capabilities.

(2) Changes in Labor Demand in Enterprises, etc.

With improvements in corporate earnings and the continuing economic recovery in Japan as a whole, the jobs-to-applicants ratio exceeded 1.0 in December 2005 for the first time in 13 years and 3 months, and the total unemployment rate improved from the

record high of 5.5% to 4.0-4.5% in fiscal 2005, indicating extensive economic recovery, although severe employment conditions have not been relieved entirely.

Meanwhile, looking at economic situations by region, situations in large cities, where a large number of manufacturing including automobile and information and telecommunications equipment and IT-related industries which have led Japan's recent economic recovery are located, are improving while there are some regions which are slow in recovery due to a decline in local industries, etc. as a result of a decrease in public work projects and heated global competition.

Looking at transitions in the number of workers by occupation, the ratio of blue-collar workers is decreasing while the ratio of professional and technical workers is increasing, which indicates the need to promote human resources development that responds to these changes.

Furthermore, Japanese enterprises must reinforce the so-called "on-field excellence," including skills, techniques, problem-solving abilities and management skills supported by practical experiences in various sites such as manufacturing sites, for reasons such that production of high value-added products and provision of high-quality services are increasingly needed, while a series of serious accidents that took place at production sites and the upcoming "the year 2007 problem" are among concerns.

Looking at human resources development situations in Japanese enterprises under the situations stated above, utilization of workers that are not "permanent employees", who work on a full-time basis under an employment contract without term, and outsourcing of business operations have been increasing, while there is a trend toward stagnation of planned OJT (vocational training conducted within the process of performing tasks) and OFF-JT (vocational training conducted outside the process of performing tasks), as well as a trend toward stricter selection of workers who can receive vocational training. At the same time, there is still a gap in opportunities for development and improvement of vocational capabilities between workers of large enterprises and those of small- and medium-sized enterprises.

(3) Current Status and Future Prospects of the Labor Market

As a result of economic recovery and the effects of employment measures including human resources development measures, employment situations have improved steadily during the duration of the Seventh Basic Plan for Human Resources Development.

However, the total unemployment rate is still high, and there are still severe situations such as delayed improvements in several areas, although the percentage of young people who have found work has improved over the past several years.

The number of part-time workers, temporarily dispatched agency-workers, etc. is increasing, accounting for 32.6% of total employees in 2005. Furthermore, among “permanent employees” with a stable income in prospect, the percentage of those who work longer hours is increasing.

Regarding future labor supply and demand prospects, a report prepared by the Employment Policy Study Group in the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (issued in July 2005) estimates that the labor force population in 2015 will be approximately 4.1 million less than that in 2004, unless measures are taken to support employment of young people, further facilitate motivations and capabilities of female workers, secure opportunities of employment/work for elderly people, etc., given the arrival of the depopulating society. If the above-mentioned measures are taken, the labor force population in 2015 will be larger by approximately 3 million than the labor force population in the case where no measures are taken. Even if these measures are taken, however, it is expected that the number of workers in 2015 will be less than that of 2004 by approximately 1 million. In order to maintain and enhance the dynamism of the economy and the society, therefore, it will be necessary to promote human resources development effectively in a consistent manner and enhance productivity through enhancing vocational capabilities of individual citizens, in addition to taking the above measures.

2. Situations in Each Stage of Career Development

In the structural changes in labor supply and demand described in Section 1, a variety of issues are occurring in each stage of career, and it is necessary to take appropriate measures to address them.

The positioning of each stage varies depending on the actual situation of each individual, and it is difficult to separate each stage by age in a single uniform way. The Plan, however, divides career into the three stages of “preparation stage” before beginning a working life, “development stage” during a working life or interruption of a working life, and “maturity stage” when the retirement process is entered.

First, among young people in the “preparation stage” of their career, approximately 20% of college graduates (undergraduate course) do not work or proceed to higher education, while the percentage of those who advance to colleges, etc., exceeded 50%. In addition, the early job turnover rate of high school and college graduates has been high. Given such a situation, the total unemployment rate among young people has also stayed high.

The total number of unemployed youths, Freeters and NEETs, avoiding duplicated counting, was over 3.7 million on average in 2005. There is a variety of factors behind this situation, such that young people, who graduated from school in the times when the employment situation was particularly severe and could not find a "permanent job", did not have an opportunity to be employed as a "permanent employee", as well as insufficient support for young people in the “preparation stage” of their career in enhancement of a sense of professionalism and acquisition of basic abilities such as the minimum communication ability required for social life.

Looking at the percentage of NEETs by household income, in particular, there is a tendency for more NEETs to belong to relatively lower-income households in recent years. In addition, it is believed that some NEETs are included among welfare recipients.

Next, regarding workers in the “development stage” of career, the percentage of workers who work more than 60 hours a week is high, causing concerns about adverse effects from the viewpoint of harmonization of work, family life and community life (hereinafter referred to as the “work-life balance”) and maintaining physical and mental health.

From the perspective of human resources development, constraints on time rather than constraints on costly tuition fee and access to information are becoming a disincentive for workers to voluntarily develop and improve their vocational capabilities, and working long hours is becoming a major problem in promoting career development initiated by individuals.

Furthermore, with regard to workers in the “maturity stage” of career, the “Law Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons” (1971 Law No. 68, hereinafter referred to as the “Law on Older Persons”) was amended partially in 2004 and took effect in April this year as a measure for securing employment of older persons,

such as raising the retirement age to 65 and introducing the continuing employment system.

It is important to create a variety of work opportunities for older people, etc., in accordance with their willingness and capabilities. In addition to improvement of working conditions including short-term work, it has become important to promote measures such as provision of temporary and short-term work opportunities at the Silver Human Resources Centers.

In addition to these measures and efforts, the significance of creating opportunities for middle-aged and elderly people, in particular, to demonstrate their willingness and capabilities, not necessarily through employment or work but through community activities in the fields of education, culture, the environment, etc., is increasing. It is expected that opportunities for these activities will be expanded, especially for baby boomers.

3. Declining Roles of Local Communities and Families in Human Resources Development

In the progressing trends of urbanization and an increasing number of employees, the percentage of employees in the total labor force increased from 43.5% in 1955 to 84.8% in 2005. Conversely, the percentage of self-employed workers and workers engaged in a family business has decreased substantially. Recently, in particular, the functions of local communities in human resources development are declining along with the decay of local communities, as a result of situations such as a decrease in local shopping streets and small- and medium-sized enterprises which is associated with the changes of central urban areas arising from Regulatory Reform, etc. and also with heated global competition.

With regard to family situations, the divorce rate doubled when compared with the period between 1965 and 1975, and the number and the ratio of single-parent families doubled from 1975 accordingly. In addition to these family situations, it is believed that the trend toward an increase in workers who work long hours while raising children and an associated decrease in daily communication at home is one of the obstacles preventing children from enhancing their sense of professionalism and developing the minimum communication ability required for social life.

In such a situation, promoting the work-life balance and restructuring the basic function of local communities and families in human resources development are becoming major issues in human resources development, as a prerequisite for securing sustainable career development.

Chapter 3 Target to be Attained in Human Resources Development Measures

In light of economic and social changes related to human resources development described in Chapter 2, the target to be attained was set as follows.

1. Perspective for Promoting Career Development Support Policies

Human resources development policies form a part of employment measures, and their focus has conventionally been placed on conducting vocational training in response to labor supply and demand, as well as expeditious vocational training for displaced workers, with the overall perspective of trend and status of economy and industry. The importance of these perspectives in policy making has not changed even today.

As noted in Section 2 in Chapter 2, however, new problems have recently arisen in the “preparation stage,” “development stage” and “maturity stage” in workers’ working life, and appropriate measures need to be taken.

Based on this situation, the Plan promotes career development support policies from the following perspectives.

The first perspective is promotion of development and enhancement of vocational capabilities. In many cases, vocational capabilities of individual workers are acquired through work experiences, including working hard by competing with each other and absorption of knowledge and skills in daily operations. Considering such actual situations, it is important to set a policy goal of supporting to promote accumulation of vocational capabilities through work, namely, supporting to make smoother career development, in order to promote human resources development and enhancement of vocational capabilities.

The second perspective is employment measures. With rapid changes in the way enterprises are managed and in the industrial structure as a result of the progress in technological innovations and shorter product cycles, workers' attitudes toward work are diversifying more and more in the labor market. In this situation, it is becoming more

important that enhancing employability by supporting individual career development as part of employment measures, paying attention to career diversification, in addition to policy measures combining the ones for displaced workers and support for enterprises to retain workers,

As the third perspective, it is expected to be established that a theoretical basis to set career development support measures as a core part of human resources development and to organize these measures in order to develop career development support measures mentioned above in the future. These must be implemented based on the fact that the “Law for Partial Amendment, etc. of the Employment Promotion Law to Promote Smooth Reemployment Responding to Changes in Economy and the Society and Other Laws” enacted in 2001 (2001 Law No. 35) stipulates, as the basic principle of promoting human resources development measures, that human resources development measures shall be implemented in a staged and organized manner throughout the entire working life, with due considerations to workers’ working life design, and that measures shall be implemented in accordance with the principle.

2. Implementation of Career Development Support Measures

(1) Promotion of Career Development Support Measures for Workers

Wide range of career development support policies, which do not target only at employed and unemployed workers in the strict sense, are recently being implemented as part of human resources development administration to respond to a variety of issues described in Section 2 in Chapter 2. These policies include raising awareness of professionalism in elementary and upper secondary education, measures for vocational independence of NEETs, and support, etc. for smooth re-employment, work resumption, etc. of those who gave up career due to childbearing, child-raising, nursing care, etc.

In Japan which is facing depopulation, it will be necessary to further promote career development support measures for workers, including measures to enhance a sense of professionalism, in order to maintain and enhance the economic and social dynamism, so that a variety of human resources can contribute to creation of an enriched society through work.

For this purpose, in addition to improvement of above-mentioned measures, it is important to give political consideration to career development support measures for people whose working style is somewhere between employment and self-employment,

creation of a mechanism which makes use of elderly people's knowledge and experiences in the field of community contributing activities, which could provide a workplace for young people and the disabled, etc.

(2) Promotion of Infrastructure Development to Make the Labor Market Function Effectively

Based on the Seventh Basic Plan for Human Resources Development, from the perspective of responding to increased labor movement, associated with changes of the industrial structure, etc. and stabilizing career development and employment of workers, infrastructures (economic and social infrastructures, hereinafter referred to as "the infrastructure") have been improved in the fields of promotion of career development support, information on human resources development measures, vocational capability evaluation, and a variety of VET in order to make the labor market function effectively.

As described later, improvement of the infrastructure in the labor market is not necessarily sufficient, although there is a certain progress, and it is necessary to continue to promote development and improvement of the infrastructure in order to promote smoother career development through the public private partnership.

Specifically, together with appropriately operating the systems which have been developed and improved, as responding to the demand for a variety of human resources development measures including high-level measures, further developing and utilizing corporations and entities which provide a variety of education and training services, it is necessary to respond to a variety of education and training needs by combining these education and training services. It is also necessary to establish a vocational capability evaluation system based on needs brought up by enterprises and industrial groups, etc., develop human resources of career consultants, and further enhance the quality of career consultants, etc.

(3) Career Development Support throughout Working Life

In Japan which is facing an aging society, leading as productive a working life as possible throughout one's entire life according to willingness and physical strength is an important issue not only for workers themselves but also for the entire economy and the society in order to maintain and enhance the driving force.

As described in Section 2 of Chapter 2 regarding career development of workers, however, there are major issues in each stage of career, such as securing employment opportunities for career development in the “preparation stage,” the work-life balance in developing career in the “development stage” and securing opportunities to demonstrate accumulated skills in the “maturity stage.” Recently, in particular, the number of so-called “non-permanent employees” including part-time workers and dispatched agency workers (hereinafter referred to as “non-permanent employees”) is increasing significantly, but they have fewer human resources development opportunities in general when compared to “permanent employees.” It is necessary to seek well-balanced career development support measures and human resources development measures, including those for “non-permanent employees,” lest the trend cause polarization of human resources.

In order to ensure sustainable career development throughout the working life, we must address these issues, paying attention to improvement of the environment that develops and enhances vocational capabilities of workers who work for enterprises, etc., and also the environment of the society and families that develop human resources.

3. Promotion of Human Resources Development in Response to the Trends of Labor Supply and Demand

Human resources development measures are positioned as part of employment measures, and the public sector (the state and prefectural governments) has so far taken the lead in conducting vocational training for job-seekers and workers at small- and medium-sized enterprises in accordance with trends of labor supply and demand.

In particular, in cases such that there are a large number of displaced workers due to economic recession, effects of policy measures in other fields, etc., the public sector has played a leading role in conducting training for those workers flexibly as part of employment measures.

The importance of these efforts, including vocational training conducted as an employment measure chiefly led by the public sector, will not change in the future, but in promoting these efforts, it is particularly important to utilize private education and training providers actively and effectively, grasp the education and training needs of enterprises, and provide support in the areas of human resources development know-how, facilities, equipment, etc. for small- and medium-sized enterprises, etc.

Recently, mismatches between capabilities of job-seekers and abilities desired by employers are increasing. Therefore, it is important to implement human resources development measures in growth areas, while providing career consultations.

4. Rebuilding the Environment to Develop Workers' Capabilities for Sustainable Career Development

(1) Rebuilding the Mechanism to Strengthen “On-Field Excellence” of Enterprises

The competitiveness of Japan's industries, particularly the one of its manufacturing industry has been supported by the strength of so-called “on-field excellence” in the manufacturing industry and a number of other fields.

Meanwhile, a decline in the “on-field excellence” has become a concern in the wake of serious accidents, faulty products reported at production sites, etc. Behind these issues, there are actual situations such as lack of young new workers as a result of an increased rate of young people who advance to institutions of higher education, an ill-balanced age structure of workers as a result of severe personnel downsizing, and reduction of systems to develop young people such as conventional in-house training centers. In addition, there is concern that techniques, skills, etc. that have supported the on-field excellence will be lost upon the retirement of the baby boomers who have accumulated those techniques, skills, etc.

In order to reinforce the “on-field excellence” which is essential for providing high value-added products and high-quality services, it will be necessary to secure and develop young new workers, who will engage in on-field operations and play a core part in the future, as well as drastically rebuild the mechanism for HRD and also to take measures to promote inheritance of techniques, skills, etc. from middle-aged and elderly workers, including baby boomers, to young workers.

(2) Restructuring the Enhancement of Human Resources Development at Community and Other Levels

In Japanese society, there have traditionally been a large number of self-employed workers and family-business employees supporting local communities, in addition to corporate employees. Recently, however, enterprises occupy the central part of the Japanese society, especially in large cities; local communities have changed, and more than a few of them are on the wane.

Along with this, local communities' capacity to accept a variety of values and lifestyles and enhance human resources including young people is also declining.

In urbanized Japan, restoring conventional local communities is a major challenge, and it is necessary to create local communities which accept various lifestyles and values and to promote efforts to accept and develop various human resources, including young people and the disabled, by creating opportunities for a variety of community-based activities such as educational, cultural and the environmental activities.

In line with these efforts, it is desirable to deepen understanding of and give a certain consideration to the importance of the nature of the family and its educational capacities.

5. Building the “Public” Interest Approach to Career Development through Collaboration between Public and Private Sector

In entering the phase of depopulation, it is becoming more important than ever for enterprises to develop and improve their employees' vocational capabilities, not only to enhance corporate productivity and promote career development of individual workers but also to maintain and enhance Japan's economic vitality.

In addition, it is believed that workers' voluntary human resources development efforts for their own career development will help enterprises secure human resources with high vocational capabilities and contribute to the realization of an enriched society.

From this perspective, it is expected that enterprises will take measures to support workers' voluntary human resources development efforts, based on measures to reduce work hours, provisions on leaves to prepare for reemployment, and other efforts which were added to the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law as measures to be taken by employers to promote workers' voluntary efforts to develop and enhance their vocational capabilities.

Based on the Seventh Basic Plan for Human Resources Development, the Japanese government has implemented policies with a focus on smooth promotion of career development by making the labor market function effectively.

However, in order to address career development issues arising in each stage of career

described earlier and secure sustainable career development throughout the entire working life, it is indispensable to (1) support career development of young people, (2) promote the work-life balance of workers, and (3) promote policies from the “public” viewpoint through partnership between public and private sector, including creation of community-based activities and restructuring the capacities on education of local communities, in parallel with making the labor market function effectively by developing the labor market infrastructures, etc.

Furthermore, it is expected that enterprises will adopt the concept of CSR (corporate social responsibility) in the areas of contributions to local communities and support for career development of young people, and that society as a whole will evaluate those enterprises through the action of SRI (social responsibility investment), etc., and explore the essence of a sustainable society from the “public” viewpoint.

Each country is making human resources development efforts from the "public" viewpoint in accordance with its own situation. For example, various donation-based funds and NPOs are actively engaged in activities in the United States, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Germany takes a major role in vocational training for young people. It is a major agenda the way to promote career development support measures from the “public” viewpoint in Japan in the future.

Chapter 4 Basic Measures for Human Resources Development

1. Improvement of the Labor Market Infrastructure

In order to realize sustainable and smooth career development of workers in the course of structural changes of industries and occupations, progress of technological innovations, diversification of working styles, etc., it is important to develop an environment where individuals could receive education and training, build working experience on practical business operations, etc., based on their own working life design and demonstrate their vocational capabilities effectively.

From this perspective, as described in Section 2 (2) in Chapter 3, efforts have been made to improve the career development support system through improvement of the labor market infrastructure, including promotion of career development support measures, dissemination of information on human resources development measures,

implementation of vocational capability evaluation, and a variety of VET, during the duration of the Seventh Basic Plan for Human Resources Development.

The current status shows certain accomplishments, such as the training commissioned to private institutions of education and training in effective manners within the scheme of public vocational training programs, improvement of vocational capability evaluation standards, and development of career consultants. However, there are still remaining issues, such as improvement of infrastructures for various kinds of VET and for vocational capability evaluation based on the needs of enterprises, industrial groups, etc. and there is an urgent need to address the increasingly serious problems in each stage of career.

For this reason, during the Eighth Basic Plan for Human Resources Development, improvement of the labor market infrastructures will be promoted to deal with these issues appropriately.

(1) Securing Opportunities for Diverse VET

Along with diversification, specialization and rapid changes in the vocational abilities required of workers, it is necessary to provide various VET opportunities responding to economic and social needs.

A. Development and Utilization of Training Institutions Providing Diverse Training Services

While OJT and in-company OFF-JT will continue to play a major role in human resources development, external OFF-JT and voluntary development and enhancement of vocational capabilities will be more important for promoting development and enhancement of vocational capabilities of individual workers under the circumstances of progressing technological innovations and diversifying the needs of job-seekers'.

Major establishments which provide external OFF-JT and education and training services to develop voluntarily and enhance vocational capabilities include private enterprises, employer associations such as federations of small- and medium-sized enterprises and industry-based organizations, public interest corporations, colleges, vocational schools, etc.

The primary roles of these establishments and the levels, prices, etc. of educational training services provided by these establishments vary, and it will be necessary to

promote development of individual service providers according to their roles and natures and to respond to a variety of educational training needs by combining various educational training programs. In particular, the roles of employer associations, public interest corporations, etc. engaged in career development support for workers of small- and medium-sized enterprises and “non-permanent employees,” as well as roles of colleges, vocational schools, etc. associated with long-term human resources development for setting, changing, etc. of the direction of career, are significant.

From this perspective, the Plan will promote (1) to enhance the quality of educational training provided by private enterprises, etc. with consideration of vocational capability evaluation, etc. for those who would complete the training, upon the minister of health, labour and welfare assigning training programs for the Training and Education Benefits System, (2) to facilitate employer associations and public interest corporations as training providers, and (3) to aggressively commission the training to a variety of private educational training institutions, including colleges, etc. which provide higher-level education and training and also promote to improve training quality, etc. through provision of commission expenses, etc. based on post-training employment status of trainees.

B. Improvement of Public Human Resources Development

In order to respond to changes of the industrial structure, technological innovations, diversification of job-seekers' needs, etc., the government will provide the supports to establish vocational training courses and human resources development for small- and medium-sized enterprises, etc., based on changes of human resources needs of enterprises, and make the efforts to improve public vocational training programs which allow job-seekers to select training programs based on their own needs.

In addition, VET needed for human resources development in the fields of information and telecommunications, which is required in a number of fields, and nursing care, where there is an increasing labor demand due to progress of the aging society, will strongly be promoted. In doing this, it is significantly promoted to commission trainings to a variety of private training institutions for the purpose of making the best use of dynamism and expertise of the private sector.

In addition, the government will promote to provide consultation, assistance, information, etc. through the “Entrepreneur Support Centers” for those who hope to

start businesses, etc., and make supports such as information provision in order to promote human resources development applying e-learning method.

C. Dissemination and Establishment of the “Practical System for Human Resources Development”

Efforts will be made to disseminate and establish the “Practical System for Human Resources Development”, a system led by enterprises, designed to develop practical vocational capabilities of young people by combining “theoretical learning provided by educational training institutions” and “OJT provided by enterprises, etc. under a fixed-term employment contract”, which is added to the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law as a measure to promote human resources development measures to be carried out by employers.

Specifically, in the guidelines based on the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law, a model contract which indicates necessary data related to training contents, etc. in an easily-understandable manner will be prepared, together with specifying a means of informing workers of training contents, working conditions, etc. during the training period, specifying coordination between training providers and employers, etc., and its use will be promoted.

In addition, information will be disseminated concerning such matters as the system for authorizing those training programs which are effective as employment support measures for young people in terms of duration, the number of hours, training contents, etc. under the “Practical System for Human Resources Development” and the system to praise efforts by authorized employers.

Furthermore, support will be provided for recruiting trainees, and support such as consultations and assistance regarding methods of curriculum development and vocational capability evaluation upon completion of training will be provided upon requests from employers.

At the same time, effective use of support measures based on the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law will be encouraged among small- and medium-sized enterprises and federations of small- and medium-sized enterprises, and

efforts made by these organizations and coordination between the organizations and training providers will both be promoted.

(2) Development of Infrastructure Related to Vocational Capability Evaluation

In association with an increased ratio of professional and technical occupations, as well as sophistication and diversification of job contents, the importance of promoting appropriate evaluation of workers' vocational capabilities, reducing mismatches between vocational capabilities required by enterprises and actual capabilities of workers, and reducing employment-related risks of both employers and employees is increasing.

In order to respond to this situation, efforts will be made to develop and improve the vocational capability evaluation system, based on needs of enterprises and industrial groups, and use of the system by both employers and employees will be promoted, so that the system can effectively serve as the guideline for smooth career development in and outside enterprises.

Systems currently used for vocational capability evaluation include a number of qualification systems; skill-based grade systems and in-company certificate systems at private enterprises, in addition to national trade skill testing systems and certification system, and the "Vocational Capability Acquisition Support System" (Business Career System), etc. but there is no uniform standard among these systems.

In order to develop a vocational capability evaluation system applicable to a wide range of occupations with cross-cutting perspectives, a "vocational capability evaluation standard," which the government and industrial groups, etc. are currently developing in a collaborative manner as a uniform standard to evaluate vocational abilities, will help workers set career development goals by being used for clarifying roles of a variety of systems, as being further developed and improved, based on needs of enterprises and industrial groups.

In the area of national trade skill testing systems, job classifications of national trade skill testing and certification will be reviewed based on needs of enterprises and industrial groups, and facilitation, etc. of dynamism of private organizations will be promoted, furthermore opportunities for taking tests according to workers' career development stages will be expanded, as well as national trade skill testing systems

including facilitation of certified skilled workers will be further disseminated and promoted.

Moreover, the “Vocational Capability Acquisition Support System” (Business Career System) related to the educational training of white-collar occupations will be reviewed to respond to user needs, and vocational capability evaluation functions will be reinforced through improvement, etc. of testing systems.

In addition, the “YES Programme (Youth Employability Support Program)” designed to enhance basic abilities of young people to make them employable will be disseminated, and promoted, etc.

(3) Improvement of the Data Collection and Supply System for Career Development

A. Development of Career Consultation Environment

In the growing trend resulting from lengthening of working life, etc. where workers design their working life by themselves, the importance of career consultation is further increasing.

In such a situation, promoting development of career consultants who meet user needs, enhancing their quality and increasing opportunities for them to demonstrate their abilities have become issues.

In particular, it is necessary to promote establishment of career consultations, with an eye to designing overall life career, which means lifestyle of individual persons including not only occupation/duties but also family life and local community activities, etc., and responses to mental health issues, and to disseminate and penetrate career consultations at enterprises of different scales and belonging to a variety of industries.

Specifically, development of career consultants at private organizations will be promoted through utilization of the Career Development Promotion Grants and the Training and Education Benefits System, and efforts to secure, enhance, etc. the quality of career consultants will be supported.

In addition, trainings, etc. concerning various kinds of knowledge and skills which are increasingly needed for effective career consultation, including life career-related knowledge and methods of pursuing activities for reemployment, will be provided by

experts, and a collaboration system with experts in the concerned fields will be developed to support people who have mental health problems, etc.

These efforts will be promoted based on the fact that securing career consultation opportunities in and outside enterprises was clearly positioned as a measure to promote human resources development to be taken by employers, etc. and that provision of training sessions to the supporters who carry on the career development, including career consultants, was specified as an assistance given by the government, etc. in the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law. In particular, active use of career consultants assigned by public organizations will be publicized and encouraged among small- and medium-sized enterprises having difficulties in assigning career consultants internally.

Furthermore, efforts such as presentation of best practices on career consultation both to employers and employees will be promoted, which will help an environment where career consultants can exercise their abilities to be developed.

B. Improvement of the Information Infrastructure Related to Career Development

In order to realize smooth, sustainable career development, it is also necessary to improve the information service, not only for workers and job-seekers but also for potential job-seekers who, for example, gave up working due to childbearing, child-raising, or nursing care, etc., but can work if conditions become better.

For this purpose, the contents and quality of the information, etc. provided by the “Career Information Navigation,” which organizes and provides comprehensive information on career development on the Internet, will be improved from the users’ viewpoints, such as by organizing information targeting for various workers in a user-friendly manner.

In addition, in order to activate efforts that contribute to human resources development, it is necessary to develop a system where personnel in the field of education/human resources development from special technical schools, professional organizations, etc. can exchange information with one another.

For this purpose, it will be considered to promote not only information service provided to general users including enterprises and workers but also opportunities provided for

the personnel in the field of education/human resources development to exchange information with one another, based on the state of improvement, etc. in the information service systems of foreign countries.

2. Support for Sustainable Career Development throughout the Working Life of Workers

(1) Improvement of Support for Each Career Stage

A. Support in the Preparation Stage

For young people who are in the preparation stage of their career, it is necessary for families, schools, enterprises, local communities, etc. to play their respective roles, as well as provide supports for career preparations, including acquisition of basic capabilities necessary for work, such as enhancement of a sense of professionalism and manners required to become a working adult, as promoting collaboration with each other.

For this purpose, based on the fact that the “National Declaration to Enhance Comprehensive Capacities of Young People” was announced at the “National Conference to Enhance Comprehensive Capacities of Young People,” the following measures will be taken so that young people can become independent as workers through developing and demonstrating their own capacities.

- a. Encourage young people to deepen understanding of work and allow them to have confidence and strength to live their own life, through experiencing occupations on-site and enhancing a sense of professionalism at each stage of elementary, junior high and high school and college.

Specifically, improve educational curricula on career and further create opportunities to experience occupations on-site at the stage of elementary and junior high school in collaboration with schools for juvenile and pupils, etc., and provide internship and job guidance in collaboration with employers, etc. for high school and college students.

In addition, disseminate and establish the “Practical System for Human Resources Development,” which is a third option after job and school, combining elements of both, to bring new graduates, etc. having practical business potential into

workplaces and provide them with basic knowledge and skills required to work as core personnel there in the future.

- b. Conduct necessary career consultations and counseling for unemployed youths, Freeters, etc. according to their situations, as well as support their employment through effective vocational training, etc. including the “Japanese-style Dual System.”

Provide NEETs with support, etc. such as the “School of Independence for Youth” , camp-type communal life training, which lets them have labor experiences, etc., and with a variety of other supports responding to their own situation through measures such as networking local organizations that provide support with young people to become occupationally independent in order to promote their vocational independence.

- c. The society as a whole is to support young people in attaining their independence in collaboration with families, schools, enterprises, local communities, etc. In providing such support, consideration is to be given to the importance of developing NPOs, which support independence and employment of young people from their point of view, as well as the importance of developing human resources, etc. to support NPOs.

B. Support in the Development Stage

In the development stage of career, it is becoming more important to support voluntary development and enhancement of vocational capabilities by workers, in addition to human resources development provided by enterprises. Furthermore, amid the increasingly uncertain future prospects of working life, it is becoming an issue how to ensure sustainability and expansibility of career.

In response to this situation, the following measures will be taken.

- a. Promotion of efforts by enterprises related to support for career development of workers

In the ongoing shift to a service economy and a knowledge society, the source of corporate competitiveness is human resources that produce added value for products and services, and there is a tendency for enterprises that make larger investments in human resources development to have better corporate performance.

Considering this situation, effective OFF-JT, etc. will be promoted through provision of information related to the Career Development Promotion Grants and external training institutions, and other measures.

It is becoming important for enterprises that workers themselves think of their own career development and enhance their vocational capabilities in response to changes in the vocational capabilities required of them. So, support will be provided, including utilization of grants to promote introduction of reduction of work hours, etc., in addition to a system of paid leave-of-absence for training, so that enterprises can give consideration to human resources development in terms of funds and work hours.

Recently in particular, there is a conspicuous tendency for workers in their late 20s to 40s who play a core role in business operations to work for more hours. In response to this tendency, policy measures related to the work-life balance and work-sharing will be promoted in collaboration with the concerned government agencies, not only from the perspective of securing time for human resources development but also from the perspective of securing sustainability and expansibility of career, including mental health issues, etc.

b. Cross-enterprise career restructuring and new developments

Career development of workers tends to go beyond enterprises and diversify as a result of changes in employment practices and attitudes of workers, in addition to changes in the industrial structure and the rapid progress of technological innovations, so it is necessary to provide support for career development responding to individual needs.

For those who were forced to discontinue their career due to the business restructuring or obsolescence, etc. of their techniques, skills, etc., support will be provided through career consultations so that such workers can look over their own career and set a concrete goal. Quick and smooth reemployment will be promoted by conducting effective vocational trainings utilizing private training institutions and further reinforcing collaboration with the public employment security offices, as an employment safety net, under public responsibility.

For those who discontinued career due to the reasons such as childbearing, child-raising, or nursing care, etc., efforts will be made to develop a system where such people can easily receive career consultations for resumption of work provided by enterprises and public organizations even during leave periods, and efforts will be made to improve the environment so that they can easily access information on human resources development. At the same time, close collaboration with agencies and groups providing support for these workers will be established, and an environment where necessary information on human resources development measures is widely provided will be developed.

Furthermore, for those who hope to change jobs or start their own business, etc. in pursuit of new business opportunities and a place for exercising their capabilities, information, consultations, assistance, seminar, etc. will be provided chiefly by the “Entrepreneur Support Center,” and building a support mechanism and improving an environment for such workers will be considered, aimed at creating a society where people can try completely new career development in the middle of their working life.

C. Support in the Maturity Stage

In the future depopulating society, expanding opportunities for elderly people with a high willingness to work will be a significant challenge, and in addition to the smooth implementation of measures to secure employment of elderly people under the “Law on Older Persons” and other measures, provision of a variety of employment opportunities by the Silver Human Resources Centers, etc. it will be necessary to make efforts to create an environment, where elderly people can demonstrate their diverse experiences and techniques, skills, etc. sufficiently, as part of human resources development measures.

For this purpose, support will be provided through the Career Development Promotion Grants, etc., to encourage enterprises to provide career consultation opportunities, looking over workers’ overall life career, and to introduce a leave system designed for preparation for reemployment, etc. after retirement for workers in the maturity stage of their careers. Furthermore, the commissioned trainings provided by NPOs, etc. so that those who hope to participate in community contributing activities in the fields of education, culture, environment, etc., could shift to these areas smoothly by taking advantage of the opportunities. In addition, effective coordination with related

measures, etc. will be sought, such as encouraging workers in the maturity stage of their career to demonstrate their abilities in community contributing fields.

(2) Support, etc. for Career Development from Welfare to Independence

A. Support for the Disabled

It is expected that the number of severely disabled persons who hope to work will increase upon enactment of the “Law for Independence of Persons with Disabilities” (2005 Law No. 123), etc., as reinforcing supports for the shift of policy from welfare to employment/working. It is necessary to promote support for more carefully-crafted vocational training for the disabled according to the degree/condition of their disabilities.

For this purpose, the Human Resources Development Centers for the Disabled will focus their efforts on conducting vocational training for the disabled who need support to become independent, including physically severely challenged persons who need nursing care in daily life, mentally handicapped persons, mentally disordered persons, and persons with developmental disorder. In particular, for mentally disordered persons who are included in the actual employment rate, vocational training will be expanded while promoting accumulation and dissemination of training know-how. For persons with developmental disorders, vocational trainings will be implemented on a trial basis to establish training methods, as the first stage.

The regular National Human Resources Development Centers will continue to actively accept disabled persons who are eligible for regular training courses, and promote to secure vocational training opportunities in the neighborhood of their residences and to further normalize vocational training for the disabled by promoting the set up of training courses for mentally challenged persons, etc. In addition, a variety of commissioned training based on the conditions of the disabled, which is functioning as an approach to substantially expand vocational training opportunities for the disabled and as an approach for collaboration with welfare departments, etc., will be further promoted. Meanwhile, working at home was legally stipulated as a result of a partial amendment of the “Law for Employment Promotion, etc., of the Disabled” (1960 Law No. 123). In response to this, support will be provided to the disabled who hope to work at home by providing them with commissioned e-learning for information and communications skills.

For holding the National Vocational Skills Competition for Persons with Disabilities (Abilympics), public relations and information dissemination will be actively conducted to raise awareness of the skills of the disabled among people in society. Furthermore, efforts will be made to increase the number of job classifications that compete at the “2007 Universal Skills Competition” to be held in Shizuoka in 2007 and to enhance the capabilities of participants at the competition, and support will be provided for efforts to improve skills of the disabled.

B. Support for Single Mothers, Welfare Recipients, etc.

The number of single-mother households, households receiving public assistance, etc. is increasing, and effective support for their independence, including related support such as support for housekeeping, etc., is required. For single mothers, in particular, it is necessary to give consideration to childcare for them to receive trainings.

For this purpose, active efforts will be made to provide human resources development opportunities, considering trainees’ conditions such as their need for childcare, to promote the vocational independence, etc. of single mothers and welfare recipients.

C. Other Supports

For those whose employment is hampered significantly due to the social reasons such as discrimination issues, and other people, public human resources development facilities will make efforts to conduct effective vocational training in close collaboration with employment security organizations in order to secure employment opportunities for such people and stabilize their working life.

(3) Improvement of the Human Resources Development Conditions for Part-Time Workers, Temporarily Dispatched Agency Workers, etc.

The number of people who does not have sufficient human resources development opportunities is increasing, associated with diversification of working styles. If this situation is ignored, the vocational capabilities of such people will neither be developed nor enhanced sufficiently and sustainable career development will be difficult to attain.

To address this issue, for example, clarification of the positions of part-time workers, etc. in enterprises’ human resources development plans and support such as consultations and assistance by career consultants in or outside the company will be

promoted, according to the actual situation of each enterprise, to promote provision of well-balanced human resources development opportunities within enterprises.

Furthermore, as part of the measures to improve the labor market infrastructure, establishment of training courses that consider the needs of part-time workers, etc. provision of information on training utilizing e-learning, etc., collection and provision to enterprises of information on good practices, and collaboration, etc. with organizations encouraging related support will be promoted.

With regard to temporarily dispatched agency workers, from the perspective of their sustainable career development, human resources development efforts by employers, cooperation, etc. by companies supplied with the labor of temporarily dispatched agency workers in the voluntary vocational capability development and enhancement of temporarily dispatched agency workers, and voluntary efforts by industrial groups, etc., in the area of vocational capability evaluation will be promoted.

In addition, it will be necessary for the national government to recognize the specific actual working conditions and human resources development needs of “non-permanent employees” and to consider taking carefully-crafted measures because the needs of workers and enterprises vary.

3. Promotion of Human Resources Development in Response to Employment/Unemployment Situations as well as Industrial Trends

(1) Human Resources Development in Response to Employment/Unemployment Situations

In order to respond to employment/unemployment situations and changes in labor supply and demand appropriately, quick and smooth reemployment of those who were forced to discontinue their career due to business restructuring or obsolescence, etc. of techniques, skills, etc. will be promoted by providing consistent reemployment support for trainees through further reinforcement of collaboration between public vocational training and employment security organizations as an social safety net.

Such vocational training will be provided flexibly according to local employment/unemployment situations, etc. and quick, appropriate measures will be taken when there are a large number of displaced workers.

(2) Human Resources Development in Response to Industrial Trends, etc.

In order to respond to industrial trends, technological innovations, diversification of job-seekers' needs, etc., vocational training course setup will be promoted, based on industry-based changes in human resources needs.

The manufacturing industry is the core industry supporting the competitiveness of Japan's industry, and it is the national government's important political challenge to have public human resources development facilities provide support for development of human resources who will take charge of the field operations of this industrial area, chiefly for small- and medium-sized enterprises which have difficulty in taking human resources development measures on their own.

In implementing vocational training, in particular, provision of practical vocational capabilities and sophistication, combination, etc. of vocational training contents, including improvements of basic techniques and skills, will be promoted, based on the recent trends in the manufacturing industry, such as automation and promotion of efficiency in production processes including manufacturing lines and machine tools, production of higher-value-added products, requirements for techniques and skills that can cope with multiple processes including design, processing, production and quality management of products, and combinations of machinery, electronics, IT technology, etc.

In addition, with regard to the information and telecommunications industry, the service industry, and others, it is expected that efforts for energy conservation and productivity improvements taking advantage of the latest technology will be promoted. Therefore, for human resources development in these industries, it will be necessary to provide support for application of new technologies including advanced telecommunications technologies in the manufacturing field and to develop human resources who can handle new technologies.

In response to sophistication and diversification of human resources needs, training commissioned to a wide range of private educational/training institutions including colleges and graduate schools will be taken advantage of actively, practical vocational training incorporating training at enterprises will be provided, and quality of commissioned training will be improved through providing commission expenses based on employment results of those who completed training and other measures.

Furthermore, vocational training needed in IT-related human resources development, which is required in a number of fields, and human resources development, etc. in the

field of nursing care, where labor demand is increasing along with the progress in aging, will be promoted actively.

In order to promote human resources development responding to industrial trends and employment/unemployment situations appropriately, vocational training courses will be reviewed flexibly, based on understanding and analysis of human resources needs in local communities.

4. Reinforcement of “On-Field Excellence” and Inheritance and Promotion of Skills

(1) Human Resources Development to Strengthen “On-Field Excellence”

Comprehensive efforts will be promoted to develop and secure the “on-field excellence” which is essential for production of high value-added products and provision of high-quality services serving as the basis of Japan’s industrial competitiveness and also to develop and secure human resources to support the “on-field excellence.”

Specifically, effective OFF-JT, etc. will be promoted through the “Practical Human Resources Development System” based on the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law, the Career Development Promotion Grants, provision of information related to external education and training institutions, etc.

In addition, support for employers will be provided in public vocational training programs, chiefly targeting for mid-level workers who carry the backbone of enterprises, such as conducting tailor-made training to expand vocational capabilities related to production management, safety management, etc. sending instructors, making facilities and equipment available, etc. Furthermore, for small- and medium-sized enterprises, etc., chiefly those in the manufacturing industry having difficulty in conducting training on their own, opportunities for vocational training which are difficult to provide at private education and training institutions will be available.

Under the authorized vocational training system, human resources development is promoted at authorized vocational training colleges for large enterprises and at authorized vocational training centers for small- and medium-sized enterprises. This system will be reviewed when necessary, and disseminated as a system contributing to development and securing human resources who will take a core part in field operations.

Furthermore, in order to recruit human resources by creating attractive workplaces and operating sites, small- and medium-sized enterprises making efforts to improve the labor environment will be encouraged to take advantage of financial, recruiting, and other support systems, and political consideration will be given to promote duty-based skills evaluation and human resources development of part-time workers, temporarily dispatched agency workers, etc.

(2) Policy Measures for Inheritance and Skills Development

In order to promote smooth inheritance of skills, it is necessary to clarify techniques, skills, etc. to be inherited, promote to inherit the techniques, skills, etc. to mid-level workers by extending retirement age or retention, etc. of baby boomers, etc., and take human resources development measures, such as assignment of young workers to manufacturing sites for development of their skills, as well as development of “non-permanent employees” into multi-skilled workers, in an integrated manner.

Based on this, organized management, provision, etc. of skills will be promoted as an effort of employers to promote acquisition of techniques, skills, etc. by workers, based on the Amended Human Resources Development Promotion Law. In addition, a liaison will be set up to provide information, consultations and assistance on skills inheritance, know-how related to recruiting/retention and education/training will be provided, and financial support measures will be reinforced.

In light of recent networking among small- and medium-sized enterprises and the progressing trend of clustering, etc. between industry and the academia, the government will take active human resources development measures in collaboration with concerned government agencies, groups, etc. including creation of opportunities for techniques, skills, etc. partnership between public human resources development facilities and enterprises.

(3) Measures to Promote Skills (Skills Competition, etc.)

In order to promote understanding of the importance of skills among each class of society and enhance social evaluation and skill levels of skilled workers, chiefly in the field of manufacturing, it is necessary to facilitate skills promotion measures actively. In particular, it is necessary to develop an environment where young people who will lead

the next generation have interests in manufacturing site requiring skills and learn skills spontaneously.

In order to respond to the issues and promote interests in skills and manufacturing among young people, opportunities for children to learn the attractiveness of skills and manufacturing at an earlier educational stage will be created in collaboration with concerned organizations such as educational institutions.

Also, opportunities for young people to set their own goals and compete with each other over their skills will be increased, and at the same time, skills will be promoted through public relations and information dissemination concerning a variety of skills competitions, as well as through observing these competitions.

During the duration of the Eighth Basic Plan, in particular, the “International Skills Festival for ALL, Japan 2007” will be held in Shizuoka in 2007, where the “World Skills Competition” and the “International Abilitylympic” will be held concurrently for the first time. Public relations and information dissemination concerning the festival will be promoted, and active skills promotion measures, etc. will be taken, such as creating a spirit of respecting skills in Japan, taking advantage of this opportunity.

In addition, efforts of sending highly skilled workers, etc. to industrial high schools, etc. and other efforts will be promoted. Furthermore, career models of highly skilled workers will be presented and disseminated for encouragement, through presentation, etc. of career of winners of skills competitions, etc. and enterprises’ various awarding systems for highly skilled workers will be presented and disseminated.

5. Creation of Community-based Activities and Reinforcement of Educational Function

As described in Section 4 (2) of Chapter 3, local communities were traditionally the place where people in the different generations interacted with each other through a variety of community-based activities, and young people learned social skills and communication abilities to become independent adults, providing elderly people with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities.

It is expected that local communities will resume these functions in the future through revitalization of a variety of community-based activities.

Human resources development measures taken previously in the field of community-based activities include the followings.

- (1) “Workers’ Multi-Life Support Project” which provides information, consultations, training, activity programs, etc. in the field of community-based activities aimed that workers broadening their horizons and utilizing the activities to find post-retirement work for a meaningful life through participation during their career in social activities in which they are interested
- (2) Training programs which are commissioned to NPOs, etc. designed to provide job-seekers with knowledge and skills required to establish an NPO or to be employed by an NPO
- (3) “Community Business Support Concentration Model Project” is designed for middle-aged people, elderly people, young people, full-time homemakers, etc. to achieve self-fulfillment and revitalize local communities, through founding companies, creating employment, and making social participation related to community businesses

With regard to these projects in the field of community-based activities, it will be necessary to consider their integration and establish community-based activities in a phased manner from the perspectives such as the followings;

- (1) Reinforcement of measures to accept a wide range of human resources including baby boomers, etc.
- (2) Improvement of a system to accept young people and disabled persons in training
- (3) Building a one-stop mechanism to provide a variety of services in collaboration with local municipalities, etc.

In the promotion of these programs, local enterprises play a major role, in addition to personnel from local municipalities, NPOs, public interest corporations, etc.

In addition, in the present times when the role of family and home is questioned, it is also important to promote creation of a family environment to develop human resources

by reinforcing, etc, consultations, guidance and advice for parents of NEETs and enhancing measures for the work-life balance which are taken by enterprises.

6. Internationalization and Human Resources Development

(1) International Cooperation for High-Quality Human Resources Development

Developing countries are increasingly stressing human resources development in recent years to strengthen the international competitiveness of their industries in response to globalization. Considering this trend, in future international cooperation, cooperation according to economic growth stages of each country will be implemented efficiently and effectively, with a focus on establishment of a system to develop and secure human resources to serve as the foundation of economic growth.

Specifically, the following measures will be taken.

- A. In order to develop and secure a high-quality labor force with a focus on East Asian countries with which Japan is in a state of expanding, deepening economic interdependence, cooperation for the establishment and improvement of a skills evaluation system will be implemented, and active support will be provided to develop and secure leaders at private manufacturing sites, in collaboration with Japanese enterprises through programs such as the “Skills Evaluation System Promotion Program.”
- B. With regard to technical cooperation in the field of human resources development as well, collaboration with industrial groups, etc. in the partner countries will be promoted proactively in the process of technical cooperation, and political advice related to human resources development and vocational capability evaluation systems, as well as human resources development in the government of the partner countries, will be stressed in order to enhance self-sustained expansibility after completion of technical cooperation. In addition, in order to develop instructors of vocational training, etc. in developing countries, acceptance of students from these developing countries to the Human Resources Development Universities will be promoted progressively.
- C. In international cooperation through international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), etc., contributions to the international society will be made by introducing

advantages and operational know-how of Japanese systems, which have long-standing successful results, to help the human resources development systems of each country function effectively.

(2) Foreign Trade Skill Training and Technical Intern training Program

Based on the purpose of contributing to economic growth of developing countries through transfer of skills, etc., appropriate use and review of the systems will be considered. Specifically, the following measures will be taken.

- A. Considering the fact that there are some problematic cases in Japan, such as nonpayment for training expenses, inappropriate off-duty training, etc. during training periods, nonpayment of wages, etc. during periods of the Technical Intern Training Program, and abscondence during training periods and periods of the Technical Intern Training Program, legal protection, etc. related to practical vocational training will be considered, and measures to prevent these incidents will be taken through dissemination of the system, implementation of effective, appropriate guidance through visitation, etc.
- B. Considering the fact that developing countries which send trainees are requesting Japan to expand the range of occupations covered by the Technical Intern Training Program due to the skills transfer needs, etc. of these countries, and also considering other conditions, occupations covered by the program under training and technical cooperation will be reviewed in order to promote effective, appropriate skills transfer.
- C. Because results of the Technical Intern Training Program have not been verified sufficiently, participants will be encouraged to take skills tests, etc. upon completion of the program, etc. and follow-up for the program participants after returning home will be conducted as much as possible to verify program results.

(3) Support for the Globalization of Corporate Activities

It is expected that Japanese enterprises will continue to deploy overseas business activities more actively with the progressive globalization of corporate activities, and development of workers who can take charge of international business operations in Japan and abroad and who have practical vocational capabilities becomes an urgent issue, especially in small- and medium-sized enterprises.

In order to address this issue, more effective implementation of the “Global Human Resources Development Support Program,” which provides small- and medium-sized enterprises, etc. running business abroad with human resources development opportunities to match their overseas business activities through consultations, assistance, information provision, seminars, etc. will be pursued to promote development of cosmopolitan with practical vocational capabilities.

7. Improvement of the System for Promoting Human Resources Development Measures

(1) Division of Work and Public-Private Partnership

With regard to career development and human resources development for workers, in principle, enterprises which take the primary role in business activities should conduct as an integral part of business operations.

Recently, however, the activities of human resources development provided to workers by enterprises have diversified, and there has been a striking trend toward outsourcing education and training. In addition, coupled with an increase in workers who develop and enhance their vocational capabilities voluntarily, the roles of off-company education and training service providers are becoming more important.

Major education and training service providers in the private sector include private enterprises, employer associations, public interest corporations, schools, etc. which are dividing roles according to their characteristics, service levels and prices.

On the other hand, the major roles of the public sector are as follows:

- A. Support for those who have difficulty in taking human resources development measures for workers on their own, such as small- and medium-sized enterprises, etc.
- B. Development of private education and training service providers so that they can provide education and training services in response to needs of enterprises and workers, making the most of their own characteristics
- C. Conducting of vocational training in the fields where human resources development measures are needed from a national perspective, considering the

enormous training costs in relation to training effect, especially in the manufacturing fields, etc.

- D. Conducting of vocational training, etc. aimed at early employment of displaced workers and vocational independence of the disabled, single mothers, welfare recipients, etc. and establishment of the basic framework of vocational training

In particular, with regard to training for displaced workers conducted as part of employment measures, the issues are promotion of consignment of training to a variety of private education and training institutions, evaluation of overall public vocational training including commissioned training based on employment rates, etc. after completion of the training, vocational training based on needs of both employers seeking workers and job-seekers, and efficiency of public vocational training and improvement of services for users.

In addition, since it is necessary to secure a variety of education and training opportunities through public-private partnership to improve the labor market infrastructures, the public sector will develop and disseminate training courses and secure education and training opportunities through coordination, etc. with training programs in the private sector, based on the role-sharing mentioned above.

(2) Promotion of Measures from the “Public” Viewpoint through Collaboration between Public and Private Sector

In order to secure sustainable career development throughout the working life of workers as described in Chapter 3, it is necessary not only to promote development and enhancement of vocational capabilities directly by conducting education and training but also to rebuild the environment to develop human resources from the public viewpoint through collaboration between public and private sector, with the involvement of enterprises, local communities and families.

Precisely, in order to promote sustainable career development of workers, not only human resources development measures taken for workers by enterprises but also efforts such as the followings need to be promoted actively.

- A. Provision to young people of a wide range of educational and training opportunities as is done in the “Japanese-style Dual System” and the “Practical Human Resources Development System”

- B. Promotion of simultaneous pursuit of child-raising/nursing care and work, consideration for the work-life balance and work-sharing

It is necessary to establish a mechanism to evaluate and support enterprises making such efforts, through collaboration between public and private sector.

In addition, in order to rebuild the capacities of human resources development of local communities, collaboration between public interest groups, including local municipalities and local NPOs, and enterprises, as well as support by the national government, etc. as needed, is indispensable. Specifically, the support should be made for development of human resources who will take major roles in community-based activities, data collection and supply, improvement of work environments, etc. under the lead of local municipalities, in collaboration with concerned groups and under the support of the government, etc.

It is also desirable that enterprises give their workers leaves for volunteer works, give consideration to work hours, and cooperate with local administration as a contributing component of a local community.

(3) Division of Work and Collaboration between the National Government and Local Municipalities

Human resources development measures of the national government and local municipalities have different roles as described below, so it is necessary to promote measures based on the difference.

From the perspective of taking employment measures, the government conducts vocational training designed for early reemployment of displaced workers as safety net measures, develops and disseminates high-level/advanced vocational training, and conducts such training.

On the other hand, local municipalities are expected to assume the role of promoting human resources development in accordance with actual conditions of local communities, including an understanding of the details of human resources needs and vocational training needs of local industries and conducting vocational training responding to these needs, and to make efforts to create and stabilize employment, integrating their industrial and welfare measures and collaborating with concerned organizations.

In order to promote effective human resources development measures, based on the division of work between the national government and local municipalities, both parties closely collaborate with each other and arrange the necessary coordination for establishment of vocational training courses, etc.

In the area of human resources development measures for young people, disabled persons, single mothers, welfare recipients, etc. in particular, vocational independence of such people in local communities will be promoted through such measures as promoting collaboration not only with prefectural governments but also with local municipalities.

(4) Partnership among Other Related Measures

In promoting a wide range of career development support measures in the future, collaboration among related measures will be reinforced as follows:

First, human resources development measures form a part of employment measures, coupled with employment security measures, and close coordination between these measures is necessary. Therefore, public human resources development facilities will conduct vocational training responding appropriately to employment/unemployment situations and labor supply and demand, and in conducting vocational training, will further improve services which are consistent from training to reemployment according to trainees' situations, collaborating with related organizations such as employment security offices, local enterprises and social welfare organizations, as an organization responsible for the employment safety net.

Second, the following points will be promoted selectively in order to implement career development support measures for all workers throughout their working life.

- A. Raising awareness of professionalism, implementation of internships, and coordination with measures for NEETs and young Freeters, educational policies related to support for career development of young people such as the "Practical Human Resources Development System," and industrial policies
- B. Coordination with educational policies for taking advantage of high-level, practical education provided by colleges, graduate schools, etc.

- C. Coordination with related policies such as educational, welfare and medical measures, in implementing human resources development aimed at vocational independence of the disabled, single mothers, welfare recipients, etc.
- D. Coordination with industrial policies, etc. to promote career development support measures for those who hope to start their own business or shift from employment to self-employment, etc.

Third, in order to promote sustainable career development throughout working life, it is important to reinforce the educational function of families and local communities for young people, disseminate working styles according to physical strength and capabilities of elderly people, create opportunities for elderly people to demonstrate their capabilities in local communities, etc. For this purpose, promoting cooperation and collaboration with local municipalities, etc. is essential.

For implementing the above measures, promotion of measures through collaboration between public and private sector is a prerequisite, and the roles of a number of groups including cross-enterprise labor unions and employer associations are important.

(5) Promotion of Effective Measures through Policy Evaluation

Policy evaluation is assumed to be conducted based on the “Government Agencies Policy Evaluation Law” (2001 Law No. 86) in order to implement policies efficiently and effectively. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare also conducts policy evaluation for each human resources development measure, based on the “Basic Plan concerning Policy Evaluation by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare” stipulated based on the Law.

In implementing the policy evaluation, programs will be reviewed, including review, etc. of establishment of individual training courses, based on use of measures in each program, user needs, etc., in order to take more efficient and effective measures, while improving the data collection system needed to verify programs.

The goals of human resources development policies implemented as the Three Employment Insurance Projects are managed using the so-called “PDCA Cycle” management method. Efforts will be made to implement overall human resources development measures more efficiently and effectively, considering this method.

(6) Public Relations and Information Dissemination of the Policy Measures

Information on human resources development includes not only information on laws and regulations and vocational capability evaluation systems but also various information such as information on courses available at the facilities for human resources development, a variety of support policies such as grant programs, locations of contact points to obtain the information, etc. and good practices on the use of support policies. So far, public relations and information dissemination on human resources development measures have been implemented at events conducted chiefly during the “Human Resources Development Promotion Month,” set in every November, and the “Trade Skill Day” held on November 10, as well as by producing posters and leaflets for each measure, using websites, etc.

In order to raise awareness and deepen understanding about human resources development measures and promote the use of systems and a variety of support measures, it is important to provide enterprises and workers with various information on measures in an easily-accessible manner, in addition to actively using skills competitions such as the “International Skills Festival for All, Japan 2007” to be held in Shizuoka in 2007.

For this purpose, basic information on human resources development measures will be organized, and public relations and information dissemination on these measures will be implemented, with consideration for diverse situations in order to broadly distribute the information among target people, including information for use of contact points to obtain the information.

In doing this, efforts will be made for effective public relations and information dissemination, by obtaining cooperation from concerned parties, etc. including not only the national government and local municipalities but also labor unions, employer associations, professional organizations, NPOs, etc.

Further information: Planning Section, General Affairs Division, Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Extension: 5313)

ⁱ Those who have graduated and are aged between 15 and 34, i) those currently in work defined as employed people, and ii) people currently not engaged in work as those who neither do housework, nor attend school, and who wish to do part-time work.