

MHLW HRD Information (November 2015 / 33rd issue)

1 Report on “The Workshop on Skills Evaluation Method”

This year from October 19 to 26, “Workshop on Skills Evaluation Method” was held in Japan. The main venue was Makuhari International Training Center in Chiba prefecture. This workshop was an activity conducted under “Skills Evaluation System Promotion Program (SESPP)” by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan with support from Japan Vocational Ability Development Association (JAVADA). The objective of SESPP is to provide know-how on making skill standards and conducting trade skills test, which has been nurtured in Japan over the past 50 years, thus improving the skills evaluation system in Asian countries. Currently SESPP is being carried out for seven countries (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam).

This year, 14 persons in charge of developing skill standards and making test questions were invited to this eight-day workshop from Cambodia, India, Laos and Myanmar. The workshop dealt two job trades; ‘Electric Equipment Assembly’ and ‘Plaster Work’ and was composed of various activities including lectures from experts, study visits, action plan making exercises and report presentations.

The workshop provided comprehensive knowledge. The participants learned the overview of Japanese skills evaluation system (trade skills test and skills competition), skill requirements for each job trade, practical and theoretical test questions which were actually used in Japan, marking criteria for practical test, and guidance on how to make practical and theoretical test questions.

The lectures as well as many other activities were conducted separately for each job trade. For example, the group of ‘Electric Equipment Assembly’ visited Toshiba Corporation’s Fuchu Complex, a complex of factories which manufactures electrical products and systems. On the other hand, the group of ‘Plaster Work’ visited a plaster work company called Harada Sakan Co., Ltd. At this company, the group saw a demonstration of plastering techniques which are used in the practical test of Japanese trade skills test.

On the last day, the participants made action plans based on the knowledge acquired during the workshop. Each action plan outlined a pilot skills test which they are going to hold in the future under SESPP. Practical and theoretical test questions which will be used in the pilot skill test were also outlined in each action plan.

Trade skills testing system is an effective tool for objective evaluation and promotion of workers' skills, hence leading to the enhancement of their status. Therefore, MHLW hopes that the participants will utilize the knowledge obtained from the workshop to improve the skill evaluation system in their countries. MHLW also wishes that the countries supported under SESPP would introduce a Japanese-style national trade skills test to their skill evaluation systems.

Opening ceremony



Site visit to Toshiba Corporation's Fuchu Complex



Site visit to Harada Sakan Corporation



Lecture scene from Electric Equipment Assembly



2 Enactment of Youth Employment Promotion Act and Revision of Human Resources

Development Promotion Act

(1) Introduction

In order to promote youth employment and create an environment which enables them to fulfill their potential, the Government of Japan decided to take comprehensive measures which help young people to choose right professions and to improve their

vocational abilities. For this purpose, the “Act for Revision of Acts including Working Youth Welfare Act” was promulgated on September 18, 2015.

Regarding the contents of the revision, there are two major points. The first one is that the title of the act “Working Youth Welfare Act” was converted into “Youth Employment Promotion Act” and the content of the act was drastically revised. In order to help young people to choose right professions, the new act specifies measures including establishment of a mechanism in which companies recruiting school graduates are required to provide them with information on “recruitment situation of young workers”, “how the company promotes human resources development” and “how the company supports young employees to retain their jobs”. The second point is the revision of the “Human Resources Development Promotion Act”, which was intended to promote the improvement of vocational abilities of workers, particularly, those of young workers. The revised act have new provisions such as establishment of a registration system for career consultants, who support workers to develop vocational life plans, dissemination of Job-Card (a card which compiles each worker’s work experiences) and revision of the way to conduct practical examinations of National Trade Skills Testing System.

The background to the revision of the acts and the summary of revised articles related to HRD are explained as follows.

(2) Situation which young people are facing and road to the adoption of the amendatory bill

In Japan, job opening-to-application ratio for school graduates and percentage of school graduates who found work are picking up. Taking this fact into consideration, the current overall employment environment which surrounds Japanese young people is improving.

However, turnover of new school graduates after they are hired for three years is about 30% for college/university graduates and about 40% for high school graduates. In addition, rate of workers who are aged between 15 and 34 and involuntarily engaged in non-regular employment is about 23%, which is higher than the rate of other age groups. Moreover, there is a problem of companies which exploit young employees. Therefore, challenges still exist in the employment environment surrounding young people.

Furthermore, at a time when the labor force is shrinking because of the falling birth rate and the aging population, it is becoming more important to create an environment which enables young people to fulfill their potential, because they are valuable assets who lead the future society.

In response to this situation, youth employment measures were elaborated in the Japan Revitalization Strategy (Revised in 2014), a growth strategy adopted by the Cabinet on June 24, 2014. The strategy stated that “to ensure that youth employment measures covering the preparatory stages of finding employment, job-seeking activities, and career development after being hired are promoted throughout society, the Government would aim to submit the relevant bill to the Diet session where legislation needs to be established to achieve this”. After the adoption of the strategy by the Cabinet, the bill was discussed at Labour Policy Council of MHLW and then Diet sessions, and finally adopted by the Diet on September 11, 2015.

(3) Summary of revised articles related to HRD

a. Revision of the “Working Youth Welfare Act”

(a) Conversion of the title

The title of the act “Working Youth Welfare Act” was converted into “Youth Employment Promotion Act”. The purpose of the act was also changed to enable young people to fulfill their potential through employment promotion by taking comprehensive measures which help young people to choose right professions and to improve their vocational abilities, so that welfare of young people will be enhanced as well as economy and society. (Article 1)

(b) Measures to promote vocational independence (ex. vocational training)

The revised act specifies that the Government (central government), in collaboration with local governments and other relevant partners, shall strive to take necessary measures in comprehensive and effective manners for young people, such as promotion of vocational training, promotion of utilization of National Trade Skills Tests, provision of counselling by career consultants, and promotion of a work sheet which compiles each worker’s work experiences. (Article 21)

It also specifies that as measures to promote vocational independence, the Government shall strive to take necessary measures for young people who do not

engage in employment, education or vocational training and have difficulties to have a smooth vocational life, such as provision concerning consultations on choice of right professions and other vocational issues. In addition, the revised act specifies preparation of institutions which support vocational independence of such young people. (Article 23)

b. Revision of the “Human Resources Development Promotion Act”

(a) Promotion of a work sheet which compiles each worker’s work experiences (Job-Card)

The new article 15-4 is a provision on the promotion of a work sheet which compiles each worker’s work experiences (Job-Card). Job-Card shows how the worker improved his or her vocational abilities.

This article was created because, in order to promote workers’ voluntary efforts to improve their own vocational abilities, it was considered necessary that workers’ vocational abilities are clearly identified, and based on this identification the workers improve their own vocational abilities throughout their lives.

This article was created to specify the template of a work sheet and disseminate it on a long time basis in a stable manner, as a mechanism to help workers to develop their vocational life plans based on the work experiences and vocational abilities and improve their vocational abilities according to the plans.

(b) Establishment of a registration system for career consultants

In Japan, career consultants give workers various supports, such as counselling workers on how to develop their vocational life plans and how to develop their vocational abilities. New articles were made to give a legal status to this qualification “career consultant” and specify other matters including the examination for them.

Due to changes in industrial structures and advancement of technological innovation, only depending on employers’ efforts for human resources development is not enough for workers. It has become more important for workers themselves to develop vocational life plans and improve vocational abilities. In this context, the importance of career consultants, who support workers to develop their vocational life plans, has been more widely recognized and career consultants have been more

widely utilized. On the other hand, there was neither a clear scope for supports provided by career consultants nor a legal status given to them. They were not even required to keep confidentiality obligations.

In response to this situation, the qualification “career consultant” was given a legal status, aiming to publicly certify them as those who have special knowledge and skills, and to increase the number of them in a planned manner.

New articles specify the following matters: examination for career consultants (Article 30-4), requirements to be registered as a test center which conducts examinations for career consultants (Article 30-5 to Article 30-18), registration of career consultants (Article 30-19 to Article 30-23), criteria to be designated as a registration center which register career consultants (Article 30-24 to Article 30-26), obligations of career consultants (Article 30-27), exclusive right to use the title “career consultant” (Article 30-28).

(c) Revision of National Trade Skills Testing System targeting face-to-face service sector

The revision relates to Vocational Ability Tests, which are implemented in order to enhance workers’ skills and their socio-economic status through evaluation and visualization of vocational abilities.

Section 1 of Chapter 5 specifies National Trade Skills Tests which are conducted by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, and Section 2 of Chapter 5 specifies supplementary matters related to Vocational Ability Tests which are conducted by employers and other relevant partners.

New article specifies that the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare shall establish the appropriate criteria for Vocational Ability Tests which are conducted by employers and their associations. This was intended to improve the quality of vocational ability evaluation system of the whole country by enhancing objectivity and fairness.