

Public Career Support for Immigrants in Finland: Implications for Japan

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Abstract: Japan and Finland, mostly homogeneous countries, have had an increasing number of immigrants in recent years. While Finland develops an integration system with career education and vocational training rapidly, based on 1999 legislation, Japan has just begun to realize the importance of organizing public support for immigrants. In this paper, Finland's successful integration of a public career support program is examined in the context of the Japanese multicultural coexistence society.

Infectious diseases caused by COVID-19 have the potential to cause a tremendous change in our personal and professional lives around the globe. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported COVID-19 as “the worst global crisis since the Second World War” and warned that certain groups will be disproportionately affected by the jobs crisis, which could increase inequality (ILO, 2020a, 2020b). The unemployment rate in April was 2.8% in Japan and 7.9% in Finland (Statistics Bureau, Japan, 2020; Statistics Finland, 2020a). Statistics Bureau, Japan (2020) also revealed the number of unemployed personnel was 1.95 million, 330,000 more from the same month in the previous year which suggests that the unemployment rate could exceed 4% or more by year end. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland also announced in a press release on May 27 that 184,000 employees have been laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that number is increasing rapidly. In June, there were 223,000 unemployed personnel, 47,000 more from the same month the previous year. It is not difficult to imagine that immigrants are more vulnerable to these layoffs, but neither the Japanese nor Finnish governments have counted the number of their unemployed immigrants or noted the current effect on them. Immigrants likely need more

physical, psychological, and economic support due to various risks. Career support is one of the needs of immigrants who have already been fired or are at risk of losing their job. In order to further develop a career support system for them in Japan, insights obtained from an investigation of Finnish integration law and public system was thought to be useful. In this paper, “career support” includes all career related support activities, such as career counseling and education as well as vocational education and training to support successful labor market integration and career development.

In this paper, the term “immigrant” is used to refer to any person who is born abroad and lives outside of his or her original country. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1998) defines “immigrant” from the perspective of the country of arrival, a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. From the Japanese government's perspective, the term “immigrant” means “foreign nationals who are allowed to enter Japan with permission of permanent resident status at the time of entering” (Policy Research Council of Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, 2016, p. 2).

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This paper provides an overview of Japanese and Finnish history as countries accepting immigration, and public career support for the immigrants from the perspective of legislation and public system; suggestions for further development of public career support in Japan will be introduced in the end.

The Significance of Study – Why Finland?

Even though the number of foreign residents who live in Japan is the highest ever recorded, the Japanese government keeps its attitude, “no immigrant has been allowed to enter our country.” A major change was made when a new residence status “Specified Skilled Worker” started to accept semi-skilled and skilled foreign workers in April 2019 due to an amendment to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Immigration Act). A maximum of 345,000 specified skilled workers are expected to come within the next five years, and 3,987 have been permitted as of March 2020 (Ministry of Justice, Japan [MOJ], 2020a). Along with the establishment of this status, “Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals” was released as a kind of social integration policy (MOJ, 2018).

The “integration policy” generally means a governmental policy to support social participation of the immigrants. Despite MOJ overseeing integration for immigrants, there is no official definition for “integration” in Japan. Instead, the word “multicultural coexistence” or “TABUNKA-KYOSEI” in Japanese has been commonly used for the same meaning. It is defined as “the society or the societal situation in which our culture shares common values with other cultures, then we can feel the symbiotic social condition without any kind of violence” in the “Plan for Promotion of Multicultural Coexistence in the Regional Area” announced by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan. In addition to the Immigration Act, enactment of the “Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education” is

expected to improve effective language support, targeting children and workers from abroad as of April 2019.

For planning future career support for immigrants in Japan, it is useful to examine the implementation of immigrant career support in Finland. Finland has adapted a multicultural integration policy which is close to the idea of Japanese multicultural coexistence policy (Kondo, 2019). Compared to other European Union (EU) countries, Finland has a lower rate of foreigners but recent rapid establishment of integration policies based on legislation; therefore, it seems to provide a useful example for Japan. There are three reasons why research on Finland should be conducted. First, Finland has earned top evaluations on international indicators regarding immigration and integration policy. For example, Finland earned 4th place among 38 countries on the “Migrant Integration Policy Index” (MIPEX) which assessed public policy for immigrants, led by Migrant Policy Group, EU and 38 other countries in the world (Migration Policy Group, 2015) (see Table 1). Another indicator which showed the effectiveness of Finland’s implementations is the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2020). It showed Finland as 1st place in happiness for three consecutive years for both foreign born and Finnish native-born persons. Second, there is not much research on career support for immigrants in Finland or Japan. There has been research on Finnish education and social welfare but few on immigrants’ integration and career support. Numaguchi (2017) indicated Finnish vocational education and training, but no mention of career support for the immigrants. The reason for fewer studies is because Finland is thought to be late in developing the integration legislation and public system compared to other countries such as France, Germany, and Sweden where a greater number of immigrants have historically been accepted. Third, social and cultural circumstances of immigrants in Japan and Finland have many similarities. Among EU

countries, Finland has a relatively low rate of foreign-born people, about 6 %, and ethnic homogeneity is thought to be as high as Japan. Additionally, Finland's total fertility rate, 1.35%, and Japan's, 1.42%, are almost the same (Statistics Finland, 2020b; Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare of Japan [MHLW], 2019). For aging rate (population over age 65), Finland's is 22.1% of the total population, 4th place out of 201 countries in the world, and Japan's is 28.4%, 1st place (UN, 2019a). The ratio of the working age population (from 15 to 64 years of age) is 62.2% in Finland and 59.5% in Japan (Statistics Finland, 2019; Statistics Bureau, Japan, 2020b). As introduced above, there are strong reasons for a deeper investigation into Finland for possible implications for Japan.

Immigrants in Japan

Japan used to be a country of emigration, sending citizens mainly to the United States and South America. Its history as a destination for immigration began slowly in 1980s. After the "Plaza Agreement" in 1985, there was an appreciation of the Japanese yen and shortage of a labor force needed in the growing economy. In 1988, the government's "The 6th Employment Basic Plan" stipulated a new policy for foreign workers in official written form for the first time. Most foreign workers were denied protective employment opportunities for women and the elderly within Japanese society. The new policy allowed foreigners, mostly in the manufacturing industry, to work. Accepting these low skilled foreign workers was cautiously considered for its potential influence on Japanese economic activities. Shortly after the political decision was made in 1990, the revised Immigration Act came into effect. Resident statuses were enlarged from 6 to 27 types, including 16 for labor purposes. Third generation Japanese, called "Nikkeijin," mostly from Brazil, Peru, and Argentina were permitted to come to Japan under "long-term residence status" which had almost equal labor opportunities with Japanese

nationals except some occupations which required Japanese nationality.

The inflow of foreign workers continued even a couple of years after the bubble economy collapsed in 1991. In the 1990s, there were also many women from Asian countries who came to Japan as entertainers and candidates for marriage partners of Japanese men who worked in agricultural businesses in the suburbs. For technical trainees who began to work in Japan in 1993, the establishment of the "Technical Trainee" resident status finally became official by amending the Immigration Act in 2009. In 2008, under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Indonesia and Philippines, the acceptance of candidates for nurses and care workers for the elderly were decided under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, Japan (METI) . There have been 1,991 candidates accepted in 870 institutions (Cooperation for Overseas Nurses and Care Workers, 2018). For international students, the government's goal of 100,000 students in 1986, and a new goal of 300,000 more students was set in 2008.

The numbers of immigrants increased until the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers financial company in 2009. Due to a lack of Japanese language skills, most of the Nikkeijin were laid off and had a hard time finding a new job, despite MHLW's "Employment Support Project for Nikkeijin" carried out from 2009 to 2014. Moreover, for those who could not find a new job and decided to leave Japan, the "Support Program to those Unemployed of Japanese Descent Wishing to Return to Home Country" was arranged for those wishing to go back to their original countries with financial support from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011. For those who wished to leave Japan, 300,000 yen for one person and 200,000 yen for each additional family member was paid in exchange for not returning to Japan with the same residential status. There were a total of 21,675 (20,053 Brazilian, 903 Peruvian, and 719 others) who left Japan using this program.

Despite the government's effort, amending legislation and reorganizing policies for Japanese women and the elderly to participate more in the labor market, demand for more foreign labor became stronger. To tackle the serious labor shortage, foreign construction workers and shipbuilders had been invited under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, Japan from 2015 to 2022 for the Tokyo Olympics. There are other projects for medical doctors and nurses by MHLW, for housekeeper and workers in the agricultural industry by the Cabinet Office, and for workers in the manufacturing industry by METI. These projects have been carried out in addition to admitting Nikkeiji (4th Japanese descendants) from South America. To attract highly skilled professionals, "Points-based Preferential Immigration Control and Residency Management Treatment for Highly-Skilled Foreign Professionals" commenced in 2017. Furthermore, the Japanese government decided to accept a new residential status, "Specified Skilled Worker," under the "Basic Policy for Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform" which was released in June 2018. The industries the policy is able to affect all suffer from a labor shortage, these are: nursing businesses, building cleaning, the material industry, industrial machinery manufacturing, electrical and electronic information related industries, construction, shipbuilding and marine related industry, automobile maintenance, aviation, accommodation, agriculture, fishery, food and beverage manufacturing, and the restaurant business.

Statistical Data of Immigrants in Japan

Currently, there are 2,933,137 foreign residents living in Japan, the highest number ever recorded (MOJ, 2020b). As shown in Figure 1, most people come to Japan for work purposes. By gender, 1,445,799 men (49.3%) and 1,487,338 women (50.7%) came from 195 nationalities and regions. A remarkable increase is 371,755 from Vietnam (12.4% increase from

the previous year) and 61,051 from Indonesia (8.4% increase from the previous year). There are 312,214 international students (4.4% increase from the previous year) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, Japan, 2020). International students are mostly from China, Vietnam, and Nepal. Among 10,375 asylum applicants, 44 of them are recognized as refugees, and 37 are not recognized as refugees but have been granted residence permission for humanitarian reasons (MOJ, 2020c).

Public Career Support for Immigrants in Japan

In general, career consulting officially began when a career support system was instituted as a means of social infrastructure for a more effective labor market as part of the government's "The 7th Basic Plan for Vocational Competency Development," which was announced in May 2001 (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2018). As the "Act on Vocational Ability Development Promotion" was amended in 2016, "career consultant" and "career consulting" were stipulated as requiring a national license. There are national policies promoted by MHLW for the purpose of career support called "Stress Check Program," "Self-Career Dock," and "Job Card Project." For children in elementary through high school, "Career Passport" was just initiated on April 2020 by NEXT. Also, the "Occupational Information Network" (O-NET), which was designed based on O-NET in the U.S., began in March 2019 for all people, including students and employers.

In Japan, most labor laws, including the "Labor Standards Act" and the "Human Resources Development Promotion Law," applies to all workers regardless of nationality. Nogawa (2004) stated that "the Principle of Equality of Treatment of Nationals and Non-Nationals on International Human Rights Agreements" has already been achieved in Japan. However, questions remain. Do the

immigrants have access to information regarding career support? Do they even know that the public employment office provides career consulting and vocational trainings?

There are 544 Public Employment Offices called “Hello Work” throughout the country and three employment service centers for foreigners in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. For those who have long-term resident status or are international students with labor permission, various career services and trainings are available. According to the Employment Security Bureau (ESB) (2020), for those who have long-term resident status, “Training Course for Promoting Stable Employment of Foreign Residents” is available, which contains a Japanese language course, an employment preparation lecture, and a workplace visit. This program has been continued from “Employment Support Project for Nikkeijin” and currently one of the General Incorporated Foundations, Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), has overseen the operation. Additionally, there are 129 interpreters, 243 counselors specialized in needs of foreign workers, five one-stop service centers, and a multilingual contact center with installation of telephone interpretation in 11 languages within Hello Work nationwide.

For international students, the ESB focuses on matching services through their nationwide network, and arranging internships in collaboration with universities for smooth integration into the Japanese labor market after graduation. For technical trainees and specified skilled workers, Japan International Trainee & Skilled Worker Cooperation Organization (JITCO) provides a comprehensive support and training program for individuals and employers as well as free guidebooks in several languages for safety, mental health, and physical health on their website. For refugees, more organized measures have been carried out. Japanese language education and employment service support has been implemented as “Settlement Support Program” since 2003. Since it began in 2010 for treaty refugees and their families, and

resettled refugees, 27 refugees from five families from Myanmar have participated in this program. Japanese language education, social system, culture, and health care guidance, as well as employment training were given.

Immigrants in Finland

During World War Two, Finland became a country people emigrated from, sending citizens largely to the United States and Sweden. Finland is a parliamentary republic that became independent in 1917 from Sweden and Russia. The population is approximately 5,510,000 (Statistics Finland, 2019), and there are two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, but only 5% speak Swedish. There are few who speak Sami or Russian. After the refugee crisis in 2015, the number of asylum applicants dropped drastically, and Finland has been shifting their focus to attracting international students, high-skill personnel, and labor immigration.

Their history as a destination for immigration began when Finland accepted Chilean refugees who fled from the Pinochet administration in 1973. Soon afterwards, about 2,500 Indochinese refugees from Vietnam were accepted. Beginning in 1986, there has been 750 quota refugees accepted every year with collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The quota refugee system stabilizes the ability of government to manage those admitted into the country each year. The State budget for each year, aliens who need international protection and are to be resettled are allocated for in the budget. (Article 90, Paragraph 2 of the Alien Law). Furthermore, when the welfare disparity between Sweden and Finland was reduced, a number of former Finnish citizens came back to Finland (Björklund, 2009). Moreover, about 20,000 Ingrian Finns returned to Finland in 1991 triggered by the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The Ingrian Finns are descendants of Finns who migrated to the territory of former Ingria region, presently around the area of Saint

Petersburg in current Russia, in the seventeenth century. Despite the Finnish government's demand that these former citizens acquire high Finnish language skill and prove legitimate blood connection to Finland, about 143,000 people were permitted Finnish residency and about 90,000 were naturalized by the end of 2008.

To deal with the increasing number of immigrants, the former President Koivisto officially announced the acceptance of returning migrants in 1990 (Nykänen et al., 2011). In 1999, a first comprehensive integration law, Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, was enacted. With this act, provisions for individualized integration plans and integration training were stated. The immigrants were required to participate in making the integration plan and assigned trainings (Sarvimäki, M. & Hämäläinen, 2010). Because of an amendment to the Nationality Act in 2003, holding multiple nationalities became legal. By enactment of the Anti-discrimination Act, discrimination against origin, nationality, language, religion, birth and blood relationship, and sexual orientation were banned with penalties (a fine and imprisonment up to six months) in 2004. The EU directives such as 2003/109/EC concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents; 2004/38/EC on the rights of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States; and 2004/114/EC on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service, also influenced the Finnish government to modify relevant Finnish provisions such as the residence permit on the Alien Act (European Migration Network, 2009).

For refugees, the Act on the Acceptance of the Person seeking International Protection was established separately from the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (Integration Act) in 2010. Based on article 34 of

the Integration Act, the Finnish government announced, "The Government Resolution on the Government Integration Programme -The Government's Focus Areas for 2012-2015." In 2013, the Ministry of Interior, Finland (MI) announced "The government resolution to the immigration of the future" and Immigration's "Immigration Strategy 2021" to support the integration of the immigrants holistically.

Statistical Data of Immigrants in Finland

In 2017, the population of Finland was about 5,510,000 and those who had a foreign background was about 380,000 (6.9 % of the total population). OECD (2019) indicated that women comprised 48.8% of the foreign-born population, and the percentage breakdown of purposes for entering Finland was 27.2% for free mobility of EU citizens, 7.8% for work purposes, 41.8% for family members (including accompanying family), and 22.9% for humanitarian efforts, as shown in Figure 1. 9,649 acquired nationality (citizenship) in 2019 (5% increase from previous year). They were originally from Russia, Estonia, Iraq, and Somalia (Statistics Finland, 2020c). Finland has accepted 750 quota refugees and will increase that quota 100 more for resettlement to 850 refugees plus 120 emergency cases beginning in 2020 (MI, 2019).

Public Career Support for Immigrants in Finland -Provisions on Integration Act

It seems the public career support for immigrants in Finland has been well organized, especially through their integration plan and training based on the Integration Act. The integration plan is defined as a personalized plan drawn up for an immigrant covering the measures of support and services, the aim of which is to support him or her in acquiring a sufficient command of the Finnish or Swedish language and other skills and knowledge required in society and working life to promote his or her opportunities to play an active role in

society as an equal member of society as per the Integration Act. Finland has emphasized a lifelong learning and individualized support based on legislation. Providing guidance counselling is mandated for students from 7 to 16 years of age based on the Basic Education Act. Therefore, it looked natural for the Finnish government to provide individual support for each immigrant. The Finnish government and public agencies are mandated to promote integration by the Integration Act. Labor integration is heavily focused as presented in Figure 2. The act applies to persons possessing a valid residence permit in Finland as referred to the Aliens Act and persons whose right of residence has been registered or who have been issued a residence card under the Aliens Act. Target of the integration plan is the immigrants who have been unemployed, currently seek a job, and receive social assistance.

Prior to making an integration plan, initial assessment is conducted to evaluate language skills, educational background, and employment history through interview and examination. It is usually conducted by an employment and economic development office or municipality. Based on the initial assessment, the integration plan is made together with the government authority and the immigrant. Finnish or Swedish language courses, advanced vocational training, and other courses that promote social, cultural, and life management skills for immigrants whose age is above compulsory education are provided as integration training. The Integration Act also states that identification of acquired skills, recognition of qualifications and degrees, and vocational planning and career guidance may be included in integration training if necessary. Under special circumstances, municipalities should work with minors who are under 18 years of age to formulate an integration plan. Additionally, unaccompanied minors and family members are also targets of the integration plan under special circumstances.

The municipality employment and economic development offices are required to monitor the implementation of the integration plan. Also, the integration plan is required to be updated at least once a year. If an immigrant refuses to participate without reasonable cause, the integration assistance will be reduced. During the participation in integration training, integration assistance stipends are paid for livelihood. The integration assistance was discontinued as of January 1st, 2015, but the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) provides a similar assistance as labor market subsidies. Any immigrants who has an integration plan, and is unemployed, can receive 33.66 euro per day (724 euro per month on average). If a person takes care of child under 18 years of age, additional financial support will be given: 5.28 euro per day for one child, 7.76 euro per day for two children, and 10.00 euro per day for three or more children (KELA, 2020).

Effectiveness and Challenges in Finland

Finland has been highly evaluated by the MIPLEX and the World Happiness Report as mentioned in the beginning of this paper. As Sarvimäki and Hämäläinen (2010; 2016) reported, the integration plan and training have a positive effect to increase employment and annual income, and reduce social security costs for the immigrants. On the other hand, OECD (2018) indicated concerns that immigrant women especially have faced more difficulties when they stay home to raise children. The same report pointed out that urgent attention should be paid to data collection and monitoring program implementation for further analysis. Furthermore, the following issues were revealed when compared with five indicators regarding successful labor integration (Keeley, 2010):

1. Language education: OCED (2018) pointed out that more than four in every five participants failed to attain the level necessary for entry into vocational training by the end of the language

courses provided under the integration training in 2016.

2. Mentoring: although there have been implementations such as Finnish Red Cross's "Friends Family program" and a NGO's "Neighbor-Mother Project," details are not easy to obtain.
3. Skills and recognition of qualifications: the Finnish Board of Education has established school degree recognition system. However, labor skills and qualifications acquired in an immigrant's original country are rarely evaluated and immigrants are more likely required to take complementary trainings.
4. Discrimination: among other EU 12 countries, Finland is the most discriminatory country especially against those from Africa (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). The result of a study showed 63% of all respondents in Finland reported that they were harassed based on racism and 14% were victims of physical violence. Akhlaq (2019) reported that the most frequently contacted from employers were Finnish men and women and the least contacted were men from Somalia from his experimental investigation in order to reveal how immigrants' names and genders impacted the job-hunting process. The OECD (2019) also pointed out that the immigrants in Finland have higher unemployment rate among other OECD member states.
5. Efforts of integration promotion made in regional area: The Integration Act made clear responsibilities for municipalities for promotion and monitoring of the integration. However, passiveness and obstacle within the municipalities have been noted (OECD, 2018). The importance of the roles of NGOs and volunteers should be recognized more to tighten cooperation between actors (The

Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2016).

From the research conducted above, it can be said that there is more to be done by the Finnish government to improve the implementation of supports to solve issues with immigrants. In the future, more investigation on career guidance along with integration legislation and policy should be carried out, as well as the individual integration plan and the training for immigrants in Finland.

Conclusion - Implications for Japan

In Finland, the government made the official decision to support immigrants for the dramatic inflow beginning in the 1990s. Career support has been emphasized within mandatory integration plans and training based on individual needs since the Reception Act was enacted in 1999. In 2018, the residence permit was extended for researchers and students to stay from 2 years to 4 years according to EU directives. Furthermore, the Alien Act was amended to stop labor market tests in order to promote smoother job changes for immigrants who were already working in Finland. However, labor rights of asylum-seeker became stricter. They are obliged to show their employer a new work certificate (fee of 50 euro) issued by the Finnish Immigration Service. The employers are also required to check the certificate at the time of hiring. In 2040, it is predicted that more than 700,000 immigrants will be residing in Finland. The New Integration Act has been under discussion in Finnish Congress and more flexible responses would need to be established in Finland to cope with the expected number of immigrants.

On the other hand, Japan has just started in 2006 to build the multicultural coexistence society. However, there is no comprehensive law on integration. Legislation and public policy for overall support for immigrants must be established in a faster manner to cope with the expected number of immigrants. From Finnish implications, the individual integration plan and

training should be expanded widely to all immigrants in Japan. For example, the Settlement Support Program should be provided to partners and children of newly entered individuals. Additionally, the integration training should be mandatory for all who need language courses and a wide variety of career support.

In 2019, international migrants in the world was estimated to be about 272 million, and the reasons for immigration were diverse (UN, 2019b). There will be more people, with varied reason who coming to and wanting to stay longer in Japan. When the unexpected happens, like the circumstances with COVID-19, the need for comprehensive policy is more evident. Japan has a public career support system and career support legislation, yet it should be organized further with the social infrastructure based on individual need, with eyes on the future, regardless of the individual's nationality in Japan. Currently, many immigrants are not aware of this system's services or their own qualification for these offerings.

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