Migration of Health Workers Under the Japan-Philippines and Japan-Indonesia EPAs: Challenges and Implications of the Japanese Training Framework

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Japan’s EPAs with Indonesia and the Philippines

- Both EPAs entered into force in 2008


- Three years of duration of stay of the Indonesian nurse candidates already expired in March 2011.
Policy Background

• Japan’s restrictive migration policy based on the Immigration Act
  --- Supporting the entry of “skilled workers” only
  --- The share of foreign nationals in Japan = 2%

• Migration scheme under EPAs
  → The migration issue is treated as a trade matter, rather than an immigration one.
  → Avoiding a difficult and complex discussion under the immigration Act
“Approving potential nurses and caregivers from Indonesia and the Philippines is not a response to the labour shortages in the health service; this training program has been agreed under the EPAs on the basis of strong requests from the two countries.”

(Website from Ministry of Health & Welfare)
### Japan's Training Framework

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nurses</th>
<th>Caregivers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>=Matching with the demand of Japanese host institutions=</td>
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<td><strong>2. Language Training</strong></td>
<td>= Six months of Japanese language training =</td>
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<td><strong>3. Training/Practice at host institutions</strong></td>
<td>Training at hospital</td>
<td>Training at caregiving institutions</td>
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<td><strong>4. National exam</strong></td>
<td>Once per year: Maximum three attempts</td>
<td>Three years of training is required before taking the exam: one chance to pass</td>
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<td><strong>Admitted to work (three-year temporary stay with renewal)</strong></td>
<td>(If fail the exam, immediate return to sending country)</td>
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1. Recruitment

• “Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services” (JICWELS) coordinates a matching process between applicants in Indonesia and the Philippines and host institutions in Japan

• The number of successful matches has declined.

(Ex.) 138 job offers from Japanese institutions
289 Indonesian applicants
→ 105 matches

→ The number of host institutions that want to accept candidates is decreasing.

→ The high costs of accepting and training the candidates borne by the Japanese host institutions.
2. Six Months of Language Training

- It turns out that the six months of language training is not sufficient to move on to practical training at hospitals and caregiving institutions and subsequently pass their exams.

- In 2011, the Japanese government began to provide an additional three to six months of language training.
3. Training at Hospitals/Caregiving Institutions

• Candidates are guaranteed at least as much payment as Japanese employees engaging in the same activities.

-- In addition, they must prepare for the national exam (+ further language study).

• Japanese host institutions bears the training costs.

--- Given that institutions differ in their available staff and financial resources, it is up to each institution how they spare time and expenses for exam preparation.
4. Exam and Afterward

- Nurse candidates took the national exam in 2009, 2010 and 2011, while the first group of caregiver candidates will be able to take their exam in 2012.

- A Cabinet decision in March 2011 --- a special arrangement that the status of candidates who arrived in 2008 and 2009 would be extended for an additional year under certain conditions.

**Nursing Exam Pass Rates:**

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>None out of 82 exam takers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Three out of 254 exam takers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16 out of 398 exam takers.</td>
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Summary

• This is not simply about trade. It is also about education, training and management.
  → importance of education and communication capacity for this type of work
• How to cover the costs borne by host institutions
  --- in order not to discourage the institutions to hire foreign candidates
  ←→ For some candidates, three to four years of work may provide sufficient economic benefits.
• It is important to motivate candidates not to leave Japan, encourage them to prepare for their exams, and improve retention in Japan
  --- also serving to build skills of candidates