

Recommendations on the Acceptance of Foreign Workers — A Proposal for a New Acceptance System —

— Executive Summary —

Amid the immense changes that are occurring in the domestic and international situation surrounding Japan, promoting the acceptance and utilization of foreign workers is essential for Japan to maintain and build a vibrant economy. The system for accepting foreign workers must be a desirable one for both Japan and the foreign workers concerned.

Accordingly, the acceptance of foreign workers must be based on the following principles:

- (1) The acceptance of foreign workers will lead to upgrading the Japanese economy and increasing its vitality.
- (2) Through their work, foreign workers can stabilize and improve their lives and at the same time fully develop and display their skills and enhance their careers.

Furthermore, in formulating an acceptance policy, it is necessary to consider (1) the social cost of accepting foreign workers and (2) the social integration that is required, because foreign workers are also members of society.

On the basis of this understanding, we make the following recommendations.

《 Main Recommendation Points 》

(1) Building a New Acceptance System

— An acceptance system that enables skill and career development through working

The key to the acceptance of foreign workers should be skills. The categories of “**highly skilled workers**” and “**specified technical workers**” should be introduced and acceptance systems established to suit each category.

1. Acceptance system for highly skilled workers

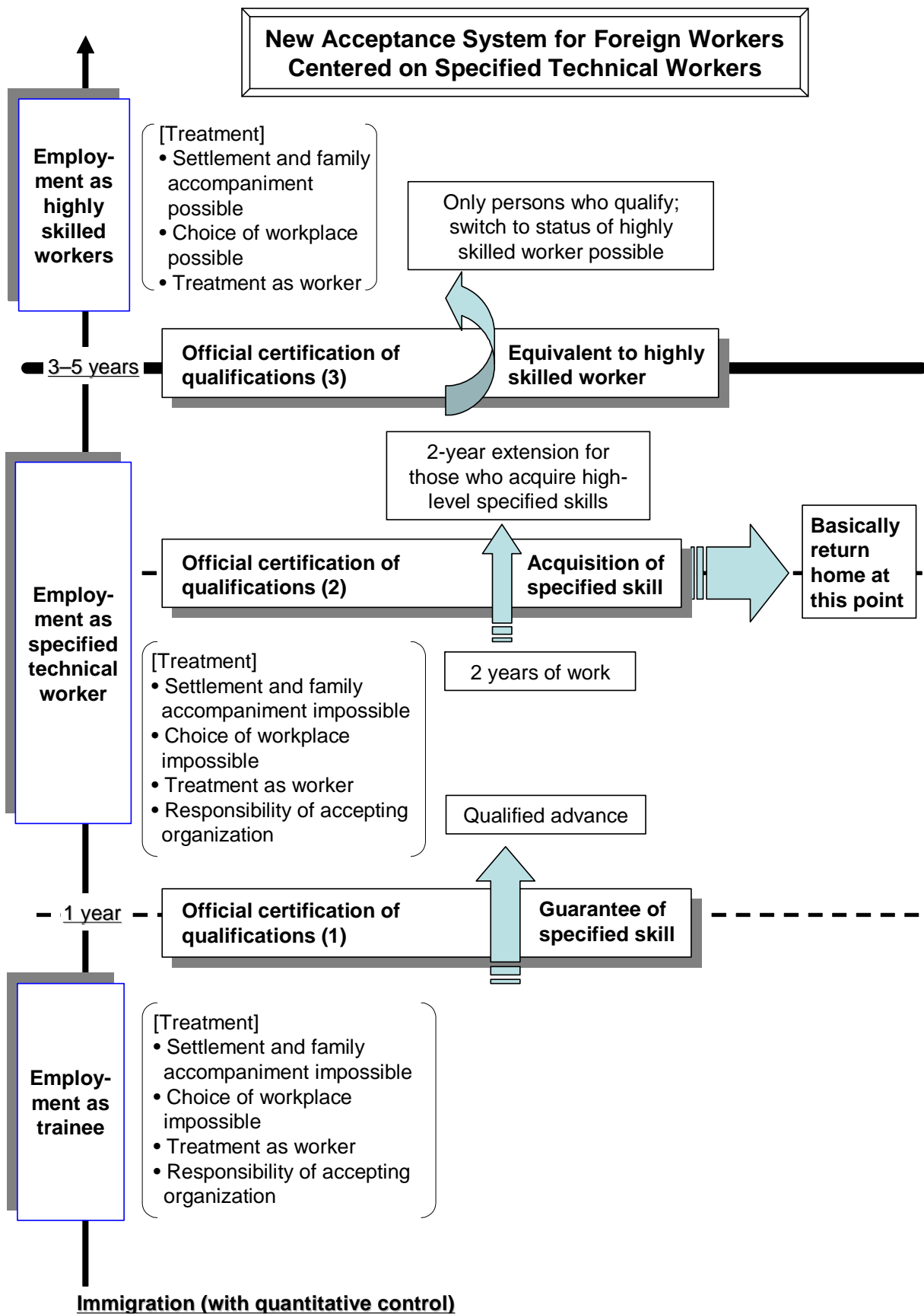
- (1) Actively accept such workers and widely permit settlement and family accompaniment.
- (2) In conjunction with this, make improvements to immigration control, such as increased flexibility in the scope of work permitted.

2. Acceptance system for specified technical workers

- (1) Establish a rotation-type setup under which such workers can develop their skills and careers while working.
- (2) Enable such workers to develop their skills and careers through stage-to-stage experience from work that does not require any special skills to work that necessitates high-level skills.
- (3) Based on the assessment of skills, permit periods of work from one to five years.

3. Switch of status from specified technical worker to highly skilled worker

Establish an acceptance system based on the principle of skill development so that, among specified technical workers, those who have notably upgraded their skills are recognized as highly skilled workers and allowed to work, etc. on a par with highly skilled workers.



(2) Policies to Support the New Acceptance System

In order to make the above-mentioned new acceptance system function, it is necessary to adopt policies relating to immigration control, residence control, the labor market and corporate employment management, and social integration as follows:

1. Immigration control and residence control

(1) The following policies are necessary regarding immigration control:

- (a) Establish conditions to make it easy for highly skilled workers to work by promoting, among other things, the extension of residence periods and increased flexibility in the scope of work responding to status of residence.
- (b) It is necessary to reconsider the status of residence system, because statuses of residence that permit work include fields that cannot really be viewed as highly skilled ones.
- (c) Since the number of foreigners entering Japan and working with a status of residence based on personal status or position is increasing rapidly, it is necessary to think of immigration control and policy toward foreign workers in a way that takes this factor into consideration.

(2) Regarding residence control, it is necessary to accurately understand the situation concerning the residence and employment of foreign workers and to improve the alien registration system in order to conduct appropriate residence control.

2. Labor market policy and corporate employment management

(1) Labor market policy

- (a) The principle should be that the working conditions of foreign workers are the same as those for domestic workers. In order to guarantee this principle, it is necessary to form a labor market setup that determines wages, etc. by work and skills.
- (b) In order to give foreign workers adequate opportunity for skill development in the new acceptance system, it is necessary to adopt policies to support the educational and training activities of the accepting companies and organizations that have direct responsibility for the skill development of foreign workers.

(2) Employment management

It is necessary for companies to improve their employment management in order to effectively utilize and fairly treat foreign workers (especially highly skilled workers) working under the new acceptance system.

3. Social integration

When thinking about policies for the acceptance of foreign workers, it is necessary to emphasize that foreign workers are not only workers but also members of society and to think about social integration policies as part of the package.

(1) Educational system

(a) Establishment of important Japanese-language education system

Improving the Japanese language ability of foreign workers is the most important condition for realizing safe and effective training and work and at the same time for promoting social integration. Therefore, it is essential to set a certain level of Japanese language proficiency as a condition for working in Japan and to improve the Japanese language education system both in Japan and overseas. Within Japan in particular, as well as the establishment of educational setups by local governments, the roles of companies in the place of employment and nonprofit organizations and others in the community are important.

(b) Necessity of improving educational system for foreign children

Furthermore, together with the settlement of foreign workers in Japan, the improvement of the educational system for their children will become important. Therefore, it will be necessary to promote multicultural education in public schools, appoint teachers to support education in foreign languages, provide supplementary education for children who cannot adapt to Japanese education, and improve local schools. In addition, in order to stimulate the enthusiasm for study among children, it will be important as a policy to compile role models showing that “if you study, you can get a wonderful career.”

(2) Social security

Regarding social security, etc., the most important thing is to ensure that foreign workers pay their taxes and subscribe to social insurance. In order to solve this issue, among other things, it will be necessary to adopt a policy making it obligatory for foreign workers to attach records of tax payments and social insurance membership when applying for renewal of their status of residence.

4. Improvement of administrative system

(1) Since the acceptance of foreign workers is related to a wide variety of policies, including ones regarding immigration control, employment and labor, social security, and education, it is necessary for the central government to promote a setup so that it can implement policies toward foreigners in a unified manner.

(2) Although the present reality is that local governments have to pay the policy costs for the social integration of foreign workers (and their families), from now on it will be necessary for the central government to strengthen its financial support.

Specific Recommendations by Category of foreign workers

1. Foreigners of Japanese Descent

《Basic Principle》

As well as eliminating discrimination against foreigners of Japanese descent because of their ancestry, both Japanese and foreigners of Japanese descent must have an attitude of being partners living and working in the same country and must make efforts toward mutual understanding and cooperation.

《Policy Direction》

(1) Immigration control and residence control

- 1) At the present time, when the path to solution of the various problems of foreigners of Japanese descent remains unclear, do not accept fourth-generation descendants of Japanese and thereafter.
- 2) Exercise the utmost caution in changing the condition of “status of residence based on personal status or position” in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.
- 3) Improve the alien registration system in order to manage appropriate residence control of foreigners of Japanese descent.

(2) Labor and employment

- 1) It is necessary to make efforts toward the normalization of employment by, among other things, ensuring subscription to social insurance.
- 2) It is necessary for their working in Japan to lead to the advancement of careers and skills. For this purpose, efforts should be made to improve corporate employment management, for example by promoting the recruitment of foreigners of Japanese descent as regular employees.

(3) Social integration

(A) Education

- 1) Centering on local governments, strengthen educational arrangements relating to Japanese language and daily living. In addition, companies at the employment level and NPOs and others at the community level should undertake educational activities.
- 2) Furthermore, the following measures should be promoted in order to improve the educational setup for the children of foreigners of Japanese descent:
 - (a) Make compulsory education the same as that for Japanese children.
 - (b) In public schools, promote multicultural education and appoint teachers to provide support in foreign languages.
 - (c) Provide supplementary education through NPOs and others for children who cannot adapt to Japanese education and establish an educational setup through “local schools.”
 - (d) In order to stimulate the enthusiasm for study among children, compile model cases of careers to show that “if you study, you can get a wonderful career.”

(B) Social security

Efforts are necessary to promote their payment of taxes and subscription to social insurance. For this purpose, it should be made obligatory for foreigners of Japanese descent to attach records of tax payments and social insurance membership when applying for renewal of their status of residence.

(4) Administrative setup

A policy response to social integration is required. Specifically, the following policies are important:

- 1) The financial burden of social integration should not be left only to local governments; the central government should strengthen its financial support.
- 2) In order to facilitate solution of the problems facing foreigners of Japanese descent, build close cooperative relations with their countries of origin.

2. Foreign Trainees and Technical Interns

《Basic Principle》

- 1) The trainee and technical intern scheme should be improved developmentally as a new acceptance system for specified technical workers.
- 2) If the present trainee and technical intern scheme is maintained, efforts should be made to solve the problem of the very poor working conditions that exist in some quarters, and the scheme should be improved in the following direction.

《Policy Direction》

(1) Immigration control

- 1) Treat trainees who engage in on-the-job training as workers in order to guarantee appropriate working conditions and establish a new status of residence to clarify that this is a type of work.
- 2) Permit an extension for further training of up to two years on condition that certain conditions are fulfilled, such as the fact that the trainee has achieved a certain technical level through the training or technical internship and the accepting organization or company is implementing the training or technical internship properly.

(2) Acceptance and control setup

Strengthen the selection and accountability of accepting organizations in order to eliminate malicious brokers and ensure appropriate training and working conditions.

(3) Training/internship and employment

- 1) In order to ensure legal protection under labor legislation and to strengthen controls on illegal practices, basically accept trainees and technical interns on the basis of an employment relationship.
- 2) In order to ensure the propriety of training and technical internship, make efforts to improve and expand the technical assessment system.
- 3) Regarding working conditions, ensure the same compensation as that of Japanese.
- 4) Since the number of accepted persons is increasing rapidly and many of them come from specific countries, in view of its impact on the domestic labor market, consideration should be made of

controlling the number of entrants through, for example, restrictions on the total number of entrants and country quotas.

(4) Administrative setup

- 1) In reviewing the system, related ministries and agencies and local governments should make concerted efforts.
- 2) Build close cooperative relations with countries of origin in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the system.

3. Highly Skilled Workers

《Basic Principle》

- 1) Amid economic globalization, the international competition to acquire highly skilled workers is intensifying. In this situation, the active utilization of foreign highly skilled workers is essential for the development of Japanese companies and industries, and conditions should be established for this purpose.
- 2) In particular, the utilization of international students as highly skilled workers is important.
- 3) In establishing conditions, it is necessary to have not only immigration and residence controls but also social living infrastructure that is attractive to highly skilled workers and to improve the employment management arrangements of companies so that foreigners also can properly develop and display their abilities and enhance their careers.

《Policy Direction》

(1) Immigration control and residence control

- 1) Maintain arrangements for the positive acceptance of highly skilled workers from now on also.
- 2) Regarding immigration control, endeavor to make such improvements as extension of the permitted period of residence, expansion and increased flexibility in the scope work permitted under a status of residence, and shortening of the work experience required for transfers within the company.

(2) Labor and employment

- 1) Employers must take the initiative in utilizing highly skilled workers and establishing the environment for that purpose.
- 2) In order to secure/maintain and effectively utilize highly skilled workers, it is necessary to reform work organization and employment management in the direction of promoting diversity management.
- 3) With regard to international students, it is necessary to (a) build an international student educational setup that conforms to the needs of industries and (b) strengthen employment support for international students.

(3) Social integration

It is necessary to promote the establishment of social living infrastructure that makes Japan an attractive country for highly skilled workers.