
Building Regional Partnerships for the Development of Human Resources

Juro Nakagawa

THE ERA OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

In the twentieth century, the world's economies were developed from resources such as land, labor, and capital. In the twenty-first century, however, the new economic drivers will be knowledge and intellectual capital. More importantly, in Northeast Asia, the growth of the Internet and information technology (IT) will have a major impact on the development of human resources for knowledge-driven ventures and businesses.

In order to maximize the efficiency of the development of human resources, businesses are going to have to make the best use of IT and computing tools as opposed to the current traditional educational tools. Within Northeast Asia, people working in small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) will have to be trained in areas of high technology, software development, and IT.

In order to train people to become highly skilled in information technology, "joint-study" teams will have to be established and set goals. This is particularly important because the regions in Northeast Asia must play an important role in developing and training human resources.

JAPAN'S ROLE AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Given its advanced IT industry and its developed market, Japan will play a leading role in training and educating small and medium-size businesses in areas such as advanced manufacturing technologies, business administration, international business, IT, and management of venture business.

In addition to official development assistance (ODA) training, on-the-job training (OJT) by the private sector will be very important. This OJT will also be supported by the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs). The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), as a vehicle for ODA implementation, should play a key role, but NGOs, NPOs, and the private sector should also have strong roles in developing human resources in the Northeast Asian region. In order to provide effective training the following may be considered:

- offering training and access to education facilities in China to participants from Mongolia, the Russian Far East, and the DPRK through the use of JICA's ODA
- using the experience and expertise of overseas Chinese in Asia
- establishing training programs in Korea
- establishing training programs using the facilities of Japanese corporations in China.

ESTABLISHING TRAINING PROGRAMS IN JAPAN

In addition to the traditional “real” training and education, it is imperative to develop a new educational system for the region—one that incorporates the use of the Internet and cyber-education. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary to secure cooperation and assistance from governments, the corporate world, international organizations such as UNESCO, academic institutions, NGOs, and NPOs.

To achieve the objectives listed above, it is necessary to set up a Joint Task Force Committee, comprising people from the countries of Northeast Asia, to work on building regional partnerships for the development of human resources in the area.

JAPAN'S EXPERIENCE

A review of Japan's educational support policy and programs and JICA's past programs may be helpful in envisioning and designing human resources training programs for Northeast Asia.

It can be said that access to education is not only a fundamental human right, but also a foundation for all forms of development. However, owing to factors such as insufficient educational budgets, inadequate numbers of qualified teachers, poverty, and disparities between men and women, many children face limited educational opportunities and are subject to unsuitable educational environments.

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee set goals for the extension of primary education throughout the world by 2015, and the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. Japan is also working to support basic education with its efforts to promote vocational institutions that meet the needs of each region and improve employment capacity. Japan's annual educational support adds up to about 25 billion yen (including 10.4 billion yen for Asia) and Japan accepts 17,902 trainees from abroad (11,818 or 66% from Asia). The target share for assistance in education is 15% of the ODA budget.

Japanese cooperation in the field of education and training focuses on the

following:

- development of science and mathematics teaching
- primary and secondary education planning
- study on regional education development projects
- education administration at the regional level
- advice for girls' education
- seminar on elementary and secondary school education
- improvement of the literacy rate.

Among the kinds of assistance Japan provides for education is grant aid for construction of education-related facilities such as school buildings, expansion of broadcast education services, and training and retraining educators. In the area of technical cooperation, JICA is the leading implementing agency. JICA dispatches experts and provides project-type technical cooperation.

The Japan-Vietnam Human Resource Development Center in Hanoi, for example, was established in October 2000 with 7 Japanese and 34 local staff. The educational programs include training in the field of business administration, Japanese language, and cultural exchange. This center may serve as a model for future centers in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. JICA is already active in Mongolia and China (see Table 1), and these programs could also be expanded.

Table 1. JICA educational and technological cooperation in Mongolia and China in 2000 (number of people)

Item	Mongolia	China
Acceptance of trainees	116	1,241
Dispatch of experts	45	104
Dispatch of peace corps	25	47

The world will look to Japan to provide even more strategic support for human resources development in developing countries. JICA has participated in cooperation in the field of education in a number of ways, beginning with the dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to primary and secondary education institutions. JICA has also been involved in the dispatch of experts to education-related agencies, the establishment of vocational programs in Japan and other countries, and project type technical cooperation directed at universities (agricultural, engineering, medical departments, etc.) and vocational schools.

Since 1990 a larger portion of Japan's grant aid has been allocated to the construction of primary schools, compared with past years when grant aid was

primarily aimed at higher education. In 1992, JICA set up an aid research committee on “development and education.” The Committee recommended that the allotment of aid toward education should be raised to about 15% of the entire ODA budget, emphasis should be placed on basic education, and cooperation should conform to the level of educational development in the partner country.

Finally, in addition to the cooperation outlined above, JICA is carrying out a program that invites young people from developing countries who work in the field of education to come to Japan for interchange with Japanese young people working in the same field.