

Revitalizing rural parts of Japan

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The Abe Cabinet has endorsed a long-term vision for Japan's population and a five-year comprehensive strategy starting with fiscal 2015 to help revitalize the nation's regional economies, a major pillar of the Liberal Democratic Party's campaign promise for the Lower House election last month.

Given Japan's dwindling and graying population, this is a task that cannot be avoided.

It would not be realistic to expect the task to be accomplished quickly, but it is important for both the central and local governments to take effective steps promptly, because the aging and dwindling of the population are especially rapid in rural parts of Japan.

As Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, the central government should not spare funding and other resources in helping local governments in their efforts to reignite their economies.

The national government has a target of stabilizing Japan's population at around 100 million in 2060. It estimates that the goal would be achievable if the total fertility rate — or the number of children on average that a woman gives birth to in her lifetime — rises from the 1.43 in 2013 to 1.8 in 2030 and to 2.7 in 2040. To achieve that, the government needs to pursue policies that will contribute to stabilizing employment for young people and enhance measures to support young working parents, including improving the availability of day care centers for children. These steps would be crucial to encourage the younger generation to have and raise children.

It is estimated that if the total fertility rate goes up as planned, the percentage of the elderly people aged 65 years or older in the total population will peak at 35.3 percent in 2050 and will come down to 26.6 percent in 2110 — slightly more than the rate of 23 percent in 2010.

But one wonders whether the Abe administration's policy, which is inclined toward increasing the number of irregular workers — as exemplified by the effort to remove the cap on the period in which companies can continue to hire dispatched workers — will be conducive to securing and stabilizing employment for young people.

There seems to be a basic discrepancy between the administration's general direction in its employment policy and what its regional revitalization program aims at.

Both the long-term vision of the population and the five-year-strategy call for reducing the concentration of Japan's population in the greater Tokyo area. It is a reasonable goal from the viewpoint of revitalizing economic, cultural and other activities outside urban areas.

The strategy calls for reducing projected domestic emigration to Tokyo and Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures by 60,000 and increasing the exodus out of the area by 40,000 in 2020 from 2013 levels, so that the people moving in will balance out those moving out. Each movement would number some 410,000 in 2020, the year of the Tokyo Olympics.

The key to the success of this policy would be whether regions other than the Tokyo metropolitan area can offer attractive job and education opportunities in adequate numbers. Otherwise, the goal will be a pie in the sky.

To prevent population concentration in the greater Tokyo area, the strategy embraces a numerical target — creating jobs for 300,000 people in the age bracket of 16 to 34 in other parts of Japan over five years through 2020. It also envisages reducing the number of “freeters” — young people who move from one low-paying job to another — by 580,000 from the 2013 level to 1.24 million in 2020, the year of the Tokyo Olympics.

One problem with the target of creating 300,000 jobs in areas outside of Tokyo is that it is unclear how the goal is connected with the policy of creating 50,000 jobs in agriculture, forestry and fisheries businesses through efforts to turn these sectors into growth industries.

The tourism industry is expected to create 80,000 jobs, but that sector could be beset by unstable factors such as natural disasters and a higher yen as well as diplomatic rows that discourage foreign tourists from visiting Japan.

A bigger problem is that the Abe administration appears to have bundled together measures pushed separately by different government ministries. The administration needs to monitor the progress of each measure and coordinate the various steps from an overall viewpoint, allowing the strategy to evolve as it moves forward.

Other measures called for by the strategy include tax privileges for companies that move their headquarters outside of the greater Tokyo area, relocation of government offices, establishment of easy-to-use scholarships for university students in other parts of the country and provision of new grants to local governments that can be used flexibly as needed.

In fiscal 2015, local governments are required to work out their own revitalization plans in accordance with the national government’s strategy.

The effects of these policies will be reviewed and the national government will then differentiate the amounts of grants to each of the local governments on the basis of the results in an attempt to spur competition among the prefectures and municipalities.

But given that each local government faces different sets of problems, one wonders what would be the rationale for differentiating the grant amounts, even though wasteful use of the grants should be restrained.

Although the strategy has its problems, local governments bear the responsibility all the same for developing revitalization policies that fit their specific needs. The national government should not leave that task completely to local governments; it should proactively assist them by offering its knowledge, ideas and resources.

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/01/04/editorials/revitalizing-rural-parts-of-japan/#.VIIlBH_krLWJ

The 4.0 Career Is Coming... Are You Ready? (edited)Posted: November 17, 2010 06:03 PM by *Douglas LaBier, Ph.D.*

Even in the midst of our economic disaster that's hitting all but the wealthiest people, a transformation is continuing within people's orientation to work. I call it the rise of the 4.0 career.

Career Versions 1.0, 2.0, 3.0... And The Emerging 4.0

The 1.0 career describes doing whatever kind of work enables you to survive. It's what people do when they're in situations of extreme hardship, political upheaval, or within socioeconomic conditions that limit their opportunity and choices. In these situations, your criterion for "success" is being able to earn enough of a living to survive -- pay your bills and support your family.

Version 2.0 emerged with the political and economic environments that supported the emergence of the modern "career." That is, work within increasingly large, bureaucratic organizations that developed from about the late 1800s into the early 20th century. Those organizations required layers of management and administration -- white-collar jobs, within bureaucracies. Your career could advance along a defined path, and it was available to people who were able to gain a foothold within it. That path was often facilitated by educational opportunities and/or social class advantages people brought with them. The 2.0 career is what most people define as "careerism:" Pursuing more power, authority, money and position within an organization.

The 3.0 career reflects a desire to find more personal meaning and sense of purpose through work. The 3.0 careerist struggles for more balance between work and personal life, and is less willing than the 2.0 careerist to stick with an unfulfilling job, or settle for one when job-hunting. Conflicts within the 3.0 orientation are visible, for example, in the pushback against the longer hours companies increasingly pressure people into. The 3.0 careerists do not want their professional lives to be the enemy of their talents or interests outside work. More than just having a successful career, they want their careers to serve and support a successful personal life.

That latter point distinguishes the 3.0 from the emerging 4.0 career. The former is more self-development-focused. In contrast, the 4.0 careerist wants more than sufficient work-life balance and personal meaning. The 4.0 career is more focused on having *impact* on something larger than oneself. In essence, the 4.0 careerist is motivated by a sense of service to and connection with the larger human community through the product or service he or she contributes to. The 4.0 careerist wants to work for a company that practices and values positive leadership, transparency, informality, collaboration, high ethical standards, innovation... and is also a fun place to work. They want companies that promote and value diversity and an equitable reward system for achievement. Within them, people work hard but also have fun.

The 4.0 career is visible in the desire men and women report towards wanting to contribute to the common good -- whether it's through the value and usefulness of a product or service. That theme links the 4.0 career with the emerging new business model focused on creating sustainable enterprises and the "triple bottom line" -- financial, social and environmental measures of success. It combines financial success with contributing to social needs and problems. This is "social entrepreneurialism" -- the movement towards creating successful businesses that also contribute to the solution of social problems. In effect, the 4.0 careerist thinks of work as a vehicle for change and influence upon the larger human community.

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/douglas-labier/the-40-career-is-coming-a_b_783566.html

A “super-aged” society and the “locomotive syndrome”

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The population of Japan is aging very rapidly. According to an estimate made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on *Keiro no Hi* (Respect for the Aged Day, a national holiday, the third Monday of September), people aged 65 and over numbered 27,440,000 in 2007, which is 22% of the population. Both figures set new records. Those aged 80 and above numbered 7,130,000, exceeding 7,000,000 for the first time. Because a society is considered relatively old when over 8%–10% of its population is 65 or older, Japan can already be seen as a “super-aged” society.

An aging population inevitably has a great impact on social systems, including public health. To cope with Japan’s rapid change in age demographics, a new insurance system, *Kaigo Hoken* (Nursing Care Insurance), was introduced in 2000. The number of elderly who need nursing care is increasing; 4,300,000 individuals actually received such services in 2006, and this increase in demand for nursing care poses a great challenge for the system. The reasons for which services were needed were stroke (25.7%), senility (16.3%), falls/fractures (10.8%), dementia (10.7%), joint disorders (10.6%), and others. Orthopedic problems are unquestionably one of the main reasons for nursing care, and this fact should be more widely recognized by society.

In 1994, the Japanese Orthopaedic Association (JOA) decided to designate October 8th as *Hone to Kansetsu no Hi* (Bone and Joint Day) in order to publicize to the general public the importance of locomotive organs. Since then, the JOA has devoted various educational efforts to increasing public awareness of the importance of each individual’s locomotive organs through the *Hone to Kansetsu no Hi* movement, such as open lectures for citizens offered in many locations throughout the year, “call-in” programs in October of each year to answer questions from orthopedic patients, a lecture delivered through the mass media once a year, and distribution of informative brochures to the public.

In 2000, the Bone and Joint Decade (BJD) was launched at the headquarters of the World Health Organization in Geneva. The goal of the BJD is to improve the health-related quality of life of people with musculoskeletal disorders throughout the world, and to raise awareness of the suffering and cost to society associated with joint diseases, osteoporosis, spinal disorders and other related conditions. In response to this international movement, a BJD initiative was launched by the JOA, and the BJD Japan National Action Network was organized by 45 medical societies and four sports organizations in May 2000. The acronym “BJD” was translated into Japanese as *Undouki no Junen*: *undouki* means “locomotive organs” and *junen* means “decade”. Thus, the JOA linked the *Undouki no Junen* movement with the *Hone to Kansetsu no Hi* movement and has been playing a central role in promoting awareness of orthopedic problems in Japan.

The Japanese word *undouki* refers to the organs that move the body, and therefore includes bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, the spinal cord, and peripheral nerves. Although the word *undouki* was somewhat unfamiliar to Japanese people at the beginning of the movement, it is gradually being recognized through the above efforts. However, I believe that further activities aimed at educating the general public in this respect are necessary.

Faced with an aging population and a declining birth rate, the Japanese Government has undertaken a comprehensive reform of the health-care system and released the Cabinet Office's report "New Health Frontier Strategy" in April 2007. The report identified nine areas that require government intervention: nursing care was taken up together with cancer, metabolic syndrome, women's health, children's health, mental health, and others. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare then announced a concrete strategy to decrease demand for nursing care, which involved the establishment of a new fund for scientific research focusing on locomotive ability in the elderly. This research will focus on early detection of any decline in locomotive ability caused by "*undouki* diseases" and on early action to prevent their deterioration.

People are now looking for easy-to-understand medical services. The JOA plans to develop simple pretests to assess an individual's locomotive ability and to identify those who are at risk and are highly likely to need nursing care. We propose that the term "locomotive syndrome" be adopted to designate the condition evident in this high-risk group. If this term can be easily remembered by the general public, it is hoped that more attention will be given to the prevention of "*undouki* diseases". If people can evaluate their own locomotive ability using the simple tests proposed, they might recognize the value of early prevention more easily. With the growth of the "super-aged" society, the role of orthopedic surgery will undoubtedly become more prominent. Therefore the JOA will continue to emphasize to the general public the importance of preventing "locomotive syndrome" and will continue its efforts to provide high-quality orthopedic treatment for those in need.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2779431/>

Japan's children face a dementia boom

BY MICHAEL HOFFMAN, SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES, NOV 28, 2015

Confucius said it's not enough merely to provide for our parents. We must revere them. To fail in filial reverence, he said, is to be no better than the animals.

What did Confucius know? He lived 2,500 years ago, when life expectancy at birth was 22, and 50 was extreme old age. True, he himself lived to 72 — but the general fact remains. A headline such as this one in *Shukan Gendai* magazine earlier this month would have left him aghast: "Ten million people with dementia!" Not in the world — in Japan. Ten million people — that's nearly 10 percent of its declining population. Not today — it hasn't happened yet (the latest round figure is 5.2 million). But 2025, when some experts calculate it will (a less pessimistic estimate is 7 million), is only 10 years away.

In 2004, a book of essays titled "Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society" posed the question of why so little had been done to prepare for what was, after all, a perfectly foreseeable perfect storm: the rapid and unprecedented aging of a nation in which advanced medical care kept death further and further at bay while social changes of other kinds made for fewer and fewer children.

The book's answer — or one of its answers — was Confucianism. Japan's traditional morality was Confucian, reverential. Reverential children would reverently see their parents through infirm and dependent old age. The government could count on it. It did count on it. Care would be a family matter, not a government one. But the officials who did the thinking were rooted in another age and failed to see the shape of this one, and now the results are plain: far too few institutions, too many of them desperately understaffed, to cope with an elderly-heavy demography such as the world has never known — and that Confucius, visionary though he was, never dreamed of.

Imagine, for starters, what promises soon to be plainly visible: the sheer absurdity into which mass dementia can plunge society as a whole. It's visible now at the individual level — a case here, an episode there. In Miyazaki in October, a 73-year-old man allegedly ran his car into a group of pedestrians, killing two and injuring five. In Sendai in March, a 78-year-old man allegedly stabbed his home helper, a woman in her 60s, with a fruit knife. Why? "Because she sealed my lunch with plastic wrap," he reportedly told police when they came to charge him with attempted murder.

Absurdity: In 2014, 10,783 people with dementia went missing. They wander off and lose their way. Approached and asked where they're going, they don't know; where they come from, ditto; who they are, blank. One person in this situation is tragic — and when 10,000 becomes 20,000, as in a decade the math shows it must, barring a sudden medical or pharmaceutical breakthrough? There are simply no words for it. The human species has never been here before.

Far from rising to the challenge, *Shukan Gendai* says, the government is cutting funding to the already strapped care industry: "No one is working on this at the practical policy level — not politicians, not bureaucrats. The politicians say, 'This won't come to a head while I'm in office — it's not my worry.'" In

2025, 8 million baby boomers will turn 75. But the next election, Shukan Gendai says, doesn't hinge on what will happen in 2025. It hinges on the economic indicators a week before the voting.

Seventy-five is almost 80, and at 80, says research quoted by the magazine, you have a 20 percent chance of suffering from dementia. If you and your spouse live alone together, there's an 8 percent chance you both do. And what of the children, on whom Confucius and, until very recently, his Japanese disciples pinned all their hopes?

It's easy to blame children for not returning the love and devotion their parents lavished on them (assuming they did). But children in their prime and past it are not children. Most of them are busy adults, with demanding jobs and children of their own. It's not their fault that there are only 24 hours in a day and only so much money at hand. Some try. Some try very hard. They quit jobs to become full-time caregivers. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has identified that as a problem — not as a solution.

Shukan Gendai profiles a 58-year-old company executive in Tokyo whose parents live in Osaka. Some years ago his mother suffered a brain hemorrhage. His father took care of her, the son coming home to help when he could. Then Dad began showing signs of dementia. Evidently a stalwart character, he insisted he was fine, his son's worries were groundless, he could carry on. But he plainly couldn't, and the son, getting on in years himself, lately finds himself shuttling back and forth between Tokyo and Osaka, doing what he can for his parents while meeting his work and family responsibilities at home. An institution? Impossible — his mother's illness has already drained the family savings, and anyway, would dad stand for being put in one? He still maintains he's capable.

Institutions pose problems of their own, given dramatic urgency by reports such as those of three elderly people falling to their deaths last year from upper-story balconies at the S Amiyu Kawasaki Saiwai-cho nursing home in Kawasaki. Was abuse involved? Negligence? The extreme stress under which caregivers work is amplified by chronic understaffing and wretched pay: ¥210,000 a month on average, reports Josei Seven magazine — ¥100,000 a month less than average pay in other fields. Current calculations are that in the watershed year 2025, when 2.53 million caregivers will be needed, the number available will fall 380,000 short.

Josei Seven notes a striking anomaly. Television is overflowing with health programs. They get the highest ratings. Weekly magazines are full of health tips, diet recipes and exercise routines. That's what readers want. It all suggests a love of life and a desire to prolong it.

And yet a survey Josei Seven cites asks 1,000 people aged 40 to 70 whether they'd want to live on into a healthy advanced old age, and hears that only 55 percent do. And what of the dubious 45 percent? Have they seen too much, too close up, of life's final phase?

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/28/national/media-national/japans-children-face-dementia-boom/#.V6scY_196Uk

Invention most Japanese are proud of is instant ramen

By Jessica, RocketNews24

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Japan's best minds have contributed quite a few important inventions to the world over the years. Did you know that the portable ECG machine was invented in Japan, for example? So were electric rice cookers, DSLR cameras, CD players, Blu-ray discs, and gaming systems. Really, the list of Japanese tech that has become integral to our daily lives goes on and on.

However, if you ask Japanese people which invention their country should be proud of, it turns out a far humbler product jumps to mind for most: instant noodles.

Five hundred Japanese, split evenly between men and women, were asked in a survey which home-grown inventions they thought Japan should be proud of. They weren't given a list but rather asked to come up with ideas on their own. The result? An astonishing 57% of Japanese responded that Japan should be proud of instant noodles!

Perhaps instant ramen isn't saving any lives, but you have to admit in terms of cultural cachet, it's been a huge success. The appeal of having a hot, tasty meal just by adding a little water seems to be nearly universal, with over 100 BILLION packets being consumed around the world each year. Not a trace of the Galapagos syndrome there. Inventor Momofuku Ando tapped into a worldwide demand with that one.

The next closest competitor for Japanese pride is the blue LED light, for which inventor Shuji Nakamura won a Nobel Prize in 2013. Despite recent blanket coverage of the award, however, only 41.4% of respondents mentioned it.

Rounding out the top 10 are washlet toilets (36.8%), automatic ticket gates (27.2%), karaoke (25%), curry in a pouch (21.2%), dry-cell batteries and electric rice cookers (21% each), endoscope cameras (20%), and mechanical pencils and erasable ink pens (19.6% each).

No love for AIBO, I guess.

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/lifestyle/view/invention-most-japanese-are-proud-of-is-instant-ramen>