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Social Security for the First Half of Life

-- Employment, Marriage, Childbirth and Childraising: Risks and Guarantees

Summary

[Feature Article]

- “Social Security for the First Half of Life” and a Stable Society

Professor Yoshinori Hiroi

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Deliberations on social security in Japan have to date focused on the elderly. In the future, it will be important to consider “social security for the first half of life” and to adopt policies accordingly. This paper adopts a broad perspective on the issue, considering its background and significance, the international situation, the fusion of education and social security, the relationship between social security and economic maturity and the concept of “pensions for the young.”

- New Social Risks and Social Security for the First Half and Middle of Life

Professor Taro Miyamoto

Hokkaido University Public Policy School

Instability in the employment environment and changes in family structures are generating “new social risks” that have not been previously considered in the social security perspective. These include the dilemma of the choice between childraising and work, the difficulty young people face in becoming independent, and a long-term unemployment problem that is not related to trends in the labor market. Under these circumstances it has become necessary to reexamine the social security systems that have traditionally absorbed employment and family risks. These systems have traditionally emphasized the second half of life. However, social security for the first half and middle of life should not mean merely reducing benefits to the elderly and redistributing the savings to younger people. The social security system itself must be redesigned. This paper presents this redesign as a transition to a “launch-pad-type,” “intersection-type” or “expression-of-needs-type” system, and argues that such a transition is essential for social security for the second half of life.

- Promoting Marriage among the Young – How Can We Increase “Marriage Capacity”?

Professor Oshio Takashi

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The mechanisms of social security for the first half of life that have functioned effectively to date are informal and non-standardized ones in which the government is not directly involved. However, these mechanisms are no longer functioning effectively, and young people are at risk of falling into a situation of unstable employment and low income. This will lead to a tendency to marry late or not to marry, causing a further decline in the fertility and compromising the sustainability of social security systems for the second half of life. It is necessary for the government to expand child-support programs for married couples, at the same time as taking measures to reduce the social risks faced by the young by reestablishing systems for the development of human resources and ensuring job opportunities. Although they represent a slight detour, these are the most effective and realistic measures that can be taken in order to improve the “marriage capacity” of the younger generation.

- Motivation for Childbirth and Childraising

Fumiko Takasaki

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In this paper, the author attempts to employ achievement motivation theory in explaining behaviors related to childbirth and childraising, which have not previously been considered in psychological studies of motivation.

Among the elements of motivation, the paper focuses on “need” and “cognition.” The author introduces “intrinsic motivation” and “expectation x value” theory, and discusses the interpretation of the current situation in Japan which is enabled by their application to childbirth and childraising behaviors.

The paper argues that while countermeasures against the falling fertility employed to date have encouraged “expectation,” one element of motivation, it is also necessary to adopt an approach that increases the level of “need” and “value.”

- The Declining Fertility and the Potential for Policy Responses

Akiko Tsuji, Senior Researcher, NIRA

Takahiro Matsumoto, Researcher, NIRA

The decline in Japan’s fertility is caused by the increasing economic burden of childraising, and the heavy economic burden on the working generations and their anxiety for the future because of the dependence of the social security system on them.

To deal with the issue of the declining fertility, it will be necessary to

share the economic burden and anxiety concerning the future that presently falls on the working generations among all the relevant social sectors. This will require, in addition to measures adopted by the administration, changes in personal awareness, such as the achievement of gender equality in housework, and the creation of new schemes that will make active use of the dynamism of private enterprise.

[NIRA Working Report]

- Examination of the Linkage and Comparative Advantage of East Asian Economies Based using Basic Economic Data

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Using basic economic data for the East Asian nations (considered as Japan, China, South Korea and the ASEAN10 nations), this paper compares the economic status of East Asia with other major free trade areas, and surveys the comparative advantage and interdependence within the region of each of these nations from the perspective of trade. The analysis clearly demonstrates that the scale of the East Asian economy has recently grown to a level comparable to that of NAFTA and the EU, and is continuing to increase due to China's growth. Consideration of each nation's comparative advantage in terms of trade goods revealed that each nation possesses an advantage in different goods. In addition, interdependence, as viewed from the perspective of the degree of trade linkage, was generally high within the region.

■ Fixed-Point Observation of Asia

Economic Development in Mongolia: Current Status and Future Issues – A Qualitative Analysis based on a Five-year Field Study

Professor Yukimitsu Sanada
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Mongolia, once the center of a huge empire and the birthplace of Genghis Khan and Kubilai Khan, leaders who were feared as far away as Europe, now contends with the status of an East Asian developing nation sandwiched between Russia and China. Home to a proud people with a glorious history, Mongolia's population is small but it possesses superior human resources, and is also rich in natural resources. The day may come in the near future when Mongolia will overcome its financial underdevelopment and achieve true economic independence, recapturing its past glory.

[Regional Report]

Regional Rejuvenation: Making Communities Open to Other Cultures

-- Activation of Regional Economies via Multicultural Exchange

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Japan and the East Asian region more broadly are changing rapidly with the emergence of newly developing countries and a rapid aging of populations as a result of declining birthrates, among other factors. Against this background, the promotion of multicultural exchange is one of the only strategies still available to promote regional revitalization. This report defines communities open to other cultures as ones in which people are able to live, work and learn together comfortably, and which are enjoyable to visit. With reference to actual efforts to use multicultural exchange as a strategic method to activate regional economies and solve regional problems, the paper suggests problems that might be solved by multicultural exchange and projects that should be examined at both the regional and national levels.

[Forum]

Characteristics and Problems of Ability Development as Seen from the Perspective of "Time"

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As corporate educational and training strategies change, it is becoming necessary for individuals (full-time employees) to consider their careers independently, to attempt to develop their abilities and to make changes in the methods they use to develop abilities. This paper first examines historical data in order to determine the frequency with which individuals have to date pursued ability development, and then goes on to consider the investment individuals make in ability development activities and the characteristics of those activities. Based on the results, the paper suggests that in order to encourage individuals to engage in activities related to the development of ability, it will be necessary to enhance the career development support offered by companies to their employees, and to enhance social infrastructure related to ability development.