

## Multicultural Human Resource Model of Sustainable Development for Asia

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The population of Japan has been declining since the start of this new century. If immigration policies remain complacent and the current birth rate of 1.2 per couple continues, it is estimated that by 2050 the population will be halved.<sup>1</sup> If Japan aims to promote the sustainable development of its society, it may have to accept up to 33 million people as immigrants by 2050.<sup>2</sup> It is time to consider accepting immigrants and to think about the possibility of a multicultural Japan. Can a multicultural Japan allow for equality among its citizens, permanent residents, and invited workers? In this world, it is desirable that every person should be equal in every sense, but there is no such thing as total equality. There are the rich, the poor, educated or uneducated people, race, religion, minorities, the hiring people, and the jobless. Many of these differences depend on a country's policies. There are different strategies and treatments for the problems of inequality.

There are not many successful multicultural nations to borrow ideas from.

As a whole, Asia is multicultural, but it is neither a commonwealth nor a free trading region. It does not have access to a migrating labor pool such as the European Union (EU) does, despite years of cooperative discussions at Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Each country in Asia is vertically monocultural. No one country is multicultural.

Looking to Europe for possible answers reveals unrest, with terrorist fears in France and the United Kingdom. The acceptance of people from other countries is not working well. Although the EU as a whole is multicultural, no one country has successfully become multicultural. Other EU countries are insisting on the assimilation of future immigrants.

The Canadian government is currently promoting its stand on diversity, rapidly expanding its immigrant population, and welcoming many kinds of people in a sustainable manner. The land mass of Canada is similar in size to the total of all Asian countries, excluding mainland China and India. In this essay, I would like to suggest that Asia, and in particular Japan, should consider learning from the Canadian model of multiculturalism.

### Current Population Trends in Japan are Not Sustainable.

A declining birth rate and the aging of the baby-boom generation are hindering the sustainable development of Japan. The birth rate in Japan fell to an all time low of 1.25 in 2005. Because aging is rising to an all time high, the overall population offset the low birthrate until 2004. The total population of Japan was 125,570,000 in 1995, rose to a peak of 127,776,000 in 2004 and then fell to 127,757,000 in 2005 (footnote 1).

These problems have amplified the decrease in the labor force, especially among the young; reduced the size of the consumer market; increased the national burden rate; and created other problems. If these problems continue, what will become of Japanese society? To maintain the Japanese population and economy, perhaps we will have to accept more immigrants in the future. In fact, Japanese society has been supported by many guest workers. I'm sure in the future that Japan will certainly face change based on these facts. If Japan is changed, what will it become?

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication. Chapter 2: Population. In *Statistical Handbook of Japan*. Available: [http://www.stat.go.jp/English/data/handbook/c02cont.htm#cha2\\_2](http://www.stat.go.jp/English/data/handbook/c02cont.htm#cha2_2)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Population Division. *Replacement Migration*. Available: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/migration/japan.pdf>

## What is “Multiculturalism?”

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines multiculturalism as "the belief that it is important and good to include people or ideas from many different countries, races, or religions."<sup>3</sup>

The word "multiculturalism" can be defined in many other ways. I suggest that it applies to the following:

- (i) Experiments and campaigns for accepting and coexisting with other races and cultures.
- (ii) Women, handicapped, or homosexuals.
- (iii) Campaigns and policies for reviewing forcible assimilation where one country dominates other country.
- (iv) A means of solving minorities' problems when everyone becomes more accepting of differences.

In this way, it is hard to define “multiculturalism.” The word “coexist” can also be defined in many ways and is relevant to the above situations.

### Hypothesis: Japan needs “Multiculturalism”

Japan certainly needs multiculturalism. Only 1.57% of the total population of Japan, or 2.01 million people, are foreigners.<sup>4</sup> I'm sure that as globalization and internationalization are promoted, more foreigners will start coming to Japan.

To know other cultures, languages, and lifestyles is a clue to success in society. In fact, many guest workers have supported Japanese society and are members of it. Multiculturalism is also related to equality in every sense of the word. I am sure people can work together to find sustainable ways in which they can live peacefully forever. A peaceful multicultural society is a basic human right, and this kind of society would support the ideal of equality.

Japan was originally a homogeneous nation and as a result, its people are proud of being Japanese and value Japanese ideas above everything. In addition, although there are many foreigners in Japan, the Japanese are not interested in foreigners' human rights. Given this attitude, what will become of Japan when more foreigners come to Japan and more of Japanese society consists of various minorities?

First, Japan will try to accept minorities for the sake of diplomatic relations, but minorities will live in specific areas in Japan because of their language and cultural differences. After that, it is likely that problems will develop between the Japanese and minorities, and demonstrations will be held seeking to keep minorities out. At last, we will start to think about human rights and finding ways to coexist in Japan seriously. But it might be too late for these changes, because there would already be people whose human rights were violated. To prevent this, we should imagine now what Japan will be like in the future and study the idea of multiculturalism.

A multicultural Japan would not be a bad thing. If Japan becomes a multicultural country, there would be many languages spoken in addition to Japanese. This would make Japan more effective in negotiating with other countries. Also there would be broader ideas,

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<sup>3</sup> Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Available: <http://www.ldoceonline.com/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Justice Immigration Bureau. 2006. Available: [www.moj.go.jp/PRESS/060530-1/060530-1.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/PRESS/060530-1/060530-1.html)

thoughts, and views and this would have a positive influence on Japanese economics and society.

Japan will face multiculturalism, which will be both good and bad. Since the good things will only get better, and the bad things will not get worse, we need to accept multiculturalism as a policy. To promote the sustainable development of society in Japan, and to counteract the falling population, I suggest we research the Canadian experience of multiculturalism.

### **The Canadian Experience of Multiculturalism**

Canada, a country that consists of many ethnic groups, was the first to enact a multiculturalism law as a policy in 1988. Since then, Canada has promoted multiculturalism to build a comprehensive society so that every person can participate in society perfectly, with equality and respect for each other in spite of race, roots, language and religion. Based on several laws, the Canadian Government has tried to build a peaceful country. As a result, the Canadian identity and cultural heritage is becoming "multiculturalism."<sup>5</sup>

In addition, The Department of Canadian Heritage implemented a multicultural federal government program in 1977. The main target of the program was the following:

- (i) Identity: People of all origins have a sense of belonging and can attach themselves to Canada;
- (ii) Citizen Participation: Promotion of the citizens who positively participate in the formation of various communities and nations in the future; and
- (iii) Social Justice: Construction of a nation in which there is fair and equal treatment and where all people are accepted and esteemed regardless of origin.<sup>6</sup>

Homosexual marriage is currently a hot topic in Canada. The Supreme Court of Ontario has ruled that homosexual couples can be legally married. This case has influenced the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec, and laws are being revised. Other countries are observing how the law will work.<sup>7</sup>

In this case, we can see how the Canadian Government has promoted "multiculturalism" as a policy and how Canadians are interested in multiculturalism. I think it would be valuable to discuss problems and enact laws in Japan and Asia. Multicultural laws would allow every person to be a member of society and have a sense of belonging. Since many differences exist, which is natural, what should we do to promote coexistence? It is important to think about this, and the Canadians have clearly considered the idea.

Have all of Canada's societal problems been solved by laws on multiculturalism? I don't think so. I think there is no such thing as total equality and even Canada is a developing country in the field of multiculturalism, as the laws do not tackle the root causes of the social and economic inequalities faced by ethnic minority groups.

### **The Actual State of Multiculturalism in Canada**

In general, there are three major differences defining ethnic minority groups:

- (i) Origin or ancestry: the common genealogy of a person.

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<sup>5</sup> The Department of Canadian Heritage. 2006. *A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism - An Overview*. Available: [http://www.pch.gc.ca/multi/plan\\_action\\_plan/overview\\_vue\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/multi/plan_action_plan/overview_vue_e.cfm)

<sup>6</sup> The Department of Canadian Heritage. 2006. Available: [http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/org/sect/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/org/sect/index_e.cfm)

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia. Re Same-Sex Marriage. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Re\\_Same-Sex\\_Marriage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Re_Same-Sex_Marriage)

- (ii) Race: based primarily upon genetically imparted physiognomic features.
- (iii) Identity: how people perceive themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Then, what is the way to tackle the root causes of inequality based on a lack of multiculturalism?

One solution is education. Education makes it possible for people to be responsible and informed members of the community. In turn, it allows people to have a voice in the politics and direction of a community. Education gives people the knowledge and awareness that they need to understand different ethnic groups.

Another solution is employment. Employment is an important way to include an individual or group within a community. A major component of employment is to promote an environment where opportunities can be created, by encouraging individuals to develop the necessary skills and training to succeed in the labor market.

Education and employment are closely related and both contribute to human development. To give all Canadians equality, however, education is especially important. Affirmative action policies can tackle the root problems of inequality and poverty (footnote 8).

Considered this way, Canada has had to face problems with education and employment in order to build its multicultural society. While adopting multiculturalism as a policy makes a difference, it is very hard to build an equal society based on background and identity. Also, as more people go to Canada seeking a perfect multicultural society, it is likely that there will be more problems. The Canadian attitude towards equality is very important and will help. It is necessary for all Canadians to recognize these issues and for the Government of Canada to provide its citizens with enough information.

The Government of Japan has tried to address the problem of building a sustainable population, but the results have not reflected their effort. If the country's declining birth rate and aging of the baby-boom generation continues, the time will come when immigrants are needed in Japanese society and multiculturalism as a policy is enacted.

I recognized that multiculturalism in Japan might be difficult when I was researching multiculturalism in Canada. Compared with Canada, Japan was originally a homogeneous nation and the multicultural idea is far from its understanding. Even if Japan accepts multiculturalism, we can expect that anti-segregation and affirmative action will increase the gap between the rich and the poor, as the Canadians experienced. Considering this, Japan might be cautious about multiculturalism. Japan's economy and society are different from Canada's, and the multiculturalism of Canada does not apply to all countries. The most important thing is that every person thinks about multiculturalism. For that, I recommend that information about multiculturalism in other countries is disclosed, that there is transparency on the issue, and that there is education on it. If more information on the facts of multiculturalism from the perspective of foreigners in Japan is made available, I'm sure we will begin to think deeply about differences, human rights, and the meaning of peaceful coexistence. We can sympathize with other parties and seek wider ideas. I think about this every day and I think behavior is the most effective way to build a comprehensive country - from the inside to the outside, from the spirit to the action.

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<sup>8</sup> Hasmath Reza. 2006. *Canadian Multiculturalism: A Sociological and Human Development Perspective*. UK: University of Cambridge