Labor market structure, welfare policy and the integration of immigrants in Japan: Brazilian immigrants during the economic downturn

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Post-industrialization, globalization and immigrants’ employment

In recent decades, many countries have accepted a large number of immigrants from other countries. Immigration scholars have been quite concerned about the way in which immigrants are integrated into host societies because several immigrant groups have been marginalized socioeconomically, and their disadvantaged positions have inherited from one generation to the next (Portes et al. 2005). The segmented assimilation theory highlights the fact that the pathways of assimilation and integration differ depending on the resources immigrants have brought from abroad or have inherited from their parents and on the social environments surrounding immigrants in the receiving nations (Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009). In addition, cross-national comparative studies indicate that the incorporation of immigrants into the labor market has been shaped by the institutional arrangements of immigration policies, labor market structures and welfare regimes (Kogan 2007; Reitz 1998).

Recent changes in the economy and the labor market have hindered immigrants from successfully adapting into their host societies. Post-industrialization has resulted in shrinking manufacturing employment, whereas the number of jobs in the service industry has grown over time. Service employment, however, is increasingly divided into menial, unskilled jobs associated with personal service and highly skilled jobs requiring professional and technical skills (Esping-Andersen 1993). This bifurcation of the labor market blocks unskilled immigrants from upward mobility because those who lack the human capital specific to the host country lose the opportunity to climb the occupational ladder (Portes et al. 2005).

Globalization has also contributed to the bifurcation of the labor market among immigrant and native-born workers, has increased economic competition and uncertainty across firms and has exerted greater pressure on those firms to become more flexible in contracting with employees (Blossfeld 2005). Consequently, nonstandard employment relationships, such as part-time work, temporary employment through agencies, fixed-term employment and independent contracting, have become increasingly prevalent in many countries (Kalleberg 2000). Because jobs with
nonstandard work arrangements are less attractive to native-born workers, employers have turned to immigrant workforces to fill the gap between labor supply and demand (Luthra and Waldinger 2010; Piore 1979). These socioeconomic changes have strengthened the segmentation and polarization of the labor market, as the segmented labor market theory posits (Kalleberg 2003; Piore 1979).

These circumstances have made unskilled immigrants with nonstandard work arrangements vulnerable to economic fluctuations because employers can easily dismiss contingent workers. In fact, in several countries in Europe and North America, unemployment rates among immigrants increased markedly after the recent financial crisis triggered by the US mortgage crisis in 2007 (Tilly 2011). Employment and welfare policies can play an important role in mitigating resultant unemployment among immigrant and native-born workers, protecting workers from dismissal and helping the unemployed to maintain their standard of living. It is also important to consider industrial relations between employer associations and labor unions because these relationships shape employment and welfare policies and labor market structures.

Much of the previous literature has focused on the socioeconomic status of immigrants in North American and Western European countries that have a long history of receiving immigrants from other countries. However, some countries that have not received attention from immigration scholars have recently become countries of immigration, largely due to economic expansion, declining fertility rates and educational expansion leading to a shortage of unskilled labor. Japan is now classified as one of these recent countries of immigration. To develop a deep understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of immigrants, it is important to investigate immigrants in different institutional settings.

Japan has distinctive institutional structures that shape the mechanisms by which immigrants are incorporated into its society, as demonstrated in other chapters. The Japanese labor market has been divided primarily into the core (primary) and periphery (secondary) sectors (Genda 2005; Takenoshita 2008). A large number of jobs in the periphery sector are presumed to involve nonstandard employment relationships. These jobs lack stable employment contracts, earnings based on seniority, company-sponsored welfare benefits and future prospects for advancement and promotion, all of which are important features of the Japanese labor market. Because these jobs are shunned by native-born workers, employers must seek immigrant workforces. In contrast, employment in the core sector is protected from economic cycles and recessions. In Japan, greater employment protection for regular workers has generated unstable, precarious jobs with nonstandard employment relationships, situations in which many
unskilled immigrant workers are employed (Takenoshita 2013).

The structure of Japan’s labor market has made unskilled immigrants highly vulnerable to economic recessions. Many Brazilian immigrants in Japan, most of whom are descendants of Japanese emigrants who moved to Brazil, are employed by temporary help agencies or contract companies that allow organizations to adjust the number of workers easily in response to demand fluctuations (Higuchi and Tanno 2003). In fact, an economic recession in 2008 and 2009 seriously affected the Japanese economy, leading to rapid growth in unemployment among temporary workers employed by employment agencies and among workers with fixed-term employment contracts. In particular, industries whose products are exported to the US, such as manufacturers of automobiles and electronics, were seriously damaged. Because many Brazilian immigrants had been employed by employment agencies and dispatched to firms that produce parts for automobiles and electronic appliances, many Brazilian workers were dismissed and lost their jobs (Ishikawa 2011).

This chapter discusses the way in which Brazilian immigrants have been incorporated into the Japanese labor market and how this incorporation mechanism affected their employment during the recent economic crisis. In addition, we argue the manner in which the Japanese government helped the unemployed immigrants to maintain their lives and find new employment. Because the recent economic crisis led to a rapid rise in unemployment among temporary workers regardless of their immigration status, the Japanese government began providing significant support for these workers. This chapter focuses on the employment policy specifically targeting Latin American immigrants in Japan. Before going into greater detail about the characteristics of immigrants’ employment in Japan, we will examine the welfare and integration policies for immigrants in several European countries in comparison with Japanese integration measures.

**Welfare regimes and immigrants**

Policies that facilitate immigrants’ integration into a host society are composed of welfare and integration policies specifically targeting immigrants and policies providing assistance for general populations. Presumably, these policies depend on the type of welfare regimes in a given country. For instance, social-democratic welfare regimes such as those in Sweden and Denmark are state-dominated welfare systems characterized by principles of universalism and egalitarianism (Kogan 2007). This type of welfare system leads to less stratified societies and fosters openness toward diversity.
The generous welfare provisions, which are assumed to enhance integration, may affect not only natives but also immigrants (Fossati 2011). In contrast, liberal welfare regimes such as in the US and the UK are characterized by a strong emphasis on market orientation, self-reliance and meager welfare benefits for the disadvantaged. Whereas a limited level of benefits in liberal regimes forces people to avoid becoming unemployed, a higher proportion of workers are likely to fall into poverty (Fossati 2011; Kogan 2007). In fact, it has been reported that there is a significant difference in the poverty rates between natives and immigrants in the US (Morissens and Sainsbury 2005).

Conversely, the nations that adopt liberal welfare regimes are also regarded as the classic countries of immigration, and immigration signals an essential component of nation-building in these countries. Because people in the classic countries of immigration may be familiar with immigrant workers in the labor market, socioeconomic assimilation, which is defined as the economic equalization of immigrants with native-born workers, may be more likely to occur in these countries (Fossati 2011).¹

In conservative welfare regimes, the state matters more than the market with regard to the delivery of welfare, but the state does not encourage redistribution and equalization because its goal is to maintain existing class and status differences (Esping-Andersen 1999). This type of welfare regime is associated with highly segmented labor markets with greater protection for workers, producing insider-outsider divisions (Blossfeld 2005; Kogan 2007). Japan’s welfare and employment policies are partly representative of the conservative welfare regime because Japanese policies have served to maintain the rigid structure of the labor market with a strong insider-outsider cleavage (Estévez-Abe 2008; Takenoshita 2008). The conservative welfare state regimes, including Japan, share the following characteristics with regard to the incorporation of immigrants: immigrants lacking human capitals specific to the host society tend to be incorporated into the peripheral sector of the labor market, and strong insider-outsider cleavage traps unskilled immigrants in the lower segment of the labor market and hinders their upward mobility (Takenoshita, forthcoming).

**Integration measures specifically targeting immigrants in European countries**

Most industrialized countries in Europe have accepted a large number of immigrants since the postwar period to meet the labor demands of the economic boom at that time. However, there has been a cross-national divergence with regard to the manner in which governments and societies have received immigrants (Kogan 2007). Together, the welfare regimes, the citizenship regimes and the legal frameworks of these countries
have shaped the patterns of immigrants’ integration (Fossati 2011).

For instance, Germany has maintained the guestworker model, in which the state government perceives immigrants as temporary residents rather than as citizens who are legitimate members of society. This model also implicitly assumes that there is no necessity to integrate immigrants even if they settle permanently in the host society. In addition, the citizenship policies in Germany are more restrictive than in other European states (Kogan 2007). Consequently, the German citizenship law, which defines Germans based on *jus sanguinis*, has given rise to a second generation of foreigners. After the 1970s, the actual situations of the immigrants’ incorporation substantially contradicted the original expectations of German guestworker model because many temporary immigrants who migrated under this program became permanent settlers. Nevertheless, it took almost 30 years until the new Immigration Law of 2005 came into force. Until very recently, although the German government perceived the necessity to integrate foreign workers, the official policy denied that Germany had become a country of immigration and neglected the need for immigrant integration (OECD 2007).

Swedish policies for immigrant integration are distinctive with respect to the influence of its welfare and citizenship policies, which were expanded during the postwar period. Sweden was one of the first countries to recognize the importance of immigrant integration (OECD 2007). In 1965, the Swedish government began to provide language courses for immigrants. Sweden’s implementation of integration measures for immigrants, which took place earlier than in other European states, seems to be associated with the idea of subscribing to a broader integration policy aimed at the whole population (Wiesbrock 2011). In other words, the social democratic welfare regime has also provided support for the inclusion of immigrants in society.

In Sweden, immigrants are supposed to have the right to receive free Swedish language instruction. All newly arrived immigrants are provided with integration programs consisting of free language courses and civic orientation, where they learn basic information about Swedish society. The introduction program starts with the establishment of a settlement plan between the new arrival and the Public Employment Service. The content of the language course is largely employment related so that immigrants can become fluent in work-related terminology. The final goal of the language course is to prepare the immigrant for the labor market (OECD 2007; Wiesbrock 2011). Although the introduction period is intended to last for approximately two years, the actual length of time differs depending on the municipality and the individual (OECD 2007).

Since 1994, municipalities have been encouraged to grant individuals participating in
an introduction program an introduction allowance. The size of the introduction allowance depends on the municipality. In some municipalities, the allowance is the same amount as a standard social assistance allowance and is means tested. Other municipalities have chosen an allowance equivalent to the minimum wage (Lemaire 2007). Integration policies in Sweden tend to be highly decentralized and are generally implemented at the municipal level. However, in connection with recent reforms, Swedish integration policies have undergone a process of centralization, eliminating the differences among municipalities regarding the introduction allowances. Public Employment Service plays an increasingly central role in determining financial assistance for individuals (Wiesbrock 2011).

Whereas participation in integration programs is voluntary in Sweden, mandatory integration courses and integration tests have recently been introduced in several European countries (Joppke 2007; Wiesbrock 2011). These mandatory integration courses were pioneered in the Netherlands, beginning for newly arrived immigrants in 1998. Non-EU adult immigrants were obliged to take 600 hours of government-financed language courses and courses on societal orientation over the course of twelve months (Jacobs and Rea 2007). If immigrants who relied on social benefits failed to take a civic integration course or dropped out permanently, they could be subject to benefit cuts (OECD 2008).

Initially, the integration programs were clearly designed with the positive goals of getting migrants to work and helping them learn Dutch, with all costs paid by the state. However, a shift to the right in the Dutch political climate contributed to a restrictive revision of the civic integration law, which came into effect in 2006. The state government privatized the integration courses, which had previously been financed by the state. Immigrants are now required to pay for their integration courses in full (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Joppke 2007).

In addition to the privatization of integration programs, coercive state involvement, such as the creation of the civic integration test, has increased substantially. The revised civic integration law linked the granting of permanent residence permits with the successful passing of an integration test (Joppke 2007). Those who fail to pass the test after three and a half years are sanctioned and are not entitled to permanent residence. Passing a language test and a test on Dutch society has also become a prerequisite for naturalization (Jacobs and Rea 2007). In addition, a new citizenship test was introduced for people who want to come to the Netherlands and need a residence permit. Applicants for family reunification are now required to take this test at a Dutch embassy abroad as a precondition for being granted even a temporary residence permit (Joppke
These obligatory integration programs tied to the acquisition of citizenship have influenced other European countries, with states such as Germany and Denmark copying the mandatory approach used by the Dutch. In a sense, these integration models are converging and moving toward assimilationism. With this process comes a loss of respect for diversity, which is considered to be an important component of multiculturalism (Joppke 2007; Wiesbrock 2011).

The context of immigrant reception in Japan

In this section, we describe the way in which the context of reception for immigrants in Japan, specifically for Brazilian immigrants, has shaped their precarious status in the labor market, thereby contributing to the massive increase in unemployment that arose from the economic crisis in the late 2000s.

Since the 1980s, Japan has accepted a significant number of immigrants from other countries as a result of a combination of several demographic, economic and social trends (Tsuda and Cornelius 2004). Eventually, the labor demand exceeded the supply of domestic workers because previous labor sources, such as workers from rural areas, were depleted, and declining fertility rates reduced the size of the Japanese workforce. Furthermore, an increasing number of Japanese youth became so highly educated that they became unwilling to perform 3D (dirty, dangerous and difficult) jobs (Tsuda 2006). The segmentation of the labor market between large and small firms also created a need to introduce immigrant workers in small firms, which constitute a considerable portion of the secondary sector in Japan because employment in these firms has become less attractive to Japanese workers.

To cope with these challenges, the Japanese government revised the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990. Although the act officially prohibits foreign, unskilled workers from entering Japan, it admits second- and third-generation Nikkeijin (i.e., descendants of Japanese emigrants). The immigration policies in some countries tend to prefer immigrants who share the same ethnic origins. This policy change enabled the Japanese government to introduce a large number of unskilled migrant workers without contradicting the fundamental principles of its immigration policy (Tsuda and Cornelius 2004). In addition, because of their common ethnic ancestry, the Japanese government assumed that the Nikkeijin would be culturally similar to the Japanese and would easily assimilate into Japanese society; however, most of the Nikkeijin migrants in Japan do not speak Japanese well and are culturally Latin
American (Tsuda 2006). According to foreign registration statistics, only 14,000 Brazilians lived in Japan in 1989, but the population exceeded 100,000 in 1991 and 200,000 in 1996. In 2007, the Brazilian population in Japan approached 316,000.

Although the Japanese government initiated the introduction of Nikkeijin migrants from other countries, increasing economic competition has forced the Japanese labor market to become more flexible. However, the long-term employment practices and an emphasis on firm-specific skills that have prevailed in Japan have hindered organizations from firing redundant workers at will. (Genda 2005). To respond to fluctuating labor demands, Japanese organizations have demanded nonstandard workforces, such as part-time workers and temporary workers dispatched by temporary employment agencies (Sato 2010). This response forms an extremely important part of the institutional context for immigrants in Japan because many Brazilian immigrants have been incorporated into the nonstandard employment sector.

Many Brazilian workers who migrated to Japan after 1990 were employed by labor contractors and temporary help agencies (Higuchi and Tanno 2003). In these types of flexible staffing arrangements, a client organization that uses temporary workers can avoid the legal and administrative burdens of being the de jure employer because employment agencies, including temporary help agencies and contract companies, play a critical role in externalizing administrative control (Kalleberg 2003). By relying on these employment agencies, organizations can easily reduce their workforces when the economy slows down. Although a few Japanese employers directly hired Brazilian immigrants, most manufacturers increasingly relied on contract companies and temporary employment agencies to access the supply of Brazilian labor (Tanno 2007). This situation caused Brazilian workers to frequently change their workplaces in response to the fluctuating labor demands, even if these workers continued to be employed by the same contract companies. Brazilian temporary workers have faced difficulties in accumulating firm-specific skills and have consequently been excluded from the internal labor markets (Takenoshita, forthcoming).

The socioeconomic marginalization of Brazilian immigrants in Japan has been exacerbated by Japanese citizenship and welfare policies (Higuchi 2010). In some European countries, citizenship and welfare policies have facilitated the integration of immigrants into the mainstream society (Kogan 2003), but similar policies do not exist in Japan. The Japanese government has focused on immigration control and border enforcement measures while neglecting the rights and citizenship of immigrants and their children in Japan (Tsuda 2006). Access to formal citizenship is highly restricted in Japan because of a jus sanguinis nationality law. The Japanese government considers...
foreign migrants to be temporary residents rather than permanent settlers and has not, therefore, addressed the right to citizenship for immigrants in Japan. The stance of the Japanese government toward immigrants in Japan appears quite similar to the German guestworker model as described above.

Unlike the national government, local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have provided social integration programs in Japan. These programs focus primarily on the translation of information about local governments into different languages and on educational programs for school-age children, whereas no integration programs exist in Japan to address the socioeconomic marginalization confronted by unskilled immigrant workers (Pak 2006; Takenoshita 2011). This problem stems largely from the introduction of multicultural coexistence policies into the programs and services provided by the NGOs. The slogan of multicultural draws our attention to the cultural and linguistic barriers that prevent immigrants from participating in the larger society, whereas less attention has been devoted to the structural discrimination and socioeconomic disparity that play a larger role in shaping the incorporation of immigrants. In addition, the lack of governmental policies to address the socioeconomic marginalization of immigrants is deeply rooted in the extremely meager Japanese welfare provisions for the working-age population (Estévez-Abe 2008). Although Japan has substantially relaxed the employment protection policies that had restricted the activities of labor-dispatching agencies in the 1990s, the country has not increased its social protection for temporary workers, including unemployment benefits and vocational training programs that would enable the unemployed to return to the labor market (Hamaguchi 2009).

**Economic crisis and immigrant unemployment in Japan**

The US financial crisis that began in 2007 also affected the economy in many other countries, including Japan, and led to a rapid shrinkage in other countries’ exports to the US. In Japan, many temporary workers lost their jobs in 2008 and 2009. Brazilian workers in Japan were also seriously harmed by this economic slowdown because most of them were temporary workers controlled by contract companies or temporary help agencies.

Table 1 indicates the distribution of employment status among Brazilian workers living in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2007 and 2009. We conducted several surveys in collaboration with the local governments in Shizuoka Prefecture, focusing primarily on situations of immigrants living there. Shizuoka Prefecture is home to a significant
number of manufacturing plants that produce automobiles and electronic appliances, which have attracted many immigrant workers. Consequently, Brazilian immigrants are concentrated in Central Japan, including Aichi, Shizuoka, Gifu and Mie Prefectures. Accordingly, the empirical findings regarding Brazilian immigrants in Shizuoka Prefecture can be reasonably applied to Brazilian immigrants living in other regions where the manufacturing industry has proliferated.

Table 1 shows that in 2007, roughly 70 percent of Brazilian immigrants were employed by temporary help agencies and contract companies, and 10 percent were employed directly by companies as regular workers. The rate of unemployment rose dramatically from four percent in 2007 to 27 percent in 2009, whereas the rate of temporary employment in temporary help agencies declined markedly from 68 to 36 percent.

**Table 1 and Figure 1 around here**

Figure 1 compares immigrant unemployment by nationality over time by using the 2005 Japanese census and the 2009 Shizuoka survey of immigrants. All immigrant groups enjoyed lower unemployment rates in 2005 compared to 2009. The highest unemployment rate in 2005 was 7.1 percent, for Peruvians; the lowest rate was less than one percent, for Indonesians. However, several immigrant groups had higher unemployment rates in 2009. In particular, the unemployment rate for Peruvians exceeded 30 percent, whereas the unemployment rates for Filipinos, Vietnamese and Brazilians reached more than 20 percent. Given that the overall rate of unemployment in Japan shifted from 3.9 percent in 2007 to 5.5 percent in 2009, the disparity between the unemployment rates for native-born workers and immigrants widened remarkably during that time. Among immigrant workers, the unemployment rates for Chinese and Indonesians appeared to be relatively lower than the rates for other immigrant groups because more Chinese and Indonesian migrants living in Shizuoka Prefecture entered Japan under the trainee and technical intern program. Although this program is officially intended to provide trainees who have migrated from developing countries with opportunities to acquire technical skills at Japanese companies, it has been widely used as a source of inexpensive, unskilled foreign labor. Workers may participate in the program for up to three years. When employers no longer need trainees and technical interns and terminate their employment contract with these workers, the trainees and interns are not allowed to stay in Japan. This highly precarious residence status for trainees made unemployment rates seem much lower for Chinese and Indonesian immigrants than for Latin American immigrants, many of whom held residence permits allowing them to reside in Japan regardless of their employment status.
Welfare regimes and integration programs for immigrants

In this section, we describe how the Japanese government has coped with a rapid increase in unemployment among immigrants in Japan. The Japanese government began implementing two types of programs: measures to facilitate the return of Latin American immigrants to their country of origin and integration-oriented programs to provide support for unemployed immigrants. In April 2009, the Japanese government began implementing programs that provided a travel allowance for Latin American immigrants of Japanese ancestry to return to their home country. This policy lasted for a year. Applicants were paid 300,000 Japanese Yen (JPY), which was comparable to almost 3,000 US dollars (USD) based on currency exchange rates in April 2009. Dependent relatives were paid 200,000 JPY (2,000 USD). Those who were qualified to receive unemployment benefits for more than one or two months were further provided with 100,000 JPY or 200,000 JPY, respectively (Ishikawa 2011). Moreover, this program stipulated that the applicants who were offered a travel allowance would not be admitted to Japan with a long-term resident visa for at least three years. Some criticized this stipulation because the program was obviously aimed at inducing jobless immigrants to return to the countries of their birth.

In fact, the Brazilian population in Japan began to decrease in 2008, declining to 210,032. Between 2007 and 2011, the Brazilian population in Japan declined by 34 percent. In total, more than 100,000 Brazilian immigrants are estimated to have left Japan after the financial crisis. Of that number, 19 percent applied to the program to help return to their country of origin. It appears that fewer people applied to the program than expected. Those who returned to their country of origin without applying to the program may believe that they will re-migrate to Japan when the economy improves.

Programs that focus on language and vocational training are designed to include immigrants socially rather than exclude them, in contrast with the policies encouraging jobless immigrants to return home. As discussed above, the Japanese welfare regime is a conservative welfare regime that maintains the rigid labor market structure with its insider-outsider cleavages. Japan’s employment policies are characterized as providing a high degree of employment protection, defined as the extent to which employers find it difficult to dismiss workers, and a low level of social protection, which refers to the extent to which the government provides support for the unemployed. However, globalization has led to a considerable increase in the number of employees with nonstandard work arrangements in Japan, whereas employment protection for regular
workers has remained intact. Although temporary workers engaged through employment agencies and workers with fixed-term employment contracts are more likely to be dismissed in times of economic recession, there are few governmental policies to provide significant support for the disadvantaged in the labor market.

Figure 2 indicates the public expenditure for employment policies in several advanced countries in 2005. The total expenditure is considerably smaller in Japan than in other countries except for the US. Japan spent 0.68 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on employment policies, whereas Denmark, Germany and Sweden spent more than triple that amount. When public expenditures for employment are disaggregated into active measures (job-matching and training services) and passive measures (unemployment benefits), Japan’s expenditure for active measures was smaller than its expenditure for passive measures. Japan’s budget for training was the lowest of all the countries shown in Figure 2.

One of the reasons the Japanese government has played a minor role in implementing active measures in the labor market is that the firm-based internal labor market has been dominant in Japan. Employers or organizations have provided firm-specific skills for employees. The practices of long-term employment and seniority pay have deterred employees from changing employers, leading to lower turnover rates in Japan. The Japanese government’s employment policies are notably consistent with such labor market practices. During the economic crisis, public expenditure for the active measures of employment policy in Japan rose markedly in 2009 from the 2007 level. The ratio of active measures to GDP rose from 0.18 in 2007 to 0.47 in 2009, whereas the figures for passive measures were 0.28 and 0.42 in 2007 and 2009, respectively. At first glance, it appears that the Japanese government addressed unemployment among dispatched workforces through a considerable increase in its expenditure for training programs. This budgetary growth, however, does not reflect significant changes in Japan’s employment policies because the growth in active measures is mostly attributable to the employment maintenance incentive, which was intended to protect the employment of redundant workers during the economic downturn.

Despite few changes in the overall budgetary structure for employment policies in Japan, it is important to consider that the Japanese government began establishing some types of social inclusion policies for unemployed immigrants during the economic recession because there were few integration policies for immigrants in Japan at the national level while the economy and the labor market were the driving forces shaping the incorporation of immigrants into Japanese society.
The integration programs established by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (hereafter, MHLW) specifically targeting immigrants are composed primarily of language courses and vocational training programs that anticipate that participants will become financially independent. In the programs intended to prepare Nikkeijin for jobs, the language courses concentrate on teaching words and expressions that are useful in the workplaces where the Nikkeijin migrants were previously employed. The course also includes instruction on how to write a C.V., job interview practices and a lecture on Japanese employment legislation and labor market practices. MHLW entrusted the delivery of these courses to the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), a non-profit organization that implements international cooperation activities delegated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, governmental ministries and other public and private institutions.

In 2009, when JICE began to implement language courses, the courses entailed 181 hours of study over the course of three months. Subsequently, MHLW and JICE extended the program to increase the variety of courses and the total hours of study. As of 2012, this program offers eight different courses; eligibility depends on applicants’ fluency in Japanese. The basic language course is composed of three different levels, each of which includes 120 hours of study during which students can learn to read, write and converse in Japanese as needed in workplaces. In addition, immigrants can choose language courses that focus specifically on preparation for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. These courses also have three levels, each geared to a different level of applicant language fluency.

Two other language courses are more oriented toward specific occupations. For instance, a language course for people interested in elderly care aims to teach words, terms and communication skills that workers in the elderly care industry need to know. This course was established because the supply of labor for elderly care has not met the recently increased demand. Another course is oriented toward the acquisition of general skills that are applicable in a wide variety of jobs, such as communicating with others in a business setting and computer skills. Those who finish these language courses can then take vocational training courses specifically for immigrants as well as courses intended for the overall population. There were thirteen vocational training courses targeting immigrants in 2011. In one course, people can learn metalworking skills. The duration of vocational training courses ranges from three to six months.

Although there are eight language courses in the immigrant integration program, the program assumes that people will generally take four courses. It is not mandatory for applicants to take all four courses, and the number of courses taken varies by individual.
For individuals who take all four courses, the total number of study hours ranges from 420 to 480 over a time frame of more than a year. The total number of study hours in Japan’s integration programs appears to be slightly lower than the number of study hours for integration programs in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden (Jacobs and Rea 2007). The decisions about whether to participate in an integration program and the number of courses to take are made in consultation with public employment agency officers. In contrast to the policies in several European nations, immigrants in Japan are not obliged to take part in integration measures. Participation in the language courses is voluntary. In the Netherlands, in contrast, newly arrived immigrants are obliged to take 600 hours of language courses and courses on societal orientation. In addition, in 2007, the obligation to participate was modified to include an obligation to pass a final test in the Netherlands (Jacobs and Rea 2007). It is also important to note that the Japanese government provides free language and vocational training courses, which allows disadvantaged immigrants to gain easy access to integration measures. In Europe, free language courses are provided in Denmark, France and Sweden, whereas people must pay for the courses in Germany and the Netherlands (Jacobs and Rea 2007).

The Japanese integration measures, although established only recently, seem to help integrate unemployed immigrants into Japanese society. Nevertheless, several aspects of the courses may be insufficient to provide social inclusion for immigrants. First, although the immigrant integration programs were only first offered by the Japanese government in 2009, the state budget for these courses has been declining ever since. In 2009 and 2010, the government spent approximately one billion JPY on integration courses for Nikkeijin immigrants. Compared to the 2010 budget, the 2011 budget was 20 percent lower and the 2012 budget was 40 percent lower. This reduced budget resulted in a significant decrease in the number of students who could take the courses.9

Second, there is no social allowance provided while immigrants participate in language and vocational training courses. Several courses have therefore been implemented in the evening because many participants work during the day. However, all vocational training courses have been conducted in the daytime. The lack of social allowance prevents unemployed immigrants from taking the integration programs. In fact, because all vocational training courses have been offered only in the daytime, fewer immigrants have applied for these courses than expected.10

Among those who became jobless during the economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, unemployment benefits are assumed to have expired in 2010. Among unemployed immigrants, many of whom contribute to unemployment insurance for a short period of
time due to their precarious employment status, unemployment benefits usually last for only six months. The maximum duration of this benefit is limited to one year, which is a very short term in comparison with what is provided in European countries, where the unemployed receive benefits for more than two years.

This lower level of social benefits for maintaining the lives of the unemployed originated from the overall employment and welfare policies in Japan, as discussed above. To effectively enact its integration measures, the government presumably needs to provide benefits to the unemployed to support themselves while they are participating in language courses. The short duration of unemployment benefits has made it difficult for MHLW to implement vocational training on a long-term basis. In Denmark, which concentrates more on social protection for the unemployed, the government has spent a great deal of money on both unemployment benefits and vocational training (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009). In 2009, the Japanese government established an additional allowance for unemployed individuals who participate in vocational training after their unemployment benefits have expired. However, this allowance is not linked to immigrant integration measures, such as language courses. Even if immigrants whose unemployment benefits have already ended participate in language courses, they receive no allowance for their livelihood, unlike those who participate in vocational training courses that implicitly target Japanese people.

Finally, I must mention the socioeconomic outcomes for immigrants who participate in integration measures. Given the highly segmented labor market structure that has prevailed in Japan, integration measures may not be particularly effective in helping immigrants change their precarious employment status. Japanese organizations have played a greater role in providing firm-specific skills for workers. Except for recent high school and university graduates, those who lack any employment experience as regular workers face difficulties in becoming regular workers with stable employment and social benefits.

Nonstandard workforces, including part-time workers and temporarily dispatched workers, find it difficult to move to the standard employment sector because of the barrier to mobility between these two sectors and because nonstandard employment is not generally considered to provide workers with opportunities to enhance their skills (Genda 2005; Takenoshita 2008). It is therefore important to consider the way in which Japanese organizations utilize the workers trained outside their firms. According to research on jobs among immigrants after the completion of language courses in 2009 \textsuperscript{11}, among 400 immigrants who participated in integration measures, 73 percent were able to find jobs. Nevertheless, most of these jobs were temporarily created by local
governments as public works for the unemployed. The immigrants were engaged in unskilled jobs such as cleaning streets, forestry and road construction. The tenure of these public works jobs is a year at most. By performing these unskilled jobs, immigrants were unable to accumulate work-related skills that could contribute significantly to their future career development. However, by 2009, the Japanese economy had not yet recovered from its slowdown, and the language and vocational training courses had just begun. It is therefore still too early to assess the socioeconomic outcomes of participation in the integration measures. We must continue to carefully examine the manner in which integration courses help immigrants become upwardly mobile and transition from precarious to stable employment.

**Conclusion**

This chapter consists mainly of two parts. First, we discuss how the incorporation of Brazilian immigrants into the labor market influenced the conditions for employment during the recent economic recession in 2008 and 2009. Second, we describe how the Japanese government coped with the massive growth in unemployment by launching integration programs for immigrants. By looking at the labor market structures and the welfare and employment policies, we highlight the fact that these two dimensions were strongly interconnected and consequently influenced situations of immigrants’ employment in Japan.

Before the recent economic crisis occurred in 2008, the incorporation of Nikkeijin immigrants from Latin American countries depended primarily on the economic demand for unskilled workers in the production sites that arose in the segmented labor market structures. During this period, there were few governmental welfare and integration policies at a national level that aimed to improve precarious status of immigrants’ employment, whereas local governments and NGOs played a significant role in providing support for immigrants in Japan.

However, the massive rise in unemployment among immigrants and Japanese temporary workers led the government to launch active employment policy measures similar to those already implemented in several European countries. Given the previous unwillingness of the Japanese government to assist immigrants in becoming integrated into society, these recently established integration-oriented policies undoubtedly represent an unprecedented improvement in supporting disadvantaged immigrants in the labor market. Nevertheless, the institutional arrangements of employment and welfare policies and the labor market structure placed significant constraints on the actual
integration programs and their effectiveness. When the integration policies are reformed, it will be important for policy makers and immigration scholars to consider beforehand how integration measures would depend on the institutional constraints previously established in Japan.

In addition, we need to take a cautious look at the future improvement of the integration policies that have only recently been implemented in Japan. Specifically, there has been a substantial shrinkage in the budget for these integration courses due to the need to cut overall governmental expenditures in connection with the deficit crisis. Meanwhile, the normative issues associated with individual rights and citizenship play a prominent role in justifying the ongoing governmental effort to address the integration of immigrants. While the Japanese government pursues the effectiveness and the actual positive outcomes of its integration measures, it may need to consider whether and to what extent the actual integration courses will guarantee the social rights and citizenship of immigrants. It is important to keep in mind that these integration policies unavoidably require normative debates regarding people’s rights and citizenship.

In several European countries, such as Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, some integration measures became mandatory in the late 2000s. To obtain a long-term or permanent residence permit, non-European immigrants in these countries now have to pass a test on language and social knowledge after completing their integration courses. If they fail this test, the applicants are denied a residence permit and citizenship. In addition, the cost of courses and tests are paid by the applicants rather than the government (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Joppke 2007). These mandatory integration programs clearly have a connotation of assimilationism rather than respect for people with different backgrounds. We should continue to observe whether any changes occur in Japan’s integration courses to strengthen the assimilationist perspective that forcefully requires immigrants to acquire the language and culture of their host society.

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Notes

1 Although Australia, Canada and the US are commonly classified as classic countries of immigration and as liberal welfare state regimes, there appear to be divergences among these nations with regard to providing integration programs that specifically target immigrants. Whereas the US is a *laissez faire* country that lacks programs at a national level to facilitate immigrants’ integration into its society (Jimenez 2011), Australia has several programs through which immigrants can learn the English that is necessary to work in the labor market (OECD 2007).

2 In this section, the author draws heavily upon his previous works (Takenoshita 2010; Takenoshita 2013; Takenoshita, forthcoming).

3 Please see the following regarding detailed information on the survey of Brazilian immigrants in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2007 (Takenoshita, forthcoming). The 2009 survey aimed at investigating the impact of economic recession targeted several immigrant groups: Brazilians, Peruvians, Koreans, Chinese, Indonesians and Vietnamese. The systemic sampling method was used.

4 In the analysis of the 2005 Japanese Census, we restricted samples to those who lived in Shizuoka
Prefecture at the time of the survey.

5 Regarding recent changes in immigration and integration policies in Japan, please see another chapter included in this edited volume, which discusses the immigration policy in Japan.

6 These figures were calculated using the OECD statistics on the website.

7 In this section, we rely heavily on several interviews with officers in the Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communications and Exchanges (HICE), workers in Public Employment Security Office in Hamamatsu and officers in MHLW and JICE. These interviews were conducted from 2009 to 2012. I also use the documents provided by these institutions to describe the integration programs.

8 There is some information on the following website regarding the integration programs run by JICE, (http://sv2.jice.org/jigyou/tabunka_gaiyo.htm) (last accessed 11 February 2013). MHLW also put some governmental documents and information on the programs on the website (http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2009/04/dl/h0428-2a.pdf).

9 In 2009 and 2010, more than 6,000 immigrants participated in these courses each year, whereas in 2011, the number of students declined to roughly 4,000, and in 2012, it is projected to be 3,000.

10 In 2011, eighty immigrants enrolled in the vocational training courses.

11 This information was provided by the Public Employment Security Office in Hamamatsu during an interview in 2010.
Table 1. Proportion of Brazilian immigrants in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2007 and 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular employment</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatched employment</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of labor force</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in this table indicate percent in each year. Note that there is a slight difference between the 2007 and 2009 surveys in the way the respondents were asked about their employment status. In the 2007 survey, respondents could choose the option “others” from a list of possible answers, whereas this option was not included in the 2009 survey.

Figure 1. Unemployment rates of immigrants living in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2005 and 2009

Note: Results of 2005 are based on the 2005 Japanese population census. Their numbers are estimated from the results of foreign nationals in Shizuoka Prefecture. The results of 2009 are calculated using the 2009 survey for immigrants in Shizuoka Prefecture.
Figure 2. Public expenditure for employment policy as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in 2005

Note: This graph has two vertical axes. A vertical axis on the left side indicates the public expenditure of passive and active measures in employment policies, whereas a vertical axis on the right side is associated with the public expenditure specifically on provision of training.

Source: OECD statistics