

Educational Inequality in an Age of Declining Birthrate

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The purpose of this paper is to expand upon the existing literature on educational reform in Japan by examining how a declining birthrate affects equality of educational opportunity among children from different family backgrounds.

The official report of the United Nations defines a society as young if the share of the over 65-year olds is under 4%. If the share of older people reaches to 7% the society is understood to be aging. Furthermore, a society with a 14% share of above 65-year olds is defined as a 'hyper-aging society.'¹

In Japan the demographic change from a young to a 'hyper-ageing society' has taken place in only the past five decades. While only 4% of the Japanese population were 65 years old or older in 1950, the figure reached 17% in 2001 while still on the rise. The Japanese population has the highest life expectancy by international standards (with an average of 77 years for males and 83 years for the females population). The share of over 65-years olds in the total population is higher only in Italy. The average age of the entire population in Japan is 42.3 years, indicating the steady graying of society.

The rise in life expectancy by itself would not have such serious influence if the fertility rate (a measure of the average number of birth per woman during her childbearing years) were not declining precipitously at the same time. While the fertility rate was still 3.65 children per woman in 1950, it fell to 2 children, and thus below the replacement rate, within a decade. In 2000 the fertility rate was only 1.35. The share of the under 15-year olds in the total population has now reached a historic low of less than 15%. Japanese society has thus been severely hit by the demographic problem at both ends of the age scale.

The absolute share of old people in the total population is rising as a result of the decline in birth figures, while life expectancy is growing steadily due to the continuing improvement in living conditions. In addition, the average age of the population is being raised further by a drop in the population of young people. After the combination of these two demographic phenomena resulted in Japan experiencing its first population decline in the postwar era last year, with the number of Japanese falling by 8,340 from December 2004 to November 2005 to a population of 127.76 million. The declining birthrate is also a serious problem faced by other East Asian countries. The 2004 total fertility rate was 1.16 in South Korea, 1.18 in Taiwan, and 1.24 in Singapore. With the exception of China where the one-child policy has been enforced since 1978 to restrain population growth, other nations in the region have undertaken a number of measures in an attempt to halt this trend.

Against this backdrop, the Japanese government has set up several consultative bodies to study measures to tackle the falling birthrate which has resulted in a number of measures, including a tax reduction to support child-raising and more support to the current school system. In 2003, the Koizumi administration enacted a law obliging local governments and business enterprises to work out action plans to support child-raising and took measures against the dwindling number of children, including allowances for children and nursery schools as well

as subsidies for enterprises.

Certainly, in the post-war period, Japan had a baby-boom, as did Europe and America, but in recent years the school-age population is declining. Also it is an interesting coincidence that the burst of so-called 'bubble economy' coincided almost exactly with the peak in the number of war18-year olds in the Japanese population, (the group which has accounted for well over 90% of all university entrants). This generation, the baby boom after the Second, peaked at 2,050,000 in 1992 and then began a steady decline (31.2%) in numbers to around 1,410,000 in 2004. Therefore, in the higher education sector, there is a lot of speculation about the effects this will have on the lesser institutions in the sector, leading to the amalgamation, downsizing or closure of many of them. This is being offset through strategies such as the promotion of lifelong learning, upgrading from two-year to four-year courses, and an expansion of postgraduate schools. This is probably also linked to the phenomenon of credentialism ('degrecocracy').²

Official and Governmental Policies against the Declining Birthrate

According to various news sources in Japan, the fertility rate hit a record low in 2005. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare announced that the national fertility rate was 1.25 in 2005, meaning that on average a Japanese woman between the ages 15 and 49 would give birth to 1.25 babies. Several official documents revealed that the trend of low birthrate in Japan seems to be strongly related to following causes; (1) late marriage stemming from insecure economic conditions; (2) rises in levels of women's education and subsequent high percentage going into workplace; and (3) the costs of children's school education.³

Since the early 1990s, the Japanese government has been actively concerned with the stagnating total fertility rate which remains under the replacement level and the decreasing birth (so-called 'shōshika'). It is feared that 'shōshika' would have a serious impact on of the social security and welfare of the citizen, such as public pensions and medical treatment and care. The only possible way to maintain the present system of social welfare would be to either increase the burden on the working population and companies or reduce benefits to the elderly. Furthermore, a population decline could bring about a slowdown in economic growth over the medium and long term and thus further aggravate the government's fiscal difficulties. Therefore, pronatalistic policies some have been publicly discussed and have been implemented.

In 1995, the Japanese government implemented a *Basic Orientations to Assist Child-Raising* the so-called the 'Angel Plan,' originally a 10-year plan for helping people in child-rearing arranged under the Education, Health and Welfare, Labor, and Construction ministries. As pointed out above, one of the reasons for the trend toward declining birthrate is the growing presence of women in the workplace. In general, Japanese women tend to leave work once they were marry (*kotobuki-taisha*) or became pregnant (*shussan-taisha*) to become housewives and devotedly raise children. It is an unwritten rule that if two employees who were working for the same company got married (*shanai-kekkon*) one of the two must leave the company. In practice, the woman would quit and usually dropped out of the workforce altogether.

Indeed, 70 percent of married women quit the workplace after giving birth to their first child. This is a bleak sign of just how hard it is for women to hold down careers and be mothers at the same time. If a woman continue to work after giving birth to the first baby,

it is difficult for her to have a second child. Therefore, the 'Angel Plan' aims to build an environment that makes it possible for women to feel secure that they can give birth to and raise children while holding jobs. Among the various measures advanced were the expansion of the capacity of day nurseries, a lengthening of the hours during which day nurseries are open, and a large increase in the number of child-rearing support centers (*kosodate shien senta*) throughout the country

In 1999 this plan was revised to create the New Angel Plan, which covers the 2000 to 2004 period.⁴ The new plan expands numerical targets for diverse types of care facilities, and includes provisions promoting improvements in the corporate work environment. However, despite the fact that the government and bureaucracies planned to put together a new package of policies aimed at reducing the declining birthrate, it continued to fall. As critics look at these plans, which only try to change employment environments, corporate demands on the importance of the workplace, and calls for reduction of education costs and better childcare.

In 2000, The Central Council on Education (CCE) published a report entitled '*Shōshika to Kyōiku*' (Low Birthrate and Education) which pointed out that the educational functions of families were in decline as a result of the falling birthrate, increasing numbers of nuclear families, urbanization and weakening of human relationships-phenomena which have increased sharply in occurrence during the past decade. The Report argued that the low birth rate will exert negative influences on future school education, namely those are (1) the decrease in opportunities for children to "cultivate character through hard work hard together at school" (*se'ssa takuma*) ; (2) prompting over-protectiveness by parents through excessive interference in their children's education ; (3) future difficulties of transmitting the experiences and knowledge of child-rearing from generation to generation ; and (4) the decrease in various extra-curricular school events such as club activities.⁵

In order to minimize these effects, the report recommended taking the following measures separately explained in three different social sections ; education at home, school, and the local community. For example in the section entitled 'The Role of Family Education and a Plan for implementation,' based on the assumptions that 'education in the home is the starting point for all education and it plays a major role in the fostering of fundamental lifestyle habits, a sense of ethics, a rich sensibility, an independent spirit, and self-discipline' the report promotes measures to support education in the home by all parents. These measures include the distribution of 'The Pocketbook for Home Education' (i.e., *Family Note*, a note book to be used by students in moral education classes prescribed by the government), which suggests a variety of opportunities to hold child care lectures and gatherings at which the issue of the cooperation of fathers in children's education in the home is considered. In addition to these measures, the CCE is further promoting finely tailored support utilizing information technology (IT) for education in the home, for example, child care counseling and information provision is available through mobile telephones. Recently the elements of this report have been revised into a new plan, *Kodomo, Kosodate Ouen Pulan* (Children and Childbearing Support Plan) for the period between 2005 and 2009.

With the formation of a new Koizumi cabinet in October 2005, Kuniko Inoguchi, (former Professor of Sophia University, and a scholar of international relations) was appointed as Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs, a new post created to specifically address a problem of the decreasing birthrate. Inoguchi soon confirmed the priority she attached

to this issue by launching a series of discussions with prefectural governors on measures to tackle the low birthrate. Inoguchi and related research committees studied a child-raising tax cut said to be effective in France and sought cooperation from other members of the cabinet. But the Finance Ministry and the Tax Research Commission of the ruling LDP are opposed to a tax cut due to the severe fiscal difficulty the government faces. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, which has been in charge of measures to tackle the decline in the birthrate, is also not willing to support the tax reduction. On June, 15, 2006, the government came up with proposals to curb Japan's declining birthrate, offering preferential treatment in public works contracts to companies that provided child-care benefits to employees. Among other plans presented at a panel meeting chaired by Inoguchi was a proposal to give parents of preschool children larger subsidies than parents with children who are of school age.

In short, the current declining birthrate and shrinking of the population are issues that have an increasingly strong impact on educational policies in Japan. Rather than being simply one item on the policy agenda, the Japan government is dealing with the dramatic decline in the number of children as a critical issue that can affect school education in general. The issues of insufficient number of day-care centers, extension of the period of free medical care for children, and reform of tax exemption for dependents are closely related. Moreover, the aging of the population and the projected conversion of vast proportions of the population from producers and taxpayers to benefit recipients are changes that will affect Japan's basic economic structure and could lead to low growth and massive fiscal deficits. However, the critics sound the alarm that the government should analyze the reasons the past measures have failed to achieve tangible results and allocate funds efficiently by spending them on carefully conceived projects deemed worthwhile.

“Unequal Competition from the Start”

The ideology of *gakurekishugi* or ‘degreeocracy’ affects Japanese society widely and resulted in an examination culture across a considerable section of the Japanese school system. In such a society, it is believed that educational background plays an extremely significant role concerning the distribution of occupations and careers. Since the mid-1990s in Japan, there has been extensive coverage in both the mass media and academic books and articles describing how the low birthrate tendencies influences parents' *excessive* willingness to invest in their children's education, paving the way for extra instruction at cram schools outside formal schooling.⁶

Some observers have gone so far as to proclaim that this demographic shift will mean the end of Japan's ‘examination hell’ or *shiken jigoku*. The so-called ‘2009 crisis’ is named so because this is the year when there will no longer be any competition to get into a university since the places available at higher education institutions will equal the number of potential applicants. However, this does not mean, as some have intimated, that the competition to get into higher education will disappear.

Instead some educationists and sociologists have suggested that the ‘examination hell’ will continue in an altered form and will be coupled to ‘unequal competition from the start’ of children's lives or *hajemekara fukōhei na kyōsō*. Most troubling to many critics are the emerging ‘fixed’ inequalities in educational opportunities among the different social strata throughout all stages of schooling. Famous private middle schools, offering guaranteed access to a prestigious

private high school and high chances of getting into a top university, have been attracting increasing numbers of students in recent years. Students who begin this process early commence their preparations in elementary schools. Indeed, richer parents have always been able to supplement their children's education with extra, costly tuition and there is a level to which the education system therefore reproduces the class profile of Japanese people.

In an editorial on May 21, 2006, in the *Asahi Shinbun*, the headline 'Educational opportunity depends on parents' income' reported this tendency, describing, '21 million yen (about 20 million dollars) per child is needed to send them to a private kindergarten, middle school, high school and university.' In the article, according to a survey of household expenses conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2005, the average annual income of a working household is merely 5,680,000 yen, an amount that has been decreasing in recent years. The survey concluded that: 'It is extremely difficult for an average family to send two children to private middle schools.' Likewise the survey concerning the educational expenses conducted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2004 reported that 'the educational expenses for the private middle schools (i.e. tuition fees) has never stopped increasing. It costs about 960,000 yen per child per year. The expenses for preparatory cram schools have been increasing in general.' AIU Insurance Company simulated that the educational expenses cost 20,630,000 yen for liberal arts graduates (i.e., humanities and social sciences) and 21,790,000 yen for natural science graduates in cases where a child goes to all private schools from kindergarten to university (excluding elementary school).

Mimizuka Hiroaki, Professor of Ochanomizu University, in the above article, made critical comments concerning 'unequal competition from the start', as he expressed apprehension about generating inequalities of educational opportunities according to earning differentials of families:

Nowadays, the difference between each family's economic situation and culture is greatly influencing children's academic ability. It is an unfair competition from the start. Data from a survey of elementary school children aged 12 years in a suburban city of Tokyo with a population of 250,000 showed that 14% go to cram schools. 22% of the children who attend cram schools scored over 90 points (scale of 100) on a standard mathematical exam. On the other hand, in case of children who do not go to cram school, only 1% scored over 90 points on the same exam. The difference of academic ability between children who go to cram school and who do not has been expanding even in local prefectures, for example in the cities with the seat of the prefectural government where private junior high and high schools and prestigious cram schools are often founded.⁷

In fact, the Gini co-efficient (a measure of income inequality ranging from 0, representing perfect equality, to 1, representing perfect inequality) of Japan is on the increase according to various surveys. A study released in 2005 by the OECD (*Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* in the second half of the 1990s) found Japan to have a slightly higher level of inequality than average among the industrial nations (with a Gini co-efficient of 0.314 against the OECD average of 0.307). The number of children and students who receive financial aid for stationery and school lunches in public elementary and junior high school reached 1,340,000 in 2004 nationwide. This represented an increased 40% over 4 years.

The article remarked that ‘there are many children who can not even have a choice from the start to go to private middle school and cram school because the annual income of their parents is low.’

In recent years, however, many social scientists acutely point out that education policies designed to protect the educational interests of the least educationally advantaged and the most vulnerable to failure are being counteracted by the effects of policies designed to entrench the privileges and to broaden the educational options of those already best placed, by market forces, to complete successfully a full secondary education and to proceed to further study and employment. For instance, Kariya Takehiko, Professor of Tokyo University, denounced the educational reform carried out by the MOE, including the newly revised Course of Study during the 1990s, on the basis of data about the number of hours of study outside of school. According to Kariya’s data, the MOE’s relaxation of educational standards, the introduction of so-called ‘*yutori kyōiku*’ had diminished children’s interest in learning.⁸ Indeed, he found that the enfeeblement of the value of studying was especially pronounced among lower social strata. The diffusion of the idea of a ‘vice of competition based on examination’ had made it harder for those in the lower strata to maintain an interest in learning. Under governmental educational policies, the widening gap between the upper and lower strata in terms of children’s eagerness to learn and advance academically will, Kariya warned cause Japan to turn into a full-fledged “class society.”⁹

It can be said that this trend raises a question. How can families and educators deal with children who no longer find any motivation to learn. The significant concern is that academic achievement is becoming polarized between two groups (so-called *nikyokuka*): children who are coming from wealthier family and those who are not. In other words, the differing home environments of students is leading to the creation of one stratum that studies and one that does not. When this is linked with the gap between the ‘well-off’ and ‘badly-off’, the result will presumably be greater social inequality in the future.

Thus, as the birthrate in Japan falls and the number of children declines, though high school education is open to almost anyone, but entrance to a few private middle and high schools, then top universities remains difficult. The economic slump has still been severe recently. With society’s once-rigid focus on educational value changed and diversified, the growing lack of motivation among students of lower income families may be unavoidable.

Advent of *Kakusa Shakai* (“Gap Society”)

This increasingly distinct divide between rich and poor is so vivid in the national consciousness that it has been given a name : *kakusa shakai* (literally meaning “a society of disparity” or “gap society”). Recently the term “*kakusa shakai*” turns up frequently in Japan. Certainly many Japanese have paid an attention to several disparities for a long time, for instance, between regions and between industries. However, consideration is now focusing also on the gap at an individual level. Actually, the Ministry of Internal Affairs presented the statistics which indicated that household income differentials have been widening steadily ever since 1979, with a wider gap as age goes up. Moreover, a comparison of the figures for 1999 and 2004 points out an increased disparity in the under-30 age group in the same way. Economists suggested that this gap is caused by the decline in hiring of regular employees,

leaving many young people unemployed or doing low-paid temporary work.

Chūō Kōron published a paperback in 2001 under the title *Ronsō-Chūryū Hōkai* (Discussion-the breaking up of the middle) that gives a clear overview of the first media coverage and academic discussions of topics such as the ‘break-up of the great middle (class)’ and the emergence of an ‘unequal society’ in Japan. A decade ago, 90% of Japanese considered themselves “middle-class.” Actually in various surveys conducted by several official reports, however, 60% of Japanese recently rate their economic status as “below middle-class.” The public’s increasing awareness of a *kakusa shakai* is reflected in the Japanese media’s obsession with who is up and who is down. In other words, the domestic debate is dominated by the idea of *kachigumi* and *makegumi* (“the winning team” and the “losing team”). For this account, Miura Atsushi’s recent book, *Karyū-shkaii*, points out that this ongoing change in consciousness of the Japanese will affect the pattern of parents’ behaviors to choose schools for their children.¹⁰

Likewise as major newspapers and magazines, sociologists and educationists have recently published numerous books or articles discussing *kakusa shakai* in Japan. Perhaps the earliest books are *Nihon no keizai kakusa* (Japan’s economic disparities) written by Tachibanaki Toshiaki in 1998 and *Fubyōdō Shakai Nihon* (Japan’s unequal society) by Sato Toshiki published in 2000.¹¹ Tachibanaki analyzed the factors contributing to the polarization such as the introduction of performance-oriented practices and the increase of non-regular employment. He attributed the sense of widening disparity to earnings differentials among workers that have become larger with the introduction of merit-based pay, as well as to a rapidly aging society, which puts a greater welfare burden on younger worker. He claims that recently the degree of inequality in Japan has become greater than in the U.S. and the UK.

From a different angle, the sociologist Yamada Masahiro, in his book *Kibo Kakusa Shakai* (Society of expectation gaps) in 2005 has suggested that statistically verifiable data of quantitative income gaps do not necessarily match directly a person’s individual sense of living in poor social conditions, therefore pointing out considerable qualitative perceptions of disparities.¹² The declining academic ability of Japanese young people, according to Yamada, is a result of the growing perception that effort in the educational arena will not be rewarded. Yamada and others highlighted that young people no longer dream of becoming “*salarymen*.” because they know that even if they study hard, enter a famous university, and are hired by a major company, that company is at risk to go bankrupt. The need to acquire academic proficiency has traditionally been premised on the goal of becoming a white-collar worker after completing one’s education. If youth are unwilling or unable to follow this path, as Yamada argues, there is no need for them to study. Thus, the re-differentiation of Japanese society is particularly sensed by Japanese young people, felt as a loss of career chances and personal future options.

Many Japanese, including mass media, interprets the reforms under the Koizumi administration as the direct cause of *kakusa shakai*. Though flexible regulation policies fulfilled throughout the period of Koizumi administration contributed to the activation of the economy, many people think that their were ‘losers’ (*make-gumi* in Japanese) created by the Koizumi’s policies which have focused on deregulation, privatization, spending cuts, and tax breaks for the rich. ‘I don’t think it’s bad that there are social disparities,’ Koizumi said in the Japanese Parliament, Japanese people have been quick recognize the spreading of *kakusa* (the gap).

The Issues of Jobless Youth

The issues surrounding the inequality of job opportunities were exacerbated during the recession of the 1990s. In 2002, the latest survey showed that the number of jobless youths reached 2,132,000 persons nationally. Genda Yuji, labor economist, and others have been arguing that the rapid rise of the new phenomenon of so-called *furita* (youth who do not find employment as full-time tenured employees and work in untenured short-term and or part-time jobs after leaving school) and 'NEET' (an acronym for 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' applied to youth who do not engage in any type of employment at all after leaving school) is been striking.¹³ According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare statistics, while the overall population of NEETs was approximately 400,000 in 1993, it reached 640,000 in 2003. As far as the 30-to 34-year-old group goes, the number was around 90,000 in 1993 and it doubled to 180,000 in 2003.¹⁴

The term 'NEET' was first identified as a problem in Britain (categorizing the people between 16 and 18 years of age), and was adopted by the Japanese (alternated to indicate the people aged between 15 and 34, and excluding married women). Concerning on the problem of jobless youths, three problems stands out:¹⁵ (1) opportunities for full-time employment will continue to be limited among the *furita* and NEETs; (2) the increase of such a new categories of jobless people in their late 20s and early 30s further exacerbates the declining birthrate; and (3) the system of company recruitment of university (or college) graduates deprives employment opportunities to youth who fail to develop renowned career goals.

The Influences of Social Structure

Genda argues that there is a clear distinction between the characteristics of the unemployed as represented in the labor force survey conducted by the government and NEETs.¹⁶ The former is those who wish to work for earnings and actually search for jobs ("job-seeker type"), and the latter can be classified as "non-seekers" or the "discouraged" who do not even wish to work and herefore are not counted statically as unemployed. Genda suggests that the phenomena of NEETs will have serious affects on the social structure of present-day Japan. He indicates that jobless youths, with higher education tend to become a type of "job seeker," while jobless persons with lower education are more likely to give up their search for work entirely, and therefore become "non-seeker" types (therefore, not be counted in government unemployment statistics).

Moreover, in addition to educational background, as Genda argues, a large decline in family income has a serious influence on the rapid increase in the number of NEETs in Japan and a significant number of them come from economically disadvantaged families. He states as follows:

Granted, some NEETs do come from wealthy families; more that 20% of households with "non-seekers" earned more than 10 million yen/year in the 1990s. However, for households living with "discouraged" jobless youths, the proportion of such rich families fell from 23% in 1997 to 14% in 2002. As a result, in the 2000s, upper-income households have become less likely to generate the "discouraged" jobless youths, while lower-income households have become more likely to produce NEETs.¹⁷

Genda suggests that in Japan, in the UK, people's educational attainment and family income have a strong effect on whether they will become NEETs. Youths with lower education and those from poor working conditions and thus more tend to quit their jobs. He concludes that 'such class structure, or social segmentation, evolved during the long recession, and the presence of so many NEETs in Japan today is one outcome of the changing social structure in Japan in the 1990s and 2000s.' However, critics comment that lifestyles of *furita* or NEETs have become advantageous for enterprises, as these businesses can reduce labor costs by hiring them or other part-timers for labor rather than hiring regular employees.

Thus, the number and proportion of NEETs has been ever-increasing over the decade and it has increased to such level that Japanese people can no longer overlook them. Genda and others dispute that the issues of *furita* and NEETs are not so much an indication of a new generation of individualistic Japanese with a new work ethic (like *parasite singles*)¹⁸ as they are victims of a labor market which cannot fully accommodate them.

Conclusion

Many of the changes in school education since the 1990s in Japan were linked with both to the collapse of the bubble economy and to the continuing fall in the birthrate, currently one of the lowest in the world. Should the birthrate continue to fall, the workforce will decrease and consumption will slow, causing serious economic effects. Several governmental reports and plans recognized that extra supports are necessary in response to the declining birthrate affecting social securities.

Since the period of economic recession period, many Japanese young people who view the future with uncertainty and can barely support their existing lifestyles are now unlikely to consider getting married and starting families. More than half of married couples are reluctant to have more children, mainly because of the high costs and 'unsuitable' conditions for raising a child. In such a society (*shōshika shakai*), Japanese sociologists and economists point out that education-class lines are discernible and increasingly becoming visibly in at least three areas: differences in family socialization process, stratification in high-school culture, and macroscopic patterns of social mobility.

For years after World War II many Japanese harbored the idea of a universal middle class, but now the situation has changed substantially. Although Japan still tends to think of itself as one giant middle class, the wrenching economic and social shifts are splitting the nation into ranks of haves and have-nots. There are even concerns that the equality of educational opportunity has been lost and that this is leading to the stratification of Japanese society through the widening of income disparities in a "gap society" (*kakusa shakai*).

In a "gap society" secure, full-time jobs are more and more becoming limited to those who graduate from prestigious universities, and entry to those institutions becoming more apparently connected with family income and investments. Therefore, CCE's education reforms which were executed to give students more free time to explore their own interests might actually lead to those who can no longer see the point of working hard in school and becoming *furita* and NEETs. Since educational success is so visibly related to family background, more and more youth are dropping out of the system altogether or becoming disruptive within it.

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- ¹ *CIA World Fact Book* (2005). For the discussion of Japan's aging society, see Traphagan, J. and Knight, J. (eds) (2003) *Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society*, New York: State University of New York Press.
- ² See, Okada, A. (2001) "Japan as a Prototype of the 'Degreeocracy' Society?", *Educational Review* Vol.53-3, pp.303-312.
- ³ For example, see Ministries of Education, Health and Welfare, Labor, and Construction (1995), 'Angel Plan,' Chapter 5.
- ⁴ See, Ministries of Education, Health and Welfare, Labor, and Construction (1999), 'New Angel Plan.'
- ⁵ Central Council on Education (2000) *Shōshika to Kyōiku* (Low Birthrate and Education), Tokyo: Ministry of Education, Chapter 2.
- ⁶ For example, see Shirahase, S.(eds) *Henkasuru shakai no fubyōdō*, Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai.
- ⁷ Quoted in *Asahi Shinbun*, May 21, 2006.
- ⁸ *Nihon wa kaisō shakai ni naru* (Japan Will Turn into a Class Society), *Ronza*, January 2001.
- ⁹ See, in particular, Kariya, T. (2001) *Kaisōka nihon to kyōiku kiki*, Tokyo: Yūshindō.
- ¹⁰ Miura, A.(2005) *Kayū-shakai*, Tokyo: Koubunsha.
- ¹¹ Tachibanaki, T. (1998) *Nihon no keizai kakusa*, Tokyo: Iwanamishoten. and Sato, T. (2000) *Fubyōdō Shakai Nihon*, Tokyo : Chuōshinsho. Tachibanaki (" *Jakusha no hinkonka ga kakusa o jocho shite iru,*" *Ronza*, June 2005, pp. 102-107, at p.106) suggests "between two and four million," of whom many, perhaps most, live in severe poverty.
- ¹² Yamada, M. (2005) *Kibō kakusa shakai*, Tokyo:Chikumashobō.
- ¹³ For detailed argument for *furita* and NEET, see Genda,Y. and Kyokunuma, E. (2004) *NEET*, Tokyo: Gentousha.
- ¹⁴ See Prime Minister Office (2003) and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2005).
- ¹⁵ Genda, Y. and Kyokunuma, E. (2004).
- ¹⁶ Genda, Y. (2005) "The 'NEET' Problem in Japan" in *Social Science Japan*, No. 32, Tokyo: University of Tokyo., p.4.
- ¹⁷ Genda (2005), p.4.
- ¹⁸ Yamada, M. (1999) *Parasito shinguru no jidai*, Tokyo: Chikumashobō.