

Part 1 Introduction

Today, the significance of "human resource development" in developing countries is widely recognized not only in the field of international cooperation but also in the fields of education and industrial development. In the educational field, an increasing number of students from developing countries is being welcomed now in developed countries as a form of intellectual international contribution. In the industrial field, efforts have been made for local human resource development in developing countries in order to ensure proper quality management of overseas manufacturing, which is consequently contributing to improved technical capacity and industrial promotion. "Training" in international cooperation is nothing new, but its importance and necessity are being reaffirmed, and various human resource development activities are being actively carried out these days. Those include the acceptance of technical trainees in Japan, technical cooperation for counterpart entities by OJT (On the Job Training) in the context of development studies or technical cooperation projects, training programmes in a third country, study programmes for young people (to come and stay in Japan) and projects in partnership with NGOs or local governments in developing countries. In addition South-South cooperation is being encouraged by sending those engineers / technicians who received training in Japan to neighboring countries that enjoy similar regional conditions (nature, culture and language) to transfer their techniques acquired in Japan.

What is behind this trend is not only the concept of "nation building through people building", which is a fundamental principle of international cooperation, but also the strategic expectation that training projects will enable more flexible and directly effective assistance. It is also expected that training in Japan will allow the trainees not only to acquire the most updated techniques and new ways of thinking, but also bring their experiences in Japan back to their home countries. Moreover, it is hoped that human interaction through training programmes will help build up friendship between countries and contribute to peace building without resorting to force. Trainees learn various techniques applicable in their home countries and improve their individual skills through the training programmes. On the other hand, those who provide training are enabled to look at their own environment objectively by learning its differences from other countries/regions. They also learn a lot about different lifestyles, culture and traditional techniques from their trainees. Such mutual learning and understanding is highly important for sustainable international cooperation.

In reality, however, there are many cases where training programmes are structured in such a way that they are only convenient for the organizers and do not meet the needs of the trainees. Furthermore, sometimes the contents of the training do not match the background or capacity/ability of the trainees and fail to produce meaningful results. Needless to say, in order to conduct effective training programmes the contents should match the needs of the trainees. To ensure that this occurs, appropriate needs assessments and flexible programme planning and implementation is necessary. While the direct purpose of training might be put as "capacity building" of each participant, "institutional building" of the organizations they belong to is also an important task, to ensure that they can make full use of their newly acquired techniques and knowledge in their actual professional context.

Human resource development has been a major theme for AAI. In this respect we have been involved in various activities such as training programmes at the JICA Tsukuba International Centre, planning and implementation of training programmes in the context of development studies, agricultural training programmes by experts, technical exchange programmes, and third-country training programmes. In this new series we would like to report on the human resource development activities we have experienced thus far, share our joys and discontent, and discuss some managerial problems we have encountered. We would also like to make some suggestions for future training programmes and reflect upon their meaning.



Lecture for trainees from southern Africa at the JICA Tsukuba International Centre



Interview with a progressive farmer (as part of a third-country training programme in Morocco)