

■ Article ■

A Transnational Approach to the Integration of Migrant Workers: With Focus on the Korea's Employment Permit System*

Julia Jiwon Shin

Abstract

Having received temporary migrant workers for over two decades since the early 1990s, Korea has become one of the top destination countries in Asia hosting a large number of migrant workers. This trend has led the country to a crucial juncture at which it faces emerging political, social, economic, and cultural challenges. Despite the diversity of the migrant population in Korea, the current policy concerning the integration of migrants primarily focuses on marriage migrants and their families who are assumed as permanent residents in the country. Considering the substantial number of migrant workers among the overall migrant population, it is necessary to deliberate the ways in which integration policy could embrace temporary migrant workers. This study aims to seek an alternative paradigm and policy measures to enhance the integration of temporary migrant workers with focus on Korea's Employment Permit System. Integration policy for migrant workers should be initiated to work more effectively to enhance the skills and experiences of the workers and thereby contribute to the reintegration of migrants when they return and improve their ability to assist in the sustainable development of their home countries. The study explores the possibility of integrating temporary migrant workers through training programs at various stages of the migration cycle and transnational cooperation between various actors in countries of origin and destination.

■ **Keywords** : labor migration, integration, migrant workers, Employment Permit System (EPS), South Korea

* I would like to thank the reviewers for their insightful comments on the paper.

Introduction

As of September 2016, more than two million or four percent of South Korea's total population are foreigners. Among them, 1.5 million or more are estimated to be long-term residents, which means staying in South Korea (hereafter, Korea) for longer than 90 days (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Among the registered foreign population, 545,897 persons entered Korea through the Employment Permit System (EPS), the Korean government's labor migration policy for recruiting low-skilled migrant workers, mainly from countries in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and China. Having received temporary migrant workers for more than two decades since the early 1990s, Korea has become one of the top destination countries in Asia hosting a substantial number of migrant workers. This trend has led the country to a crucial juncture at which it faces emerging political, social, economic, and cultural challenges. As the number of migrants grows steadily, researchers and policymakers have given close attention to the formulation of various policies to address key problems that the migrant population faces in Korea. The policy discourse on migration in Korea has evolved from the initial question of whether Korea should accept migrants into manifold issues on integration, settlement, citizenship, and cultural diversity.

The broad operational definitions of integration as applied to migrants refers to the process by which migrants lead an independent and sustainable life through social, cultural, political, and economic participation as a member of the receiving society (Castles et al., 2002; Li, 2003, cited in Shin, 2012, p. 184). In other words, the integration of migrants is a multifaceted concept which embraces legal-political, socio-economic, cultural, and religious aspects. In policy terms, the integration of migrants denotes two principal aspects. First, integration is a two-way process that requires adaptation on the part of both newcomers and the host society (Castles et al., 2002). Integration can be understood as an interactive process in which the host society accepts migrants and respects difference and diversity, thereby embracing them as members

of society; while migrants respect community values of the host society and perform their responsibilities and duties as citizens of society (Shin, 2012). Integration is a process by which individuals and groups maintain and practice their cultural identities while actively participating in the larger societal framework. Second, integration policy should recognize the diversity of migrant groups. Different migrant groups follow different patterns of integration and settlement processes. Even within the same ethnic group, the process of integration could vary depending on the social supports and networks that are available for migrants in the host society. For example, the experiences and patterns of integration could differ between a migrant worker and a marriage migrant even if they migrated from the same country.

Despite the diversity of the migrant population in Korea, the current policy concerning the integration of migrants primarily focuses on marriage migrants and their families who are assumed as permanent residents in the country. Considering the substantial number of migrant workers among the overall migrant population in Korea, it is necessary to deliberate the ways in which integration policy could embrace temporary migrant workers.

Accordingly, there has been a burgeoning literature on the need of comprehensive approaches to policies for migrant integration in Korean society, especially calling for inclusive policy agendas to consider migrant workers (Shin, 2002, 2006; Kim et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2011; Chung, 2012). Nevertheless, those previous studies take the nation-state as an analytical unit and set state borders as societal boundaries, thereby containing the approaches within a single society. Unfortunately, this nationally contained observation leads the migration researchers themselves to unquestioningly accept the underlying premise that domestic politics and state policies are primary determinants of the experiences and lives of migrants in a state territory (Shin, 2012).

Due to the nature of the cross-border movement of people, migration policies are likely to raise an impact outside a country's territory for which these policies are primarily intended. At the same time, the success

or failure of those policies would be determined by various factors that lie beyond a national boundary. While there are undeniable challenges, migrants engaged in transnational activities enrich the numerous spaces they occupy. This draws our attention to the significance of a transnational perspective on migration, requiring migration scholars and policy makers to look beyond national borders in analyzing the scope, purpose, and impact of their policies. This study, therefore, attempts to challenge specific national intellectual assumptions and modes of research which have been closely linked to national policy models on migration and integration.

This study aims to seek an alternative paradigm and policy measures to enhance the integration of temporary migrant workers with focus on Korea's Employment Permit System. It suggests that labor migration should be considered beyond the simple supply and demand of workforce between countries of origin and destination. It considers that both countries of origin and destination need to make efforts to ensure that labor migration genuinely benefits both countries and migrants themselves through maximizing the developmental effects of migration policy. The study aims to seek an alternative paradigm and policy measures to enhance the integration of temporary migrant workers with focus on Korea's Employment Permit System. Transcending geographical borders, policies with a transnational outlook specifically address the linkages between countries arising from transnational activities and practices of migrants. Integration policy for migrant workers should be initiated to work more effectively to enhance the skills and experiences of the workers and thereby contribute to the reintegration of migrants when they return and improve their ability to assist in the sustainable development of their home countries. The study explores the possibility of integrating temporary migrant workers through training programs at various stages of the migration cycle and transnational cooperation between various actors in countries of origin and destination.

The study is divided into three main sections. First, it examines the principles of Korea's temporary labor migration scheme and the limi-

tations of the Employment Permit System. Then, it discusses an alternative paradigm for the integration of migrant workers, which reflects its temporary and circular nature. Finally, it considers the ways to coordinate policy programs for improving the return preparedness of migrant workers, particularly focusing on skill development, training programs, and transnational cooperation between various actors in the countries of origin and destination.

Overview of Korea's Labor Migration Policy: The Employment Permit System

The Employment Permit System (EPS) is a temporary labor migration scheme intended to supply a low-skilled foreign workforce for local businesses which suffer labor shortages. The EPS was introduced in response to the increasing demand of small and medium size firms for the workforce as they faced severe labor shortages since the late 1980s when the wages soared and domestic workers started shunning away from 3D (“dirty, dangerous, and demeaning”) jobs. According to the Act on Foreign Employment, Workers’ etc. legislated in August 2003, a “foreign worker” is defined as a person who does not have Korean nationality and who works or intends to work in a business or workplace located in Korea for the purpose of earning wages. Under the Act, a “temporary foreign worker” means a migrant worker – aged between 18 and 39 -- who is allowed to stay in Korea only for a brief period of time and who works in a business or workplace located in Korea for a period allowed under the general Employment Permit System (E-9) and the Working Visit System (H-2), which offers special work permits for ethnic Koreans with foreign nationalities.¹⁾ This study focuses on the E-9 migrant workers.

The EPS is based on a number of basic principles of temporary labor migration. The foremost principle is that migrant workers would be admitted only as a supplement to Korean workers. In other words, migrant workers should not displace local workers while holding down

costs and prices for small and medium size firms suffering labor shortages. Therefore, the government adopted a number of strategies to balance those goals: identifying industries and skills in short supply; controlling the admission of migrant workers through quantitative quotas; testing for labor market shortage; and requiring employers to attest to prioritizing local workers.

Migrant workers who enter Korea through the EPS are granted an E-9 visa that allows them to work in non-professional areas. The designated industries opened for E-9 workers are restricted to manufacturing, construction, service, agriculture/stockbreeding, offshore/inshore fishery, and fish breeding. In the manufacturing sector, the firms which meet the following criteria are only eligible for hiring migrant workers through the EPS: having less than 300 full-time workers who are covered by labor insurance or having less than eight billion won (KRW, approx. US\$ seven million) in capital.

The number of migrant workers categorized as non-professional workers (E-9) under the EPS stands at 275,000, taking up about 45 percent of the total migrant workforce. Among these E-9 workers, about 175,000 have manufacturing jobs and they take up the largest share (64 percent) across industries (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Divided by nationalities, workers from Vietnam account for the largest share with 29,996 persons, followed by Cambodia (27,985), Indonesia (26,327), and Nepal (21,558). The annual quota of EPS migrant workers, industrial types, and the sending countries are determined by the Foreign Workforce Policy Committee under the Prime Minister's Office based on the annual review of the labor shortage and economic conditions of the Korean market. In 2016, a new annual quota of 46,000 was set up for EPS workers and an additional 12,000 re-entry workers were projected to re-enter Korea for re-employment (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2016).

The EPS operates through bilateral memoranda of understanding (MOU) between Korea and sending countries. Both in the sending country and Korea the government or public sectors manage the migratory process in order to prevent the possibility of the high cost of migration through

private intermediaries. The MOU stipulates the respective duties and responsibilities of the governments involved (Korea and the government of sending country) and coordinates the actions of both parties regarding recruitment, selection, placement, protection, and work-related benefits of migrant workers bound for Korea. As of 2016, 16 countries had signed an MOU with Korea on sending workers through the EPS. They are all Asian countries including Indonesia, Philippines, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, China, Timor Leste, and Laos, which lately has been added on the list.

Second, the EPS is principally a non-permanent labor migration scheme based on the fixed-term contract. Under the EPS, migrant workers are restricted from being accompanied by their family members and obtaining permanent residency in Korea. The duration of the contract is renewable by extending a contract on an annual basis. By renewing the contract, migrant workers are allowed to stay in Korea for the maximum of four years and ten months. With the introduction of the re-entry employment system, a migrant worker is allowed to work for an additional four years and ten months after departing and returning to Korea if his/her employer wants to extend the contract at the end of the initial contract.

Last, the Act on Foreign Workers' Employment, etc. (Chapter IV, Article 22) prohibits discrimination and entails equal labor rights for migrant workers that could be reconciled with the temporary nature of their employment. Accordingly, migrant workers, in principle, can exercise basic labor rights – freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and action – and enjoy benefits equal to those of Korean nationals under the Labor Standards Act, the Minimum Wages Act, and the Industrial Safety and Health Act.

Nevertheless, due to such grounding principles of temporary labor migration, the current EPS unsurprisingly has limitations and challenges for the rights of workers. For over a decade, there have been numerous studies that investigate problems and challenges faced by EPS migrant workers and demand legal and policy amendments of the current labor

migration scheme (e.g., Chung, et al., 2010, 2013; Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea, 2009; Ko, 2011; Kim et al., 2011; Park, 2012; Lee, 2014; Choi & Lee, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015). Here are three major limitations and concerns on the EPS frequently raised by researchers and commentators.

Limits of Mobility

First, the policy considerably limits the freedom of mobility of workers. As mentioned above, migrant workers are formerly issued one year contracts that could be renewed. However, Korean employers are now able to issue their migrant workers three year contracts that cover the entire duration of the EPS. This challenges migrant workers for invoking their right to have a degree of autonomy in regards to continuing or discontinuing the employment.

Since 2012, a migrant worker is allowed to change workplaces a maximum of three times during the first three years of employment and a maximum of two times during an extended period of employment of up to one year and ten months. When the workers change their workplaces for a reason not attributable to them, such as a temporary shutdown or permanent closure of the business or a violation of working conditions by the employer, the change is not subject to the limit on the maximum number of workplace changes. If a migrant worker wants to be re-employed and re-admitted to Korea after termination of the full contract duration, he/she must prove that during the last one year there has been no change of workplace.

When the worker is authorized to change the workplace, he or she should be re-employed within three months from the date of applying for a transfer to another workplace. If the worker fails to apply for a transfer to another business or workplace within one month from the date on which his/her labor contract with the employer is terminated, he/she becomes subject to repatriation. The number of workers who have changed their workplaces has substantially increased from 18,867 persons

in 2006 to 53,309 persons in 2013 (Sa, 2016). Perhaps in response to this unintended increase, the local Job Centers no longer give information to migrant workers on available positions and employers from which workers could choose to shift, as was the practice in the past. Instead, the migrant worker seeking to change his/her workplace has his/her name and information put into a large pool of migrant jobseekers, from which Korean employers make the selection. In the absence of job information for a migrant worker, this takes relatively longer for the worker to find a new employment. This arrangement would effectively diminish the ability of the migrant worker to choose, thereby increasing his vulnerability.

Alienation at Work and Social Exclusion

Second, the nature of employment patterns and lives of temporary migrant workers make them easily isolated from the host society, thereby making them one of the most vulnerable groups to social exclusion. The social exclusion of migrants has potentially negative social and economic implications, not to mention of the infringement of basic rights of migrants. Preventing the marginalization and social exclusion of migrant workers, thereby maintaining social cohesion as well as the well-being of migrants, should be regarded as the main objectives of integration.

The temporary circular form of labor migration, which is characterized as the strict restriction on the sojourn period and the prohibition on the accompanying of family members, could be a critical hindrance to cultural and social integration (Hennebry, 2012; IOM, 2011). Despite apparent legal protections under domestic labor laws, migrant workers in Korea still experience a certain level of difficulty in workplaces and daily life. Migrant workers now take up a substantial share of the workforce in small and medium size firms and play indispensable roles in the Korean labor market. Nevertheless, their working conditions are not positively correlated with increasing importance. Migrant workers still engage in 3D jobs paid with low wages and long working hours. As discussed above, migrant workers are strictly forbidden from extending

their stay in Korea and are not allowed to change their workplace at their own discretion. Besides, there is very little chance that migrant workers are promoted to a higher paying position during the temporary contract period and little incentive for employers to pay their migrant workers above the minimum wage.

In 2014 Amnesty International (AI) released the report, “Bitter Harvest,” which exposes that the EPS directly contributes to the serious exploitation of migrant agricultural workers. There are approximately 20,000 migrant agricultural workers in Korea, with many arriving from Cambodia, Nepal, and Vietnam under the EPS. The report, based on interviews with migrant agricultural workers across Korea, discloses a range of exploitation, including incidents of contractual deception, intimidation, trafficking, violence, squalid accommodation, excessive working hours with no weekly rest days, and unpaid overtime. The report shows that migrants are compelled to work in conditions that they did not agree to, under threat of some form of punishment, which amounts to forced labor. Arguing that “the exploitation of migrant farm workers in South Korea is a stain on the country,” AI urges that the Korean government must end the exploitation and widespread use of forced labor of migrant agricultural workers (Amnesty International, 2014).

Such restriction could make migrant workers particularly vulnerable to social exclusion from Korean society. Migrant workers tend to limit their social networks mainly to the fellow migrants from their home country, which further excludes them from the Korean mainstream society. Such exclusion and isolation of migrant workers will eventually lead to problems such as the violation of basic human rights and social conflict and this may cause social costs.

Burden of Social Cost on Sending Countries

Last but not least, from the sending country’s point of view, one of the negative aspects of emigration is that family members left behind and the local community may have to deal with social costs, such as

family separation, children left behind, and an aging population, due to the constant move-out of people. Such problems imply that temporary migration is not a direct answer to the national development of sending countries. If remittance is the only buttress of the livelihood and consumption of family members left behind, families in the home country are likely to become over dependent on remittance. From the workers' standpoint, burdened by the obligation to send money home, they will not be able to save money for their own future. This very fact is what makes migrant workers choose not to return home and extend their employment contract or re-migrate searching for overseas employment.

A Paradigm Shift for the Integration of Migrant Workers

Considering the historical experience of temporary migration, the temporary sojourn of migrant workers could end up becoming permanent settlement. Böhning and de Beijl (1995) argue that there had been empirical indications in some European countries, such as Germany and Austria, since before the 1973 oil price shock that migrants had for all practical purposes begun to settle. While permanent admission may well require an integration policy from the start in Western Europe, the admission of migrant workers, which is designed to fill domestic labor shortages, does not raise the question of integration because the migrants are only meant to stay temporarily. Many migrant workers themselves actually never set out with the intention of staying abroad permanently. For decades, integration was explicably not an issue for temporary migrant workers. Nevertheless, as Böhning and de Beijl (1995) rightly point out, while policy-makers and individual migrants throughout the 1950s and 1960s believed that their employment was a temporary phenomenon, migrant workers were in an empirical sense reasonably well integrated in the labor market. Migrant workers were heavily concentrated in the secondary labor market, chiefly in unskilled or semi-skilled work. In other words, until the beginning of the 1970s Europe's migrant workers were undergoing a rather successful process of spontaneous integration, albeit

only in the secondary labor market.

Under the circumstances, policymakers in Western Europe were confronted with the integration question when they had to cope with the “quasi settlement” of migrant workers after they had closed the borders to further labor migration during economic recession. As Böhning and de Beijl state, “Once the intended temporary migration took on permanent settlement features, they found themselves in *terra incognita* as far as the analysis of the causes, characteristics, ramifications as well as of appropriate solutions were concerned” (1995, p. 4). This empirical case illustrates that integration becomes relevant to temporary labor migration in a profound sense “when the temporariness gives way to a lasting stay.”

Favell (2010) critiques that the proliferation of integration studies is part of a wider “nation-state-society” paradigm, which sees the nation state as the principal unit of bounded society. There is a question raised whether the nation-state-policy paradigm is still sufficiently appropriate for understanding the ever growing issue of the relationship between migrants and the host society (Shin, 2012). The ideas of integration and multiculturalism in the policy discourse of the state are typically and historically related to nation-building as found in many receiving countries. Favell asserts that “an awareness of transnational phenomena” may enable migration and ethnic studies researchers to escape in their analyses the normative constraints of the integration paradigm (2010).²⁾

I have argued elsewhere that in order to move beyond nation-centered structures of integration policy, integration policy in Korea should be approached from a transnational perspective by expanding its target groups and geographical scope (Shin, 2012). Casting off the present integration policy merely targeting on multicultural families, it is necessary to scrutinize the ways in which compatible policies could be developed to enhance the social, cultural, and economic integration of migrant workers who make up a substantial number of the migrant population in Korea. From a transnational perspective, the policy should expand its geographical scope and consider the way to support the integration of temporary migrant workers through transnational cooperation between various

actors both in the sending and receiving countries, thereby promoting sustainable return and maximizing developmental effects of international migration.

A “one-size-fits-all” integration policy is more likely to fail to consider the diversity of the migrant populations in the country of destination. As temporary labor migration has become dominant in the flow of international migration in Asia, integration policies need to accommodate for this increasingly non-permanent nature of contemporary migration patterns. This requires redefining the concept of integration and discussing the objective and rationale of integration policy for the diverse migrant population in the host society. The diversified pattern of international migration intensifies the need for a flexible approach to integration that is tailored to the different needs of the migrant population in the host society (Böhning & de Beijl, 1995; IOM, 2008; ILO, 2004).

The success of a temporary labor migration scheme is probably based on successful return and reintegration of migrant workers afterwards and return is therefore considered as an essential feature of temporary/circular migration schemes. However, as Cassarino (2014) aptly points out, return has not been regarded as a substantial stage in the migration cycle, but rather as the end of the temporary stay of migrants. Besides, the return policy is predominantly considered as instruments aimed at tackling unauthorized migration. Accordingly, given the receiving-country’s point of view, reintegration of migrants in their countries of origin remains overlooked. Such restricted approaches have been “detrimental to the exploration of the link between return, reintegration and development” (Ibid., p. 164). Therefore, integration policy needs to reflect the temporary and circular nature of labor migration in order to protect basic rights of migrants and maximize mutual benefits for migrant workers themselves as well as countries of origin and destination.

Policy Considerations for Integration

Considering the nature of temporary circular migration, the success

of integration policy for migrant workers is determined by the improvement of migrants' capacity through training and skill improvement, voluntary return based on "return preparedness" (Ibid.), and the sustainable development of their home countries. Time, resources, experience, and circumstances in the host and home countries constitute the main factors that shape the readiness of migrant workers to return. Accordingly, return is not only a voluntary act, but also "pertains to a process of resource mobilization that requires time" (Ibid., p. 160). Cassarino aptly argues that migrants with a high level of return preparedness feel that they have gathered enough tangible (i.e., savings and investments) and intangible (i.e., social networks, skills and knowledge) resources to carry out their plans or projects in their home countries. Once they return, those resources mobilized during labor migration are invested and re-integrated to local contexts. Thus, migrant workers should be offered fair information, training, and social supports so that they become mutually interactive through social, economic, political, and cultural participations while their basic rights are protected. Besides, transnational cooperation among multiple actors, including countries of origin and destination, international organizations, the private sector, non-government/non-profit organizations, can be one of significant measures facilitating the mutual development which are pursued through temporary labor migration. This section highlights imperative policy measures that should be reinforced for the integration of migrant workers.

Improving Training Programs for EPS Migrant Workers

The Act on Foreign Workers' Employment, etc. (Chapter II, Article 11) specifies that the EPS migrant workers shall receive training provided by institutions to learn necessary skills for employment in Korea. Under the EPS, migrant workers are currently subjected to take two mandatory training courses: pre-departure and post-arrival employment training. In addition, migrant workers are also offered vocational trainings during their employment and return support training. All training programs are

overseen by the Human Resources Development Service of Korea (HRD Korea) which is a public organization affiliated to the Ministry of Employment and Labor.

At the initial stage of migratory processes, the EPS migrant workers who have been recruited and signed employment contracts are required to attend a 45-hour pre-departure training course at designated local institutions in their home countries. For instance, in the case of the Philippines, while the local EPS center of HRD Korea in Manila oversees the mandatory pre-departure training course for Philippine workers, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) operates the training. The contents of the training program include lessons on Korean language and culture and basic information about the EPS, related laws and regulations. Although the level of Korean language proficiency and the cultural knowledge of workers vary between newly departees and returnees, the course is run for the whole batch of workers who will leave for Korea shortly, regardless of workers' previous migratory experience in Korea.

Once they arrive in Korea, EPS migrant workers are required to attend a 16-hour mandatory training course before they are deployed to the workplaces. While HRD Korea is in charge of the general management of the training courses for migrant workers, training courses practically take place at the following organizations: the Korea Labor Foundation, the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business, the Construction Association of Korea, the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, and the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives. The contents of the program include basic information about jobs in the relevant industrial sector, related laws and regulations, and Korean language and culture. Migrant workers are divided into groups mainly based on nationality and the type of industry. Nevertheless, as training sessions are rather brief and the contents of programs are not much specified according to the type of industry, the current post-arrival employment training tends to be a mere orientation for the newly arrived. Although instructors are required to speak the mother tongue of migrant workers

and complete a professional course for instructing workers, disadvantageous working conditions for training instructors has led to a high turnover of the instructors. As a result, the training course has to rely on the temporary supply of instructors and this, in turn, adversely affects the quality of the courses.

During the period of employment of migrant workers, the Ministry of Employment and Labor has established regional support centers for migrant workers which offer skill training and support services. The support centers for migrant workers are located in major cities in Korea, offering counseling, training, and social services. In the case of counseling and interpretation services, professional counselors and interpreters support migrant workers who seek counseling and legal advices and handle complaints. Multi-language interpretation services are offered at major centers. In addition, cultural events and free medical check-up services are offered during weekends. However, training programs are limited to Korean language and computer skills. As mentioned above, the 16 hour post-arrival employment training course is less sufficient in terms of the method of teaching and contents. Nevertheless, the majority of employers do not appreciate the longer hours of training since they want to put workers into workplaces as quickly as possible. As a means to complement this, on-the-job training and other forms of skill training should be offered and reinforced.

While HRD Korea has provided migrant workers with vocational training programs, the number of courses and types of occupational skills on the programs are rather limited. There have been noticeable decreases in the number of courses over the years seemingly due to budget cuts since 2014 (see Table 1). In 2016, occupational skills for the training programs included heavy equipment operation (forklifts and excavators), car maintenance, welding, electricity and electronics and, machinery cutting processing.

Table 1
EPS Vocational Training Programs (2010-2016)

year	Number of commissioned institutions	Number of occupational skills	Expected number of trainees (persons)	Trainees on the courses (persons)	Completed trainees (persons & %)	Budgets (million KRW)
2010	45	10	5,000	4,653	4,653 (93.6)	902
2011	39	13	5,000	4,787	4,005 (80.1)	1,143
2012	42	17	5,000	4,935	4,935 (98.7)	1,443
2013	59	22	5,000	5,826	5,826 (116.5)	1,443
2014	26	4	1,500	1,711	1,341 (78.4)	472
2015	22	6	1,500	1,487	1,295 (87.1)	485
2016 (as of August 31)	19 (in progress)	5	1,500	959 (in progress)	705 (73.5)	485

Source: HRD Korea (internal data)

Last, a return support program is offered to migrant workers expecting to return to their home countries who have worked in Korea for more than three years. The aim of the return support program is to help migrant workers to attain skills and find jobs in their home countries so that they could successfully resettle at home. Return support programs consist of the following courses: a mandatory return preparation course (e.g., planning and savings for return and information on insurance claims and return procedures); a Korean language course preparing for the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK); skills and entrepreneurial training; and help finding employment opportunities at Korean firms in migrant workers' home countries. Skill and entrepreneurial trainings are offered by regional support centers, vocational training schools, and polytechnic colleges across the country. The subjects taught on the training courses include welding, car maintenance, agricultural tool repair, motorcycle repair, heavy equipment operation, baking, cooking (Korean cuisine) and 3D printing. In addition, other programs and activities aiming to encourage migrant workers' voluntary return are offered such as running a website on job matching for returnees and local companies in their home countries (alias, 'Return Job'), organizing job fairs, and building networks of returnees in the countries of origin.

However, the budget and the expected number of trainees for the return support program are rather smaller than the vocational training programs (see Table 2). It is also difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of such training courses unless the institution monitors the progress of employment and reintegration of returnees in their home countries. In practice, the wage gaps between Korea and sending countries discourage returnees from getting a job in the local Korean firms in their home countries. Another issue is whether the skills, experience, and licenses that migrant workers acquired in Korea would be helpful or recognized as important merits when they gets a job in local Korean firms in their home countries. In order to improve the effectiveness of skill and entrepreneurial trainings as part of return programs, it is essential to consider the local needs and environments of the country of origin. Identifying the needs of migrant workers is also essential to harness the training programs and the employment prospect of returnees.

Table 2
EPS Return Support Programs (2016)

Courses	Number of commissioned institutions	Number of occupational skills	Expected number of trainees (persons)	Trainees on the courses (persons)	Completed trainees (persons & %)	Budgets (million KRW)
TOPIK	8	1	600	463 (in progress)	183	439
Skills and Entrepreneurial training	13	9	600	418 (in progress)	192	

Source: HRD Korea (internal data)

Promoting Transnational Cooperation

The current EPS program to assist the return of migrant workers tends to consider return and reintegration as an issue confined to individual migrant workers. However, their return and reintegration are not only personal but also local community issues involving migrants' families and communities left behind. For example, not only the training and

education to improve the skills of migrant workers should be provided in Korea, but also education needs to be offered in order to help migrants' families left behind to improve the skill and knowledge of financial management. One of the good examples is the financial literacy training on both sides in which migrant workers learn how to save money with a long-term return plan whereas their family members at home learn how to wisely spend, save, and invest the remittances. The financial literacy training could equip them with a set of skills to plan ahead for their long-term prospects.

In order to deliver such training and education in both countries, it is crucial to promote transnational cooperation between multiple actors, including central and local governments, NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector. In the case of the Philippines, one of the national NGOs, *Unlad Kabayan*, based on transnational cooperation and the support of various actors, has delivered training and education programs, called the "Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment (MSAI) movement." MSAI was launched in order to help migrant workers successfully reintegrate in their communities and boost the local economy. Such movement encourages migrant workers to save what they earn abroad for the future and become economically self-sufficient by making investment of their savings, which in turn leads to successful reintegration into the local economy.³⁾

It is noteworthy that *Unlad Kabayan* has established partnerships with various organizations in and out of the Philippines, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and the Netherlands. *Unlad Kabayan* also makes efforts to minimize risks for individuals by taking advantage of the network it formed with the private sector and banks. It particularly lays stress on building cooperative relations with the local government organizations as it aims at boosting the local economy. The case of *Unlad Kabayan* highlights that transnational cooperation in a sense involves not only the central and local governments but also other parties such as NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector. NGOs, in particular, have the strength of being able to access family members of mi-

grant workers through their local-based networks.

However, NGOs often lack either material or human resources and such drawbacks could be supplemented by international organizations or the private sector equipped with professional management capabilities. A Manila-based NGO, the Batis Center for Women (BATIS), illustrates the ways to promote transnational cooperation with various actors, including international organizations, governments, and the private sector. “BATIS has contributed to encourage the reintegration of women returnees and their children in Philippine society. This has been possible through local community-based networks that BATIS has established through its activities and projects.”⁴⁾

BATIS is dedicated to offering education and training services, legal and medical support, counseling, and conducting advocacy activities for female migrant workers and their family members, particularly those who have returned from Japan. A majority of the female migrants have worked as “entertainers” in Japan, and many of them have children with Japanese men or have fallen victim to human trafficking. Most of them decide to return to the Philippines since their rights and residential status are not properly protected in Japan.

In cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), BATIS provides support for returned Filipinas and their children so that they can become self-reliant in their local communities. Considering transnational characteristics of migration, international organizations are often in a favorable position to handle politically and diplomatically sensitive issues, such as human trafficking and irregular migration that arise between the countries of origin and destination. In collaboration with IOM through funding from the Toyota Foundation, BATIS has organized a series of international forums in which the governments of the Philippines and Japan get together to deal with the issues raised by Japanese Filipino Children (JFC).⁵⁾ With IOM, BATIS is in a position to urge the Japanese government to take actions in order to resolve problems concerning Filipinas and JFC in Japan. It is also noteworthy that the Toyota Foundation has

participated in the project by means of financial contribution. This case demonstrates that the private sector as a main employer of migrant workers could be an important actor for pursuing such transnational projects concerning the welfare of migrants and their families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as repeated and circular international labor migration increases, migrants consistently interact with different cultures and, despite their temporary stay in the destination country, this mutual interaction significantly influences both sending and receiving societies. The nature of international migratory processes therefore requires us to look beyond the perspective only of the receiving country when considering the issue of integrating migrant workers. Rather than taking labor migration as a mere issue to balance the supply and demand of labor, a holistic approach needs to be taken to promote mutual benefits of all the related parties – countries of origin and destination and migrants. Approaching the issue of integrating migrant workers within the boundaries of a receiving country can bring down the efficiency of the relevant policies. In other words, the integration policy of migrant workers needs to reflect the viewpoints of both countries of origin and destination and those of migrants themselves. The empowerment of migrant workers and transnational cooperation can be important tools to help realize such a policy of integrating migrant workers.

After all, when promoting “development” through international migration, it does not merely mean increasing incomes of migrant households and boosting the balance of payments of developing countries through remittances. One should seriously consider the effect of migration on “human development” that is to expand one’s opportunity and capacity; therefore, migration for a better life should be a potential process not only of increasing individual and family incomes, but also of “broadening one’s scope of choice” (Haq, 1995; Sen, 1997). Migration policy is not all about statistical figures and “well-managed” processes.

It concerns people, i.e., individuals, families, and children, and their dreams and hopes. It is, therefore, urged to consider the ways in which Korea's migration policy could embrace human, labor, and social rights of temporary migrant workers and their children.

-
- 1) The Working Visit tier (H-2) within the Employment Permit System (EPS) was introduced in 2007. Unlike the E-9 tier, the H-2 tier of the EPS is designed only for an ethnic Koreans with a foreign nationality, allowing migrants to seek for suitable employment after entering Korea and to freely change their workplaces. However, there are still the restriction of industries and jobs permitted for them and the number of H-2 holders is strictly controlled based on the annual quota set by the government (Shin, 2016).
 - 2) For further discussion, see Shin (2012).
 - 3) From the interview with Mayan Villalba, Executive Director of Unlad Kabayan. (October 31, 2011).
 - 4) From the interview with Andrea Luisa C. Anolin, Executive Director of Batis Center for Women. (November 1, 2011).
 - 5) It was a two-year project (2008-2010) entitled "Facilitation of Sustainable Migration/Return of Japanese-Filipino Children from the Philippines to Japan through Multi-sectoral Networking and Pilot Cases." The project was established with the primary objective of promoting the welfare and human rights of JFCs and their mothers through strengthening of support networks and through pilot cases of sustainable migration/return scheme for the JFCs from the Philippines to Japan (see <http://www.jfcmultisectoralnetworkingproject.org/index.php/en/jfc-multisectoral-networking-project>, accessed on November 18, 2016).

References

- Amnesty International. (2014). *Bitter harvest: Exploitation and forced labour of migrant agricultural workers* in South Korea. London: Amnesty International.
- Böhning, W. R. and de Beijl, R. Z. (1995). The integration of migrant workers in the labor market: Policies and their impact. *International migration papers*. No. 8. Geneva: ILO.
- Cassarino, J. P. (2014). A case for return preparedness. In G. Battistella (Ed.), *Global and Asian perspectives on international migration* (pp. 153-165). Geneva: Springer & IOM.
- Castles, S. et al. (2002). *Integration: Mapping the field*. London: Home Office.
- Choi, S. and Lee, C. W. (2015). *Debates on migrant workers' rights to change workplace* (in Korean). Goyang: IOM Migration Research and Training Centre.
- Chung, K. S. et al. (2010). *2010 Survey on living conditions of foreign workers* (in Korean). Policy Report commissioned by the Ministry of Justice.
- Chung, K. S. et al. (2012). *A study on the settlement of migrants in local society and social integration policy* (in Korean). Policy Report commissioned by the Ministry of Public Administration and Security.
- Chung, K. S. et al. (2013). *2013 Survey on living conditions of foreign workers* (in Korean). Policy Report commissioned by the Ministry of Justice.
- Favell, A. (2010). Integration and nations: The nation-state and research on immigrants in Western Europe. In M. Martiniello. & J. Rath (Eds.), *Selected studies in international migration and immigrant incorporation* pp. 371-404. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Hannebry, J. (2012). Permanently temporary? Agricultural migrant workers and their integration in Canada. *Institute for Research on Public Policy Study*, No. 26. Montreal: IRPP.

- Haq, Mahbub ul. (1995). *Reflections on human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- International Labour Organization. (2004). *Report of the committee on migrant workers*. Retrieved from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/pr-22.pdf>
- International Organization for Migration. (2008). *International dialogue on migration No. 11-Migrants and the host society: Partnerships for success*. Geneva: IOM.
- Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea. (2009). *The 5th anniversary of employment permit system: A survey on migrant workers' labor rights* (in Korean). Seoul: JCMK.
- Kim, H. S. et al. (2009). *Addressing the now and seeking the future of social integration policy on immigration* (in Korean). Policy Report commissioned by the Ministry of Justice.
- Kim, K. W. et al. (2011). *The condition of employment and low-wage of foreign workers and their status within the domestic law* (in Korean). Seoul: FKTU Research Center.
- Kim, Y. S. et al. (2011). *Policy paradigm for transition to multiethnic & multicultural society in Korea (V): Achievements and future challenges of a multicultural policy* (in Korean). Seoul: Korean Women's Development Institute.
- Ko, Z. K. (2011). "Actual conditions, legal problems and proposal on transfer of business or workplace of migrant workers," *Journal of Labor Law*, 23, 139-181.
- Korea, Republic of. Ministry of Employment and Labor. (2016). *The employment permit system* (in Korean). Retrieved from <https://www.eps.go.kr/eo/EmployPerSystem.eo?tabGb=02>
- Korea, Republic of. Ministry of Justice. (2015). *Monthly statistics on immigration and foreigners* (in Korean).
- Korea, Republic of. Ministry of Justice. (2016). *Monthly statistics on immigration and foreigners* (in Korean).
- Lee, K. H. & Lee, H. Y. (2015). *The policy for guest workers of border: The issues and tasks of employment permit system, 21st Century*

Political Science Review, 25(4), 223-248.

- Lee, K. Y. (2014). *The 10th anniversary of employment permit system: Achievements and future policy issues* (in Korean). A paper presented at the seminar of the 10th Anniversary of EPS.
- Li, P. S. (2003). Deconstructing Canada's discourse of immigrant integration. *PCERII Working Paper Series* No. WP04-03. Edmonton: Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration, University of Alberta.
- Park, Y. K. (2012). *Problems and proposal of constitution and international law on transfer of business or workplace of migrant workers in the act on the employment of foreign workers*, *Northeast Asian Law Journal*, 5(3), 247-272.
- Sa, M. C. (2016). Achievement and challenges of Korea's employment permit system. A paper presented at the Migrant Labor Policy Forum, HRD Korea: Seoul.
- Sen, A. (1997). Editorial: Human capital and human capability, *World Development*, 25(12), 1959-1961.
- Shin, J. J. (2012). *The transnationality of culture: Policy implications for the integration of migrants in South Korea*. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 21(2), 173-192.
- Shin, J. J. (2016). The racialisation of migrant workers: The construction of the 'other' in South Korea. *Democracy and Human Rights*, 16(3), 173-202.
- Shin, K. D. (2002). *Improving labor environment for foreign workers in Gyeonggi Province* (in Korean). Suwon: Kyonggi Research Institute.
- Shin, K. D. (2006). *Residency status of foreign workers and their needs for administrative service* (in Korean). Suwon: Kyonggi Research Institute.

Biographical Note

Julia Jiwon Shin holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Warwick, U.K. She is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology at Chonnam National University, South Korea. Her main research interests are in interdisciplinary and gender sensitive approaches to the study of international migration. Her research and teaching interests also cover the following areas: labour migration; migration and development; gender and ethnicity; racism; and feminist research methodology. Email: juliashin@jnu.ac.kr

Date of the submission of the article: November 24, 2016

Date of the peer-review: December 3, 2016

Date of the confirmation of the publication: January 9, 2017