



Newsletter

Committee on Certification of Professional Ergonomists

March, 2018

CPEJ Newsletter Editorial board

At the CPEJ, a general meeting and a lecture were held in April 2017, a seminar was held in October, and a CPE salon was held in February, discussions were held on a wide range of themes related to ergonomics. At the six JES local branch meetings during the fall season, these activities and the certification program for professional ergonomists were explained.

In September, Dr. Kazuo Aoki (CPE Chair for 2008–2012, JES President for 2012–2016) was selected for the IEA Fellow Award ¹⁾. Furthermore, eight new certified professional ergonomists, 38 associate ergonomics professionals, and two ergonomics assistants were accredited.

Newsletter numbers 51 to 54 were published with No. 53 being a special issue on “Work Style Reform”. This CPEJ Newsletter is translated into English and published with a focus on the featured articles.

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http://www.iea.cc/president_newsletter.php?id=24

➤ Special Issue: Work Style Reform

These days, opportunities to see and hear the term “work style reform” are increasing. In addition to the government-led system and law amendments, there is a growing momentum to review work styles due to the emergence of long

working hours and the need for increased productivity, given the intensifying competition in all industries.

Reforming work styles may necessitate a series of reviews of the human resources system, the workplace environment including IT, corporate culture, business practices, and many other factors. Among these, there are quite a few that are related to ergonomics. This topic is the special feature of newsletter No. 53, with contributions by experts in this field and by individuals who have actually embraced new working styles.

Background and trend of work style reform in Japan

Eriko Wanibe (Editor of CPEJ Newsletter)

The special topic in this edition is the trend of work style reform in Japan. In this section, the background is described for better understanding in the topic.

Population in Japan

Japan is known as the one of the nations whose population is rapidly aging. The ratio of the people over 65 years old was 26.6% in 2015 and forecasted to be 38.4% in 2065 in Japan. In the long run, the labor population in 2065 is estimated to be 40% less in comparison to the number in 2016 unless effective countermeasures are taken. One of the countermeasure is to encourage female population to join work force.

Unhappy workers

When thinking of the society today, not only maintaining number of the labor population, we also should secure our workforce productive at workplaces and healthy and happy as human beings. However, it is recognized that Japanese working culture needs drastic changes as cases of “Karoshi (overwork death)” in many industries have been reported so often and poverty of non-regular workers became a social issue. These are

only examples and there can be more to fix for workers happier.

Year of 2017

In 2017, the government announced some work style reform related regulations. Major ones are to prevent overwork death and improve work contract for the non-regular workers. It was not mandatory force by the regulations, but companies were encouraged to allow employees to tele-work, to stop over hours and to try leaving office earlier on 4th Fridays of the months (called “Premium Friday”). However, some negative impacts were witnessed and the outcomes of these activities did not satisfy many people.

At work places

Due to the economic recovery, shortage of labor has been reported lately in many industries especially, service sectors. Many companies make efforts to lure the employees, they appeal how attractive their work conditions are. It makes many companies to put more efforts in work style reform activities today. It has been learnt that reform activities require revisions of HR rules, working culture, work process, IT systems and so on. They are still in the phase of try-and-error due to complexity and uniqueness in each work place which make them difficult to reach the optimal measures in short term.

What ergonomist can do?

Ergonomics is the science of work. There are some issues which can be solved by the in-house or industry work rule revisions and new IT technologies implementation separately or in combination. Is there anything we can provide from outside? We started the discussion among some members what ergonomist can do and send messages from now. Our discussion continues!

✦ **Special Issue: Work Style Reform**

Work Style Reform and Men’s Work-Life Balance

— Role Augmentation and Mental and Physical Health —

Nozomi Sato (Kindai University)

In this paper, among the many issues that can emerge with the promotion of work style reform, we discuss matters related to the co-existence of work with childcare and housework among men, and their physical and mental health. New role expectations have led to an increased physical and mental burden on men as well as women.

According to the Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform¹⁾ approved by the Council for the Realization of Work Style Reform at the Prime Minister’s official residence in March 2017, one of the building blocks of work style reform is a better work-life balance based on the modification of long working hours. With the existing strengthening of employment support for women, including the Law to Promote Women in the Workplace, and the Revised Child Care Leave and Family Care Leave Law, in addition to the development of laws to reduce the child and family care burden as their foundations, it can be assumed that these initiatives will encourage men to participate more in housework, child and family care. Back in 2010, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare started the Ikumen Project to promote the participation of men in child rearing by taking child care leave²⁾. The website³⁾ provides a wealth of information including accounts of men’s experiences who have embraced active participation in child rearing and housework (hereafter referred to as *ikumen*). These accounts include examples of support initiatives by municipalities, and present the related policy documents. Furthermore, in March 2017, a collection of case studies of initiatives for the promotion of work-life balance for corporate

men⁴⁾ was released by the Cabinet Office. Almost all of the companies listed have introduced their own experiences of *ikumen* and *ikuboss* (bosses who make efforts to improve work duties that help actualize work-life balance and provide support to *ikumen*). According to this, nation-led public awareness campaigns are being promoted expeditiously to achieve work-life balance for both men and women.

To strike a balance between work, childcare, and housework, different duties are required in each domain, hence one has to perform multiple roles. In research that investigates multiple roles, the conditions and experiences of one person have been found to influence the roles of others, which is defined as spillover⁵⁾. In cases where this has positive effects it is termed positive spillover, and in cases where this has negative effects it is termed negative spillover⁶⁾. In majority of the abovementioned experiences of *ikumen*, entailing the co-existence of child care and work, both have a mutually positive influence on each other. When framed from the perspective of spillover, it corresponds to a two-way positive spillover from work to child care (home) and from child care (home) to work. This positive spillover for both men and women, due the rapid increase of *ikumen*, is considered an ideal life style model in the area of work style reform, and informs the expectations of the work-life balance of the future.

The direction of work style reform should contribute to a fulfilling family and professional life for each individual, and lead to an enriched life throughout the life span. However, if we are to change our perspective on the current state of work-life balance among men, the modification of long working hours is the most important problem facing work style reform. It is not progressing that much, as there are many men who are physically and mentally exhausted and are unable to achieve any work-life balance due to the gap between an

ideal life style and social conditions on the ground, where there is a rapid rise in the expectations from men to fulfill additional roles at home, childcare and housework, as *ikumen*. For example, based on the results of an interview survey targeting male workers, Taga⁷⁾ states that while participation in child care is emphasized as one of the conflicts that men have between work and home, long working hours prevent them from participating in child care. Married men are still expected to play the traditional role of bread winners, and in addition are expected to contribute to child care and housework, leading to problems with meeting the demands of life⁸⁾. Furthermore, in a discussion on father's postpartum depression, Takehara and Suto⁹⁾ state that fathers whose partners are pregnant or have just given birth to a child are expected to work to support the family even in highly demanding workplace environments. Furthermore, due to the nuclearization of families, most receive little support from their parent's home for housework, or for taking care of the household after childbirth. Hence all these responsibilities fall upon the parents themselves, and this kind of role augmentation has led to an increase in stress. This shift in the expectations from men to combine full-time wage earning over long hours with a share of child care and housework has additional implications for their physical and mental health.

The nation has emphasized the importance of speedy deliberations and execution of plans for the promotion of work style reforms¹⁾. Considering the enduring situation of sudden deaths due to painful overwork caused by long working hours, it is crucial to implement an immediate correction of long working hours. However, an increasing number of men who are riding the wave of reform, and are working too much to achieve the ideal image of *ikumen* sought at work and at home, are becoming physically and mentally exhausted. It is

like putting the cart before the horse. To ensure that such adverse side effects are avoided as far as possible, it is important to advance work reform within a framework that promotes the health of working people.

This paper has been assigned limited space and, moreover, is restricted to a limited discussion. It is important to examine the issue discussed in this paper in a context that covers all the issues pertinent to work style reform.

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Author Self-Introduction

Nozomi Sato: Associate Professor, Faculty of Applied Sociology, Kindai University. Doctor of Medicine (Ph.D.). Majored in Ergonomics when enrolled in Kwansei Gakuin University and University of Occupational and Environmental Health, Japan. Studied Gerontology during my tenure as Visiting Researcher at the University of Hawaii Center on Aging. Research areas of interest include health and safety issues of working people.

➤ Special Issue: Work Style Reform

Short-term Work Experience

Aya Nishihara (Secretariat of the
Japan Ergonomics Society)

Since 2009, I have been working at the Japan Ergonomics Society and am in charge of the Secretariat of the organization. When I heard about the theme of work style reform and talked to the Editor-in-Chief of Matsumoto I really wanted to read other people's experiences. In addition, I was given the opportunity to write.

I had taken a year and a half of childcare leave and returned to work last year. With no day care center being identified still where I could place my

child, and my physical condition not being at its best due to the changes in the rhythm of daily life, I was worried that even though I had resumed work, everything would turn out to be half-finished. However, I was encouraged by former chair Dr. Yoshitake's advice, "Why don't you give it a try and start by doing what you can?", and I resumed work with an irregular working format.

At first, I started working once a week, and continued with a trial and error approach, sometimes gradually increasing my working hours and at other times reducing them. Now I work almost every weekday for one hour in a short-duration work format. When I first embarked on the short-duration work format, it was difficult to determine the appropriate hours of work. My feeling of accomplishment was lowered when my working hours were not sufficient. I seemed to get flustered and felt restless, and could not invest an alpha plus effort into my work. Moreover, at present the secretariat office is being operated by two people including myself, and I was concerned that an excessive burden was being placed upon the other staff member. However, from this fall, the day care center where I used to send my child relocated, and what used to be a one-hour commute by train to the day care center became a 10-minute trip by bicycle. Finally, as the number of working days and hours increased, I began to feel calmer.

When I returned to work, I had no spare time to gather information about examples of a short-duration work style. I needed access to a good advisor and role model. I did not understand a single thing, even about my salary calculation. I found out about the Social Insurance Waiver Program from social insurance workers and employees, and it was extremely useful for extending my temporary absence from work, as it did not burden either the employee or the employer. I would like the system to be organized

in a way that makes it easy to choose one's work style according to individual circumstances, irrespective of whether it is for childcare, nursing care, or recuperation.

The content of my work includes responding to inquiries and communicating extensively with the secretary in charge of examinations to ensure that the test is conducted in a safe and successful manner. I do not have many opportunities to go out of the office as my duties consist of desk work, so I look forward to listening to talks by experts during events such as the annual organization lectures or CPE seminars held in April. Ergonomics is a practical field of study that is also related to everyday life and I always listen, with a great deal of interest, to the kinds of projects experts are working on.

Author Self-Introduction

Aya Nishihara: Graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Photography, Nihon University. Working for the Japan Ergonomics Society since 2009. Formerly, a cameraman. My hobbies are watching baseball.



Report from Professional Ergonomist

Creating New Value from the Context Concealed in Action

Ryota Kubo (Ogis Research Institute)

When a product or a service is developed, what do users or customers seek? We work to help create the value being sought using on-site behavioral observation, involving actual-use scenarios in the lives of users and customers.

One can obtain many essential insights by actually going on-site, but in order to interpret what happens on-site and create value, I believe it is important to not only observe a particular behavior and discover the issue but also accept the reason for the actions and the experiences, and interpret such events in the context of a person's cultural background.

Prior to practicing behavioral observation in earnest, I was exploring why "equipment operating in Vietnam is less productive than estimated at the time of designing." During the early stages of the initiative, the issue seemed to be that "as it is made with the physique of Japanese as the standard, the operators have been operating it in unreasonably uncomfortable postures." However, during the process of working and eating together for many days, I noticed that they had been asking me questions, yet confirming their ability to use the equipment a number of times. At that time, the assumption could be made that it was not "as it is made with the physique of Japanese as the standard, the operators have been operating it in unreasonably uncomfortable postures," but "confirmation was being done so many times as they did not want to fail, as they were serious, a national characteristic".

Of course, as they had an ergonomic background, from an operational approach, it was noticed that "the specifications of the equipment do not match the physique of Vietnamese people," but accepting their background might lead to new realizations and effective solutions.

By understanding the facts that are actually occurring on-site and accepting and interpreting events in light of culturally diverse backgrounds,

I believe that fixed frameworks can be removed and can lead to the creation and innovation of collective values that honor diversity, while achieving common objectives.

Author Self-Introduction

Ryota Kubo: Ogis-RI Co. Ltd., Behavioral Observation Reframing Headquarters, Energy Development Department, Solution Proposal Team. The author has worked in developing and improving equipment design in Japan and overseas, starting at "People and Sites," then joining the Osaka Gas Action Observation Research Institute in 2015, and then joining Ogis Co., Ltd. in the Behavioral Observation Reframe Headquarters Energy Development Department, Solution Proposal Team (currently here). The author has engaged mainly in behavioral observation for product development and problem solving.



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