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Exploring Ways of Reviewing Technical Intern Training Program

How to bridge the gap between objectives and actual condition of the system, which is the cause of negative situations such as forced labor

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Summary

- The stance toward forced labor has been stricter, especially in the US and Europe. Under these circumstances, Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) in Japan, which has been pointed out by the United States as being a form of forced labor, is considered to be a priority issue.
- One of the factors that may have contributed to the perception of forced labor is that violations of labor standards-related laws and regulations at apprenticeship implementation organizations occur at a higher rate than at workplaces subject to regular supervision, and that a high percentage of consultations from technical intern trainees (hereafter, trainees) also involve suspected violations of the same laws and regulations or the Technical Intern Training Act. Furthermore, the percentage of trainees who borrowed money in their home countries reached 54.7%, with Viet Nam extremely high at 80.8%, which suggests that the situation is prone to becoming a form of debt bondage.
- The current situation surrounding trainees is largely attributable to the difference between the objectives of TITP, which are international contribution and skill transfer, and the actual situation of securing a labor force. There are two main ways to bridge the gap between the two: (1) thoroughly implement the system in accordance with its purpose, and (2) change the system in accordance with the actual situation (unifying the system into Specified Skilled Worker system aimed at securing a labor force). Nevertheless, some problems remain difficult to resolve, such as suspicion of forced labor in the case of persons who have gone through TITP and have become specified skilled workers, and the problem of debt in their home countries. In addition, the Japanese government is being forced to take difficult steps as the decline in the number of trainees is expected to lead to a further shortage of labor.
- Looking at it from a different angle, the Japanese government should not forget the perspective of presenting a complete picture of Japanese policy on the acceptance of foreign workers, including highly-skilled foreign professionals, and on how to position and improve TITP.

Attention

This report is a summary translation. The official document is only in Japanese.