

Educational Attainments of Women and Lowest Low Fertility of Japan

Toshihiko HARA (Sapporo City University, Japan)

Purpose

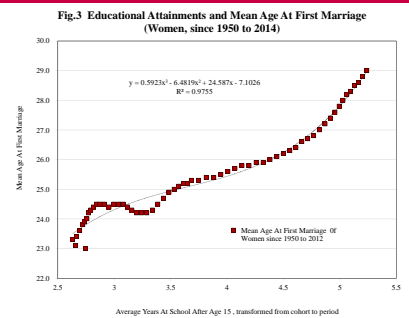
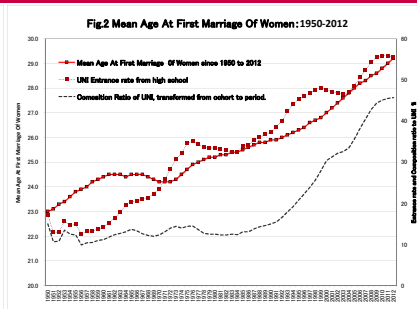
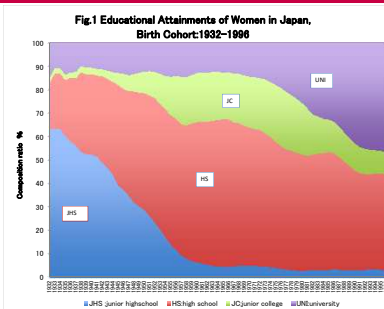
This study focuses on the second demographic transition of Japan and tries to investigate backgrounds of below replacement fertility as steady state, for making clear what is the best orientation for measures targeting Low Fertility in Regional Revitalization Policy ?

Backgrounds

The Japan Policy Council announced in 2014 “a strategy to halt the decline in Japan’s fertility rate and reinvigorate the nation’s regional areas”. It indicated which of Japan’s regional areas would face a decline of 50% or more in their female population aged 20-39, and suggested the possibility of the “disappearance” of regional municipalities. Following this, the “Regional Revitalization Law” was passed and the “Headquarters for Overcoming the Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan” was established. As of 2015, municipalities throughout the country are engaged in the formulation of “regional population visions” and “comprehensive strategies.”

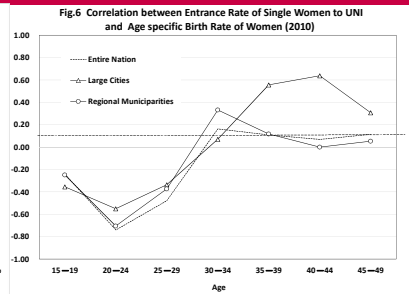
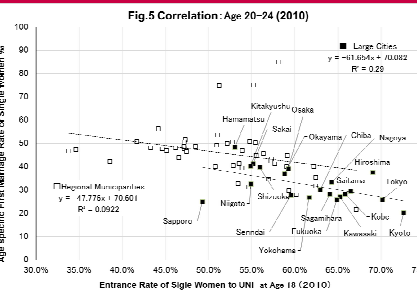
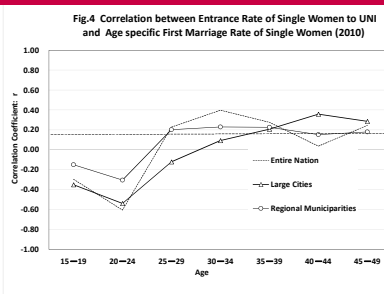
Educational Attainments and Mean Age at First Marriage since 1950 to 2012

I analyzed changing composition of educational attainments of women since 1950 to 2014 and estimated average years at school after age 15, transformed from cohort to period. They indicate highly correspondence with increasing mean age at first marriage of women since 1974 to 2012. It suggests the prolonged years of school education cause timing shift of family formation through delayed debut to marriage market.



Correlations in Prefecture Data in 2010

The prefecture data in 2010 show negative correlation of mean age at first marriage of women (and age specific birth rates) at age 20-24, where most of women are still at higher education or short after graduation. In contrast, they indicate positive correlation at age 30-34 and elder, where they try to catch up delayed marriage and childbearing. Those tendencies are more acute in large cities than regional municipalities.



Discussion

Japanese society was adaptive and successful in 1960-1970's. The demographic bonus brought the economic growth. At the same time individualization towards reproduction had spread throughout Japanese society. The responsibility for child/elderly care was shifted from family to woman as an individual. It changed women's life course. Education and employment opportunities for women were expanded. They caused timing shift of marriage and childbearing. Japanese women became more adjustable. It was escalated to increase the number of women with only one child and the childless, even to emergence of below replacement fertility as steady state.

Conclusions

The critical condition to recover the replacement fertility is to change the cost/benefit balance of childbearing for the women toward plus value. We need career design to harmonize having children with extending years of education, especially, to resolve the disadvantages in regional municipalities.

We need policy measures as such;

- 1) Free charge for university (including post-graduate studies) as the right to education
- 2) Child care leave for achieving Education-Work-Life Balance
- 3) Equal educational opportunity through ICT (Information and communication technology)
- 4) Better career chances for the people to return to their hometown

Toshihiko HARA
School of Design, Sapporo City University, Professor
(Ph.D.in Sociology)
Geijutsu no Mori 1, Minami-ku, Sapporo 005-0864
Japan
TEL:+81-11-592-2300 / FAX:+81-11-592-2369
Dialin: +81-11-592-5860
E-Mail: t.hara@scu.ac.jp
http://faculty1.scu.ac.jp/hara/