

The New-Old and Social Participation



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In 2010, a post-WWII generation (born after 1945) reached age 65, and the elderly will account for more than 25% of the Japanese population. Being recipients of post-war democratic education, the post-WWII generation will constitute a new generation of the elderly whose values are different from those of their older peers.

Japanese people have long assumed that once one grows old, he/she will retire from work, retire from the forefront of the society and become dependent on the family and society. The new generation of the elderly, however, is capable of actively contributing to the society and many desire to do so.

In a society where elderly people constitute a large portion of the population, it is not practical for them to be dependant on society without contributing back simply because they are elderly. Such thinking is tantamount to the denial of their potential and agism.

This new conception of the elderly as active contributors to society was expressed in ‘General Principles Concerning the Measures for the Aged Society’ formulated in 2002. It is summed up in the following three points:

- 1) A fair and energetic society where people can be ensured of the opportunity to participate in diverse social activities or work throughout their lives.
- 2) The formation of a community based on both independence and social connectedness.
- 3) An affluent society where people can live peacefully and with fulfillment throughout their lives.

In a new framework of an unprecedented super-aged society, it is hoped that the elderly will actively participate in the society and even be the driving force of the society.