

The Role of High School Career Education in Career Development

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This study aims to clarify the function of high school career formation, especially through career education since 2000, in the smooth transition of high school students to work and study after graduation.

Since the late 1990s, the situation regarding the transition of new graduates from school to work has changed significantly. Nowadays, there is a need to develop people who can manage their own careers. In modern schools, expectations for socialization functions rather than distribution functions are increasing. However, few studies have analyzed the role of high school career education in personal career development.

One of the factors that make it difficult to grasp the function of high school career education is that career education in Japan was advanced while changing its purpose to “adaptation,” “work motivation,” and “basic skills.” “Furthermore, some studies have suggested that the content of high school career guidance differs depending on the school rank (Arakawa 2009; Mochizuki 2007); therefore, it is assumed that the content of career education is diverse across schools and is not uniform. In this study, an analysis of data regarding high schools nationwide was used to explore the curriculum of career education. First, the goals of “career education” implemented at each high school were clarified, and the internal factors of high schools that affect students after graduation were analyzed.

In this study, the socialization function of a high school related to career formation is not a “social-oriented socialization” that teachers convey to students with a certain correct answer, but an individual-led career development. This is because even if students have similar experiences in high school, their reflections on what the experiences mean to each of them differ. Therefore, the framework of the internal experiences of Moon (2004) was used to examine the relationship between the individual internal experiences of high school students and their adaptation, work motivation, and basic skills after graduation.

This paper is composed of three parts and nine chapters. The first part is a theoretical study. Chapter 1 expands the scope of modern career education research and theoretically examines the fact that career education research has a cross-disciplinary character. A career is defined as “a series of experiences that an individual has throughout his life and is internally meaningful” (Kawakita, 2014). Conventional research on career development focuses on school and occupational choices, and there are few studies on individual independent choices and the development of basic skills. Chapter 2 focuses on how the study of educational effects on educational economics and educational sociology is changing its perspective from educational background to learning background. This study clarifies how the content of career education conducted in high school has changed.

The second part examines policy and the transition function of high school education. Chapter 3 considers that transitional education policies can change their definitions and concepts at the request of countries and businesses. Chapter 4 reports on a three-year survey of high schools across the country, which was conducted to understand how policy-level discussions were interpreted and practiced at the high school level. The analysis shows that the content of high school career education has shifted owing to changes in national policies, and that it has been implemented under at least three goals: adaptation, work motivation, and basic skills. It clarifies the need for an analysis that looked at both inside and outside Japan and provided a framework for empirical research in the third part.

The third part examines empirically what experiences in high school promote subsequent adaptation.

In Chapter 5, it is examined how the career education curriculum, as “intentional career education” in high school, has an effect on work motivation and adaptation in university. The results indicate that the high school career education curriculum has a positive and significant impact on adaptation, but a weak but negative impact on work motivation. In Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, the utility of career education, in which individuals create self-explanation while giving meaning to their experiences, is examined. Chapter 6 analyzes the utility of internal experiences in subject learning, club activities, cultural festivals, sports festivals, and leadership experiences in high school, with “workplace adaptation” as the dependent variable. The results indicate the following: existing curriculum initiatives promote internal experiences; in-school experience opportunities could affect group skills and interpersonal skills development; and gaining internal experience through school festival boosts workplace adaptation. Chapter 7 analyzes the utility of internal experiences in high school with “university adaptation” as the dependent variable, and finds that learning “how to build relationships with others” affects university adaptation. Chapter 8 evaluates internal experiences in high school that affect the motivation to work. The results of the analysis indicate that the utility of internal experiences in high school affects job choice, work motivation, and job performance after employment. In Chapter 9, the effects of school-level experience on the acquisition of basic skills and internal experiences from subject learning in high school are analyzed.

The high school career-building function needs to change from conventional passive socialization to individual-oriented socialization. The high school should provide opportunities for learning from personal experiences. The nature of experience leads to different learning content; therefore, a combination of experiences tailored to individual tasks and strengthening opportunities for introspection is the only opportunity for career education in future high schools.