

Realities and Challenges of Youth Employment Support: Research on Assistance Development in the United Kingdom and Situation Analyses on Japanese Youth

Summary

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Objective of the Research

These days, the numbers of jobless new graduates, unemployed youth, and young people working on an *arubaito* (casual work) or part-time basis (the so-called "*freeters*"), as well as NEETs (those Not in Education, Employment or Training) are all equally increasing. It is possible to consider that the backgrounds of this phenomenon could be the facts that the transition process from school to work has changed in our country and that systems to help young people smoothly go through this transition are not efficiently functioning. Taking this situation seriously, the Government has implemented the "Independence and Challenge Plan for Young People" since the fiscal year 2004, deploying new employment support measures such as "Job Cafes."

This study focuses on the following three points: (i) understanding and analyzing consciousness and actual behavior of young people, focusing on those who tend to have difficulties in transition from school to work due to low educational background, as well

as those with tendency to avoid participating in the labor force, both of which were not able to make use of past employment support measures, (ii) conducting hearings with respect to situations of youth employment support measures that have been newly administered in Japan, and (iii) examining directions that youth employment assistance measures should head for so that our country can efficiently deploy those measures, by investigating realities surrounding operations and evaluations of new measures taken in other countries, for example “Connexions” in the United Kingdom.

Outline of Research Results

1. Research Objective and Issues

(Objective)

These days, the numbers of jobless new graduates, unemployed youth, and young people working on an *arubaito* (casual work) or part-time basis (the so-called “*freeters*”), as well as NEETs (those Not in Education, Employment or Training) are all equally increasing. It is possible to consider that at the backgrounds of this phenomenon could be the facts that the transition process from school to work has changed in our country and that systems to help young people smoothly go through this transition have not efficiently functioned. Taking this situation seriously, the Government has implemented the “Independence and Challenge Plan for Young People” since the fiscal year 2004, deploying new employment support measures such as “Job Cafes.”

The objective of our study is to explore what will be required from here on to efficiently deploy new youth employment support measures that have been initiated in Japan.

(Research Issues and Focus)

For this purpose, the following two approaches seem to be effective. The first approach is to learn from experiences of other developed countries that have been actively dealing with youth employment issues since early on. The JILPT has already collected information on situations of youth employment support policies implemented in other countries (United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, and United States) and compiled it into reports (Japan Institute of Labour 2003; Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2004a). Among these policies, a certain measure draws special attention when compared with those developed in Japan, that is, the “Connexions” Program, which has been recently introduced in the United Kingdom as a local community-driven policy aimed to promote young people’s transition from school to work. Based on an on-site observation of operational realities regarding this policy, we

will attempt to identify challenges surrounding “Job Cafes” and other similar measures launched in local communities in Japan.

The second approach is to closely observe present consciousness and behavior of Japanese young people and current situations of where employment support is provided in Japan. Among Japanese youth, what we should be most focused on are those having difficulties in transition from school to work due to low educational background and with tendency to avoid participating in the labor force, who were not able to make use of past employment support measures. With respect to this matter, we have already started an interview survey since the fiscal year 2003 and compiled an interim report (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2004b). It is necessary to deepen our analysis by continuing this interview survey and covering a broader and better-balanced range of subjects. Along with a qualitative analysis, a quantitative analysis is also inevitable. However, young people who have difficulty in making use of transition support measures are at the same time difficult to understand through questionnaire surveys. Therefore, we will try to conduct a quantitative analysis by independently processing specific statistical data that have been gathered on a large scale.

As for the situation of where the employment support is provided, since the “Independence and Challenge Plan for Young People” has just been initiated, we decided to visit some of the Job Cafes in the latter half of the fiscal year when they were established in local communities, so as to investigate actual support services provided in these new assistance offices. We also collected information on support given by other assistance bodies than Job Cafes.

2. Method of the Research

Our research consists of four parts. The first part deals with the fact-finding survey in the United Kingdom focusing on understanding of situations surrounding the Connexions. The second part deals with the interview survey of young people who have trouble with transition from school to work, and the third part contains the results of the reaggregation of micro data of the “Employment Status Survey” (conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications) for the purpose of a quantitative analysis. The fourth part is on the interview survey targeted at youth employment assistance organizations including Job Cafes.

1) Fact-finding survey in the United Kingdom

In October 2004, we conducted an interview survey concerning the Connexions

Partnerships (organized in the central London and Sussex), targeting at those who are in charge of career education in secondary schools.

2) Interview survey of jobless youth and young *freeters*

We performed interviews of 28 young people who pursued higher education and 53 of those who did not, from the fiscal year 2003 (starting in April 2003) to December 2004.

The interview survey consists of four dimensions (employment, school, family, and social networks, etc.) under the intention to holistically comprehend the situation of the subjects to discuss appropriate assistance programs. In each dimension, we asked the subjects to explain their individual situations by looking back on their personal histories.

3) Reaggregation of micro data of the “Employment Status Survey”

We gained permission to access and reaggregate micro data collected in 2002, 1997, and 1992 in the “Employment Status Survey” (conducted every five years). We identified the following four groups of young people as those experiencing transitional difficulties, and analyzed their attributes and tendencies. We also examined about “*freeters*.”

- (i) “Those who are basically jobless but wish to work, and are actually preparing for job seeking or trying to start up a business, excluding students” (hereafter called the “job seekers”)
- (ii) “Those who are jobless and unmarried, do not try job seeking, do not either belong to or go to school, and do not engage in household works” (hereafter called the “jobless youth defined by the White Paper”)
- (iii) “Those who are jobless, do not try job seeking, unmarried, do not either belong to or go to school, and yet engage in household works” (hereafter called the “unmarried youth engaging in household works”)
- (iv) “Those who are not either students or housewives and work on an *arubaito* or part-time basis either for 99 days or less per year or 21 hours or less per week” (hereafter called the “peripheral *freeters*”)

4) Interview survey of youth employment assistance organizations

From July to December 2004, we conducted an interview survey targeted at representatives of Job Cafes and other private youth employment support organizations. Major contents of the interview include the basic profile of the organization (founder, size, financial condition, and number/backgrounds of staff), objective of youth

employment support, relation with the past and existing policies, actual support activities (characteristics, operational policy and philosophy, contents of support services, and range of subjects), realities of service users (number of services provided, status of service provision, profiles of users, and general images of users), and operational problems.

3. Major Findings and Policy Implications

In Part I, development of youth employment support measures undertaken in the United Kingdom and the European Union (EU) are discussed.

The focus of Chapter 1 is how youth employment support measures that had been initiated in the U.K. eventually evolved into the Connexions. After completing secondary school education (at the age of 16), young people in Britain have the following choices: going to a Sixth Form College to prepare for entrance to a higher educational establishment, attending a successive educational institution, taking vocational trainings, and starting work, or becoming jobless by not choosing any of these options (i.e. NEET). NEETs account for 9 percent of British young people at the age from 16 to 18.

The U.K. has encouraged young people to build consciousness both as a worker and as a citizen through career education and work experience provided by schools. Nonetheless, some problems have been pointed out including: insufficiency of support activities to follow up individual children, lack of assistance for young people who left school (as most youth employment support services are provided by schools), and insufficiency of collaboration between schools and relevant organizations outside of schools. Conventional educational and/or training policies for youth also failed to fully engage young people. Although the New Deal policy did have certain effects, it was not able to give positive impact on young people who have complicated problems, particularly on NEETs. Thus what was needed was an assistance measure which could appeal to young people. The Social Exclusion Unit established within the British government for the purpose of preventing social exclusion stated in its survey report that although the state of NEET, i.e. that of social exclusion, is far more complicated than it was considered to be, existing policies have not brought out any useful effects because they did not take the complicatedness into consideration, recognizing the necessity of broad assistance that also covers matters outside employment.

Based on the above experience in youth employment support, the following issues were identified: (i) Assistance measures should reflect opinions from young people themselves so that they can make the most of such measures, ; (ii) Assistance services

should be provided early enough before young people actually fall into the state of NEET; (iii) Support organizations need networking; and (iv) Comprehensive and careful assistance should be given from a diverse range of perspectives, not limited to employment matters. The U.K. was exploring youth support policies that could address these problems.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the Connexions which was introduced as an assistance measure to deal with the above-mentioned issues, and also explains its system. The Connexions is a comprehensive support covering all young people at the age from 13 to 19, in the hope that they can have a good start to working life. The services of the Connexions are different from past youth assistance policies in terms that it provides general and continuous services, that it focuses on teenagers, and that it promotes the involvement of young people themselves.

One of its organizational characteristics is that each Connexions Partnership (hereafter called the “Partnership”) established in a local community is not a single fixed body, but a aggregation of multiple networks. What is playing an important role to form a Partnership by linking and networking originally separate organizations is an information tracking database called CCISs (Connexions Customer Information Systems).

CCISs contributed to connect various youth-related organizations such as support centers and schools and to realize comprehensive and consistent services from a wide range of sources. An entry of this database is created for each student when he or she is still receiving compulsory education. The initial information given to the database is a set of basic data (name, gender, address, contact numbers, etc.) of a student at the age of 13 (8th grade). After receiving these personal data from the school which the student belongs to, the Partnership starts providing support services to the pertinent student. The information on the career path taken at the end of compulsory education is also sent to the Partnership from the school.

Most of the “Personal Advisers” (PAs) who actually contact young people used to be career counselors, teachers, or youth workers. Although only those who have NVQ4 or equivalent professional qualifications (those of career guidance, youth work, or social work) are eligible to be PAs, it is difficult to secure sufficient number of personnel under such a strict criterion. Thus, Partnerships are eager to provide on-the-job trainings. The expenses for on-the-job trainings are funded by the Government for the first three years, and Partnerships cover the remaining.

The major activities of the Connexions can be grouped into those within and beyond schools. For activities within schools, a “consent agreement” that stipulates objective

of support services, human rights of young people, and data collection, is made between schools and the Partnership prior to actually performing any support activities. What kind of support activities the Partnership carries out in a school depends on the contents of each consent agreement. The core activity within schools is provision of information and guidance by PAs.

As one of activities beyond schools, each Partnership is required to follow up and report career paths of young people who completed compulsory education, using CCISs. It is necessary for Partnerships to contact those who advanced to higher education once per year, and those who do not either belong to any organization or engage in any activities (i.e. NEETs) once per three month to give assistance. In spite of such efforts to individually contact ex-students on a regular basis, a certain number of young people are always missing and impossible to follow up, to which improvement is required.

In Chapter 3, the audit process for each Partnership is explained. The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), an independent body from the Government, is mainly responsible for the audit activities for Partnerships. Audit teams, led by an Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) specially hired for each case, conduct audit in each Partnership. The aims of the audit are to give independent and official evaluations on quality and efficacy of services provided by Partnerships, to contribute to enhancement of support activities, and to report whether or not the services are value for money.

The framework and criteria of the audit are presented by OFSTED in advance. In accordance with this framework, audit teams write audit records based on interviews to staff members of the Partnership and young people who are registered with it, as well as observations into its support activities. The records are submitted to the relevant Partnership and local governments, and are compiled into a report. Partnerships are required to work out an action plan within one month after receiving the audit report.

The previously conducted audits proved that the Connexions has succeeded in motivating young people to work and cultivating their ability to choose career paths, that continuity and consistency of support activities have been secured, and that systematic and comprehensive assistance and information provision activities have been realized. Some of the future challenges include developing vocational abilities of stakeholders such as PAs and establishing a more organic system of collaboration and cooperation among related organizations.

Chapter 4 presents reviews on recognition of present circumstances and actual measures observed in the EU's transition support policies, as well as issues that should be addressed by our country. In western countries, youth assistance policies have emerged, as smooth transition to adulthood was becoming more difficult to achieve and

many young people were experiencing unstable transition accompanied by risks. The objectives of these transition support policies are to ensure a position of an adult for every young person, and at the same time to integrate him or her into the society.

The typical transition style in Japan has a close connection with the structure of the Japanese society where responsibilities of child education are uniquely imposed on his or her parents, which often prevents latent problems from coming to the light. In order to overcome this situation, we suggest that establishment of a public assistance system apart from schools or private enterprises is required.

Part II discusses the Japanese youth and current situation of new support measures.

In Chapter 1, we take a look at realities of and changes in young Japanese people who have difficulty in “transition to the state of social independence centered on work life” (hereafter called the “transition to work life”), based on the reagggregated micro data of the “Employment Status Survey” and extracted young people who belong to the following four categories: among those who are jobless and also not in education, “job seekers” = who are seeking for jobs, “non-job seekers” = who are not seeking for jobs and are unmarried (this group can be subcategorized into “jobless youth defined by the ‘White Paper on Labor and Economy’”¹ who are not engaging in household work and “unmarried youth engaging in household work”), and “peripheral *freeters*” = those who are employed but whose working period/hours are extremely short.

According to our calculation, among 34 million people (including both males and females) at the age from 15 to 34, there are 1.92 million “job seekers,” 650,000 “jobless youth defined by the White Paper,” 210,000 “unmarried youth engaging in household work,” and 410,000 “peripheral *freeters*.”² Looking at the changes from 1992 to 2002,

¹ We independently processed individual data obtained in the “Labour Force Survey” and calculated that there are 520,000 jobless youth, i.e. “non-labor force population who do not either work or study, are unmarried, and do not engage in household work.” Please note that the “**Employment Status Survey**” referred to in this report focuses on “usual situations,” while “Labour Force Survey” pays attention only to the last one week of the month. Therefore, figures given in the two surveys are naturally different, even though both of them use similar definitions.

² Just like we did in this chapter, the “Study Group on Youth Employment (an interim report 2005)” organized in the Cabinet Office also independently processed data obtained in the “**Employment Status Survey**” to analyze jobless youth. The Study Group categorized jobless and unmarried young people who usually do not either work or study into two groups: the “non-job seeking” type who does not engage in job seeking yet shows intention to work, and the “non-desire to work” type who does not engage in job seeking and has no intention to work, either. It estimated the number of the so-called “NEETs” at 850,000, combining the number of both “non-job seeking” and “non-desire to work” types of jobless youth. The total number of “jobless youth defined by the White Paper” and “unmarried youth engaging in household work” calculated in this chapter is also 850,000, which indicates that these two categories almost overlap with the two groups defined by the Study Group (the “non-job seeking” and “non-desire to work” types).

we found that the number of each group have equally increased. In particular, the number of those classified into the group of “jobless youth defined by the White Paper” significantly increased in the last five years of the relevant period. Although the status of “non-employment defined by the White Paper” is often seen among teenagers with low educational background, the peak in number of jobless youth defined by the White Paper has gradually shifted to that of the late 20s or early 30s. At the background of this phenomenon is the existence of the so-called “Dankai Juniors” (second-generation baby boomers in Japan), indicating the possibility that this is a problem shared among this specific generation. The Dankai Juniors with a high concentration of population graduated from schools in the period when labor demand declined, and some of them failed in the transition to working life and remained jobless.

Many of the “unmarried youth engaging in household work” are women living with their parents. The number in this category has also considerably risen since 1997. They are gradually aging; those in their late 20s and early 30s account for 70 percent of this group. As parents of this generation reach the phase of retirement, some of Dankai Juniors seem to be newly facing the issue of independence.

Male subjects showed a clear correlation with the status of household and marriage. As many as 70 percent of them lived with their parents as dependents, and few of them were married. Comparing the income levels and marriage status by age, there was an apparent tendency that males with high income levels were often married. Among the male groups, the level of earnings at which the rate of those who are married exceeds 50% was, five million yen or more per year in the late 20s, and three million yen or more per year in the early 30s. It is therefore evident that the growth of tendency to delay or avoid marriage is linked to an increase in job seekers, jobless people, and *freeters*.

Nearly half of the jobless who do not make an effort to find jobs still wish to work to make some money. The major reason they do not actively seek jobs is illness or injury, accounting for one fourth of the total. Tracing back the changes since 1992, we found that although an increasing number of young people are becoming jobless, more and more of them actually have desire to work. While those who can not work due to illness or injury decrease in a relative sense, more jobless people say that they were not able to find jobs in spite of their job seeking efforts.

Approximately 60 percent of “jobless youth defined by the White Paper” and 40 percent of “unmarried youth engaging in household work” have no work experience. Among those who previously worked, one third have been out of work for ten months or less. For another third, it has been three years or more since they quit their jobs.

Many of jobless young people with low educational background have never worked or have not resumed working after a long period of time since they left their last job, while most of those who attended higher education have experienced working before and it has been only a short while since they quit working. In recent years, an increasing number of young people become jobless after having certain work experience.

Some of the major reasons for jobless youth who have once worked to not seeking jobs include “being ill or injured” and “having tried but failed to find one.” In contrast, relatively many of those who have never worked before give reasons of not seeking jobs such as “not optimistic enough to believe that a desirable job should be available” or “not confident in his or her knowledge or skills,” rather than “being ill or injured” or “having tried but failed to find a job.” This made us assume that career counseling could be effective for jobless young people without any work experience.

We then paid attention to “peripheral *freeters*” to examine their employment situation and consciousness. Contrary to our hypothesis that peripheral *freeters* might often fall into the status of NEET, many of them showed a totally different mindset from that of NEETs; some stick to their current jobs because there is a possibility that they can be hired as an expert in the future, and some others prefer the status of peripheral *freeters* so that they can attend schools during non-working hours. Most of peripheral *freeters* who were not satisfied with their present situation had started job seeking for a position of a regular employee. The number of those who were close to the status of NEET and did not have intention to change their current circumstances where they do not work hard for better future, tuned out to be not so high, approximately 80,000.

We defined “*freeters*” as “those who are in the age range of 15 to 34, do not belong to any school, are unmarried in the case of woman, and (i) if employed, those who are referred to as a part-timer or *arubaito* worker by their employers, or (ii) if jobless, those who do not either engage in household work or study but wish to work on a part-time, *arubaito*, or as contract workers.”³ In 2002, the ratio of *freeters* under this definition to

³ This definition is based on the 2002 version of the “Employment Status Survey.” In the 1997 and earlier versions, jobless people who wish to work as a contract employee were not included in the category of *freeters*. We modified our definition as the 2002 version changed the criteria for those who should be categorized as *freeters*. According to the “White Paper on Labor and Economy 2004” based on “Labour Force Survey” (detailed results), *freeters* were defined as “those who are in the age range of 15 to 34, have already graduated from schools, are unmarried in the case of woman, and (i) if employed, those who are referred to as a part-timer or *arubaito* worker by their employers, or (ii) if jobless, those who do not either engage in household work or study but wish to work on a part-time or *arubaito* basis.” The total number of *freeters* was estimated at 2.17 million people on average in 2003. Please note that definitions may differ since the reference survey (“Employment Status Survey”) focuses on “usual situations” and changes the criteria used for categorization from time to

the total number of people in the same age range who do not study and are unmarried in the case of woman, and (i) those who are employed (except for executives), or (ii) those who are jobless but “wish to work to make some money,” increased up to 9.3 percent for men (4.4 percent in 1992) and 21.9 percent for women (10.2 percent in 1992). Looking at the ratio of *freeters* by age, the increase among teenagers is remarkable, while according to educational background, the ratio is highest among junior high school graduates who did not attend high school or other higher educational institutions. In the case of women, the increase in the ratio of *freeters* among university or graduate school graduates has not been as significant as those among other educational background groups, suggesting that gaps by educational level are expanding in terms of the *freeters* ratio.

The age-specific ratios of *freeters* are increasing particularly among those in their late 20s or older (regardless of gender), which seems to be affected not only by the existence of the Dankai Juniors, but also by growing tendency to avoid marriage. The ratios by job type of *freeters* have also largely changed. An increasing number of *freeters* are now working as professional or technical experts. In fact, there are more *freeters* experts than those who are regularly employed. There is a huge gap in annual salaries between those paid to *freeters* and regular employees, although both of them are equally working as professional or technical experts. It is likely that *freeters* experts have to accept their position simply because they do not have opportunities to be hired as regular employees. When comparing hourly calculated incomes, there was no significant difference between those paid to *freeters* experts and those paid to regularly-employed experts, which indicates that *freeters* who work as professional or technical experts seem to be receiving fair treatment at least in terms of hourly pay.

The main focus of Chapter 2 is those who did not go onto higher education, their realities and challenges in transition to working life.

Based on a series of hearing surveys targeted at young people having difficulties in transition, we can induce that the factor of “unwilling entrance to high school” has a significant impact. It should be attributed to the absence of socioeconomic and cultural “capital (resources)” in their family. Those who do not attend higher education often share a common circumstance where they did not or could not commit themselves to

time. The “Employment Status Survey” referred to in our study is useful for qualitative analyses as it covers a large number of respondents and contains numerous questions. However, since this survey is performed only every five years, it is less up-to-date compared to “Labour Force Survey” (detailed results) that releases reports four times per year. Therefore, the “Employment Status Survey” is more suitable to conduct qualitative analyses reflecting long-term changes, rather than to argue latest trends.

“scholastic values” (= values or ethos considered desirable by the society) even in the stage of compulsory education at elementary and secondary schools. They do not either accommodate themselves to schools or have the custom of studying at home. As a natural consequence, they can not enter “high-level high schools” with good reputation or “long-established vocational high schools (specialized high schools),” and end up going to either a “local high school” where all applicants can be accepted or, if in urban areas, a “high school saddled with numerous problems.” In one of these schools, some enjoy their “fun high school years (when they can indulge themselves in whatever they desire),” while others spend everyday hating studying just as they have been since elementary school. In either way, they superficially accept “scholastic values” and continue attending high school without fully appreciating the values.

Families of such students are often indifferent. They are hardly able to direct their children to “accept the current situation and make efforts to improve it,” although they might instead inflame their “sense of inferiority.” In rural regions, the lives of parents could also be unstable in extremely indigent circumstances. Available employment opportunities are so limited that they can not embody a model of “adults who work in a stable manner.” The financial difficulties of urban families are not as prominent as those in rural areas. Nonetheless, looking at the attitudes of young people who do not have a fixed job and work only on a non-regular basis even in their mid 20s, we can not observe strong, positive influence from surrounding adults including their own parents. The surrounding adults themselves do not seek for “generally-approved stability in the society.”

In Chapter 3, we examined in what processes those who went onto higher education fail in transition to working life, and how they remain incapable of overcoming the situation where the transition is hampered.

The first possible obstacle that could deter the transition is dropping out from the higher educational institution which the person advanced to. The reasons of dropping out included wrong choice of educational path which was made while they were still in high school, entrance to the institution without satisfaction, and discontent with environment available in the institution. Many of those who choose to drop out of school have intention to make a fresh start once again after acquiring vocational skills in some sort of educational organizations.

The next obstacle could emerge upon graduation from the higher educational institution. Some of jobless young people who graduated from junior college or vocational college said that it had been difficult to balance their second-year specialized study and job seeking. Even if it was not the case, some did not try very hard to find

jobs under the recognition that failure to obtain employment was not very rare and that “everyone” around them was having troubles in job seeking. For four-year university graduates, it was a difficult challenge to narrow down their target industries and job types in the trend where they were allowed to apply for jobs at their own discretion. For that very reason that they are well aware of the importance to “obtain employment,” many of jobless university graduates are squarely facing the issue of how to balance their work and way of life, though without taking into account the practical conditions of the current labor market. Among those who had to delay graduation by multiple years, there was a strong inclination towards becoming civil servants or obtaining jobs requiring certain qualifications. For they often believe that if one misses any steps in the transition process, it could cause disadvantage in the simultaneous mass employment procedure or personnel management according to the employment year (in private enterprises). In the hearing survey of employment guidance centers organized in universities, respondents indicated that they are no longer able to support each student's isolated efforts in finding jobs, as their job placement function has deteriorated and counseling function has been underutilized along with expansion of job postings on the Internet. They also pointed out that students' desire to postpone deciding their career paths are backed by their parent's support in the form of funding for the purpose of taking examinations to be civil servants or to acquire certain kinds of qualifications.

The third obstacle may rear its head when one quits working only after a short while and does not immediately seek for another employment. Although once employed, many of those in such a situation had to leave their jobs due to their inability to complete their tasks, followed by resignation requests from the employer. Sometimes there seems to be a background that companies which have not had much experience in hiring graduates from higher educational institutions and which have only just enough staff to run their business tend to give heavy responsibilities or place excessive expectations on new graduate employees even in the early stages of employment. After losing jobs due to loss of self-confidence, it takes some time before commencing actions for reemployment. The thought that “my presence caused trouble” deters them from finding a next job. In some cases, university graduates who failed in their initial attempts to work show their reluctance to resume working in fear of once again building a social relationship, which may need certain support or encouragement.

In Chapter 4, we focused on realities of young people in a transitional crisis from the perspective of family environment.

Generally, the transition processes to adulthood as well as the period dependent on

parents are both prolonged. This is not necessarily true, however, for junior high school graduates, high school dropouts, and high school graduates who did not seek for higher education. Many of them stopped receiving allowances from parents while (or before) they belonged to a high school, and started making money by working on an *arubaito* basis. Once a child begins earning cash by doing *arubaito* work, it means that he or she has made the first step of financial independence from parents, with no way back. Such young people are often living in a complicated family environment, and financial independence (i.e. independence from parents) is the most critical element for them to maintain their own dignity and to protect themselves from adverse conditions. Nonetheless, despite their early attempts for independence, they tend to either take long time to attain complete independence or even end up failing to achieve it, under constraints of unstable employment and insufficient income. Naturally, not a few of them have no clear idea when they can get married to start their own family.

In urban cities, there are many young people who place little expectations on the future and only have vague images of it instead. As pointed out in western countries, it can be said that they are the most typical people who are at the risk of being socially excluded. Since their family environment does not have any condition which allows them to prepare for working life, they tend to think that all they need is immediate cash. The stagnation of local economies has aggravated conditions of rural households where children do not seek for education higher than junior or senior high school. We found that, owing to lack of sufficient job opportunities, those who are in the age range when one is supposed to develop professional careers and to gain experience as a member of the society have been confined in a socially and culturally poor environment.

There is a significant difference between *freeters* and jobless people with high educational background and those who did not go onto higher education in that the former was brought up in the environment where every family member goes to university. Parents are greatly concerned over education, have strong expectations for their children, and have spent a lot of money for their children's education. For this particular reason, if their children stumble in their educational paths, it might adversely affect their occupational choice process. Furthermore, parents who always respect their children's intention and will and do not interfere eventually give their children an illusion that they are multi-talented and expand the gap between reality and dream, causing their children's hesitation in taking up available jobs. Some people are trying to take qualification examinations, go to vocational schools, or change their career paths, in the hope to survive in this era of job scarcity. Whether or not the rather expensive costs occur in such a process can be met solely depends on their

parents' financial strength. The period when parents have to take care of their children has been more and more prolonged. This prolonged transition is putting pressure on household finances of even families with high educational backgrounds, which would not have any economical problems if their children had a smooth transition from school to work.

In Chapter 5, we investigated the current situation and challenges in terms of youth employment assistance, and analyzed profiles of young people who utilize assistance services and the realities of support from the standpoint of support staff who actually provide assistance to them. According to the interview survey of youth support organizations, the following facts were found: (i) While the major objective of Job Cafes is to encourage *freeters* and jobless/unemployed young people to become regular employees, there are some public organizations that give assistance for the purpose of helping them build human relationships and participate in the society; (ii) Assistance by youth and for youth is meaningful for both supporters and supportees; (iii) Support organizations are emphasizing on on-the-job trainings for career counselors and advisers who play the key roles of youth assistance; and (iv) Although many support centers are trying to establish a single-point delivery system of assistance, collaboration targeted at young supportees has not been significantly enhanced. We identified the future challenges as follows: (i) assistance-related issues caused by numerical targets, (ii) restraints concerning opening dates/hours and venues, (iii) PR and advertisement to attract young people, (iv) cares for young people who have worries other than the ones associated with employment, and (v) collaboration with other bodies, especially schools.

Below are the current situation and challenges of youth assistance, from the perspective of supporters. Authors have noticed problems concerning young people such as prolonged wait-and-see period, endless search for suitable jobs, baseless self-confidence, and aging of those in transitional crisis. Although mechanisms that consist of private organizations and NPOs to support all young people have been taking root to complement public assistance centers, they are not ubiquitous yet and are concentrated only in certain areas. This is why we pointed out the necessity for supporters to deliberately establish wider networks. When it comes to support for young people who are having trouble in transition, the keyword from here on will be "outreach" to engage isolated youth. Based on the lessons learned from some support organizations, what we believe is required to effectively step up our "outreaching" efforts is to make the following five elements function in a balanced manner: "Target," "Attendance," "Distinction," "Network," and "Personal Guidance."

In the last chapter, we discuss necessary policy measures in comparison with cases

observed in the United Kingdom, based on the reality analysis of Japanese young people. In addition, we present issues to be addressed regarding currently-implemented assistance measures.

The following seven are our suggestions in terms of youth employment support policies:

(1) To enhance collaboration between schools and employment support organizations outside of schools. To establish an organic system of collaboration among support organizations.

Not a few young NEETs have no work experience working after graduation from school. In order to cover all young people, and at the same time to support those who are the farthest from independence, assistance that are consistently provided since school days is required. The Connexions implemented in the United Kingdom has established a mechanism to engage every young person in its services, where youth support organizations can make decisions by participating in Partnerships and can share information via CCISs.

Japanese assistance bodies such as Job Cafes have also recognized the necessity of PR and advertisement to attract more young people and to encourage them to make use of their services, and have realized that they should provide cares to young people with mental problems. This can never be achieved with efforts by a single youth support organization. It is vital to establish a system where a young person who visits a certain support center can be referred to the most appropriate assistance organization. In particular, building an information sharing network of assistance organizations is a task that should be urgently addressed, so that a wide range of youth organizations including schools can smoothly collaborate with each other.

More precisely, the pieces of information exchanged in the network should include resource information on concrete support to give proper assistance to individual users, and the network should serve as a practical mechanism that can introduce services provided by other organizations to young people who have visited one of support centers seeking for immediate help. The organizations that belong to the network are required to share common understandings, for example about problems that each young person would have. That would be ideal if measures which consider the possibility of setting up a personal information database equivalent to CCSIs could be realized.

(2) To establish a system to improve the quality of assistance provided by employment support organizations

Today, a diverse range of youth support policies have been initiated, including Job Cafes administered by prefectural offices. The effectiveness of such policies should be measured, and resources should be directed to those that have been proved to be more efficient than others. Concurrently, the measured results of quality and efficacy of support services should be provided to each organization in the form of feedback so that it can further improve its service operations. Although such an effectiveness measuring with numerical targets has already been taking place, it is feared that these assessments might deter each support office from helping young users who have significantly difficult problems. To avoid such an adverse effect, it is necessary to elaborate on effectiveness measuring methods. What we can do to this end is to classify young people according to their problems from a total point of view on youth issues, and to set improvement goals and numerical targets for each category. It is also inevitable to establish goals and targets taking into consideration not only young people who have actually sought for help at support centers but also those who have not accessed any assistance organization.

The Connexions in the United Kingdom has a system where an organization independent from the Government conducts practical audits involving supporters who actually meet young people and provide them with assistance. This audit system focusing on actual supporters seems to have a great deal to do with the fact that the Connexions has set finely-tuned objectives and has succeeded in enhancing its operations to address various kinds of problems. The standpoints of actual support staff should be reflected in the audit activities administered in Japan as well.

For the sake of better quality assistance services, it is considered important to respect each support organization's discretion as much as possible in the practical support phase, leaving the task of efficacy assessments to auditors. We should always keep in mind that support services customized to individual problems could face a large number of unexpected matters and troubles. So that these unanticipated events can be properly handled, a flexible system is required where individual support organizations are allowed to independently make decisions as much as possible, depending on circumstances. Each organization should also have freedom to decide, for instance, locations of support offices and opening hours.

(3) To establish a system to enhance assistance capacities of support staff

The quality of services centered on counseling is affected by the capacity of each support staff member. The Connexions in the United Kingdom has organized on-the-job trainings and other associated programs, in the recognition that it is

essential to improve professional skills of Personal Advisors.

Our country is also facing the challenge to maintain and/or enhance the quality of supporters. Many Job Cafes have already started to hold case study meetings and have introduced a supervising system, both with the intent of improving the quality of assistance services. Furthermore, it also seems to be necessary to perform research to brush up qualities of staff as a whole.

(4) To encourage young people themselves to participate in youth support activities

Assistance programs based on young people's opinions, which are undertaken in some Job Cafes, have brought about significant effects. By having young people join in support projects, the contents of assistance measures could be attractive for young users. Furthermore, the young participants can also gain self-esteem and self-confidence by running support projects by themselves. If more young participants can be motivated to participate in youth support programs, their sense of ownership could be expected to be further enhanced.

Participation by young people is largely valued in terms of youth policies implemented not only in the U.K. but also in the European Union. To bring out potential of young people, both opportunities and expectations from surrounding stakeholders are inevitable.

(5) To explore comprehensive transition assistance measures

Various and complicated situations could trigger young people to fall into transitional crisis. After fully understanding the background and personal history of individual young people, we should explore possible support measures that are centered on employment yet also involve other related issues such as educational trainings, housing, family building, and social insurance.

(6) To establish a sustainable public assistance system

The system of mass employment of new graduates, a traditional employment practice which functioned until 1990s in Japan, clearly indicated the transitional path from school to work, and allowed many young people to smoothly go through the transitional period. Of course it was not always the case for everyone, and some did have difficulty in the transition. In such cases, those who failed in the transition were looked after by their family, and these problems were not shared by the public. As the number of NEETs in their 30s increases, their aging parents will soon become unable to cover their NEET children's living expenses. Western countries have already recognized the

delayed transition to adulthood as one of grave social problems. At present, most of their transition support policies are aiming to officially ensure a position of an adult for every young person, and at the same time to integrate him or her into the society. Japan also has to sustain the public assistance system that has just been launched.

(7) To enrich support for teenagers who are still studying at school

As already suggested in our interim report, enhancement of youth support particularly for students is the most essential and important issue. Preventive measures before actually failing in the transition to professional life are needed, rather than follow-up programs to help those who are already in the throes of the transition. Our interview survey targeted at young people has revealed that failure to adapt to school life at an early stage (i.e., constant absence, deviation from requirements, or dropout) tends to continue to be a barrier for career development even later on.

The function of school could be enhanced through the collaboration with the industry, just as seen in the ongoing Japanese version of the so-called “Dual System,” by putting emphasis on vocational training. The fact that students who do not live up to what schools value and are often eager to work on an *arubaito* basis could be attributable to the educational power that the business circles have, on top of their simple motivation to earn money. Extensive efforts are expected to incorporate such an educational power that the industry possesses into school education.

Non-school organizations can be of use in that they can prevent students from deviating from school requirements and help young people prepare for starting work, by support in their adaptation to school life and granting opportunities to expand their social networks.

Higher educational institutions are also expected to administer educational programs that have an orientation of career development and occupational guidance. Many young people end up being jobless or working as a *freeter* because of dropout from higher education or unsuccessful job seeking. This could be attributable to higher educational institutions, on top of insufficient career education given in secondary schools. Also in this context, development of support in collaboration with the industry is required.

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