

Abstracts

The Japanese System in Historical Comparisons of Vocational Education and Training: Schools and Companies in the Formation of Vocational Competencies

Moriki Terada (Professor Emeritus, Nagoya University)

This article aims to review the characteristics and specific issue of Japan in vocational competency formation by the vocational education and training (VET) system through comparisons with earlier developed countries and based on previous domestic and international research. The formation of VET systems at the secondary school level is strongly influenced by the method chosen to organize apprentice systems in each country since the pre-modern era. Educational training is structured around several systems including the dual system or apprenticeship-like system, the unregulated type based on further education, and a type centered around full-time school education. Japan saw the development of a system where basic competencies were learnt at school and specialized training was undertaken by corporations. However, from the 1970s, VET was gradually pushed upwards and undertaken at the higher education level in college, polytechnic universities or universities of applied science depending on the country. A Comparison with early VET systems in various developed countries reveals a Japanese system characterized by strong segmentation and the absence of a common framework to assess conformity of qualifications at the end of training. Additionally, the relationship between schools and corporations, both at the secondary and the higher education level, is characterized by a lack of special partnerships. As initiatives regarding “job-focused employments” and quality preservation of educational training expand, it seems that the challenge regarding VET in the 21st century will be the achievement of the relevant reforms.

Challenges and Prospects of Competency-Based Education Reform: Beyond Vocational Training and Toward Education for Transition to Society and Independence as an Adult **Terumasa Ishii** (Kyoto University)

This paper clarifies the background and characteristics of the competency-based school curriculum reforms that have developed worldwide, as well as the qualities- and abilities-based Japanese version of these reforms. This paper also provides a comprehensive overview of the various issues surrounding competency-based reforms, and discusses the challenges and prospects from the perspective of the transition from school to work and society. Competency-based reform has developed in close relation to employment issues and career education. It stands at the intersection of economic policy interest in human resource development and transfer in response to changes in industrial structure, and educational policy interest in whole-person education and subject formation. In late modern society, which is growing more fluid and individualized, issues surrounding the transition from school to work have shifted from skills-oriented vocational training to competency-oriented career education, and have become more identity-oriented. The influence can be seen in the emphasis on the concept of agency in the OECD's competency theory. Competency-based reform in Japan tends to be subjectivized and abstracted in a holistic and psychologistic manner in the form of qualities- and abilities-based reform. In contrast, career education in Japan focuses on this very issue of subjectivization and abstraction. In addition, redefining career education as education for social and human independence by objectifying and concretizing the content of understanding and skills, in line with current labor and social circumstances, has been proposed as a possible perspective, based on the structural problem of the difficult transition from youth to adulthood. Competency-based education, which tends to be abstracted and individualized in the discourse of “qualities and abilities,” needs to take the shape of education for social and human independence.

Structure and Solutions for Perception Gaps in Selection Criteria for Recruitment of New Graduates: Using Personality, Intellectual Ability, and Interrater Reliability Research as Theoretical Framework

Tomoyuki Suzuki (Nagoya University)

This study aims to clarify the structure of perception gaps in Japan between companies, universities, and students around selection criteria in new-hire recruitment and discusses solutions to address these gaps. Firstly, the analysis applied a theoretical framework using research on personality traits and intellectual ability to show that differing definitions of selection criteria held by different companies were one of the reasons those gaps existed. Secondly, the application of a theoretical framework using research on interrater reliability revealed the existence of perception gaps within companies in Japan and their role in perception gaps between company employees and outside stakeholders (universities and college students). Based on these results, the present research emphasized the importance of college students' information seeking behaviors toward companies as a driver to fill in perceptive gaps, and the importance of universities as creators of opportunities for information sharing between companies and students. Furthermore, this study proposed that companies should define selection criteria with a theoretical framework, distribute rating sheets to their interviewers, and communicate consistent selection criteria to universities and students through companies' recruiting seminars and recruiters so as to eliminate these gaps.

The Historical Evolution and Present Situation of the Student-athlete Myth: Signs of Transformation in the Wake of the Covid-19 Crisis

Fumio Tsukahara (Kyoto University of Advanced Science)

This paper aims to discuss the future prospects of the myth of the student-athlete in the Japanese new graduate job market according to which "student-athletes get better jobs" through describing its origin and transformation, tracing the social context in which it became embedded, and describing recent statistical trends. The origin of the myth of the student-athlete can be traced back to the late Taisho and the early Showa period, when athletes were considered elites who possessed both intelligence and physical strength, and who were attractive prospects for companies. World War II was followed by a massification of higher education and a gradual loss of its elitist characteristic, but the myth still seemed valid until the 1990s, with the success of alumni recruiters and the prosperity of corporate sports recruiting. In the 2000s, with the universalization of higher education and the dramatic increase in the number of student-athletes, appeared a segmentation between elites characterized by "highly prestigious universities," "traditional team sports" and "male students," and other non-elite student-athletes. However, according to a statistical analysis of the employment status of student-athletes graduating in March 2021, the males' advantage observed in 2014 had disappeared in favor of females. In contrast to males whose affiliation is influential, for females the commitment to activities at the university and the balancing of academics and athletics are more effective to succeed on their first job search. Above all, we state that we should see the change during the Covid-19 crisis from an affiliation-based model to an sustained ability-based model as a positive opportunity for further transformation in higher education, recruitment companies, Japanese society, and among student-athletes themselves.

The Postgraduate Wage Premium in Japan

Fumihiko Suga (Kyushu University)

Kunio Urakawa (Kyushu University)

Wen Li (Kyushu University)

Over the last three decades, college enrollment rate has almost doubled in Japan. If graduate education imparts useful skills and knowledge to students and increases their productivity, the increase in the number of graduate students should boost technological development and foster economic growth. Therefore, it is meaningful to investigate by what margin graduate education improves human capital. In order to address this question, this study attempts to estimate the returns to graduate education in Japan,

taking into account the endogeneity of graduate schooling. Using four household surveys, the Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers (JPSC), the Working Person Survey (WPS), and the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), and the Survey on Living Conditions of Regions and Happiness (SLCRH), this study estimates the returns to postgraduate education in Japan considering potential self-selection bias. To mitigate the bias, we control for workers' undergraduate majors, types and ranking of the university respondents graduated from, level of cognitive skills, and parents' education levels. These factors explain up to 34.4% of the postgraduate wage premium for men and 29.2% for women. Even after controlling for these factors, the postgraduate wage premium remains positive and significant, ranging from 14.7% to 23.7% for men and 13.5% to 26.4% for women.

Possibilities of Employability Education

Hiroshi Yamamoto (Aoyama Gakuin University)

The goal of this study is threefold. The first one is to analyze the definition, traits, objects, stakeholders, and classification of employability. The second one is to offer an analysis of the possibilities of employability education in companies. The third one is to study the possibilities of employability education in educational institutions. A review of prior studies led to the following conclusions. Regarding the first goal, the concept of the employability was ambiguous, with different definitions of employability among studies. Regarding the second goal, employees' employability security through organizational practices was studied and implemented in enterprises in Europe and US. The utility of employees' employability security through organizational training and development was also proven in Japanese companies, which shows that the implementation of strategies for employees' employability security is necessary in Japanese companies. Regarding the third goal, universities in Japan implemented career education for their students. However, in the implementation of career education, the findings of accumulation of employability studies haven't been utilized sufficiently. Improvements on this matter may lead to a higher contribution of current career education to employability improvement.

Differences in Admitted College Students between Written Exam-Based Admissions and Holistic Admissions: Heterogeneity across High School Ranks of Origin

Yuki Onozuka (Otaru University of Commerce)

This paper uses student-level data and examines differences between college students admitted through written exam-based admissions and those admitted through holistic admissions focusing on three aspects: characteristics during high school, attitude and activities inside and outside college, and performance during college. Since the role of holistic admissions may differ by college selectivity, this descriptive analysis focuses on heterogeneity across high school ranks of origin. The results suggest that the reasons why students use holistic admissions vary by high school rank of origin. Furthermore, students who were admitted through holistic admissions from high-ranked high schools tend to be desirable in terms of autonomy in both study habits at college and social activities, and they tend to recognize their large skill growth at college. However, regardless of the rank of the high school of origin, students admitted through holistic admissions are more likely to study diligently in class and to be satisfied with their college, compared to those admitted through written exam-based admissions from high schools of the same rank. No evidence supports their inferior performance during college. Negative perception of holistic admissions among the public probably comes from the fact that this type of admissions is widespread among less selective colleges.