3 Changes in the Transition from High School to Work: Focus on High School Career Guidance

This paper discusses the situation and issues concerning the distinctively Japanese school graduates employment system that has underpinned the stable transition of high school graduates from education to work in Japanese society using data from an interview survey conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) in 2007 and the Japan Education Longitudinal Study (JELS), and focuses in particular on vocational counseling for high school graduates.

It was found that although the ongoing relations between high schools and enterprises that are the linchpin of the Japanese school graduates employment system are less continuous than they were in the 1980s, the change according to the present survey is not as great as that observed during the early 1990s. The system changed structurally in the early 1990s, since when it may be regarded as being maintained as it is. It was also found that the scale of the change in the system tends to vary according to region. While policies suited to each region are required, the JELS data indicate that social class has a particularly major impact on female high school graduates in the provinces, placing them in a socially disadvantageous position. What is needed is the social development of means of facilitating the movement of young people in the provinces from school into work to ensure social equity in order to ensure that opportunities in life do not depend on social attributes.

I. Purpose of Study and Outline of Data Sources

1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine present developments in the distinctively Japanese high school graduates employment system that has underpinned the stable movement of high school graduates into employment in Japanese society, focusing in particular on high school career guidance.

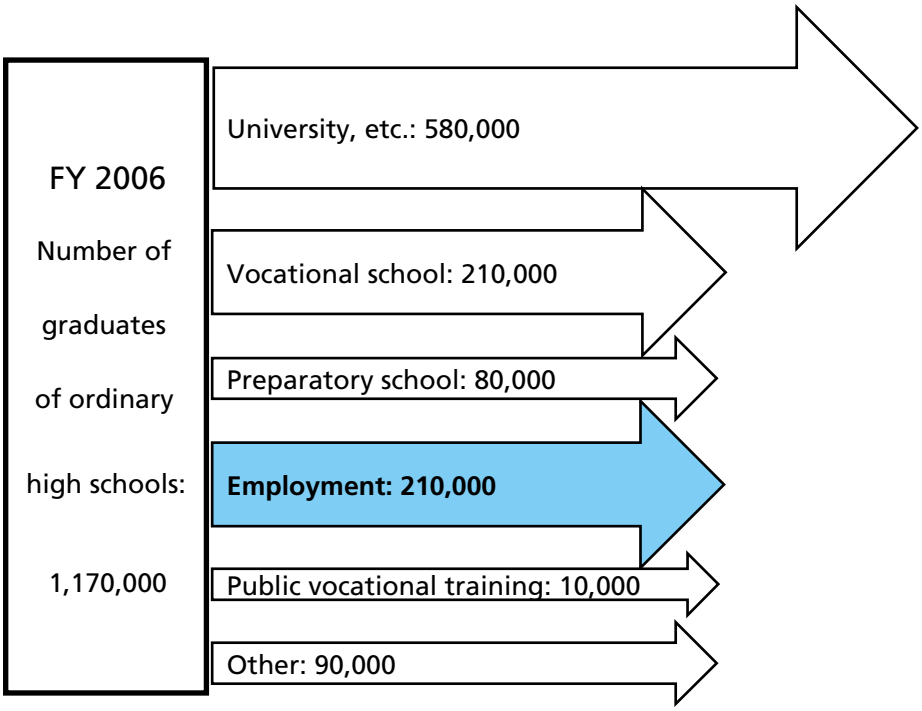
The transition from school to work of young people who do not enter higher education became a serious social problem in developed countries from the late 1970s, when there began to occur a shift in industrial structure from secondary industry centered on manufacturing to tertiary industry. Only in Japan and Germany, which had mechanisms enabling young people who leave education at an early stage to move from school to work, was the problem of youth unemployment long avoided.[1]

In Japan, this role was played by good rule-based relations between public employment security offices, high schools, and companies. Despite considerable regional variation, these relations are known to be characterized by the development of the high school graduate labor market by the labor authorities and relations between high schools and companies, and a particularly important role is considered to have been played in Japan in facilitating the movement of high school graduates from school to work by ongoing "proven" relations between high schools and companies (Kariya 1991). In this paper, we define the system by which students decide on their jobs in an environment of ongoing, stable relations between schools and companies based on the practices of "referral by designated schools" and "one application per student" as comprising the Japanese high school graduates employment system.

From the mid-1990s, however, the career paths of high school students underwent a major transformation. The proportion of high school graduates entering employment fell from 40% to just

1 At the "Transition Support Policy for Young People with Low Educational Background—2007 JIPLT International Workshop" held by JILPT in 2007, the difficulty encountered by young people who do not proceed to higher education in making the transition to work was discussed as a challenge faced by all developed countries.

Figure 3-1 Post-school Paths of Ordinary High School Graduates (Graduating March 2007)



Source: Compiled from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), *Gakko Kihon Chosa* (Basic Survey on Schools).
Note: Percentage of students enrolling in ordinary high school: approx. 97%.

20%, and the proportion enrolling in universities rose sharply. The high school graduate labor market was also hit by the recession, causing major changes in both the quantity and quality of job openings for high school graduates, and the result was that out-of-work school graduates who neither enrolled in higher education nor entered employment after high school became a social problem. It was at this time that there began to emerge a strong recognition that the formerly healthily Japanese high school graduates employment system was ceasing to function properly.

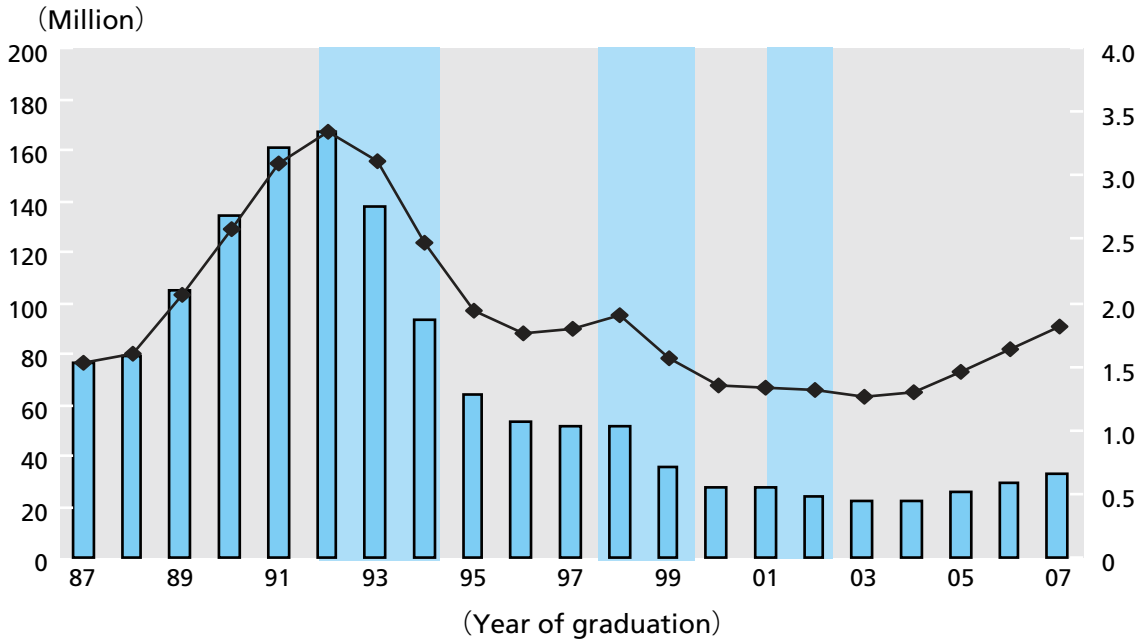
Figure 3-2 depicts the number of job openings and the ratio of job openings to job applicants for prospective new high school graduates. From this it can be seen that, despite recent indications of an economic downturn, job openings for high school graduates are recovering following a period of recession in the late 1990s. However, the true picture of employment of high school graduates in knowledge society where over 70% of high school graduates is unclear, and it may safely be said that the general economic recovery has not necessarily led to an improvement in employment conditions in all regions.

Using data from past and present interview surveys, this paper therefore examines the present state of the Japanese high school graduates employment system focusing on an analysis of regional variables, and it concludes with a tentative analysis of young people's employment choices in the provinces.

As variables of regional employment conditions, we use types of high school graduate labor market. Labor markets are classified into three types based on labor force mobility, the state of supply and demand, and the category of job openings for high school graduates (Table 3-3). In this paper, we perform our analysis using these three types as variables.

This paper is composed as follows. In the following section, I confirm the data, and in section II I review the shrinkage of the high school labor market and the mechanisms by which high school

Figure 3-2 Number of Job Openings for Prospective New High School Graduates and Ratio of Job Openings to Applicants



Source: Annual editions of Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (MHLW), Employment Security Bureau, *Shinki Gakusotsusha (Koko/Chu-gaku) no Shokugyo Shokai Jokyo* [Employment referrals for new junior and senior high school graduates].
Note: Final estimates for June following graduation. As recruiting activity occurs before graduation, there is an approximately six-month lag before the effects of the economic downturn become apparent.

Table 3-3 Types of High School Graduate Labor Market

Type	Labor mobility	State of supply and demand	Category of job openings	Regions covered
1	Inflow	Good/ intermediate	Services/ distribution	Tokyo, Saitama, Osaka
2	Balance	Good/ intermediate	Manufacturing	Nagano, Niigata
3-i	Outflow/ balance	Shortage	Services/ distribution	Aomori, Kochi, Hokkaido
3-ii	Outflow	Good/ intermediate	Manufacturing	Shimane, Oita, Akita

graduates find employment. In section III, I review the literature and analyze school-employer relations. In section IV, I present four types of high school career guidance, and in section V I present an overview of the employment choices of young people in the provinces. In the closing section, I expand on the implications of the findings.

2. Outline of Data Sources

The data sources used were "Kosotsu shushoku shien chosa" [Survey of employment support for high school graduates] conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (referred to below as the JILPT Survey) and a survey of third-year high school students in AREA-Y of the Japan Education Longitudinal Study (JELS) conducted in autumn 2004 by Ochanomizu University COE.

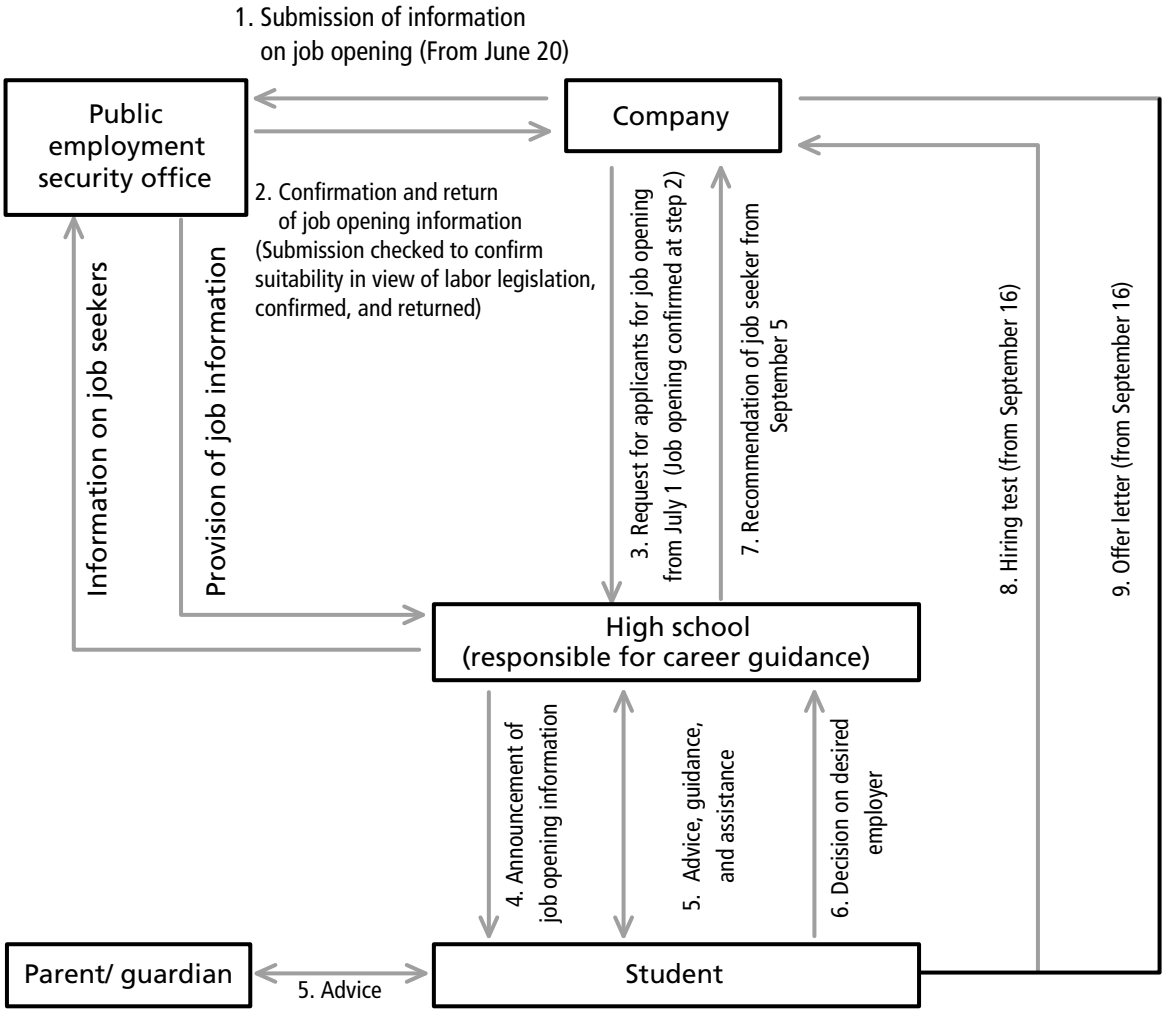
The former is a survey of 11 public employment security offices, 24 high schools, and 23 companies. The geographical scope of the survey is shown in Table 3-3 Some high schools surveyed in 1997 were included, and eight schools were used for a longitudinal comparison based on Table 3-7.

High schools were selected with the assistance of the public employment security offices in each region. As a rule, the high schools with most students who found employment in each office's area were chosen, as a consequence of which the vocational schools selected tended to consist of the more prestigious schools in the region. The JELS survey covered 947 persons, and the survey method and sample are described below.

II. Shrinkage of High School Graduate Labor Market and Mechanisms of Employment of High School Graduates

Before proceeding to the analysis, I first describe the present state of the high school graduate labor

Figure 3-4 Framework for Employment of New High School Graduates through High Schools



Dates of commencement of recruitment screening, etc.
1. Commencement of acceptance of requests for applicants for job openings by public employment security offices (June 20)
3. Commencement of requests for applicants for job openings and visits to schools (July 1)
7. Commencement of submission of student application documents to companies (September 5)
8 & 9. Commencement of screening and offers (September 16)

Source: Reproduced from the final report of *Kosotsusha no Shokugyo Seikatsu no Iko ni kansuru Kenkyu* [Research on transition of high school students to working life] (MEXT/MHLW 2002).

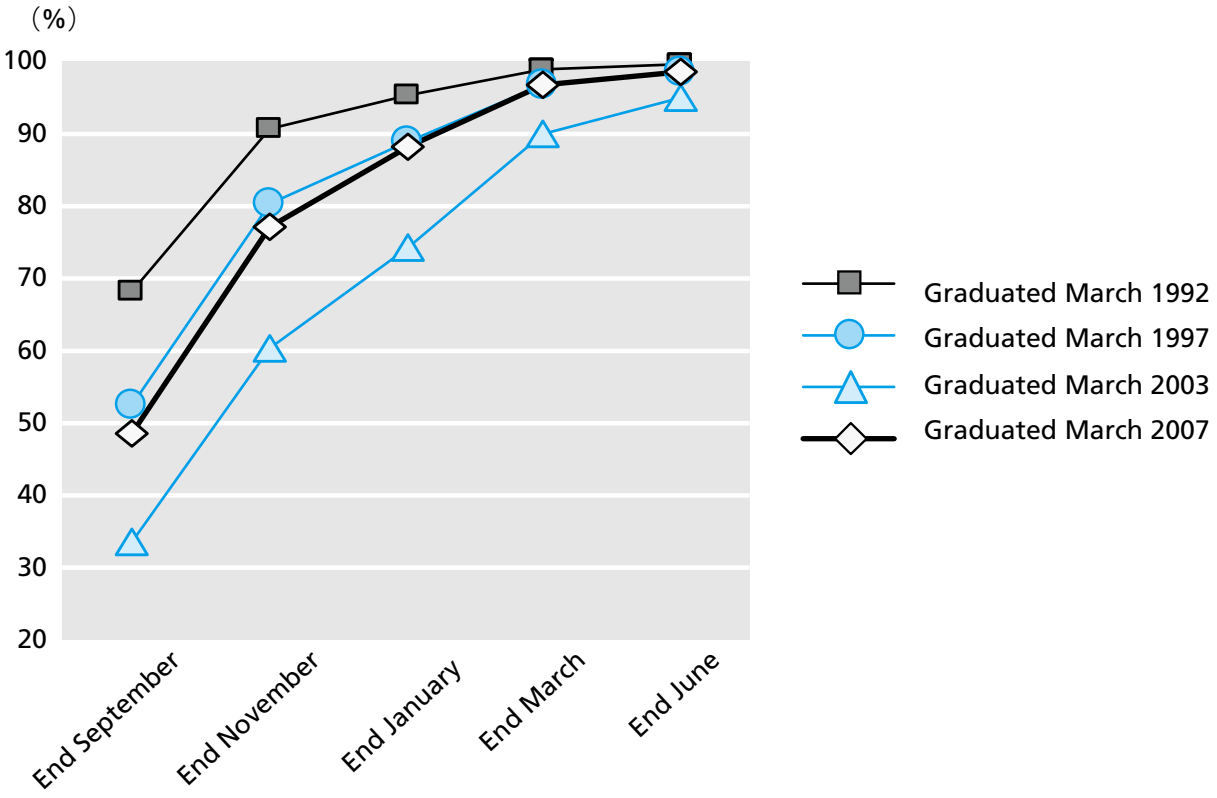
market in Japan as a whole and the mechanisms of employment of high school graduates.

From the late 1990s, the 18-year-old population decreased and three changes in the career choices of high school students were observed (Hori 2007). Firstly, there was a rise in the proportion of students enrolling in higher education. Due to the change in direction in higher education policy and the decline in the size of the 18-year-old population, there occurred an increase in the proportion of students entering university. Secondly, there was a rise in the proportion of high school graduates who neither enrolled in higher education nor found employment. This proportion rose until 2002, and then began to decline from 2003. Thirdly, the proportion of job finders declined. The number exceeded 600,000 in the 1980s and fell sharply in the 1990s, but since around 2003 has remained at around 210,000. The number of job openings for high school graduates similarly declined rapidly following the collapse of the economic bubble, though it has followed a recovery trend since 2003. While demand at large manufacturers is presently temporarily high, the scale of employers of high school graduates is declining overall, and openings are mainly for factory manual workers (Further data on this are omitted due to constraints of space).

As Figure 3-4 shows, moreover, the employment of high school graduates is prescribed by institutional arrangements.

Firstly, companies are unable to have direct contact with high school students, who instead seek employment through public employment security offices or high schools. Secondly, the timing of disclosure of job openings is governed by recruitment agreements. Job openings are disclosed to high schools on July 1 and selections made by September 16. In the 1980s, over 600,000 high school students decided which companies they wanted to apply to and over half decided on their jobs during this short period. Thirdly, students can only apply to one company at a time, a practice that is regarded as

Figure 3-5 Change in Timing of Offers



Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008)

being intended to enable as many students as possible to be interviewed by their first-choice employer.

Out of this institutional environment there developed the practice among companies of designating particular high schools to recommend students for job openings. There thus formed ongoing transactional relations between specified schools and companies.

In order to maintain their status as designated schools under this system, high schools seek to recommend the students that companies want. Before sending students to companies, therefore, they screen them internally based on their grades. If there are more students than job openings, the number is whittled down by internal screening, and no recommendation is made if students' ability is not up to the level required by a company. In order to continue to be supplied by high schools with good students, companies hire the students recommended to them by high schools without performing further screening themselves.

Now, however, more job information is shared via a system run by public employment security offices that provides online access in high schools to a database of information on job openings for high school graduates received by these offices. The date from which job openings can be advertised also varies according to region and, although it has become institutionally possible for students to make multiple applications, the "one application per student" approach still predominates.

One further change is the increasing variation in the timing of offers. At the beginning of the 1990s, 70% of students decided their jobs at the end of September (when the results of applications to companies made soon after openings could be advertised and presumably the companies whose hiring tests were taken first). By 2003, by contrast,

Table 3-6 Timing of Receipt of Information on Job Openings and Number Received (by Prefecture)

	March 2007 graduates			March 2003 graduates			2003-2007
	Number of job openings at end March	Number received end July or later	Proportion of late job openings	Number of job openings at end March	Number received end July or later	Proportion of late job openings	Change in proportion of late job openings
Osaka	23,580	3,945	16.7%	14,173	4,214	29.7%	-13.0%
Tokyo	44,861	10,897	24.3%	29,632	11,963	40.4%	-16.1%
Saitama	12,227	2,591	21.2%	7,041	2,238	31.8%	-10.6%
Niigata	6,932	2,221	32.0%	4,298	2,636	61.3%	-29.3%
Nagano	4,553	1,126	24.7%	3,761	1,741	46.3%	-21.6%
Hokkaido	10,054	6,901	68.6%	10,477	7,872	75.1%	-6.5%
Kochi	761	392	51.5%	637	391	61.4%	-9.9%
Oita	4,804	1,293	26.9%	2,805	1,606	57.3%	-30.3%
Aomori	2,460	1,614	65.6%	2,365	1,817	76.8%	-11.2%
Akita	2,532	1,375	54.3%	2,521	1,703	67.6%	-13.2%
Shimane	1,507	604	40.1%	1,234	680	55.1%	-15.0%

Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008)

this proportion had fallen to 33%. Despite returning to 48% in 2007, it is no longer the case that everyone finds jobs at the same time.

The change in the timing of offers is dictated by companies' recruitment activities, and an examination of the timing of receipts of information on job openings shows that the proportion of job openings appearing in July differs considerably according to prefecture. According to JILPT (2008), while there are large proportions of early job openings in areas of high demand such as Tokyo and Osaka, the proportion of "late job openings" appearing latter than July exceeded one half in Aomori (65.6%) and Hokkaido (68.6%) (both sets of figures are for March 2007). In regions where employment conditions are poor, it is not unusual for job openings to appear toward the end of the year or later. When economic conditions worsen, job openings appear later. The difference in timing of recruitment activity is due to the fact that while large companies in areas of high demand can engage in periodic hiring, most companies in the provinces are small businesses that rely mainly on recruiting workers as and when needed.

From the above, it may be concluded that the tendency for jobs to be found during the same short period of time is weakening, as up to the first half of the 1990s, and that the timing has grown especially more diverse in regions where demand is weak.

III. Review of Literature and Current State of School-employer Relations

Career guidance for high school graduates has to date been regarded as centering on "*jisseki-kankei* (proven relations)" in the sense of ongoing trust-based transactional relations between high schools and companies. These proven relations are "networks that help to stabilize employment, recruiting, and job placement through the exchange of highly definite information based on trust in the context of an ongoing transactional relationship, and are associated with the norm of one party's actions being controlled by others against the backdrop of the continuity of relations" (Kariya 1991). "Proven relations" in the form of ongoing relations founded on trust between high schools and companies are an effective means of enabling the smooth transition of high school students from school into jobs, and are considered to have operated in unison with the spread of meritocracy through internal screening by schools based on grades.

The Japan Institute of Labour (JIL) (1998) astutely observes, however, that the identification of such "proven relations" depends solely on the perceptions of high school teachers, and their existence has not been properly demonstrated from objective data. There thus arises a need to investigate relations between schools and companies based on actual data on job finders, and analysis has demonstrated that such relations are not as strong as had previously been assumed. Terada (2004) did an analysis of several vocational high schools in Aichi Prefecture, where school-employer relations are considered strong, and he found that the number of companies with which schools had proven relations was extremely small, accounting for only around 30% of the number of school graduates who found employment. He concludes that proven relations "could not be described as a decisive mechanism of employment of high school graduates in Japan."

So are school-employer relations, which weakened in the 1990s, weakening further? This analysis employs the same methodology used by JIL (1998); that is to say, school-employer relations are measured based on actual data on jobs found, rather than teachers' impressions of proven relations. As data for the same observation period as last time could not be obtained, however, comparisons should be treated with caution.

Companies that recruited only once during the observation period were defined as "single hirers," a lower proportion of which (calculated by dividing the number of such companies by the number of companies at which jobs were found) was interpreted as indicating a greater continuity in the school-employer relationship. "*jisseki kigyo* (Proven hirers)" were defined as companies that hired continuously for five or more years. "*keizoku kigyo* (Ongoing hirers)" were defined as companies that hired for at least half of the years during the observation period.

The results are summarized in Table 3-7.

Although the proportion of single hirers tends to be slightly higher than on the last occasion, the change is not as great as that observed in the 1997 survey, and the scale of the change varies, moreover, according to high school. The large structural change in relations between high schools and companies occurred in the early 1990s, and there appears to have been no substantial change since then to the present.

From the above, it is evident that while school-employer relations have weakened slightly overall, ongoing relations are being maintained by some. Avoiding simple generalizations, therefore, the next task is to identify patterns.

IV. Four Types of High School Career Guidance

The analysis up to the preceding section employed as a data source information from high schools. In this section, we consider regional differences in high school career guidance using data from interviews with teachers responsible for providing such guidance. High school career guidance varies depending on the number of job finders and employment conditions, and patterns in this variation can be identified tracing along the two axes of employment conditions and number of job finders (Figure 3-8).

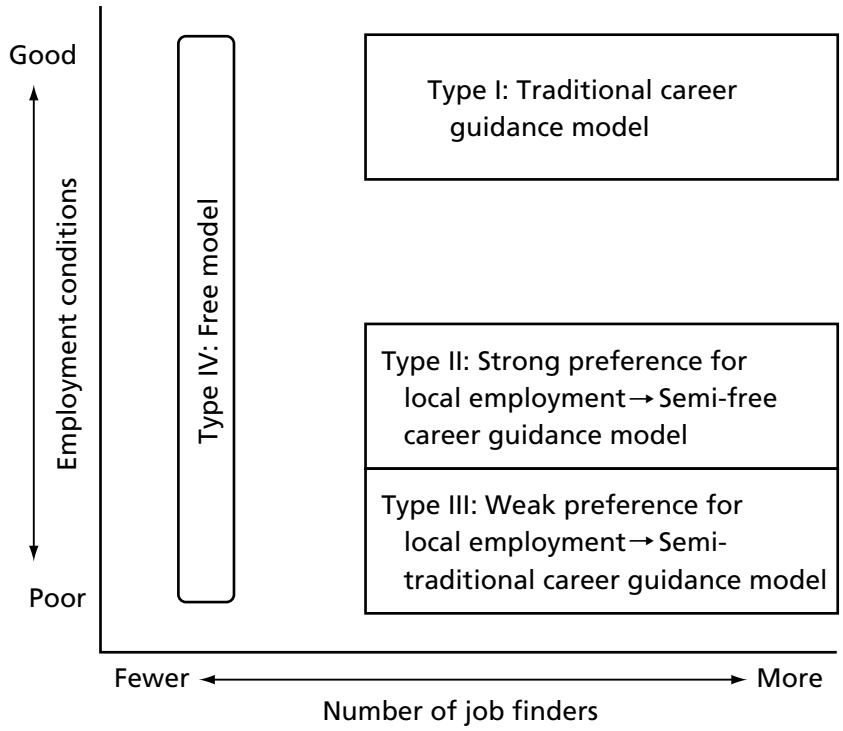
Type I is the so-called Japanese high school graduates employment system centered on stable, trusting relations between schools and companies, and this can still be found at vocational schools in

Table 3-7 Proportion of Single Hirers

	% of single hirers in 1997 survey		% of single hirers in 2007 survey	1997 Observation period	2007 Observation period
Tokyo					
High school A	78.8	↑	98.5	11 years (1986-1996)	11 years (1996-2006)
Saitama					
High school D	70.4	↑	83.6	10 years (1987-1996)	10 years (1997-2006)
Vocational high school E	77.3	↓	76.8	5 years (1992-1996)	5 years (2002-2006)
Vocational high school F	43.2	↑	66.2	15 years (1981-1996)	11 years (1996-2006)
Nagano					
High school K	84.9	↑	93.7	10 years (1986-1996; 1990×)	8 years (1996-2006; 2001-2003×)
High school L	63.5	↑	73.2	12 years (1985-1996)	11 years (1996-2006)
Vocational high school N	49.1	↑	65.1	11 years (1985-1995)	11 years (1996-2006)
Shimane					
Vocational high school R	55.9	↑	66.2	8 years (1989-1996)	8 years (1999-2006)

Note: ×denotes years for which no data were obtainable.

Figure 3-8 Four Types of High School Career Guidance



regions where the job market is still buoyant (Tokyo, Saitama, and Nagano).

Type II is the model of career guidance observed at schools with comparatively large numbers of job finders that are located in regions where employment conditions are poor and there is a quite strong preference for working locally. Although in prefectures such as Hokkaido and Akita, for example, teachers described not screening internally for job openings in the prefecture due to the small number involved, the likelihood of traditional career guidance being maintained falls as the desire of students to remain in regions where employment conditions are poor increases, resulting in a "freer" career guidance model in comparison with traditional career guidance prescribed by practices to date.

Type III is the model of career guidance observed at schools where job finders are comparatively numerous in regions where employment conditions are poor and the preference for local employment is relatively weak (as in prefectures such as Shimane and Kochi). As the local orientation is not that strong, students at such high schools can be sent out to regions where employment conditions are better, making it easier to maintain traditional career guidance.

Type IV is found principally at general schools with extremely few job finders. It may be classed as a "free career guidance model" in the sense that hardly any features of traditional career guidance are apparent regardless of whether employment conditions are good or bad.

V. Who Gets a Job after High School Now in Japan?

While differences can thus be observed in career guidance for high school graduates according to region, can regional variation in the career choices of high school students also be detected? We turn to the survey of third-year high school students in AREA-X and Y for the Japan Education Longitudinal Study (JELS) conducted in autumn 2004 by Ochanomizu University COE in order to attempt a tentative analysis.

We begin with the relationship between academic

Table 3-9 Grades and Career Plans: Area-X

Grade	Employment	Vocational school	Junior college	University	Freeter	Don't know	Others	No answer	Total
Male									
Good	15.4	8.1	2.1	72.6	0.4	0.0	0.9	0.4	234
Middle	22.1	18.2	2.6	53.9	0.0	0.6	0.6	1.9	154
Not good	22.9	14.3	1.2	53.9	1.6	1.2	3.7	1.2	245
Total	19.9	13.0	1.9	60.8	0.8	0.6	1.9	1.1	633
Female									
Good	10.4	18.0	14.7	55.4	0.0		1.1	0.4	278
Middle	14.0	27.0	16.3	38.8	2.2		0.6	1.1	178
Not good	23.0	30.9	8.6	29.7	3.1		2.0	2.7	256
Total	15.9	24.9	12.9	42.0	1.7		1.3	1.4	712

Table 3-10 Grades and Career Plans: Area-Y

Grade	Employment	Vocational school	Junior college	University	Freeter	Don't know	Others	No answer	Total
Male									
Good	26.5	6.2	1.9	63.6	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.6	162
Middle	36.1	9.3	1.9	48.1	0.9	0.0	1.9	1.9	108
Not good	40.9	13.6	2.8	36.4	0.6	1.1	2.3	2.3	176
Total	34.5	9.9	2.2	49.1	0.4	0.4	1.8	1.6	446
Female									
Good	27.6	11.8	11.8	48.8		0.0	0.0		170
Middle	23.8	23.8	8.5	42.3		0.0	1.5		130
Not good	30.3	21.1	7.4	39.4		0.6	1.1		175
Total	27.6	18.5	9.3	43.6		0.2	0.8		475

performance and the types of careers chosen in Area-X (Table 3-9). According to our analysis, those high-school graduates who enroll in university obtain higher academic grades, and those who seek for jobs have poorer grades.

We next turn to Area-Y. We make two observations here. First, the ratio of employment in Area-Y is higher than Area-X. Second, while male students exhibit the same feature as that we observed in Area-X, we find that female students in Area-Y behave differently for those achieve the "middle" academic performance; those female students tend to go for vocational school.

We next consider the relationship between student's carrier path and his/her father's education in both areas. Overall, we find that students with good academic performance proceed to university; however, we find the following two differences between Area-X and Y.

(i) The ratio of going to university in Area-X is higher than in Area-Y.

(ii) In Area-X, both female and male students have gap on father's education with same grade. In Area-Y, father's education seems to play more important role in on the carrier choice made by female rather than male. Only 25.6% of female student with good grade and low social background enter the labor market after high school, while 37.6% of female students with good grade and low social background enter the labor market after high-school graduation.

From our analysis, (i) social background better explains the high-school graduates' carrier choices in Area-X, rather than Area-Y; (ii) gender gap in

Table 3-11 Grades and Career Plans and Father's Education: Area-X

Grade	Father's education	Employment	Vocational school	Junior college	University	Freeter	Don't know	Others	No answer	Total
Male										
Good	Junior/ high school	18.8	12.5	0.0	67.7	1.0		0.0		96
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	6.9	5.0	2.0	84.2	0.0		2.0		101
	Total	12.7	8.6	1.0	76.1	0.5		1.0		197
Middle	Junior/ high school	34.4	19.7	1.6	42.6		1.6		0.0	61
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	7.5	9.0	1.5	80.6		0.0		1.5	67
	Total	20.3	14.1	1.6	62.5		0.8		0.8	128
Not good	Junior/ high school	30.8	13.2	0.0	47.3	2.2		5.5	1.1	91
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	10.6	11.5	2.9	72.1	0.0		1.9	1.0	104
	Total	20.0	12.3	1.5	60.5	1.0		3.6	1.0	195
Female										
Good	Junior/ high school	15.3	18.4	22.4	42.9			1.0		98
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	5.8	14.4	9.4	69.8			0.7		139
	Total	9.7	16.0	14.8	58.6			0.8		237
Middle	Junior/ high school	20.3	31.3	14.1	29.7	1.6		1.6	1.6	64
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	3.8	21.8	14.1	60.3	0.0		0.0	0.0	78
	Total	11.3	26.1	14.1	46.5	0.7		0.7	0.7	142
Not good	Junior/ high school	33.9	29.4	8.3	16.5	4.6		3.7	3.7	109
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	8.2	30.6	6.1	52.0	2.0		0.0	1.0	98
	Total	21.7	30.0	7.2	33.3	3.4		1.9	2.4	207

Table 3-12 Grades and Career Plans and Father's Education: Area-Y

Grade	Father's education	Employment	Vocational school	Junior college	University	Don't know	Others	Total
Male								
Good	Junior/high school	25.6	5.8	3.5	64.0		1.2	86
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	20.0	2.2	0.0	77.8		0.0	45
	Total	23.7	4.6	2.3	68.7		0.8	131
Middle	Junior/high school	46.0	8.0	0.0	46.0		0.0	50
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	15.2	12.1	3.0	66.7		3.0	33
	Total	33.7	9.6	1.2	54.2		1.2	83
Not good	Junior/high school	42.9	15.4	3.3	35.2	1.1	2.2	91
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	36.2	8.5	2.1	48.9	0.0	4.3	47
	Total	40.6	13.0	2.9	39.9	0.7	2.9	138
Female								
Good	Junior/high school	37.6	10.6	10.6	41.2			85
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	15.4	7.7	13.8	63.1			65
	Total	28.0	9.3	12.0	50.7			150
Middle	Junior/high school	30.6	27.4	4.8	37.1		0.0	62
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	12.8	14.9	10.6	59.6		2.1	47
	Total	22.9	22.0	7.3	46.8		0.9	109
Not good	Junior/high school	35.9	21.4	9.7	33.0	0.0		103
	Univ./ junior/ vocational school	12.5	14.6	6.3	64.6	2.1		48
	Total	28.5	19.2	8.6	43.0	0.7		151

Area-Y is larger than that in Area-X.

VI. Conclusion

The school-company relations that are the linchpin of the Japanese high school graduates employment system are weaker now than during the 1980s, but have changed little since weakening in the first half of the 1990s. In an examination of "regional migration" in the employment of high school graduates from a geographical perspective, Tani (2000) argues that there occurred structural change in the regional migration of high school graduate job finders in the early 1970s and early 1990s. Although this paper does not analyze regional migration, this identification of a structural change in the employment of high school graduates in the early 1990s coincides with the findings described here.

A further finding of this paper is that forms of employment of high school graduates in Japanese society are diversifying, and there is some variation in the extent of changes in the Japanese high school graduates employment system. While this paper mainly concerned high school graduate vocational guidance for school graduates, it is known from surveys of companies conducted simultaneously that ways of responding also differ according to size of companies (JILPT 2008). Though being maintained overall, the Japanese high school graduates employment system is beginning to exhibit increasing diversity.

While policies need to be tailored to suit individual regions, it is especially important to focus on support for young people in the provinces. According to the findings of this paper, an examination of the career choices of young people in a certain region in Area-Y shows that women's choices are particularly affected by social class, restricting their chances of advancing to higher education. In addition, job openings for high school graduates consist increasingly of factory manual worker, and there is little demand for female graduates. Accordingly, female high school graduates in the provinces may be described as being in a socially disadvantageous position. Support for high school graduates in the provinces is therefore also important from the point of view of social equity in order to ensure that opportunities in life do not depend on social attributes.

In Japanese society, it is impossible for everyone to advance to higher education. There remains a certain proportion of school graduates who go straight into work after leaving high school, and they are especially concentrated in the provinces. What is needed is the societal development of means of guiding young people in the provinces to ensure a smooth transition from school to work.

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