Topical news

Towards an Age of Career Education
- Grab a Hold of Life Yourself -

Introduction
Career Education is education that guides youths in acquiring an ideal view of a career and work, career related knowledge and skills that suit one’s individuality, and develops abilities and attitudes that enable youths to subjectively select career options.
This topical news has as back ground the increasing demand for career education, the current situation of measures in Japan, a Career Education Promotion Plan which was issued by the government, and discuss its meaning and future prospects.

1. Employment Situation of Youth
The total unemployment rate in April 2007 was 3.8% and that of youth aged 15 to 24 7.5%, which is a high level. In addition the average number of Freeters, underemployed youths who lack fulltime employment or are unemployed, excluding housewives and students, was 1,870,000, and unemployed youth referred to as NEETs, who are not employed or in education or training, was 620,000. Even though this number has decreased compared with the previous year, it is still a serious situation.
Moreover, many youths leave their employment within 3 years of graduation. The numbers are 70.4% for junior high school graduates, 49.3% for senior high school graduates, and 35.7% for university graduates (new graduate in March 2003). This is known as the “7-5-3 Phenomenon”. After obtaining a job, many youths leave their employment after just a few years of working due to reasons such as the actual work situation differed from their ideal image, and so forth.

Career education which promotes social independence of youth is also instrumental in reversing the declining birthrate, which is an urgent issue for our nation, through future prospects and stability of the economic foundation, employment, etc. While economical globalization is advancing, developing human resources with practical abilities can contribute to the development of a vital society and improve the international competitiveness of our nation.
In keeping with changes of the environment for the youth employment situation, the government has been promoting career education with the Youth Independence Challenge Plan, National Youth Development Policy, and so forth.

In addition, Comprehensive “Challenge Again” Support Plan, issued in December 2006, and Strategies for enhancing the general level of Growth (basic concept) reported in February 2007 included measures related to career education.

3. Various Career Education Experiments
   (1) Advanced Case Studies in Japan

   o Career Education at an Elementary School
     Tobu Elementary School, Tahara-city, Aichi-prefecture
     Explore Workplace Together – Akatsuki Expedition
     The Akatsuki Expedition is a case study in which mixed age groups of students from 3rd through to 6th grade visited factories, etc. in their school areas, and observed the process of work, asked how people felt about work and so forth.

   o Career Education at a Junior High School
     Fushimi Junior High School, Kyoto-city
     Appreciate the town that raised us
     In cooperation with stores a case study, consisting of 5 days work experience in the 2nd grade as the core, in the 1st grade visit local business institutions in groups and interview business people on their business policies, enjoyment of work, etc., and then in the 3rd grade create CM videos and logos related to local traditional industries and develop products, etc. based on the results of what they learned.

   o Career Education at a Senior High School
     Ureshino High School, Saga-prefecture
     It’s me that’s changing – Know oneself through experience and consider your career options –
     A case study where students analyze themselves by making a personal history before internship as advance preparation, and see the changes in themselves and accrue experience through using diaries, etc. after the activity.

   o Career Education at a University
Kagoshima University
Human resource development beyond campus – from basic abilities to practical abilities of a business worker
Practical program case study such as Governmental and Company Experience Study (Internship), etc in coordination and cooperation with outside campuses such as the media, companies and prefectural governments by organizing Career Education Subject Groups regardless of faculty and department.

- Case of local support
Local community and school connected by NPO, Craftsmanship through pottery
Case study where a NPO coordinator function supports school activities by stage at elementary school, junior high school and senior high school.
Case Study based on local industry and manufacturing in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and an NPO.

(2) Advance Case Study in Other Countries
- Connections in England
Case study of multifaceted and integrated self-support service for people who have difficulty shifting from the school stage to the work stage.

(3) Toward further promotion of Career Education in Japan
- Career Education Promotion Committee and Outline of Career Education Promotion Plan
Career Education in each of the school systems has been expanding due to the results of various measures of career education promotion made by the government.
However, by looking at internship implementation, for example, the ratio of students and people who have experience in that is low compared to the ratio of implemented number of schools and departments at both universities and senior high schools. It also varies depending on area and school level. There are still some issues remaining such as the difficulty of ensuring companies accept internships, and the significance of career education has not fully reached both parents and companies.
In December 2006 the Council for Career Education was established under the Youth Development Headquarters in order to issue the relevant policies to strengthen and accelerate efforts for implementing career education based on consideration of the above mentioned issues, and formulated the Career Education Promotion Plan – Grab a Hold of Life Yourself (May 29, 2007, Career Education Committee). Sanae Takaichi, the Minister of State for Youth Development presided over the council which consisted of
the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry.

**Conclusion**

- The Career Education Promotion Plan is the first plan to systematically coordinate related government measures on Career Education, and it is imperative to implement the contained measures.
- The government will continue to promote the measures based on the plan in a comprehensive manner.