

15. International Comparative Study on Present Conditions and Curriculum Development in Career Preparation in Secondary Education

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1. Purpose and Aim of Study

This study set out to shed light on the realities of career preparation and curricular development oriented thereto in secondary education in the United States, Germany, France, EU nations, and China. Surveys on the current status of career preparation were undertaken in Japan, the United States, China, and Germany.

2. Outline of Research Results

- Examined career preparation in secondary schools in Japan and found that internships and a variety of other experiential activities were being conducted using the Period of Integrated Study in most lower and upper secondary schools, and that despite many problems remaining, most schools were achieving a degree of success.
- Conducted interviews with students and representatives from host companies participating in Japan's version of the dual system for specialized upper secondary schools, which is implemented mainly at designated experimental schools. Found that this system is yielding great results in areas such as development of career awareness.
- Conducted a survey in the State of Michigan, one of the many states in the U.S. where career preparation is being practiced and a curriculum for it is being developed actively. Found that career preparation is accorded a place alongside development of academic ability as one of the primary goals of school education, with basic vocational abilities being tested as part of statewide examinations and a variety of measures put in place including training for instructors in this field.

- Found that career preparation in China is conducted mainly within the regular education subject of “Work Skills” and seeks to develop skills, techniques, and vocational outlooks for everyday life, but that it is not achieving sufficient results in urban areas where students are more focused on gaining admission to university. Also found, however, that the central government views vocational education in secondary schools as an urgent policy issue in light of the unemployment problems among young people and in rural areas, and is beginning to put in place a variety of measures to promote it.

- In Germany, found that career preparation consists mainly of internships in lower secondary schools and the dual system in upper secondary schools, and that although these initiatives have been the subject of high acclaim both domestically and abroad, many problems have emerged recently, such as a shortage of host companies and a decline in the quality of education in companies.

- Found that career education in France centers on orientation—the equivalent of career guidance in Japan—and places emphasis on obtaining vocational qualifications that measure expertise in line with the needs of occupations and work duties corresponding to educational level.