

3. Comprehensive Study on Career Education in Schools—Curricular Approaches to Cultivating Qualities and Abilities Needed for Social Independence among Schoolchildren

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(1) Purpose and Aim of Study

This study explores strategies for establishing and expanding career education programs in schools, with the aim of identifying approaches to curricular development to cultivate the qualities and abilities needed for social independence among schoolchildren, such as occupational and work-related outlooks, capacity for career design (future planning), self-affirmation, and communicative abilities. Career education in schools has recently been advanced on a comprehensive and systematic basis under the Young People's Independence and Challenge Plan released by MEXT in 2003, and the research report on *Advancing Education to Cultivate Occupational and Work-related Outlooks in Schoolchildren* produced by NIER's Guidance and Counseling Research Center in 2002 is being used widely in the course of developing the career education curriculum in schools. Building on the research findings to date, this study assesses the state of career education as practiced in schools today, and verifies the educational significance of such education. It also explores how best to furnish support for the development of the career education curriculum in schools, in light of the fact that, in contrast to the cases of advanced practice, career education has not yet come into general use in regular schools.

The study was conducted over a term of three years from fiscal 2007 through 2009.

(2) Outline of Research Results

- In fiscal 2007, three research teams were organized: (1) research committee, (2) overseas survey team, and (3) domestic survey team. Each team conducted research in line with its own research plans.

- The research committee discussed future research challenges oriented to the establishment of career education in schools, by reference to the status of implementation of career education programs to date and analysis of research trends.
  
- The overseas survey team studied cases of distinctive practice in career education in the West, East Asia, and other regions (such as contextual learning in the U.S., career education and career guidance in the UK, and career education and other initiatives in EU countries), and identified distinguishing features and issues in each country.
  
- The domestic survey team collected guides on career education research and practice, training materials and other resources produced by education centers at prefectural and designated city level, and conducted a questionnaire survey of personnel in charge of career education in these centers. It also held group discussions with associate team members appointed from among staff at education centers engaged in particularly distinctive initiatives and research, and explored issues and approaches to advancing career education in schools. Findings were brought together in the interim report titled *Current Status and Challenges in Career Education—Toward Systems for School Support in Education Centers*.
  
- Domestic surveys identified the following major outcomes of the advancement of career education that has taken place to date:
  - (1) The concept of career education has gained clarity through study and application of advanced cases of career education practice in schools.
  - (2) The expansion of work experience systems in lower secondary schools is achieving greater shared awareness of the significance and outcomes of social experience activities.
  - (3) The concept of curricular development in line with desirable skills has come to be addressed in the course of training programs, etc.

- It has become clear that the following challenges will need to be addressed in order to advance career education into the future:

- (1) Although appreciation of the significance of career education is growing, it is not recognized by schools (particularly elementary schools) as a pressing educational issue. Even at lower secondary school level and higher, a tendency can be observed for career education to be conceived as work experience or vocational education rather than used as an approach to reviewing the school's educational activities as a whole, including in curricular subject areas.
- (2) Schools do not have support systems for curricular development of career education in place.
- (3) Methods have not been established for assessing how children develop through the practices of career education.

- In order to resolve the abovementioned problems in advancing career education and enabling it to take root in schools, the study made proposals concerning the provision of support to schools, including methods for propagation and teacher training, the creation of cooperative structures, and the use of curriculum advisors and coordinators. The effectiveness of these proposals will be reviewed in the course of later research.