

Leading career development services into an uncertain future: Ensuring access, integration and innovation

Country paper: Japan

In advance of the symposium all attending countries are asked to produce a country paper setting out the key issues for their countries in relation to the key themes of the conference.

Please use this template to enter your information. You should aim to be concise. Use bullet points and links rather than providing a lot of local detail. **The paper should be no more than 10 pages in length.**

How to submit:

- Download the Country Paper Template, save this on your computer.
- Prepare the country paper based on consultation within the country team and preferably with relevant national authorities and information sources.
- Submit the Country Paper by sending it to jmc@iccdpp.org (John McCarthy, director ICCDPP)
- Deadline: **31st of January**

If you have questions concerning the country paper, please contact John Mc Carthy (jmc@iccdpp.org)

Background information

1. List all of the members of your country team with their organisation.

FUJITA Teruyuki, Professor, University of Tsukuba, OKABE Atsushi, Associate Professor, Sapporo Otani University, SASAKI Yoshimi, Director-General, Japan Career Development Association, and TATEISHI Shinji, Senior Researcher, National Institute for Educational Policy Research of Japan

2. What are the key aims your country has for participating in this symposium?

The newly revised Courses of Study, i.e. the new national curriculum guidelines for elementary and secondary schools, were published in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The new guidelines, effective from 2020, clearly require all schools from Grade 1, without exception, to provide career development programs and infuse them into regular school subjects. Also, the new guidelines mandate every
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school to provide students with individual career portfolios as well. With this epoch making revision of the national curriculum guidelines, we cordially would like to learn from the related policies and practices in other countries. We are also looking forward to exchanging views with the participants regarding career development programs necessary for students and youth today.



Theme #1 - Context and challenges for career development policy.

In your country...

3. Is the level of policy interest in career development:

- Growing?
- Shrinking?
- Staying about the same?

Comment

As mentioned above, newly revised national curriculum guidelines require all elementary, junior high and senior high schools to provide career development programs in their curricula. Also, securing various opportunities for individual career counseling at every school will be mandatory. In 2020, the national Ministry of Education (MEXT) will require all schools to initiate cumulative career portfolios named "Career Passport". The portfolio is designed for every student from Grade 1 to Grade 12 and it will be used for consecutive 12 years. Also, from April 1, 2019, the government starts de facto immigrant acceptance measures that allow low- and middle-skilled workers to work in Japan, after its long history that rigorously restricted foreign workers to highly skilled professionals. This will require entirely new career development programs suitable for an ethnically culturally diverse society.

4. What are the key political, social, economic and technological issues that are likely to have an impact on people's lives and careers in your country?

Give up to five of the most important issues as you see them.

1	Shrinking population and workforce shortages due to declining birthrate and aging society
2	Immigration Law revised in December 2018 to introduce new visa statuses for low- and semi-skilled foreign workers
3	Impacts from AI and robots
4	Realizing work-life balance regardless of the gender, especially with the progress of labor participation of females in the child-rearing generation
5	Expanding equivalent income gap (Gini coefficient), while wage for all types of employment has generally been increasing since 2014

5. What roles do career development programmes and services play in addressing these political, social, economic and technological challenges?

1. Shrinking population and workforce shortages due to declining birthrate and aging society

According to the 2015 Population Census, the total population of Japan in that year was 127.09 million. However, based on the results of the medium-fertility projection, the population is expected to decrease to around 88.08 million by 2065. The lowest ever birth rate of 1.26 was recorded in 2005. Although its trend recovered a little after its lowest rate, it has still remained far below the replacement level. The labor shortages are serious especially in labor intensive sectors such as accommodation and restaurant business, and elderly care. Furthermore, in rural districts, the apparent decline of the population and business stagnation have already resulted in unignorable cases of SME bankruptcy. The career development programs have important roles to encourage youth to design their future plans in accordance with these situations.

A decrease in national population directly means a decrease in consumers nation-wide. If Japanese companies would focus their efforts in providing high-quality products and attentive services only to the domestic markets, such unrealistic exertions would never improve their profits. The career development programs are expected to strengthen the global perspectives among students.

2. Immigration Law revised in December 2018 to introduce new visa statuses for low- and semi-skilled foreign workers

From April 1, 2019, a new policy comes into effect to expand the numbers and types of incoming workers from foreign countries. The government estimates an additional 345,000 workers in 14 designated fields will be accepted over the next five years. Unskilled workers who meet certain basic criteria are allowed to work in Japan for maximum of five years without the benefit of family reunification. Also, semi-skilled workers are allowed to bring families, and stay in their permanent residents at the end of their initial ten-year working experience. This, in fact, is the first immigrant acceptance measure in modern Japanese history. In this context, there are manifold imperatives for the career development programs. At least, multi-lingual services with subtle consideration to ethnic and religious issues will be needed for incoming foreign workers and their families. Also, wide-range services for both Japanese and non-Japanese students will be indispensable to reinforce their various competencies necessary to work and live in the diverse multi-cultural society.

3. Impacts from AI and robots

A research conducted in 2015 by the Nomura Research Institute and scholars at Oxford University reported that 49 percent of Japan's workforce can be replaced by AI and robots. Some critics argue that AI snatches roles of human in many industries. Among the students, pessimistic outlook on their future has been casting a shadow. The career development programs need to persuade students not to repeat the same mistake of the Luddite movement began in Nottingham in the 19th century. They destroyed textile machines as a form of protest, believing that machines would replace their role in the industry. Students today must understand that innovation creates new jobs while drastically changing the society.

4. Realizing work-life balance regardless of the gender, especially with the progress of labor participation of females in the child-rearing generation

While Japan is infamous for long workdays with limited use (just 50 %) of their entitled annual leave, Japan ranks lowest among G7 members in productivity. The government is promoting "work-style reforms" to enable people to ensure their work-life balance. However, in order to transform the long-lasting male-dominant corporate culture, with implicit common understanding of long hours of work as a virtue, we need multifaceted career development programs.

5. Expanding equivalent income gap (Gini coefficient), while wage for all types of employment has generally been increasing since 2014

Japanese employment system has been facing a major transition. Its traditional features such as long-term employment, in-house education and training, seniority-based wages, and other paternalistic corporate management system have changed in the last three decades. The growing number of lower-paid positions that are temporary or involve precarious labor conditions has eventually brought forth visible income disparities. Society stratifies when the income gap widens. In addition, the overall stagnant trend of disposable income has been continuing, and the consumption tax hike scheduled for October 2019 (from current 8% to 10%) will probably have a major impact on low-income households. The poverty impedes the social independence of youth in many aspects such as repayments of student loans and access to further training programs for advanced credentials. Many practitioners and policy makers recognize the importance of career development programs in this context. However, there seems to be no clinching panacea.



Theme #2 - Aims for, and access to, career development

In your country...

6. What are the key policy aims for career development programmes and services?

Under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MEXT), career education programs in all schools, i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary education institutions, are expected to foster the "Basic and General Competencies" that consist of the following four domains:

1. Competencies to establish positive relationships with others and community,
2. Competencies to manage and understand oneself,
3. Problem-solving Competencies, and
4. Career-planning Competencies.

The Human Resources Development Bureau of the Ministry of Labor (MHLW) has established the following three pillars aiming to realize social development through individual skills development:

1. Promotion of public vocational training according to the needs of regions and industries,
2. "Visualization" of professional abilities, and
3. Promotion of career consultations.

The Ministry of Economy (METI) defines the "Fundamental Competencies for Working Persons" and is working to develop and propagate these abilities. The competencies consist of the following three domains:

1. Abilities to find problems for the creation of new value,
2. Abilities to effectively work toward solutions to problems, and
3. Abilities to use teamwork to unite diverse individuals

7. What groups of people can access career development programmes and services and what groups are excluded?

Institutionally, various service providers are developed and established to meet different needs.

For example, service providers, in addition to the traditional public employment security offices, such as "Job Cafes" and "Regional Youth Support Stations" are in operation throughout the country for the socially disadvantaged youth including early school leavers, young job hoppers, and those labeled as NEET. "Job Cafes" operated by prefectural authorities are the centers that provide one-stop employment-related services for young people. They offer aptitude assessment, counseling, seminars and other services in accordance with local circumstances. "Regional Youth Support Stations" serve as bases for employment support of NEETs and other young people struggling in the school-to-work transitions. Among other services, they provide expert advice and workplace experience designed to build vocational independence, and support for workplace norms and upgrading after taking up employment. Moreover, various free-of-charge counseling and consultations are available via phones, emails and SNS services.

However, the social recognition on such service providers has still been low. A survey conducted in 2012 by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research shows that only 0.9% of those who graduated from high school in the previous year said that they have obtained information about the existence and roles of "Regional Youth Support Stations" while in high school. Also, according to a survey conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2010, only 1.5% of high school dropouts answered "having sufficient knowledge" about the Stations, and the percentage who answered "having partial or vague knowledge" was 4.4%. The majority of the youth do not even know the fact that various free career services are available for them.

Moreover, career services for ethnic and religious minority groups, and sexual minorities such as LGBT are extremely inadequate and they need a large scale improvement.

8. How are the opinions of citizens and service users heard and incorporated into policy and practice?

There are paths for the opinions of citizens and service users to be heard. For example, both national and local governmental agencies must complete the at least one-month public comment procedures before establishing and revising laws, ordinances and regulations which directly affect or have close connection to daily lives of the people. Also, it is very common for public career service providers to release their annual reports with the result of the user evaluations to secure their accountability. It is obligatory for each school to disclose the result of its self-evaluation each year. Many of such self-evaluation contain some items related to the career development programs.

9. Is there a framework for ethical practice in career development? How does this framework balance the interests of the individual with the demands of policy and signals from the labour market?

Many professional organizations in Japan have the codes of ethics for career related practitioners. However, none of them has clear sections or articles to balance the interests of the individual with the demands of policy and signals from the labor market.

The Japanese Society for the Study of Career Education, for example, has the Code of Ethics consist of following nice articles:

1. Securing Professional Responsibility, 2. Respecting the Rights and Welfare,
3. Obtaining Informed Consent, 4. Conducting Researches and Practices,
5. Conducting Evaluation, Assessment and Interpretation,
6. Securing Confidentiality and Privacy, 7. Publication of Researches,
8. Duty of Professional Training, and 9. Observance of Ethics.

Also, the Career Consulting Conference has following 12 articles as the Code of Ethics:

1. Basic Philosophy, 2. Retention of Dignity,
3. Holding and Fostering Trust, 4. Self-Training and Professional Development,
5. Confidentiality, 6. Prohibition of Flaunt, Libel and Slander,
7. Accountability, 8. Scope of Mission,
9. Respect for the Self-Determination of Clients, 10. Relationship with Clients,
11. Relationship with Organization, and 12. Committee for the Code of Ethics.



Theme #3 – Integrating career development into wider society.

In your country...

10. Which ministries or jurisdictions are responsible for career development programmes and services? Clarify what programmes and services each ministry or jurisdiction has responsibility for.

In Japan, following three national ministries are cooperating to promote career education and other career development programs for students, youth, and working persons:

1. Ministry of Education (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology: MEXT),
2. Ministry of Labor (The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare: MHLW), and
3. Ministry of Economy (The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry: METI)

1. Responsibilities of the Ministry of Education (MEXT)

To ensure equal educational opportunities and the right to education for every citizen, the Ministry of Education sets the national curriculum guidelines for elementary and secondary schools, authorizes school textbooks, accredits teacher training programs at colleges and universities, administers the national standard for the teacher licensure, etc.

As for career education, newly revised national curriculum guidelines mandate all schools to provide

career development programs and infuse them into regular school subjects, to secure various opportunities for individual career counseling, and to initiate cumulative career portfolios named "Career Passport" from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

Also, the Ministry strongly request all junior high schools to have five-day work experience programs for the students. As for senior high schools, the Ministry is encouraging the academic (general) courses to introduce internship programs especially at worksites dominantly for highly skilled professionals, for example, in legal, academic, medical circles.

2. Responsibilities of the Ministry of Labor (MHLW)

In relation to career development, the Ministry of Labor plays the central role in the national labor policies and measures in securing human resources development; labor standards; equal employment; employment for part-time, dispatched, and fixed-term workers; etc.

Also, the ministry has important responsibilities for supporting socially disadvantaged youth including early school leavers and youth labeled as NEET. It is noteworthy that the Ministry administers "Youth Yell Certification System" that recognizes small- and medium-sized companies active in recruiting and training of youth. The "Youth Yell" certified companies can receive priority matching support by public employment security offices. These companies can also apply for loans with low interest from the Japan Policy Finance Corporation.

In addition, the Ministry is focusing on supporting the balance between work and treatment of diseases such as cancer. This measure has significant importance for Japan, where the declining birthrate and aging population are advancing.

Furthermore, the Ministry administers the national licensure for the career consultants, i.e. employment counselors by designating the official training providers and accrediting their training programs for the career consultants.

3. Responsibilities of the Ministry of Economy (METI)

Among the wide-range missions of the Ministry, it has crucial role to develop Japan's economy and industry by focusing on promoting economic vitality in private companies. For example, the Ministry in conjunction with the Tokyo Stock Exchange have been conducting the "Nadeshiko Brand Initiative" since 2012 for the purpose of selecting and publicizing enterprises that encourage women's success in the workplace. Another example would be promoting recurrent education programs for employees. In light of the arrival of the "era of 100-year lifespan", individuals need to build their careers so that they can continue to create added value. To achieve this goal, the Ministry is re-examining i) basic competencies necessary for employees, addressing changes in the business environments, ii) roles that companies should play in assisting individuals in advancing their careers, and iii) ideal approaches to employment systems that facilitate career ownership.

The Ministry has also been advancing efforts for the career education program to convey to students the significance of labor and the links between school lessons and real life. As part of these efforts, the Ministry annually selects winners of the Career Education Awards for their outstanding activities for supporting educational initiatives by business communities. The Ministry further holds annual Ceremony for Grand Prix Award for Development of Fundamental Competencies for Working Persons, where university student teams make presentations compete each other on their progress in the development of the required competencies achieved through classes and seminars.

11. What leadership, co-ordination and collaboration approaches exist within the career development system to ensure collaboration across different sectors and different types of clients. For example, how are career development systems within the education system connected to those within employment, health and youth work?

At present, there seems to be smooth collaboration among ministries concerned with career development programs. For example, The Ministry of Labor administers "New Graduate Hello-Work Initiative" in all prefectures to provide one-stop support to new graduates in cooperation with the schools. The "Regional Youth Support Stations" also runs their outreach programs for at-risk students in schools. The Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Education jointly established the new annual award: Awards for Partnerships for Career Education Promotion to recognize pioneering comprehensive collaboration projects for career education conducted between educational institutions and regional and business organizations.

12. What are the main challenges to leadership in the field and the main obstacles to effective collaboration?

Sometimes, the problem of compartmentalized, vertically structured administration becomes apparent. The policy review conducted by the Administrative Reform Promotion Council in November 2013 would be a typical example. After reviewing an initiative to strengthen the cooperation between schools and the "Regional Youth Support Stations", the report stated, "The initiative would guide at-risk students into such Stations. There is a serious possibility that it will infringe the school's original function. Therefore, reconsiderations are inevitable." In response to this, the scale of the initiative was reduced in the 2013 supplementary budget.

13. What kind of cooperation (if any) is there between the career development services and stakeholders like employers, trade unions, the media, NGOs, professional organisations etc?

The representative cases are found in the work experience programs for junior high school students. Around 98% of the students have at least one opportunity for work experience for three days on average while in junior high school. The ways of implementation vary depending on the area, but the chambers of commerce, the local boards of education, and/or NGOs often coordinate the activities.

14. How is the professionalism of career development workers developed and maintained whilst working with other professionals?

As for the career consultants, the licensure is administered by the Ministry of Labor. Since this is a national credential authorized by the Ministry, the license holders receive proper social recognition as professionals. The licensure has three levels: one standard level and two advanced levels. Career Consultant License is to ensure standard-level expertise of professional practitioners. The Second Grade License for Skilled Career Consultant is for the advanced practitioners, and the First Grade License is for educators who can provide training of new career consultants.

15. Do other types of professionals (e.g. teachers and social workers) deliver career development?
How is a professional service ensured?

Unlike in most western countries, Japanese schools give the responsibility for career development programs to the members of school teaching staff, each of whom has their own subject to teach. This situation comes about mainly because of the "class teacher system" universal throughout primary and secondary schools in Japan. An educational activity known as "class activity" or "homeroom activity" takes place once a week in all schools. This involves group work and discussion-based activities, during which students learn how to form positive relationships, plan how to enjoy class and school activities, and think about their own futures. The person leading these activities is the class teacher. Emotionally, the class teachers are truly "in loco parentis" for the students in their classes. This traditional delivery of career development at schools can be an advantage in realizing the comprehensive career education programs, especially in the light of curriculum infusion/integration.

However, on the other hand, securing the expertise of teachers as the practitioners of career guidance and counseling remains an issue. In the initial training in universities, all students who wish to obtain teacher certificate(s) must earn 2 credits in student services, career guidance and counseling both in theory and practice. The National Teacher Certificate Renewal System sets a ten-year period of validity for teacher certificates. In every 10 years, 30 clock hours of attendance for accredited in-service training programs and the passing the final exams for each course are mandatory for school teachers. Currently, the Ministry of Education requires every providers of such programs, mainly universities, to offer at least one course for career education.



Theme #4 - Leading innovative change for the future.

In your country...

16. What are the key innovations or ways that career development programmes and services have changed over the last 10 years? This could include changes relating to technology, practice, management and governance and the use of new theories and evidence.

A strong awareness of the need to promote "career education" as a national policy matter arose in December 1999, as a countermeasures against the increasing number of young people out of work, and those who spend their time on part-time, unskilled labor. Today, career education programs no longer are emergency measures to cope solely with youth employment issues. Career development programs are now expected to foster wide-range generic and transferable career competencies. As the philosophy of career education has drastically been changed, many new approaches have also been introduced. The introduction of career portfolio named "Career Passport" from Grade 1 in all schools nation-wide would be a good example. However, at present, the government does not plan to shift them into so called e-portfolios. There mainly are two reasons. One is the concern for the data breach by unexpected accidents and/or malicious hacking. The other reason is the retardation in ICT related equipment and in necessary infrastructure at schools.

17. How do national policies and initiatives, where they exist, ensure and support the development of innovation in career development services provision?

The Ministry of Labor (MHLW) is encouraging private enterprises to introduce "Self-Career Dock", which provides opportunities for workers receive career consulting from certified professionals at least once a year to regularly reflect on their own working careers, and confirm what kind of career paths they should go on, and determine the knowledge, abilities and skills they should acquire. The Ministry also encourages workers to use e-portfolio named "Job Card" to reflect on their own professional experiences and credentials and make future plans.

18. What new, innovative and promising interventions in career development programmes and services is your country planning for the future? How are such innovations making the most of open data initiatives, online technologies, artificial intelligence and other forms of innovation?

The introduction of the commulative career portfolio which students create and use for 12 consecutive years from Grade 1 is totally new to schools in Japan. However, use of the cutting-edge technologies and computer sciences has not yet been under deliberate considerations.

19. How is the training and continuing professional development (CPD) of careers professionals encouraging innovation and taking account of new evidence as well as changes in technology and the labour market?

From April 1, 2020, the contents and length of pre-service training program for the certified career consultants will be expanded in order to meet with new demands such as continuous career development support including "Self-Career Dock"; individual spontaneous learning through recurrent education programs; balancing work and medical treatment, child rearing, and family care giving; etc. Furthermore, in January 2019, the Ministry of Labor (MHLW) released the "Report on the Enhancement of Continuous Learning for Career Consultants". This report systematically proposed concrete topics for continuous professional development and called for the planned opportunities for supervision and case studies.

Final reflections

20. Is there anything else that you could like to address through participating in this symposium?

The demand side of the labor market has been and will constantly be changing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Emergency calls for responsive career development will never stop, not only for students and youth but also for everyone on the globe. However, should prompt adaptiveness be the ideal goal for career development programs to pursue? How about self-esteem, courage, resilience, and other fundamental human nature? We certainly need outer armament to cope with the unpredictable changes. But, at the same time, we need to enrich our inner strength. How can we foster such human nature through career development programs?