

**Parents' Views of Children's Futures and Career Education/
Career Guidance**

Summary

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Note: Members of the above study group are members of the Japanese Society for the Study of Career Education's research promotion committee. This research is a joint research project with the Japanese Society for the Study of Career Education.

<Overview>

Parents currently play an important role in children's career education and career guidance from various standpoints. In this research, we focused on how parents viewed children's futures as well as their career education and career guidance. The research

was conducted from April 2006 to March 2007. We conducted a survey on parents' needs for career education and career guidance, and analyzed the background behind the survey results.

1. Research Objective

Currently, various programs are in place to provide support for young people's employment and career formation, in view of growing social concern over unstable employment among young people, as can be seen in "*freeters*," or job-hopping part-time workers, and NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Notably, efforts to provide career education and career guidance for young people in school education are growing considerably.

Against this background, the role of "parents" in young people's career education and career guidance is being increasingly perceived as important. Nowadays, parents are involved in career education and career guidance provided by schools in several different ways. At home, they are the father or mother who provide the core of home education to their children. At the same time, they, as members of the society's workforce, receive young people at their workplace to provide work experience. In the local community, they are local residents who share the community with young people, including children outside their own family.

Therefore, how parents view the current career education and career guidance status is an extremely important factor in determining the future course of Japan's career education and career guidance policies. What expectations do parents, or parents, have about their children's futures? How do they see society after their children have grown up? What kind of skills and abilities do they want their children to acquire? What kind of education do they expect from school? In what aspect do they think they can contribute to career education and career guidance as members of the general workforce as well as the local community?

Given the above awareness of the problems as a background, we compiled this report with the objective of extensively looking into parents' views of children's futures and career guidance.

2. Research Method

In this research study, we conducted a survey of the general society's needs for career education and career guidance, and analyzed the background of the results. The survey targeted adults with children, and the targets were selected from monitors of a research

company. The survey was conducted by mail and used a sampling method that set the targets' gender and age as constants. Specifically, we asked the research company to provide samples of 200 people in each of six cells created by forming combinations of gender (male/female) and age (30s/40s/50s). Based on this sampling, 1,500 questionnaires were sent out, of which 1,372 responses were collected, resulting in a collection rate of 91.5%. The survey was conducted in January and February 2007.

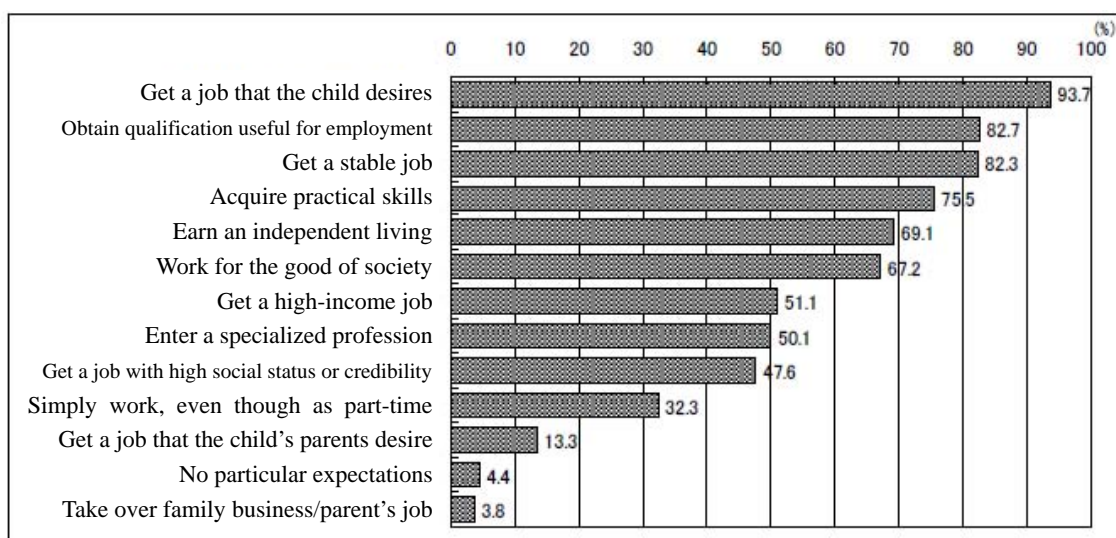
The survey was divided into six major sections: "About yourself," "About young people and children of the future," "Career education at schools," "Young people as seen from the standpoint of a working adult," "Young people as seen from the standpoint of a local resident," and "Future social conditions."

3. Research Results

Parental expectations of children's future

Asked about expectations of their children's future, the most frequently selected answer was for the child to get a job that he/she wished, followed by hopes for the child to acquire practical skills or obtain qualifications to get a stable job. To this end, parents taught their children to acquire basic lifestyle habits, be punctual, obey rules, take care of their own things and affairs, and so on. This role was played mainly by mothers, who typically spend more time with their children in their childhood. As the child grew older, parents tended to place importance on academic achievements and independence. (Figure 1)

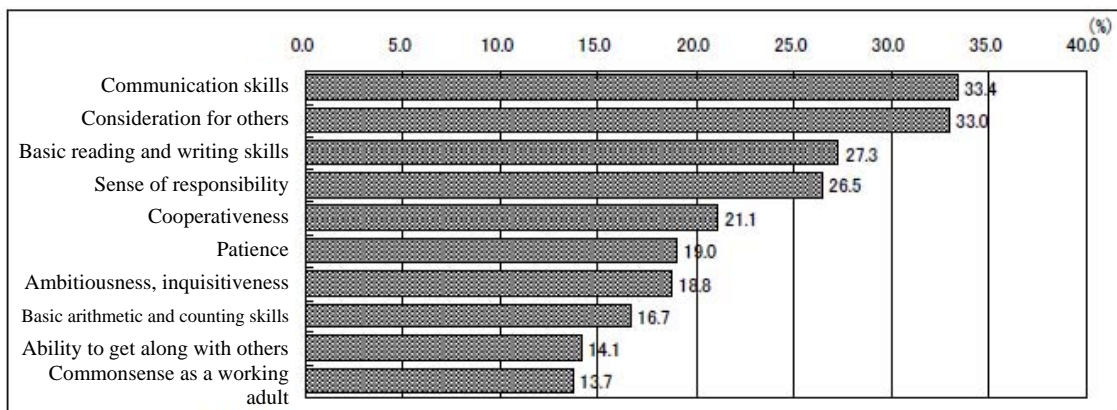
Figure 1 Parents' expectations of children's futures (Strongly agree + Agree)



Expectations of career education at school

Many parents wished to see their children’s school career education program teach them the significance of learning and working, help them understand their own individuality and aptitude, and help them acquire moral values and manners required as working adults. With regard to the content of career education programs, many parents had positive feelings about workplace visits and work experience, with many willing to actively cooperate. However, there was some concern, mainly among men, that they would not know what to do if young people came to their workplace for work experience. In terms of the types of skill that parents wished children to acquire at school, communication skills came at the top, followed by consideration for others, and basic reading and writing skills. Expectations for skills related to personality development, such as sense of responsibility, cooperativeness, and patience, were also strong. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2 Skills parents wish their children to acquire at school (top 10 answers)
(Strongly agree + Agree)**



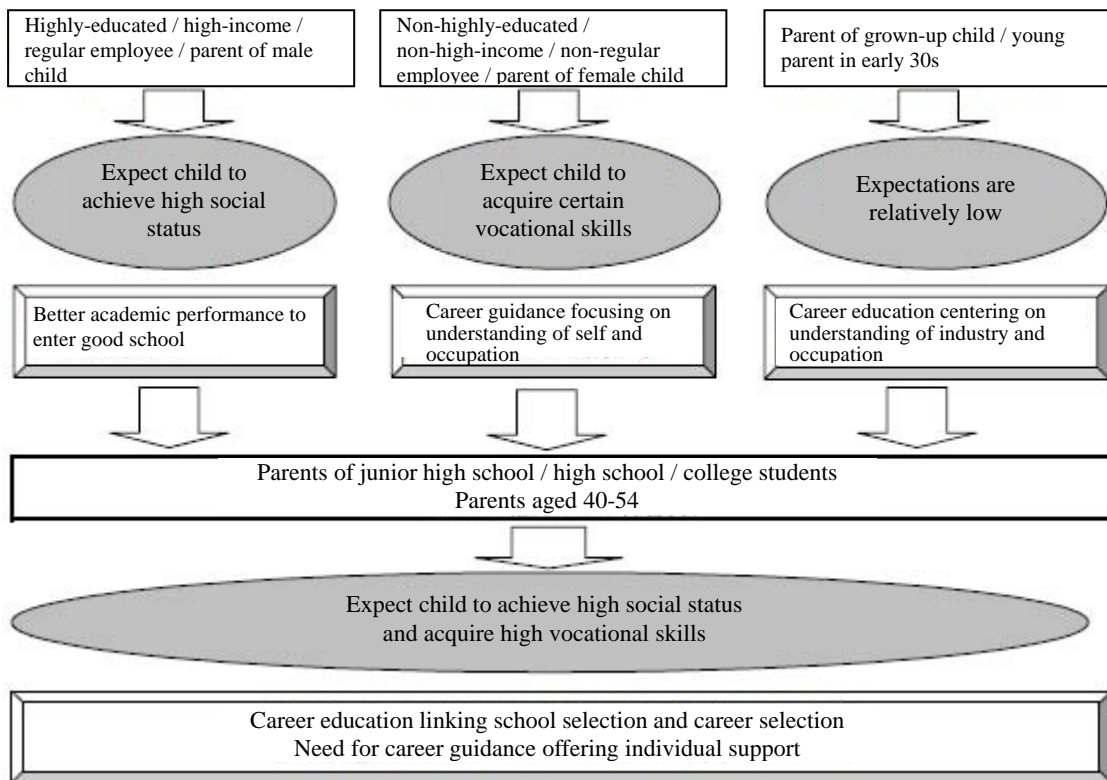
Furthermore, expectations of children’s future careers could be considered roughly from two aspects: whether or not parents wished for their children to achieve high social status, and whether or not they wished for their children to acquire vocational skills. Both of these aspects were closely related to the type of career education and career guidance parents expected from school. However, parents in age groups where their children’s career selection was an important issue had considerable expectations on both aspects of social status and vocational skills.

In addition, based on the results of Figure 3, we made suggestions with regard to Japan’s future career education and career guidance policies, and labor administration.

We raised three points:

1. The need for proactive efforts from the labor administration to meet diverse career education and career guidance needs;
2. The importance of acquiring basic academic skills to serve as a foundation of lifetime career guidance, as well as the need to provide support for this end;
3. Utilization of career guidance resources to meet individual support needs for school-age children and their parents. (Figure 3)

Figure 3 Relationship between parental expectations of children’s futures and career education/career guidance (Diagram showing outline of results)

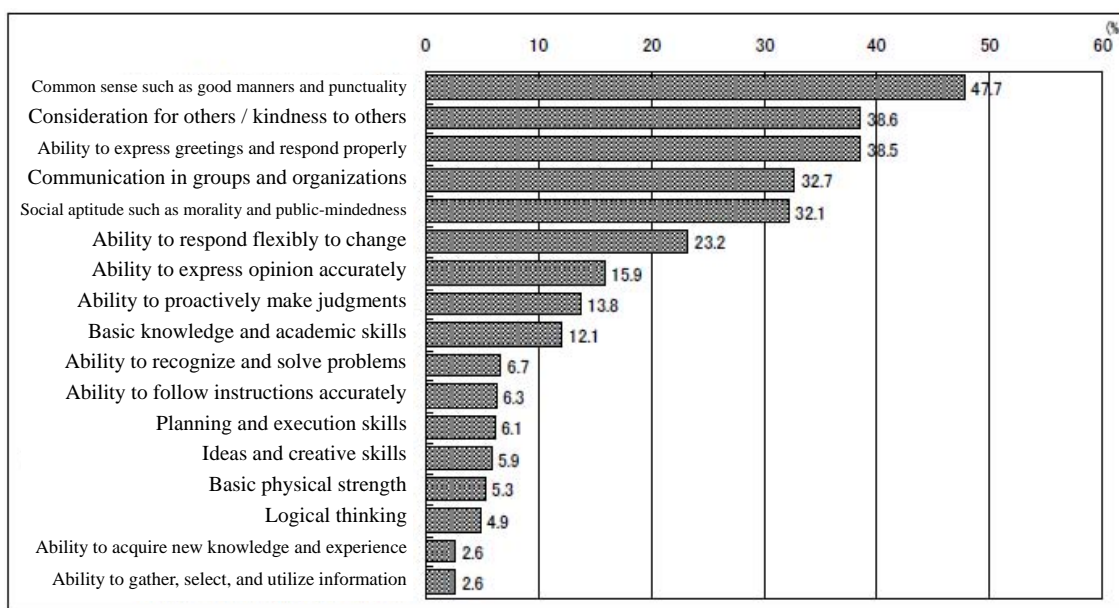


Career education from the standpoint of a working adult

As skills or abilities lacking among young people about to start working, many pointed to common sense skills such as good manners, punctuality, greetings and conversational responses, as well as consideration for others, communication skills, morality and public-mindedness. However, older people tended to place importance on basic academic skills, highly-educated parents on abstract skills, and women or parents with low education and income on general common sense. Asked who should be responsible for nurturing these abilities, many saw the school as being responsible for

developing basic academic skills, the home for basic lifestyle habits and personality development, and the workplace for basic vocational ability. As for developing communication skills, the school was seen as being mainly responsible, while the roles of the local community and home were also perceived as considerably important. (Figure 4)

Figure 4 Skills parents expect of young people about to start working, from the standpoint of working adults (percentage selected)



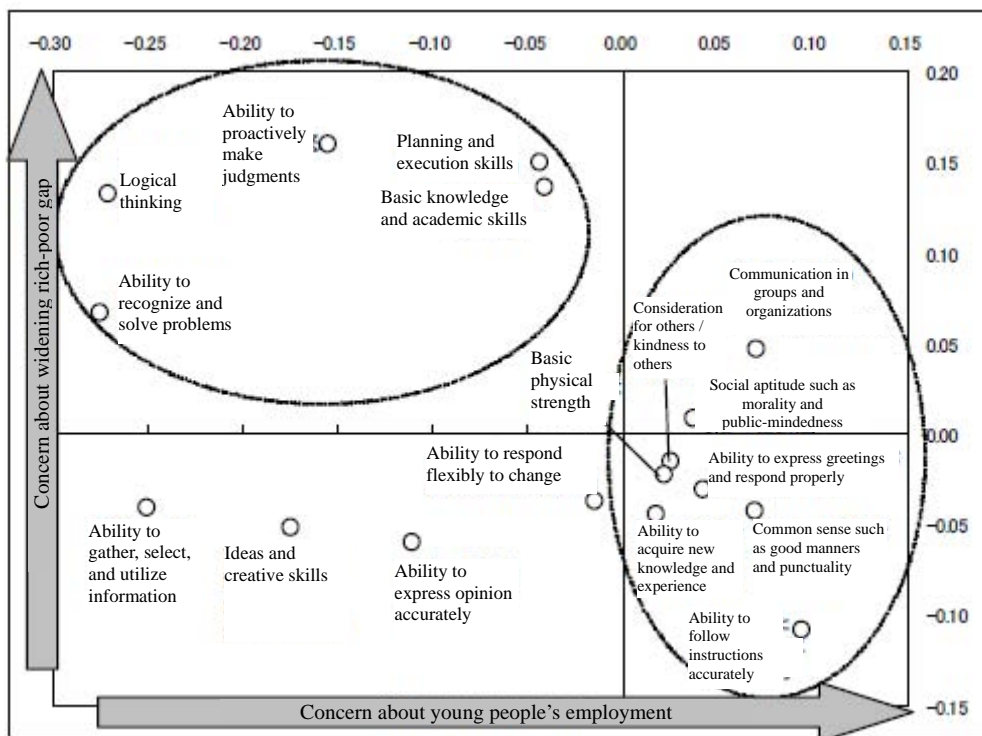
Career education from the standpoint of a local resident

Many people were willing to be involved in young people’s career education as local residents, and felt they could do so to some extent. Specifically, however, the efforts centered on parents, mainly mothers, discussing the matter with other parents, and providing young people with opportunities to meet various people. There were views that they would be able to take part in career education in the local community more if there were such a system, or a facility for that purpose. The survey results also pointed to the importance of building a network that would enable parents to talk to each other casually and cooperate. Many male respondents, while agreeing to cooperate by providing work experience in their workplace, said they were too busy with work to become heavily involved. In general, older people and people with higher education wished to see a system that would enable them to become involved as local residents.

Future social conditions

Declining birthrate combined with an aging population, wider gaps between the rich and poor, and globalization and internationalization were widely shared views. There were strong concerns that young people’s employment would remain an issue as the number of “freeters” and NEETs continued to rise. In general, male, highly-educated, high-income parents believed that the rich-poor gap would widen and globalization would accelerate, while female, non-highly-educated parents felt it would become increasingly difficult for young people to find regular jobs. There were stronger concerns among older people about deteriorating basic academic skills. There was a rough correlation between people’s views about future social conditions and skills they expected of young people as working adults. Parents with strong concerns about young people’s employment wanted young people to acquire specific skills in human relationship to enable them to get on well with people in their individual workplaces, while parents highly concerned about the widening rich-poor gap expected more abstract, conceptual skills as working adults not bound by specific workplaces. (Figure 5)

Figure 5 Relationship between views about future social conditions and skills expected of young people working adults



Results of free-answer section

The results of this section, in which respondents were asked to comment freely on children's futures and career education, showed that some people understood the content and purpose of career education and acknowledged its significance. On the whole, however, the general public's understanding of career education was still insufficient, and many respondents were skeptical about its purpose or effect. Behind this result is the notion that focusing on personality development, general knowledge, and basic academic skills is more important as a result to children's future careers than raising their awareness of occupation and career from an early stage. There were also very abstract requests, such as to create an atmosphere that values work and labor in a broad sense, which would be worth future consideration.

Positive opinions about career education

- I want my child to choose an occupation that he/she desires. I am strongly in favor of career education, particularly work experience.
- I think career education is a good thing, especially since I grew up at a time when people didn't know what occupation they wanted to enter until they started job-hunting. (The rest has been omitted.)
- It would be good to provide young people with more career options. Career education would allow more appropriate career selection or career change.
- I believe career education is very good. It would be even better if young people could experience various jobs instead of visiting just one workplace. I definitely hope career education will continue.
- As a lesson to be learned from my own childhood, I think it is important to know the kinds of jobs that exist in the world from an early stage. I therefore agree to the idea of career education involving the local community.

Opinions that personality development should take priority over career education

- I think career education is effective in considering and determining one's future options. But, it should take place on the basis of educational policy at home, such as cooperativeness and willingness to learn.
- First, basic manners and morality should be taught at home and school. Children's future and career education come next.
- I am not very interested in career education. I place importance on personality, so I intend to teach my children the important things in life.
- I believe children should be taught to have consideration for others, morality, and public-mindedness before giving them career education. (The rest has been

omitted.)

- I feel that, rather than career education, young people need education of the mind, such as learning to endure, make an effort, or have a dream.

Policy suggestions

A certain level of need was shown for career education and career guidance as educational intervention measures regarding children's futures and careers. Notably, practical work experience was widely perceived as a meaningful measure. We therefore believe that the survey results redemonstrated the need for continual indirect support from a labor administrative perspective to implement career education centering on practical work experience, which is a key feature of Japan's career education.

On the other hand, there were opinions that called for the need to improve children's soft skills, personality development and general knowledge, which up to now have been relatively low in priority in career guidance policy. There is still room for future consideration as to how to meet this need. Also, of those who took part in this survey, parents with children who were about to take school entrance exams or search for jobs expressed strong needs for school selection and improvement in basic academic skills, leaving us with the task of considering how to incorporate these aspects into career education programs in the future. However, an important factor that should be considered is a possible generational effect, namely, the impact of the nature of career guidance that the parents themselves received when they were young, in which excessive importance was placed on academic performance.

Furthermore, there were more needs than generally believed to become involved in children's career education as a member of the local community. Thus, one conceivable direction in Japan's future career guidance policy might be to form an effective system and network in order to make career guidance function widely in the local community.

4. Summary of This Report

In Chapter 1, we described the research background and explained the importance of considering parents when discussing career education and career guidance. We described problem consciousness of this research themes, as well as the survey method and characteristics of survey respondents.

In Chapter 2, we focused on parents' expectations of children's futures. Simple tally results as well as results by gender and age were shown. Parents' answers to questions such as what they wished for with respect to their children's futures and how they treated their children at home suggested their underlying need for career education and career guidance.

In Chapter 3, we displayed simple tally results as well as results by gender and age regarding parents' expectations toward career education at school, by asking their expectations of career guidance provided at school, what they thought was important and should be taught as part of career education, what they hoped their children to acquire at school, and so on. The results highlighted parents' expectations toward school from a career education perspective.

In Chapter 4, we looked at parents' perceptions of their children's futures and career education by mainly using a multivariate analysis technique. We identified the relationship between parents' expectations of their children's futures and their interest in career education. We also touched on future possibilities for career education and career guidance policies.

In Chapter 5, we analyzed the results of parents' responses to questions that asked how they saw career education as a member of the working adults as well as a member of the local community. We focused on several key points in our analysis, including the skills, abilities and qualities they expected young working people to have, and the extent to which they could become involved in career education as a local resident.

In Chapter 6, we looked at parents' views of future social conditions and analyzed how those views were related to their perceptions of career education.

In Chapter 7, we made suggestions regarding Japan's future career education and career guidance policies, based on the survey results of this research. We considered future possibilities, including discussion topics derived from the survey results, from two aspects: labor administrative measures regarding career guidance, and career education at school.

In the Appendix, we published the results of the free answer section of the survey in detail. We carried out an analysis of the answers mainly in categories of "career education" and "children's futures," and made suggestions regarding the future course of career education and career guidance.