

A BRIEF COMPARATIVE REVIEW ON VOCATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND JAPAN ¹

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ABSTRACT

During the last two decades various efforts have been made by curriculum developers nearly in all countries in the world to reform their education systems and review their existing curriculum policy, curriculum design, implementation, and curriculum evaluation. This paper highlights the initial steps done by curriculum policy developers in three countries (*Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan*) in *revitalizing and reforming the vocational school curriculum* to meet with the challenge of changing technological, social, economic, national and global environment.

It also elaborates how curriculum developers in 3 countries make decision in curriculum design, policy, implementation, and evaluation regarding to overall approach to curriculum design as well as to the subject areas that will be implemented in vocational schools.

This paper is mainly developed and written based on literature study taken from various sources and research publication on education and curriculum.

The purpose of this paper are : (i) to have degree of appreciation of similarities and differences among 3 countries in efforting the revitalization of vocational school curriculum development; (ii) to identify general trends and unique features as well as indigenous aspects in developing vocational school curriculum among 3 countries; (iii) to brief cross-nationally analyse of each educational system and other related matters in reforming vocational school curriculum among three countries.

The result of this paper is to have mutual understanding and degree of appreciation of similarities and differences among 3 countries in efforting the revitalization of vocational school curriculum development. On the other side, in addition, the purpose of study is to gain cross-nationally analyse of each educational system in reforming vocational school curriculum.

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I. INTRODUCTION

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This paper is also elaborate how curriculum developers in 3 countries make decision in vocational curriculum design, policy, implementation, and evaluation regarding to overall approach to vocational curriculum design as well as to the subject areas that will be implemented in vocational schools. Eventhough, this paper is mainly developed and written based on literature study taken from various sources and research publication on education and vocational curriculum in three countries.

The purpose of this paper are :

(i) to have degree of appreciation of similiarities and differences among 3 countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan) in efforting the revitalization of vocational school curriculum development;

(ii) to identify general trends AND indiginious aspects in developing vocational school curriculum among 3 countries;

(iii) to brief cross-nationally analyse of each educational system and other related matters in reforming vocational school curriculum among three countries.

II. DESCRIPTION ON VOCATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A. INDONESIA

The National education system of Indonesia, is generally aimed at elevation the intelectual life of the nation and developing the Indonesian people fully, i.e as people who are devoted to God, have knowledge and skills, are in good physical and spiritual health, are independent and fair, and feel responsible for their country and nation.

Vocational Education in Indonesia, starts in the Senior secondary school 9 Grade 10,11, 12 or 13. School leavers from 12th grade vocational school become tradesmen, craftsmen and represent as skilled worker. The curriculum of Vocational Secondary Education was set forth by the Minister of Education and Culture in Decree No. 080/U/1993.

Currently, 2007 school based curriculum (KTSP) was launched and introduced and steply implemented in all level of school included in secondary vocational school. The objective of vocational education is to prepare students to enter employment and to develop professional skills and to prepare students to choose a career, to instill the ability to compete and develop independently, and to foster a national workforce to meet the manpower needs of business and industry.

Vocational secondary school implements education programs according to the perceived present and future demands for employment types. The vocational secondary school curriculum program is envisioned to be completed in three to four years. The curriculum is divided into six groups: (1) the agricultural and forestry group, for occupations in such areas as agribusiness, agronomy, animal husbandry, fisheries, and agriculture production management; (2) the industrial technology group, offering professions in building construction, mining, marine engineering, graphics, textiles, informatics, and industrial instrumentation; (3) the business and management group, leading to careers in accounting, office management, finance and banking, trade, and secretarial work; (4) the community welfare group, targeting employment with social services, community health, and community development; (5) the tourism group, whose graduates move into the hotel, catering, fashion, and beauty occupations; and the arts and handicraft group, whose skills are focused on applied arts, visual arts, and the handicraft industry.

B. MALAYSIA

Education in Malaysia may be obtained from government-sponsored schools, private schools, or through homeschooling. The education system is highly centralised, particularly for primary and secondary schools, with state and local governments having little in the curriculum or other major aspects of education.

In lower secondary school in Malaysia, students follow a general and liberal comprehensive education system. All students are required to study at least one of the four practical arts subjects, i.e. : Industrial Arts, Agriculture Science, Home Science and Commercial Studies. In upper secondary school, successful lower secondary students enter the general secondary school or secondary vocational school. In the general secondary school, the students are streamed into science, technical, or arts classes based on their lower certificate examination results. The general secondary schools are academically oriented, whereas the secondary vocational schools are occupational-oriented.

Students who do well in the Malaysian certificate of education are given the chance to follow pre-university classes or join one of the polytechnic, technical, agricultural colleges or institute of technology.

C. JAPAN

The Japanese educational system is a moderately centralized, single-track system. The government is responsible for setting national standards for curriculum development, for authorizing textbooks, and for ensuring the uniform use of textbooks in all schools. Compulsory education in Japan extends only through the lower secondary level (i.e., through approximately age 15), and competition for positions in upper secondary schools - and later for positions in universities - is usually intense.

In recent years, Japanese industrial and educational practices have received worldwide attention. In spite of the interest in Japanese industry and education, there has been relatively little study of technology education in Japan. This paper describes the history, current status, and future challenges of technology education in Japan. Because of their close relationship, discussion of both technology education at the lower secondary level, *gijutsu ka*, and vocational technical education at the upper secondary and post-secondary level, *shokugyo kyoiku*, are included in this paper.

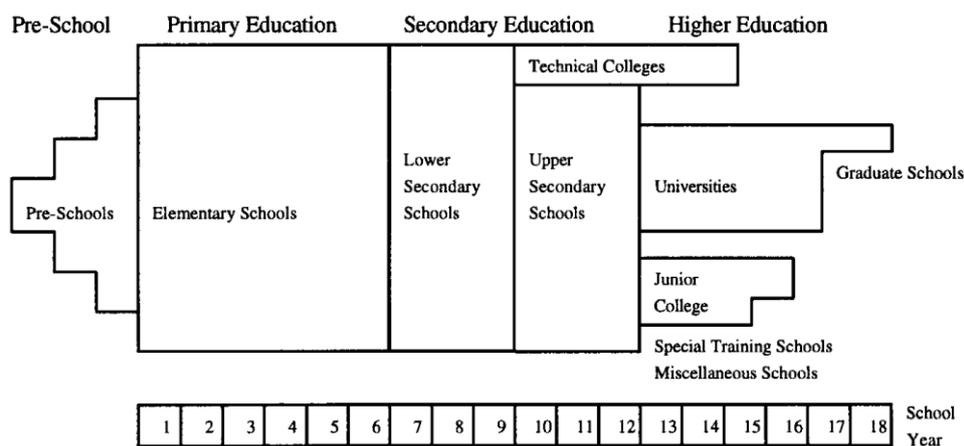


Figure 1. Organization of Japanese School System

The structure of public education in Japan is largely based on the American model of education which was adopted after World War II. Figure 1 shows the major types of publicly supported schools. The foundation of the modern Japanese educational system is the nine-year compulsory education core, *gimu kyoiku*. Included in the compulsory core is a six-year elementary school, *shogakko*, and a three-year lower secondary school, *chugakko*. Practically all (almost 100%) of Japanese students complete compulsory education. After completing compulsory education, about 95% enter upper secondary school. Of those who enter upper secondary schools, less than two percent drop out before graduating. (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 1991).

The Japanese education system is modeled on and heavily influenced by its American counterpart. The Fundamental Law of Education, passed in 1947 under American occupation, introduced the 6+3+3+4 structure of Japanese education: six years of elementary education, three years at lower secondary school, three at upper secondary school followed by four years at university for those in the academic stream.

Although education beyond the ninth grade is not compulsory, *Monbusho* develops curricular guidelines for senior high schools. The most common types of public senior high schools are regular or academic (*futsu*) high schools and vocational high schools, such as commercial (*shogyo*) and industrial (*kogyo*) high schools.

III. TRENDS, ISSUES, AND FEATURES OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

In three countries that focused on this paper (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan), it can be found some trends, issues, and features of the planning, implementing the curriculum of secondary vocational schools are as the following :

1. In 3 countries, it is agreed that vocational education is defined as those educational programmes aimed at the occupational level of craftsman, basic trade and it was represented as the level of skilled workers. While Technical Education is defined as those educational programme3s aimed at the occupational level of tecahnician or sub professional level which is generally considered as one step above of the craftsmen level but below the professional level.
2. In term of institution that offer vocational education, in three countries can obviously seen that vocational education program is provided : (i) in senior secondary school, (ii) in post secondary schools, non formal centres, institutes, or colleges or (ii) in industries and (iv) in combination of the three program.
3. What each country or community does about vocational and technical education depends upon such factors such as its stages of industrial and economical development, history and tradition,attitudes and values, social structures and physical geographic condition, as well as its educational structure. That each countries is increasingly becoming part of an international community also affects the provision of vocational and technical education. Japan as modern country, suport fully the vocational international program.
4. In term of courses offered, in 3 countries, vocational education are offered : (i) full time, particularly at secondary vocational school, (ii) par time, associated with employer, industries, including block days and "dual system", (iii) there is serious effort to conduct course via distance learning and multimedia programs. In Japan and Indonesia, vocational education was also offered with the spirit of apprenticeship system.
5. In term of curriculum development, in addition to a theoritical absed, the curriculum for vocational schools is usually characterized by an emphasis upon the achievement of manipulative skills in volvng equioment, materials, and

process. Laboratory practice is usually seen as essential programmes. There are many relevant course introduced in social education. Curriculum was also developed by involving expert and practitioner from relevant fields.

6. In term of Vocational and technical teachers Training, it can be noted briefly that :
- a tendency of an insufficient number of skilled and knowledgeable eople being attracted to become teachers of vocational schools.
 - A tendency of a high turn over rate caused by the lost of teachers to industry and commerce.
 - The high number of existing teachers who have little adequate preparation as teachers.
 - The relatively few teacher training institutions which have specific programmes for vocational teachers preparation, and have specialized staff, facilities, and adequate sources to provide program.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. There is ongoing commitment to vocational school curriculum policy and develeopment to meet the challenges of the changing technological, social , economical, political, national and global environmental.
2. In three countries appear to be developing vocational school curriculum, qualification, and schooling frame work and structures that able to respond effectively both national and international change and more local needs.
3. In 3 countries, it is still easily found a tendency that vocational schools has "a lower status" than academic education. This lower status is often perceived by potential students and the community and thus affects their attitudes to vocational school. During last several years, this stigma stepply changed with the provision of new and better school facilities, new curricula and better trained taechers as well as public adverstisement on the new paradigm of vocational school.
4. Some potential problems faced in vocational schools, the 3 countries are attempting to solve problems of :

- an insufficient students intake particularly of those with higher ability.
 - The lack of relationship between courses provision and manpower needs.
 - Inadequate and frequently outmoded facilities and,
 - Relatively high dropout rates and failures.
5. A trend in vocational school curriculum was identified to move from content based to varying combinations of competency and content based vocational school curriculum frame works that ensure the acquisition of both knowledges and skills.
6. Especially in Indonesia, the curriculum is relatively overloaded as the result from a variety of reasons including too much content, too many subject areas, inappropriate early introduction, and some pressure for politicians to include issues to meet immediate needs.

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