

**2003 Committee on the Difficulties for Young Adults to Find Jobs
and on the Vocational Education
FINAL REPORT (published in June 2004)
SUMMARY**

Various issues surrounding the working conditions of young adults, such as unemployment and increased trend of being engaged in the part-time, temporary, and unstable jobs, should be understood as a structural problem caused by a society, in which market mechanisms dominate and those with less power are being marginalized, rather than as an individual problem of not having enough motivation to work. Not to deny that there is indeed a space for improvements in the young adults' work ethics and attitudes, we however see the difficulties for young adults to find jobs fundamentally as being caused by corporations' employment strategies.

Meanwhile, it also needs to be considered as one of educational tasks, as promoting young adults' vocational and societal independence is an important outcome for school education. This however does not mean that all schools should provide universal vocational education in a sense of mastering skills. Rather, we argue that helping students to develop vocational and career awareness and attitudes through the school curriculum should be regarded as one of fundamental roles for school education to play. In addition, we propose to redefine the meaning of vocational education with an acknowledgment that vocational activities provide us concrete ways to participate in the society in which we live.

Given such a stance, in the final report, we submitted a list of political recommendations, a brief version of which follows below:

1. In order to help students think about vocational life in a connection with where one is located and how one wants to live in the society rather than to be exclusively preoccupied by mastering the job-related skills, establish and make it as a required course "Industrial Society and Humans" at all secondary schools. The course is currently offered as a requirement only at the hybrid Comprehensive High Schools that incorporate both general education curriculum and specialized vocational learning.
2. Provide learning opportunities specific to vocational education to all high school students.
3. Involve relevant stakeholders in a community, particularly labor unions,

upon planning and implementing field learning programs, such as internship and apprenticeship training.

4. Considering the learning opportunities to build vocational abilities as a basic right that should be given to all members of the society, expand the public support for the young adults, including those who are in their late twenties, to develop vocational abilities. Two approaches are recommended. First, increase the number of institutions that publicly provide vocational education and training at a reasonable cost. Community colleges of the U.S. may be a good model for this aim. Second, expand the eligibility of the Public Education and Training Benefits. Current eligibility excludes many of the young adults, especially those who have been unemployed or have been temporary workers for a long duration of the time. It is ironic that those excluded young people are the ones who most need vocational education and training opportunities.
5. Expand the “Job Café” program to inclusively support the young adults who are in their late twenties, in addition to the currently focused target of those around twenty. Expand also the services it provides to include not only employment support but also career learning and re-learning opportunities at educational institutions. Envision it to be a One-Stop Service center where diverse support menus and various kinds of information are available.
6. Develop an integrated system of accreditation in order to properly acknowledge wide range of qualifications and to give formal certification to re-learners who went back to schools in their late twenties or early thirties. That is, a certification system is needed, through which various patterns of accumulated experiences, knowledge, and skills, including those acquired through general education curriculum, vocational education programs, public or corporate vocational trainings, private job seminars or remote education programs, intermittent experiences of holding jobs, volunteering, participation in community activities, engaging with housekeeping jobs, childrearing, and caring for others, are appropriately acknowledged.
7. Establish a new law that supports the young adults’ societal independence and ensures their employment opportunities.
8. Decrease the inequalities between the working conditions of full-time and of part-time, and enhance a just and flexible employment system where workers can choose/change working pattern depending on one’s own changing life circumstances.