

International Master's Program in International Studies
National Chengchi University
國立政治大學國際研究英語碩士學位學程

**Youth unemployment in Taiwan,
Japan, and South Korea**
台灣、日本及南韓青年失業
之比較分析

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February, 2017

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Abstract

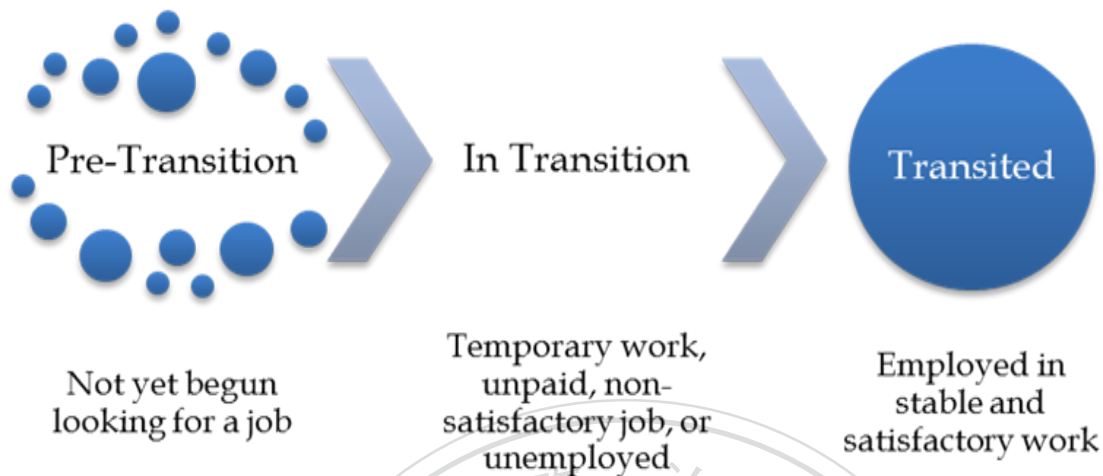
Youth unemployment in the context of the school-to-work transition is an important issue to understand given its implications for individual development, society, the economy, and the education system. While this topic has received strong attention in the North America and Europe, less research on the topic in East Asia exists. Given the sharp fall in fertility rates, rising youth unemployment, and the adverse social consequences of incomplete school-to-work transitions in East Asia, there is a need for greater analysis on the topic. This thesis sets out to investigate the context in which youth unemployment and the school-to-work transition emerged as a publicly concerned issue in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Moreover, this thesis seeks to analyze the discourses that have been put forth in public discussions and deliberations and consequently how policymakers have responded.

A qualitative method is used to provide a holistic understanding of the issue and generate more suitable solutions. In addition to analyzing the discourse, the thesis examines the results of the East Asia Social Survey (EASS), particularly the relevance of social capital to youth unemployment. Based on the findings in the discourse and the EASS data, it is found that the challenges to the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea are the intense exam culture, youth's lack of social capital, a deficit of practical experience opportunities, and the strong emphasis on rote learning in the education systems. It is thus recommended that policymakers consider alternative measurements to exam results in determining the academic future of young people as well as increasing their opportunities to gain social capital and work experience.

Chapter I. Introduction

Youth unemployment in 2015 in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea was between 69 and 208 per cent higher than the overall unemployment rate despite that this generation of Taiwanese, Japanese, and Korean is more educated than ever before (International Labour Organization, Statistics Database; The International Labour Organization & The United Nations, 2015). This represents an unsuccessful school-to-work transition, which has serious implications for the economy, society, and development. Economically, a higher youth unemployment rate represents an underutilization of the talent, energy, and innovation young people have to offer. Socially, youth who are unable to find jobs are prone to feeling frustrated and more likely to engage in antisocial behavior, including criminal activity (Chen, 2009). As for development, young people can be pivotal engines of change, but if they are unemployed or underemployed this opportunity for change is lost.

While youth unemployment is one of the more visible outcomes of a failed school-to-work transition, the concept is far more nuanced. The transition is defined by the ILO as “the passage from the end of schooling to the first entry into stable and satisfactory employment.” In order to better understand the school-to-work transition it can be conceptualized into the following three stages.

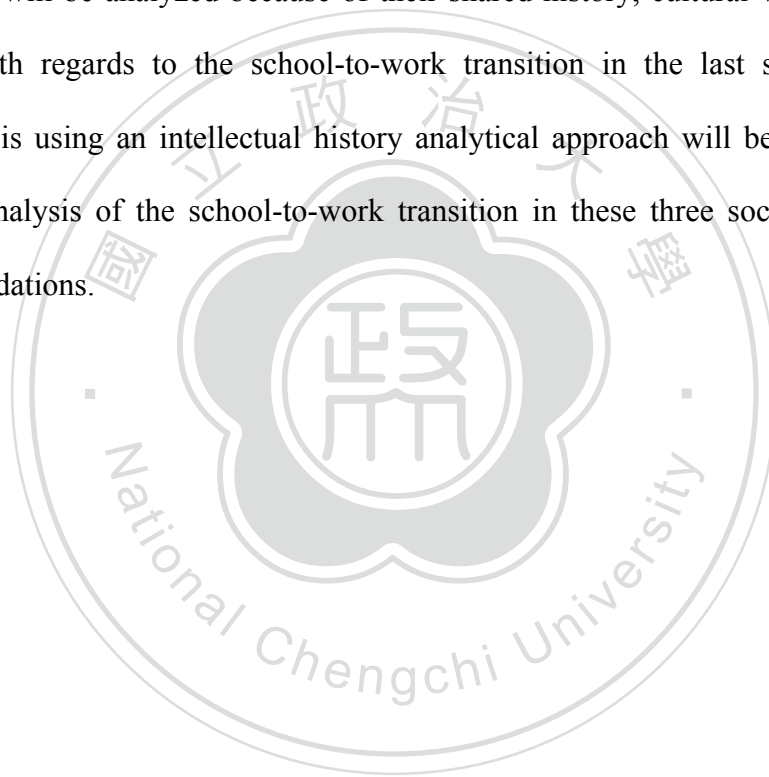


During the pre-transition stage most youth are in education where they should be learning skills and knowledge that prepares them for the labor force. As such, education systems are also an important focus of the school-to-work transition. Then at the “in transition” stage, youth are usually looking for work, at which time public employment services, career counselling, and job finding and job matching services are very important. Since many youth need income to support themselves and/or their family they often engage in work that is far less than ideal, frequently characterized by precarity and a lack of social protection. As such, youth are considered “transited” when they secure decent work, which the ILO defines in the following way:

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (2007).

So while youth unemployment is an important consequence of a poor transition and a useful barometer for measuring the state of the school-to-work transition, the discussion of the school-to-work transition is by no means limited to youth unemployment.

Although issues related to the school-to-work transition appear worldwide, the precise challenges faced and the response by society and policymakers varies greatly. The cases of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea will be analyzed because of their shared history, cultural values and dynamic developments with regards to the school-to-work transition in the last several decades. A qualitative analysis using an intellectual history analytical approach will be used to provide a comprehensive analysis of the school-to-work transition in these three societies and generate policy recommendations.



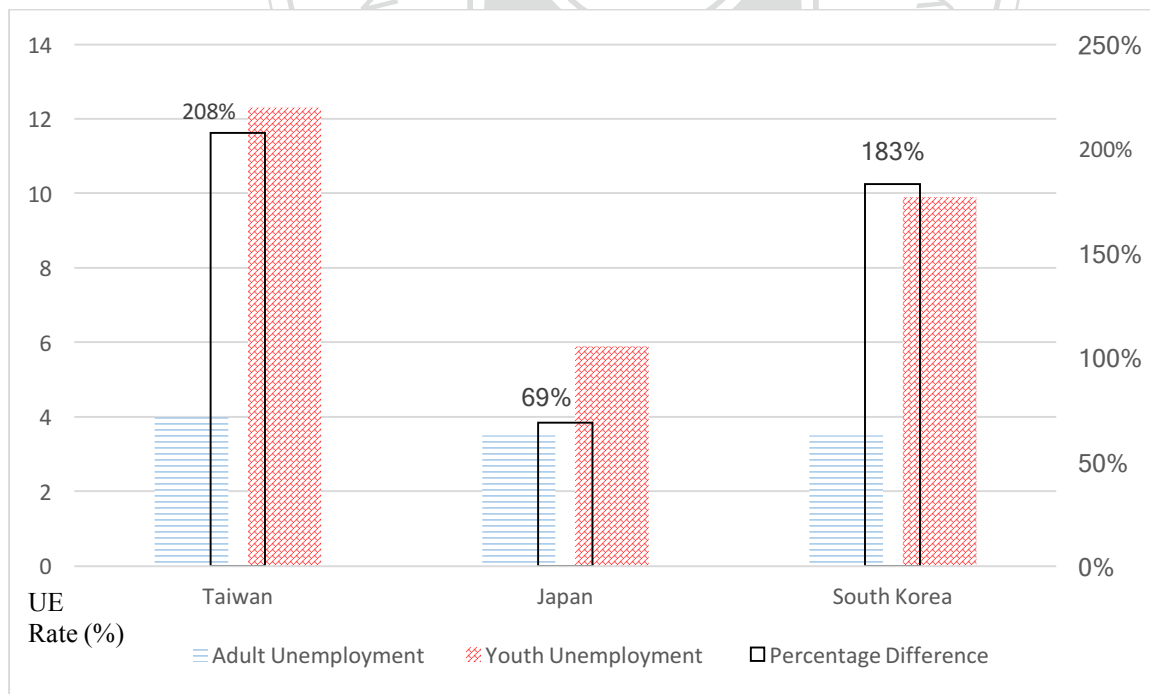
A. Research motivation

As mentioned, youth unemployment is one of the serious consequences of not addressing the school-to-work transition and useful to analyze given that it is easily quantifiable. Youth unemployment is a serious global issue and particularly acute in Asia and the Pacific due in large part to demographic dynamics. Demographics in Asia and the Pacific exacerbate the effects of youth unemployment because of the sheer size as well as specific population trends. In 2014, the youth population in Asia and the Pacific reached 717 million, corresponding to a sizable 17 per cent of the total population and 24 per cent of the working-age population (UN ESCAP Statistical Database). Failing to fully integrate such a significant group of productive, adaptable, and dynamic people could have long-lasting repercussions on a wide range of development areas. Youth therefore need to be actively engaged as equal contributors and implementers, and given the adequate resources and space to reach their full potential.

A key trend that many countries in the region face is a growing share of older people and a falling population share of working age individuals (UNDESA database). This is particularly acute in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea where the old age dependency ratio is 35, 42, and 18, some of the highest rates in the world (UNDESA, 2015; National Statistics of the ROC (Taiwan)). The old age dependency ratio refers to the number of older persons (aged over 65) relative to the working age population (age 15-64). This situation poses a number of challenges including labor market shortages, increased strain on working age individuals, and increased healthcare costs. It is therefore of increasing importance that young people are fully integrated in society and participate in the labor market as productive workers. Critical to achieving this is ensuring that young people are able to transition into productive, decent jobs in a timely manner after finishing their education.

In 2015, the youth unemployment rate was 12, 6, and 10 per cent in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, which is at least partly indicative of the challenges youth face in their transition from school to work. Still, these rates alone do not accurately characterize the situation because they must be considered within a national comparative context. While the unemployment rates in these countries may appear low at a glance, they are substantially higher than the general population. As can be seen in the figure below, the youth unemployment rate in the three countries are between 69 and 208 per cent higher than adults. As such, the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea indicate that youth face disproportionate barriers to employment because of the difficulties they experience in transiting from school to work.

Youth to adult unemployment rate comparison, 2015



Source: National government statistics databases

Solving the issue of youth unemployment is crucial to ensuring sustainable long-term growth because the experience of youth in the labor market has a contagion effect on the entire economy. The longer youth spend in transition, searching for a job or accepting employment below their skill level is not only a loss to the economy in terms of unrealized production but it is also a burden on the adult population that has to support youth during this time. Then as a result, when the parents of today's youth advance in age their financial resources are more likely to be depleted, making it difficult to take care of themselves in old age. Furthermore, unlike previous generations where older persons had a strong base of young people to support them, declining fertility rates means there will be substantially less working adults per dependent older person. The bottlenecks in the school-to-work transition clearly have implications beyond youth that cause a ripple effect.

The cases of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea are of particular interest because all three experienced rapid economic growth in the past and have many of the institutional structures commonly believed to prevent youth unemployment, including active labor market policies, public employment services, and high enrollment in education (secondary and tertiary).

B. Research questions and framework

Given the multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary nature of the school-to-work transition a holistic approach is necessary to fully understand the situation. This dissertation aims to answer the following three questions:

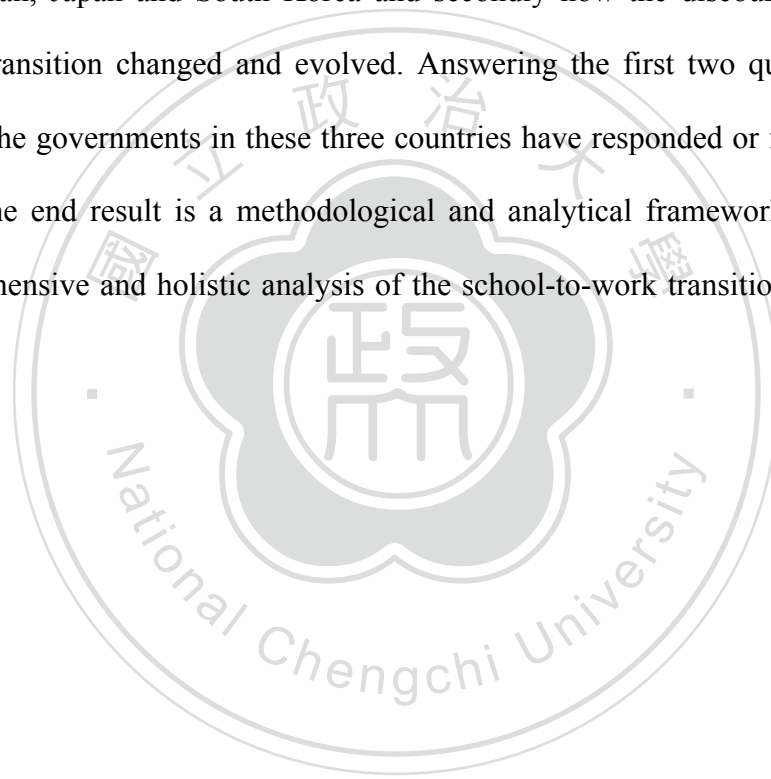
1. What are the contexts in which the school-to-work transition emerges as a publicly concerned and discussed issue in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea?
2. What are those discourses that have been put forward in the public discussion/deliberation about school-to-work transition in these countries?
3. How have policymakers responded to this discourse?

A qualitative methods approach using the analytical approach of intellectual history will be used to investigate the above research questions. While it is necessary to understand the quantitative trends relevant to the school-to-work transition, they do not provide a complete picture of the difficulties youth face and the implications for the entire society. Therefore, the bulk of the analysis of this thesis will be qualitative in nature so as to generate a nuanced in-depth understanding of all the different facets of the school-to-work transition. This will enable an examination of the topic that explores not only the economic aspect of the transition but also the equally important social aspects, including inequality and the perception of young people.

An intellectual history approach is the most suitable analytical approach to employ because of its emphasis on the importance of understanding the context in which any given phenomenon develops. Furthermore, intellectual history is a flexible framework that appeals to multi-disciplinary issues because it takes into consideration how cultural norms, traditions and historic

events influence a topic. This allows for a study of the transition that takes into consideration the political implications of a sequence of events that is highly social in nature.

Considering the comparative aim of the thesis, intellectual history allows the researcher to see over time how issues related to the school-to-work transition have evolved based on contexts that share many similarities. This approach allows for an analysis of firstly the level of (dis)similarity in the contexts of Taiwan, Japan and South Korea and secondly how the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition changed and evolved. Answering the first two questions enables an analysis of how the governments in these three countries have responded or failed to respond to the discourse. The end result is a methodological and analytical framework that allows for a uniquely comprehensive and holistic analysis of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.



C. Research method and analytical approach

This dissertation will employ intellectual history as the analytical approach and a qualitative methodology to deliver a contextualized analysis of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. Utilizing this approach will enrich the existing literature of the subject by expanding the geographic scope to East Asia and provide a vital understanding of the social, cultural and historic forces that shaped the unique situations of these societies.

i. Qualitative method

Qualitative research as a specific methodology began in the beginning of the 1900s with scholars rejecting the idea that all phenomena can be empirically measured and tested (Leavy, 2011). These scholars argued that reducing complex phenomena, such as human interactions, into numbers undermined one's analysis. In the 1980s, qualitative analysis gained more traction with the increased amount of research being conducted on identity, discourse communities, and gender (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). While quantitative analysis remains the primary methodology for research in the hard sciences, a large number of social scientists acknowledge the value of qualitative analysis. Also, scholars increasingly argue that qualitative and quantitative analysis does not need to be a strict dichotomy, rather elements of the other can be incorporated to yield a more flexible methodology.

Given that the school-to-work transition is a social phenomenon, qualitative analysis is well suited to analyze the myriad of nuances that influence a young person's employment status, education, and access to resources. Purely positivistic investigation would not be able to adequately capture the whole picture as well as qualitative research can. Moreover, quantitative analysis risks over-

simplifying the complex nature of the school-to-work transition. Using qualitative analysis on the other hand will allow this dissertation to examine the influence of history, culture, power dynamics, inequality, and human behavior on youth's journey from education into the labor market. Another reason for using a qualitative methodology is to emphasize the need for a more holistic view of youth issues to be taken by policymakers. Too often in labor economics policymakers concentrate solely on unemployment rates without taking into consideration the quality and circumstances of those who are technically employed. This is particularly true of youth who are often engaged in precarious employment that frequently does not offer social protection, stability, or acceptable working conditions.

At the same time, overlooking quantitative trends relevant to the school-to-work transition would be foolhardy as they offer another lens through which to view the subject. Longitudinal trends in the unemployment rate of youth and adults highlight how events such as economic crises affect the two groups differently. Also, a society's enrollment rates in different types of education provide a window into the changing values of the society and its government. In order to fully understand the results of these quantitative trends, it is necessary to employ qualitative analysis to understand the larger impact on society and youth's transition from school to work. Looking at the quantitative trends can also support or refute the validity of arguments made by academics, the public, and the government. In this way, quantitative data will support my qualitative analysis of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea.

Drawing on the strengths of the qualitative method approach and utilizing the lens of intellectual history, this dissertation will offer a comprehensive comparative analysis of the school-to-work

transition in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. The thesis will begin by looking at how the history of these three countries shaped the context in which issues related to the school-to-work transition arose. Then it will examine key quantitative trends of the school-to-work transition, namely trends related to unemployment, education, and public spending.

Next, the bulk of the analysis for each country chapter will focus on how the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition has been presented and contested in the public forum. Then the thesis will analyze how the government has responded to issues related to the school-to-work transition and the extent to which their actions are in line with the prevailing discourse. After the individual country chapters, an in-depth comparative analysis of the situation in all three countries will be presented. Lastly, the dissertation will include a proposal of actions the governments can take to alleviate the bottlenecks experienced by youth in their transition from school to work in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea.

ii. Intellectual history

Intellectual history and those who make use of the tradition in research employ a diverse set of methodologies and as such many scholars assert it is not possible to conceive a singular global definition of the subject (Gordon, 2009). Broadly speaking, intellectual history attempts to contextualize any given idea or phenomenon by examining the history and environment of the phenomenon in a particular setting. The history of ideas and intellectual history share many things in common and are sometimes used interchangeably but in fact, they are distinct in a number of ways.

According to the history of ideas, concepts develop with their own internal logic and can be seen as occurrences of the same phenomenon in simply different landscapes (Gordon, 2009). By contrast, intellectual historians emphasize the context in which a concept occurs and how the different forces of the specific context shape its evolution. (Gordon, 2009). Thus a central concept of intellectual history is that nothing occurs in isolation and therefore cultural norms and traditions of the specific time and place are of great importance to fully understanding any given phenomenon or idea.

The idea of intellectual history that nothing occurs in isolation is very suitable for comparative analysis, which is applicable to this dissertation because of the shared history of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Given the interwoven history of these three countries, they also influenced each other. Thus, the context that gave rise to the current issues youth experience in their transition from school to work is interconnected. As such, the intellectual history approach is a suitable choice for conducting a comparative analysis of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea.

There are a number of varieties of intellectual history with some favoring a more internal approach that is only concerned with “context” in a conceptual manner, while other intellectual historians view the actual worldly context as imperative to their analysis (Gordon, 2009). The latter will be employed in this thesis as it is more pertinent to generating outcomes, such as policy recommendations.

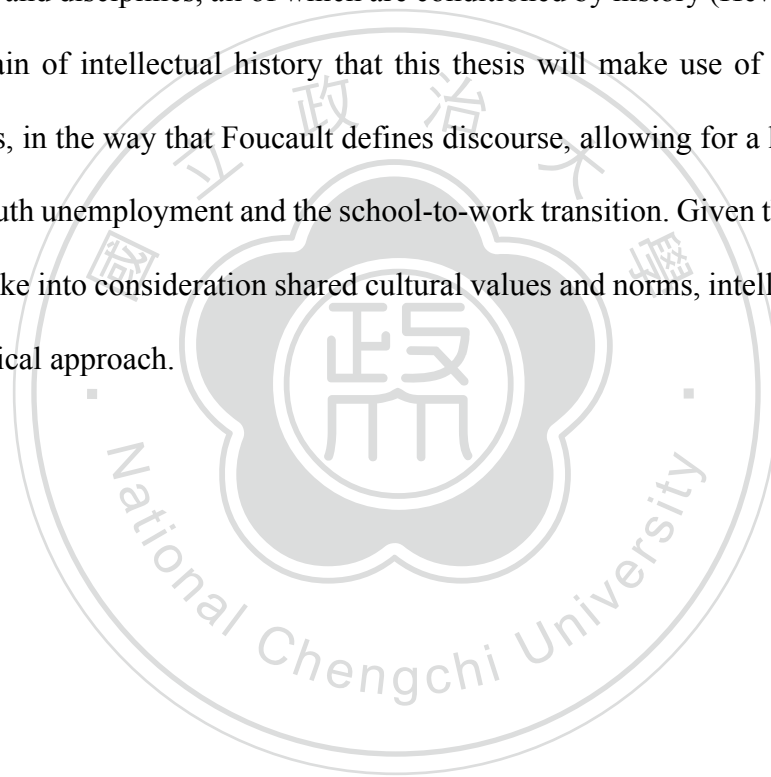
One of the great strengths of intellectual history is its usefulness to a variety of disciplines including philosophy, politics, culture studies, and sociology. The cross-disciplinary nature of intellectual history makes it particularly well suited to analyze youth unemployment and the school-to-work transition, as they are social phenomena that have political implications and are the targets of policies because of the implications on the economy, social cohesion, and quality of life. Furthermore, youth unemployment and school-to-work transition occur in practically all modern societies around the world but vary precisely because of cultural and historical differences.

Of the different disciplines intellectual historians concern themselves with, politics and political thought are frequently considered the primary focus for many scholars (Gordon, 2009). Scholars attribute this connection in large part to the history of “historical science,” which began in 19th century Germany where scholars in the field modeled themselves after the Greeks who subscribed to the ethos that history is primarily a political narrative (Gordon, 2009, p. 5). This trend is evident in the works of key scholars entrenched in the tradition of intellectual history including Friedrich Meinecke born in the mid 19th century and Quentin Skinner who remains a key figure in the field today.

Intellectual history also maintains a strong relationship with sociology, with scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu utilizing intellectual history to show how social preconditions shape policies (Gordon, 2009). Applying intellectual history to sociology allows for an analysis of how power hierarchies develop and pervade with certain groups (such as youth versus adults) at an advantage or disadvantage. Considering the importance of hierarchy in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, it makes the intellectual history approach particularly applicable to the analysis of this dissertation.

Furthermore, an age-based hierarchy is a key component of Confucian ideology, which is present in all three of the societies under study.

Discourse theory and intellectual history also share many ties, with certain academics from both fields applying elements of the other. Michael Foucault is exemplary of this with his view that any given discourse is derived from and dependent on social practices that encompass cultural norms, rituals, traditions, and disciplines, all of which are conditioned by history (Hewitt, 2009). As such, the particular strain of intellectual history that this thesis will make use of includes aspects of discourse analysis, in the way that Foucault defines discourse, allowing for a holistic approach to understanding youth unemployment and the school-to-work transition. Given the aim of this thesis to compare and take into consideration shared cultural values and norms, intellectual history is the best suited analytical approach.



Chapter II. Literature Review

A. The school-to-work transition and youth unemployment

Prior to the 18th and 19th century, unemployment was generally not recognized and few societies worldwide kept systematic records of unemployment, largely because societies were mostly agrarian and there was not an open labor market (Spicker, 2011). Although the recognition of unemployment occurred at different time periods around the world, it was generally recognized after industrialization, which fundamentally changed the labor market as individuals were less able to generate self-employment and more dependent on the peaks and troughs of industry and the economy (Spicker 2011). The great depression of the 1930s ignited a flood of analysis surrounding unemployment worldwide because of the devastating effects on society and the economy.

The study of youth unemployment naturally grew out of the study of unemployment at large, as politicians, economists and scholars began recognizing the specific problems young people face in securing employment. Many researchers focusing on youth unemployment point to the quality and relevance of education as a root cause of youth unemployment (ILO, 2012). The importance of education in determining youth labor market entry lead to the term the “school-to-work transition.”

As defined by the International Labour Organization the school-to-work transition refers to the “passage of a young person from the end of schooling to the first fixed-term or satisfactory employment (decent work)” (Matsumoto and Elder, 2010). An emphasis is placed on transitions into “decent work” because a successful transition is not simply to become employed but that the

job is productive, offers social protection, safe conditions, security, and provides adequate income.¹ The school-to-work transition and youth unemployment are complex phenomena because of the diverse experiences of youth, which are in of themselves a highly heterogeneous group.

While the school-to-work transition was primarily studied in the United States, in the 1990s and early 2000s this expanded to Europe and to a lesser extent Asia and Africa (Ryan, 2001). Evidence of difficulties in the school-to-work transition can be seen globally. In 1973, 86 per cent of French youth were employed within nine months of leaving school, while in 1992 only 19 per cent of French youth were employed within three years of leaving school (Affichard, 1981; Werquin, 1999). Outside of the Western world, youth unemployment has become a source of instability and conflict (Hoffman, 2012). In 2010-2012 the Arab Spring happened, with one of the major triggers being the high rate of youth unemployment rate, which was 23.4 percent at the time (ILO, 2011).

Within the Asia Pacific region, youth unemployment began to emerge as a relevant issue across many of the countries. Starting in the 1990s youth unemployment rates rose up to 10 times that of adults.² International comparative analysis of the experience of youth unemployment is lauded as beneficial by scholars including David Blanchflower and Richard Freeman because they extend the evidence of key issues and allow the research to explore how the factors of different contexts affect youth unemployment (2007). Comparing the experience of youth in different countries as they transition from school to work allows governments to learn from successful examples in other countries as well as avoid pitfalls others already experienced. Additionally, comparing countries

¹ <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

² ILO YouthSTATS Database, calculated by dividing adult unemployment rates over youth unemployment rates.

with similar historical and cultural contexts makes it easier to learn from their experience, as is the case in this dissertation.

Active labor market policies, public employment services, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and entrepreneurship are frequently put forth as solutions to youth unemployment and smoothing the school-to-work transition. One of the fundamental issues in the school-to-work transition that leads to youth unemployment is a skills mismatch between the knowledge obtained in school and the demands of the labor market. Survey results from 8,600 hiring managers in Asia and the Pacific found that 51 per cent of employers had difficulty finding young graduates with adequate skills as compared to the global average of 35 per cent (Manpower Group, 2013). This finding indicates a skills mismatch is a major issue connected to youth unemployment worldwide and particularly acute in the Asia Pacific region. Scholars often link the skills mismatch in the region to the emphasis on rote learning and outdated curriculums (Chapman, 2016).

TVET can be an effective means to making curriculums more relevant to labor market demands, thereby better preparing youth for employment. Enrolment in TVET institutions varies greatly across the region, with rates as high as 50 per cent in Uzbekistan to as low as 1 per cent in Lao PDR (UNESCO Database). A myriad of reasons contributes to this variation including public perception of TVET, where TVET is viewed as a less prestigious alternative to tertiary education (Choi, 2013). Political will is another factor, with some governments putting more emphasis on TVET, which results in more sophisticated programs that attract higher enrolment rates (Ibid). At

the same time, monitoring and evaluating these programs along with government regulation is important to ensuring continued relevance and thus optimum performance.

Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea share a number of historic commonalities and trends, including rapid growth and industrialization after the end of World War II. As the economies became more prosperous, the governments in the three countries sought to increase the educational access of their citizens in hopes of improving standards of living, efficiency, and economic output. These efforts were largely successful with secondary and tertiary education enrollment rates rising significantly. With higher levels of education, youth ought to be better prepared for the labor force, yet youth unemployed rates have been on the rise in the last several decades in these countries. In response, the governments in all three countries have introduced relevant legislation and programs attempting to better prepare youth for the labor force and reduce youth unemployment.

i. Taiwan

The government of Taiwan has developed several pieces of legislation aimed at promoting active labor market policies with varying success. According to the most recent “public employment services act (2006),” all ROC nationals are entitled to access public employment services, which includes labor market information, education and training opportunities, and information related to companies currently hiring (ROC Ministry of Labor). Along with PES, Taiwan also has an official policy on youth, which was most recently updated in 2007 and explicitly calls for improving the employability of youth (Youth Development Administration, Ministry of Education).

Despite these efforts, starting in 1995 youth unemployment has gone up every year (Chen, 2009). The youth unemployment rate at nearly 13 per cent is 3 times that of the overall population, causing many youth to become discouraged and give up looking for work altogether (national statistics ROC). The result is an increasing amount of youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Chen, 2009). The ROC government has attempted to solve this problem by increasing the number of universities and increasing enrollment rates, yet youth unemployment continues to persist and wages have not risen in line with the cost of living (Chuang, 1998). Trust in public employment services and their ability to help a person successfully find a job is quite low among youth in Taiwan. As a result, there is a strong reliance on social networks in finding jobs as opposed to public employment services (Yang, 2000). Although efforts have been made to ameliorate the situation of young people as they transition from school to work in Taiwan, there is still a great deal of room for improvement.

ii. Japan

Despite one of the most advanced job placement systems in the region, Japanese young are increasingly experiencing troubles with their transition school to work. Specifically, more than 40 per cent of youth in their 20s are in non-regular (temporary) work that is frequently low-paid, offers limited labor protection and skills training (Nitta, 2013). As a result, many young Japanese have a difficult time transitioning from temporary work to permanent positions as they lack the skills that would normally be provided by their employers (Ibid). Another issue particularly relevant to Japanese youth transitioning into the labor market is the fact that Japan is one of the fastest aging societies in the world. With an increasingly large share of older persons relative to young people and longer life expectancies, there are fewer employment spots for young people as

older persons fill them because they are retiring much later (Genda, 2003). At the same time, older persons often have no choice but to stay in the labor force because there are fewer working age people to support them compared to previous generations. It should be noted this phenomenon is not isolated to Japan but a pressing issue for most of East Asia including South Korea and Taiwan, albeit not identical given differences in national contexts and histories.

Japan also has one of the longest histories in the region of active labour market policies (ALMP) and as such also one of the most sophisticated systems (Kamimura, 2013). The Employment Insurance Scheme started in 1947 and includes two methods for reducing unemployment, with the focus on employers rather than employees (Ibid). First, the scheme provides subsidies to employers who keep employees during times of economic hardships and the second method is the provision of subsidies for employers that provide skills training for employees (Ibid). Starting in 2000, the Japanese government has introduced labor market policies specifically targeted at young people that address skills mismatch through public vocational training as well as job-finding support including career fairs (Ibid). Despite these efforts, a survey of more than 8,000 employers by Manpower Group found that 85% of employers in Japan had a difficult time finding young graduates with appropriate skills, indicative of a skill mismatch and a less than optimal school-to-work transition (2013).

iii. South Korea

Since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the Republic of Korea has struggled with structural youth unemployment problems, despite government attempts to improve the situation (Jeong, 2007). Following the end of the crisis in 1998, youth unemployment rates in South Korea jumped from

5.7 per cent to 12.2 per cent before the crisis and in February 2016, remained high at 12.5 per cent (KoStat – Statistics Korea database). According to scholar Insoo Jeong, several structural issues are responsible for youth unemployment in South Korea, namely slower economic growth, education supply and labor market demand mismatches, and lack of public sector vocational training (Jeong, 2007). Between 1990 and 2005 the coefficient of employment³ dropped by 50 per cent, resulting in a more rigid labor market unable to readily absorb new graduates. Labor and education mismatches include the fact that while 80 per cent of young job seekers in South Korea possess a higher education, only about 30 per cent of the jobs in the society demand such qualifications (Ibid). Furthermore, employers frequently seek experienced employees yet the country lacks solid public vocational training that could provide such experience, coupled with weak commitment by the private sector to investment in employee's human capital development (Ibid).

In response to the youth unemployment problem the government has established a “one-stop system” with 96 centers staffed by around 4,000 employees that provide a breadth of information concerning labor statistics, tertiary opportunities, TVET, and career counseling (Korea Employment Information Service, 2012). Despite comprehensive public employment services and one of the highest tertiary enrollment rates in the world, 40 per cent of students in South Korea are unable to find a job upon graduation (Choi, 2013). Such a situation indicates that what was learned in secondary and tertiary education did not adequately prepare students for the job market.

³ The number of employed workers per every one billion won of Gross Domestic Production (GDP).

B. Social capital

Preliminary research on the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea suggests that social capital as an interesting component to analyze. While by no means the primary focus of this dissertation, how social capital relates to the school-to-work transition emerges in the discourse of each country and in the comparative analysis. Considering the relative prominence of the concept in the thesis and the complex nature of social capital, a review of the literature on the subject will be provided in this section.

The concept of social capital is arguably much older than the modern term with references about the benefits of participation in associations dating back to the 19th century (Portes, 2000). It wasn't until the late 20th century that scholars such as Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam, and Loury began to define and discuss the concept in earnest (Ibid). Glen Loury alluded to the idea of social capital in his paper on racial inequality by saying, "the social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve" (Loury 1977, p. 176). Loury argued that merit alone does not determine the success of an individual, their social network, which for many is determined by their family, plays a significant role in the development of an individual's career and life. Considering the transition from school to work is one of the most pivotal points in a person's career development, social capital is logically of great importance to youth. Similarly, Mark Granovetter's paper on the positive value of cross-cutting social ties and networks references the concept of social capital without using the exact term (1973).

Bourdieu later offered the first succinct definition of social capital: "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less

institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248). The popularity of social capital as a concept and theory increased dramatically in the 1990s with a host of publications touting the positive externalities of social capital including lower unemployment, greater social cohesion, health benefits, reducing poverty, lower crime, and more (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Continuing into the 1990s and beyond multiple scholars emphasized the importance of “bridging social capital”, ties formed across different social groups (Narayan, 1999). Among the benefits, scholars believe bridging social capital provides is improved access to the labor market (Ibid).

In support of the usefulness of social capital in improving employability, studies found that successful managers spent 70 per cent more time networking and engaged in regular communication 10 per cent more than their less successful peers (Luthans, Hodgetts, & Rosenkrantz, 1988). Along the same vein, Granovetter’s research indicates that people who frequently have cross-cutting interactions possess better labor market information are more likely to be employed (1973). Considering the contagion effect a young person’s initial entry into the labor market has on his or her career, it is very important that young people build their social capital early on, including by networking and frequently interacting with people from different backgrounds.

Along the same lines, research by Ronald Burt indicates that individuals with social networks that contain high levels of heterogeneity exhibited improved labor market access (2009). Granovetter conceptualized two types of ties, weak and strong ties. Using Granovetter’s concept, people with many “strong” similarities (family ties, ethnicity, social status, religion, etc.) are bound by strong ties and thus the connection between two people from different social groups are termed “weak

ties” (1983). Weak ties are important for connecting low-resource individuals (such as youth) to high resource individuals (such as adult professionals). In general, much of the literature on social capital and employability highlights the impact of inequality in determining a person’s level of social capital. As a result, youth from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds suffer twofold, as they possess less resources than experienced adults and have restricted access to resources compared to their wealthier peers.

Social standing makes a difference in youth’s acquisition of social capital as those who come from more privileged backgrounds have more opportunities to create bonding networks as they are afforded more leisure time that allows them to engage more frequently with different groups of people such as through participation in associations and clubs (Billett, 2011, p. 213-214). Additionally, youth from higher socioeconomic standings tend to have a greater stock of bridging capital as they have more chances for community engagement and are exposed to more people from different backgrounds (Billett, 2011 p. 213-214). This literature highlights the importance of taking into consideration inequality when analyzing the school-to-work transition.

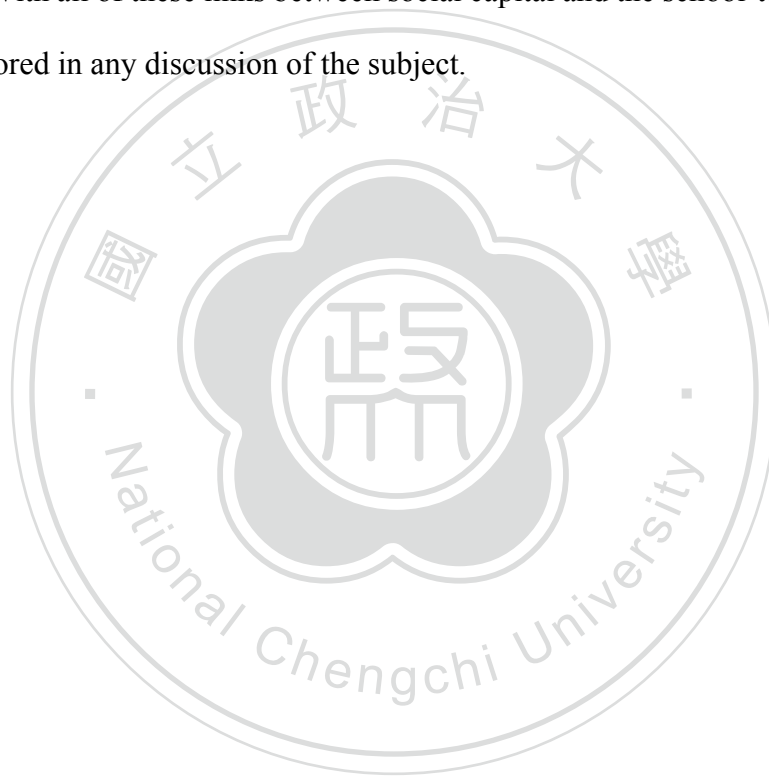
Another important concept that emerged was structural hole theory. This theory asserts that certain individuals have advantages and disadvantages that are embedded within social structures and the difference (in terms of resources) between the two individuals is termed a structural hole (Burt, 1995). This concept is particularly applicable to youth because they lack experience and connections to potential employment opportunities compared to adult professionals who have ample experience and a strong network, again reinforcing social capital’s relevance to the school-to-work transition. Similarly, social resource theory asserts that individuals have varying levels of

resources and focuses specifically on how status determines access to said resources (Lin, 1990). Kraimer, Liden, and Seibert combined weak tie theory, structural hole theory, and social resource theory to show how all three of these theories can explain how social capital can be beneficial to an individual's career (2001).

More recent studies have begun to focus specifically on how social capital can help young people make a smooth transition from school to work. These scholars assert that youth frequently have insufficient information and connections related to the labor market, which a greater stock of social capital can ameliorate, thus improving their school-to-work transition (Billett, 2011; McMurphy et al, 2013; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Larson & Sullivan, 2010). Social capital is particularly vital for youth who are making the transition from school to work because initial labor market experience can have a lifelong impact on a person's career (Luijckx, 2009). Programs that proved successful in increasing youth's social capital and employability included paid internships that incorporated guidance and mentorship (McMurphy et al, 2013). These programs coached the participants in how to build their network and use past experience to move towards larger career goals (Ibid). Larson and Sullivan's study illustrated the efficacy of improving youth's social capital by connecting them with high-resource adults in their field of interest (2010).

As cited by Reynolds, analyzing the use of social capital building programs to increase youth inclusion in the labor market is a relatively new topic that is quickly picking up popularity around the world (2007). This includes in East Asia, where traditional concepts of a strong network or "guanxi/inhwa/wa" (關係/인화/和) are considered imperative in advancing one's career (Alston, 1998). Evidence of the importance of social capital for youth's school-to-work transition in the

focus countries includes studies that cite that 60 per cent of people in Taiwan found their first job through personal connections (Yang, 2000). Similarly, a study by Kim et al in South Korea showed that university students' stock of social capital had a critical impact on their entry into the labor market (2010). Before the 21st century in Japan, institutional social capital was highly important to a young person's school-to-work transition but now those systems have broken down and individual social capital is increasingly necessary for young Japanese to enter the labor market (Brinton, 2014). With all of these links between social capital and the school-to-work transition, it should not be ignored in any discussion of the subject.



Chapter III. Taiwan

In the tradition of intellectual history, understanding context requires an examination of the history surrounding any given phenomenon. In the case of the school-to-work transition includes the education system, employment, and views on youth. The history of a country greatly influences the cultural norms and beliefs about youth's capacity and their role in society. In the case of Taiwan, its distinctive history greatly affected the education and employment systems till present day. As a result, an understanding of Taiwan's history strongly contributes to the analysis of the school-to-work transition.

A. History

Austronesians have inhabited Taiwan for more than 8,000 years but in 2014 made up only 2.3 per cent (Hill et al, 2007; The Republic of China Yearbook 2014 Executive Yuan, 2014). Migration from Mainland China to Taiwan began in 17th century and was part of the Chinese empire until it was ceded to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. Taiwan remained part of the Japanese empire until 1945, during which time Japan imposed their education system and values upon the people of Taiwan. In an effort to reduce anti-Japanese sentiment, the colonial government introduced compulsory education, which was highly successful in increasing the primary education enrollment rate and made it the second highest in Asia in 1944 (Japan being the highest) (Lamley, 1999). Following the end of World War II, control over Taiwan was given to the Republic of China in 1945. Shortly after, in 1949, the Nationalist Party in China (Kuomintang) lost the civic war and evacuated 2 million people to Taiwan, adding to the existing 6 million people (Dunbabin , 2014). As a result of these historic facts, Taiwan from after the second World War till today is a society comprised of predominantly ethnically Chinese people with elements of Japanese

culture. Another important historic factor to note is the strong political connections between Taiwan and the United States, which have also greatly influenced the society (Bush, 2003).

After the end of World War II and the retreat of the Chinese Nationalists to Taiwan, Taiwan began on a path to rapid industrialization. Multiple scholars have commented on the remarkable growth Taiwan experienced from 1950 until the late 1980s, which was based on an export driven economy and land reform policies. An important ramification for the education system was the increasing compulsory education from six to nine years in 1968. Similarly, in Europe and the United States legislation was introduced in the 20th century specifying during which ages education was compulsory, from ages 5-18 in the United States^{4,5} and until age 16 in France⁶ and the United Kingdom.⁷ For Taiwan and many other governments, the expansion of education was meant in part to help the economy deal with the increased demand for skilled labor. This in turn should have helped ease the school to work transition by making young people better prepared for the demands of the labor market. Generally both the overall labor market policies and the formation of youth employment policies in Taiwan are based on the concept a free market with limited trade conditions (Tsai, 1998). At odds with this, the transition from school to work in Taiwan is greatly influenced by high competitive, inflexible exams run by the state into a much more flexible, free market economy with minimal institutional linkage between the two (Ibid).

⁴ Varies by states

⁵ "Age range for compulsory school attendance and special education services, and policies on year-round schools and kindergarten programs".

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08_165.asp

⁶ Ordonnance of January 6, 1959.

⁷ The Education Act of 1996

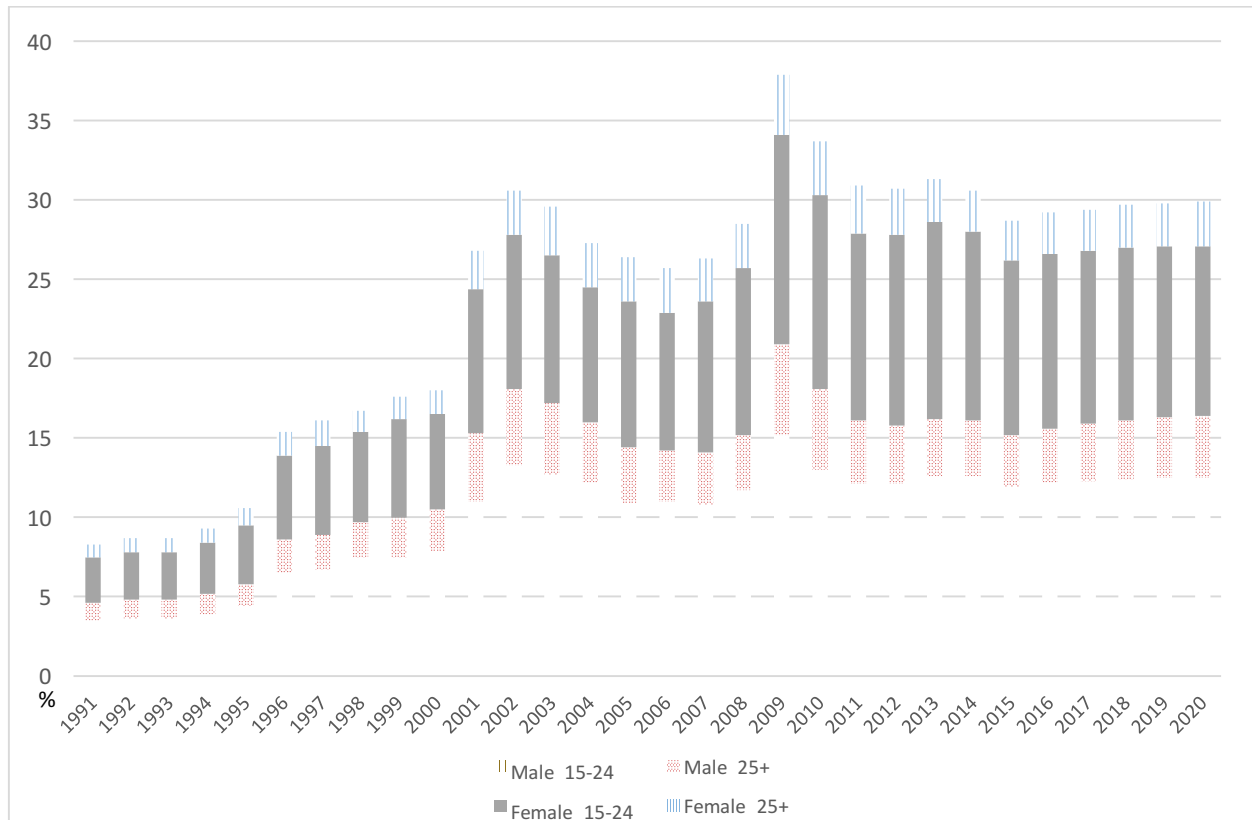
While this system contributed greatly to the Taiwan economic miracle in the past, does this system still work today? It is imperative for policymakers to constantly evaluate and revise legislation to ensure they are aligned with present conditions. Important contextual features have changed drastically from the 1960s and 70s to today, specifically, the rise of China (The People's Republic of China). A key component of Taiwan's competitive advantage in the manufacturing sector post WWII was the lack of competition because the Chinese Mainland was still not very open to international trade and lacked the capacity to manufacture a diverse range of goods before the 1990s. Similarly, many of today's manufacturing hubs in Southeast Asia, such as Viet Nam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Indonesia, were marred in civil war and unrest and thus not a threat to Taiwan's core manufacturing sector.

By contrast, today Mainland China leads the world in the manufacturing sector and many South East Asian economies have become highly competitive in the industry. At the same time, Taiwan's standard of living has risen dramatically and as a result the cost of living and wages have increased greatly, making it difficult to compete with the aforementioned countries in the race to the bottom for low production costs. This change in context needs to be taken into consideration because while the present education and employment systems were created and developed during Taiwan's rapid economic advancement after the second World War, Taiwan itself and the global economic and political situation has changed greatly. It is therefore necessary for policymakers to take into consideration this historic context when developing youth policies.

B. Trends

Based on the latest available data from the International Labour Organization, the figure below reveals some important patterns regarding youth unemployment rates (individuals age 15-24) and how they compare to the figure for the adult population (individuals age 25 and over).

Youth and adult unemployment rates in Taiwan, ILO estimates and projections



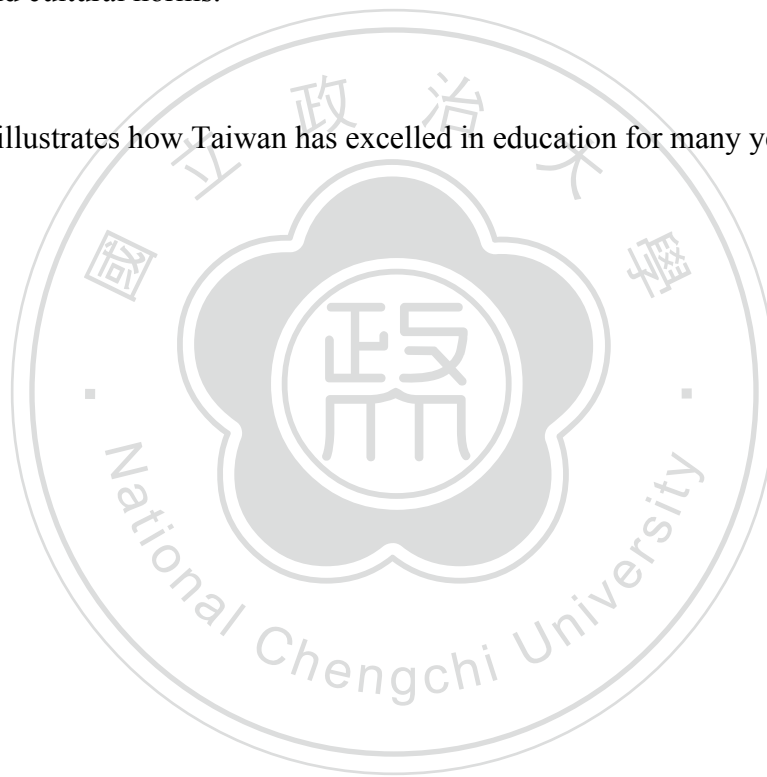
Source: The International Labour Organization Labour Statistics Database (ILOSTAT)

From 1991 into 2020 (based on projections) it is clear that youth in Taiwan have been and will continue to be at a disadvantage compared to the adult population because the youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than the adult unemployment rate. This indicates that youth unemployment has been an issue in the past as well as the present and likely into the future.

In 1991 the youth unemployment rate at 3.3 per cent was 230 per cent higher than the adult rate of

1.0 per cent.⁸ Compared to 1991, the youth unemployment rate in 2016 is 252 per cent higher.⁹ This finding indicates that the problem has not improved overtime, on the contrary it continues to worsen. Additionally, looking at the gender dimension it should be noted that while unemployment rates between males and females is not incredibly different, the rate for males is consistently higher than females for both youth and adults. This is a result of lower labor force participation among females in Taiwan, who at times do not engage in employment because of child rearing responsibilities and cultural norms.

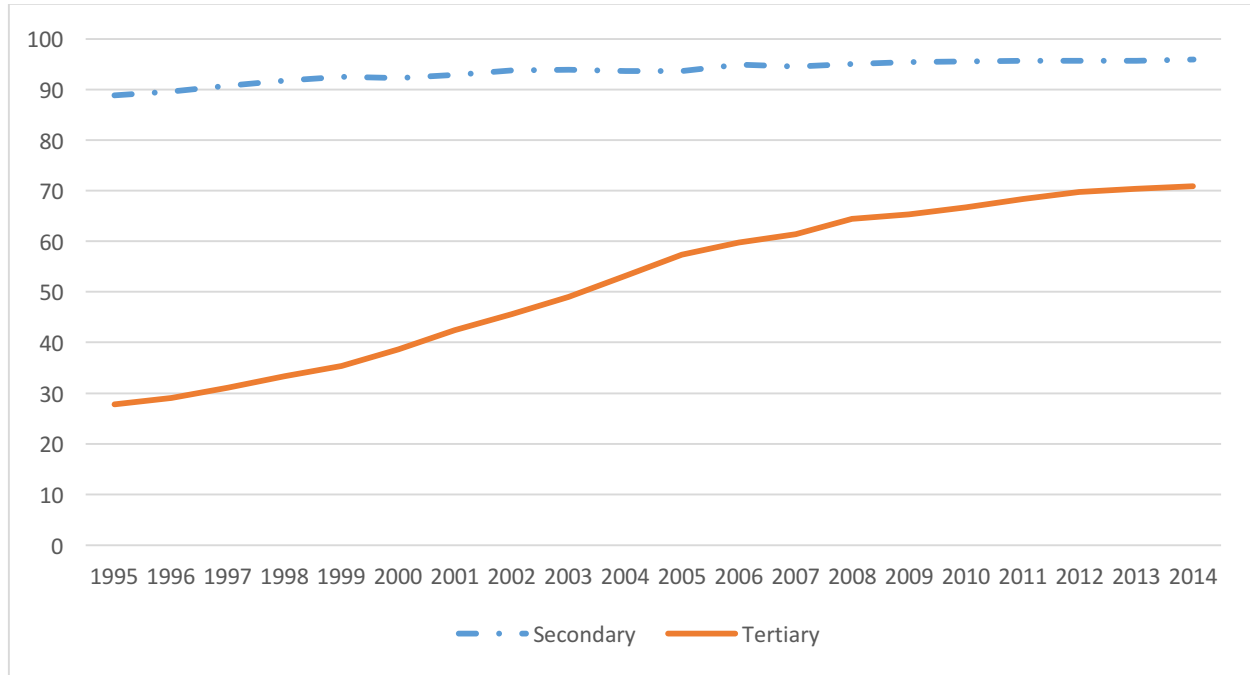
The graph below illustrates how Taiwan has excelled in education for many years and made great progress.



⁸ Calculation: Youth rate in 1991 was 3.3% and adult rate was 1.0%. Percentage increase = $(3.3 - 1.0) / 1.0 * 100 = 230$

⁹ Calculation: Youth rate in 2016 is 11.6% compared to 3.3% in 1991. Percentage increase = $(11.6 - 3.3) / 3.3 * 100 = 252$

Secondary and tertiary enrollment rates in Taiwan¹⁰



Source: The statistical yearbook of the Republic of China 2014

Not only was education in secondary school very high at 90 per cent in 1995, it has reached near universal coverage in recent years. Furthermore, enrollment in tertiary education has risen steady between 1995 and 2014, with a 155 per cent increase.¹¹ These results are indicative of the population's increasing demand for education beyond the compulsory level. Reflective of the rising demand for education, former President Ma announced in 2011 that Taiwan would implement a new 12-year compulsory education plan (《十二年國民基本教育實施計畫》) by 2014

¹⁰ Note: National data was used instead of UNESCO data (as was used in the other two countries) because of a lack of availability. Additionally, recent data on vocational secondary enrollment rates were not available for Taiwan and thus not included.

¹¹ Calculation: Rate in 1995 was 27.79 and in 2014 was 70.85 Percentage increase = $(70.85 - 27.79) / 27.79 * 100 = 155$

(Chen & Fan , 2014). This replaces the previously mentioned 1968 law instituting nine years of compulsory education.

An important area of interest is what sparks this high demand for education. Based on the youth unemployment rates, the positive increase in access to education has not resulted in better labor market access for young people. As such, it would appear the skills and knowledge obtained by increasing the years of education are not aligned to labor market demands. Furthermore, as higher education becomes more widespread, it acts more as a social marker, required to be considered for a large number of jobs, even if there are little to no practical benefits in terms of ability to complete the tasks required by the job in question.

From a government perspective, this indicates a decreasing rate of return on investment in education because increasingly more young people in Taiwan are enrolling in highly subsidized education yet they are not more prepared for the workforce. This should incentivize the government to consider how the return on their investment in education can be increased. Specifically, how to use these extra years of schooling to create a more employable youth labor force, which would then increase production and heighten economic performance.

C. Key issues in the discourse

Earnest academic discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in Taiwan began in the 1990s, once the country had made a complete transition to democracy and critical analysis of the government and its policies became easier. At this time many Taiwanese scholars had returned from education abroad and brought back with them a different perspective on society, including Hwei-lin Chuang and Shu-Ling Tsai. Chuang noted that the average amount of time a college graduate has spent looking for employment in Taiwan has been higher than that of secondary school graduates since 1979 (Chuang, 1999). This indicates that access to higher education is not a panacea to smoothing the school-to-work transition and that this has been a persistent problem spanning decades.

Tsai's paper "The Transition from School to Work in Taiwan" was one of the very first academic pieces to critically examine the subject and as a result a key piece that shaped the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in Taiwan (1998). The discourse of the paper centers around the enormous pressure placed on youth in Taiwan from a young age. In this system the demand for high quality secondary and tertiary education exceeds the supply and as a result exams are used as a mechanism to sort students based on their performance. Furthermore, the education system in Taiwan reproduces rather than corrects inequalities, in that individuals from better socioeconomic backgrounds take advantage of the better quality and cheap public education and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds either drop out of education entirely or have to pay high fees for a lower quality education.

Without access to good quality education, youth from poorer backgrounds have a more difficult time finding work and thus completing the transition from education to employment. Additionally, burdened by the loans they took to pay for private education these young people often have no choice but to accept whatever employment is available, which is more likely to be low quality and precarious. As a result of a dysfunctional system that does not benefit everyone, education abroad and emigration are increasingly popular.

In more recent discourse, Chuang asserts job search method is an influential factor in determining the initial unemployment duration of young college graduates in Taiwan (1999). Research by Hai En Yang indicates that a young person's social network has strong implications on their first employment opportunity, related in part to the importance of "Guanxi" in Chinese cultures (Yang, 2000). Supporting this, it was found that 60 per cent of people in Taiwan obtained their first job through personal contacts and 40 per cent of their current job this way as well (Ibid). Furthermore, most youth relied on "strong ties," family and close friends, to find their first job. At the same time, Yang's research showed that "weak ties," more loosely connected acquaintances, generated better employment opportunities (2000). As such, the discourse of Yang's paper emphasized the importance of young people knowing how to network and expand their social circle, essentially expanding one's stock of social capital.

A study by Chin-Chun Yi on the transition from adolescence to adulthood in Taiwan sheds some light on how certain cultural factors may act as barriers to young people building their social capital. According to Yi, East Asian values, such as filial piety and education performance as a means of bringing "family glory" and making the transition from youth to adulthood different from their

Western counterparts (2011, p. 3 – 5). As a result, most adolescents in Taiwan only have one role, which is to be an obedient, diligent, good student (Yi, 2011, p. 3- 6). It could then be postulated that this intense pressure exerted on them during their high school time could limit the amount of extracurricular activities students would be able to be involved in. Such a focused education leaves youth with little opportunities to develop their interests or learn skills outside the school curriculum, which are valuable in fostering interest, knowledge and skills for future employment. This is in line with Yi's argument that the interplay of family, school, and community influences and affects the social capital of young Taiwanese (Yi, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, the context created by these social forces diverts energy away from activities that could help from social capital that would be useful in securing employment in the future.

Chih-Jou Jay Chen asserts that social capital is important in Taiwan in securing desirable employment and earning a higher income (2009). Similar to the United States, the distribution of social capital in Taiwan is uneven with people from high socioeconomic positions tending to have access to social networks richer in resources (Chen, 2009). This information emphasizes the need for programs aimed at helping youth garner social capital to take into consideration socioeconomic differences among youth. High school and university in Taiwan were found to be pivotal times for acquiring social capital, which in turned later shaped their access to the labor market (Chen, 2009). Therefore, it is of great importance that youth in Taiwan are able to gain a good stock of social capital at this crucial juncture in their lives and providing assistance to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who likely have less social capital and a harder time gaining it.

D. Government polices and programs

The government of Taiwan recognizes the importance of empowering youth through education and employment opportunities in a variety of formal ways, with specific government departments dedicated to youth and legislation specific to youth. The main government agency responsible for youth in Taiwan is the Youth Development Administration (YDA) under the Ministry of Education. Promoting career counseling and enhancing employability, encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement, and providing diverse learning opportunities with international perspectives are the three main areas of the YDA.¹² In terms of recent legislation, the two most relevant to youth are the 2007 Youth Policy Launching and Promotion Act and the 2011 Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act. In these pieces of legislation the YDA employs highly positive rhetoric that reiterates the need to help youth reach their potential and the societal benefit of doing so. As a result, the characterization of youth's potential and the need to empower them in the policy gives the impression that the government recognizes many of the issues youth face in the school-to-work transition and actively desires to ameliorate the situation.

Adaptability, professional skills, life-long learning, and the value of an international perspective feature prominently in the discourse. Japan and Korea's youth policies are specifically referenced for justifying the need for youth sensitive legislation in Taiwan, highlighting the linkages between these three countries. In line with previous commentary in this thesis, the government acknowledges the need for youth policies, particularly education policies, to evolve and stay current as the situation and context of youth changes. Having such strong support written into a

¹² <http://www.yda.gov.tw/>

country's laws provides an important framework for changes to be made that support youth employment and their transition from school to work.

Despite the positive appearance of the policies put in place by the government they do not effectively tackle many of the issues featured in the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition. While a broad-based framework that supports large concepts such as youth empowerment and adaptability are important, there is clearly a need for more targeted policies that deal with the actions to achieve these large goals. Issues that the current legislation does not address include the perpetuation of inequality that the education system engenders and the high-pressure environment of young people to succeed in exams. Connected to the pressure to succeed in exams is the lack of opportunities for young people to build their social capital because they have no time for activities that do not improve their marks on exams. These are key issues that the government does not actively and effectively engage with, indicating a disconnect between the government and academic and public discourse.

At the intersection of academic literature and government policy, Yu-Wen Chen's paper "Once a NEET always a NEET? Experiences of employment and unemployment among youth in a job training program in Taiwan" explores the effectiveness of a government policy aimed specifically at helping some of Taiwan's most disadvantaged youth smoothly transition from school to work (2011). The discourse describes what is often referred to as a vicious cycle, wherein certain circumstances, such as coming from an economically disadvantaged background, increases a young person's propensity to be (chronically) unemployed. Poor academic performance forced interviewees out of mainstream education, which then made it difficult to acquire decent work. A

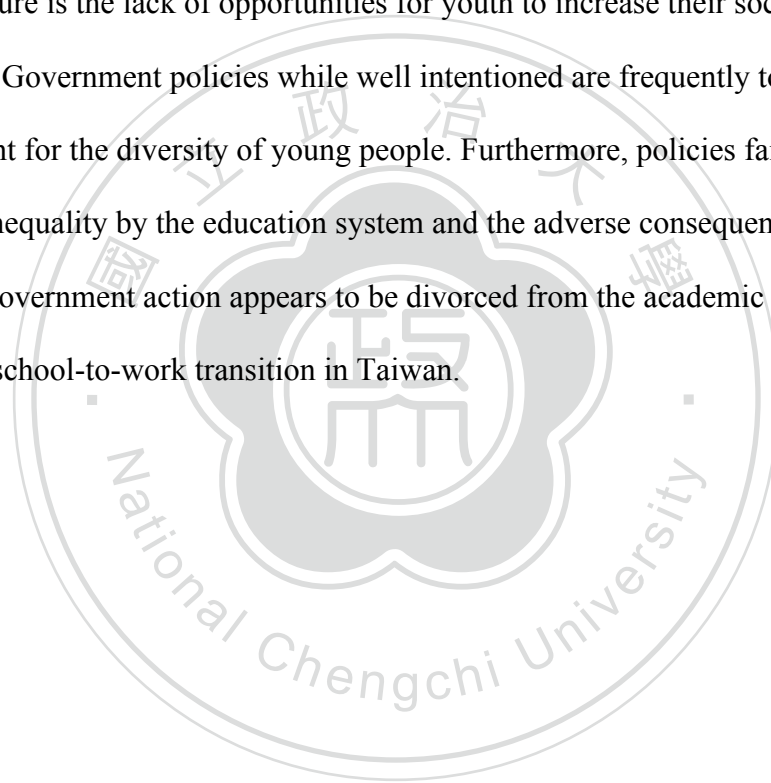
job training program as a result was one of the few remaining viable options. Chen emphasizes the incorrect assumption of the public that NEET (young people not in education, employment or training) are lazy individuals unmotivated to work and rather through her interviews found that these young people greatly preferred work to school and derived value from involvement in employment.

An important take away from Chen's discussion on NEET in Taiwan is that youth are highly heterogeneous and a one-size-fits-all approach inadequately addresses the problem of youth unemployment. Furthermore, it is difficult for young people to assert their desire for a non-traditional transition from school to work because of the emphasis on higher learning in Taiwan influenced by Confucian ideology. Findings in the paper reinforce the need to better understand the diverse experiences of young people as they attempt to make the school-to-work transition and how alternative approaches, such as job training programs, can accomplish this.

The government needs to realize the change in context that has occurred between KMT's arrival in Taiwan and today. Previously it was sufficient to simply increase the general population's level of education in order to improve their capacity to operate in the labor market. Today the system is more complex and nuanced and requires a focus on continuously updating curriculums, a shift toward a more holistic approach to education, inclusivity, and providing ample opportunities to gain real-life experience and build social capital.

Summary

In the historic context, Mainland China, Japan, and the United States have greatly influenced different aspects related to the school-to-work transition. Among these is the inheritance of a strong exam culture that academic discourse indicates to be a major bottle neck in the transition in Taiwan. Quantitative trends reveal that although access to higher education has increased greatly in recent decades, youth unemployment remains an issue. Linked to the aforementioned intense exam culture is the lack of opportunities for youth to increase their social capital and gain work experience. Government policies while well intentioned are frequently too broad in nature and do not account for the diversity of young people. Furthermore, policies fail to address the reproduction of inequality by the education system and the adverse consequences of the exam culture. Overall government action appears to be divorced from the academic discourse pertaining to the school-to-work transition in Taiwan.



Chapter IV. South Korea

As is the case with Taiwan, an intellectual history perspective benefits the analysis of the school-to-work in South Korea transition given its unique history, including its rapid development and industrialization. Furthermore, through the lens of intellectual history the shared connection between Taiwan and South Korea becomes clearer and consequently so does the choice to compare them.

A. History

Humans have inhabited the Korean peninsula since approximately 100,000 BCE and today the peninsula is split into two sovereign nations, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic people's Republic of Korea (North Korea) (Li, 2002). Starting in 1871 Japan began to exert force over the peninsula, compelling China (The Qing Empire) to abandon the tributary system with Korea. By the year 1910 Korea became annexed by Japan until 1945 when Japan lost World War II. As a result of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union the peninsula was split at the 38th parallel with the Soviet Union backing the North and the United States backing the South. War broke out in 1950 with the North invading the South and ended in 1953 with the Korean Armistice Agreement. Present day South Korea maintains strong political and military relationships with the United States in an on going conflict with the North. As a result of this unique history many aspects of the South Korean government and education system have been influenced by Japan and the United States, similar to Taiwan.

One of the biggest recent events in South Korea's history that impacted the school-to-work transition was the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. The Financial Crisis in South Korea was spurred

by a variety of factors, largely motivated by the desire to expand and compete in the global arena. A significant consequence of the Crisis was an IMF bailout of \$US57 billion, which increased the speed of change in the labor market and employment structure. During these years both overall and youth unemployment spiked to its highest levels in the country's history, with youth affected particularly adversely (Chang, 2002). Scholars argue that the protracted high levels of youth unemployment experienced in the new millennium are to an extent a result of the Crisis and the IMF bailout package (Chang, 2002).

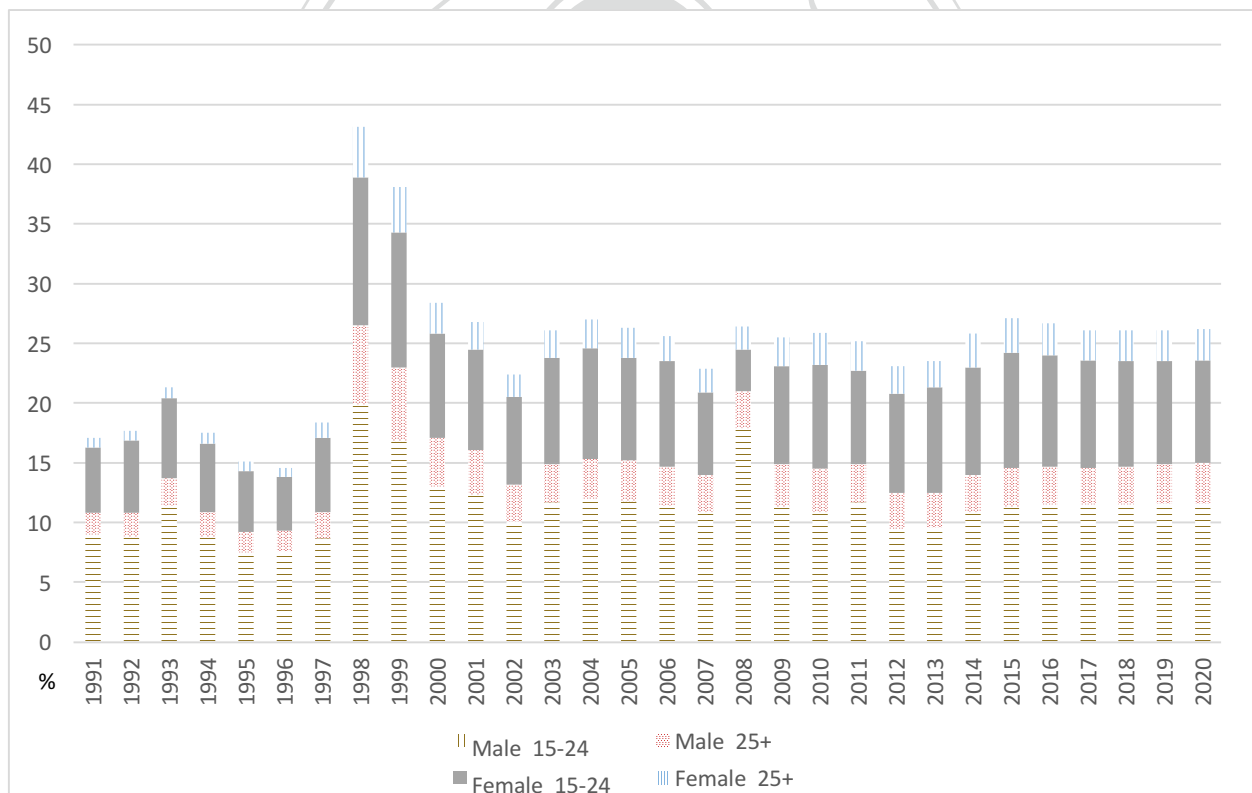


B. Trends

Along with history, an important means of contextualizing a given problem or phenomenon is analyzing patterns in quantitative data over time. The following section looks at key indicators in the school-to-work transition, namely unemployment rates, enrollment rates and public spending on education.

The figure below shows the unemployment rate trends among both the youth (age 15-24) and adult (over age 25) population, disaggregated by sex.

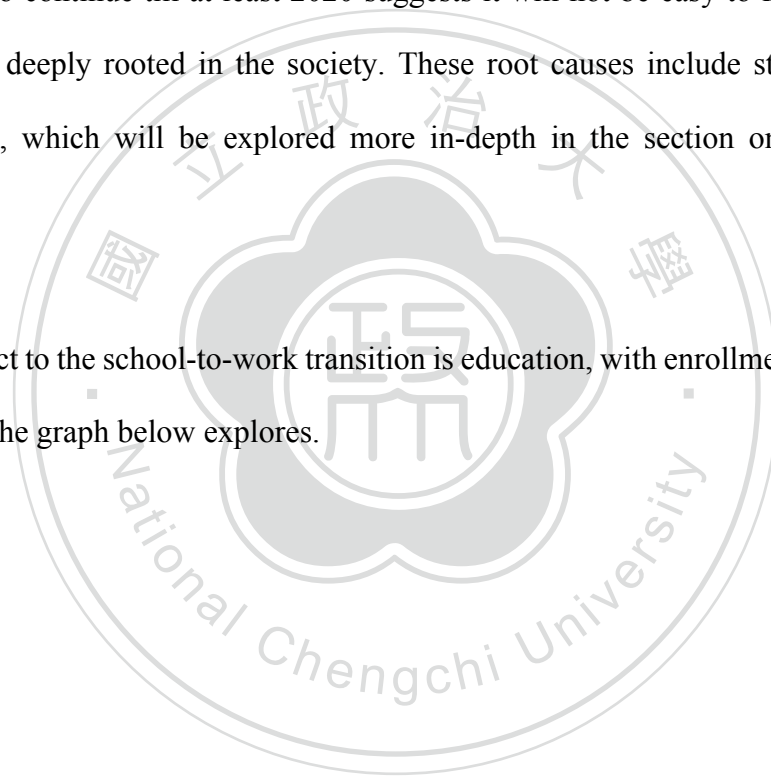
Youth and adult unemployment rates in South Korea, ILO estimates and projections



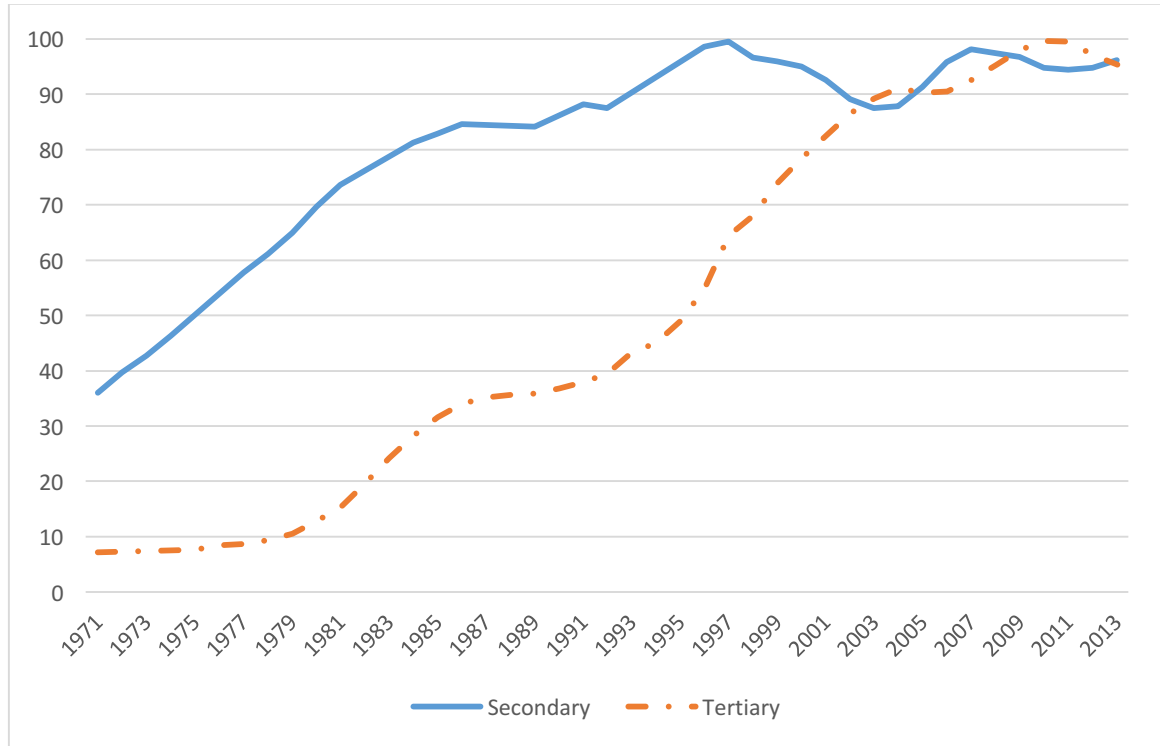
Source: The International Labour Organization Labour Statistics Database (ILOSTAT)

Looking at the data, the strong impact of the Asian Financial Crisis can be observed from 1998 to 1999 when rates were highest for all groups. From 1991 into 2020 the trend is clearly that of one where a much greater share of youth is unemployed compared to the adult population and where young women are consistency less represented in the labor market. Moreover, while the data reveals peaks and troughs it does not indicate any specific overarching trend other than youth consistently being disadvantaged. The fact that this problem has existed for more than 25 years and is projected to continue till at least 2020 suggests it will not be easy to fix because the core causes are likely deeply rooted in the society. These root causes include structural issues and cultural elements, which will be explored more in-depth in the section on *key issues in the discourse*.

Another key aspect to the school-to-work transition is education, with enrollment rates being a key indicator, which the graph below explores.



Secondary and tertiary enrollment rates in South Korea¹³



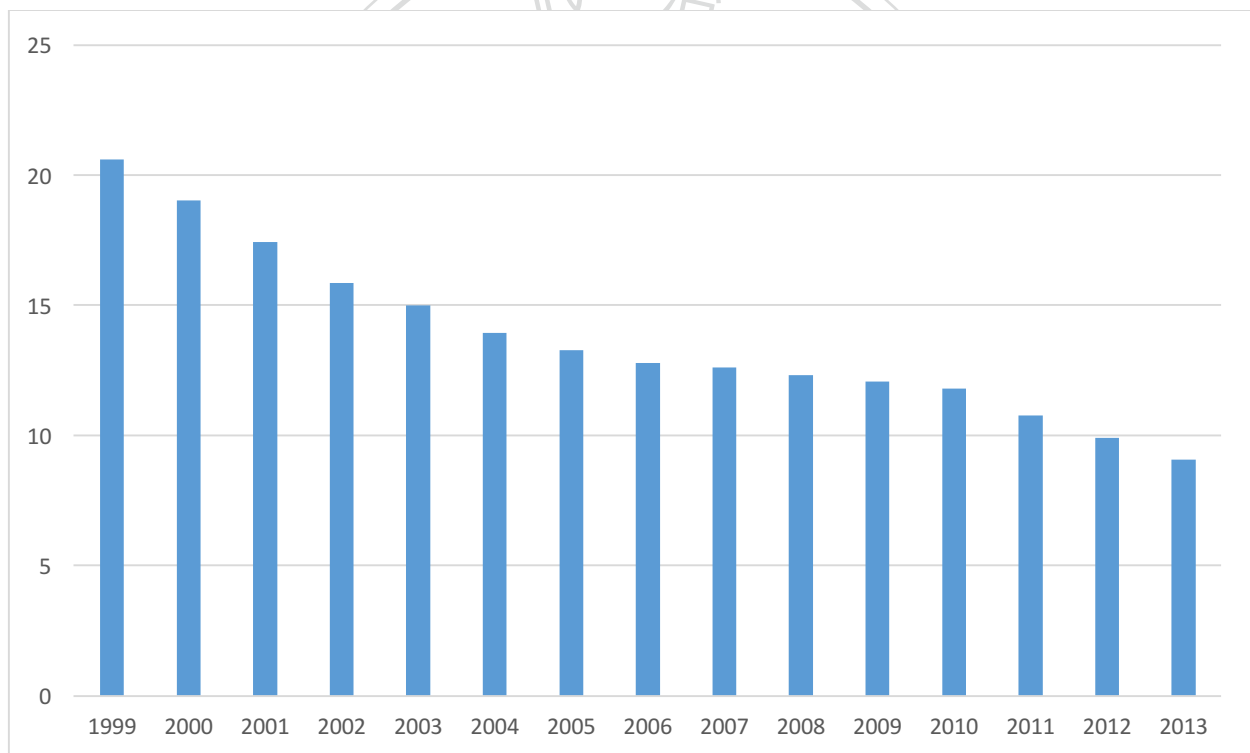
Source: UNESCO Education Database

The data shows the dramatic rise in education participation at both the secondary and tertiary level in South Korea over the last few decades. Enrollment in tertiary education is particularly significant, going from less than 10 per cent in 1971 to nearly 100 per cent in 2013. Interesting to note in the secondary enrollment rates is the dip following the financial crisis, illustrating just how hard the crisis affected youth. Considering that in present day South Korea enrollment in secondary school and university is more or less universal, the key focus should be improving the quality and relevance of education.

¹³ Note: Secondary vocational enrollment rates were not graphed together as they are in the next chapter on Japan because data was only available from 1999 to 2013 for South Korea.

Looking at enrollment rates in vocational secondary education in South Korea (in the graph below) over the last 14 years the opposite trend can be observed with a decline of 57 per cent from 1999 to 2013. This trend reflects the negative attitude many Koreans hold towards vocational education. Considering a key concept behind vocational education is teaching students skills and knowledge that are more applicable to the labor force, these results are telling of priorities in the Korean society. That is, people would prefer an education that is considered prestigious over a more applicable, practical education.

Vocational secondary enrollment rates in South Korea

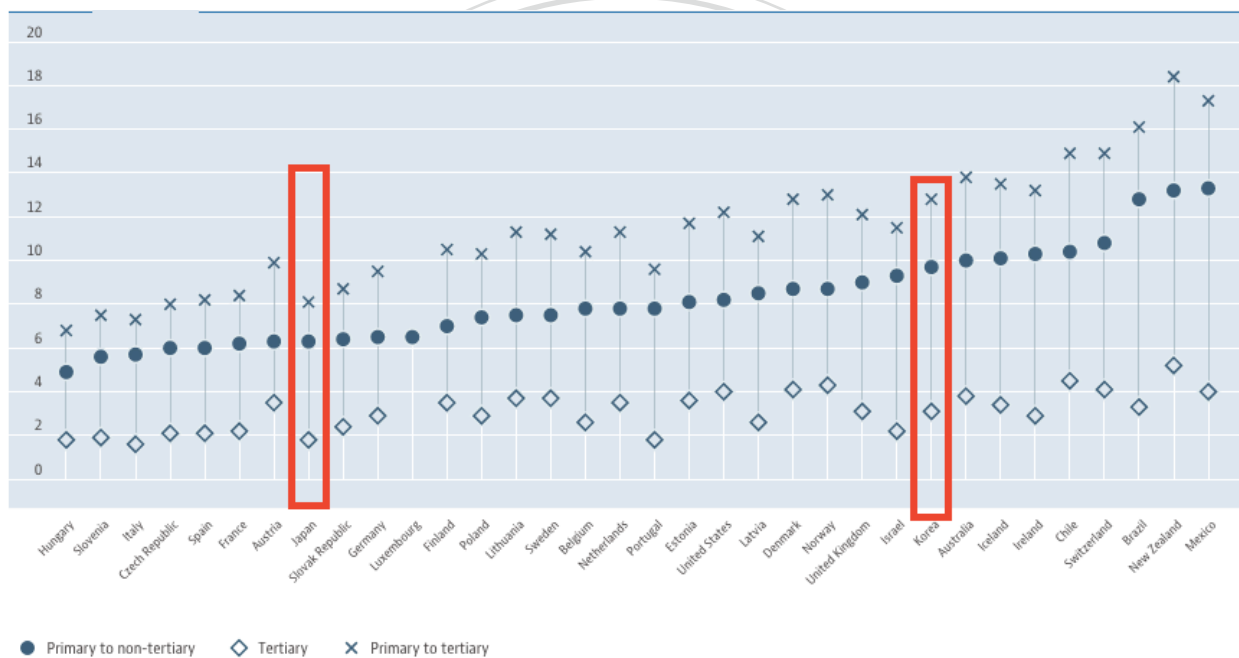


Source: UNESCO Education Database

One measure of political will and commitment to education is public spending on education. According to UNDP, countries with a very high human development on average spend 5.3 per cent of their GDP on education compared to 4.6 per cent in countries with high human

development and 5 per cent in South Korea (Expenditure on education, Public (% of GDP)).¹⁴ This would thus indicate that public spending in South Korea is somewhere between the average of countries with very high and high levels of human development, which speaks positively of the government’s commitment to education. The figure below displays South Korea’s public spending on education as a percentage of total public spending relative to other OECD countries.

Spending on education (as a % of public spending) in the OECD countries, 2013



Source: OECD

With 12.8 per cent of the Korean government’s budget being spent on primary through tertiary education in 2013, it is in the upper quartile among OECD countries and is also substantially higher than Japan’s figure of 8.1 per cent. In Taiwan, public spending on all levels of education as a

¹⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/expenditure-education-public-gdp>

percentage of total public spending was 25.10 per cent in 2009¹⁵, compared to 15.3 and 8.9 per cent in South Korean and Japan¹⁶, respectively, for the same year. While level of public spending on education reflects the government's commitment to education to an extent, it does not indicate how exactly the money is spent.

To illustrate this point, the government of Thailand spent 23 per cent of their budget on education in 2011 yet in some countries that spent a considerably smaller portion of the budget on education, such as Germany at 11 per cent, consistently outpace Thailand in terms of education quality and youth preparedness for the labor market (World Bank database, 2011). Adequate funding is a necessary but not inherently sufficient requirement for a good education system. Along with providing education ministries enough funds, the distribution of education spending is critical to success. This includes ensuring enough money is allocated to teacher training, facilities and curriculum updates, schools that serve lower income groups, and alternative forms of learning and training.

¹⁵ Most recent year available. Source: Taiwan Ministry of education 《公部門教育經費占政府歲出比率》

¹⁶ Source: Education at a Glance 2012 OECD indicators: Table B4.3. Total public expenditure on education

C. Key issues in the discourse

South Korea's rise to success is an undeniably remarkable feat but for the nation to continue to expand and increase productivity, the society needs to better integrate youth into the labor force. Based on the existing body of literature and dialogue surrounding the school-to-work transition in South Korea, the discussion will be grouped in the following four thematic areas:

1. Structural issues in the education system
2. Cultural elements
3. Social networks and social capital
4. Lack of multi-stakeholder ownership

As is frequently the case in the school-to-work transition, structural issues in the education system are frequently cited by scholars as sources of impediments in Korean youth's transition to the labor market. Specifically, discourse on the subject points to issues of relevance, continuity, the national qualifications framework and the structure of technical vocational education and training (TVET). Studies recommend increasing linkages between education and industry and improving the flexibility of trainings so that they better match the needs and interests of students in South Korea (Jung, 2004).

The Korean Government has tried to promote curriculums in education (particularly TVET) that are aimed at being more sensitive to the needs of the labor market, which often initially prove successful but are not frequently updated to keep pace with changing trends (Kim, 2010). Therefore, the issue is not only the creation of curriculums that take into account the labor market demands of that moment but also the importance of systematically updating course content to reflect ongoing changes. This is particularly relevant in the age of Information Communications

Technologies where technological change is rapid, which can cause changes in employment structure. ICT is a major industry in South Korea, producing 463 trillion won in 2014, amounting to approximately 29 per cent of the GDP and is expected to continue to grow in coming years and thus an important source of employment (Korea Information Society Development Institute, 2014).

Another related issue is the lack of continuity between high school and university studies and between higher education and the work place. The skills learned in university do not build upon the skills learned in high school as a large amount of the time in high school is devoted to preparing for national exams to get into university. Considering the high rates of enrollment in higher education it would benefit the society if what was learned in high school and was then further developed in university, particularly with regard to knowledge and training that can be used in the labor market.

Furthermore, studies in South Korea show that many youth found that their major in university does not ultimately match with their employment once they successfully enter into the labor market (a considerable amount of time in many cases). According to the Korean National Statistics Office, 4.1, 16.3 and 20.6 per cent of graduates from vocational high school, two-year colleges and four-year colleges (respectively) found their major to be very relevant to their employment. That means in the vast majority of cases, youth's major while in education was not very relevant to their work.

Related to the major of study in university, there has been a major shift over the last few decades. According to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, in 1981 62 per cent of university students were in the science and engineering compared to only 8 per cent in humanities and social

science. These numbers became 45 and 30 per cent for engineering and science compared to humanities and social sciences in the year 2000. Statistics in 2009 showed that less than 45 per cent of college graduates from the humanities field found jobs related to their major versus nearly 90 per cent for students that studied medicine (Ministry of Education/KEDI).

Naturally humanities and social sciences are less technical than science or engineering, which is not intrinsically a problem. At the same time, it means that the curriculums for humanities and social science majors need to include a stronger focus on knowledge and skills applicable to the labor market. This can also be coupled with career counseling to introduce to students the different careers these majors could potentially lead to and subsequently help them identify the right major and courses for a desired career.

While South Korea does possess a national qualifications framework, a great deal of the discourse surrounding the school to work transition in South Korea and TVET point to the need for a better structured framework that is well recognized by employers. A joint study between South Korea and Australia found several useful lessons in Australia that could be applied to the Korean context to improve the school-to-work transition, including refining the national qualifications framework, which would add legitimacy to short and long-term TVET courses (Dawe, Hong, et al, 2004). The OECD recommends that the Korean Government involve important stakeholders in the development process, including industry experts, employers, teachers and community members (Kis & Park, 2012). A well recognized qualifications framework would allow employers to better understand the qualifications of young graduates and would add value to the graduates' education and training.

Aside from qualifications framework, South Korea's TVET suffers from poor perception, with many people viewing it as an inferior alternative to traditional education. The end result is vocational students are on average from more socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, demonstrate lower self-efficacy and are less likely to enroll in and complete university (Kwon, 2014). The demographics of vocational schools should act as an alarm to policymakers, indicating the need to ensure the track a student chooses in high school is based on the student's interests and aptitude not wealth.

Studies in South Korea showed that pursuing the vocational education track in high school presented short-term disadvantages in continuing on to higher education but minimal difference in experience in initial employment after completing their education (Kwon, 2014). Specifically, it was found that vocational track students were 20 per cent less likely to enroll in higher education than students in general high school, with only 25 per cent of vocational track graduates pursuing a four-year university education (Kwon, 2014). These findings indicate that young people who take the vocational track in high school are at a disadvantage when it comes to pursuing a higher education. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust curriculums in vocational schools so that all students have similar opportunities to participate in higher education regardless of the track they enroll in during high school. Also, since students graduating from the vocational track did not demonstrate better experiences in the labor market, it calls into question the efficacy of the vocational education system as a whole in South Korea.

OECD indicates that being “overeducated” is a major challenge for youth in South Korea’s school-to-work transition, more so than six European countries that South Korea was compared to (Kis and Park, 2012).¹⁷ Overeducated in this sense means that young people have more education than is necessary to perform the job they pursue after finishing school. This phenomenon has a tangible impact on Korean youth’s entry into the labor market with over educated junior college graduates earning 10 per cent less than well matched classmates (Kis and Park, 2012). While Korean people’s Confucian emphasis on education has contributed to their rapid economic advancement, it is also a source of over-education. Even when pursuing further education does not provide a real increase in wages or productivity, youth in South Korea may be motivated by the higher social status attributed to people with an advanced education.

At the same time, “culture does not work in isolation from other social influences, once we place culture in adequate company, it can greatly help to illuminate our understanding of the world” (Sen, 2004 p.50). In the past, pursuing higher levels of education did provide clear benefits to students and their families, thus they rationally continue to pursue higher education when given the opportunity. Therefore, correcting the problem of being “overeducated” should concentrate on improving the quality and relevance of education so it can add value to the productivity of graduates, rather than trying to go against cultural norms and dissuade individuals from pursuing further education.

Another issue related to cultural values and norms in South Korea is the “hobong (호봉)” system, which provides wage increases on the basis of age rather than productivity (Australian East Asian

¹⁷ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain and Switzerland

Analytical Unit, 1999). Addressing this challenge requires both providing more opportunities for lifelong learning, so that older workers are in fact more productive and shifting to a hybrid system that takes into consideration both a worker's age and productivity in determining wage.

High private tutoring spending, severe competition for college entrance exam and mechanical learning form a vicious self-reinforcing cycle in South Korea. All three problems are related to the intense exam culture that is a result of cultural heritage, Confucianism and Japanese colonialism, and institutional structure of credentialism (Jang & Kim, 2004). Pressure to succeed in national exams supports the private tutoring industry and emphasizes the importance of rote learning. The result is an education culture that lends itself to inflexibility and discourages teaching content that will not be covered by national exams.

In response, many students in South Korea feel high school does not adequately prepare them for further education or the workplace, rather it only prepares them for the entrance exam (Jang & Kim, 2004). Specifically, it was found that Korean high school students have difficulty in creative problem solving and self-directed learning and that the emphasis on exams fosters a one-size-fits-all model of education that does not take into account the diverse needs of different kinds of students. Furthermore, students increasingly desire a different kind of education that includes more extracurricular activities, training, career guidance and different approaches to learning (Jang & Kim, 2004).

Research indicates that reliance on informal channels, such as social networks, for both finding information about and actually securing employment is increasingly high among youth in South

Korea (Chang, 2002). Several forces propel this trend, including changes in employment structures, the lack of available labor market information and the absence of job preparation in school. Previous generations in South Korea often enjoyed life-time employment by one employer and thus there was not a strong incentive to hire quickly, on the contrary the process was slower and thorough. Today the demand for labor changes quickly and employers need to be able to react and fill vacancies within a small amount of time. Drawing on social networks to find employees is far faster than formal recruitment channels and thus favored by many employers (Chang, 2002).

Even though the Korean government does provide Public Employment Services (PES), 66 per cent of university graduates reported not receiving any employment preparation in school and are thus unaware of these services (Chang, 2002). As a result, youth often do not have access to reliable, up-to-date labor market information and thus turn to their social network to find employment opportunities. Given this strong reliance on social networks, a young person's stock of social capital is an important factor to consider.

Research in South Korea indicates that social capital is an important factor in how Korean students select their job, which in turn affects their entry into the labor market (Cho et al, 2014). Another finding is that online social networks are an important avenue for Korean youth to build their social capital (Ibid). As such social capital building programs should be introduced along with an online component.

The lack of social capital among youth can also be considered to be a structural issue because there are not enough programs dedicated to helping youth build their social capital. Furthermore, this

structural issue may have its roots in the previously discussed cultural related elements. Similar to Taiwan, South Korea has an intense exam culture that places enormous pressure on youth, where intelligence and success are measured by scores on national exams. The National Statistics Office reported that 10.1 per cent of students considered suicide, with the main reason being poor test results (Kyunghee & Kang, 2014).

With such high levels of pressure to succeed in exams students spend the majority of their time focusing on exam preparation, which in turn leaves minimal amount of time for extracurricular activities that could build a young person's social capital. Moreover, any society that is so focused on exams is more likely to overlook other aspects of a young person's development, such as communication and social skills that in turn impairs their ability to garner social capital.

Several reports on the school-to-work transition in South Korea point to the need for greater involvement by parents, teachers, administrators and local government (Chang, 2002; Jung et al, 2004; Kis & Park 2012). This cooperation should also include an institutional framework for mutual cooperation of the aforementioned stakeholders along with civic groups and labor unions (Chang, 2002). This illustrates the need for all relevant parties to come together to form a supportive ecosystem that recognizes that the school-to-work transition is an important issue that affects the whole society and as a result needs adequate support. Increased cooperation and communication will help make education more relevant to labor market demands and enable more effective legislation to be drafted.

D. Government policies and programs

Since the beginning of industrialization in the 1960s the Government of the Republic of Korea has introduced numerous legislation related to youth and the school-to-work transition. The most recent youth policy was enacted in 2008 and is entitled “The Youth Law” (체육 관 청소년기본). While this piece of legislation covers a comprehensive set of issues related to youth’s protection and the right to civic participation it contains minimal reference to education, employment or the school-to-work transition. More relevant legislation is found under the Ministry of Employment and Labour, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy, which are also in charge of the country’s TVET policies. The Vocational Training Act was instituted in January 1967 and sets the legal framework for the provision of TVET.

Most recently in May 2005 the Ministry of Labor created “VISION 2020: Vocational Education for All,” a guideline for reforming many aspects of the current TVET system. The document addresses many issues identified in the academic discourse including the need for closer cooperation between industry and education, systematic updating of labor market information and encouraging workers to take part in training (at their own expense during paid leave). While this legislation focuses on a number of important issues, it fails to address several critical issues prominent in the academic discourse including the overall decline in vocational education, the lack of continuity between high school, junior college, university and the work place and the need to improve youth’s stock of social capital. In this regard, this particular piece of legislation is in line with the discourse in multiple areas but in other areas could still benefit from stronger linkage to the prevailing discourse on the subject.

Another important area of youth legislation is the national qualifications framework, amended as “The Framework Act on Qualifications” in 1997. This framework recognizes a variety of courses offered by public TVET institutions and is comprised of 5 levels, 27 fields, and 180 job categories, generating a total of 556 qualifications. As of 2013, 91 private qualifications are recognized so as to expand the scope beyond publicly funded programs. The qualifications framework developed by the Korean government is clearly extensive, making coverage of a diverse range of skills not a problem.

In regards to the aforementioned legislation on a national qualifications framework, government action is clearly well aligned with historic academic discourse that advocated for a strong qualifications framework. As discussed in the section on *key issues in the discourse*, the issue is that the private sector and potential employers are not adequately incorporated into the consultation of the development of this framework. As a result, even though the government does offer an extensive list of national qualifications it remains ineffective because employers do not recognize the significance of these qualifications. Considering the responsiveness of the government to the previous discourse that helped create the existing national framework, it is plausible that the Korean government will take into consideration the recent discourse on incorporating the private sector and employers into the development of future national qualifications.

In recent years, youth unemployment is increasingly in the headlines of South Korean media with President Park Geun Hye promising greater job creation for youth. To her credit she has spent approximately 2 trillion won (\$US 1.7 billion) a year on programs that facilitate youth employment (Kim, 2016). Unfortunately, only 26.4 per cent of participants in such programs were able to secure

employment, 75 per cent of which were temporary or contract positions (Korea Employment Information Service, 2016). In response to these problems the government promised to direct 17 trillion won (\$US 14.5 billion) towards increasing the number of programs focused on solving youth unemployment (Chang, 2016). Considering a sizeable amount of financial resources is already being directed towards alleviating youth unemployment, perhaps more important is considering how the money is being spent rather than only how much. This includes not only trying to solve the immediate problem of the lack of suitable jobs for youth but also considering structural problems, such as the inflexibility of wages for senior employees and issues related to education and training.

The public discourse is very much aligned with the academic discourse on the negative impact of the Hobong system on youth's access to the labor market. Similarly, the criticism by the public on simply increasing spending on youth employment programs without considering the precise use of the funds is in line with the discussion in the *trends* section on public spending. In this case, while public and academic discourse is in sync, government action is not. It would thus behoove the government to place greater consideration on the execution of plans that aim to improve education and youth employment access, particularly considering the large amounts of money it spends in these areas.

Compared to Taiwan, the Korean government is more responsive to the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition. Still there are many areas where the government of South Korea would benefit from better aligning itself with academic and public discourse. The government has yet to address the exam culture and the lack of opportunities for youth to build social capital. As indicated

in the analysis of the discourse, these issues could be fixed in tandem. If the government took steps to lessen the importance of exam results youth would have more time to engage in activities that improve their stock of social capital. Additionally, a system that places less of an emphasis on examinations would better foster holistic learning and development that would improve young people's transition into the labor market.



Summary

From a historic perspective South Korea shares many things in common with Taiwan including Confucian ideology and Japanese colonialism, both of which influence the education and employment system. Quantitative trends indicate that youth unemployment in South Korea was significantly higher in the past and is expected to continue that way into the future, similar to Taiwan. South Korea performs exceptionally well in terms of education enrollment rates with some of the highest tertiary enrollment rates in the world (nearly universal). Vocational education has steadily lost popularity in the last 14 years with mostly young people from lower income families enrolling. The government's commitment to education appears strong with high public spending compared to Japan and the OECD average but not as high as Taiwan (which is exceptionally high). At the same time, public and academic discourse warns of the problems arising from focusing solely on spending without considering how the money is spent.

The four main issues arising in academic discourse include structural issues in the education system, cultural elements, lack of social capital, and the absence of multi-stakeholder ownership of the issue. It is asserted that the strong exam culture adversely impacts youth's development and impairs their acquisition of social capital. The government's actions are at times reflective of the prevailing discourse such as with regards to creating a national qualifications framework and improving TVET. In other cases, the government's agenda does not align itself with the academic or public discourse, for example budget allocation of public funds and the detrimental effects of a strong exam culture. So while the Korean government is not completely out of touch with important discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition it could be improved.

Chapter V. Japan

Japan is a unique country as the first Asian power to industrialize and has asserted its influence through a variety of means, notably the occupation of various territories across the region during the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” era. Only two decades ago, many Western scholars viewed Japan as an example of a country with a seamless school-to-work transition, yet in the last 20 years the situation for youth has changed greatly. As such, an intellectual history perspective is the best method for analyzing the change in Japan from an ideal example of a smooth school-to-work transition to a country with large numbers of disaffected youth who have withdrawn from society.

A. History

Evidence of human habitation in what is now present day Japan dates back to 30,000 BCE (Hammer, 2006). National Foundation Day in Japan is celebrated on 11 February, commemorating the first Emperor of Japan (Emperor Jimmu) who rose to power in 660 BCE (Aikens, 1982). Japan has long historical ties with China with evidence of interaction dating back to 500 BCE with the introduction of new agricultural techniques and pottery (Sansom, 1978). Important cultural ties between the Japanese and Chinese include religion and philosophy, with the Chinese introducing Buddhism to the Japanese during the Asuka Period (592-710) and Confucian teachings towards the end of the Kamakura Period (1185-1333) (Jansen, 1988). These developments in antiquity have bearing on modern Japan; with the majority religion being Buddhism and the influence of Confucian thought on values and norms (Sawada, 1993). In this respect, Japan is quite similar to Taiwan and South Korea and it is thus interesting to compare

them. Particularly to see if cultural elements such as exam culture or inflexible age-based wage systems affects Japanese youth's transition from school to work.

In 1854 the United States military forced Japan to open up to the outside world, leading to the Meiji Restoration that incorporated more western elements into its government and transformed Japan into an industrialized power (Totman, 2014). Similar to industrialized western powers, Japan began to expand its sphere of influence through colonization, including Taiwan and Korea. World War II and the expansionist efforts of Japan ended violently with the bombing of Japan by the United States in 1945. After the end of the war, the United States established multiple military bases in Japan and provided substantial aid to cope with the damage caused by the nuclear bombings.

Despite the violent past between the two nations, the U.S. is one of Japan's biggest allies and the two countries have developed strong relations post WWII till present day. The post-WWII involvement of the U.S. in Japan is similar to that of Taiwan and South Korea (though in this case due to the damage caused during war by the U.S.). It is thus interesting to analyze if the U.S.'s influence on Japan impacts the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in the country. This could include the desire for a more American lifestyle that is more flexible and places less of an emphasis on exam results and age hierarchy.

In recent history, most scholars attribute the increased difficulty in the school-to-work transition in Japan to demographic, economic, and social change (Yoshimoto, 2002). The population in Japan rose from 83 million in 1950 to 124 million in 1990, but then only went up by 3 million

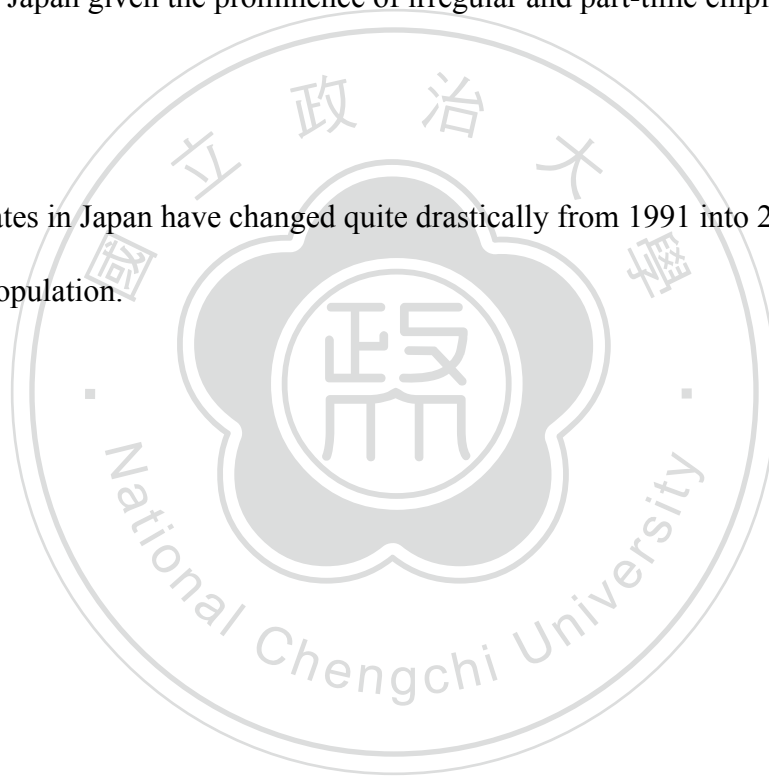
from 1990 to 2000 (Yoshimoto, 2002). This dramatic fall in fertility rates has led to the current situation of a rapidly aging society with few jobs for young people. Economics has also contributed to the situation with Japan experiencing a prolonged recession since the bubble economy burst in 1993 (Yoshimoto, 2002). Lastly, modern Japanese youth are increasingly interested in pursuing a life outside the bounds of traditional norms, desiring more flexibility and non-monetary fulfillment (Yoshimoto, 2002).



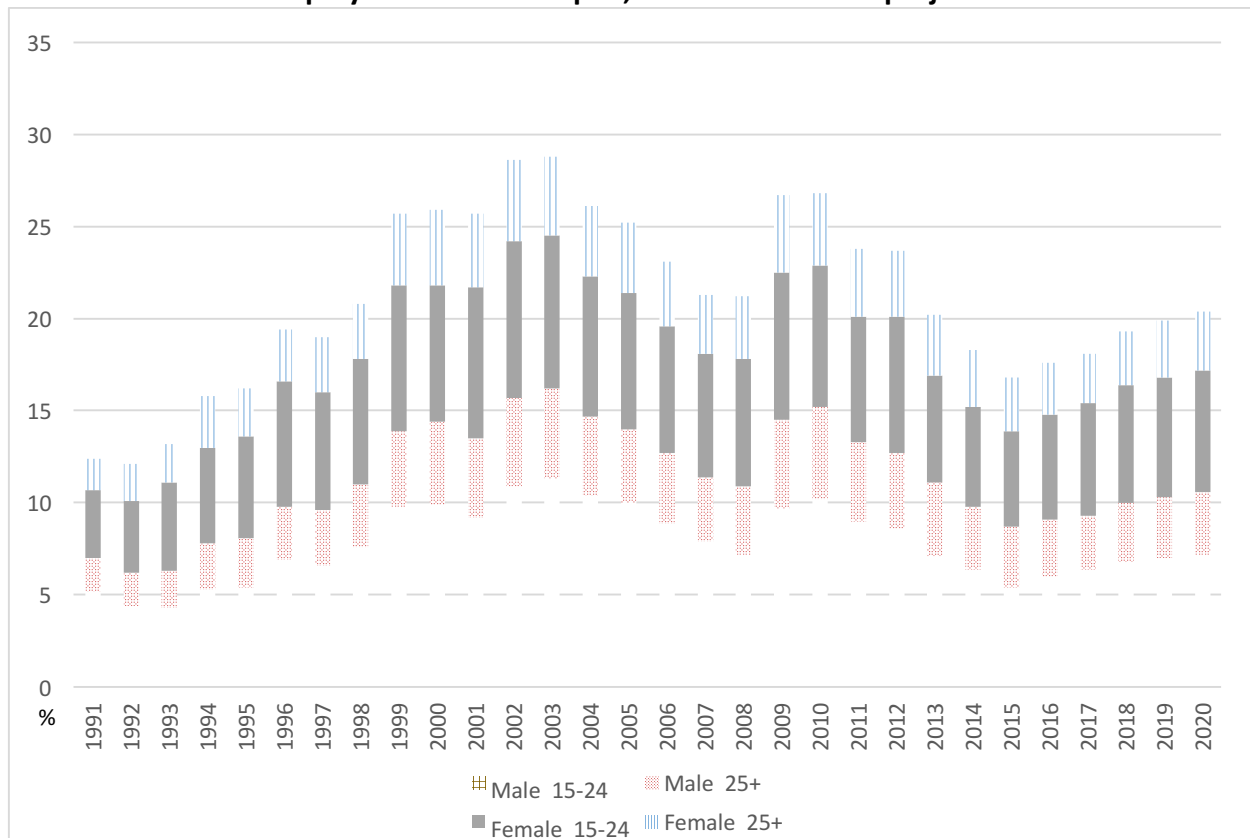
B. Trends

As in the previous chapters on Taiwan and South Korea, this chapter will examine important quantitative trends relevant to the school-to-work transition. Along with looking at unemployment and education enrollment trends, as was the case in the chapters on Taiwan and South Korea, this chapter will also include an analysis on trends related to the type of employment and work. This addition supports the analysis of the discourse on the school-to-work transition in Japan given the prominence of irregular and part-time employment in the discourse.

Unemployment rates in Japan have changed quite drastically from 1991 into 2020 for both the youth and adult population.



Youth and adult unemployment rates in Japan, ILO estimates and projections

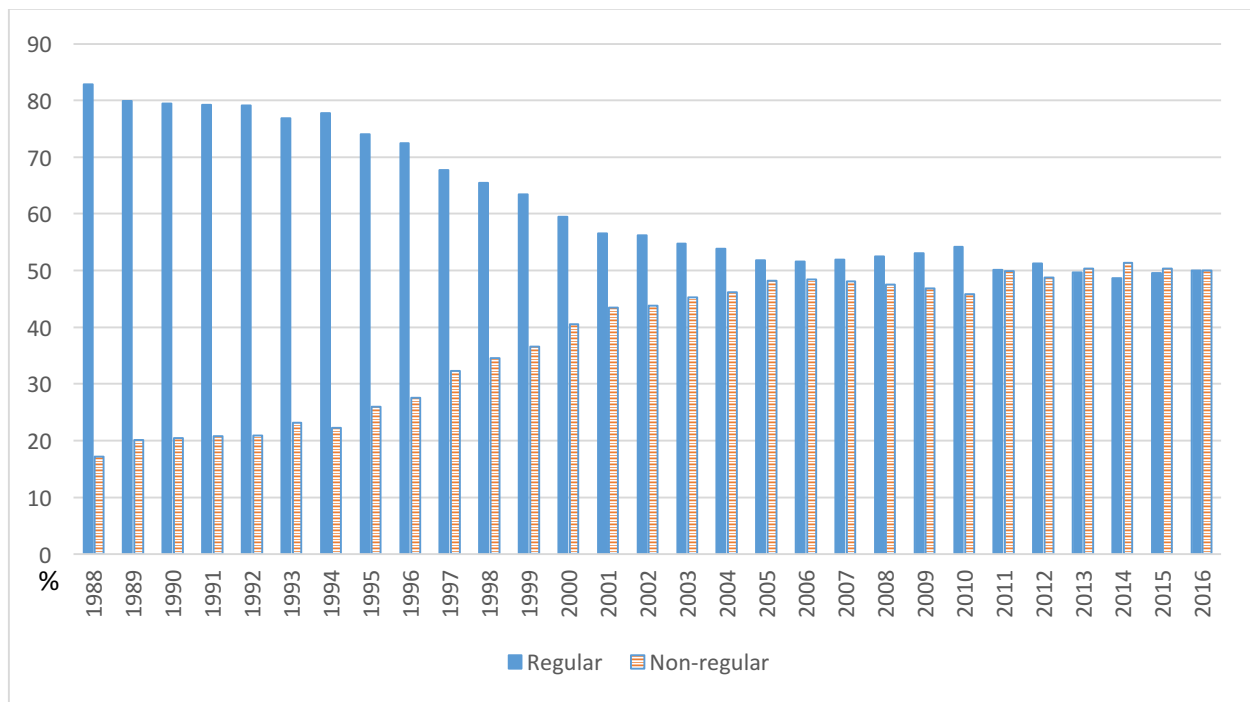


Source: The International Labour Organization Labour Statistics Database (ILOSTAT)

Across all years in the dataset, the data indicates that larger shares of youth are unemployed compared to adults. Furthermore, over time, unemployment has become a larger problem for the entire society but affects much larger shares of youth compared to adults. This is particularly evident in 2002 and 2003 as well as in 2009 and 2010 when youth unemployment rates spiked to over 10 per cent for males and over 7 per cent for females versus only 4-5 per cent for adults (male and female). When the Japanese economy is hit by adverse conditions the impact felt by youth is greater than other segments of society, reflective of the challenges they face in securing and retaining employment.

Along with changes in the youth unemployment rates, the type of employment many young Japanese people engage in has also changed over the last few decades. The figure below indicates a sizeable decline in the share of young people employed as regular employees from 83 per cent in 1988 to 50 per cent in 2016.

Type of employment youth engaged in between 1988 and 2016



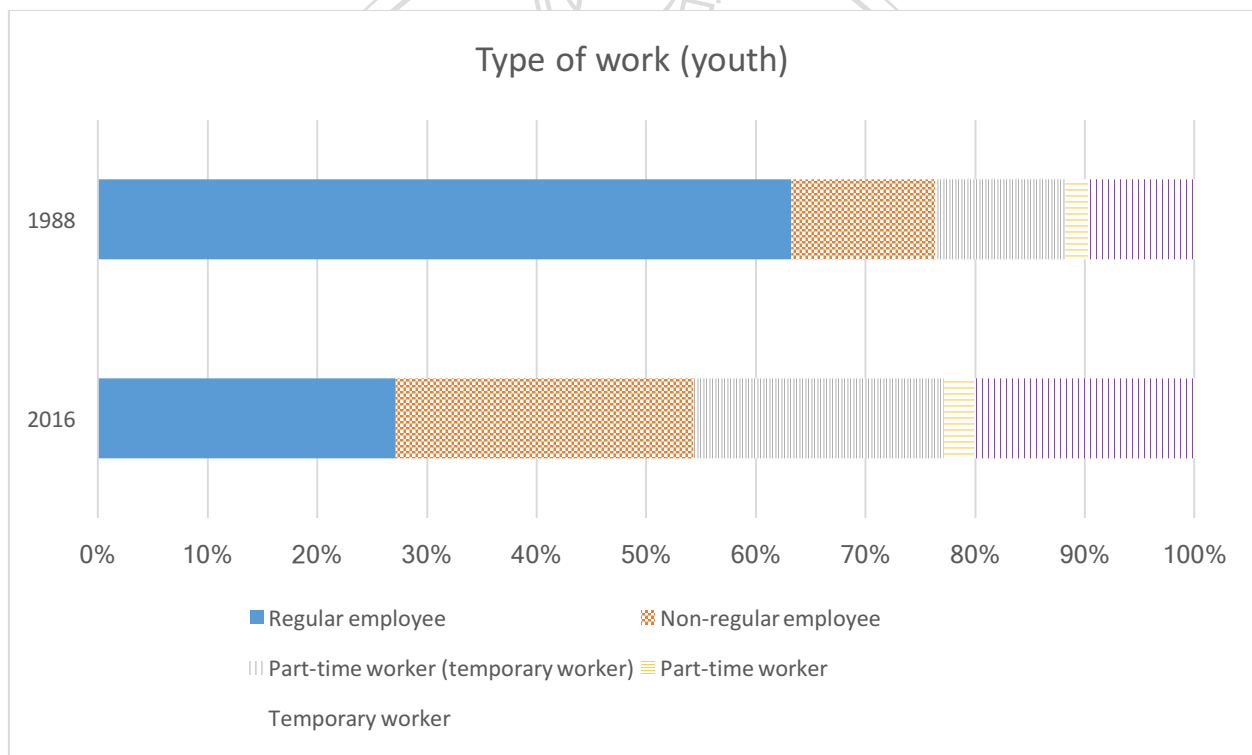
Source: Japan National Statistics¹⁸

The end result is a situation where half of the youth population is employed as a non-regular employee. Non-regular employees lack many basic forms of labor protection including training, job security, insurance, and pensions. Every person deserves work that provides these minimum forms of labor protection that young people in Japan increasingly lack.

¹⁸ Only available from national sources, thus ILO data was not used

Along with a rise in non-regular youth employees is an increase in the share of youth engaged in part-time and temporary work, as seen in the figure below. The share of part-time temporary workers and full-time temporary workers has more than doubled from 1988 to 2016. These findings emphasize the need for policymakers to consider not only unemployment rates but also measures such as the quality of employment.

Type of work youth engaged in, year 1988 versus 2016



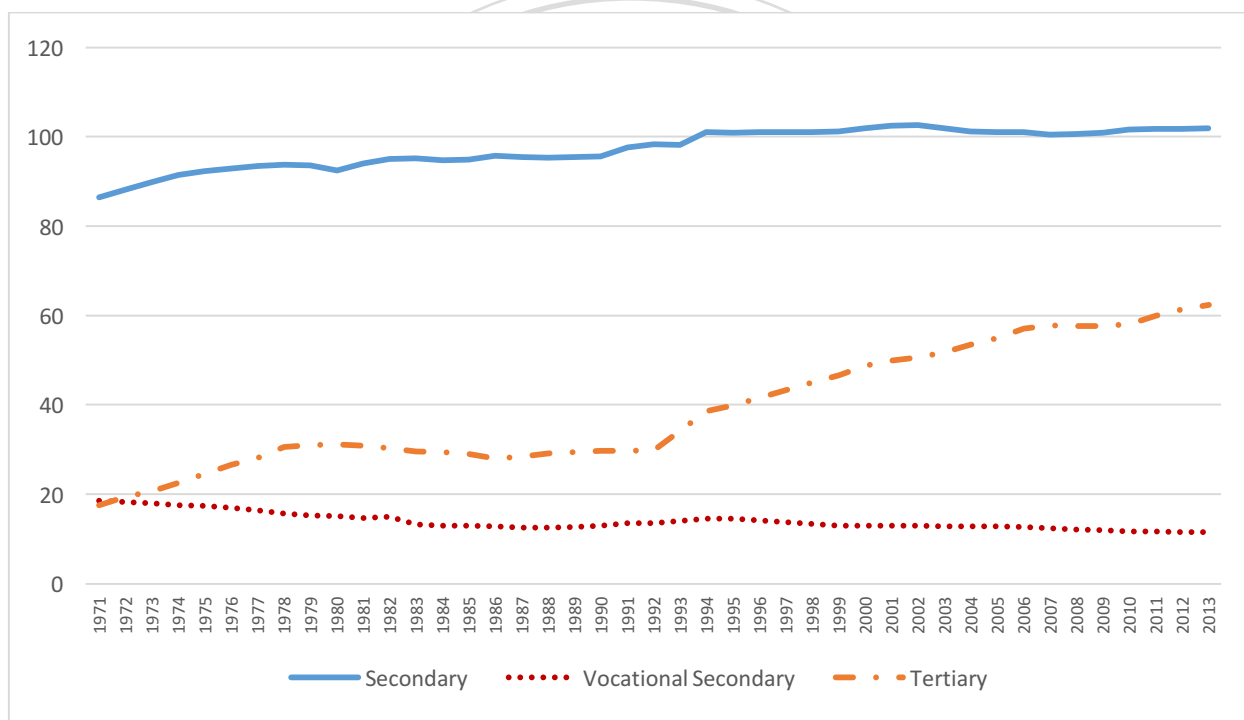
Source: Japan National Statistics¹⁹

On the other side of the school-to-work transition, the figure below highlights education trends in Japan. Looking at the data, enrollment rates in education have been quite high at the secondary

¹⁹ Only available from national sources, thus ILO data was not used

level since 1971 and today the gross rate exceeds 100 per cent. The reason the secondary enrollment rate exceeds 100 per cent is because it is a gross rate, which looks at the number of students at a given level divided by the number people in that age bracket. Gross enrollment was used instead of net enrollment because gross enrollment statistics have been collected for a substantially longer period of time compared to net enrollment rates in Japan.

Secondary, vocational secondary, and tertiary enrollment rates in Japan



Source: UNESCO Education Database

While participation in secondary education is now universal, the rate of enrollment in vocational secondary education has declined by 38 per cent²⁰ between the years 1971 and 2013. As such, even when the entire population has access to secondary education, fewer people choose a

²⁰ Calculation: Rate in 1971 was 18.65% and in 2013 was 11.64%. Percentage decrease = $(18.65 - 11.64) / 18.65 * 100 = 38\%$

vocational education compared to a general education. As for tertiary education, enrollment rates have jumped from 18 per cent in 1971 to 62 per cent in 2013, an increase of 244 per cent²¹.

While this tertiary enrollment rate is not much lower than the OECD average of 69.7 per cent, it is markedly lower than South Korea and Taiwan who have tertiary enrollment rates of 99.5 and 70.85, respectively. As a result, while the majority of the Japanese population enrolls in higher education, a large portion does not, which makes it particularly important to consider the transition to work of both high school and university students.



²¹ Calculation: The tertiary enrollment rate in 1971 was 18% and 62% in 2013. Percentage increase = $(62-18)/18 * 100 = 244$ percent increase

C. Key issues in the discourse

The school-to-work transition in Japan is a particularly interesting case as it was once considered to be one of the best examples of a smooth transition around the world. As a result, youth unemployment was not a prominent topic of discussion until after the Japanese recession in the 1990s began. Today the school-to-work transition is a prominent topic of discussion in Japan among the public and policymakers. Key issues in the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in Japan can be categorized into either institutional change or social change. Regarding social change, the two items most frequently under discussion are the concepts of “freeters” and “nito.”

A unique feature of Japan’s historic school-to-work transition is a system where youth relied (and to a less extent continue to rely) on their school’s “institutional social capital” to gain post-graduation employment (Brinton, 2001). The institutional model of matching high school students to suitable jobs is in direct contrast to the American system that asserts youth employment policies and programs should be based on market forces rather than institutions. When this system was still the standard in Japan, many scholars lauded it as enabling the Japanese labor force to better accommodate lower skilled youth and facilitate a smooth transition from education to work (Salimi, 2013).

Institutional social capital in this context is defined as “the resources to which students have access by virtue of being in a certain school” as opposed to “personal social capital,” which refers to the individual’s supply of resources granted by their own social network, skills, and knowledge (Brinton, 2001, p. 290). In this way, all students who attend/graduate from a

particular school have a certain stock of social capital afforded to them because of the institution's social capital. Brinton argues that this is fairer because students were admitted into each school based on their own personal merit (2001). This is as opposed to when young people rely on personal networks to gain employment where they might have acquired said social capital because of their family and/or social status. On the other hand, if youth rely on the social capital of their institutions, then social mobility is extremely limited because once a student is admitted to a certain high school or university he or she only has the chance to gain employment that his or her school has connections to. Therefore, a better system would be one that makes use of both the school's institutional social capital and also promotes youth to gain their own personal social capital so that youth are not beholden to the will of their schools' administrators and instructors. More importantly, in recent years this system has broken down greatly and is not nearly as prominent as it once was (Brinton, 2011).

Another dramatic change for today's Japanese youth compared to their parent's generation is the shift from stable, life-long employment to highly precarious employment, as was indicated by the data in the *trends* section. Certain scholars attribute the disappearance of the high school placement system in part to the lack of investment modern Japanese firms make in hiring new employees (Brinton, 2011). Since most employers are not hiring for life-long positions, they favor speed in hiring over a slower more meticulous process. Lastly, as more and more Japanese pursue higher education there are simply less high school students looking to find employment immediately after graduation. It could therefore be proposed to try and build on the previous success of the high school placement system and apply it to universities, where many youth now make the transition from education to the labor force.

Not only has life-long employment become extremely rare in Japan but full-time stable work is increasingly difficult for young people to find. As a result, many youth take up casual work (arubaito) or part-time jobs, which data in the *trends* section indicated. There is also a substantial amount of Japanese youth that give up looking for work all together and withdraw from the labor market. “Freeter” is now a prominent term in the Japanese discourse regarding youth unemployment and the school-to-work transition, which describes the aforementioned youth that have either given up working or only engage in casual, part-time work (Kosugi, 2004). With an increasing number of freeter youth, the number of young people in the school-to-work transition has risen to over 4.2 million, 2 million of whom are considered freeters by certain estimates (Kosugi, 2004).

Multiple studies have investigated into the freeter phenomenon which unearthed a variety of interesting findings, such as the fact that half of freeters in a survey in Japan reported that they chose to be freeters (Kosugi, 2004). Reasons students became freeters included that many had no idea what kind of job they wanted and felt being a freeter would be less stressful and more free. Others wanted to pursue a dream and thus took up irregular employment as a means of subsisting while in the process of realizing their dream (Pilz, 2015).

Thus part of the reason for the rise of freeters in Japan is reflective of a desire for something different from the typical mold their society provides and greater self-realization. At the same time, such results also indicate that youth lack adequate exposure to potential careers along with an absence of career counselling. It would therefore be useful to increase opportunities for youth

in Japan to better understand their interests through activities such as internships and volunteering. Also, there needs to be mechanisms that help youth make the transition from freeter to regular employee by recognizing the skills, knowledge, and experience acquired through casual work and part-time employment. Youth pursuing a freeter lifestyle especially need to have a strong personal network and large supply of social capital because their jobs are not guaranteed by long-term contracts or agreements.

Another social phenomenon that dominates the discussion of the school-to-work transition in Japan is Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET). What began in the early 2000s as a policy term in the United Kingdom soon became a topic of heated debate in Japan in 2003 (Toivonen, 2011). The fact that most Japanese discourse refers to NEET using katakana, “ニート”(nīto), indicates that the concept has been internalized by the Japanese. Unlike in many other countries, NEET and other measures of “youth” in Japan are defined as between 15-34 years of age, which was likely done so as to facilitate a comparison between NEET and freeters, which is defined using this same age range. By comparison the governments of Taiwan and South Korea define age as 12-24²² and 9-24²³, though even this can vary based on the specific ministry. Internationally, the United Nations Secretariat, the International Labour Organization, and UNESCO define youth as age 15-24 (and in certain cases 15-29).

According to many leading youth focused researchers in Japan, NEET can be considered both a social policy target group and a social category (Toivonen, 2011). Much of the attention

²² Based on Taiwan's 2007 Youth Policy Launching and Promotion Act

²³ Based on The South Korean Youth Law (2008)

policymakers in Japan have placed on trying to tackle the problem of NEET is due to the larger discourse on NEET as a social category. A significant portion of the Japanese society associate NEET with many negative attributes, evidenced by descriptions such as “Nīto are ravaging the wealth and pensions of the state and parents” and “NEETs are seen by mainstream society as lazy sluggards as disgraceful, worthless, spoilt and dependent, and as having no work motivation; yet NEET is less negative in its connotations than hikikomori” (Asai and Morimoto 2005, p. 15; Toivonen, 2011, p.419). The term “Hikikomori” refers to another youth phenomenon in Japan that some scholars link to the discussion of NEET and Freeters. Hikikomori youth are characterized as social recluses that abstain from social interaction and are seen as socially withdrawn and who are also not in education or employment (Uchida & Norasakkunkit, 2015).

Such negative societal views of NEET likely makes affected youth and their families ashamed and thus refrain from asking for social support from the government or community. Still a smaller group of stakeholders have expressed more sympathetic views towards NEET, citing the rigidity of social values and adverse conditions in the job market as the reason for youth becoming NEET (Futagami, 2005). A positive outcome of the prevalence of NEET in the Japanese media is the creation of government policies and programs that target out of work and school youth such as Hello Work, Job Café, Youth Independence Camp, and the Youth Support Station.

D. Government policies and programs

Despite having a long history of Active Labor Market Policies (ALMP), Japan did not introduce youth specific ALMPs until the early 2000s. The first youth related unemployment policy was entitled the “Strategy Council to Foster a Spirit of Independence and Challenge in Youth” and was put into place in 2003 with the support of the State Minister in Charge of Economic and Fiscal Policy; the Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry; and the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. Later the same year the “Youth Independence and Challenge Plan” was instituted, which sought to provide a more comprehensive solution to the school-to-work transition focusing on education, employment and industry. One of the most significant outcomes of these pieces of legislation was the creation of the “Jobs Cafés” programs, which was implemented in 2004 in all prefectures of the country except for Kagawa.

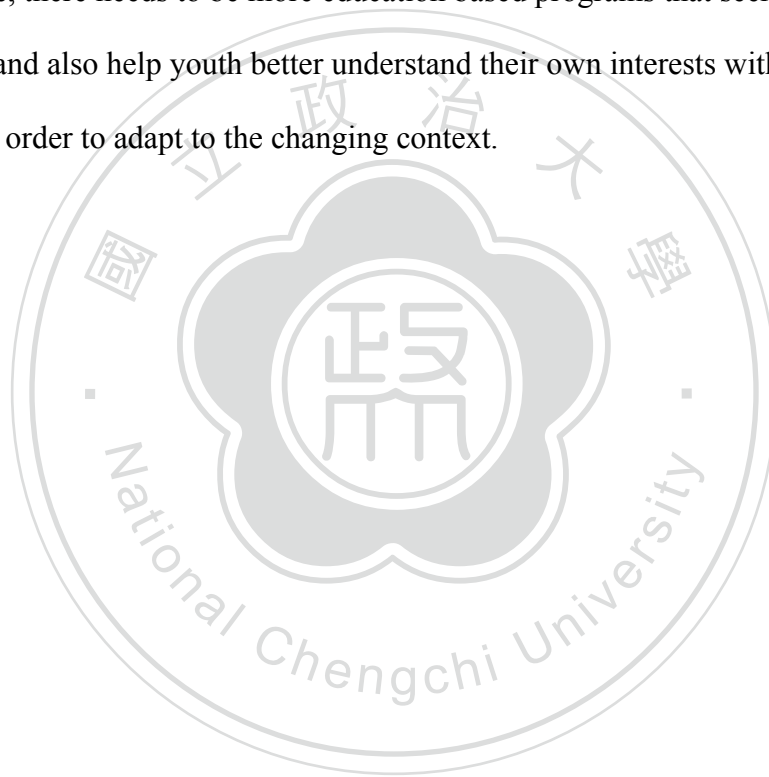
The Job Cafés aim to offer an inclusive suite of services for youth that includes career counselling, job placement services and labor market information. Multiple support programs bolster the mission of the Job Cafés, including a variety of programs concentrating on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well regional support. The move to strengthen youth’s involvement with SMEs is in part in response to the Global Recession that Wall Street triggered in 2008 in which mega corporations and banks played a significant role (Isamu & Yamamoto, 2015). As for the specific regional support mechanisms, this is a result of the diversity of experience different regions in Japan have had with regard to youth unemployment, such as youth unemployment rates of over 12 per cent in the Hokuriku, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Okinawa regions (Yamamoto & Nohara, 2015). Financial support for the different Job Café programs

ranges from 0.5 to 7 billion JPY (4.8 – 67.9 million USD), a testament to the level of support from the government.

Academic discourse of the Job Cafés support programs by scholars Isamu Yamamoto and Yasuhiro Nohara indicates that while the programs may have created job opportunities for the users of Job Cafés, the program fails to change the fundamental state of youth unemployment (2015). Furthermore, the low user rate of the Job Cafés means that even if they do provide benefits to users they do not affect the majority of the target population (Yamamoto & Nohara, 2015). Therefore, from an implementation stance it is necessary that the government increases the usership of the Job Cafés program if they want to maximize the usefulness of the program and make efficient use of public funds. This could include dissemination strategies that more effectively target the affected populace, such as through social media, schools, community centres, and places youth frequent such as sports facilities and actual cafes.

Considering this discrepancy between academic discourse and government action, the Japanese government could benefit by better aligning itself with the prevailing discourse. Specifically, the Job Cafés program seems to only address the immediate concern of how to assist youth in finding and securing employment but does not tackle the aforementioned issues related to social change. Job placement and labor market information are very useful in alleviating the issues related to institutional change but have limited usefulness in addressing why youth choose to be freeters or nito.

Based on the discourse surrounding youth unemployment and the school-to-work transition in Japan, youth are fundamentally interested in a different lifestyle from previous generations. Particularly, a life with more flexibility and lower levels of stress. Therefore, a more durable solution also requires the cooperation of industry to think about how they can accommodate the interests of the new generation. Reasons for this change could include the increasing globalization of Japan and the American influence mentioned in the *history* section of this chapter. Therefore, there needs to be more education based programs that seek to understand what youth want and also help youth better understand their own interests with regards to employment in to order to adapt to the changing context.



Summary

The situation of Japan provides another fascinating piece of the puzzle in understanding the school-to-work transition in East Asia. Despite far lower higher education enrollment rates compared to its neighbors, youth unemployment is not significantly higher, implying that greater access to higher education alone does not improve youth's labor market access. While the government has taken strong action to provide new mechanisms to assist youth in their transition from school to work, the prevailing discourse points to other issues.

Specifically, the ethos surrounding youth unemployment in Japan places substantial emphasis on social change. Increasingly more youth in Japan are not satisfied with the old way of life and demand a more dynamic system of employment that allows them to realize their dreams and provides them more flexibility and less stress than was the norm for previous generations. With the decrease in institutional social capital, youth increasingly rely on their personal stock of social capital, thus programs that provide youth opportunities' to increase their social capital are imperative to improving the school-to-work transition in Japan. The linkage between government action and the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in Japan needs to be strengthened because they are currently not well aligned. Overall, policymakers need to take into consideration the changing context, particularly the values and desires of modern youth in Japan, when developing policies that target the school-to-work transition.

Chapter VI. Comparative analysis

Now that each case of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan has been discussed in-depth individually, I will examine how their experiences compare and contrast. Such an analysis contributes to the understanding of cultural and historical influences on the challenges youth face. Furthermore, this analysis will help determine to what extent good practices between the countries can be shared, generating positive synergy. Similar to the individual country analysis, this chapter will look at history, discourse and policies. In each of these sections the similarities and unique points will be drawn out. Subsequently there will be an analysis of data from the East Asia Social Survey comparing the countries quantitatively.

A. History

Historically all three societies share several things in common; namely strong connections to China, Japan, the United States, Confucianism, rapid industrialization and the Asian Financial Crisis of the 1990s. In every society religion and philosophy have a strong impact on the development of culture and norms. Confucianism in particular provided a strong framework for not only the way a person conducts his or her life, but also a foundation for governance. From antiquity, Confucian thought emphasized the importance of rules and structure as well as the value of learning. It also stressed the importance of obedience and adherence to hierarchy with more educated people occupying higher strata. Furthermore, the use of state-run exams was influenced by Confucian teachings in China which later spread to Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea.

Historic ties to China, Japan and the United States also influenced and continue to influence the structure of the three societies under study. Specifically, the education systems of modern day

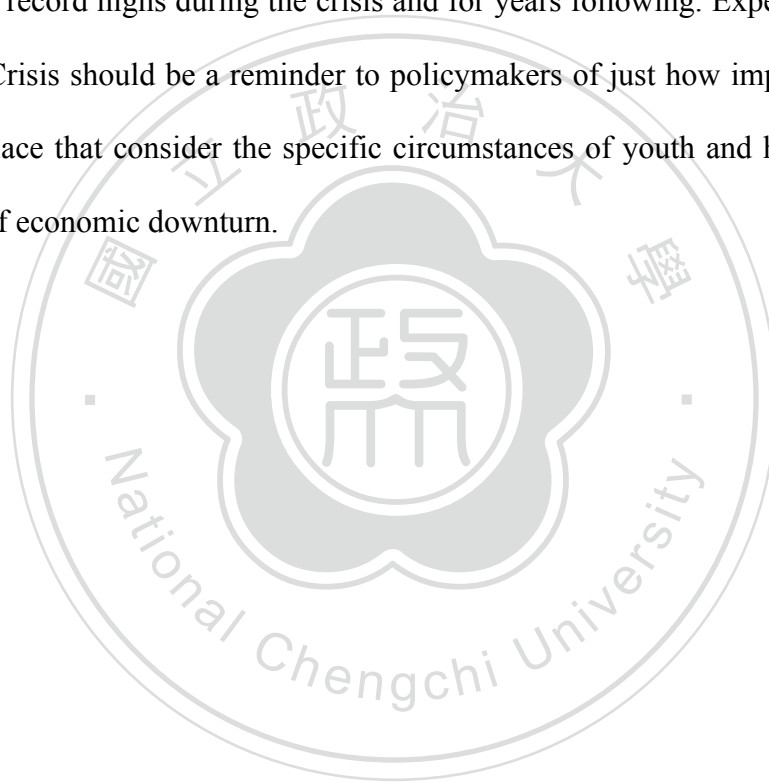
Taiwan, Japan and South Korea are largely impacted by the historic influence of China and Japan. The United States has also strongly affected these societies after World War II through the use of development aid, military bases and the media.

At the same time, the way in which these historic ties formed in each country is quite different. Japan was the colonizer while Korea and Taiwan were imperial subjects, creating a strongly dissimilar experience in terms of exchange of values. While Japan enforced its vision of a better society upon Korea and Taiwan, the two occupied countries had no choice in the matter. The connection to China is also significantly different in each society. Taiwan is a Chinese majority society and the direct inheritor of historic Mainland China's values and systems. Korea was part of a tributary system more than a century ago, which created an uneven distribution of power at that time but ended when Japan invaded Korea at the end of the 19th century. In ancient times, Japan was strongly influenced by China but was isolationist under the Sakoku (鎖国) policy between 1633 and 1866 (Totman, 1980). Therefore, while the countries possess many historic similarities they also have significant differences. Furthermore, the historic path of each country exerts an influence on the school-to-work transition because it shapes core values and systems including the education system.

The more recent history of the countries is also of relevance to the school-to-work transition. While all three countries are presently advanced, industrialized economies this happened rather recently for Taiwan and South Korea and over a short period of time. This led to important economic policies that promoted skills development to meet labor market demands and boost rapid

industrialization. Japan on the other hand began its journey to industrialization more than 150 years ago but had to recover from the aftermath of the atomic bombings and losing the war.

One specific historic event that the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in all three countries points to is the Asian Financial Crisis. As in many other countries, youth are hit hardest by adverse labor market conditions and East Asia was no different. Youth unemployment in all three societies hit record highs during the crisis and for years following. Experiences such as the Asian Financial Crisis should be a reminder to policymakers of just how important it is to have mechanisms in place that consider the specific circumstances of youth and how to mitigate the negative effects of economic downturn.



B. Discourse surrounding key issues in the school-to-work transition

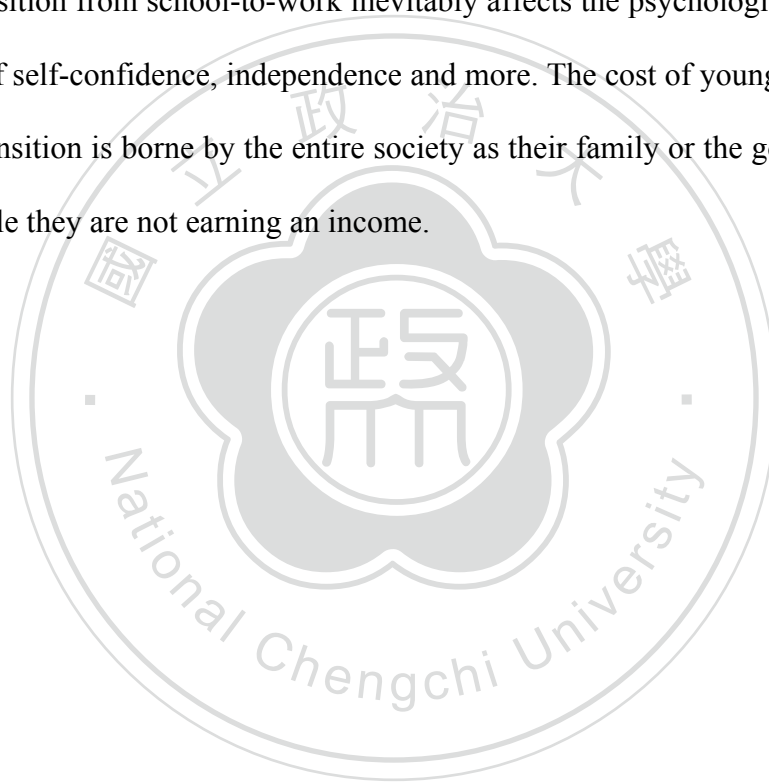
The discourse surrounding key issues in the school-to-work transition overall contained more similarities than differences with most discourse focusing on society's negative view of youth, high stress environments, lack of real world experience, rote learning, deficit of social capital and the importance of exams. A notable difference was that discourse in Japan focused more on the psychological state of young people in their transition to adulthood, in that the inability to secure decent work was not simply viewed as an economic problem but as a social issue.

The strong exam culture in all three societies has a variety of negative consequences, including its contribution to rote learning, lack of real life experience and preventing youth from engaging in activities that build social capital. Given the importance of succeeding in exams, in these societies learning tends to focus on preparing students for exams, which then lends itself to memorization rather than critical thinking and creativity. It also leads to a high stress environment where youth have no time for other activities such as internships or training courses. Similarly, given the lack of free time young people have, they are not able to take part in associations or clubs that would expand their networks and generate important social capital. In this regard the exam culture can be seen as a root cause of many other problems related to the school-to-work transition.

Academic literature and news articles in Japan frequently characterize the difficulties youth have in transitioning into employment as a threat to the entire society with their failure to integrate into the system as a failure to fulfill their social obligations. In fact, the school-to-work transition is important to the entire society in any context and does have negative impacts outside of economic consequences. More understanding observers expressed that it is not so much a failure but a

paradigm shift with the new generation desiring a lifestyle different from previous generations. Many of the so called “Freeters” in Japan chose this situation because they desired more flexibility and greater self actualization.

Although there was less literature about the psychological and sociological aspects of the school-to-work transition in Taiwan and South Korea it is an important aspect to be considered. Longer time spent in transition from school-to-work inevitably affects the psychological state of a young person in terms of self-confidence, independence and more. The cost of young people spending a longer time in transition is borne by the entire society as their family or the government needs to support them while they are not earning an income.



C. Government policies and programs

The governments in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea all have national legislation pertaining to youth, which lays an important foundation for improving the school-to-work transition. Each government has also instituted labor protection laws and vocational education plans for increasing skills development. What none of the governments have done in terms of policies and programs is tackle the systemic issues that give rise to the bottlenecks in the school-to-work transition. There has been no move to fundamentally reform the education system to better prepare youth for the labor force. Despite the vast amount of literature on the negative effects of a strong exam culture, performance in examination remains a key feature in all three societies.

Most youth related policies target specific at-risk groups, attempting to alleviate the symptoms of a difficult transition rather than solving the root cause. In the same vein, vocational education is often seen as the main conduit for improving young people's skill set despite a trend of avoiding vocational education. Sustainable change requires targeting mainstream and vulnerable groups so that all young people learn the skills and knowledge they need to easily and smoothly transition into satisfactory jobs with good working conditions. As mentioned in the Japan chapter, a large body of youth literature focuses on the psychological and sociological aspects of the transition, which are rarely, if ever, addressed by policymakers. It is necessary for politicians to consider the system that worked in the past is not automatically applicable to the present context. This includes the fact that modern East Asian youth might appreciate a more flexible career path, which necessitates a greater emphasis on adaptability in education and training curriculums.

As a whole, most policies in these three countries are reactive to the immediate problem of a specific group of young people. While serious concerns should be addressed as quickly as possible, it is important to keep in mind long-term growth and change. Instituting large scale change is neither easy, nor possible over a short period of time, but steps can be taken to achieve this goal.



D. Results from the East Asia Social Survey

In addition to the qualitative comparative analysis of the school-to-work transition, this section will look at quantitative results from the East Asian Society Survey (EASS). The EASS provides a unique opportunity to compare youth across Taiwan, South Korea and Taiwan with insight into their state of employment, education, and social capital.

The EASS began in 2003 and partners with top research institutes in China²⁴, South Korea²⁵, Japan²⁶, and Taiwan²⁷ and explores social issues including, family, culture, health, and social capital. All of the EASS institutions have ample experience in large scale, GSS-type nationally representative sample surveys (East Asia Social Survey, 2008). Furthermore, the majority of them are involved in other international collaborative social survey projects, such as the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) (Ibid). An important methodological feature of EASS is that surveys conducted in each of the four countries are integrated into a pre-existing survey framework, similar to ISSP, allowing data to be aggregated across the four countries as well as compared between them. The survey on social capital conducted in 2012 will be analyzed in this dissertation, which includes 173 variables and 11,684 observations including a plethora of questions related to social capital as well as demographic information.

As mentioned previously, one of the common factors in the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition in all three countries is the low levels of social capital among youth. Thus the 2012

²⁴ National Survey Research Center, Renmin University of China, Beijing

²⁵ Survey Research Center, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul

²⁶ JGSS Research Center, Osaka University of Commerce, Osaka

²⁷ Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei

EASS is an excellent tool for analyzing certain aspects of the school-to-work transition. According to Bourdieu, social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1985, p. 248).

Several studies have found a positive link between social capital and labour market access, with one study showing that successful managers spent 70 per cent more time networking and 10 per cent more time engaging in routine communication than their less successful peers (Luthans, Hodgetts, & Rosenkrantz, 1988). Granovetter found that cross-cutting interactions and ties (bridging social capital) empowered individuals with better career related information and thus improved their employability (1973). Similarly, Burt found that when an individual’s social network contained a diverse array of people that are not acquainted with each other, the individual gained improved access to career opportunities (1992). More recent studies have begun to apply theories of social capital to youth’s career preparedness, arguing that youth often lack vital information and connections related to the labour market, which social capital can help remedy and as a result reduce youth unemployment (Billett, 2011; Habibov et al, 2013; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Larson & Sullivan, 2010).

Since the survey covers a variety of ages not only youth, it is possible to compare the status of different age groups across the three countries. The table below displays the main status of youth aged 18-29 and adults aged over 30 across the three countries.

What is your main status? (%)

Youth (aged 18-29)			
	Paid work	Unemployed	In education
Taiwan	61.25	15.81	17.59
Japan	77.03	6.22	5.74
South Korea	30.45	7.73	55.00
Adults (aged 30 and above)			
	Paid work	Unemployed	In education
Taiwan	64.57	4.87	0.06
Japan	61.05	1.22	0.09
South Korea	58.59	0.94	0.17

Similar to national labor force surveys, youth from this survey are far more unemployed than adults. These results are also in line with much of the discourse discussed previously and the diversity between the three countries. Young Koreans are clearly far more likely to be enrolled in education compared to Japanese who are mostly working, reflective of the high tertiary enrollment rate among South Koreans and comparatively lower rates among Japanese. The linearity between national statistics and these findings supports the validity of the EASS data, confirming its usefulness.

After examining some of the basic indicators, we move on to two questions that specifically look at the benefits of social capital in securing employment, specifically whether or not respondents received help in finding their most recent job and the usefulness of that help. The data indicates that in the majority of cases, young people in all three countries received help from one or more persons. There is also quite a wide range among the countries in that while only a little over half of Taiwanese respondents received help, over 80 per cent of Japanese did. Furthermore, of those who did receive assistance in Japan mostly had help from six or more individuals, unlike Taiwan and Japan where most respondents received help from one or two people. The implication of these

findings is that youth in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea do in fact rely heavily on social networks to secure employment.

Usefulness of social networks in securing employment

Percentages of youth who received help from one or more persons getting a job			
	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan
	57.54	69.04	80.55
Percentage of youth received help getting a job from x number of people			
x number	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan
0	42.46	30.95	19.46
1	38.62	15.87	17.3
2	11.25	23.81	16.76
3	3.32	17.46	17.3
4	1.28	2.38	5.41
5	0.77	3.17	2.7
6+	2.3	6.35	21.08
Were the kinds of help provided useful to getting/securing your job?			
	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan
No	2.68	9.2	5.56
Yes, to some extent	31.7	74.71	38.89
Yes, to a great extent	65.62	16.09	55.56

Looking at the second question in the table above, the vast majority of respondents found the help they received useful. Since most young people do find personal networks useful in securing employment, it is then very important that they build their social capital, specifically cross-cutting or “bridging” social capital (as mentioned previously).

The table below indicates that despite the usefulness of social capital, few young people in these countries are actively involved in associations, which are a key place to build one’s social capital.

In Taiwan, hardly any respondents reported active involvement in any association except recreation, which even then was still less than one fifth.

Percentage of youth respondents actively involved in an association or club

Active involvement in an association (%)			
	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan
<i>Type of association</i>			
Political	0.00	1.36	1.44
Residential	0.22	1.36	4.81
Social service	1.34	5.91	0.96
Citizens' movement	0.00	0.45	0.48
Religious	2.9	11.36	3.37
Alumni	0.67	21.36	11.54
Recreational	12.47	30.45	14.42
Labor union	0.22	0.45	1.91
Occupational	0.45	4.09	2.87

South Korean respondents reported higher levels of youth involvement in associations compared to the other two countries, notably in recreation, alumni and religious clubs. At the same time, it should be noted that if disaggregated by gender, less than half the number of female Koreans were involved in recreation associations compared to males, indicating a gender divide.

As mentioned before, cross-cutting interactions are pivotal to creating the kind of social capital most useful to employment for young people. The next table explores this by looking at the level of homogeneity among members of the aforementioned associations/clubs.

Homogeneity among group members

<i>Are members in this organization/group different from each other in the way they think and do things? (%)</i>			
	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan
Almost all members are similar to each other	56.14	31.45	19.09
There are more members who are similar than those who are different	34.21	35.22	58.18
There are more members who are different than those who are similar	4.39	16.98	16.36
Almost all members are different from each other	5.26	16.35	6.36

As it can be seen in the table above, not only do few youth participate in associations, but the organizations they are involved in tend to be composed of similar people. This further strengthens the argument that youth in these countries do not participate actively in activities that generate bridging social capital. It would be interesting to test the relationship between some measure of social capital and employment status, but unfortunately in this dataset too few youth participate in any kind of social capital activity, making any such test statistically unreliable.

A possible reason youth do not engage in more cross-cutting social capital building activities is because of anxiety over expressing dissenting views, which the tables below provides some insight on. A few interesting findings from the data can be discerned. First, regardless of status, youth expressed a little bit of difficulty expressing different opinions on social issues of public interest. At the same time, they were most comfortable with people of equal status and had the most difficulty with people who are of a higher status.

Comfort discussing dissenting views among people of different social status

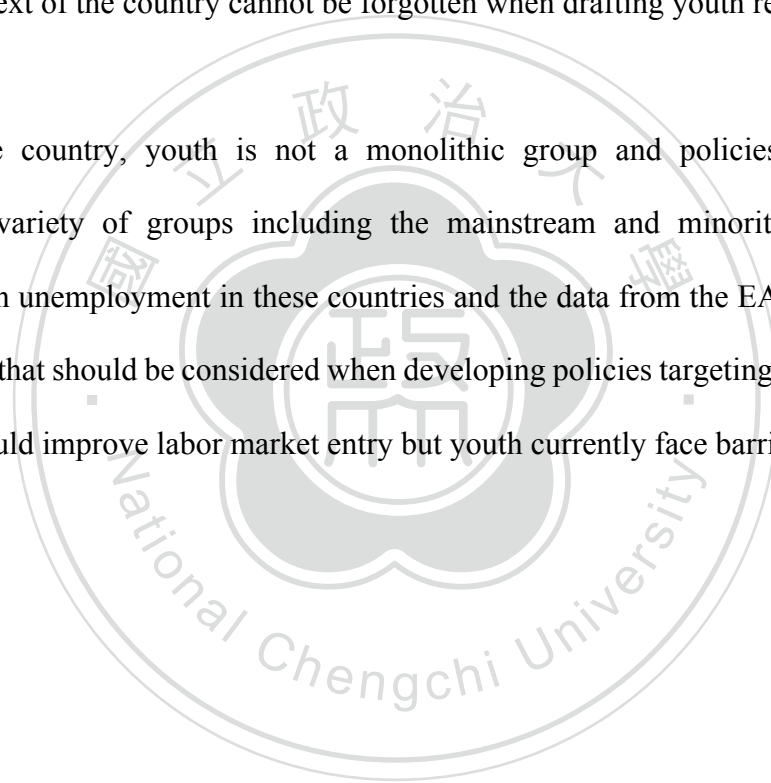
<i>To what extent do you have a hard time discussing with the following people/acquaintances if they had different opinions on social issues of public interest?</i>				
Taiwan				
<i>With those of... to you</i>	A great deal	Some	Little	Not at all
Equal status	0.92	9.89	48.05	41.15
High status	5.29	39.31	33.33	19.08
Lower status	3.08	27.01	42.18	27.73
South Korea				
<i>With those of... to you</i>	A great deal	Some	Little	Not at all
Equal status	0.91	7.73	66.36	25
High status	10.45	51.82	30.91	6.82
Lower status	1.82	15	64.09	19.09
Japan				
<i>With those of... to you</i>	A great deal	Some	Little	Not at all
Equal status	1.92	8.17	55.29	34.62
High status	11.54	26.92	45.19	15.87
Lower status	5.83	20.87	50	23.3

Therefore, the two main takeaways from the above table is that youth in these countries have difficulty expressing their opinion when it differs from others in general and particularly so when they interact with people of a different social status.

Summary

As a whole, the results from the comparative analysis provide a variety of valuable insight that can be used to create more effective youth policies that aid in the school-to-work transition. These three countries have a number of similarities making it possible to compare them and consider introducing good practices from one country to another. In addition to their similarities, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea possess a variety of unique points in terms of history, discourse and policies. As such, the context of the country cannot be forgotten when drafting youth related policies.

Even within one country, youth is not a monolithic group and policies should take into consideration a variety of groups including the mainstream and minorities. The discourse surrounding youth unemployment in these countries and the data from the EASS indicates social capital is a factor that should be considered when developing policies targeting the school-to-work transition as it could improve labor market entry but youth currently face barriers in acquiring it.



Chapter VII. Conclusion

The school-to-work transition is a complex topic that entails a variety of important issues for young people. While youth experience difficulties in their transition around the world, the precise reasons vary based on the context of the country, which is informed by cultural norms and systems inherited through history. The school-to-work transition is a turning point for the lives of most people when they finish their education and enter the labor market. In this transition the two main foci are naturally a nation's education system and industry. A good education should provide crucial knowledge and skills that allow young people to quickly secure decent work post-graduation. Unfortunately, youth frequently do not obtain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to obtain work and as a result experience a protracted transition.

Time spent in transition has multiple negative implications for the individual and the society. For the individual, difficulty completing the transition to stable employment can be stressful and damaging to his or her self-confidence, causing some individuals to withdraw from society, as is well documented in Japan. At a societal level, youth being idle is a waste of their talent and abilities that could push the society forward economically and in terms of innovation. Therefore, the school-to-work transition is not simply a matter of youth unemployment but encompasses the entire sequence of events from time spent in education till a person's first stable, decent job.

This thesis looked at how the phenomenon is discussed and dealt with by the public, scholars and policymakers in three East Asian societies, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. In an effort to maximize the depth of understanding of the topic the thesis employed a qualitative methods approach that also made use of quantitative data to a lesser extent. Specifically, this dissertation

utilized an intellectual history analytical approach to analyze the school-to-work transition. Intellectual history takes a holistic approach that delves into the context in which issues to the school-to-work transition emerged. In the context of this dissertation, multiple types of discourse are analyzed to understand fully the environment in each country and how this environment impacts the transition. This includes how a country's history influences its values and education system as well as how scholars have discussed these issues and the response (or lack thereof) from policymakers in addressing these issues.

In Taiwan the long tradition of exams leads to a high pressure situation for youth and harms those from lower socioeconomic standings the worst. Families with greater financial resources are able to hire private tutors to help their children prepare for these important state exams. As a result, these richer families are able to send their children to the nation's best education institutes, which are also cheaper as they are subsidized by the government. By contrast, young people from poorer families often struggle to outperform those who had the aid of extensive private tutoring.

Then, these youth have no other choice but to enroll in private universities, which are both more expensive and of lower quality. Without a good education these youth are then less prepared for the workforce and lack the social capital that wealthier youth have as a result of their more resource rich networks. Ultimately, youth coming from families with more limited financial resources have a far more difficult transition to stable employment. Instead of rectifying this problem, policies fail to effectively address core issues of inequality in the education system that have a lifelong impact on the individual.

Multiple studies pointed to the need for Taiwanese youth to gain solid stocks of social capital particularly because of the cultural importance of networks and connections, “guanxi.” Despite this, the discourse in Taiwan revealed that few youth have opportunities to build social capital, such as through extracurricular activities, because of the aforementioned high pressure academic environment. It would thus behoove the government to encourage programs that help Taiwanese youth improve their social capital.

Existing government policies in Taiwan that focus on youth tend to be well intentioned broad frameworks and lack the specificity to affect positive change, such as the 2007 Youth Policy Launching and Promotion Act and the 2011 Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act. On the other extreme, programs aimed at helping disadvantaged youth in Taiwan make the school-to-work transition tend to focus on a select group of youth that meet specific requirements, which then limits the benefits of such programs. Furthermore, feedback from youth and academic discourse points to the tendency of the Taiwanese government to generalize about the needs of young people, neglecting the reality of youth’s diversity of experience.

Discourse in South Korea also point to a similar problem of a strong exam culture that fuels the private tutoring industry. Another issue Koreans face is over education, with nearly universal enrolment in tertiary education despite the lack of jobs that require a higher education. TVET programs attempt to increase the skillset of youth, but results show it does not in fact improve their labor market entry. Similar to Taiwan, the education system perpetuates inequalities with mostly lower income individuals enrolling in TVET, which does not provide benefits in terms of a smoother transition into work. There are also few opportunities for university students to gain

precious social capital, because of the strong emphasis on academic performance and lack of institutional support to promote social capital building for young people.

Another reason for difficulties in the transition are tied to the Hobong system, which increases wages based on age instead of productivity. Also, the lack of recognition of the national qualifications system by industry makes training courses less useful in gaining employment.

Policymakers have responded to some of the issues raised in the discourse, such as reforming the qualifications framework and involving industry leaders in the process through the passing of the “VISION 2020: Vocational Education for All” framework. The Korean government has also introduced Public Employment Services that target young people and attempts to improve access to labor market information. Still, none of the policies touch upon the core issues of over-education, intense exam culture, lack of social capital, and inflexible wages, which discourse analysis of the school-to-work transition in South Korea indicates is very important.

Key issues surrounding the school-to-work transition in Japan were found to be largely related to either institutional or social change. Previously, scholars around the world thought of Japan as one of the best examples of a smooth school-to-work transition because of the strong institutional support by the government. Until the mid 1990s Japan utilized a special system wherein high schools selected who they believed to be the best candidates for a particular job opening in the community and then recommended them to that job. The Asian Financial Crisis hit Japan hard because of its heavy investments in the region, particularly Southeast Asia, which ushered in many changes. In order to cope with the economic recession, Japanese companies found it less advantageous to provide life-long employment opportunities and instead favored short-term,

flexible labor. There was thus less of an incentive to invest in recruitment, which contributed to the end of the institutionalized school-to-work transition system.

Social values amongst Japanese youth have also been rapidly changing in the last two decades, with many youth expressing the desire for a different lifestyle from previous generations, specifically a less rigid one. The combination of poor economic conditions and a desire for more flexibility in their work gave birth to the concept of Freeters and Nito in Japan. According to surveys, while many of these youth admit their status as Freeter was involuntary, a significant amount of youth chose to be Freeters. They viewed the Freeter lifestyle as a way to support themselves while working towards a dream job.

The shift away from reliance on institutional social capital makes it necessary for modern Japanese youth to rely on their own stock of personal social capital in order to successfully enter the labor market. This is all the more the case given the increasing numbers of youth in Japan who aspire for a more flexible lifestyle where one does not have lifelong employment with one company. In order to evolve with these changes, it is necessary for the Japanese government to promote programs in secondary and tertiary education that help young Japanese develop their personal network and social capital.

The Japanese government began including youth in their active labor market policies starting in the early 2000s, resulting in among others things a program called “Job Café.” This program actively aimed at responding to the discourse surrounding the lack of institutional support for the school-to-work transition. Despite such admirable efforts, the Japanese government fails to

address a very large body of literature about the changing social needs and attitudes of the new generation. Specifically, the government needs programs that recognize the value of part-time jobs, provide training outside the workplace, allow young people opportunities to gain real-life work experience, and chances to build their social capital. As such, while the Japanese government has instituted various job search and job matching programs, they have had only limited success in addressing the bottlenecks faced nationally in the school-to-work transition.

The last chapter of substantive analysis offered a comparative lens through which to view the school-to-work transition in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. First, it brought together the discourse analyzed in the previous chapters to examine to what extent the context of these three nations are similar with regards to the school-to-work transition and how their governments' solutions vary. This analysis illustrated these three countries share many historic elements that directly and indirectly contribute to the present day transition, such as a shared Confucian heritage and a strong exam culture. Modern discourse in all three countries suggest that rote learning, a lack of social capital, pressure to succeed in exams and a deficit of practical experience contribute to the difficulties faced in the school-to-work transition. Policymakers' actions were largely not aligned with this discourse, and tended to focus on micro level problems rather than system wide change.

Secondly, the comparative analysis chapter drew on the East Asian Social Survey (EASS) to analyze quantitatively how similar or different the experience of youth in transitioning from school to work is. The results confirm the national trends and discourse previously discussed in the country chapters. Furthermore, the data from the EASS illustrate that similar trends can be

observed across the three countries and differences tend to with regards to degree rather than direction. Regarding social capital, the data indicates that youth in these countries find social capital useful in securing employment but few young people engage in associations, which is a very useful place to build social capital. Additionally, the survey indicates that youth in these countries feel uncomfortable expressing dissenting views, which could make it harder for them to interact with new people and form bridging social capital.

Based on the in-depth analysis of the context in which the discourse surrounding the school-to-work transition emerged in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea along with careful examination of quantitative trends and survey results, suggestions for better policies and future research can be discerned. Most importantly there needs to be a stronger focus on systemic change rather than solving immediate problems. Policymakers should target both mainstream education and special cases when considering how to improve the relevance of the knowledge and skills youth attain.

Vocational education and training should not be restricted to specific streams or schools but incorporated into all curriculums thus creating more equitable opportunities. Education systems should be structured to reduce inequalities rather than reinforce them because the experience of youth in education affects their transition into the labor market, which in turn affects their entire life course. The experience of Japan should be a strong reminder that the school-to-work transition is not only an economic issue but also a social issue. Policymakers need to consider the changing nature of society and how they can better prepare young people for a lifestyle they value. Introducing self-awareness courses along with more holistic career counselling could help

achieve this. Similarly, promoting mechanisms that support pathways to different careers is also important, such as youth entrepreneurship programs.

Both discourse and results from the EASS point to the usefulness of social capital in improving labor market access for young people. Therefore, more research should be conducted that focuses on how different measures of social capital affect youth's transition from school to work in these countries. This requires primary research that asks questions directly related to the effects of social capital on labor market access for youth. Furthermore, there is a need to research what mechanisms best promote social capital building for youth in these societies. Such research would be incredibly valuable for policymakers, as it would give them actionable points that could improve the school-to-work transition in a way that has not been done before. At the same time, policymakers today can start to actively consider how to help youth in their country build social capital. Pilot programs can be introduced that provide young people with more opportunities to meaningfully interact with established professionals and thus expand their social network and strengthen their social capital.

The school-to-work transition is an issue that will never be completely solved, rather it is an ongoing and changing topic that continually requires looking at both the past and the present. A historic analysis provides an essential understanding of how the current state of affairs developed. There is also a need to evaluate the present situation of the school-to-work transition and see what can be learned from the past and other countries' experience. Such a complex phenomenon requires multiple lens to see the full picture, the transition has economic, political and social implications. As such, there needs to be greater communication between different

academic fields and importantly between policymakers and academics. All the discourse and research of academia is of little use to the real-world situation without the engagement of academics in policymaking. There is tremendous potential for mutual benefit and collaboration between politicians and academic researchers and this needs to be realized.



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