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## The Career Development of Young Japanese People: The Attainment of Self-Confidence in Career Development

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**The Career Development of Young Japanese People:**

‘The attainment of self-confidence in career development’

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## **Abstract**

Many young Japanese people seem to be able to determine goals towards their career development. However, many appear to struggle to take action towards their intended goal, often due to a lack of confidence, or an inability to make decisions without guidance or assistance from others. As a result, we think that perhaps a misconception is formulated by the community that young Japanese people drift around aimlessly without a sense of purpose or direction towards a career path, even after graduating from universities. In contrast, students in professional training schools appear to be more self-confident and decisive in choosing their career path. Perhaps, this is due to the different educational environments between the professional training schools and the general school system in Japan. For example, students who attend professional training schools live together during the training, whereby they have the opportunity to interact with each other under the guidance of their teachers. As a result, students appear to develop effective communication skills that perhaps contribute to increased self-confidence. This research focuses on the career development of young Japanese people to analyze how they attain self-confidence to action their career development path. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with young Japanese people including university students and professional cadets to examine their ability to identify a career path. We believe that young Japanese people are able to identify their career path and the steps necessary to follow, however it appears that many lack the confidence to initiate the process towards their chosen career.

## **Introduction**

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Most young Japanese people usually go to universities just after graduating high school. The statistics by the ministry of the Japan Institutes for Labor Policy and Training shows that the ratio of 18-year-old students' receiving higher education<sup>1</sup> in 2004 is 75.9%. Regardless of this high percentage, society has formed the opinion that young Japanese people have not acquired the sense of work importance or image of their career. Society has misinterpreted the data relating to NEETs<sup>2</sup> as the behavior of all young Japanese people. The data related to NEETs strongly conflicted with their cultural image of Japanese working people. The number of NEETs has rapidly increased by 130.000 only for 5 years (from 710.000 in 1997 to 840.000 in 2002, i.e. statistics by Cabinet office, government of Japan, 2005), and one fourth NEETs have graduated universities (by the research institutes of UFJ, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> Including universities, junior collages, correspondence courses and universities of the air, and the other special course schools after graduating high schools

<sup>2</sup> NEET means Not in Employment, Education, or Training.

In contrast to the society's opinion, the empirical researchers with Japanese NEETs (e.g. Genda, 2004, Kudoh, 2005) insist that most of them actually have a desire to work, but have trouble commencing or continuing working. This research is inadequate to create more positive and acceptable image of young Japanese people for society.

This phenomena and society's negative opinion of young Japanese people has prompted this research to investigate the reasons why about 25% of NEETs appear from university graduates. Hopefully, this research will provide society with a more accurate image of young Japanese people.

Therefore, the dual purpose of this study is to explore career development of young Japanese people by examining arts and science major students' career and self-awareness prior to obtaining a career. In addition, this research aims to identify issues and provide some solutions to assist young Japanese people in creating their career path. Further, this research hopes to find factors to bridge the gap between society and young Japanese people.

## Literature

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There is a lot of literature researching young Japanese people's behavior relating to career development. This literature follows three trends.

Firstly, some literature reviewed the current state of career education from the view point of history, economics and politics. Such literature tends to believe that university students lack a sense of career; fail to initiate a future vision, and need to set their own career goals and take action towards them. Asai & Morimoto (2005) says that NEETs will waste money of nations and families. It could be a source of the collapsing society, so to speak, a bomb to Japanese society. On the other hand, Mimura(2004) researches with students shows that the Japanese government and educational organizations have prepared many programs relating to career development and counseling, in order to let students understand the importance of career development. However, these systems do not always work well at the interface between teachers and students, because Japanese people are not familiar with counseling at school. Moreover, teachers are also confused to come up with programs because they have never undertaken professional counseling training during or after their education and only acquire such kind of communication skills through their experiences. It also shows some frequent problems of students that teachers might be troubled to tackle when providing career guidance for students. Further, it represents students as easy-going, aimless, unmotivated, and lost about their future career. These images correspond with Japanese society's image of the younger generation that was mentioned in the previous chapter.

Secondly, some literatures is from the perspective of education and psychology, that refer to

US literature such as self-efficacy<sup>3</sup> (Bandura, 1977, Taylor & Betz, 1983), self-concept and self-awareness (Super, 1957), offering suggestions in education systems for university students. They report that students were troubled about career development during schooldays. Yanai(2001) shows that students are drifting around aimlessly without a clear vision of the future career relating to self-awareness. Azuma & Adachi (2003) points out that students could be indecisive because of a lack of self-efficacy in combining the image of themselves to their future. Therefore, they tried to focus on reasons why many young Japanese people lack motivation to work or study, and introduce the educational and psychological counseling therapies<sup>4</sup> to give solutions for career development.

Thirdly, literature from the psychological background implied the solutions to both individuals and systems, focusing on the real situation and environment, feelings and problems. Japanese research in career development in business, Kanai(2002) points out the phenomena that many Japanese people including both graduates and students sometimes drift around without having a clear vision of their career, and suggests reflection of their career just at the important turning points. In contrast, US researchers in career development of psychology, Krumboltz and Levin (2004) insists that we don't have to set or remain dedicated to a career goal, even if we may dream of our future career, because it could be difficult for us to realize our own future career. Further, the researches appear against the stance of previous career counseling theories that have strongly suggested people set career goals. For example, parents and society should demand their children have dreams and set a goal quickly, even though parents cannot reply the same needs soon. In spite of the answers, they sometimes prescribe the career path their children should take. The problem is that the children can feel obligated to live out their parents' dream. It also insists to the individual that people tend not to fear failure during their own career, and need to have some solutions and mental prepared to face difficulties. Moreover, to the education system, we need qualified and skilled counselors to listen to what young people truly think and say carefully. The view point of Kanai (2002), Krumboltz and Levin (2004) is opposite to the majority stance of Japanese society towards young Japanese people's career decisions.

At this moment, each opinion of literature differs in career development and counseling. Have the young Japanese people realized the importance of work? Why they are troubled to have career image? Might the counseling style approach be better to assist their self-awareness? How they react to the counseling style and think in their turning point? This

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<sup>3</sup> According to Bandura(1977), self-efficacy would be expectations of personal efficacy determine whether coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences.

<sup>4</sup> For example, placing counseling rooms, career education course in university programs would give students to reflect self-knowledge.

paper has conducted research to answer these questions through the qualitative approach to the young Japanese students.

## **Method**

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### **Measures**

Semi-structured interviews and participation observations were conducted from 2005 to 2006.

This research was conducted with young Japanese people including university students and professional cadets. The reason why the two groups were chosen was to examine their ability to identify a career path and acquire self-awareness in relation to the different inferential factors such as school systems, teachers and friends.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the career development since childhood, especially through schooldays by examining students' responses to open-ended questions about themselves, influential others, goals, and decision making. Counseling style interviews were executed in an effort to build a rapport with students, and to share their true thoughts and feelings about these issues. Stories to open-ended questions provided qualitative data for analysis. Questions were constructed on the basis of the career development literature emphasizing the time of realizing the importance of work, self-awareness, significant others, and decision making (e.g. Krumboltz and Levin, 2004, Super, 1990).

The research was divided into two stages. This research was originally conducted to ascertain if students realize the importance of work. Thus, interviews of professional cadets were executed in March and August 2005 through observations, and then also interviews with business major university students in art were conducted during the fall semester. The questions asked to students were; 1. When and how they realized the importance of work?, 2. Who and what influenced your realization? Moreover, in order to explore their behavioral characteristics about self-awareness, the following questions were also asked; 3. What's the difference between self-concept and self-ideal?, 4. How to fill-in the gap between yourself and your intended career? At the last stage, another question was asked only to business major students who talked about difficulties to start the next step towards their future career; 5. Why can't they take the first step towards their intended career?

Depending on the results from the first stage, the research moved onto another stage to examine the behavioral characteristics and ability relating to decision making. Interviews and observation research were conducted with professional cadets again in spring 2006, especially for comparing the result from question 5. The questions to professional cadets in this stage were; 6. How did they take the first step in the job hunting stage, choosing the ship

officers' course, or usual activities and unknown things at practical training?, 7. How did they overcome to their previous failure?, 8. how did they initiate their plans?

Man-to-man interviews were conducted for about forty to sixty minutes, at the longest two hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Moreover, situation-oriented data was provided by observation in both research sites. As for the professional training school, the researcher was onboard the ship during, and remained at the bridge of the ship throughout all students' shift on watch (duty) in 2005, because the member of participants had changed at the time of the watch. In 2006, the onboard researcher observed only one group of the shift team that consisted of the same members in the 2006 research group as much as physically possible.

The researcher is familiar with most of the interviewees from the school of business. Some of them are studying not only in mammoth classes but in the small-sized seminar. The participants were observed in the classes because the researcher has had to chair lots of classes at their university since 2001. This research was conducted throughout 2005 to 2006 in classes such as management and small-sized seminars.

### **Interviewees**

The number of all of the interviewees was 29. 17 interviewees from the science field consist of 14 professional cadets who were in the special course for maritime science and transportation at a government-organized university. Regarding professional cadets, 3 interviewees have participated in the research of both in spring 2005 and spring 2006. On the other hand, 12 undergraduate art students were from the faculty of business at a private university when interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted in spring and summer 2005, and spring 2006 at the professional training school, but fall semester 2005 for the art major students<sup>5</sup>.

### **Procedure**

This research has firstly highlighted that many young Japanese people seem to be able to acquire motivation to work and to determine goals towards their career development, in reference to Genda(2004), Honda(2006) and Kudoh(2005). However, many appear to struggle to take action towards their intended goal, often due to a lack of confidence, or an inability to make decisions without guidance or assistance from others.

In contrast, students in professional training schools appear to be more self-confident and decisive in choosing their career path.

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<sup>5</sup> I have been lecturing in relation to management and career since 2001, and naturally have been observing university students throughout my career.

Perhaps, this is due to the different educational environments between the professional training schools and the general school system in Japan. For example, students who attend professional training schools live together during the training, whereby they have the opportunity to interact with each other under the guidance of their teachers. As a result, students appear to develop effective communication skills that perhaps contribute to increased self-confidence. This research focuses on the career development of young Japanese people to analyze how they attain self-confidence to action their career path. In this discovery-oriented analysis, the continuous comparing methods have been used as described by the grounded theory approach in Glaser and Strauss (1967). Therefore, this research needs to understand the different phenomena in relation to the different education systems and specific cultural conventions. Firstly, data referring to thoughts and feelings were psychologically focused on in order to interpret the background or underlying reasons for their behavior. Secondly, this coded data was distinguished into some parts to ascertain the direction the next stages would take.

We consider that young Japanese people are able to identify their career path and the steps necessary to follow, however it appears that many lack the confidence to initiate the process towards their chosen career.

Also evident, by the interviewees' responses as shown in this paper, is the state of confusion created by thought provoking interview questions that required interviewees to undergo self analysis and reflection. Hence, the responses may appear to lack clarity however this provides a true image of the interview situation.

## **Results**

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### **1. Environment**

#### **Science: Professional training school**

The professional training organization in which this research was conducted was one of the faculties at a government organized university in Japan. It covered the major of maritime sciences including the government qualified training course for professional ship officers and engineers. The cost (admission fee: US\$2.500, tuition: US\$4.500/year<sup>6</sup>) was cheap to register.

The school environment could simulate the intended future working situations. It recommended students especially professional cadets to live at the dormitory beside the campus or the apartments near the campus, even though students strongly preferred to live at home with their families because of personal reasons. The professional cadets to ship officers and engineers had to attend 24hour a day continuous for a month practical ship

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<sup>6</sup> The cost was roughly estimated here. After 2004, each national university in Japan was allowed to decide the amount of tuition within the limitation.



training program by the ministry of Transport every year until their third year, as well as 3 months at the last of their senior year. They needed to complete one year practical training (6 months during university days and 6 months in the ministry after graduation) in summation before acquiring the licenses for third officers. Therefore cadets were living together all throughout their schooldays.

Active communications were frequently conducted. Most of the teachers and students were well acquainted, saying hello whenever they encountered each other, remembering each other's name easily. Teachers and elder cadets taught younger cadets how to communicate with each other, or disciplined them for misbehaving. Small-sized classes created more effective communications. The school enrollment was limited to 90 cadets for professional training in every grade.

Cadets were encouraged to study very harder by teachers and friends, tackling lots of core courses at classrooms as well as undertaking for preparation to the national examinations for licenses. Some cadets could pass the paper-based examinations during their schooldays even though some licenses could be gained during their practical career after graduation.

#### **Art: School of business**

The school of business in which this research was conducted belongs to one of the Japanese private universities including of more than ten faculties. There were only 50 teaching staff and more than about 6,000 students enrolled specifically in the school of business. More than 1,000 students entered each year. That is to say, the rate of student to teacher was over 100. There are usually about 300-500 students per class at the faculty. The faculty provided seminar classes for freshman, third year and senior students. However, freshmen couldn't be followed after finishing the first semester, or all third year and senior students didn't have to register small-sized seminars or the independent studies with teachers. Therefore, teachers could hardly identify each student.

Often classrooms, could be crowded and noisy, because students that usually attended classes, often chatted or used mobiles, especially in enormous classes. Students didn't react actively to the lectures. On the other hand, students were suffering from making new friends and networks at school, because it might be difficult for them to speak to and communicate with people outside their limited party of good friends. For example, they didn't try to interact with only anyone new, even though people belonged to the same cohort such as age, gender, and community. Each of them usually felt isolated from other students. Students could talk with the counselor at the job hunting stage, if they requested, but many never attempted to do so. Therefore, students might talk about their problems or career choices with their limited friends, not to teachers, counselors, nor people with beneficial information.

## **2. Feelings from interviews and observations**

### **➤ Realization of the work importance**

In this research, students and cadets answered Question 1 and 2; when and how they realized the importance of work? Table 1 shows the result, the conclusion was not different between the two groups. Therefore, both students and cadets had realized the importance of work before their third year in university, and most of them in their childhood.

Next, factors which had influenced their realization were almost the same answers between them. They pointed out the factors as parents and adults around them; their lifestyles/ dual income parents/ pocket money system<sup>7</sup>/ their stories about working experiences/ and friends who are working.

<Table 1> Realizing the work importance

Before the interviews, the answers were differentiated by each educational organization because most of the cadets had already decided a future occupation before entering university. Further, and the strong connections could be found between the time of realizing the importance of work and their decision of a future occupation. However, the big difference in both time and factors could not be isolated. Cadets had often decided their future occupation before entering university. Therefore, most of the cadet interviewees in this research had realized the importance of work during their childhood. Moreover, the answers by the student interviewees contradicted Japanese society's image that young Japanese people these days cannot realize the importance of work and lack motivation to gain employment.

### **➤ Self-awareness for career**

#### **Students: 12 participants**

When the interviews relating to questions 3 to 5 were conducted, some differences were found. In relation to question 3, student interviewees talked about their future image or self-ideal, even if they couldn't identify specific occupations. Surprisingly, all of the students stated what they wanted to be. Some students answered enthusiastically with great expectation, others talked slowly, thinking carefully and finally summarizing their image of their future.

However, when asked to reflect on self-concept at that time, and estimate the gap to the self-ideal, 9 student interviewees out of 12 suddenly acquired a dark expression, and began to

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<sup>7</sup> Children receive money for doing household chores.

talk about the 'stuck' situations; what we called, they referred to a being unable to start the first step towards their chosen occupational career, even though some of them realized their goal. During the interviews, the reasons why they felt difficulties in reflecting about their self-image and what they wanted to be were discussed in detail. After analysis, all interviews about the 'stuck situations' could be related to a lack of self-confidence. Moreover, they could be classified into two groups: motivated- who lack confidence to take the next step because of fear of failure; and non-motivated- who lack confidence to achieve their true ideal due to underlying fear of failure.

**1. motivated group: a lack of confidence to take the next step because of a fear of failure**

This category represents students who expressed both motivations and fear of failure to their intended career. All students answered images what they wanted to be after graduation, however, stated that they couldn't take the first step towards their future career because they fear to find that they would come short of the intended goal. In the following passage, the interviewee feared the gap between capability and that required to reach the goal to become a novelist would be far too great.

I don't want to try to imagine my ideal as a great novelist. If I try to think about that, I will realize the gap. If I would be so far from my future image, I couldn't make any effort to practice writing anything. I'm so scared. (Student 1)

In another instance, a student was talking of a strong desire to be a tax specialist at the beginning of this research. However couldn't start preparation, because there appeared to be a great distance between the present situation and the future career image.

I have been longing to be a tax specialist due to respect for my father who is a tax specialist. By the way, I decided to enter this university because the program contained a lot of tax courses. Now, I really want to be a tax specialist, but I cannot start preparing for this occupation because there could be a major gap between my reality and ideal. I'm only frustrated when I think about the path to becoming a tax specialist, preparation for exams, etc. (crying. The interviewer asked, 'are you nervous when you think about becoming a tax specialist?') Yes. I don't know what to do to be a tax specialist. I think that I had better to ask cram schools or somewhere about it. (The interviewer; 'Did you ask anything about a tax specialists' job to your father?') Yes, I did, but his information might be old-fashioned, so I'm not satisfied with this information. The university doesn't take care of me in the mammoth class of tax, neither. It is always noisy and nobody has a desire to become a professional such as an accountant, or tax specialists. I'm disappointed with the school environment. I'm studying very hard in a different environment with

good-educational classes in business management, not tax or accounting. I am also doing part-time job.  
(Student 2)

Student 3 disclosed fear and other complicated feelings experienced during job hunting stage. Although student 3 was able to recognize both the goal (job-hunting in relation to their career after graduating the university) and simple actions in this process (resume writing, letter of self introduction, explanation of purposes as well as attending interviews), the student lacked confidence to undertake these activities, because of their limited knowledge and experience in relation to such tasks. Hence, the student was unable to take action towards these activities.

I'm very anxious about job hunting such as resumes, questions by companies, job interviews, because I have never done such things before. For example, I'm not confident in the contents of a resume like self-introduction, strong points... Anyway, all of the things in this situation confuse me so much. I don't know how to address them. I'm terribly confused because I recognize that it should be a really important turning point. I don't know lot of things such as society, history, and myself. Many, many things...so I would like to work off my anxiety little by little. I prefer happy feelings to unhappy feelings and a depressed mind. In order to attain such good conditions, I had better to take actions by myself. However, the most serious thing for me is that I cannot start moving towards the first steps by myself...my body is not trained to move forward. That's why I have a lot of things which are not buckled down. The negative spiral goes on and on.

My father sometimes speaks to me,' there were many students around my office who were in the job-hunting stage. However, my father's talking annoys me, even if I really understand he is worry about my future and tries to encourage me. I really understand in my brain that I have to do something and now is the time to move, but my body cannot become conscious of such actions. (Student 3)

In this category, students might stop moving forwards to their intended path because they fear a negative conclusion. They lack confident towards their desirable career and are unable to tackle the new and challenging issues in front of them. Even though they cease to continue on the path of their intended career, they undertake non-related work or study diligently. Therefore, they appear to others as good and obedient students. Counseling style interviews could assist them to reflect about themselves and disclose their real feelings. Further, counseling style interviews uncovered that students either usually talked with someone near them, or didn't have anyone reliable who might listen to their talk without invading their thinking and talking.

The reasons why they lack self-confidence in taking a step forward move were: inexperience, a lack of challenging spirits, insufficient networks, an inability to create new efficient

networks, and pessimistic attitude towards creating new opportunity.

## **2. non-motivated group: lack confidence, and cover up their fear of failure**

This category includes interviews of non-motivated students due to their lack of confidence. In these descriptions, there were great differences between future ideals and on-going behavior. That is, students tend to set far easier goals far removed from their intended goals because they lack the desire to move towards their ideals. They sometimes considered their true ideals as impossible to achieve. Throughout the interviews, especially when they were talking about now and the near future, some of the students appeared strong, independent, and well-balanced in relation to their schooldays, job-hunting and career. However, although they portrayed themselves with all the easy dreams and goals that could be achieving, in fact they protected themselves from desiring their real ideals because they lacked the confidence to achieve their goals. In the next example, this student wants to be a teacher, but he cannot start studying to prepare for the national exam for Japanese school teachers, because of lack of motivation toward the ideal.

I always attempt to escape the difficult path. After school, I might go out with my friends rather than start studying. I'm a weak person. It is shameful that I cannot study because I fail to decline social offers from friends. I know I have to start studying. We have the examination in about 6 months, so I need to start as soon as possible. I want to be a person who can say, no! Now I'm busy working at a part time job, so after new year's day, I would like prepare my mind to study.

As for university and high school entrance exams, I have never chosen the difficult path such as normal competitions to enter schools. That is to say, only prepared a little bit just before examinations and chose admissions on recommendations from schools. I have never studied harder than other students around me. I could always find the way with only a little effort. (Student 4)

The following student has been placed in also this category because the student lacks motivation thus chooses the easy path. The student also considers it difficult to become self-motivated.

I can be my ideal person if I can make a complete about-face. I'm lacking of a sense of myself. Whilst I am web-surfing about job information, I will go out with friends if they call me. I can get job opportunity somewhere, although I'm not making much of effort to find them. Actually, I might be naïve from the view point of society. I will expect my inabilities when I do not pass job interviews. Now I don't have an opportunity or persons who will let me know that I'm in crisis. Like family, adults, teachers... someone who could caution me against my immature behavior. If interviewers in human resource divisions in

job-interviews would point out my badness, I might respond sincerely to the severe criticism because I have found my level of ability when I did not pass lots of university exams. I need to change my naivety, as I prefer sleeping to attending classes at university. Some students could find the meaning of the classes by themselves, but I cannot. I want to be like such students, but I don't have flexibility which they might have. (Student 5)

Student 6 wanted to be a professional sports player and still hope to be, if possible, but sometimes feels the lack of ability depends on the evaluation on the field. So the student is subject to change his goal to be a trainer. The following story shows the answer to the question, 'why did you change your goal?' This student points out the lack of commitment towards the first choice came from a weak mind.

I'm very proud of Kazu Miura, a representative professional soccer player in Japan. He is almost 40, and is always stoic towards work. He commits to being a professional, without thinking of retirement. If I could be like him, I could go abroad and play or train myself, but I can't. Probably, I'm lacking some kind of sense.

I would like to be a strong-minded person, but I worry about time, physical limitation<sup>8</sup> and I need a lot of money soon...(Student 6)

The next interview represents the lack of a sense about career and work until the first two years in university.

I have never thought about a sense of work and career until this seminar started at third year. I had been confused very much because I couldn't understand how to think deeply, nor if I needed to think more deeply. Probably, I had been thinking only around surface of everything. I had played my head off in those two years, and more accurately, I have had a half-hearted attitude for 20 years (since birth to now). Only one thing that I remember as a kind of hard ship in 20 years might be preparing the entrance exams to university. Just might be.(Student 7)

The final example of this category is the interviewee that describes the difficulty to overcome the relationship with parents. Student 8 has avoided troubled discussions with desirable careers, by preparation of easy answers to respond to their questions. Strong opposition to parents' desires failed to surface as the student preferred to give up self-ideals to appease parents. Compliance to parent's wishes resulted in harmony in the family.

My parents have been asking me to be a teacher, because one of them is a teacher. Due to their story, I

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<sup>8</sup> According to the story of this student, developing to about 23, if possible to 37 years old.

thought that I had to be a teacher, without hoping to be something myself. The other relatives advised me to be a government-employee. I have been just thinking about succession to my parents in a year and found that I replied to my parents 'I will be a teacher....', because I let them understand. To say the truth, I don't want to be a teacher so much. In other words, the answer was the words which I could make them keep silence to my life. They might gain the peace of knowing my disguised answer and don't try to say any more at that time.

I have been facing such kind of situations since elementary schooldays. I know, it is really important for me, but now I tend to confuse it with non-serious issue. I behave by saying, no more! No more about it! They have always been saying, a good university, a good company or stable government-employee! I cannot think of suggestions positively. I don't think that I want work any more when they talk about their wishes just before going out with my friends. (Student 8)

The students in this category cannot proceed with their own career because they have little will power to do what they really want to do. They might set a goal which they can easily achieve instead of their true ideals. They are unmotivated and hide their desires and avoid difficulties, because they have no confidence to face these issues.

The reasons why they lack confidence to make a step forward to their ideal career could be: lack of hard experiences and circumstances; someone or something influence them to take the easy paths, people who disregard their wishes without listening and thinking about underlying issues in regard to their decisions and career choices.

### **Cadets: 6 participants**

Due to the result from students, the research was moved on to the professional training school in spring2006. Questions (6 to 8) about obtaining self-confidence were conducted with professional cadets.

For example, how to react in the same situations as previous failures (for example: question 6); how to manage new issues (for example: question 7). Consequently, none of cadets replied that they lacked self-confidence in decision-making and taking actions in the training context relating to their career.

According to the data, their confidence in managing difficulties and failure is a result of their strong mind, that they are conscious of the worse situations and the impact on other members. Moreover, three factors have been found in obtaining self-confidence coping with difficulties: coincidental actions, support and strong connections with other people, and preparation to possible failure.

#### **1. self-confidence; facing the new issues with strong mind**

All students expressed their thoughts when they face difficulties in the context of training and school life. The responses to question 6 indicate that some of them often imagine the worst scenario, but believe that they are better than it. The following story demonstrates that the cadet became strong-minded against failure through communication with older cadets, by comparing worse situations.

I became to recognize that experience is more than nothing, even when I fear failure. I usually feared failure in a flurry before. But I don't have resistance to buckle down against cautions by officers. I think it is natural for us to fail. Older cadets could make me have such a feeling. They have trained in more demanding situations both mentally and physically. I'm training under a better environment with less penalties than theirs. (Cadet 1)

The next cadet talks about self-confidence in all behavioral contexts. It shows also the worst situation as death. Their confidence could be created by the good lessons in the book and words of others.

I'm confident. When I have to make a decision I always follow the stance, 'doing such a thing shall not end up in death!' That is to say, my decision is better than my death. I'm confident in this meaning. I have read a book showing the sentences; life is one-time-only. I tend to remember and follow it in facing the hard stuff. (Cadet 2)

The situations which cadets are tackling might be made by teachers and older cadets deliberately, in order to create opportunities to attain a strong mind to end up the conditions. Cadet 3 explains regret and strong desire to seek the next challenge, after losing the teacher's trust after making a mistake.

I have made many mistakes. The day before yesterday, my teacher on watch took away my right of handling three times while I played the role of captain. The teacher cautioned me that I let our ship near the other ship I didn't understand a little bit, but it was estimated by a professional officer. However, I want to continue my handling if possible because the teacher allowed me to make my own choice at first. If I would face the same situation, I will never let the teacher regard me as incompetent and take my role away. (Cadet 3)

In this category, the interviews indicate that the cadets are confident when they have to face difficulties in practical contexts. As for mental conditions, they are strong-minded to overcome fear of failure, consciously of the worse situations and the relation to other members.



Therefore, they might become confident in relation to their own competence through their circumstances provided by teachers and other cadets.

## **2. Factors creating self-confidence to take action**

Three factors could be found in developing self-confidence in making-decisions; taking action without stopping to think; support by others; and preparation for the next challenge.

- **Coincidental actions**

During observations, cadets were always moving around and using equipment, appearing confident as they worked. Cadet 1 described the situation that they could tackle the tasks without thinking the reasons and procedures. The cadet created their confidence, in escaping from wondering.

When we went into the port today, the teacher suddenly selected me to play the role of captain suddenly. I had to give some orders to everyone. I didn't think seriously about it before that, but the orders must have been fast. I always suggest to myself that I can do it, so my body would move without thinking. I didn't remember anything about the reason why I could complete the task. I have made mistakes. But I often fail when I tried to think about the procedure before action because I might be too careful in many things. Anyway action is first even if I don't know anything about it. (Cadet 2)

Cadet 2 continues the story about the factor influencing this behavioral feature.

When I was in high school, I didn't often need to move my body. However, we have to tackle practical training in this university, so I have trained my mind and style of actions from think first to move first. When I was working at training, someone advised me to remember and to move without thinking too deeply. I could understand meaning later, for example by checking a textbook or lectures, etc. The outcome will reveal itself to me after trying. I was able to change my style of behavior in this university. (Cadet 2)

- **Support and strong connections with teachers and other cadets**

There are frequent communications in the professional training school creating dependable relations between them. Cadet 4 talked about support by teachers and older cadets in the first practice.

Teachers can teach man to man on this ship. They tend to teach me again and again. I feel I can do anything. They might follow my small mistakes, so I challenge everything with my own decision. I'm really realizing that I could handle this ship. It's very interesting and a really great experience for me! I could practice and learn more than the other students who are staying on land, especially practicing what we

have learned before. Today, I steered the ship in a circle by giving orders to everyone including older cadets. That was my first experience. At first, the teacher showed by the example, and then ordered me to do it. Anyway, I tried to remember what he said and say the same thing...I didn't know the adequate timing of orders, but the ship moved forward against our desirable course. The teacher advised me to make quick decisions. I relied on him to check and modify my decisions. I tried what I decided even though I made mistakes. I cannot say no, if teachers ordered me to do it. I became more familiar with doing the task after giving three orders, but the direction of the wind changed and put the ship out of gear. The captain came and advised me to handle without a compass. I was concerned if I could do it without the compass. I just relied on the captain and teachers after that. I expected them to modify my mistakes....I couldn't do it by myself but with supporters, I could complete the task. They always order immediately without wondering, they look confident and make me feel good. At last in batonpassing, I had to memorize what I had to say to the next cadet, but I forgot everything when I did. About the situation around the ship, unfortunately there were many ships to check out the distances and positions. When I lost the way, the teacher said it instead of me. He helped me. (at this situation, the researcher checked the relationship between the teacher and cadet 4, and asked about one of the behaviors by the teacher to the cadet, 'what did you think of the teacher's advice; say louder, be confident!') I don't remember well the advice. I have got such advices so often. When I hear the advice, I think I have to say confidently and independently. I could be dropping my voice. (So the advice by the teacher encourages you, doesn't it?) Yes, better than before. Unfortunately, I always remember it afterwards. (Cadet 4)

In addition, cadet 2 pointed out that there is valuable communications and connections between teachers and cadets that make them relaxed and trust each other.

We are strongly connected in this school. Everyone knows each other like family. Not in public, but somewhere in a private group...off course, it might give both merits and demerits. Anyway, we rely on each other. I have never had such a connection to friends and teachers in high school. I can speak about my personal issues to my friends or teachers here. (Cadet 2)

- **Preparation to every possible failure**

Cadets could develop their confidence by preparing for future challenges and avoiding fear and failure. They might prepare in three ways; observation of teachers and other cadets as role models; clarifying with others; and taking notes.

### **Observation**

Executing tasks is really important, but I cannot always do it for myself, so I would anticipate the next procedure before the actions, referring to cases by older cadets who have done it in ahead of me. For

example, I would be puzzled to come up with a bowline bend if an officer ordered it suddenly, but I would do well soon because of predictions. Today, it was the first time to attend the windlass in the heaving cable. I have conducted the task after observing for a few years, guessing the procedure. (Cadet 3)

### **Asking someone or research into books**

The next interviews show that cadet collect the information relating to past tasks and failures in order to prepare for the next chance to tackle it by themselves. They ask questions to officers and others who know better than them. Some of them think it is important to research and confirm through books.

In the next passage, learning through obtaining answers from others is helpful for tackling challenges, despite being advised to think before asking.

Basically, I ask someone who knows better than me, when I wonder what I have to do, even though I don't know thoroughly. Sometimes teachers think that I'm asking without thinking of issues deeply, so they don't tell me anything. Anyway, it is natural for us to make an error with our limited capacity, but I would like to avoid failing, if possible. It might be better to fail a little bit after getting some hints than failing without knowing anything. I usually ask teachers something, call somewhere... Actually, I'm afraid of failure, but advice from teachers could be right at least. I could come up with it without worrying about the possibility of failure, because I consider it to be the non-failing way. (Cadet 5)

The other cadet discusses about conducting research at the library or the other textbooks that could help their confidence before the next challenge.

When I was a freshman, I didn't have any pre-knowledge like the other cadets. Some of them knew well before entering university. I worried about my ability to catch up to them when the major course started in fall semester. So I was researching at a library independently later the classes with difficult technical terms, but lots of information was provided. I could eliminate my anxiety about unknown things and my ability. I have gone to the library so often since then. (Cadet 1)

### **Take notes**

During observations, cadet 4 took notes on watch. In the interview, cadet 4 expressed the reason for doing so as follows. Taking notes supports the cadets to tackle the next challenging tasks.

I tried to take notes that would prevent me from forgetting. I have a bad memory, so I really need notes. I always forget what I have learned soon unless I write it down. (Cadet 4)

## Discussion

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The results of this research broaden the understanding of how young Japanese people, especially university students, struggle with the issues of career and prepare for work.

This research discovered several remarkable points. Firstly, the students had already realized the importance of work. All student and cadet interviewees answered that they had realized the importance of work since their childhood or before their third-year at university. Consistent with latest literature on conception of work and career in the education and business, the findings suggest that most of the university students have already acquired the importance of work. In addition, the findings pointed out that their realization resulted from approach by family, adults and friends around them.

Secondly, this research revealed the same phenomena in Japanese university students (motivated group) as NEETs who have obtained the sense of the importance of work, but can not take the first step towards their intended career paths because of fear of failure. They might be called as potential NEETs, stated by Kudoh (2005). Potential NEETs are people tend to behave like NEETs even in companies and universities. Moreover, consistent with Krumboltz and Levin (2004), the results revealed the importance to overcome obstacles inside their mind, in taking the first step towards their career. The student interviews showed the fear of failure prevented them from taking the first step to their career, on the other hand, the cadet data indicated how to take away the mind problems and prepare to challenge the next opportunity.

Thirdly, counseling style of interview spent their time to obtain their self-awareness and also allowed the researcher to observe the students more effectively in relation to their demeanor. A considerable difference between the university students and the cadets was noticed when discussing the issues of identifying a career path and the steps necessary to action such a career. In essence, the cadets appeared far more confident in their choices and decision-making process in relation to their career. Professional cadets appeared to be able to decide more clearly and concisely the necessary action required toward their career path. In addition, they were able to make autonomous decisions or at the very least were able to make decisions after seeking guidance from families and teachers. It appears that professional officers were more adept in proceeding to the next level towards a career path even though at times they may have been a little confused or unsure of their direction. Throughout interviews and discussions on watch (on duty) these cadets usually appeared decisive and confident in their career choices. However, they gave feedback to the researcher that they could have precious opportunities because it has been a while since I deeply disclosed their feelings. In contrast, most of the students at first appeared a despondent suspiciously, when

asked about their next step towards a career, even though their response elevated after answering cheerfully what they wanted to be after graduating university. Some of the students were unable to answer about their career path. However at later stages of the interview they gradually got used to the environment that the researcher has never estimated their abilities nor given any opinion to them, and then they were able to talk about their feelings and confusions about school life and career images from the bottom of their mind. Therefore, these counseling style of interviews were able to assist their reflections to attain the self-knowledge, specifically in researching the art students.

Finally, according to the cadets data, this research could show that formal counseling program and rooms in university programs couldn't be required if supporters such as family, teachers and friends would have counseling skills; at least listening skills to young Japanese people's feelings. In other words, adults around young Japanese people need professional training or at least active listening skills and mind, in coming up with counseling in usual situations of career development. This point can partly agree with the theories (Azuma & Adachi, 2003) that insisted that schools needed these programs and rooms at school.

### **Future Issues**

The findings of this investigation point to several important directions for future research.

This research described the importance of confidence and the lack of it in decision-making, however were not be able to discuss the connections between the self-efficacy in career development theorized by Bandura (1986) and other followers. The young Japanese peoples' origins of decision making and their self-confidence would be important area for future inquiry to analyze by self-efficacy.

Two different environments not clearly described by this research, especially communication between young Japanese people and others around them, merit further inquiry. Influences on the self-confidence and reflections to obtain their self-awareness would be important to explore. For example, how do new students get familiar with the each context? How do the cadets and students realize and try to reflect to attain the self-awareness if they exchange the environment each other?

As suggested by this research, an understanding of the counseling style communications and the usual situations in which at very least active listening skills are embedded, is necessary to fully understand their career support process. Thus, it is important to examine the domain of career counseling that was uncovered in this investigation together with communication skills in young Japanese peoples' environmental context (i.e., family school, community, society and culture, etc.).

## **Limitations**

The domains of young Japanese people's career development uncovered in this research were based on the one time interview responses as to most of interviewees, thereby limiting time to continuously developing career. It is important to monitor their behavior and interview further. Second, given the interview nature of responses, the quality of the responses may have been influenced by the young people's talking ability and experiences of reflections. Third, only one side data source was used, even though the interview was conducted at both art and science at universities. If we had also collected information from parents and teachers, these multiple sources of information may have further illuminates the findings.

## **Conclusion**

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This research marks the first extensive examination of young Japanese people's career development. Important domains of the career process were identified that add to the literature of Japanese career education and business. Our findings support and extend Kudoh(2005), Kanai(2002) and Krumbolts & Levin (2004) by affirming the presence of dimensions of the awareness stage and suggesting alternative conceptualizations of how these factors constructs than originally recognized. Continuous research on the process of young Japanese people's career development can contribute to the theoretical and practical impact to inform career counseling practice.

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<Table 1> Realizing the work importance>

(participants: 16 cadets / 12 students )

| When they realized it?                             | Cadets | Students |
|--|--------|----------|
| Their own childhood<br>or before university        | 12     | 8        |
| During university<br>(before 3 <sup>rd</sup> year) | 2      | 4        |
| How they realized it?                              | Cadets | Students |
| Parents and adults around us                       | 16     | 16       |
| Geographical characteristics<br>around house       | 1      | 0        |