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Research Note

An examination of the vocational education and training system under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties:
—Based on an interview with an electrician in Denmark—

Professor, Faculty of Lifelong Learning and Career Studies, Hosei University

Miki TSUTSUI

1. Purpose

This note is mainly for the readers who are unfamiliar with and are interested in the Danish IVET system, which is the upper secondary level vocational education and training, for both youth and adults. This note has two purposes: (1) to describe of how an individual is ‘using’ the IVET system in one’s career, and (2) to offer a few thoughts on the conditions under which people can choose career change and development with less difficulties¹. This note discerns “IVET=Initial Vocational Education and Training (system)” from “initial vocational education and training (system)”. The former is a proper noun, the latter a general noun.

In the modern societies vocational skills and technologies not only have

¹ This note is one of the outcomes of “Sociological Research on the Employment Support Policy and Practice Programmed in the Revitalization of Local Industry and Community” (project leader: Miki TSUTSUI), Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (c), No.17K04711, funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science from FY2017 to FY2019.
developed in very complicated ways, but also they are likely to become soon obsolescent. With this a given, working people are sometimes to be required to change/develop or at least to think of changing/developing their career, or they may find the job they want to do and be eager to hope to change their career. But it is not so easy for them to change or develop their career because making a clear projection for their future career is difficult (Fitzgerald 2006), due to the complexity of the occupational structure, the less stable employment system, the incessant change in the labour markets, and ultimately, the endlessness of the question of “what my life is for,” all of which put financial, temporal, and psychological burdens on them.

Then, what are the conditions under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties? This argument is important because it is related not only to a more effective vocational education and training system, but also to the civil/social rights to the pursuit of happiness, to work, to lifelong learning, and to a career (Suwa 1999, 2017). This note tries to give some provisional thoughts to the question above through a case study of an electrician who changed her career by using the Danish IVET system. Again, because this system is the upper secondary level for youth and adults, the implication of this note may be to some extent limited to blue-collar workers and service workers.

When it comes to an effective vocational education and training system, Japanese are very likely to think of in-house (within firm) training. In contrast, Continental Europeans are likely to think, “then, I will have to enroll

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2 Even though it is not the theme of this note to explain what the “right to a career” is, it is the right which founds an individual’s pursuit and development of one’s career and consists of the right to a life career and the right to a work career (Suwa 2017, p.167, translation by the author). The core of the right to a work career is the right to work and the corollary of the right to a work career is reinforced by the right to education/learning and the right to organize (pp.176-177).
in a vocational school,” or, “I will attend a vocational school, work and get paid as an apprentice (trainee).” This holds true not only of the adolescence but also of the early and late adulthood. In other words, it is taken for granted to take vocational education and training at school throughout a lifetime. This sense of taken-for-grantedness seems to often connote “an undoubted right for citizen,” as the electrician the author interviewed said casually, “education is the right for workers.”

For a scholar to study any foreign education system, he/she needs to gather and understand the very basic factual contents and then to describe it scrupulously to his/her home readers. He/she often reads the governmental official documents and data either on paper or on line, or conducts research interviews with the officials, teachers, and sometimes students/workers. This process is so much time consuming and the space assigned is so much limited that his/her paper is likely to end up with giving an outline of the education system in question.

Indeed, to offer an outline of the education system in question is necessary. However, even if it is written with careful description and clear explanation of its institutional and functional dimensions (Shimauchi 2015; Aoki 2017a, b), it is not easy for the home readers to hold a lively image of how an individual is ‘using’ the education system of a foreign country.

In the modern societies education gives important influences to one’s work career for a long period (Honda ed. 2018). Therefore, to describe them from the stand point of ‘users’ is important, and the so much more it is when it comes to the vocational education and training system which is a lifelong one. With an oral or career history of the older worker/students the readers will be able to have a livelier image (Mikuriya 2004, Tsutsui 2016) of how the vocational education and training system in question functions. Moreover, the author thinks that this way will be compatible to generating a few thoughts on the conditions under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties, the second purpose of this note.
But due to the characteristics of the interviewee’s career, this paper cannot mention the career change of the unemployed.

2. Data and Methods

The career history data this note employs was gathered from the interview with a 40 year-old\textsuperscript{3} female electrician, who changed her career (again) in her late thirties. The interview with her, Lotte\textsuperscript{4}, was conducted on September 15th, November 3rd, and December 2nd and 18th in 2018, respectively for 150 minutes, 70 minutes, 20 minutes, and 15 minutes, without using IC recording for the reason to keep an easy atmosphere, but with taking field notes. She gave the author her CV (Curriculum Vitas = personal history) and some documents on the curriculum.

The author and she have known each other since March 2018, when making a contract for the small apartment in Lyngby (see Figure 1), to the northwest of Copenhagen (she is the landlord)\textsuperscript{5}. Since then, the author and she sometimes have talked about the work and life of each other and the Danish and Japanese societies. That is, the author could get to know “who she is” to some extent through daily casual conversation before the interview above. The conversation was in English, for she speaks it as fluently as many Danish do and the author is very poor at speaking Danish.

The author also refers to the website of the Ministry of Education of Denmark and EURYDICE-Denmark.

In the following section, this note briefly describes the career history of the interviewee, then it goes to the discussion showing a few thoughts (section 4)

\textsuperscript{3} As of September/2018.

\textsuperscript{4} Her real (first) name, with her permission. Here the author would like to thank her for her willing consent to using her career history.

\textsuperscript{5} Lyngby is a suburban area and it is about 20 minutes from the Copenhagen Central Station by train. Now Lotte lives in Frederiksberg, to the west of Copenhagen.
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and in the last section offers some provisional remarks.

3. Career History of the Interviewee

3-1. Before enrolling in TEC to become an electrician

Table 1 is a brief time line of Lotte’s life. She was born in South Korea between Korean parents in 1978. Only in three months she was adopted by a Danish married couple and moved to Aalborg, located in the northeastern part of Jutland (see Figure 2). She neither knows her real parents nor understands Korean.

She went to a folkeskole (0th to 9th grades), to a 10th grade, and to a gymnasium (10th to 12th grades) in Aalborg. “I was not doing so well at school,” so she quit the gymnasium for one year. After quitting she began to

6 In Figure 3, folkeskole is “primary and lower secondary education” and gymnasium is “general and vocational upper secondary education” in the left column.
7 Students can choose voluntarily to enroll in the 10th grade for various reasons such as taking more time to think about their career, experiencing art and music activities, and raising their grade point for satisfying the enrollment eligibility.
work as a salesperson in a clothing store and experienced various jobs: amateur jocky, messause, and waitress etc.. During this period she also attended a school for a chirophysiological muscle therapist for a year, from 1999 to 2000 (20-21 or 21-22 years old), the tuition of which was paid by the kommune (=municipality) where she lived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Brief Career History of the Interviewee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(drawn up from the interview and the documents Lotte offered.) D.R.=don’t remember

“This was one of the youth programmes of the kommune, but now doesn’t exist. I didn’t know what I should do, so I joined it for the time being. I learned how to massage, but also learned a bone structure, it was difficult.” The municipality seemed to intend to make youth doing temporary jobs more stable in the labour markets through providing them of vocational training and education. “But a messause had to work very long, needed stamina. So I quit.”
Tired of several years’ job hopping, when thinking of a different work and life career, one of her friends suggested her to go to a vocational school for a prison officer (criminelse uddannelse) and she decided to go there. Lotte attended the school with apprenticeship for three years, at age of 23-26. The facility was located to the west of Copenhagen. She did not have to pay the tuition because the government paid for it. After the completion, she began to work as a regular prison officer.

She worked there for ten years and at the same time continued to work on “double shift,” that is, also worked as a helper for the handicapped, a

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8 According to Lotte, this school for a prison officer is positioned outside of the system shown in Figure 3.
messause, a yoga instructor, a receptionist at a fitness gym, etc. “My salary was not so high and I needed an extra work and I like to work hard. Sixty hours a week.”

After ten years working as a prison officer, she went into her late thirties. Again she started thinking of changing her career. Then another close friend of hers who is an 3-4 years older electrician⁹ and had seen through that Lotte was skillful with her fingers said, “you have good hands. Why don’t you be an electrician?” With this important suggestion she made a resolution to become an electrician and visited some technical schools in order to decide which school was the best.

These technical schools supply the initial vocational education and training for both youth and adults (over 25 years old). The IVET for youth, the ordinary IVET, is categorized as EUD in the mainstream education system, while the IVET for adults, as EUV in the professional and vocational adult education shown in Figure 3. The programmes of EUV lead to the same level (the European Qualification Framework (EQF) 3-5) and same final test as ordinary IVET programmes¹⁰. The enrollers in EUD don’t have to pay the tuition. The enrollers in EUV don’t have to pay the tuition when affiliated with their employer.

After visiting some schools and talking with the instructors, she decided to go to TEC, located to the west of Copenhagen (in Frederiksberg). From the standpoint of curriculum, the school in Hadsten (located in the northeastern Jutland, see Figure 2) was the best, she thought, but thinking of the moving

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⁹ This man is now in the managerial position after finishing some further education on management in a business school.

¹⁰ By the reform of VET (EUD=Erhversuddannelse, in Danish) law of Aug/01/2015, the vocational training for adults (EUV=Erhversuddannelse for Voksne over 25 aar, in Danish) was established. Adult students can omit or reduce the basic programme and/or internship when their work and education experience are considered as sufficient enough.
and living costs, she chose TEC near Copenhagen, which she could access easily from her house.

3-2. Basic Programme for an electrician at TEC

The IVET has the highly standardized national curriculum (Shimauchi 2015, Ministry of Education 2018). The IVET is divided into four main subject areas: (a) care, health and pedagogy, (b) administration, commerce and business service, (c) food, agriculture and hospitality, (d) technology, construction and transportation. Each main subject is divided into various sub-subjects. The programmes for electrician are positioned in one of the sub-subjects of (d) technology, construction and transportation.

Whichever subject/sub-subject one chooses and whichever schools one enrolls in, he/she goes through the common framework of curriculum: from the basic programme (course #1 and #2) to the main programme. Further, some sub-subjects have the special programme followed by the main programme (Shimauchi 2015, p.75). This note will refer to one special programme later, where Lotte is enrolling now.\footnote{As of October/29/2018.}

Because the first part of the basic programme (20 weeks) is for students who have just finished compulsory educations\footnote{According to the Ministry of Education, the basic course #1 “will give the student a broad vocational knowledge and competences. The student will get an overview of the different programmes in order to choose the right vocational education and training.” http://eng.uvm.dk/upper-secondary-education/vocational-education-and-training-in-denmark (access on Nov/05/2018)}, older (adult) students like Lotte cannot (or don’t have to) attend it. Therefore, she directly enrolled in the second part of basic programme (20 weeks), which started in April/2016, shown in Table 2.

Her class started with 22 students, a majority of them was 18-20 years old,
but only 9 students could finish and move to the main programme: 13 students failed, that is, the dropout rate is 59.1%. In contrast, the dropouts from the main course of her class were only 1 or 2 students. The high dropout rate is not limited to her class of basic programme. It is a general phenomenon of the whole IVET and it has been perceived as seriously problematic by the national government (Shimauchi 2017).

According to her experience, students who had difficulties in following the class were not only poor at mathematics and physics, but also were often late and absent for school (the class begins at 7:45 a.m.) and reluctant to do their homework. This observation of hers corresponds to the fact that the

Table 2  Lotte’s Schedule for Basic, Main, and Special Programmes for Electrician

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Y/M/D of Education</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Work period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016/04/12-2016/10/28</td>
<td>20w Basic #2</td>
<td>2015/02/17 J J Elektric 2017/05/11</td>
<td>14M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/08/07-2017/11/24</td>
<td>12w Main</td>
<td>2017/05/12 SIF Gruppen</td>
<td>6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/10/29-2018/11/23</td>
<td>4W Special programme ① automatic systems of building</td>
<td></td>
<td>3M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/02/18-2019/03/15</td>
<td>4W ② CTS (Computerized Typesetting System)</td>
<td></td>
<td>13M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/09/02-2019/09/27</td>
<td>4W ③ Scada (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition)</td>
<td>19 M</td>
<td>3M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/10/28-2019/11/22</td>
<td>4W ④ integration and energy effect system of the building management</td>
<td></td>
<td>6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/03/09-2020/04/03</td>
<td>4W ⑤ clean technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/04/14-2020/05/12</td>
<td>4W ⑥ technical contract and project management</td>
<td></td>
<td>3M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(length: 4 years and 1 month)

(drawn up from the interview and the documents Lotte offered.)
ministry began the educational reform such as setting up the “bridge building programme” for the students with difficulties in basic cognitive skills and lifestyle (Shimauchi 2017, 2018).

Whereas the basic programme is a school-based course, the main programme is built upon the dual principle, where the students alternate between school and apprenticeship. Each student is to make a contract for apprenticeship with an employer.

Lotte’s case is interesting. As shown in Table 1, she already had got employed as an apprentice in a small electric company named J.J Elektric in February/2015 before she enrolled in the basic programme-course #2 in April/2016. Why had this company employed and paid her apprentice-wage, even before the vocational training started? As she said, “when I started working in this company, I did not know anything about how electricians work, so I observed what my colleagues do and followed them and learned how-to”--- why had she been employed? According to her, companies in general seek “mature workers,” who are not late and absent for work without sufficient reasons and who are responsible for his/her tasks. “The company hired me, judging from my CV and my age, thinking that I would be a good employee.”

After all, she kept hired in this small company for 2 years and 3 months, from February/17/2015 to May/15/2017. Looking more closely at Table 2, after 14 months working she enrolled in the basic programme #2 for 20 weeks, then went back to this company, worked for 6 months, and quit it. Asked whether her boss was angry or sad with only 6 months working after her completion of IVET, “Yes, he was sad. But I wanted to work at a different company. No problem.” Asked whether the length of service (work) after finishing IVET was stipulated in the employment contract between this company and her, “No.”
3-3. Main and Special Programmes for electrician at TEC

On May/16/2017 she moved to a medium-sized company named SIF Gruppen, with 400 employees and only 3 months after, in August/2017, enrolled in the main programme. She completed it in November/2017. “With this education one can become only an ordinary electrician. In order to be a technical electrician, I need to complete the special programme.”

By the word “ordinary electrician,” she means an electrician with level 3 of the EQF (European Qualification Framework), “elmontør” in Danish, and by the word “technical electrician,” level 4. An ordinary electrician (elmontør) draws cables and installs devises, in other words, he/she is a work-site operator, while a technical electrician is engaged in designing, programming, planning, management, and so on. Lotte says, “For example, I worked for a project at a nursing home for elder people. I installed the electronic sensor in the floor. It is controlled by the central station and people can monitor by iPhone. It’s amazing.” “So I got much more interested in programming than drawing cables and installing microchips. So I decided to enroll in the special programme.”

As she told in the sub-section 3.1, she had not been so good at school, in a folkeskole and a gymnasium. Then, what made her change this way, to an earnest learner? “I met an excellent teacher at TEC. He knows everything about electricity and very good at teaching. He doesn’t use computer. He uses an old-fashioned ruler slide! He’s so smart.” “For the first time I knew how interesting the study is, how interesting electricity is.”

That is, she decided to take the special programme in order to step up to a technical electrician when she was learning in the basic programme-course.

13 There are various types of technical (level 4) electricians: according to the Certificate Supplement of EURYDICE (http://certsupp.uds.dk/), for example, “Electrician specialising in communication and security technology (Elektriker med speciale i kommunikations- og sikringsteknik),” “Electrician specialising in light and energy technology (Elektriker med speciale i lys- og energiteknik).”
and working in a small company. This decision is before she was employed by the medium-sized company she is now working for. “The employment contract includes my enrolling in the main and special programmes.” This company, SIF Gruppen, employed Lotte with a view to schooling her. So she didn’t have to pay the tuition\textsuperscript{14}.

Thinking logically, schooling their employees does not cost little because during their schooling companies cannot make them work. The fact that even so SIF Gruppen has invested in her may suggest that in general it is not so easy for electric companies to find and hire more skilled technicians. The labour shortage for “middle-skills” workers, due to the technological development and the retirement of the older generation, has been a big challenge in many advanced societies (ex. Accenture, Burning Glass Technology and Harvard Business School 2014).

As shown in Table 2, the special programme is composed of six periods (modules) of school-based education and five periods training at the workplace. Whereas each period of school-based education is 4 weeks (5 days=32 hours per week), the period of training at the workplace vary in its length, from 10 days to 9 months. As a whole, it takes 19 months for her to complete the special programme, the ratio of the periods of school to that of work is 6 months : 13 months \textasciitilde 1:2.

The six modules are: “automatic systems of building,” “CTS (Computerized Typesetting System),” “Scada (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition),” “integration and energy effect system of the building management,” “clean technology,” and “technical contract and project management.” At the end of each module there is an examination or a test evaluated by the “seven point

\textsuperscript{14} “Even if employers don’t agree to schooling their workers, workers have the right to ask their employers day off for schooling, workers have to pay the tuition themselves, though,” Mrs. Lene Kolind, a retired Folkeskole teacher explained to me (December/03/2018).
Now (as of December 2018) Lotte finished the first school period, the module of “automatic systems of building,” where she designed as her project the lighting system which is more friendly for the elder people with dementia. “Elder people with dementia sometimes forget where the room light switch is. So I designed the lightning system, when entering their room and standing at a particular space in front of their bed, then the light is on. They can choose the switching options.” She explained this design in the oral examination and got the highest grade.

4. Discussion
This note is being written at the very timing when Lotte finished the first module of the special programme. While further additional interviews are needed, let us go to a few thoughts on the conditions under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties. Again, because the IVET system is the upper secondary level for youth and adults, the implication of this note may be to some extent limited to blue-collar workers and service workers. The author thinks that there are at least five conditions for it.

(1) the visibility of the relevance (Honda 2009) between learning/qualification and job/competency. With this, learners/workers can make a

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15 This scale consists of 12, 10, 7, 4, 02, 00, -3. The highest is 12. 00 and -3 mean failure.

16 According to her, if she gets the highest grades of all the modules, she will be awarded a gold medal from the Queen. “But the second module, which will begin next February, CTS, is very difficult. It’s programming.”

After she completes the special programme, her salary will be given a rise of 2,000DKK a month and reach about 30,000-32,000DKK. According to her, the salary of public school teachers is about 27,000-28,000DKK and that of TEC teachers is about 23,000-24,000DKK.
clearer projection for one’s future vocational career, while an employer can understand his/her labor demand with the “common language,” that is, curriculum, shared with the people. In the Lotte’s case, once she had decided to become an (technical) electrician, she began to search some schools and programmes and companies, while the employers could expect what she would become able to do after completing the basic, main and/or special programmes. That is, this visibility can contribute to make the transition from school to work and from work to school more functional. To keep this visibility, in Denmark the people concerned try to make sure that “qualifications and skills are closely related to curriculum and length of education” (Suzuki 2010, p.47, translation by the author).

(2) the reliability of qualification. Unless a qualification guarantees the competence of the graduates, the first condition will be undermined. This reliability can be kept partly by failing the incompetent who did not reach the minimum requirements at the journeyman’s completion tests or a similar examination, and partly by making sure the completion test or the examination are practical and relevant. In case of Lotte’s class, about 60% dropped out from the basic programme-course #2 and only 1 or 2 students dropped out from the main programme. And at the completion examination of her first module of the special programme she designed and explained the light system which satisfied elders’ needs. How can be this severe evaluation and this practical and relevant examination possible? As Shimauchi (2015, pp.75-76) suggests, it is through the corporatist governance over the IVET. That is, the curriculum development and the execution of examinations and tests are conducted by employers and labour unions outside schools as well as instructors inside schools.\(^\text{17}\)

(3) the module type curriculum, by which students/apprentices can break down the final goal into some sub-goals and can advance gradually. In the

\(^{17}\) Needless to say, its high dropout rate itself is problematic.
IVET system it takes students/apprentices to spend 3 to 5 years with both learning/schooling and working. In Lotte’s case, it is to take about 4 years, from the basic programme-course #2 (April/2016) to the last module of the special programme (May/2020). This is never a short term, but a very long one, and it requires them to be patient without haste. Therefore, it is rational and practical that the IVET curriculum by piecemeal consists of the basic, main, and special programmes, each of which is composed of some modules. The module type curriculum is a good way to encourage them to keep going bit by bit inside the track (Fitzgerald 2006).

(4) the accessibility of education and training in financial, temporal, and psychological terms. This accessibility needs to be secure for both learners/workers and employers. The Danish IVET does not require students/apprentices the tuition, as for EUV, when affiliated with an employer. And employers are to pay them the prescribed apprentice wage, which is to be refunded from the fund named “Arbeidsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag” (Shimauchi 2015). The reduction of financial burden of both sides is considered to be critically important because it reduces the temporal and psychological burdens, in other words, increases the incentives for leaners/workers to enroll in schools and for employers to invest to VET. This is so much more important, thinking of the Danish labour market where employers can easily hire and fire their employees/workers (Hamaguchi 2007). Employees/workers have the right to protect their careers through the (vocational) education and training (Suwa 2017) free of cost or at a low price. But the challenge for this is that the worker’s right for education is difficult to be separated from the labour demands in the tendency of neo-liberal policy (Suzuki 2010).

(5) good chances to take career consulting. As mentioned in the first section, it is not easy for working people to change or develop their career because making a clear projection for their future career is difficult due to the complexity of the occupational structure, the less stable employment
system, the incessant change in the labour markets, and ultimately the endlessness of the question of "what my life is for". Therefore, many working people need good career consultants, who are skillful for finding their vocational aptitudes based on the vast and relevant knowledge on various occupations and labour markets, and helping people clarify how and why they want to live and work. Lotte happened to have a close friend who is an older electrician seeing through her aptitudes and who advised her. However, not everyone is as lucky as she. For this reason, career consultants need to be activated in the local community. They need to have psychological knowledge and counseling skills, but it is not enough: they need not only to have relevant knowledge on the local community but also to have lively social network in it, including companies, schools, voluntary associations and so on (Osaka Human Rights Center for Human Resource and Workforce Development ed. 2005). It is not too much to say the importance of this point, thinking that there is a strong tendency of psychologism in Japan (Ozawa and Nakajima 2004, Saito 2009).

5. Provisional Concluding Remark

So far this note has tried to give some thoughts on the conditions under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties. Conditions (1) (2) and (3) are more related to the educational and industrial functionality, whereas conditions (4) and (5) are more related to the civil/social rights. The author provisionally makes the following remark.

It is necessary to ask whether and to what extent the dual system or apprenticeship in question is in a broad sense guaranteeing one's life, including learning with working or working with learning (Tanaka 2007). More generalized, the arguments on the public education need to include how to realize of guaranteeing one's life in a broad sense.

In Japan the arguments and practices on the dual system or apprenticeship are likely to focus on the effects in workforce and industrial development.
Indeed, it is important that the vocational education and training system functions well in the economy. But also the society should guarantee its citizens the civil/social rights to the pursuit of happiness, to work, to lifelong learning, and to a career (Suwa 1998, 2017). Such a society will be a one where many ordinary workers like Lotte say casually, “education is the right for workers,” a society where “the employment practice has been developed which respects and embodies the right to a work career” (Suwa 2017, p.185).

With a poor standpoint of view as for civil/social rights, the arguments on the vocational education and training are likely to converge to the efficiency of the labour markets and the worker’s rights above are likely to be ignored. Of course, no one can choose entirely freely his/her vocational education and training as if he/she were in the vacuum, because any vocational education and training system cannot be designed with ignorance of the existing labour demands. However, not only by the functionality but also by the universality of the vocational education and training system, more people will be encouraged to develop their career.

Reference (All in Japanese, except for Acccenture et al. (2014) and Fitzgerald (2006), the Japanese titles were translated by the author)

Accenture, Burning Glass Technologies and Harvard Business School 2014 Bridge the Gap: Rebuilding America’s Middle Skills
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ABSTRACT

An examination of the vocational education and training system under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties:

Based on an interview with an electrician in Denmark

Miki TSUTSUI

The purpose of this note is (1) to describe how an individual is ‘using’ the Danish IVET system in one’s career, and (2) to offer some thoughts on the conditions under which working people can choose career change and development with less difficulties. In the complicated modern societies, they are sometimes required to (at least think of) career change or development, but it is not so easy for them to do it. For this reason the author tries to give some provisional thoughts for question (2).

The Danish IVET system is the upper secondary level of vocational education and training for both youth and adults (Shimauchi 2017, 2018). For readers to understand any foreign education system is not easy, but with an oral or career history (Mikuriya 2004, Tsutsui 2016) of the older workers/students, they will be able to have a livelier image of its functions.

Based on an interview with a 40 year-old female electrician who changed her career in her late thirties, this note gives some provisional thoughts for the conditions above; (1) the visibility of the relevance (Honda 2009) between learning/qualification and job/competency, (2) the reliability of qualification,
(3) the module type curriculum, (4) the accessibility of education and training in financial, temporal, and psychological terms, (5) good chances to take career consulting.

Conditions (1) (2) and (3) are more related to the educational and industrial functionality, whereas conditions (4) and (5) are more related to the civil/social rights. The author provisionally makes the following remark.

The arguments on the public education in Japan need to include how to realize of guaranteeing one’s life in a broad sense (Tanaka 2007). It is important that the vocational education and training system functions well in the economy, but also the society needs to guarantee its citizens the civil/social rights to the pursuit of happiness, to work, to lifelong learning, and to a career (Suwa 1998, 2017). With a poor stand point of view as for civil/social rights, the arguments on the vocational education and training are likely to converge to the efficiency of the labour markets and the people’s rights above are likely to be ignored. However, not only by the functionality but also by the universality of the vocational education and training system more people will be encouraged to develop their career.