**Now is the Time to Reconsider Japanese Education;  
Give Hope to Children!**

**National Institute of Technology, Akashi College**

I: To begin our presentation, we’d like to ask you a question. In your youth, were you able to develop a dream for your future? According to an investigation published by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government, 61.6% of Japanese youth said, “I have a hope for the future.” This figure is 20 to 30% lower than six other countries. Therefore, this means, there are many students who cannot envision their own future in this country.

Y: Recently, as globalization and computerization have progressed worldwide, some educational reforms, such as early English education and early ICT education, have been made in Japan. It’s certain that children’s abilities will increase uniformly as a result of these reforms. However, these reforms might merely be too impulsive in response to these worldwide changes. In order to polish up their individuality and realize their own dreams, does this really make sense?

K: We think now is a good time to review Japanese education because many schools are trying hard to upgrade their educational quality. So, through this presentation, we’d like you to reconsider what the best education for children could be. To this end, we will propose early career education as a solution by first explaining the three weaknesses of recent educational reforms, then describing the need and overview of early career education, and finally elaborating on details and expected outcomes.

I: First, let me ask you this: Do you understand the background of educational reforms that have been made recently? In other words, are you aware of the outcome that could be obtained through these reforms?

K: In many technical colleges, Active Learning has been recently introduced. But, to be honest, most of us don’t understand the background.

I: Wow! Most of us do not understand where these changes came from? That’s one weak point. Yoshiyuki, could you shed a more positive light on these changes?

Y: Well, as you know, the times are no longer what they were. So, we have to make adjustments so that we can live in this ever-changing society. For instance, as artificial intelligence has developed, the need for talented people, who can act cooperatively and independently, has increased. Therefore, Active Learning is important.

K: But, I believe most students don’t thoroughly think about the background of these reforms. We’ve just studied in accordance with the school curriculum, or simply because everyone does it.

I: Ooh! That’s two!

Y: Hmm . . . That’s right. Certainly, educators in Japan tend to introduce these new programs without explaining their significance to students, even though they want students to understand the reason for studying through Active Learning.

I: That’s three!

K: Hey, wait a minute!

I: What’s wrong, Kazuya?

K: Well, I understand the importance of these reforms. However, I think there are more important things we should focus on first.

I: What do you mean?

K: Each student may long for a unique job. But, in the current education system, the timing in which we consider our future is too late. If we could envision our future plan in earlier stages, our motivation to study would be utterly different.

Y: So, you mean, in order to clarify the aim of their study, students should think about their own future plan earlier?

K: Yes! Here is what we need. Imagine our education system as a tree which bears the fruits of knowledge. Early career education should be the trunk which supports all future growth from the base of the tree. Newly introduced education, like ICT education, should be the branches or leaves, which grow only after the trunk has formed.

I: Interesting! Through early career education, as the name implies, schools would provide a great opportunity for children to be introduced to various occupations and supported in their own career plan from elementary school.

Y: That’s great! But, isn’t it difficult to integrate career education into a curriculum packed with more common classes like Japanese, English, and mathematics?

I: Yes, this should be introduced in a feasible way such as the wise use of homeroom periods. The key is, schools should somehow prepare time that students can think about their own future in their everyday lives.

K: If introduced, we could envision our future clearly, and also, we could have a hope for the future and a reason to study with more motivation.

Y: To explain in detail, it’s essential to take three steps to deepen children’s understanding and orientation to their career paths. These are “perceive,” “research,” and “deliberate.” At the first step, “perceive,” students will broadly recognize what kind of jobs exist in this society. This step should be practiced every day introducing one job per day.

I: Video should be actively used as the teaching material. Like the proverb, “Seeing is believing,” showing the attitudes and stories of working adults could be even better than giving indirect explanations by teachers to promote children’s understanding.

Y: Then, in the second step, “research,” students examine the details of the job which each of them becomes interested in through the first step. This step should be practiced twice per month when the stock of the job knowledge is accumulated to some extent.

K: Through this step, children understand what kind of knowledge and skills will be necessary to make themselves what they want to be.

Y: That’s right! Finally, in the third step, “deliberate,” children will plan how they should proceed toward their own career paths in order to realize their dreams. This step should be practiced once per term when students have reached a point in which they can understand the jobs well, and they can vaguely envision their own future.

K: In this step, it’s important for everyone to assume their own concrete path. However, we don’t have to focus on only one dream. Instead, we should consider more than one career path so that we can alter our paths flexibly just in case.

Y: Well, like this, by taking these three steps, students should be able to visualize their unique future and put forward a motivated effort to realize it.

I: But we must keep in mind that this is a case for elementary school students. Schools should carefully change the ratio of these three steps by students’ age. Elementary schools should place an emphasis on “perceive,” so that children can imagine their various career paths. In contrast, junior high and high schools should place an emphasis on “research” and “deliberate,” so that children can take action for their own career paths.

K: And, what kind of outcome is expected after implementing early career education?

Y: Most importantly, children will be able to study with awareness of their own future. In other words, the trunk of their education tree would be stronger and the branches would grow stronger as well.

K: If combined with Active Learning, the growth of the tree will be even better.

I: That’s right! The tree would grow up tall and beautiful flowers might bloom as dreams come true.

Y: In conclusion, as the times change quickly, various educational reforms will be made to fit the changes from now on.

K: However, before these implementations take place, please do stop and think over whether or not these reforms are helpful for children to pursue their own dreams.

I: In the future, we may have children. Then, if asked, “Hey, Dad. Why do I have to study,” how may we be able to respond? Hopefully, we will not want to say, “Because everyone does it.” We would rather say, “It is what you should want to do spontaneously so that you can achieve your dream.” Therefore, as a first step to realize such a wonderful future, we strongly insist on the necessity of early career education. Now is the time to reconsider Japanese education; give hope to children!

I, K, Y: Thank you.