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How Images of Entrepreneurs Change through an Entrepreneurship Education Program: Action Research at a Japanese High School

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This study was designed to examine how the entrepreneur education model causes image transition of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs amongst high school students and how they incorporate the ideas into their career choices. The major research question of this study (MRQ) is how high school students acquired, shared, and utilized knowledge obtained from the entrepreneurial education program.

Various statistical data show that entrepreneurial activities are slow in Japan. Thus, Japanese government established a policy to implement entrepreneurship education throughout primary and secondary schools. However, previous studies focus on university students; there are not many studies conducted to examine the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education for primary and secondary school students. This study is to reveal the learning process of high school students attending the program and to examine the significance and effectiveness of the entrepreneurial education program.

The targets of this study were 22 high school students participating in an entrepreneurial education program at a high school in Aomori prefecture in the academic year of 2013 to 2014.

The major categories of the findings of this study are: 1) understanding on the characteristics of entrepreneurs, 2) understanding on the entrepreneurial activities, and 3) impact on the students' perception of career goal.

Regarding the first category, students highly respected entrepreneurs and saw them as almighty beings even before the implementation of the program. Although the significant gap between the image of entrepreneurs and low self-affirmation level forced them to exclude becoming an entrepreneur from their career goal, students started to realize that entrepreneurs also have to go through self-betterment through experience after participating in quasi-entrepreneurial activities throughout the program. In terms of their understanding on the entrepreneurial activities, one of the top reasons that students were not seeing entrepreneurship as their career goal was the high risk associated with such activities. However, as they exchanged various opinions and looked for solutions to assignments, they learned that entrepreneurship does not always mean that they have to form a company alone or that some risks can be controlled with their own capabilities. Finally, regarding the impact on the students' perception of career goal, students enhanced their knowledge to overcome the obstacles they faced during activities and recognized their aptitude to become an entrepreneur. As a result, they started considering entrepreneurship as one option.

From these results, as a theoretical implication, the study constructs a "Knowledge Process Model for Entrepreneurship Education based on Active Learning Methodology." This model is consisted of the following 4 phases which explain how participants of the entrepreneurship education program acquire knowledge: "Classroom knowledge", "Knowledge of resource", "Actual experience-knowledge," and "Reflective experience-knowledge." "Classroom knowledge" is obtained when students learn entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activities, existing managerial theories, and management activities in lecture style based on textbooks. During this phase, the style of education is such that teachers deliver codified knowledge to students. In the phase of "Knowledge of resource," students try to tackle assignments given to them as entrepreneurs through active learning. Students try to apply "Classroom knowledge" to the challenge they face; however, they realize that they do not possess enough knowledge or capabilities. Then, they utilize implicit knowledge that they gained through management activities that they see in everyday life as the source of ideas. Students bring such implicit knowledge to the classroom to tackle team assignments. This is the phase of "Actual experience-knowledge." Team actively exchange opinions, conduct aggressive discussions, and give each other feedback to generate optimal solutions by creating, sharing, and utilizing knowledge necessary to solve the assignment given to them. With this process, students undergo the acquisition of "actual experience-knowledge." Finally, when students reflect the series of activities they experienced in active learning process, they reach the phase of "Reflective experience-knowledge" where students turn the knowledge on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities into "codified knowledge." After this point, they return to "Classroom knowledge" to put "experience-knowledge" straight and better understand in the classroom setting.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Carrier Goal, High School Students, Knowledge Process, Active Learning