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Suitable University Career Services in Information Society:
Based on the Case Study of Estonia

情報化社会における大学のキャリアサービスのあり方
ーエストニアの事例をもとにー

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Abstract

Recently, the Internet has been established as a major source of information on job hunting. On the other hand, on the scene of career support for Japanese university students, it is common to see students being swayed by a lot of information overflowing the Internet.

Therefore, this research has aimed to consider suitable university career services in information society based on the case study of Estonia. In particular, an interview survey was conducted in Estonia to clarify the following points.

(1) Current situation and issue of career services at universities in Estonia

(2) Guidance and support for young people regarding career information in Estonia

Regarding the point (1), it was revealed that the scale of Estonian university career centers is relatively small. They are making effort toword prevention of students' dropouts, and their main users are international students. As for point (2), although the situation of Estonian universities is the same as that of the Japanese universities, it was uncovered that there are experts called "Career information specialist" in the public guidance centers. Furthermore, this study suggests that "informed decisions" will become a critical concept in career services of information society.

Introduction

Recently, the Internet has been established as a major source of information on job hunting (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2015). Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2015) mentioned that according to a questionnaire survey conducted by Japan Productivity Center in 2013, more than 80% new recruits cited "employment websites" as a source of information on job hunting. Additionally, in the questionnaire survey carried out by Japanese Trade Union Confederation (2015), those who agreed to the necessity of "employment websites" for job hunting are 82.8% in the fourth grade students of universities.

On the other hand, on the scene of career support for Japanese university students, it is common to see students being swayed by a lot of information overflowing the Internet. Japanese Trade Union Confederation (2015) points out that there is a gap between the information job-hunting students is seeking and the information obtained on the employment websites. Moreover, Japanese Trade Union Confederation (2015) also noted that 22.9% of respondents had difficulty in choosing necessary information due to excessive information during job hunting.

Under these circumstances, the author has been engaged in developing a job hunting support system to provide useful information for university students (Furukawa, Morita, Fukumoto, et al., 2014, Tsuzuki, Morita, Furukawa, et al., 2015, Nakamizo, Morita, Fukumoto, et al., 2016). However, the author began to consider that university students need not only job hunting support system, but also systematic guidance and career services that make students gather necessary information and use it for decision making of their career.

On the above themes, there are few domestic prior studies. Therefore, this research aims to consider suitable university career services in information society based on the case study of Estonia. The reason why this study selects Estonia as a research site is that the author studied career services in Northern European countries in this several years, and began to pay attention that Estonia has not only excellent education systems (OECD, 2016a), but also has rapidly increasing presence among Northern European countries as an information society.

This research is composed of three parts. The first part is overviews of Estonian education system and career services. The second part shows the methodology and results of this research. The third part is a discussion related to suitable university career services in information society.

1. Overviews of Estonian education system

According to Lees (2016), the Estonian education system has a long history - first academic schools were founded in1630 (Tartu) and 1631 (Tallinn). In 1632, the first university, the University of Tartu, was founded. In the second half of the 17th century, first Estonian folk-schools were opened. The aim of these schools was to provide education in the native language, so that students could read the Bible. The current structure of Estonian education system is as shown in Figure 1.

According to EP-Nuffic (2015), primary and junior secondary education have a duration of 9 years. It comprises 4 years of primary education for the 7 to 11 age group, followed by 5 years of basic education for the 11 to 16 age group. Secondary education is 3 years in either of general secondary education and secondary vocational education. General secondary

education is provided at the gümnaasium. Secondary vocational education is provided at a kutseõppeasutus.

Higher education may be acquired as professional higher education (in a vocational school, institution of professional higher education, educational institution belonging to the structure of university) or academic higher education (in a university) (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2014a). There are 33 higher education institutions in Estonia, 18 of which belong to the private sector (EP-Nuffic, 2015). The funding system was changed. Higher education became free for those studying full time and in Estonian, provided they meet the requirements for their curriculum in full each semester – which means they have to earn 30 ECTS credits per semester.

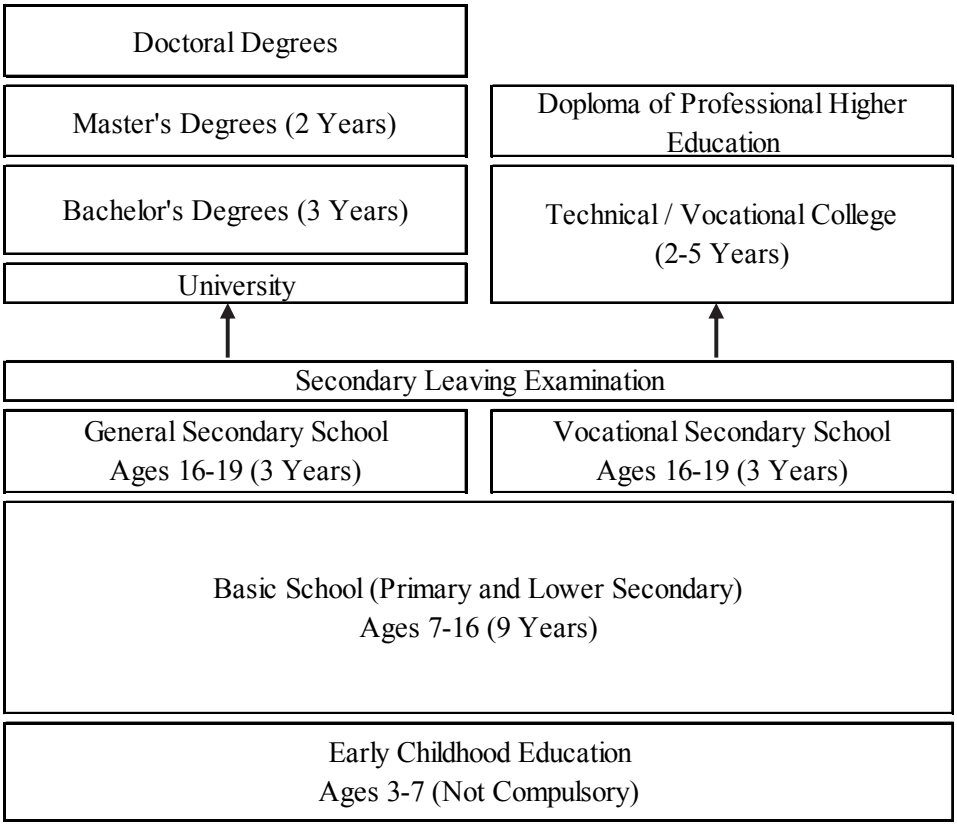

Figure 1. The current structure of Estonian education system

Source: Center on International Education Benchmarking website. "Estonia: Learning Systems"

Several Estonian universities have career center to provide services for their students and graduates. The principal aim of these centers is to act as a bridge between the worlds of study and work, and to assist students in their career planning activities in general.

2. Overviews of Estonian career services

This section reviews previous studies related to the history and current situation of career services in Estonia.

According to Foundation Vocational Education and Training Reform in Estonia (2001), career guidance has been practiced in Estonia for over 70 years. However, after regaining its independence from the former Soviet Union, numerous other problems attained primary importance for the state and interest in careers guidance declined. As the result, choosing a profession and finding a job after graduation became the concern of the youth themselves. Later development of this field has taken place due to the changes in expectations and requirements of the labour market as well as due to the advanced concept of lifelong learning (Foundation Innove, 2010).

Foundation Innove (2010) defines the term “Career services” as a concept including career education, career information and career counseling, and states that it is offered by schools, universities, colleges, training institutions, public employment services, and companies. The fact that one of the constituent elements of "Career services" is career information is a characteristic feature in comparison with defines of other countries like Japan and other Northern European countries.

Then what is the current situation of career services at universities in Estonia? There are several prior studies on the current status of career services in Estonian universities. Foundation Innove (2010) mentions that the career centres in higher education institutions provide career information and counselling to current students, employers and alumni. Kameno (2007) noted regarding career services in higher education in Estonia as below.

- The main work of career centers is focused on studying consultation for students.
- Labor demand of companies for university students is large and universities are concerned about students’ balance between study and work.

However, few studies examined the following two points.

(1) Current situation and issue of career services at universities in Estonia

(2) Guidance and support for young people regarding career information in Estonia

Therefore, we conducted an qualitative research in Estonia in order to clarify regarding these points.

3. Methodology and results of qualitative research

3-1. Methodology

This qualitative research consists of interviews with experts who belong to two universities and two public sector.

Table 1. Data Collection Procedure

Date	Research Site	Corresponding persons
September 25, 2017	Tallinn University Career and Counselling Centre	Ms. Liina Vallimäe (Career Counsellor)
September 26, 2017	North Estonia Rajaleidja Centre	Ms. Ave Vilu (Senior Specialist of Career Counselling, Agency for Lifelong Guidance, Foundation Innove) Ms.Merike Aava, Ms. Kristi Stahl
September 27, 2017	Tallinn University of Technology Counselling Centre	Ms. Helina Villem (Career Counsellor)

Table 2. The outline of the educational institutions which were addressed in this study

Institution & Department	Outline of the institution
Tallinn University	The largest university of humanities in Tallinn and the third biggest public university in Estonia. - Number of students 7,524 (foreign degree students15.7%) - Number of employees (full-time) 822
Career and Counselling Centre	The objectives: - to support students in their studies, - to offer a number of services that help students to develop personal life skills and achieve success in the labour market. Organization; There is one expert in each of three fields.
Innove, **North Estonia Rajaleidja Centre**	Innove promotes the sectors of general and vocational education, provides lifelong guidance through the nationwide Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) lifelong guidance network, and mediates the European Union assistance.
Tallinn University of Technology	The second biggest public university in Estonia, and the flagship of Estonian engineering and technology education and reserch. - Number of students 11,070 (foreign degree students13%) - Number of employees (full-time) 1,930
Counselling Centre	The objectives: This center offer information, counseling, training, consultation and cooperation. Organization; There is one expert in each of six fields.

During the interviews, field notes were kept and the interview were recorded on IC recorder with the permission of the interviewees. All interviewees approved that these contents may be publish as academic conference, documents and papers.

Table 1 is the data collection procedure of this research. Table 2 summarizes the outline of the educational institution which was addressed in this study.

3-2. Results

(1) Current situation and issue of career services at universities in Estonia

This section has been elaborated based on the interviews with the experts of Career and Counseling Centre of Tallinn University (hereinafter referred to as "TU Career Center") and Counseling Centre of Tallinn University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as "TUT Career Center").

First, share the organizational structure of the career centers of both universities.

There are three counselors at the TU Career Center, but only one of them is a career counselor. TUT Career Center also has one career counselor, although there are six experts in this center. The number of career counselors at both universities may seem to be small compared to that of Japanese universities with the same scale. However, even at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, there is only one career counselor. From this, it is considered that it is not limited to these two universities when it comes to Northern European countries.

In addition, both counselors mentioned that Estonian students rarely use any kind of counseling and tend to decide their future by themselves or by consulting someone close to them like family and friends. The fact that there is only one career counselor at both universities could be considered as reflecting the trends of Estonian students mentioned above.

Next, the career counselors at both universities mentioned the issue of career services as follows.

The Career counselor of TU Career Center noted the current issues this university's career support as the following;

- Mismatches between the contents of university lectures and what student expected
- The support for international students

The Career counselor of TUT Career Center mentioned the following;

- Mismatches between the contents of university lectures and what student expected
- Many students have problems which cannot be solved by counselors, such as the income of the student

It is a noteworthy fact that both career counselors commonly point out the mismatches between the contents of university lectures and what student expected. The career counselor of TU Career Center mentioned that approximately three months after enrolling to the university, many students suffer from mismatches and visit the center. Many of them complain that the contents of the lectures at the university are different from what they expected.

Regarding the mismatches at Estonian universities, Kori and Mardo (2017) pointed out that the average European higher education dropout rate is 19% in the ICT field, but in Estonia about two thirds of undergraduate IT students fail to finish their studies. However, both counselors pointed out that mismatches after enrolling to the university are not limited to ICT field students. Both counselors also stated as follows. The university lectures are very academic and difficult. Therefore, many students are puzzled about that and they begin to search for alternative paths. In the ICT field, students can easily find high salary jobs without having a university degree. This leads to dropouts in the field.

Concerning the current situation in which such mismatches frequently occurred, both counselors agreed that the career support in secondary schools should be the jurisdiction of secondary school's counselors. Additionally, they both mentioned that a career change after enrolling the university is the responsibility of the student, although they are making efforts to prevent students' dropouts. Regarding this point, it is considered to be a very different situation from the one in Japanese university career centers which are regarded as having responsibility for students' career decisions.

On the other hand, the Estonian government seems to focus on improving the career guidance at basic schools and the secondary schools related to this problem. Specifically, the government is beginning to develop the career guidance so that high school students seeking practical learning choose vocational higher education institutions rather than universities. This challenges will be discussed further in next section.

With regard to international students, the career counselor of TUT career center commented that 70% of international students of TUT make an appointment for some kind of counseling apart from whether they regularly visit the center or not. Estonian universities are very open to accept international students in order to invite excellent overseas students. From the perspective of career support, both counselors stated that foreign students are more likely to make good use of career counseling than students from Estonia. Consequently, at the two university career centers, it is apparent that international students are the main clients of career counseling.

The issues of students' income are deemed not to be a problem dealt with by the career

center in Estonia. Therefore, this paper will not discuss it. However, the staff of TUT Educational Technology Center who were interviewed as part of this research stated following. They sets a goal that all compulsory 1 and 2 level courses (BA, MSc) at TUT should be supported in e-learning environment (in total about 1500 courses) by 2018 to 2020. This effort is to help finding students' better balance between work and study. Additionally, they are attempting to unify e-learning platform to Moodle in order to analyze the learning behavior of students and reduce dropouts.

Besides the above, internships which were not incorporated into the curriculum seem to be handled by the career center like at universities of Japan and other Northern European countries. In addition, at both universities, career center counselors were also dealing with tasks like guidance on CV and cover letters, training of interview.

Finally, in relation to the research topic of (2), the counselors at both universities mentioned the use of ICT at the career center and the guidance to students regarding career information following.

The Career counselor of TU Career Center mentioned that they use it as communication channel, to provide and mediate information about seminars/lectures, job offers (they use career-list, Facebook, webpage) and other helpful pages/organizations/facilities. The Career counselor of TUT Career Center mentioned that they concentrate on personal approach and use ICT in minimum capacity. At the career centers of Japanese universities, ICT is used not only as an information provision and communication tool, but also as a grasping and analyzing tool of the students' employment situation, and as a reservation system for joint job fairs. In this regard, it can be said that the use of ICT is more promoted at Japanese university career centers than at the Estonian one.

Concerning the guidance to students regarding career information, it seem to be instructed as necessary in career counseling at both universities. In this regard, it can be said that Japanese universities and Estonian universities are in the same state.

From the above interview results, Point (1) is summarized as Table3.

(2) Guidance and support for young people regarding career information in Estonia

This section has been elaborated based on the interview with Foundation Innove[1] and North Estonia Rajaleidja Center.

Rajaleidja is a public center which was centralized by the Foundation Innove in autumn 2014. The role of this center is to support young people in their studies and career related issues, including opportunities for small municipalities that have under 350 students.

[1] Innove is governed by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

Table 3. Current situation and issue of career services at universities in Estonia compared to Japanese universities

	Career Center of Estonian Universities	**Career Center of Japanese Universities**
scale	relatively small	relatively large
operation	personal	organized
main user	students suffer from mismatches between university lecture contents and what they wanted to learn, international students	job hunting students, Japanese students
use of ICT	as communication channel, to provide and mediate information	as communication channel, to provide and mediate information, to grasping and analyzing the employment situation of students, reservation system for Joint job fairs
guidance on career information	instructe as necessary in career counseling	instructe as necessary in career counseling

According to Foundation Innove (2016), Estonian career services, which are provided by the community sector, went through a major change in 2014–2015. Since autumn 2014, 24 fragmented youth guidance centers were replaced by 16 public centers named Rajaleidja (Pathfinder in English). The idea of this Center is similar to that of the integrated the Youth Guidance Center and the Regional Guidance Center in Denmark[2].

According to Ms. Ave Vilu, the program of Rajaleidja is financed by European Social Fund until 2020. Table 4 represents the number of people who received support of Rajaleidja from September 2014 to November 2016.

Ms. Ave Vilu mentioned that the role of Rajaleidja is composed of career guidance and counseling for special needs. The career guidance unit of North Estonia Rajaleidja Centre

[2] Youth Guidance Centers focus on the transition from compulsory to youth education and Regional Guidance Centers deal with the transition from youth education to higher education.
Also similar centers called "One Stop Guidance Centers" have been established in 30 regions of Finland since 2010.

Table 4. The number of people who received support of Rajaleidja

Number of students, who have received individual career services	30,710
Number of students, who have received individual educational counselling	17,309
Number of teachers and parents who have received individual counselling	3,878
Number of participants in group counselling and sessions	150,141

Source: Foundation Innove (2017)

consists of 20 Career counselors and 8 Career information specialists. Every specialist has approximately 40 individual clients per month. Table 5 shows the main tasks of three types of career specialists.

The career guidance is targeting participants aged 7-26 and including career education, career counseling and career information. They have three priority groups. The first group is students from 7th to 12th grade, the second group is the students in vocational school and the third group is 18 to 24-year-olds who dropped out of the education system with no more than basic education (graduated 9th grade). Students for 7th to 12th grade correspond to 3rd stage of the integrated primary and lower secondary school (grade 7th to 9th) and secondary school (grade 10th to 12th). The career counselors of Rajaleidja Center visit schools where the counselor conducts group counseling and individual counseling for students. According to Ms. Merike Aava and Ms. Kristi Stahl, they are making efforts to reduce the mismatches by improving career guidance for students of 7th-12th grade. (They suggest vocational schools rather than general secondary schools or universities for students who want to develop themselves practically.)

Additionally, they noted that the specialist called "Career information specialist[3]" is a unique expert.

According to Ms. Ave Vilu, as of the moment, there are no regular accredited basic training programs offered for Career information specialists in public universities. However, Career information specialists have participated in various in-house courses, may it be short or long-term, about innovation, guidance and information retrieval methods, trends in economy and employment, mobility, mentoring. The scope of Career information specialist

[3] In the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (2012), the following explanation regarding Career information specialist is posted;
"A Career Information Specialist helps client access relevant information needed for their career decision making process. The Career Information Specialist identifies, secures, manages and interprets career information for their clients. This includes national and international labour market, education, occupation, and job search resources."

Table 5. The main tasks of specialists related to career guidance

Specialist Group	Occupational qualification levels	Main tasks
Career counsellor	Level 6-7	・Individual and group counselling ・Networking and cooperation with other service providers ・Service development ・Informing the public about the services ・Training and mentoring of other guidance professionals
Career information specialist	Level 5-6	・Information provision of education, labor market and occupations for groups and individuals ・Networking and cooperation with other service providers ・Service development ・Informing the public about the services ・Training and mentoring of other guidance professionals
Career co-ordinator	Level 6	・Preparation and execution of school's career services management plan ・Information provision of education, labor market and occupations ・Networking and cooperation with other service providers ・Service development ・Informing the public about the services ・Training and mentoring of other guidance professionals

Source: Foundation Innove (2017)

only focuses on gathering, systematizing and providing information to clients individually or in groups about education, professions and labor market trends. They are assisting people in seeking or applying for jobs, as well as finding an internship placement. Clients get advices and support in making employment choices. They do not counsel clients about personal matters like abilities or personality nor are they allowed to administer psychometric tests for a person's characteristics.

Ms. Ave Vilu emphasized that Career information specialist complements career counselors in the two points;

・Not all clients need personal development based on career counseling, but rather some clients would like to help them manage the information overload they are facing in their lives.
・Career information specialists are great support for teachers at schools helping them deliver career lessons and organizing career events like job shadowing or training interviews for students.

According to documents provided by Ms. Ave Vilu, the following are the part of basic activity indicators of a Career information specialist;

・Makes an information request interview in order to get to know the client's needs and explore the current situation
・Informs the client about the professions, working and learning opportunities and respective information sources, depending on the client's needs

Normally, these are just what the career counselor is implementing in counseling. However, the activity indicator of Career information specialist also includes the following contents.

・Controls the client's use of information in order to fix the client's information retrieval habits
・Organizes career information lectures, considering the needs and opportunities of the target group
・Manages and develops a career library (including an electronic database) by collecting and systematizing career information materials and assures the proper display and availability of information materials

The third indicator is sometimes handled by faculty or staff of university career centers in Japan. However, other indicators are rarely provided at Japanese university career centers.

It should be noted that apart from the career counselor, there is an expert whose main purpose is to provide and guide clients about career information. With the benefit of the Internet, students are now able to obtain a lot of information regarding studies, job-hunting activities, the situation of labor market, and companies easily. However, there are few students who can judge the reliability of the information and effectively utilize it. Therefore, the need for experts who specialize in such information will increase in the field of career services at Japanese universities.

4. Conclusion – Discussion related to suitable university career services in information society

This research aims to consider suitable university career services in information society

based on the case study of Estonia. In particular, an interview survey was conducted in Estonia in order to clarify the following two points.

(1) Current situation and issue of career services at universities in Estonia

(2) Guidance and support for young people regarding career information in Estonia

Regarding the point (1), as shown in Table 3, it was revealed that the scale of Estonian university career centers is relatively small. They are making effort toward prevention of student' dropouts, and their main users are international students.

It is thought that there are two major options to solve mismatches at Estonian universities. The first option is to change the contents of university lectures more practically. The second option is to make students who want to develop themselves practically to choose vocational schools. According to the interview survey of this research, Estonian government seems to select the second option and change the guidance to students at basic schools and secondary schools.

Regarding the use of ICT and the guidance on career information, the research shows that the situation of Estonian universities were the same as those of Japanese universities. However, it was revealed that there are an expert called "Career information specialist" in public guidance centers for young people aged 7-26 called Rajaleidja. The activity indicators of Career information specialist includes the following contents;

- Controls the client's use of information in order to fix the client's information retrieval habits
- Organizes career information lectures, considering the needs and opportunities of the target group
- Manages and develops a career library (including an electronic database) by collecting and systematizing career information materials and assures the proper display and availability of information materials

On the other hand, according to the curriculum of career consultant in Japan, career consultants are supposed to advise client regarding collection, retrieval and utilization of information. However, guidance on career information is only a fraction of the vast knowledge and skills which career consultants are required to possess. Therefore, they cannot concentrate on guidance concerning career information. Considering the information society surrounding young people in Japan, experts such as Career information specialists of Estonia should also exist at Japanese universities.

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (2014b) mention regarding "Providing information and counselling services" as follows;

"Information and counselling services need to be made available for individuals to make informed decisions (career information and studies, information about the employment opportunities, unemployment, wages and career counselling for different professions). Informed decisions allow a person to realize their potential in the best possible way, while avoiding the pitfalls of the gender and age stereotypes that have formed in society. An informed choice of specialization helps prevent dropouts and creates a good basis for the person to be able to use the acquired knowledge and skills later in their work."

This case study suggests that this "informed decisions" will become a critical concept in career services of information society. Moreover the results of this study suggest that experts on carrier information may be informative for Japanese universities as well. Therefore, it will be necessary to further study of the Estonian cases and to explore the possibility of arranging these experts at Japanese universities.

It is considered that this research can contribute to the development of career services in Japanese universities in that it pointed out the necessity of experts specializing in carrier information and the concept of "informed decisions". However, some limitations are worth noting. Firstly, in this study, not all universities in Estonia were visited. In particular, interviews at University of Tartu which is the largest and oldest university in Estonia should be implemented. Secondly, it is necessary to observe activities of Career information specialists and verify its effectiveness. Further studies are needed in order to clarify and verify the above.

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