
An investigation of course differentiation among university students: the 'trajectory' of course differentiation

Tomokazu MAKINO

To date, there has been much analysis and many recommendations regarding job-hunting by university students from the standpoint of transition studies and career education studies. However, current knowledge in this area is exclusively focused on students seeking jobs at private companies, and students who choose other careers routes have not been examined to this extent. In this paper, with regard to this missing area which comprises university students who choose career paths other than working at private companies, I will examine the process behind such students making such decisions and the relevant parameters. The data used in this research group was collected during surveys of third-year students carried out at three universities from January to March 2010. 441 respondents took part in the surveys, most of whom were students of faculties of education or the humanities. None of the students were from education faculties requiring the acquisition of a teaching certificate as a prerequisite for graduation, and such faculties without such requirements as referred to in Japanese as *zero men katei* (literally, "zero certificate course").

A summary of an analysis of the survey results is as follows:

- 1) During the winter of their third year, about 60% of students want to join private companies. But, only 20% wanted to do so before they entered university. As for students of faculties of education and humanities, it was found that they spend their college life considering whether they will chose between becoming public employees or educators, or going onto graduate school.
- 2) The parameters which determined which students chose to depart from the private company career path to public office, school, and graduate school were identified through the use of multiple logistic regression analysis (the reference category was set as "wishing to work at a private company," and the factors related to choosing other career paths (government employee, educator, graduate school) were analyzed). The results of this analysis show that the only common parameter determining whether students want to work at private companies or not is whether they entered university via an entrance examination or not. Accordingly, factors related to choosing to become a government employee or educator, or to go on to graduate school have been collated (refer to the main body of the paper for details), and model scenarios regarding the formation of each career path choice are proposed. It is thought that, for university educators or graduate students (who interact with but can only indirectly support not only students wishing to go to private companies, but students with all kinds of career aspirations), the knowledge acquired during this research will become an important and useful information resource in internally supporting, understanding and encouraging the hopes, fears and commitment of students.