

A Plan for Restructuring the Division Classification of Vocational High Schools

Sun-Tea Kim
Yoon-Hee Park

I. Overview

1. Background

Vocational high schools in Korea are now classified into five divisions: agricultural; technical; commercial; fishery and oceanography; and industry and home economics. These divisions are based on a traditional industry classification, not on that required in the knowledge information era of the 21st century. It has been shown that the current division classification is an inhibitor in solving vocational high school-related problems.

2. Purpose

The aim of this study is to present a new plan to restructure the division classification of vocational high schools. By doing this, ultimately, this study sets out to show how vocational education can be promoted at the high school level. The more specific purpose of the study is as follows:

- To analyze related literatures;

- To present criteria for restructuring the division classification of vocational high schools;
- To assess problems and needs regarding the division classification of vocational high schools;
- To suggest a new plan to restructure the division classification of vocational high schools; and
- To address recommendations for vocational policies

3. Methods

To accomplish the purpose of the study mentioned above, several research methods, such as literature reviews, delphi study, surveys, focused group interviews, and conferences, were utilized.

II. Findings

1. Criteria for Restructuring

Through the literature review, six criteria were identified for restructuring the division classification of vocational high schools. The following changes were identified as the criteria for the division restructuring of vocational high schools:

- Industrial structure;
- Vocational structure;
- Educational content and technology level;
- Social milieu relevant to the content and the system of vocational education;

- Governmental policy regarding vocational education cultivation; and
- Environment surrounding education in vocational high schools

2. Result of the Needs Assessment

To assess problems and needs regarding the new plan of restructuring division classification, a mailing survey was carried out. Major outcomes and suggestions obtained can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Respondents perceived the necessity of restructuring the division classification of vocational high schools. The most common reason was that the current classification was not based on the changes which have taken place in industrial structure and in the vocational world.
- 2) Respondents thought that restructuring the division classification of vocational high schools would contribute to the promotion of vocational education at high school level.
- 3) Respondents generally agreed on the new restructuring plan.
- 4) In the case of administering more than two divisions in a school, laboratory equipment had better be shared with community colleges and universities or corporations in the community, respondents perceived.
- 5) Respondents perceived that approval of credit completion in other institutes would be effective in removing difficulties in administering more than two divisions in a school.
- 6) Because of administrative complexity, one division in a school was preferred by the respondents.
- 7) Complexity of curriculum administration was identified as the most serious problem in administering more than two divisions in a school by the respondents.

- 8) As to the measures to deal with educational staff relocation, acquisition of minor subject matter area was preferred by the respondents. Reducing the number of students per class and utilizing industrial personnel would also need to be considered.
- 9) Administrative and financial supports from the government had better be based on the unit of division, respondents suggested.

3. Restructuring Plan of Division Classification in Vocational High School

Through two round delphi studies, a new division classification of vocational high schools was identified. The current five divisions were modified and three new divisions were introduced. The names of the divisions are as follows:

- Bio-industry;
- Technological industry;
- Management & business;
- Maritime industry;
- Home economics & health care & welfare
- Information & communication industry;
- Design industry; and
- Cultural & leisure industry

4. Expected Effect from Division Restructuring

The following effects would be expected from the division restructuring of vocational high schools:

- 1) The relevance between vocational education at high school level and the labor market would be enhanced.

- 2) The identity of vocational high schools would be secured and a reasonable standard of vocational education at high school level would be reinforced.
- 3) Competitiveness in curriculum administration would be secured.
- 4) Vertical and lateral linkage of vocational high schools would be promoted.
- 5) The expansion of administrative and financial support for vocational high schools would be secured.
- 6) Work related to admission, employment, and academic counseling would be done professionally.
- 7) Applicable standards regarding upcoming college entrance examinations would be suggested.
- 8) Effectiveness in the selection of teaching staff would be elevated.
- 9) Substantial information regarding the division restructuring of vocational high schools would be supplied.

III. Recommendations

Based upon this study, the following recommendations are made in relation to future policymaking on this key issue:

- 1) Details in each division should be further analyzed.
- 2) Each department should be reallocated based on the new division classification, and an appropriate certificate of qualifications system should be legislated.
- 3) Long-term, specific objectives of division restructuring should be identified.
- 4) Division restructuring should not be limited to just changing division

names. The curriculum and the school system itself should also be also restructured.

- 5) A corresponding teacher certificate system should also be established.
- 6) If more than two divisions are administered in a school, effective administrative methods and support plans should be established.
- 7) National standards of task competencies should be presented.
According to these standards, school curriculum, training standards, and certificate standards should be reorganized.