

A Study on the Current Status of Business Management in Technical-Art Education Program Implemented at Junior High School in Taiwan - Taking Pull-out Technical-Art Education Program Class in Pingtung County for Example

Hsiao-Chin, Ku, Shi-Jer, Lou^{*}, Chia-Liang, Cho

Institute of Technological and Vocational Education, National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

*Email Address of Contact Author: lou@mail.npust.edu.tw

Abstract

Technical-Art Education Program of junior high schools is the access for students to experiencing multiple adaptive developments early. A very high proportion of junior high school students who discover their self-interest in occupational exploration and choose to study technical-art education program can enter vocational high schools or junior colleges and even pursue for a high degree in vocational education system or general educational system. The programs they choose to study usually have a significant influence on their future development. In the job market in Taiwan, business-related jobs play an important part. Therefore, business-related departments in vocational high schools and business colleges in universities are usually the most popular choices of students. In the technical-art education program of junior high schools, the proportion of business & management related classes opened is the third highest among 13 categories of classes, which is only second to hospitality and household management-related classes. However, the proportion of business & management class opened in technical-art education program of junior high school in Pingtung County is significantly lower than the national average. A qualitative empirical study was conducted to investigate the current status of pull-out business & management programs implemented in Pingtung County. It was found that, most educational objectives established for the guidelines on technical-art education program of junior high school are meaningful and complete, which intend to educate junior high school students with basic business knowledge, concept of product sale and promotion, simple accounting ability, basic computer operation ability, and basic word processing capability, as well as to cultivate their accurate working attitude and professional ethics of cooperation before they formally enter vocational education system. However, few technical-art education programs opening business & management classes at junior high schools narrow the learning content, and ignore the width of business-related subjects in order to comply with the expertise of the faculties at vocational high schools assigned to the program. Moreover, only Chinese and English typing are included in the

competition of business and management category among technical-art program of junior high school. Therefore, such classes become the outpost of Department of Information Processing at vocational high schools. It is hoped that the difficulties and defects of opening business & management classes in technical-art education program of junior high school can be reflected by this study to propose practical suggestions on future technical-art education of junior high school.

Keywords: Technical-Art education program; Business and management program

1. Introduction

In technological and vocational education of Taiwan, technical education course in junior high schools allow students to experience curriculum of multiple adaptive developments in early times. In career development education, junior high schools students experience three stages: “self-awareness”, “career awareness” and “career planning”. In grade 1, they recognize their competence, interests and characteristics after the teachers guide them to explore themselves. In grade 2, by occupational exploration, students recognize the relationship among job characteristics, jobs and society. In grade 3, students who select technical education course according to interests recognize occupation and aptitude by content of the course to further cultivate proper job attitude and values and develop career planning competence.

Junior high school students who select technical education course according to their interests discovered by occupational exploration mostly have occupational tendency and attend vocational schools or five-year colleges. They even obtain higher educational degree in technological and vocational education or regular education system. Thus, the occupational groups they select usually significantly influence their future career. In job market of Taiwan, business and management related jobs are critical. Thus, business related departments in vocational high schools and business and management colleges in universities are mostly popular with students. According to data of technical education network of Ministry of Education, among technical education courses in junior high schools around Taiwan, percentage of business and management (second to hospitality and household management) is top three in thirteen occupational groups. However, in Pingtung County where the researcher stays, percentage of business and management in technical education course of junior high schools is much lower than others. Therefore, the researcher intends to find the difficulty and blind spots of current implementation of business and management program in technical education course of Pingtung County and indicate the suggestions.

2. Literature Review

(1) History and development of technical education course in junior high schools

Upon the ideals of “teaching students in accordance with their aptitude” and “adaptive education”, since 1983, Ministry of Education in Taiwan has implemented “national education project to continue vocational education” and the main subjects are the graduates of junior high schools with employment aptitude. In vocational high schools, “continuing education program” is established and it is the base of “practical skill program”. In 1993, the program was modified as “development and improvement of technical education in junior high schools— the goal of ten-year national education”, short for “technical education program”. The subjects include junior high school students. It mainly guides junior high school students who do not intend to pursue advanced studies. In grade 3, they learn the skills in “technical education class” and continue their study in continuing education program in vocational high schools for future employment. However, because of environment in Taiwan, the trend of educational reform and change of administration, old projects must be adjusted and renewed. In 2001, Ministry of Education established “technical education reform project” and adjusted the original implementation of technical education. Thus, technical education gradually returns to mainstream educational system. Career development education is implemented in junior high schools to fulfill career exploration function. In grade 1, there are self-exploration and some industrial primary exploration. In grade 2, the students recognize career categories and in grade 3, they learn career planning. Students who are interested in technical learning can take “technical education elective course” to enhance their primary exploration of career. Vocational high schools plan to establish “practical skill courses” which are more multiple and adaptive and connect different educational systems by vertical and horizontal mechanism (Ministry of Education, 2001).

(2) Current courses of technical education in junior high schools of Pingtung County

The researcher collects data and investigates implementation of pullout technical education programs in junior high schools of Pingtung County in academic years of 2009 and 2010. The result demonstrates that in academic year of 2009, 13 schools, such as Datung Junior High School and Kung Cheng Junior High school, launch business and management program. 5 of them establish one class in the first and second semester. The rest 8 schools construct one class in only one semester. In the academic year, there are 176 pullout technical classes launched in the county, including 19 business and management courses (10.80%); in academic year of 2010, 11 schools such as The Ming Cheng Junior High School and Fang Liao High School establish business and management programs. Among others, 4 of them establish 1 class in the first and second semesters and 7 of them only launch one class in one semester. In the academic year, there are 178 pullout technical courses in the county, including 14 classes of business and management (7.87%). It demonstrates that percentage of business and management

courses in Pingtung is low and reducing.

(3) Business and management of technical education course

Technical education courses in junior high schools allow grade 3 students to have occupational exploration which is connected to career guidance and introduction of workplace in grade 2. Students take technical education courses for career exploration to further attend the first year of preparation in practical skill course in order to fulfill knowledge transfer. In curriculum guideline of technical education in junior high schools, the educational objectives of business and management are complete and they aim to allow junior high school students to learn basic business knowledge, concepts of product sales and promotion, simple accounting competence, basic computer ability and basic document processing and cultivate proper work attitude and ethics before attending technological and vocational education system. In curriculum framework of business and management, the specific themes refer to introduction of occupational groups, Chinese and English document processing, product promotion practice, simple accounting practice and product sales practice. Product sales practice is the flexible course (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

(4) Career development education and junior high schools technical education

Upon the change of current society, junior high schools should not simply focus on intellectual education and neglect other important competences. Therefore, Ministry of Education implements “development and improvement of junior high schools’ technical education” to allow students to explore personal aptitude and characteristics and recognize workplace for adaptive development. One of the reforms is “implementation of career education” which helps students enhance career exploration by technical education to probe into their career goals (Ministry of Education, 2000). Career development education reveals academic and occupational functions. It values both advanced studies and employment. By multiple thinking, students are guided to expand their vision from academic to job world. They should not only learn the basic academic competence, but also obtain essential occupational capability (Ministry of Education, 2008b).

Some researches indicate that junior high school students who take technical education have lower academic and higher technical aptitudes. Thus, these students can have adaptive development from technical education. Most of them pursue advanced studies in technological and vocational schools (Chen, 2010). Some studies demonstrate that learning motive, interest, learning attitude, self-expectation and values will influence advanced study intention of technical course students in junior high schools (Huang, 2003). Therefore, proper implementation of technical education course and teachers’ guidance of students’ exploration in junior high schools will significantly influence students’ career development.

3. Research Method

By data collection, literature review and in-depth interview, this study probes into current implementation of business and management program in technical education course of junior high schools in Pingtung and analyzes the difficulties and blind spots.

(1) Data collection

Since the researcher undertook the business of technical education course in the school, it was easy to access general implementation of pullout technical program in junior high schools of Pingtung area. Pullout programs of technical education in about three semesters were thus downloaded from announcement of Pingtung County government. The researcher also found the data of the first semester in 2009 academic year from old documents saved in school. The data of these two years were used for the study.

(2) Literature analysis

By literature review on development and history of technical education course in junior high schools, the researcher recognizes curriculum guideline, educational objectives and instructional themes of business and management and further explores the relationship between career development education and technical education course in junior high schools in order to indicate the difficulties and blind spots of current implementation of courses in Pingtung County.

(3) Interview

Research subjects include three categories: the first category refers to two subjects of directors or technical education undertakers in junior high schools which has launched business and management program of technical education course in academic year of 2009 instead of 2010. The second category refers to two subjects of directors or technical education undertakers in junior high schools which has launched the said program in both 2009 and 2010; the third category indicates 2 undertakers in vocational high schools regarding collaborative business and management program between Pingtung County and junior high schools.

4. Results and Discussion

Analytical result of interview demonstrates current implementation of business and management program in technical education course of junior high schools in Pingtung County:

(1) Factors of implementation of business and management program

Junior high schools usually decide the occupational groups according to occupational exploration in the second semester of grade 2 for investigating students' intentions and interests. Some junior high schools continue the past implementation of programs. However, generally speaking, they focus on students' interests since students will often be absent and the class will be disordered in technical programs which they

are not interested in.

The reason that percentage of business and management program in Pingtung area is lower is in that students are more interested in the courses which immediately demonstrate outcomes (such as hospitality, food and household management). Business and management is more abstract for junior high schools. The occupational groups which allow junior high school students to produce the works are more attractive; in addition, junior high school students do not enjoy sitting in the classrooms for long and business and management courses usually bore the students. Besides, students enjoying computers suggest that they can access computers at home or in internet café. Thus, they prefer selecting more interesting occupational groups in technical programs.

(2) Difficulty of implementation of business and management program

Old facilities are the complaints from teachers in junior high schools and collaborative vocational high schools. It is the occupational group which significantly relies on computers and the facilities should be more advanced. However, business and management courses are treated similar to document processing courses which require computers. By following the curriculum guideline, some business and management programs do not necessarily need computers.

In addition, when business and management courses are regarded as computer programs or document processing classes, it means that students must stay in the computer classrooms for hours. Junior high school students are usually impatient and they cannot help but play computer games.

Teachers from collaborative vocational high schools are limited. A vocational high school usually cooperates with several junior high schools and the teachers do not necessarily have the competence indicated in the curriculum guideline. For instance, document processing teachers sometimes do not have the specialty of product sales or accounting.

(3) Actual curriculum guideline of business and management program

Educational objectives in curriculum guideline of technical education in junior high schools are complete. However, in some junior high schools with business and management programs, for the concern of teachers' specialties in collaborative vocational high schools and pressure from technical competition results, the competition item related to business and management only refers to Chinese and English typewriting. Learning content is thus limited. The programs only focus on document processing and neglect the broad scope of business related departments. Although teachers in junior high schools and collaborative vocational high schools suggest that the competences indicated in curriculum guideline are important, they also admit that in reality, they must concern about students' learning hours, interests, order in classrooms and result of technical competitions and it is difficult to totally follow curriculum guideline.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

According to data collection, literature review and interview analysis, the researcher indicates the suggestions regarding business and management implementation planning in technical education course of junior high schools in Pingtung County:

(1) Enhancement of junior high schools students' recognition of business and management

By proper measures, it enhances junior high school students' recognition of business and management and reality in workplace. After all, hospitality industry is not the only business in reality. Beauty industry is interesting for junior high school students. In job environment of Taiwan, business and management related jobs are also critical. Educators should try to allow the teenagers to recognize various occupations before deciding their career and instruct the students not to be short-sighted when exploring career development.

(2) Items of technical competition in junior high schools should meet curriculum guideline

Items of technical competitions in junior high schools should be significantly incorporated with curriculum guideline. Regarding business and management, the content in the guideline is broad. Thus, it should not simply focus on English and Chinese typewriting. Although educational authority emphasizes that students should not be particularly trained for the technical competitions, in reality, junior high schools will tend to compare with each other, vocational high schools have the pressure of recruitment and participants tend to treat the results seriously. At present, the competition with only English and Chinese typewriting is the main cause which limits the content of business and management courses.

(3) Enhancement of business and management teachers in collaborative vocational high schools

Collaborative vocational high schools usually provide one teacher for technical class in junior high schools within one semester. One teacher might not be capable of teaching various kinds of content in curriculum guideline. Ideally speaking, according to different teaching content, there should be teachers with different specialties. However, in reality, vocational high schools should take care of curriculum arrangement in schools and provide manpower for technical classes in junior high schools and they usually cannot fulfill the ideal situation. If educational authority can establish the rewards to enhance vocational high school teachers' instructional competence of business and management and their specialty and encourage vocational high schools cooperating with technical classes of junior high schools, it will improve the curriculum content of the said technical classes without increasing manpower stress of vocational high schools.

(4) Improvement of curriculum of technical program of business and management

Nowadays, technical courses of business and management are treated as computer or document processing classes. The teachers should be enhanced. After the full incorporation between technical competition and curriculum guideline and with the active demand of educational authority, current course deviation should be improved. Thus, the curriculum guideline carefully established by scholars and experts will be implemented. In addition, planning of off-campus visits is also feasible for avoiding the boredom in classrooms. Business and management program is not equal to computer class. Thus, by visits, it should allow students to recognize the diverse dimensions of the occupation.

(5) Technical education course evaluation and visits in junior high schools

As to current evaluation and visit, after educational authority establishes the points for evaluation, the evaluated junior high schools submit the data as demonstration. Most of data provided is documents. It is suggested that the authority should try to find if the actual instruction meets the curriculum guideline instead of simply examining the documents. It should increase the observation in teaching process and interviews with teachers and students in order to encourage junior high schools and collaborative vocational high schools of technical education course to improve current situations.

6. References

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