
**Participation of young women in vocational training, and
policy proposals**

Seon-Mee Shin

Young-Ock KIM

Jong-soog KIM

Junki AHN

The importance of vocational training is expected to grow even more significant from a mid-to long-term perspective with technology advancement, economic crises, aging society, women's increased participation in economic activities, and etc.. Since 2008, the budget allocated for vocational training has increased the most in youth employment policy. This research intends to analyze if there exist any gender differences in the opportunity to participate and the achievements from participation in vocational training, as well as suggest policy tasks to resolve the gender gap. In addition, with regard to the problems that are common for both male and female youths, this paper suggests measures to address the problems faced by female youths.

The issues dealt with in this research are as follows: 1) What meaning does

vocational training has for female youths? What are the purpose and role of vocational training to them? 2) Are there any gender differences in opportunities for participation and achievements from vocational training? 3) Do the content and direction of vocational training provided to the youth match what female youths want from vocational training? 4) What is the kind of vocational training policy required for female youths? To seek the answers to these issues, relevant literature and national statistical data were analyzed, and in-depth interviews (14 female youths, and 16 workers in training organizations and researchers) and a consultation meeting of professionals were held.

The meaning and role of vocational training have gradually expanded since the 1960s. The vocational training in the 1960s and 1970s concentrated on fostering skilled manpower. In the 1980s, the subjects of vocational training started to expand to include all workers, and vocational training for the middleaged, the elderly, women and persons with disabilities were strengthened. The focus of vocational training since 1990s has been the lifelong enhancement of workplace competencies of all workers. The OECD member countries that have more advanced vocational training systems have institutionalized ‘career guidance’ alongside vocational training.

Female youths in Korea reckon that vocational training is designed for acquiring skills required for actual duties or developing adaptability to actual duties, and do not feel its necessity. 87% of female youths in the 18th to 24th month after college graduation are found to have never received vocational training. It turned out that 52.4% of them did not feel the necessity of vocational training. The gender gap in the opportunities to participate in vocational training was mainly found in government-aided vocational training. Women’s participation was particularly low in training courses that accompany a long training period, relatively high in cost, and connection to employment for their focus on technology. These include the training courses for jobs in key national strategic industries, those for fostering professional manpower in natural science or

engineering and skilled manpower, and those for expansion of equipment, etc. Looking at the participation rate of youth population in vocational training regardless of whether government aid is provided or not, no significant differences between genders were found, except for the gender gap revealed in some low-ranking groups. For instance, more female youths participated in vocational training than male youths in the group of the unemployed who has graduated from school, in contrast more male youths than female youths participated in vocational training in the group youths who are still students or who are participating in economic activities.

In terms of the quality of vocational training, a distinctive separation between genders was found. First, men tend to receive more training in machinery, construction, electricity, and computers, while women in service, business management-office work, health-medical care, and education-social welfare. Of these, the training for education and social welfare is where female youths participate in most, but the portion of the demand for new employees in this field is below average, which signifies a mismatch between the field of training and the types of occupation where new employees are required. Second, the number of hours of participation and self-paying cost are lower in training courses where women attend. There was no gender gap in the level of receiving aid according to the purpose of vocational training. But when analyzed by type of training, women receive less aid in government-aided training and company provided vocational competency enhancement training.

In the aspect of achievements acquired from training, no gender gap was found, women even showed higher level of achievements in most cases. The level where job training courses designed for employment, business inauguration, or changing jobs was actually linked to employment in the past year was higher among women (35.4%) than men (30.9%). With regard to the government-aided vocational training for the unemployed, the employment rate of female youths is higher: among the participants in training courses offered under 'the learning

card' system, those as part of employment success package, those for workers who suffered industrial accidents, those for fostering professional manpower in natural science or engineering, and training and education courses for public career for men of national merit, the employment rate of female youths is higher than that of male youths. The overall gender gap is then meager. However, among participants in training for fostering skilled manpower, training for people who have suffered industrial accidents, and training and education for public careers of people with national merit, the rate of women is considerably higher, while that of men is considerably higher among participants in training courses for skill enhancement for day-to-day construction laborers and those for people who have suffered industrial accidents. On the other hand, the gender gap is insignificant in the case of training projects (training offered under learning card system and training for jobs in key national strategic industries) that have a great number of participants.

Many such cases were found among female youths where they choose a training course not as a decision made after establishing a clear career goal, but because they 'find it difficult to make a decision', 'want to change the career goal', or 'the training is instantly available to attend.' In this context, the guidance as to the competencies required for the positions in which they want to be employed or to which they want to change their current one needs to be provided before they start taking training courses. In addition, since the kinds of vocational training courses offered to female youths tend to be focused on basic contents lacking in-depth learning, they can hardly be utilized by women with working experience who wants to develop their skills.

Based on such research findings, the following policy tasks are suggested: 1) Legislative amendment that enables the implementation of career guidance programs as part of vocational training; 2) measures to improve balance between genders in training opportunities for low-ranking youth groups where serious gaps between genders exist; 3) establishment of a lifelong career

development system for female youths and reinforcement of career guidance; 4) introduction and model operation of vocational competency diagnosis system; 5) expansion of in-depth vocational training and development of the types of occupation specialized for female youths; and 6) improvement of the statistical infrastructure for monitoring vocational training opportunities and gender gap.