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**Japan's Public Qualification for White-Collar Workers
Change Management Education:
Management Education and HRM after the Business Career System**

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- Management Education and HRM after the Business Career System -

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Abstract

This paper considers management education of Japanese companies, especially development of white-collar workers and its changes focusing on white-collar public qualification "business career system". Introduction and practical use of the business career as public qualification have shown clearly that it is effective for the individual ability development and the job ability rating of a company as well as the change of management education. Moreover, the business career produces many influencing effects, such as support of raising employee's autonomy and abilities and increasing the transparency of a personnel evaluation. As the qualification affects management and human resources in Japan, it is necessary to fully recognize its features and limitations at its introduction and practical use.

Keywords

public qualification, white-collar workers, business career system, management education, Japanese companies

1. Introduction

White-collar workers mainly in Japan's major companies, preconditioned by the long-term employment, have been widely given the opportunity of management education. In Japan's management education, there are a variety of contents and methods for training programs from newly employed, middle-aged to managers by as well as OJT, self-education, etc. The white-collar workers, especially college graduates, were considered as core personnel and much management education has been made for the future management.

However, after the 1990s, what is called the bubble economy collapsed and the Japanese management based on lifetime employment and seniority system on condition of economic growth was obliged to change rapidly. Also management education is shifting gradually towards self-accountability, and away from the conventional company initiative targeting the whole workforce. Under such circumstance, the first public qualification, "the business career system" for a white-collar worker job in Japan was introduced.

This paper considers management education of Japanese companies, especially development of white-collar workers and its changes focusing on white-collar public qualification "business career system" (business career). The present condition, subjects and features of the management education in Japanese companies are first surveyed. Then, the present condition of white-collar worker qualification, the features and limits are taken up. As qualifications relevant to a white-collar worker are information processing, bookkeeping, English, company doctor for small-medium companies, the business career is the first qualification aimed at the white-collar worker job itself. Its meaning and role of the installation are summarized.

Next, a setup of the theoretic model for research and the results of an investigation of companies introduced business career are reported. The theoretical model based on the HRPD model of Schein (1978) and the hypotheses, (1) acquisition of public qualification leads to white-collar man-power development, and (2) acquisition of public qualification leads to white-collar promotion are set up and are analyzed from investigation. Finally, the change of the management education of the white-collar workers seen from introduction and practical use of public qualifications is considered. Establishing a white-collar worker job has various ripple effects, not only the effect in management education such as job specialization and management capability development, but a fair and highly transparent personnel evaluation,

and also improvement in motivation, and career development. I would like to discuss these issues and tie them to the conclusion. The outline for every chapter is as follows.

2. Management Education of Japanese Companies

For the management education, many forms can be considered according to a sponsor, an object, the contents, etc. However, it could be divided into two cases, one is external organizations such as a consulting firm, a training organization, and a university look for participants and carry out management education, and the other is when a company carries it out for employees as corporate education of a corporate university. Management education would be strictly that a company plans and manages its program utilizing the lecturers from in and outside the company and raises senior managers. However, the management education which leads to job achievement which is decision-making and job-execution to the management purpose for the employees of not only a senior management position but a broad layer is also important. Therefore, from executives to middle managers, supervisors, staff and new employees would be the object of management education. And various issues, such as general management and department administration such as finance, sales in addition to leadership and management capability could be contained in management education.

Several features relevant to lifetime employment and seniority system can be seen in Japan's management education mainly in big business. Since promotion would be slower and differences should not be given in the same age group under the long-term employment, the education tends to aim at the bottom, rising to all employees by focusing on the education programs based on participants from the same layer. As a result, the capability of the whole organization was raised, reconciliation of the employee who is an organization constituent is achieved, and good communication and morale have been held. On the other hand, since the result of efforts is not easily reflected in promotion or a salary for the young and middle employees with high potential and motivation, it may lead to demoralization of the organization. Moreover, in the education which all the members take a lecture, it does not necessarily suit with individual educational needs, and the problem that autonomy cannot be demonstrated is in study or a career.

In the 1990s, the economic growth which has continued since postwar came to an end and Japanese society entered into a time of big change. This present condition might be well seen in performance-based personnel systems. Management education is also changing from

being treated equally for most employees to what would be focused to the limited excellent and autonomous employees. Here, the state of the white-collar worker dependent on a company organization on the assumption that the long-term employment from the former accomplished change greatly here and the influence has also attained to management education.

3. White-Collar Worker Qualification and Business Career System

In Japan, there are few public qualifications corresponding to the jobs of white-collar workers, such as personnel affairs, accounting, and business. The related qualification to white-collar jobs are limited to public consultant on social and labor insurance, bookkeeping, sales agent, etc. It is because the personnel management by lifetime employment or seniority system was common that necessity of proving job knowledge and capability after employment was low. However, the *raison d'être* of public qualification has been increasing as it aims at an active career with the change of Japanese management in recent years.

About the role of qualification, Ando (1994) has pointed out the educational effects. Since qualification serves as a target when employees master knowledge and skill, a company says that it encourages qualification acquisition. Imano and Shimoda (1995) said that the first role of qualification is the proof of laborers' capability, and an evaluation means of goods or the quality of service is its second role. As for the types of qualification, it is divided into public qualification, official-recognition qualification and in-company authorized qualification based on an accreditation organization (Kirimura, 1985). A part of public qualification may be made into a national qualification, and a part of official-recognition qualification may be classified as private qualification.

About the meaning of qualification, Fujimura (1997) says that the capability that public qualification division liberal-arts qualification can be proved is restricted to the power of understanding and the operating-related knowledge which can be measured by a written examination. When the capability that qualification can be authorized is considered from the management skills which Katz (1955) discusses, the capability based on knowledge mostly corresponds to technical skill. Therefore, authorization in qualification is difficult for human skill such as communications skill and leadership, and conceptual skill such as problem solving and strategy formation. In the competency model by McClelland (1977), the knowledge and skill which are visible from outside are part of an iceberg, and it is supposed

that a motive, character, the characteristic, etc. exist under the water surface which are not visible. If based on this competency model, authorization of surface knowledge can be performed, but the evaluation and authorization of the invisible portion which affects job capability may be difficult.

Although the capacities of qualifications are limited, the necessity of evaluating job capability socially increased and white-collar worker qualification has also been socially searched. It is influenced by performance-based system and employability progress in Japan. In spite of the establishment of the official examination system for technical skill(Gino-Kentei), the public grade system which suits a white-collar job did not exist until now.

The business career system was founded by the Ministry of Labor (then) in 1993 for the purpose of systematic acquisition support of professional expertise and capability required for a white-collar job. It is a difficult subject to build common knowledge and capability system inter-company and industry, and the public qualification (business career) is the first step toward the solution. Ando (1994) indicated the following four reasons for the introduction of business career; (1)white-collar workers increased in number sharply, and the importance of the occupational skills development increased, (2) occupational skills development of a white-collar worker are proceeded mainly by OJT and job rotation, and systematic development systems are not ready, (3) although white-collar workers who want to take self-education increase, there are not enough facilities for the self-education intentionally and systematically, (4) private sector educational facilities are being prepared, however, it is difficult to form continuous and systematic study plans because of lack of unity of a level and duplication of the contents of a subject.

4. Theoretic Model of Public Qualification and Interview

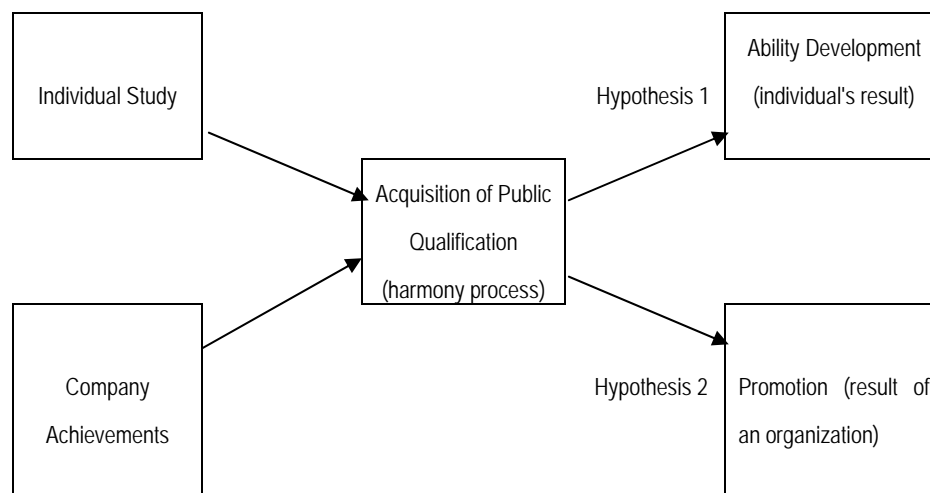
In order to carry out investigation analysis relations of public qualification and white-collar job capability from a business career system, the theoretic model as shown in the following figure was set up. This means that individual studies and company achievements (management policy, an educational system, etc.) relate to the result of individual ability development and promotion in the organization. This is a harmony process in acquisition of public qualification based on the radical model and temporal development model of HRPD of Shine (1978). Acquisition of public qualification is regarded as one of the judgments of capability as a part of harmony course of a temporal development model. Here, by the

theoretic model of public qualification, the following hypotheses were built up and those demonstrations were performed from hearing investigation etc.

-Hypothesis 1: Acquisition of public qualification leads to ability development of white-collar workers.

-Hypothesis 2: Acquisition of public qualification leads to promotion of white-collar workers.

Figure: Theoretic Model of Public Qualification



Source: Author creates based on the HRPD model of Schein (1978)

In 2002, personnel and/or education managers of information middle-sized companies were interviewed, and in 2004, personnel and/or education managers of information related huge companies were interviewed. As a result, in the information mid-companies, various qualifications for information processing were authorized in training and evaluation. Although there are many related qualifications including information processing official approval for engineers and they have become a part of requirements for promotion, as for clerical workers, there are a few qualifications. That's why business career is searched for. In the information-related companies which introduced the business career system, business career has been used as some personnel systems, such as evaluation, and promotion, and was utilized not only for study support of education but for the job evaluation for promotion. For engineers,

many qualifications were used for ability development or job evaluation. To improve the situation for engineers, the business career was introduced especially for clerical workers.

Introduction of a business career system was advanced in information-related companies. However, unexpectedly it is not so introduced in headquarters of large corporation groups. Then, follow interviews were conducted to make clear the reason to huge organizations as it has several tens of thousands of employees only in the head office. In the major companies, in-house qualification system and communities across boundaries being active. Although business career was introduced in some sections, it became clear that many were not yet introduced or under examination. The reasons why business career is not introduced in big business are difficulty to introduce one system to the whole company due to a wide range of business and a very few necessity to take the new system due to already established systems.

Based on the interview investigation about business career, the relation between acquisition of public qualification and ability development and promotion has been considered. As a result for the hypothesis 1 "acquisition of public qualification leads to white-collar ability development" seems that this hypothesis is affirmable. That is why most managers and staff indicated that public qualification such as business career develop human resource abilities such as a knowledge check. It is also checked that the individual and the company are doing qualification acquisition for the purpose of ability development initially. Next, hypothesis 2 "acquisition of public qualification leads to promotions for white-collar workers" could not reach to affirmation because investigations of the business career are limited and many pre-conditions are attached even if it is related.

It is decided by how a company positions public qualification such as business career whether it will serve as educational systems or it will become personnel systems. As practical use in a company progresses, it tends to be personnel systems rather than development systems gradually. The movement is not always effective in respect of study. A company explores positioning of the good public qualification and the suitable practical use would be requested.

5. Change of Management Education for White-collar Workers

Influence appears in various fields including management education or human resource management that white-collar worker job was actualized and recognized as a unified thing by

the common job standard through the public qualification as business career. A white-collar worker job is recognized socially and it will increase job satisfaction, motivation, professional mind, etc. Especially, the influence toward management education might be so large that it reforms it. Establishment of the standard of the unified white-collar worker job enables a common goal setting of management education accepted not only in one company but in society. Suitable and standard management education can be performed not only in major companies or companies in big cities but in small and medium-sized enterprises and local companies with knowledge and information, and training and career planning become easier also for an individual.

In respect of the change of management education, the change in quality occurs at first. In business career, it does not limit the skill and the knowledge which the conventional qualification covers, but comprehensive knowledge and potential capabilities are extracted. It includes evaluation criteria, standardization, frameworks as the result by externalization of the tacit knowledge in knowledge management. It is aimed at jobs in connection with management, not the system of learning or knowledge but finance, marketing, and production technology, in the second. Furthermore, capabilities for actual work such as management abilities, synthetic judgment, soft capabilities, etc. are included through a case study. The third feature is that human resources development can be conducted actively and independently. Although management education standard only in companies where personnel and educational systems were well prepared such as big business, if the business career by which much wisdom of Japanese companies and experience were collected is harnessed, common job knowledge and capability will become clear and the education of them which makes them a base will be attained.

As influences other than management education, the business career system having been utilized for job ability rating attracts attention in a company. Although it might be a good point that practice level of the management improved by osmosis of standard management, it may be shown that business career is not utilized easily only with education and careers. But many influencing effects, a rise of improvement in management education in a Japanese society as a whole, individual autonomy and specialty, knowledge and professional-movements and adjustments can be considered.

6. Conclusion

Introduction and practical use of the business career as public qualification have shown clearly that it is effective for the individual ability development and the job ability rating of a company as well as the change of management education. From actualization of the white-collar worker job which change of Japanese management brought about, the shift from a seniority promotion system to a capability and achievements oriented system etc., the paradigm of management or people management changed and the qualification corresponding to a white-collar worker job was sought for. Business career is the central public qualification and its introduction leads to the change of the conventional management education. Moreover, the business career produces many influencing effects, such as support of raising employee's autonomy and abilities and increasing the transparency of a personnel evaluation. Thus, as the public qualification affects management and human resources, it is necessary to fully recognize its features and limitations at its introduction and practical use.

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