

A Narrative Study of the Career Decision-Making Process of Junior High School Dropouts

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the career decision-making process of junior high school dropouts. Through the in-depth depiction of dropout process and models of the three cases – Yu, Tong and Ah Tsim, the study attempts to understand the reasons for dropping out; the effect of the ecological environment on the whole dropout process as well as their expectations for future careers.

The study was carried out by using the qualitative approach and narrative analysis. The data of the three cases are gathered after the semi-structured interviews and are analyzed from a Holistic-Content perspective. According to Miller-Tiedeman's theory of Career Decision-Making (1990), the process of the dropout model designed in this research is divided into two stages – 'anticipation' and 'implementation'.

Findings indicated that the junior high school dropouts have subjective perception of their own dropout events in terms of active and passive factors. After re-presenting the whole dropout process, 'uncertainty' and 'unwillingness to withdraw' in career decision-making are realized by the dropouts.

To highlight the further research on dropout prevention, the followings are called for: (1) parents' viewpoint on the phenomena of children 'drop-out and work'; (2) the nonuniform criterion of drop-out and repetition in Macao private schools, and thus results in a vicious circle in education: 'bad study performance – repetition – dropout'; (3) the actualization of the career planning counseling for students from different grades.

Key words / phrases: junior high school students; dropouts; dropout decision-making process; narrative analysis.