

“Is there a Plan B? How transitioning youth perceive risks awaiting them in working life and how they plan to deal with them”

Japan is a country that has recently experienced a rapid shift from an era of high growth, stable employment, stark gender role separation and an accompanying ‘grand narrative’ into one of low growth, irregular jobs, growing female economic independence and more individualised narratives. This shift has clearly bred new opportunities as well as new risks, many of which are most acutely felt by youth as they attempt transition into ‘adulthood’.

Drawing on the authors’ prior work on social risk, youth inclusion policy in Japan and intimate relationships as well as on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, this paper explores how such ‘transitioning’ youth perceive the risks awaiting them at the end of formal education and how they intend to manage them. Are young people confounded as parents and schools promote a ‘success model’ from an earlier era at a time when that model is exceedingly being undermined? Are they furthermore aware of new social support services that may be drawn upon to manage the risks of unemployment, injury from excessive work, social exclusion and loss of a sense of meaning? Or are they rather more predisposed to seek informal support from parents, peers, networks and the online world?

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