

# The changing status of vocational higher education in contemporary Japan and the Republic of Korea

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UNESCO-UNEVOC Discussion Paper Series, Volume 4 The paper offers a comparative analysis of the historical as well as institutional framework that helped shape the vocationally-oriented higher education institutions of Japan and the Republic of Korea (senmongakko and jeonmun daehack respectively), as well as comparing them to their non-vocational counterparts. Furthermore, the authors analyse the changing status of these institutions and their adaptability to the world of work, comparing and contrasting them in the light of some key questions, such as student employability, institutions' adaptability to changing labour-market needs, and the role of the state in shaping these institutions. While mostly state-run in Korea, vocationally-oriented higher education institutions in Japan are largely semi-autonomous. The authors identify the impact of these two opposing preconditions on the institutions' programmes: Whereas the Japanese senmongakko are chiefly market-oriented with a strong focus on employability and a competitive drive, the South Korean jeonmun daehack are highly regulated and designed to graduate technicians with solid theoretical as well as practical skills. The paper also highlights the similarities between these two different concepts of TVET, and concludes with some recommendations on how knowledge on the positive aspects of both types of institutions can benefit TVET policy-making in other countries.

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