

# The Impacts of Constructing Middle and Vocational Schools: Historical Evidence in Japan\*

Mari Tanaka †

April 14, 2017

## Abstract

In the late nineteenth century in Japan, there were large and rapid constructions of middle schools and vocational schools of commerce, technology, and agriculture by government subsidization for establishing a modern education system. Exploiting variations across cohorts and regions in the exposures to the number of such schools, this paper examines the effects of improved access to middle level education on occupational outcomes. The outcomes are measured by using the Japanese Who's Who Records that list biographies of a large number of notables and high tax payers in 1930s. The results of empirical analysis suggest that both of the increasing numbers of middle schools and commercial schools in a region contributed to an increase in the number of persons who were born in the region and appeared on the Who's Who Records as business elites. In addition, the results imply that middle schools contributed to producing notable engineers, scholars, politicians, and high-ranking military officers. Overall the estimated effects are larger for those born in commoners families who had no access to post-elementary level education in the previous feudal society.

Keywords: Education, Middle School, Vocational School, Human Capital, Economic Development, Economic History, Japan

---

\*I am grateful to Hidehiko Ichimura and Yasuyuki Sawada for sharing the data of The Japanese Who's Who Record that were digitized through their research project funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKEN). I have also benefited from many useful comments by Nicholas Bloom, Ran Abramitzky, Yasuyuki Sawada, and Chiaki Moriguchi.

†Graduate School of Economics, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, Japan. Email: mari.tanaka@r.hit-u.ac.jp.