

## Movements and Issues of Public School Reform in Recent Years (1)

— Case of USA —

### 1. Basic Roles of Public School and Its Transformation

#### (1) What Have Been Expected as Basic Roles of Public School

—Things Considered as Raison D’etre and Basis of Public School System—

- ① Res publica infrastructure = the foundation for the development of socioeconomy, and an individual’s means for social participation, selection of life = occupation, political participation, etc. (said to be the right of the rights of citizens) = providing all children with the “national common culture” asked in the contemporary society and work ⇒ Emphasis on importance of exposing to various cultures and of equipping with basic knowledge and skills (positive understanding of a mandatory aspect of education).
- ② Through education, to rectify socioeconomic disparities (the policy for the equality of educational opportunity as a social policy), and to foster an “open” society = “cooperativity”, which accepts the coexistence of diversified range of values.
- ③ The cornerstone of an educational and cultural creativity, and consortium, in a regional society (a district’s school, limits on disparities among schools = securement of the school district)

These basic characters of school education conducted in sort of rigid type of education administration methods and in a model stressing res publica developments were not subjects of skepticism until the 1960s.

#### (2) Skepticism and Sway

##### ① Skepticism on Basis of Public School and System Fluctuation after 1970s

Sway and breakdown of the school education that was to provide all children with the “national common culture” supported by the res publica developments and the desire for improvements through the acquisition of academic qualifications?

Outbreak and enlargement of such school problems as growing number of “learning slack children” (7. 5. 3), enlarging disparities in academic competence, school refusal, violence in school, bullying, etc.

- ② Gaps in social stratification became obvious as indicated in disparities in academic competence and differences in the rate of advancing to high school/college. = There have been disparities in social stratification also in Japan where stratification gaps used to be said small. Those in education, however, were concealed in Japan’s economic growth in which the level of the entire nation was raised. Under the economic depression = the low rate of economic growth, changes in the economic premise and the turbulences and declines in prestige of public schools brought about a situation where homes/students of high-

academic-qualification orientation came to be detached from public schools. → In the growing orientation to private schools, including disparities among public schools, problem of gaps in social stratification is beginning to surface, as a pattern of public schools versus private schools. The ideal that the public school system is the foundation for correcting social inequity and for laying down social integration and “cooperativity”, is about to break up.

- ③ The outbreak and expansion of school problems attributable to the breakdown of regional communities and the educational “holding” by schools. → A bloated control-oriented profile, indicated in holding children in school’s arms and ”protection” by schools, became apparent as the school’ s “exclusiveness” and human rights infringements.
- ④ The inductive factor to the mandatory learning become weaker in an “affluent” society, and the “res publica” attribute, used to be the school’s function, fell back, and the “individual” attribute became conspicuous. → “Consumer” consciousness in education was pragmatized. → In the 1980s, the administration reform and the rise of a small government came about, and the roles of the public and private sectors were reexamined. → In addition to the stance to expect the political reform of education and education administrations, the main constituent who satisfied and resolved own demand for education in a free market came on stage.

## 2. Evolution of School Reform in USA

– From Political Reform on Decentralization/Democratization to Reform by Market of Choice –

(1) Period Division of Public School Reform – Struggle and Adjustment of Basic Principles (equality, efficiency and freedom, i.e. choice) of Education Administration and Finance

① Period of Equality (from the Brown Decision in 1955 to the latter half of the 1960s)  
Disparities in School Education Levels among Races and Isolation Policy

← • The Brown Decision

Implementation of the compulsory integrated education

Uplift of the civil rights movements

“Fight against poverty” “Cleanout of poverty”

- Cleanout of “poverty” = the social reform by education, was to rectify disparities among races and stratifications by the policy of the equality of educational opportunity
  - ← The government’s investment in education, the intervention of judiciary
  - ← Reexamination of the equal opportunity policy (the compensatory education, the head-start project)
  - ⇒ As reforms of education administration and schools, especially the “participation” of the minority and the poor in school/education administrations that promoted changes in

their consciousness, and the decentralization reform of education administrations (decentralization of education- administration unit, delegation of authority to schools, etc.)

\*Criticism on the conventional (popularly-elected) board of education system which was large in scale and led by the specialist personnel/chairman of the board ← Reform on education administrations for the minority residents to request for the reflection of their intentions and the direct control

Deployment of the compensation education policy led by the federal government = Not only to prioritize the resource investment and allocation to the poverty regions/schools, but also to democratize the regions/schools reform by the participation of the poor/minorities hereto (conditions to grant the federal subsidies) = Establishment of the parental councils/school councils → Reformation of the consciousness of the interested party = “Substantiation” of democratization of and equality in education administrations/schools through the awaking/boosting sense of ownership by the participation

## ② Period of Efficiency (–the mid 1970s: accountability and effectiveness/productivity of schools)

Deficits in National Finance and Trade Balance, Appreciation of Education Tax, and Distrust in School Education

\*Education tax = Installation of the school district which is different from other administrative district ← The board of education possesses the authority of its own on the education tax, and operates the education budget compilations and executions.

Residents’ campaigns requesting reductions in the inhabitant tax and education tax (Rectifying disparities among school districts and equalizing thereof fell under the state government’s responsibility, and the weight of the tax on local school districts in the education finance resources went down, which, instead, significantly increased the share of burdens on the state government.)

Participations of parents/regional residents in the school education, and pursuits of the accountability of schools

→ Installation of school councils and school parents’ councils, etc. and strengthening of their authorities

## ③ Period of Choice (–the present date)

①②→ Problems such as the additional controls of schools, the progression of standardization, and the escalation of “education politics” over participation in school, etc. Amid the “small government” theory and the administrative reforms, a reform strategy is being searched for that will replace the political reform, i.e. one of democracy based on the principle of majority rule. (Anthony Giddens: “The Third Way”, etc.)

The escalation of school devastations in urban areas and distrusts in schools help the movements grow stronger to choose schools on various personal bases replacing the participatory model.

## (2) Confrontation on Basic Strategy for School Reform: Participation or Choice

The mainstream of the school reform continues to be the participation in schools by way of installing school councils and school parental councils.

\*Rights to speak and decide on elections of school principals, managements of schools, budgets of schools, etc.

### (Case) Local School Council in Chicago

Composition of councilors: 6 parental representatives, 2 regional resident representatives, 1 school principal (1 representative of student in case of high school)  
Representatives except the principal are publicly elected in each of mother body.

Council's administrative authorities:

1. Open recruitment, selection, 4-year employment contract, and evaluation, all for the principal
2. Approval authority on school improvement plans prepared by the principal
3. Approval authority on school budget plans prepared by the principal

\* "Evaluation" to each school ← Chicago School Education Accountability Council

- To appoint one as a "guidance/monitor school" where children/pupils scoring equal to or above an average in the basic academic competence test are less than 15% of its entire school
- To send to a "guidance/monitor school" the expert staff on school management improvements, and the school puts effort into "rebuilding" under the staff's guidance. In case "improvements" are not made, to fire the principal/faculty members of such school, and to initiate on sending in replacements including the principal. But difficulties and skepticism/criticism regarding the school reforms by the participation in schools:
- Democracy in the participatory form → Political struggles over authorities on the school management and education between parents/regional residents and schools/teachers → Waste of energy, to give birth to a new legal intensification of controls
- To many of parents and regional residents, school managements and participations are difficult, and it is possible that they interfere or infringe the "expertise" of schools/teachers. = Superiority in the side of the principal and schools = "Power"

structure of schools hardly change, and just the limited number of parents participate in schools ← Choosing of a school does not involve these problems, nor does it scarcely interfere or infringe the “expertise” of schools/teachers.

- Requirements for “rebuilding” and “operation” of schools → Motivation to say “our school”, or such consciousness/will of teachers, parents and children particularly in areas of the serious school deterioration or in schools
- Reexamination of the “common education” theory → How can a motivation for learning be worked up? Devices are required to let children approach to the learning, starting with subjects of their interests in a school that has a distinctive character = To put variety of distinctive characters in curriculums and education guidance from the elementary education stage ← Difficulties in conducting such approaches and devices in conventional public schools rules due to their regulations

### (3) Movements of School Reform by School Choice

#### 《Deregulation/Ease of Regulations, Position of Expanding Choice》

- Schools led by the national government or education administrations, having emphasized public roles of public schools, enhanced their bureaucratic character, and applied strong controls over freedom of learning of parents and children being consumers and that of school management. It is necessary that education administration operations and school reforms maximally secure demands of parents and children who are consumers, and are led by these demands. → Principles of market mechanism among schools/teachers = To introduce a school choice, and to expand freedom to build schools (Charter School, etc)
- The fundamental of school is for one to respect his values and be able to learn what he wants to learn. = School I have chosen = Own-school consciousness is important to learning in school and building school.
- Proving education to children/pupils (and parents) of variety of thoughts and interests, or ones under a large disparities in academic competence, who are placed in one school or one classroom, setting the philosophy aside, involves difficult problems. ← Various merits are expected in gathering and educating children/pupils (and parents) of similar thoughts and interests, by amending or abandoning such principles. = Choice of school, deregulated and flexible school district

#### ① Proposal of Education Voucher in M. Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 1980

The major reason for the devastation of public schools is that they are reigned by education bureaucrats. → Give the decision making right of education to parents (= consumers, demanders). Proposal of the education voucher as a means to realize just that.

“The main reason for the devastation is considered to be centralization and bureaucratization of the public school education. Along with the shift of financial grants for public schools from local authorities to central authorities, the state education department, instead of parents, comes to decide what and how children learn. In the first place, parents should do the job to choose a school for their children to enroll, and to choose a school for them to transfer to if dissatisfied with one of the initial choice. To take measures which make that possible is the most appropriate and probably only way to bring the education right back to parents.”

Concept of the education voucher by M. Friedman is the one without regulations. (no racial or socio economic conditions at enrollment, acceptance of additional tuition by school, etc.)

### ② “Regulated” Education Voucher Concept

A voucher concept which contains a compensation scheme to secure for such handicapped homes as the poor and minorities the right to choose schools possessed by the middle class for commuting to private school (ban on additional tuition by school, provision of education voucher amount inversely proportionate to household’s income, securement of racial/minority allotment, etc.)

### ③ Movements of School Reform Based on Choice/Freedom

#### **1) Choice of School = Flexible School District**

- Magnet school (installation of mini schools with a variety of distinctive curriculums in them)
- Open enrollment (inside and outside of school district)

#### **2) Charter School: “Private School” within Public School System**

##### **【Its Objective and Mechanism】**

Objective: To establish a school, within the public school system, which can meet diversified needs, and to promote educational activities of highly motivated faculty members

Mechanism: Permitters of installation (sponsors = the board of education of the state and school district, university organization, etc.)

↑ ↓ Installation conditions = number of approved schools, period, application requirements (teachers, residents, NPO, private schools, etc.), level of freedom different from general public schools (teachers’ qualification, class content, number of classes, etc.)

## Applicants

- Characteristics: ① Many of decrees applied to general public schools are contracted out.  
(curriculum, school budget, personnel affairs, etc.)
- ② Performance of education = Responsible for results, to be evaluated in a certain time period by outsiders

Points for debate

### 3) Home School

#### 4) Education Voucher (Choice of School Including Private School)

- 1) The first public education voucher was implemented in 1989 in Minnesota that facilitated for dropouts of public junior high schools and “at risk students” to be able to commute to private schools if they wished. Also in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a voucher was introduced in 1990 that permitted children of the poor households to commute to private schools including religious schools.
- 2) “No Child Left Behind Law” was established in Congress (December 13, 2001)  
The law obligates students to improve their performances in exchange for the subsidy the federal government.
  - Content of the law:

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#### 5) Approach to Revive Neighborhood School

Merits and Reevaluation of Neighborhood School

- Negative effect of commuting to schools in great distances (Case example: 69% of students in Milwaukee commute to schools not in local areas)
- Needs and demands for integrated education/welfare services that take advantage of neighborhood schools having kindergartens in parallel = Children with regional livelihood problems before schooling
- To enrich education/welfare services corresponding to family circumstances and demands
  - Provide safe nurturing circumstances in morning and after-school hours outside of class hours (breakfast, extended time for education, etc.)
  - Enrich education services of good quality in terms bilingual education, education for handicapped children, lowering a ratio between students in lower grades and teachers, etc,
  - Participation of parents/regional residents in school managements as partners

### 3. Target of Public School Reform Based on Choice/Freedom Principles in USA, and Differences in “Phase” from Japan – Regarding Evaluations –

- ① Target is to enhance academic competence of the urban poor and minority
- ② “Question” about school reforms resulting from the expansion of choice/freedom, and an attempt at the “revival” of neighborhood schools
  - Difficulties in participatory school reforms and their possibility
- ③ Differences in “Phase” of Public School Reforms Between Japan and USA
  - USA → Primary strategy upon recovering a low academic competence of minorities and their security  
Choosing a school is not entirely a free hand, and there are such considerations as the priority on minorities and their ratio of total enrollees arranged by the administrative offices. The education voucher to ensure commuting to a private school applies to “at risk students” in public schools, not to all children,
  - In Japan, in school reforms in which the school choice and freedom are emphasized, there is no notion of selective guarantee for handicapped children.
  - Difference in “phase” of “academic competence” problem between Japan and USA.