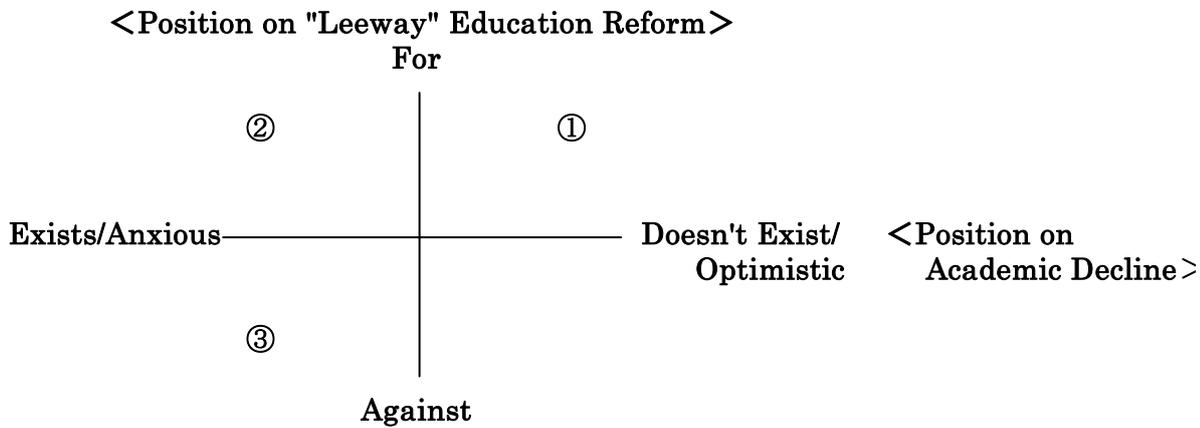


Movements and Issues of Public School Reform in Recent Years (2)

— Case of Japan —

I. “Leeway” Education Reform and Controversy on “Decline in Academic Competence”



(Ichikawa, Shinichi, *Bringing Up Learning Motivation and Skills*: Shogakukan, 2004 p.16
Figure 1.1 revised)

Position in ②: (1) “Academic decline” is not directly caused by the five-day school week system or the revisions of the school curriculum guideline (content cutbacks, introduction of the integrated study, etc.).

(2) Problems lie in the teaching/guidance by schools/teachers that, due to an excessive emphasis on children’s voluntary learning, by limiting teachers’ roles in assistances/aids, neglected a systematic educational guidance, and failed to program an educational guidance in a proper balance of a systematic guidance and a problem-solving learning, etc.

(3) Inadequate physical/human considerations on the educational guidance and comprehensive studies in compliance with individuals

(4) “Academic decline” is attributed to such multiple factors as weakening of interest/eagerness in studies, shifting-away of motivations for studies in society/home (“affluence”, “poverty”, etc.), disorderly life of children, and decay in vitality, but not to the cutbacks on numbers of school days/classes or the content of the school curriculum guideline, etc.

(5) In order to nurture motivations for academic advancement and studies, measures for children to improve living and advance vitality need to be taken by realizing classes with/ instruction of a small number of pupils, enriching assistance/aid for comprehensive studies, and alliance/cooperation among schools and homes/regions, etc.

VS.

- Position in ③: (1) While there may be some problem of educational guidance, the cutbacks on number of school days/classes and the content of the school curriculum guidance are the direct cause of the “academic decline”.
- (2) Comprehensive studies, being inadequately related to coursework, have become mere on-site studies, and their teaching materials and guidance methods vary too much among schools/teachers. → Either abolish or substantially reduce class hours for the integrated studies
- (3) To shift the discretion on abolishing the five-day school system or schooling on Saturdays to local autonomous bodies, and to reexamine and increase the content of the school curriculum guideline.

The practical evolution of State’s education policies has been to basically maintain the position in ②, and to reflect some parts pointed out from the position in ③ on these policies.

⇒ Big policy controversy

- (1) To continue or revise the five-day school system, or to grant autonomous bodies the discretion on schooling on Saturdays
- (2) Flexible class hours for subjects and the integrated study

(* Five-Day School System—Historical Backdrop of “Leeway” Education Reform and Policy Twist

- Economic frictions caused by the trade surpluses (the latter half of the 1980s) → Pressures to expand domestic demand
 “Report by ‘Panel on Economic Structural Adjustment’ for International Cooperation” (the Maekawa Report) by the advisory body to Prime Minister Nakasone in 1986 = Early enforcement of shorter working hours and a five-day work week to expand domestic demand
 + Provisional education council under Prime Minister Nakasone to criticize education-obsessed society and recommend education in compliance with individuals = Proposal on individualization and liberalization
- Requests for a five-day week system by economic circles and labor circles → political circles
- Strong objections by Education Ministry/educational circles to the application of the five-day week system automatically to the five-day school week system ← the divide bridged by pressures from economic, labor, and political circles
- Ministry of Education dealt the introduction of the five-day week system in a cautious manner (starting with its implementation at once a month), and made an appeal to every sector of society to work on putting conditions in place and making “receiver” in regions/homes so as to be able to maintain education standards under the situation where school days/class hours get reduced.

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Japanese economy was in a favorable condition when the five-day school week system was requested and its policy was made, but subsequently it deteriorated during the period of preparation and trials.

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Amid decreasing numbers of school days/classes, the streamlining of conditions did not work out to effectively implement educational guidance in compliance with individuals or comprehensive studies (, insufficient undertakings of allocations of schools/faculty members and in regions/homes, changes in regions/homes under the economic depression = disparities in echelon, etc.), and executing the “leeway” education reform and the five-day school week system, which originally had been separate measures, resulted in generating controversies over “busy schedules” and “academic declines” to school venues and teachers.

II. Debate on “Liberalization”, i.e. “Choice System” of Public Schools and Reform Trends

The preceding lecture ⇒ basic roles/principles expected on public schools, “transformation”, trends of American public school reform

*Note! ⇒ Target of Public School Reform Based on Choice/Freedom Principles in USA, and Differences in “Phase” from Japan—Regarding Evaluations—

- ① Target is to improve public schools where those children of the urban poor and minorities commute, and which are in a state of “devastation”, and to enhance their academic competence (middle class on white flight, choice of private schools at 25%).
 - ② Measures like school choice, charter, and voucher are not totally unrestricted, and are under the consideration of the public administrative offices to arrange a prioritized enrollment of children of minorities/poor and their ratio of total enrollees. The education voucher to ensure the commute to private schools is targeted at “at risk students” not adequately cared in public schools.
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 - 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 “seriousness” of “academic competence” problem between Japan and USA.
 - ③ “Question” about school reforms resulting from the expansion of choice/freedom, and an attempt at the “revival” of neighborhood schools
 - Since problems concerning public schools in urban school districts are results of multilayered social problems, their improvement requires not only education but measures closely allied with other polities such as welfare (serving breakfast, education/care after school, etc.).
- ⇒ Much more considerations and investments are essential for schools/children in regions under the target of reforms. But there is a persistent criticism on school choice and

charter school that, by recusing from such social approaches, they are becoming the measures to eventuate in an individual person's choice or efforts of an individual school.

1. Debate on Public School Reform Regarding Liberalization/Diversification in Japan

- a. Public schools as a social common infrastructure = School attendance duty/compulsory school attendance = To approve standardized education contents and their “mandatory” inoculation as the basic characters of compulsory education (social reproduction – social participation of integration and individual = adjustment for independence)

VS.

- b. Emphasis on private/individual value of education = individualization = choice and liberalization
Emphasis on a personal-service nature of education and a viewpoint of consumer sovereignty

(1) Expansion of School Choice System Centering in Urban Area

(2) Trials on More Liberal and Diversified Education and Education Administration Due to Elastic Standards of State

– Popularized from Designated Special Zone in Structural Reform = Possibly Expanded Across the Country –

- ① Contracted out of school curriculum guideline: subject of English, teaching and guidance in English, etc.
- ② Excluded from application of such education administration rules as personnel affairs for faculty members: single-handed employment of faculty members by municipalities
- ③ Learning/education for children/pupils with special needs: IT education for children not attending school, etc.

(3) Debate and Movement on Revising “Barrier” to Entry into School by Regulatory Reform (Structural Reform Special Zone [literal translation])

- ① Traditional installation of schools
 - State, local public bodies
 - Private schools = educational corporations
 - 1) In view of the “public nature” of schools, conditions for them to provide stable education are to own property above a certain scale, hold premises/facilities, and solidly maintain/manage internal revenue.
 - 2) Private school council
- ② Debate on revising a “barrier” to the entry into school in the regulatory reforms and the

conference to promote private-sector participations, and trial runs of the special zone

- 1) By traditionally limiting school installations to State, local public bodies and education corporations, schools have been on a provider-oriented management not perceptive to needs and demands of consumers, i.e. parents/children who receive educational services.
- 2) State and local public bodies and education corporations being the bodies to install schools, education of the quality to meet diversified educational service needs cannot be provided. Providers capable of such quality education should have an easier way to participate in the school installations.
- 3) Other than education corporations, such main constituents capable to provide diversified education as joint-stock companies and public-interest corporations (NPO, etc.) and others should be asked to install schools. At the same time, the criteria on education corporations should be made lower and elastic in order to facilitate an easier entry into private schools and an equal competition against private schools.

VS.

*Controversy between MEXT

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Currently, some 25 schools established by joint-stock companies, etc. are scheduled to open by next spring, by taking advantage of “the structural reform special zone” system.

- ① Compulsory education school: Asahi Jyuku (Okayama City) = Junior high school/preparatory school for advancing to high school, only one installed by a joint-stock company, to provide some 400 hours of classes (1.43 times of ones in standard public junior high schools), also to introduce classes in English.
- ② High school: Sakura International High School (Ueda City, Nagano Pref.) = Correspondence education, possibly embracing truant students and dropouts
Yushi International High School (Goshoura Town, Kumamoto) = Educational guidance through internet
With Us High School (Takahagi City, Ibaraki Pref.) = Wide-area correspondence education targeted at those who experienced cutting classes, those on a long sick leave, dropouts, etc.
Yoyogi High School: (Shima City, Mie Pref., and Shibuya Ward, Tokyo) = Correspondence education, to receive truant students and dropouts, etc.
- ③ University: LEC Tokyo Legal Mind University/Accounting Graduate School (13 locations nationwide)
Business Breakthrough Graduate University (Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo), etc.

(4) Movements on Home Schooling, Charter School, Voucher

Cf: <http://homepage2.nifty.com/irer/charter.html>

2. Transformation of Education Administration Methods by MEXT, and Movements of Public School Reform by Regional/Tutelary Participations

(1) MEXT's Public School Reforms and Changes in Education Administration

① To secure “public nature” of compulsory education and the national minimum = to make its content more elastic by positioning the stipulation as the “lowest criteria” and by loosening the content regulation into a format of the broad outline, and to move on toward tolerating discretions by autonomous bodies/schools = topping up on the criteria or sticking out sideways of the criteria

② To transform education administration methods in order to have autonomous bodies and schools adhere to and attain the national minimum, while expanding their discretionary authority and originality/ingenuity

⇒ To seek a transition from traditional education administration methods (management of entrance/process) to a new ones emphasizing educational achievements and evaluations (management of exit – academic aptitude test, external evaluation – internal evaluation made obligatory, qualification test for graduation from high school/similar level)

* • To run academic aptitude tests: Controversies over their execution and utilization methods

• To obligate self-evaluations of schools in each school's installation standards

← MEXT formulating a model idea and obligating its implementation and disclosure ←
Development of legal systems for external evaluations in progress

• From the high school equivalency exam to a high school equivalency graduation-qualifying exam (to check by qualification exam while ensuring diversified high school education)

(2) School Reforms by Regional/Tutelary Participations

– **Expansion of Speaking and Participatory Powers of Regional Residents/Guardians Regarding School Management** –

① **School independence/autonomy = to strengthen authority of principal ← School councilor system to support principal as his cheering party (Central Education Council's report in**

1998)

② **Birth of School Operation Conference**

- In way of criticizing the school councilor system, and as Japan's equivalent of the charter school, the school operation conference became possible to be established in 2004, which strengthened authorities of regional residents/guardians. And accepted were principal's authorities on personnel affairs, voice over managing policies, and making decisions. Concrete shapes of these matters are, however, to be determined by the ingenuity of each education board.