

Educational Administration in Japan

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Existing State and Characteristics

1. Educational Administration in Japan Covers a Wide Range of Domains

The central administration machinery of Japan, like the British system, centres around the parliamentary cabinet system. The Prime Minister, appointed by the Emperor upon the nomination of the National Diet, selects no more than 20 ministers of state and forms the cabinet. One member takes charge of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Monbusho in Japanese and hereinafter referred to as Monbusho in this article).

Monbusho has jurisdiction over the domains of education, science, culture and religion.

Education covers school (including pre-school, elementary and secondary school), higher education, social education, physical education and sports. Social education includes a wide range of educational activities of a non-formal nature, such as out-of school education, adult education, women's education, youth education, etc. It is a matter of course that school education also refers to the educational institutions providing vocational and technical education.

Science includes the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and their applied studies. Many scientific research institutions fall under the jurisdiction of Monbusho, which provides research grants. For example, the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, which launches scientific research satellites, and the National Institute of Polar Research which maintains bases in the South Pole region, are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry.

The domain of *cultural* administration covers the protection of cultural properties, the heritage of mankind, on the one hand, and promotion of arts and cultural activities on the other. In addition, matters related to the refinement of the national language, the extension of its use, the protection of copyrights and the registration of religious corporations, also fall under the jurisdiction of cultural administration. All are the responsibility of the Agency of Cultural Affairs, an external organisation set up under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

Since Monbusho covers such wide domains, its name in English is the 'Ministry of Education, Science and Culture'. It is confident that administrative measures will be carried out smoothly in those domains where Monbusho covers such wide domains of education, science and culture. Monbusho does not cover all aspects of educational activities of the country. Such adjacent areas as vocational training within enterprises, the development of technology, social welfare, international cooperation, for example, which are often treated as part of educational activities in international comparative studies, are not under the jurisdiction of Monbusho.

Administratively, Japan is divided into 47 prefectures and further subdivided into 3262 municipalities. Prefectures (*To Do Fu Ken* in Japanese) operate on an upper level and subsume the territories of the municipalities within their jurisdiction. But municipalities (*Shi Cho Son* in Japanese) and prefectures are independent of each other in terms of local

administration machinery. Each prefecture and municipality, in addition to its office for the top elected official, establishes an education board composed of five (and in some cases three) members.

Members of the board of education are nominated by the prefectural governor or municipal head with the consent of the prefectural or municipal assembly concerned. The board of education operates as an independent executive-agency exercising jurisdiction over the domains of education, science and culture within the given district. This board system was established in 1948. Unlike Monbusho, the boards of education do not assume responsibilities for universities, private educational institutions, or religious corporations. These areas, which are guaranteed freedom and autonomy, come under the administrative responsibility of the prefectural governor. This means that in prefectures and municipalities, two agencies, the board of education and the prefectural or municipal office, are responsible for educational administration.

2. Educational Responsibility shared between National, Prefectural and Municipal Government

In Japan, central government, prefectural and municipal government all share responsibilities for the administration of education, science and culture. The shares are as follows:

The municipality is an administrative unit closely related to the day-to-day life of the inhabitants. The municipal government shares responsibility for establishing kindergartens, elementary and lower secondary schools, and thus provides for compulsory education. In addition, it operates programmes of social education, physical education and sports responding to the daily needs of youth and adults of the district. In order to meet such requirements, Kominkan or Citizens' Public Halls are established, there being almost as many of these as there are lower secondary schools throughout the country. Kominkan plays the role of a core facility, as the learning centre of the community. Local libraries are also established by the municipal government.

However, some municipalities are big enough in terms of population and financial capabilities to establish and maintain upper secondary schools and higher educational institutions as well, according to the local needs. In particular, big cities whose population exceeds one million share administrative responsibilities equal to those of the prefecture.

The prefecture, a public entity which subsumes municipalities and undertakes administrative responsibilities for a wide territory, handles matters which need uniform treatment, coordinates administrative affairs among the municipalities which are in the territory, including liaison between national government and municipalities, and carries out larger-scale projects.

The establishment and maintenance of such institutions as upper secondary schools, schools for the blind, the deaf and the handicapped, museums of fine arts, nature and history, and large-scale physical education facilities are mainly the responsibility of the prefecture. They also pay the salaries of all educational personnel of the compulsory schools established by municipal boards of education, ensuring that the same salary scale is applied to both rural and urban school teachers. Accordingly, the prefectural board of education assumes the power to appoint the educational personnel whose salaries are paid by prefecture, thus making possible the transfer of staff beyond the boundaries of municipalities.

The prefectural governor has responsibilities for private educational institutions (excluding higher education); these responsibilities include approval for their establishment and financial assistance to them.

The national government prescribes national standards by means of laws and regulations regarding the educational administrative affairs to be shared by respective local public entities, and also provides necessary grants and contributions. For example, Monbusho disburses contributions according to relevant laws and regulations for the construction of compulsory schools and the salaries of personnel for compulsory education, and in this way strives to maintain uniform standards throughout the country.

Needless to say, the Ministry develops national educational policies, suggests laws and regulations, prepares budgets and assumes responsibility for promoting education, science and culture in Japan. In terms of school education, the national government shares direct responsibility for higher education such as university, junior college and technical college, while municipal governments are responsible for compulsory schools and prefectural governments for upper secondary schools. To date, the national government has established 180 higher education institutions. In addition, approximately 780 private institutions of higher learning are under the jurisdiction of Monbusho. In promoting scientific research and cultural activities, Monbusho establishes many important research institutes, promotes the preservation of cultural properties, takes measures to improve the national language and expand its use effectively, and establishes important museums and other facilities.

3. Standardisation of Administrative Competencies

The prefectures and municipalities carry out administrative responsibilities in accordance with the principle of local autonomy expressed in the Constitution. Therefore, they are not subordinate agencies of the national government. The Japanese education system, in which many functions are shared by local public entities, is administratively quite decentralised. The criticism that Japanese education is much more centralised accrues from the fact that there is strong demand for educational equality within Japan. Since Japan is a mono-ethnic island country, a widely agreed basic requirement of administration in Japan is to maintain standardised services to all nationals. To the extent that this has been successful in education, the system is seen as highly centralised.

The following are some of the main measures taken to maintain equal opportunities in education and provide unified standards of education throughout the country for school education, in particular for compulsory education.

First of all, the nature of education in schools is institutionalised by national laws and regulations. The contents to be taught at schools are stated in the Courses of Study prescribed by Monbusho as standards of reference. The standards refer to such matters as the number of days of instructional activities, subject areas to be taught, and sequences of instructional topics; and Monbusho strives to maintain these standards of instruction. The text books used in schools are authorised by Monbusho on the basis of prescriptions of the Courses of Study.

Secondly, differences between local entities due to financial competencies are minimised. The national government disburses general grants to local public entities in accordance with their financial capabilities based on the system of tax allocation to local governments, thus guaranteeing a certain standard of administrative competency. In the field of education, in addition to such general grants, national subsidies are given for various items.

Most important is the national contribution to half of the salary expenditure for educational personnel of compulsory schools. As already mentioned elsewhere, the salaries of educational personnel working at elementary and lower secondary schools established by municipal boards of education are paid by the prefectural government, half of which comes from the national government. In order to make the burdens as equal as possible, in addition

to the laws and regulations regarding the class organisation and quota of teaching staff in compulsory schools, the national government prescribes the standard salary scale for teaching staff. The contributions of Monbusho to local public entities for personnel expenditure are made on the basis of this standard salary scale. The same principle applies to the construction of school facilities by the municipal board of education. The national government prescribes the standards for school facilities and disburses national contributions for the expenditures required on the basis of these standards.

Similarly, various measures of financial assistance are provided for school education other than compulsory education and for social education programmes. The upgrading of educational personnel, expansion of school facilities and equipment, expansion and improvement of libraries, museums, citizens' public halls, sports facilities, the development of youth activities and the promotion of adult education programmes, community use of school facilities, for example, are promoted by means of such financial assistance to local public entities.

In this way, the shares of public expenditure for education are 47.3% by the national government, 28.1% by the prefectures and 24.6% by the municipalities (as of the fiscal year 1980). The breakdown of the national government's share is 13.4% for tax allocation to local governments, 20.2% for subsidies to local public entities and 13.7% to the expenses of national educational institutions and others. Therefore, excluding the expenditure for national educational institutions, local educational expenditure is made up of one-third each from the national government, prefectural government and municipal government.

In addition to this, it must be noted here that educational expenditure is also shared by the private sector via such costs as tuition fees to private institutions and miscellaneous educational expenses by individual households. The total educational expenditure comprises 61.7% of public expenditure and 38.3% of private expenditure (15.2% of private school corporations and 23.1% of individual household expenses). The high percentage of educational expenditure coming from the private sector is one feature of Japanese education. This may imply that parents are enthusiastic to provide education for their children, but at the same time it is a serious educational policy issue.

Development of Educational Administration and its Prospects

1. Universalisation of School Education

Since the launching of the modern school system in Japan in 1872, the national government has made efforts to train national leaders in all walks of life and to expand educational opportunities for all people. Already at the beginning of this century, Japan reached the stage of universal primary education. Compulsory education was extended from four years to six years in 1907. The development of commoners' education was quite distinctive in those years. Commoners in Japanese society had been ardent about education since the Edo Period. Educational facilities such as Terakoya were widely established and the literacy rate was relatively high in that period. The expansion and fulfilment of education for commoners were extended to secondary and higher education in the period after World War II.

In the post-war period, compulsory education was extended to nine years. Various types of secondary education institutions which existed until the war period were integrated into one upper secondary school system, and the enrolment ratio to secondary education increased rapidly: from 42% in 1950 to over 94% in 1980. The enrolment ratio at higher education institutions increased from 10% to 37% during the same period.

This corresponds to the world trend of 'secondary education for all' but it may further

imply in the Japanese situation that it is the time of 'mass higher education' and 'universalisation of higher education'.

Furthermore, the government administrative measures mentioned earlier allowed homogeneous standards of elementary and secondary education throughout the country. According to a Monbusho survey in 1982, differences of achievement level between rural and urban children in terms of giving correct answers were less than 5.0% on average. This may be the reason why Japanese children's results in the studies of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) have been so thoroughly examined by many scholars outside Japan.

By these means, Japanese educational policies both before and after World War II have striven to provide equal opportunities for education, to universalise school education and to upgrade the intellectual standard of the Japanese people.

2. Ideals and Realities of Post-War Education Reform

Educational development in the pre-war period was promoted by the positive measures of central government which designated education as one of the most important national policy areas. National education was directly undertaken by the national government. Educational personnel of schools were given the status of national government officials and required to instruct according to a curriculum defined by the national government. Local public entities and private education institutions were urged to cooperate with the 'educational policies of the national government'.

By contrast, education reform immediately after the war placed educational undertakings in the hands of local public entities with the ideal of local autonomy. Each local public entity set up a board of education to reflect the people's will, and educational personnel were placed under the jurisdiction of the boards of education and given the status of local government servants. The autonomy of private educational institutions was guaranteed. The post-war change in educational philosophy was from 'education by the national government' to 'education by local government' or to 'education by parents'.

Consideration was to be paid to the development of individuality in children and to the needs of local communities in implementing instructional programmes.

It proved easier, however, to change the administrative system than to change the people's way of thinking which is the basis of educational institutionalisation. The earlier patterns shown in the requests for equality of four social classes in the country, and for educational requirements to be in unison for all nationals, still form the basis of thinking about education by school authorities, individual teachers and administrators, and even by parents.

These ways of thinking and behavioural patterns contribute to the strong as well as the weak points of Japanese education: criticisms, for example, that it puts emphasis on memorisation and the over-heated entrance examination competition. In the past, the phenomenon of competitive entrance exams was observed among the very limited number of students who wished to go on to higher educational institutions. Today it involves most students because of the expansion of secondary and higher education.

These issues are highlighted by another trend: the social development of Japan has changed the educational environment and produced various new requirements for education.

3. Social Development and Today's Educational Issues

Japan revived miraculously from the ruins of a lost war. This was due to external assistance

and cooperation by countries which played the vital role of leading international society after World War II, and internally, it derives from the strong support of the people for government policy to reconstruct the nation by education—building on the educational standards reached in the pre-war period. Many people, both in and out of the country, now pay attention to Japan's educational development in the belief that recent Japanese economic development is due to the expansion and fulfilment of her education.

The economic development of society brought about by educational practices produces, in turn, new demands for education. The following are three significant points: the importance of international relations; progress in science, technology and information; and changes in family life. These may be worth further consideration.

First of all, Japan now contributes nearly 10% of world trade, which shows deeper inter-relatedness or inter-dependency among nations. The future of Japan depends upon efforts to improve international relations. This prospect requires a new quality in popular knowledge and behaviour. The Japanese should acquire deeper understanding of other cultures and ways of life, and better ability to co-exist harmoniously with many people different in culture. In addition, the Japanese should strive to help other people properly to understand Japanese culture, way of thinking and customs.

These new demands require new kinds of educational response, including increased opportunities for study abroad, by both sending and receiving students; extension of the use of the Japanese language; dissemination of Japanese culture; international cooperation in the field of scientific research; education programmes for Japanese children living outside Japan, etc.

Progress in science and technology and the arrival of an "information society" bring about changes in the industrial and employment structures of Japanese society. New occupations and jobs appear in society one after another, and flows of information expand year after year. The national capacity for information processing needs to be improved. It is crucial to provide education for enhancing creativity and developing research abilities in order to maintain and promote technological development. Expansion of new knowledge in such fields as space science, energy development and bio-science are very much required. In these and other ways, education will respond to the changes of an industrial society and the development of high technology.

Meanwhile, drastic changes can be observed in the family life environment and in the attitudes of people towards life. The so-called nuclear family has become common and in some cases there has been a collapse of the earlier forms of family life. Prevention of juvenile delinquency is a big social concern. The aged population is increasing rapidly, calling for educational as well as sports programmes to help aged people enjoy a healthy life and retain a sense of significance. There is a need for recurrent and life-long education because of work changes throughout the life cycle and increased life-expectancy.

In order to meet such new requests for educational undertakings, measures to integrate fully programmes of school education, social education, sports, culture and scientific studies are badly needed.

Education must respond to these multi-faceted requests of the society. At the 'micro' level, administration should pay full attention to the community so that education can meet people's changing daily needs. At the 'macro' level, administration is required to take necessary measures with the wider perspective of the development of international society. Educational administration now faces these huge tasks.