

# **Current Situation and Issues regarding School Autonomy in Japan**

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## **Introduction**

Decentralization being taken place in the scene of education in Japan, in fact, has never been a drastic change, but has demonstrated dramatic developments so far.

This report will be consisted of five sections.

- First, a brief statement will be made regarding the history and background of decentralization in the field of education in Japan after the World War II.

- Secondary, given the fact that serious efforts for decentralization have been made in a short period of time since 1998 and swiftly enacted into laws, the current conditions and key changes will be assessed from the view points of the educational administrative system as a whole.

- Thirdly, a report will be made about how authorization and relationship between the state and local boards of education may be affected through the decentralization.

- Fourthly, in the perspective of further decentralization, the relationship relevant to authority among local boards of education and the board system itself will be discussed, and their functions, strategies and issues also will be reviewed.

- Lastly, a new issue will be presented after analyzing and reviewing the following current strategic issues in the context of development of school autonomy; (i) promoting discretion power of schoolmasters, (ii) regulations for school administration, and (iii) participation of the communities and parents.

## **1. History of School Autonomy after the War**

When you think of school autonomy, educational policies of the national and municipal governments and the administrative system therefore are key words. Since establishment of the modern public educational system in 1872, Japan has gone through three major educational reforms so far. The first reform was "School System" reform of 1872, under the rise of nationalism. The second reform took place after the World War II, which was called as After-the-War Educational Reform aiming at a welfare state under the newly adopted democracy, and involved changes to the Constitution and establishment of Fundamental Law of Education. Those two reforms were made under politically and administratively completely different state policies and views. Either of these reforms was a social reform in nature, accompanying reform of school ladder (changes of school systems). Thus, the formation of the conventional centralism created homogenous, uniform, and rigid education throughout Japan, while achieving certain results by providing equal educational opportunities, in a sense of quantity, to students.

The third, ongoing educational reform, on the other hand, was brought up by the report of Ad Hoc Council on Education ( "Ad.C.E." ) under the direct control of

then prime minister during 1984-87. It may be said that this reform was a forced result of a dead end that the previous government-led reforms hit. That is, the direction of educational and administrative policies are driven to change due to ongoing tremendous social changes with deregulation and underlying market principles in all the public fields including the educational field and the restructuring of the philosophy as a welfare oriented state. The reform is a result of recommendations for shifting the state's directions, even with regard to the philosophy of the reform, from quantity-wise expansion of educational opportunities to quality as set forth in "Principal of Focus on Individuality" in every field of contents, methodology, system, policies, etc. of education.

As mentioned above, in the report by Ad.C.E., some recommendations were made, including drastic but careful deregulation, establishment of principles of educational freedom, autonomy and self-responsibility, provision of more choices, review of the sharing of roles between the state and municipal governments that subsequently lead to the promotion efforts of decentralization, pursuit of mission by the boards of education and activation thereof, etc. Importantly, in the course of this ongoing third educational reform, those recommendations resulted in the Report by the Central Educational Council ("C.E.C.") of 1998 (The "Report"), and based upon the Report a series of amendments were made to education related laws including "School Education Law" and "Law regarding Organizations and Operations of Local Educational Administration ("Local Education Law")". In this context, in the third educational reform started with the Ad.C.E. report promoting decentralization, the Report may be noted as an epoch-making event to achieve the educational decentralization.

Therefore, the current conditions regarding school autonomy in Japan will be discussed below with perspective stated in the introduction.

Schools with autonomy will mean in the world of dictionaries "schools that can manage themselves based on their own code of conducts and intentions", and the phrase represents what are the schools that are free from restrictions by others. However, most of the interested people in Japan, as a general perception, are not considering the meaning of the school with autonomy as such found in dictionaries.

Then, in an actual meaning, what is the autonomy of schools? At least in Japan schools with autonomy might be defined as schools that "are entrusted substantial powers and authorities in curriculums, staffing, finance, etc. by the competent board of education or other relevant authorities and are operated with autonomy at its discretion as an entity." To tell you the truth, however, at present even after the establishment of the laws, there still exists a huge gap between the actual conditions and principles regarding autonomy. Surely a fixed concept about education that schools should be led by governmental bodies has been established resulting from the long-lasting centralized education system, and partly because it has not been lapsed since the reform people find it hard to reverse the concept from centralization to decentralization.

By the way, aren't there any schools in Japan with autonomy as defined in dictionaries mentioned above? Yes, there were, though for a short period of time, especially during the US occupation after the War (commenced in 1945 and ended in 1952 when Japan resumed its sovereignty). Schools during the time had gone through drastic changes from the prewar educational system under nationalism, and schools during the US occupation may be defined as liberated democracy schools or schools with autonomy. It has to be noted, however, that the foundation of autonomy existed under the democratic boards of education system similar to those in the US, but

various actions were enforced in accordance with strategies for democracy led by the state.

For example, in the “New Educational Policies” released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (“the Ministry or the Ministry of Education”) in 1946, joint decisions by school teachers at each school was recommended, and, though rare, formation of an educational council consisting of experts by a schoolmaster under nonhierarchical conditions was considered a democratic, i.e., autonomous school where school staff, parents and children participated in making decisions at the school. Even assessment of the school performance was carried out by the Ministry at the time (recommendation of “Evaluation Criteria of and Guidance to Performance of Middle and High Schools (Draft)”) in the same way as in the US, under a concept that preparation of educational plans from the democratic point of view and the evaluation of the results would facilitate the improvement of schools; the concept parallels with today’s ideas of self inspection and evaluation by schools. In addition, a school curriculum guideline was released as a proposal, in which the state had a role of enlightening the local bodies and encouraged the same to have its own standards.

It was 1956 when the Local Education Law was enacted, leading to the collapse of democratic, i.e., autonomous schools in substance. Since then for about half a century till at least the time of the Report of 1998, the Japanese educational administration had focused on the principle of centralization = rationalization.

Under the principle of centralization = rationalization, the educational administration was organized as a hierarchy, putting the state on the top, followed by prefectural boards of education, municipal boards of education, and schools at the bottom of the pyramid. The formation of the structure enabled smooth delivery of state’s measures and policies to the schools, but it also resumed the older concept and idea that valued uniformity and equality of education. As a result, schools became less capable of autonomously managing themselves, or at its judgment or discretions, and in return, subsequently the schools were positioned as the end bodies under the local educational administration (i.e., board of education). The schoolmasters were located at the bottom of the administrative bodies and the top of respective schools, and most of their powers then their autonomy were taken away by the administrative bodies, though they were protected in a convoy-fleet approach by the boards. Thus, in 1970s the centralization = rationalization proceeded towards establishment of orders in school management. In the report of 1971 by the Central Educational Council, it recommended “to establish an administrative organization in each school with a specific ladder to share duties.” Thus, in addition to independent status of assistant principals, various chiefs (head of the instruction department, head teacher of each year classes, etc.) were appointed and established in the organization and job ladder.

## **2. Background of Decentralization and its Connotation in Japan**

It took nearly half a century for Japan to establish decentralization, or autonomy of schools by the C.E.C. Report of 1998 via the Ad.C.E. report in the middle 1980s. The principal driving force for the movement for decentralization newly generated during the fifty years is a change in the politically confronting structure between the Ministry and Japan Teachers’ Union that had maintained the system under the Local Education Law. As the background of the change, collapse of the Cold-War Structure of the East-West rivalry in the world, and collapse of so-

called the 55- year structure confronting the progressives against the conservatives may be underlying.

The second factor was the difficulties the schools have experienced in addressing varied problems involving school children, seriousness of which have gradually increased after the 90s and grown into a threatening problem that single school with closed structure would never be able to handle. Therefore, the situations have changed such that accountability for the communities and schools are sought in order to facilitate open schools through cooperation with residents of communities and parents and to maintain relationship between the boards of education and schools.

Thirdly, the system of boards of education had been under severe criticism and subject to review, including the significance of the board itself. The relationship between schools and the board of education system was also subject to a close review with enactment movement in mind, beyond its traditional framework in which relative uniqueness of schools were discussed or mere ideas were fiddled as measures to activate organizations. Especially, there was a backlash against the hierarchy structure of the Ministry, prefectural boards of education, municipal boards of education, and schools at the bottom of the pyramid. Under the Local Education Law the structure, theoretically, allowed local bodies to exercise their discretion in educational administration, but in reality, administrative measures without using powers (subsequently standards of superior governmental body was adopted as the model) forced to change the philosophy of the system and effectively transformed the same into centralized, uniformed system.

Thus, the C.E.C. Report of 1998 was issued. This reform has a very significant meaning because it enacted the concept of decentralization that previous reforms could have never launched including the Ad.C.E. case. The reform is consisted of three pillars: (i) as the biggest change under the system, prefectural boards of education are granted more significant role in the context of authorities and relationship with the state, (ii) review of relationship between the boards and schools, in which transformation to a supportive board and establishment of school autonomy were identified as issues, which represents a significant meaning, and (iii) accountability of the boards and schools to the communities and parents was clearly expressed in order to clarify the responsibilities that are one of the principles for decentralization, and a school council system and self-evaluation system was instituted, which will play a significant role in demonstrating the future direction of cooperation and joint efforts by schools and communities.

Judging from various researches and studies made by the administrative or school bodies, the ideas of decentralization and school autonomy brought in by the Report are generally welcomed by the public. On the other hand, one of the challenges the efforts for decentralization of administration-school structure will face will be the controlling-and-controlled culture in both sides; that is, because the top-down hierarchy structure had lasted for such a long time that schools will take any kind of advices or instructions as “musts”, and the boards will expect the same as “all-accepted”. Further, the standards stipulated by the state will be enacted, however, strictly speaking they are to be established as ordinances under the law (including laws, ministerial orders and notifications), which means the governmental bodies still have substantial freedom to exercise their discretions. Many of local regulations for school administration under the amended Local Education Law still have small control over staffing and budget, apart from curriculums. The extension of power in the future is desirable, but with current board of education system substantial decentralization would not be realized.

### **3. Review of Authorization-Related Relationship regarding between the State (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) and Local Boards of Education**

In this decentralization, the role and power of the Ministry are reviewed, and the main issue of the reform is as follows; while maintaining and carrying out the conventional role of the Ministry (desk works and projects), its powers accompanying the role and administrative approaches therefore shall be reviewed in order to transfer more power and discretion to the local bodies and at the same time to reduce their burden of office works.

In order to clarify the roles of the state, the contents of the provisions under the School Education Law will be reviewed, and in the context of the review of power and administrative approaches the following are under review:

Firstly, from extending decentralization standpoint, mainly the following matters are under review; (i) to develop the standards of curriculums into a broader outline and make the same more flexible (including the reviewing of national standards and rules other than standard curriculums), (ii) with regard to research and development, which had been mainly carried out by the state, it enabled for prefectural bodies to proceed the same, (iii) the amendments of the law enabled for prefectural bodies to operate and adapt, if necessary, the standards regarding the number of students per class or quota of teachers and staff to suit to its purposes, which the state used to define, and (iv) with regard to operation of and application to subsidies from the state, efforts were made for their effective operation, and the same was rationalized in order to lessen the burden of office works at the local level.

Secondary, the review was made regarding the guidance and advice-oriented administration. This was to discuss the long-lasting unique Japanese way of guidance and advice approach. As being discussed in the first section hereof, the postwar educational administration had precluded tendency of directional, demanding and supervisory nature from the educational system and aimed for “instruction and advice” giving body, valuing for educational autonomy. However, the establishment of the Local Education Law of 1956 promoted the united educational administration for both the state and local governments, thus, with regard to the “instruction and advice”, the decentralization-in-idea-and-centralization-in-reality situation generated a uniquely distorted relationship. In this “uniquely distorted relationship” case, any legal binding force have not been given by nature to the “instruction and advice”, being different from directions or orders. But local educational administration, as being a separate organization from general departments, was placed junior to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, a state body. Subsequently the “instruction and advice” by the state gained “legal authority” regarding general matters relative to general operations of the organizations. Resulting from the acceptance of general “instruction and advice” relationship, the state started to bind the local administration in substance, divested the same off being creative and inventive responding to respective local situations, and prevented it from activating itself.

In contrast, the Report by C.E.C. recommended to review the way of the “instruction and advice” issued by the state to the local administration, including the law system, on the assumption that the decentralization will further proceed. It was true that the “instruction and advice” by the state have been applied rather strongly from the reason of maintaining and improving the education level or securing proper

operation and management of schools, even though they might have been acknowledged as they had no legal binding power. And it was also true that the schools deemed those instructions and advices from the state as if they had legal power.

The Report replaced the old paragraph of “shall give necessary instructions, advices and supports”, commenting it is a provision that poses obligation, with a phrase of “...may...” and it demanded the receivers to change their perceptions. In this regard some credits shall be given, but the matter is the reality in efforts, because the conduct of instruction and advice is essentially a one-way flow from a senior position to a junior position. And in such a case not the request of the receiving side but the intention of the issuing side has the priority. Further in reality, these instructions and advices passed from the state to the local governments, to boards of education, then to schools had been preset as a framework because the educational administration had long tried to unify and maintain the levels of public education as its objective. If it wants to bring the issue of autonomy fore, it shall review the instruction-and-advice approach while addressing an assessment system that identifies a result (previous evaluation) as to how autonomy was accepted in the schools and how it improved schools.

#### **4. Review of Local Boards of Education and Issues therein**

In fifty years from the War, the aforementioned C.E.C. Report triggered to demand the Japanese Board of Education system to realize the new decentralization. Initially the Board of Education system in Japan was established in order to realize autonomy of local educational entities. As the result, the board was positioned as an administrative (council system) committee consisting of multiple representatives of the community, and though it is an enforcing body of a local public institution it is independent of the chief=administrative department. In the system of board of education in Japan, responsibilities and powers to decide, manage and execute various measures relevant to education, culture and academy are granted to this council system committee, and under the direction and supervision of the organization school superintendents (and secretariats) are positioned as a chief executive officer and expert adviser who are to settle local organizational issues relevant to education, culture and academy independently at local level.

When looking back the history of decentralization from the point of educational decentralization with incremental emphasis today, how has it functioned, what was the structure to secure the decentralization, and how did it work to effectively control the public? The history was that of fights with structural malfunctions. There was an array of criticism against the board system in Japan (and that was the reason of preparation of the C.E.C. Report).

For example, some criticized that the system (old decentralization) was a mere channel to introduce policies of the government, or the Ministry of Education, into schools, or others criticized that it was only a part of centralized bureaucracy and it played a role as a tool of bureaucratic educational administration. In addition, as in pointed out in the Ad.C.E. Report there were other issues of being lack of responsibility, sense of mission, understanding about spirit for educational decentralization or sense of identity, or projection for 21 century as the educational administration. Those criticisms, however, don't mean the system is no longer useful as a local body of educational administration.

The C.E.C. Report reviewed the decentralization based on the lesson learned from the previous operation of the board system. The points are as follows: (1) the board of education is considered as a body to assist schools in their innovative, autonomous school management, from the view that schools should foster children's physical and intellectual ability and develop their personalities, and (2) the board is urged to cooperate with and actively respond to the promotion and development of the community under the ongoing challenges of lower birthrate, aging, urbanization, and declining population.

In particular, the point that poses extreme importance for the essence of the board system is the autonomy of schools, and Japanese specific historical and social environments underlie on the background of the recommendation. To be specific, it was a political confrontation of the Ministry vs. Japan Teachers' Union with underlying conflict between conservatives and reformists triggered by the establishment of the Local Education Law, and the confrontation, not the system of the board itself, made the board support the schools from an expert point of view difficult.

This confrontation was generated from the position of the board system that is stuck in the midst of theoretical concepts; special authority theory to schools alleged by the former and school autonomy theory based on the freedom of teaching by teachers advocated by the latter. In the former theory, the board of education was deemed an entity that can give instructions and orders to schools on every education-related matters, and under the latter theory, though the board was acknowledged as an entity responsible for the operation and management of schools, it was barred from managing schools on issues on educational expertise based on the legal theory of freedom of teaching. Thus, the referring by the board to specialty issues was considered as "unreasonable control" over schools. The position of chief instructor was left in-between, so under these confronting situations it was impossible for him/her to give any technical instructions or advices with comprehensive control.

Although the confrontation was removed on the surface by the reconciliation between the Ministry and the Japan Teachers' Union in 1993, the long-held "negative inheritance" is hard to remove, which still demonstrates its existence as an unfavorable superior and inferior relationship between the boards of education and schools. In this regard the board should consign as much power as possible to schools and trust their ability to solve problems, through which the board needs to identify itself as a supportive figure to help the schools' transformation featuring respective characters. On the other hand the schools should admit that they need support from the board of education in order to settle various issues. Equal partnership between them, as the result, will be the key, future challenge to restore their proper relationship.

Some of the issues the board system poses will be discussed below from the point of the renewed decentralization:

(1) With regard to further promotion of general educational activities subject to educational administration, basically it is more important to promote such activities through voluntary activities by interested people (bodies) through non-enforcing power than through enforcing power of instructions and supervision. The Report recommended that, regarding the state, it should review its guidance to the prefectural or municipal boards of education, and that, as for the prefectural boards of education, to the municipal boards of education, keeping in mind the following points: (a) with regard to notification by the state to the prefectural or municipal boards of education of interpretation of ordinances or intention of a system or measures by the

state, the state should not “restrict overly” the decision by the prefectural or municipal boards of education, (b) as for comments and explanations of specialty and technical matters regarding educational contents and methodology, the state should focus on its supportive functions regarding collecting and providing results of factual researches and domestic and overseas information, (c) for purpose of ensuring the performance of educational administration or proper operation and management of schools, it should execute its power exclusively on the remedy of breaches of ordinances under Fundamental Law of Education or School Education Law.

(2) The Report then suggests transferring a certain range of authorities from the prefectural boards of education to ordinance-designated cities and core cities. In that case, the strategy such as “(the prefectural boards of education should) gradually transfer authorities in correspondent to the demographic level, commencing from municipalities that are likely to form and maintain an organization with certain specialty knowledge and techniques necessary for handling office work” seems, basically, reasonable. In Japan the size of municipalities differs substantially among them, from big cities with over 0.8 million people to villages with less than 1,000. Though they are widely different as such, the fact that education administration had been performed under uniform authority and responsibility, excluding the ordinance-designated cities, was a problem itself.

This also poses a new issue. For example, think of assignment of power regarding class formation. In big cities suffering from concurrent progression of over-population and under-population, flexible class formation standards are seriously needed. The prefectural boards of education are responsible for deskwork such as setting the standard number of students per class and class formation at each school, and municipal boards have neither responsibility nor authority. And the deskwork is to be performed under the supervision of the Minister of Education. Without reforming the structure, the decentralization cannot be introduced fully so as to directly affect the students’ activities relevant to learning. In addition, in the case of the boards of education in mega cities, being huge in size makes it difficult to have a close-to-resident board of education. To penetrate the effect of decentralization into the community level, it may be necessary to discuss a formation of new community board of education.

(3) New cares are needed and new issues are generated with regard to the new decentralization, including an appointment method of board members, improvement of member qualification, flexible operation of quorum of the board, better compensation for them, etc. The C.E.C. Report points out diversified interests and requests among communities and suggests thinking out a method to appoint members of the board of education, while maintaining the appointment method by the chief. For example, one of the measures to improve the appointment method is to choose the members from wider and more varied sources. Traditionally it is said that the board members are consisted of homogenous human resources; elderly male who previously engaged in teaching or social or educational related institutions. Therefore, special care shall be paid to choose candidates from a variety of fields. On the other hand some research found that such efforts don’t result in activation of the board members. Also it is true that in some cases there are fewer members who have essential characters such as motivation to assume the office, knowledge about the community, and ability of management at the time of assumption than those who are fit to general conditions (ages, sex, etc.). It is necessary to provide training to members as a remedy to solve those issues.

(4) With regard to hiring and deployment of superintendent of schools, teachers' consultant, specialty staff and utilization thereof, there are places necessary to change and remaining issues to be solved under the new decentralization.

Under the previous system, a superintendent of schools was to be appointed by the relevant board of education, and if the superintendent is prefectural superintendent, then the approval of the Minister of Education, and in case of municipal superintendent, then the approval of prefectural board of education was required. Under the new extended decentralization, the approval is no longer required, and instead, as a specific strategy to secure proper human resources, approval by congress and special job status are introduced.

It is not obvious if the appoint system did function to choose a fine personnel as superintendent. As quite a few local boards provided for its criteria to approve a superintendent, it had worked as a certain filter to hamper an inconsistent appointment. However, whether the appointment system will be abolished or not, a superintendent of schools is required to be skillful and have expertise in both education and administration fields, especially in school education and education administration areas, and a research result shows that other virtues such as familiarity with the community, and political and management ability are required for the post.

It's not easy to secure such capable human resources, and relevant training shall be provided from a mid-and long-term point of view. In this regard, a system in the US may give a clue, where professional graduate schools are exclusively established to train highly professional resources and to establish a licensing system for superintendent of schools (including schoolmasters).

A next issue subject to review will be the role and position of teachers' consultant as a professional, in the flow for school autonomy through the new decentralization. At present, teachers' consultants are deployed to respective prefectural and municipal boards of education and engage in planning and executing of instructions from administration, giving guidance and advice, and research and training to each school under jurisdiction. Among of all, it is necessary to clarify and define the roles of the prefectural boards of education and the municipal boards of education respectively, in order for each board to grow out of "lock-step mentality" and to secure autonomy of schools.

It is worth noting the changes in the roles of the teachers' consultants. Basically while the old "instruction/advice" function will remain in the future, functions such as "consulting," "coordination," and "providing information" will increase importance newly. Some people refer to the role of consultation regarding school activities and coordination between schools and home, and communities, etc. as "advice/support", responding to the old name "instruction/advice". The new teachers' consultants under new decentralization call for reorganization. In the case of reorganization, considerations should be given to the maintenance and improvement of educational level, financial conditions of each board of education, skill of teachers' consultants, and the environmental setting that allows schools to come out for consulting.

## **5. Expanded Discretion of the Boards of Education and Schools**

Japanese schools are often referred to as unified, uniform and closed through out the nation. The comment is true in a sense, and it is partly because each school had only a very limited discretion under heavy control of the Ministry and the boards

of education. The system had its merits though, providing equal educational opportunities in quantity, and a certain educational level has been maintained.

On the other hand, when some trouble occurs in a school, response by the board was slow, and in many cases the school was just waiting for instructions, in the following-the-leader mentality. Both the boards of education and schools don't have much ability in risk management. In addition, at schools mechanical handling of issues in accordance with manuals is enough for its daily operation, so they are not prepared for issue settlement type management.

The boards of education often conceive concerns over schools through experiences of confrontation with teachers' union, their lock step, following-precedent and ostrich mentality. Though the School Education Law sets forth that an installing person shall be responsible what it installed, the educational administration body shall execute its coordinating and supporting function in a real meaning, and schools should not be a mere sub-organization under the board as it used to be. Under the new decentralization, the schools that contact directly and daily with community residents, parents and children shall be a basic unit while receiving support from municipal boards of education.

In order to reduce the interference to schools from the boards and to expand the school discretion, the schools have to establish a relevant operational system suitable for independent management. The C.E.C. Report states that the target autonomous management of a school is that "the schoolmaster manages the school autonomously, presenting characteristic curriculums, etc., based on his/her educational philosophy and educational policies, responding to the local situations." The strategy therefore will be discussed later. Here we are to discuss what kind of public school may be generated in theory, if the above-mentioned autonomous school is formed through reviewing the relationship between the board and the schools. The autonomy of schools will create schools emphasizing the following characters in a longer term: (i) schools with virtues and quality in accordance with the ability of the schoolmaster under the direction of the schoolmaster, (ii) variety of schools with different characters, not traditional schools with unified values, and (iii) schools with characters will result in the introduction of market mechanism and selection of schools, i.e. transformation of public schools into private schools, whether it is right or not.

The school autonomy will be developed into the above-mentioned schools with its own characters and features. And in the course of the development appropriate care shall be given to an issue as to how to take a balance between the individualism and standards (standard education). Maintenance of educational level through educational standards will be achieved through supports by educational administration.

In the following section, strategies and issues regarding the review of relationship between the board and schools and strengthening of school discretion will be discussed.

(1) The C.E.C. Report recommended as a strategy to define and apply "instruction/order" and "guidance/advice" specifically in order to review a way to execute power by the boards of education over the schools.

The Report addressed that " (between the boards of education and schools) the phrases instruction/order and guidance/advice have not been defined and used vaguely among school boards' staff in charge, schoolmasters, teachers, and clerks. Those words shall be clearly defined and promoted."

From a view point to facilitate the school autonomy, it is important that matters relevant to schools shall be basically govern by respective schools, the matters that have to be handled by the schoolmaster at his/her discretion shall be defined, and, avoiding the instruction/order as much as possible, the guidance/advice shall be given only when necessary. In accordance with the Report, the instruction/order from a board to schools should be issued mainly on matters common among multiple schools in jurisdiction, and matters unique to a school shall be subject to discretion and decision by the school; i.e., not only the instruction/order, but also the guidance/advice shall be issued as a supportive tool responding to the needs of schools. Therefore, it is necessary to newly define and add the scope and contents of “instruction/order” and “guidance/advice to the regulations for school administrations of the municipal boards of education.

(2) The regulations for school administrations is a legal liaison between the educational administration and subject educational organization for the purpose of reviewing the relationship between the boards of education and schools to establish the school autonomy. The old regulations for school administrations were formed based on the draft prepared by the council of the Ministry and prefectural superintendents of schools, the contents similar to which were considered as de facto standards for respective prefectural boards. Therefore the most of the boards adopted the same regulations as their own. In this respect, the C.E.C. Report states that the regulations for school administrations actually stipulate detailed provisions regarding permits, approvals, application, report, etc., and that many of which hampers independence of schools.

Accordingly, the C.E.C. Report suggests to review in favor of expanding the school discretion, providing more autonomy with schools, “while clarifying the overall basic relationship regarding authorities between the board of education and schools” and from the “standpoint to expand the schools’ discretion” to amend “the approval by the board of education to filing”. Further, the Report recommends giving multiple proposals, depending on matters, in order to avoid unification of the regulations for school administration established by prefectural and municipal boards of education.

The important thing is that the prefectural boards of education are barred from setting standard regulations for school administrations for schools territory in jurisdiction, even if multiple proposals are presented. The municipality is required to establish its own regulations. To carry out research and study to closely analyze the contents of the regulations for school administrations is another issue.

(3) The so-called biggest challenge for establishing the school autonomy under the new decentralization is the expansion of discretion of schoolmaster and his/her leading ability and responsibility accompanied therewith.

In the C.E.C. Report, the expanded discretion of schools is taken more specifically as strengthening of personnel and budget related discretion of the schoolmaster. In the reality, however, without fundamental reform of the current board system, the personnel and budget affairs are under more restrictions than curriculums. For example, with regard to the personnel affairs, the schoolmaster may give his/her comment to, not a person with selecting power, but a person with appointing power; his/her evaluation is hard to be reflected in selection. Therefore, the expansion of discretion will apply at most to the hiring of part-timers. Unless drastic reform of the board system as well as legal reform, the board of education that has the rights to appoint and select may not fully consider a opinion of the schoolmaster in

the hiring and substantial shuffle of human resources accompanying transfers and approvals therefore to promote the school's curriculum management.

As for the discretion of schoolmaster over school budget, the Report suggests to allow schoolmasters to control a certain budget at his/her discretion under a local authority to promote schools with features, by measures such as gathering opinions from schoolmasters through hearing during the budget making or requests of respective schools on a certain form.

These suggestions are meaningful, though it's subject to financial sufficiency of municipality. To establish schools' right o budget and execution power is naturally measures to be done, but local difference in budget size is also a barrier to schools. Along with the expansion of discretion of schoolmaster, the request of the school must be something appropriate such that third parties admit the efforts by the school. In this respect it is important to make efforts so that the budgeting itself is well responding to and supported by class lesson and material studies reflecting the actual activities by students, to purchase materials at reasonable prices, to present information and seek for cooperation and understanding for voluntary activities from communities and parents.

Another issue is about staff meeting. It will present an opportunity for a schoolmaster to expand the power. There have been arguments regarding the staff meeting now and then because of Japanese specific reasons, referring the meeting as an advisory body, voting body, or auxiliary body depending on interpretation as to whether or not the body is provided with decision-making power. Up to now the forms of staff meetings are different widely subject to the tradition, strength of relevant union, community, or other school specific conditions. The schools with stronger union power function as a decision-making organization, and those at schools where schoolmasters have stronger power as an auxiliary body.

Under the new decentralization, however, the staff meeting was established under the law and has become an auxiliary body led by a schoolmaster. The Report expressed the role as, "to benefit the smooth performance of duties by the schoolmaster, communication, sharing of understanding, exchange of opinions among teaching staff regarding the educational policies of the school, measures responding to the educational objectives, etc." Of course if the schoolmaster acts arbitrarily without consultation with staff, or if the schoolmaster is forced to accept the teachers' opinion, it will be called abnormal. Discussions should take place in a positive atmosphere leading the staff to understand the schoolmaster's opinion and aim for integral operation of the school, even if there are confrontation and discrepancies. So the schoolmaster's skillful leadership is required.

Then what is needed for a schoolmaster of leadership for building up a school with characteristics and features? The answer is in the C.E.C. Report. That is, (1) to have philosophy and insight regarding education, (2) to exercise leadership while properly understanding the situation of the community and school and issues, (3) to be able to motivate teachers and staff, (4) to be able to properly cooperate and negotiate with relevant bodies, and (5) to be able to operate the school in a systematic and flexible way. It is important that, with regard to the quality and ability referred in from (1) through (5) above, the skill of the schoolmaster should be well balanced between administrative leadership and cultural leadership.

(4) The new decentralization will generate possibilities to secure the school autonomy by active participation of interested people in building up an open school. In the Report, "participation" of the community in the educational administration and school management is considered as a strategy to build up an open school.

Examples of participation and cooperation by the interested people in the educational administration in the Report include the holding of public hearings or presentation meetings, presentation of information, use of education monitors, appointment of varied complaint handling contacts, and community liaison council and Japan Center for Regional Development. These are, however, rather unilateral notification by the administration. The Report assumes that democratization of educational administration is likely to come true. However, isn't it required to issue more drastic proposals, such as formation of a deliberation body consisting of local education-related representatives and devising a new way of participation targeting to improve the selecting method of board members?

In particular, regarding the participation of the community in the school management, establishment of a school council system was announced under the new decentralization. The school council system is meant, not as a decision-making tool as in Europe and the United States, but as a consulting body for schoolmasters, and the structure may have been conceived to secure autonomy. It functions to backup schoolmasters who gain a new expanded power.

With regard to the school council system, its role and power, or as to even whether introduced or not are not considered to be legally applied. In the context of the school autonomy, it is noticeable that the introduction of the school councilor was recommended, who will be responsible to explain to parents and the community educational targets and plans of the relevant school at the beginning of a school year for soliciting participation of the community in the operation of school, as well as "self-evaluation" regarding the performance. A flow of steps shall be kept in mind here, starting from establishment of autonomy, participation of the community in school operation, explanation of educational targets and plan to the community, presenting self-evaluation of achievement to the community, then to the school council system. It may well be said that the flow takes the school council system from a viewpoint of accountability in the school management.

Anyway, the participation system for open educational administration and open school management is, I think, an effort on a thesis that the effort will promote the educational reform through the decentralization further.