

Parental and Community Involvement in School Management in Japan

Parental (guardian) and community participation in education is one of the common agenda items being discussed globally in recent education reform. In Japan, there have also been increasing calls for the building of new partnerships between the school and the community and for new systems, which promote parental and community involvement in the management of local public schools. On the other hand, the tradition of the centralized control of education and the professionalism of the educators are aspects which are deeply rooted in Japanese education. Schools have a tendency to resist interference from outsiders. Here we show the historical background and changing circumstances for the schools and teachers in Japan, and review the arguments over the institutional frameworks for parental (guardian) and community involvement in the local school management.

1. The beginning of the centralized control of education

The development of modern education, which began in the latter part of the nineteenth century in Japan, was carried out under the strong leadership of the central government. The educational reform of the Meiji government was a central part of its overall Westernization policy intended to be the most effective means of coping with existing military and industrial threats posed by the Western powers. The government's policy on the establishment of a national education system emphasized both the extension of primary education among people in general and the expansion of higher and specialized education, necessary for absorption of the advanced science and technology of the West. The aim was to catch up with the West as quickly as possible by raising the level of knowledge among the general populace and by assimilating advanced science and technology from the advanced countries.

In the pre-modern Edo period, there was a relatively wide diffusion of distinctively Japanese educational institutions. There was, however, no national system of education. Different types of education were provided for different social classes and occupations and for different sex. The institutions, content and method of education differed according to the social classes. In fact, the education for the samurai class was different from that provided for the common classes, made up of farmers, artisans and merchants. Educational opportunities for girls and women were considerably disadvantaged. In order to establish a national system of education, the traditional educational institutions were to be transformed and incorporated into the new system.

In 1871, the government established the Ministry of Education as the central agency responsible for the administration of education. In the following year, in 1872, the first systematic education regulation was promulgated in the form of the Education System Ordinance (*Gakusei*). The Ministry of Education laid down regulations on the school system, the aims and content of education, the standards for the educational facilities, and teacher training. The central government paid great attention to the spread of primary education and took various measures to compel parents to send their children to school.

The content of education and the administration of schools did not spring from the needs of people in their daily life as was the case with the old *terakoya* (popular learning centers in the Edo period), since, in many cases, they were direct transferences or imitations of elementary schools in the West.

On the other hand, since the national government could not provide enough funds for the construction of school buildings and the working expenditure for the elementary schools, school finances depended largely on funds from the local governments, levies on people living in the school districts, and tuition fees. Thus, in contrast to the centralized pattern of educational administration, insofar as financial support from the parents and their communities was concerned, it would be legitimate to say that the starting point of elementary schools in modern Japan was clearly community-based.

The parents and local residents often had criticism and complaints about the new schools. However, they did not have a voice or any influence with regard to the public schools and its modern methods. The leaders of the central government tended to regard them as the old and unenlightened generations and therefore never paid them any heed. Sometimes the parents resisted the governmental policy by turbulences or not sending their children to the schools.

2. Education policy influenced by nationalism

Around the end of the 1870s, changes began to appear in the ideological context of education. After the period of overwhelming Westernization, nationalistic ideas, driven primarily by the conservatives in the Imperial Court began to gain ascendancy. They alleged a decline in public morals resulting from excessive Westernization, and emphasized the need for a restoration of morals based on traditional ethics. In 1879, the Emperor proclaimed the Imperial Will on the Great Principles of Education (*Kyôgaku taishi*). In this document, emphasis was placed on feudal ideas such as duty, loyalty and filial piety, and patriotism. The national philosophy found the most elaborated expression in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890. The Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyôiku chokugo*) laid down a national ideology and a moral code for Japanese people, or loyal subjects, and the basic principles of school education. The objectives of the national education after 1890 were focused on moral education, basic training in the skills and knowledge necessary for the Japanese as members of a modern nation-state, together with such general knowledge and skills as are necessary for daily life.

The establishment of the Imperial Constitution of 1889 and the first session of the Imperial Diet in 1890 promoted the modernization of politics and a system of constitutional monarchy in Japan. Along with this, government administrative structures, both central and local, were strengthened, and industry was gradually modernized. In keeping with this, the school system was improved in the 1890s and a basic framework of modern education in Japan was constructed.

Thus education was regarded as not an exclusively local concern but as an affair of the State, or of the

Emperor and his government. Every policy and all the details were planned and regulated by the central government. The responsibility of the local authorities was to carry out the matters with which they had been entrusted by the Ministry of Education under the direction of officials of the central government. In the case of elementary and secondary education, authority with regard to internal matters of education such as educational objectives, the curriculum, textbooks, and service regulations for teachers was vested in the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, local government bodies were expected to take responsibility for educational expenses concerned with the establishment and maintenance of schools, equipment, and teachers' salaries. According to such situation, there were few opportunities for individual or local initiatives in education.

The government recognized the importance of training elementary school teachers for national education and carried out a thorough reform of the normal schools. Students in the normal schools were expected to acquire the three ideal dispositions of "obedience, trust and dignity". The ideal teacher would be obedient to the commands of his superiors, feel affectionate confidence in his colleagues, and strictly regulate his students' manners and attitudes with dignity. The normal schools were designed to inculcate the principles of nationalism through a strict program of physical, moral, and mental training of future teachers, who were, in turn, to inculcate a spirit of loyalty and patriotism in their students.

Generally speaking, teachers graduated from the normal schools dedicated themselves to their "sacred profession" and tried to perform their mission as effectively as possible. Although they were not very flexible in their thinking about social matters, they were honest, calm in manner, well informed about the contents of the education they were to provide, and able to elicit the confidence of their students. In general they were looked on with respect and gratitude by the parents and the public at large. The parents and the community confidently entrusted the task of educating their children and youth to the hands of the public schools and their teachers. In prewar period, Japanese people were very faithful and supportive with regard to their schools. There were few causes for parental and community participation in local school management.

As Japan moved into the 1930s, an extreme form of nationalism gradually became discernible in education policies. With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, militarism became increasingly more prominent. The Ministry of Education developed an education policy in line with rising ultra-nationalism and militarism. An ideology inspired by faith in the pseudo-religious State Shintoism penetrated school education and gradually dominated it. In 1941, all elementary schools were renamed "national schools", with the corresponding change in curriculum on nationalist lines. Following Japan's entry into World War II, the centralized control of education was strengthened to the maximum level.

3. The democratization of educational administration after the end of World War II

After its 1945 defeat in World War II, Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers. From that time to 1951,

Japan was placed under the control of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. Under this system, de-militarization, democratization, and the rebuilding of the country were all taken forward. In 1946, a new Constitution proclaiming pacifism and democracy was promulgated. The GHQ requested the U.S. to dispatch a "United States Education Mission to Japan" to examine the country's postwar education reforms. The Education Mission arrived in March 1946 and issued a report containing a series of recommendations. A large-scale postwar reform of the Japanese education system was then carried out on the basis of the recommendations of this mission.

In the area of educational administration, as part of the democratization of Japanese education, American-style local boards of education were introduced. It was deemed that the educational needs and demands of the parents and local people would be more satisfactorily met by the decentralization of educational administration. The board members were to be elected through the voting of the local residents. The prefectural or municipal board of education exercised administrative authority over school education, social education and cultural activities in accordance with the laws and regulations of the central government, receiving guidance and assistance from the Ministry of Education. In 1948 a board of education was set up in each of the prefectures and in the five big cities, and in every city, town and village in 1952.

However, the implementation of this board of education system faced various problems in the Japanese social context, such as difficulties with the methods of electing and nominating members of the boards, and the relationship between general administration and educational administration. The idea of layman control of education on which the board of education system was based was unfamiliar and alien to the Japanese people. The voting rates for the board member election were not that high. And the local residents were inclined to elect a large number of board members from among the educators and the leaders of the teachers' unions rather than from the "layman".

In 1956, to adjust the board of education system to Japanese conditions, the "Law concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration" was enacted. The boards of education system remained, but the authority of the local boards of education was somewhat curtailed. At the same time, the superior-subordinate relationship linking the Ministry of Education, prefectural boards of education, and municipal boards of education was strengthened. The system of direct election of board members was cancelled, and instead members were to be appointed by the head of each local government with the consent of the local assembly.

Also as postwar education reform, aiming to promote partnerships and cooperation between the schools and the parents of the students, new Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) were set up in each school. Parents were encouraged to cooperate in school management through the activities of the PTA such as the open-class visits, parents-teacher meetings, educational volunteers, and participations in school events. There were to be greater opportunities for parents to be involved in the schools. National and prefectural federations of PTAs were organized. However, except in some remarkable cases, the activities of the PTA

were not very active. The parents were generally diffident when it came to the professional activities of the school and their teachers and refrained from expressing their wishes and opinions on the management of the schools. So until the latter part of the 1990s, in the context of the Japanese education policy, the arguments for parental and community involvement in school management were located lower down in terms of priority.

4. Building of a new partnership between the school and the community

On the other hand, Japanese schools and teachers have been faced with increasing and diversified demands from a rapidly changing Japanese society. Since the 1960s, the increase of advancement to upper secondary schools and higher education institutions has been striking. And competition for entry into the best schools and top-class universities has intensified. The pressure on the teachers to prepare their students for the entrance examination has increased considerably. The excessive competition has inflicted psychological stress on both the children and the parents. Attention has also been drawn to the increase in the number of children who are unable to keep up with their lessons. The desolation of education has frequently been reported in the media, as “schoolphobia”, a phenomenon whereby some students refuse to attend school, in-school violence, bullying among pupils, and apathy on the part of the students. Schools and teachers are asked to tackle such demanding problems.

In addition, generally, the parents and the community expect the schools and teachers to play an extensive role and to assume a heavy responsibility including instilling discipline and morality in their students in their stead. Japanese students tend to stay in school after lessons for extra-curricular activities. Many students engage in various kinds of athletic or cultural club activities. Teachers are also asked to take care of these activities. Schools often supervise the lives of their students outside of school. Some schools occasionally send teachers to patrol the streets and downtown areas to protect students against reprehensible practices and juvenile delinquency.

Teachers and schools are held accountable to the parents and community at large for their activities. Teachers work in stressful hard-working conditions. The schools and the teachers are experiencing increasing difficulties in accomplishing the roles expected of them by themselves. Increasing calls to build a new partnership between the school and the community have been asserted. It is more widely recognized that it would bring a lot of mutual benefits. In recent arguments, there is an inclination to intentionally use the term “parental and community involvement” instead of “parental and community participation”.

In 1998, the Central Council for Education (CCE), an advisory body to the Minister of Education, submitted a report that recommended for the first time introducing some new systems for parent and community involvement in school management. In 2000, a School Councilors system was introduced at each school level, as a new way to promote communication and cooperation among schools, parents, and the community. According to regulations, the school councilors (*Gakkō hyōgiin*) are commissioned by the

local boards of education based on recommendations from school principals and are chosen from among learned persons living in the local community. Councilors are able to voice their opinions about the school management when the principal asks for input. Most schools have four to six school councilors and hold a meeting with the councilors once a semester. In schools which do not have regular meetings with the councilors, the principal hears the opinions from each councilor individually. A great majority of the public schools have established a school councilors system or similar systems.

5. Issue on the School Management Council, or the Community School

In 2004, through a revision of the law on local educational administration, another type of forum for parental and community involvement in school management, called the School Management Council (*Gakkō unei kyōgikai*) was initiated. In an additional new article (Article 47-5) it was provided that “The local board of education would be able to designate from among the schools under its jurisdiction the schools in which a school management council would be set up as a formal counseling organization for the management of the school concerned.”

The school management councils constitute a more formalized system and they have greater authority than the school councilors system. The councils are given authority and responsibility for the following three domains.

- 1) Recognizing the school management policy and plan drawn up by the principal,
- 2) Presenting opinions on the management of the school to the principal or to the board of education and,
- 3) Presenting opinions on the hiring and transferring of teaching staff to the prefectural board of education through the municipal board of education.

The local boards of education is able to designate, or approve, responding to the application from the schools, the school in which the school management council is to be set up. The council members are appointed from among local community members, parents of the students, and the people recommended by the board of education. The public schools which are approved to set up a school management council are generally referred to by the name of “community schools”

During the ten years from the beginning of the system, the number of schools in which a school management council has been set up, or the number of community schools increased from 17 in 2005 to 1,919 in 2014. The number and the proportion of the designated schools, however, are very limited. Of the total public elementary and lower secondary schools in Japan, the proportion of designated schools remains at about 6% in 2014.

According to some research reports, the activities of the school management council are carried out in the following forms. The structure and operation procedure are different depending on the regulations of the

local boards of education. In general, the councils consist of 11 to 15 members including the staff of the school concerned. There are schools that have less than ten members. They hold meetings three or four times a year. A quarter of the schools have a monthly meeting.

In most schools, a representative member of the local community serves as the chairman of the councils. Although the school management councils are responsible for the above-mentioned three domains, in reality, they tend to be more cautious in the last one, or when presenting their opinions on the teaching staff personnel administration of the school. The items of the agenda frequently discussed in the meeting are "school events", "school evaluation", "mobilization of local talent", and "local cooperation" in such descending order. In the lower secondary schools, "student guidance" is more frequently discussed.

The majority of the principals of the schools and the local boards of education which have already established and experienced a school management council, or the community schools give a high rating to the effectiveness of the management council. The effects they pointed out were as follows: a) sharing common information between the school and the community, b) developing schools with distinct features, c) promoting a more cooperative attitude with regard to the schools, d) deepening of understanding on school matters, and e) changing the mindset of the teaching staff, etc. However, even among the principals of the designated schools, the prospects for the future development of the school management councils are divided as follows: will expand more widely throughout the country (24.8%), will expand in particular areas (36.6%), will remain at the status quo (12.3%), will decrease (1.2%), and no idea (19.9%).

Among the principals of the non-designated schools, the willingness to be designated as a community school is also divided as follows: strongly hoping for designation (8.7%), accept designation on condition of the sufficient administrative support (17.9%), and would not refuse if the board of education were to initiate the designation (23.7%). Almost half of the principals of the non-designated schools did not express a desire for designation.

Unlike the case of the school councilors system, a considerable number of local boards of education and principals tend to have concerns or anxiety about this enhanced parental and community involvement in education in the form of the school management council system. The reasons for their hesitancy which they point out are as follows: a) imposing an extra burden on the staff of the school in taking care of the preparations and operations of the management council; b) considerable work involved in finding out well-informed council members from among the local residents; c) lacking understanding and interest among the teaching staff with regard to the council, d) shortage of the necessary budget and personnel for the operations of the council; and e) overlapping of functions with the existing school councilors system or similar systems. It seems that a large number of the principals of the non-designated schools think about the effects of the school management councils weighing the mental and physical burden to be borne by the persons involved.

In the meantime, in the new Fundamental Law for Education promulgated in 2006, an article on a partnership between schools and community was built in as follows: “The schools, the families, the local residents, and the other persons concerned, in having awareness of their respective roles and responsibilities in education, would seek to promote a partnership and cooperation among them (Art. 13)”.

In 2008, a considerable number of municipalities launched a new system referred to as the “school-supporting local head office” (*gakkôsien chiikihonbu*) responsible for coordinating local volunteer talent who are to engage in school support activities in their community. Such kind of organization seems to be expanding more smoothly than in the case of the school management council.

In sum, the tradition of the centralized control of education and the professionalism of the educators were formerly deeply rooted in the Japanese education world. In this cultural climate, parental and community participation in education was not really needed. Nowadays, however, the schools are experiencing increasing difficulties in accomplishing the roles expected of them by themselves. Increasing calls to build a new partnership between the school and the community have been asserted. The opportunities for parent and community involvement in school management have expanded. However, from the standpoint of the schools and the teachers, hasty and enhanced parental and community involvement in the school management might be seen as an annoyance. Moreover, we are still in the formative stage of establishing suitable and practical forms of parental and community involvement in school management.

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日本における父母・地域の学校運営への参加（記述の要点）

父母や地域社会をより積極的に地域の学校運営に参加させるべきであるという議論は世界的な潮流のひとつとなっている。わが国においても、近年、学校と地域社会との間に新たな協力関係を構築すべきという議論が高まっており、また父母・地域の学校運営参画を促進するための機構も導入されてきた。しかしながら、国家主導の中央集権的教育行政の伝統が強く、また教員たちの間にも高い専門職意識がみられるわが国においては、こうした外部からの介入の動きに対しては、抵抗感も少なくない。ここでは、わが国の伝統的な学校文化、最近における学校を取りまく環境の変化を概観するとともに、父母・地域の学校運営への参加・参画のための制度的枠組づくりの活動とこれをめぐる議論を紹介する。

1. 中央集権的教育行政の伝統

明治維新以降のわが国の近代的教育整備事業は、西欧諸国をモデルに近代国家の樹立をめざす中央政府による強い主導の下に展開された。地方の学校を設立・運営するための資金は、父母や地域住民に大きく依存するものであったが、文明開化の対象とみなされた彼らが、政府の掲げる教育方針に意見や不満を表明することはほとんどなかった。

2. 国家主義的教育政策の展開

1870年代末以降は、国家主義的な教育思想・教育政策が台頭する。1890年の教育勅語は、教育の目標として、道德教育、国民教育(日本人としての自覚を高める教育)を重視することを明示した。師範学校において教授の専門技能とともに、天皇制国家への忠誠や愛国心を育成された教員は、熱心にその使命遂行に従事した。父母や地域社会は、子どもと若者の教育を学校と教員にほぼ全面的にゆだねていた。

3. 第二次世界大戦後の教育行政の民主化

戦後の教育改革においては、教育の民主化の旗印の下に、教育行政の地方分権、住民参加型教育意思決定をめざして教育委員会制度が導入された。しかしながら、米国流の教育委員会制度の柱のひとつであったレイマン・コントロールという理念は、定着しにくいものであった。父母と学校の協力を促進するためにPTAが組織されたが、それは学校運営に関する父母や地域社会の意見表明の場としては限定のあるものであった。

4. 学校と地域社会との新しい関係の構築

近年、学校や教員にたいする要望や役割期待は、ますます多面化し複雑な様相を示している。教員たちは、その付託に応えるために忙殺されており、もはや彼らのみで問題に対処することは困難になっている。学校と地域社会との間で新たな協力・連携関係を構築することが双方から求められてきている。

5. 学校運営協議会をめぐる議論

父母・地域の学校運営参画を促進するための制度として、2000年に「学校評議員」、つづいて2004年に「学校運営協議会」、とりわけ学校運営協議会(コミュニティー・スクール)が導入された。権限が強化された後者に関しては、その設置運営の心理的・物質的負担と実質的効果をめぐって議論が続いている。「学校支援地域本部」のような新たな地方組織も生まれつつある。