

<p>1. Study on Issues in Unified Elementary and Lower Secondary Education Leader: KOMATSU Ikuo, Director, Department for Educational Policy and Evaluation Research</p>
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(1) Purpose and Aim of Study

This study's aim is to identify challenges surrounding the concept of "compulsory education schools" (tentative title) as a means for quality assurance in the compulsory education system. To this end, the study assesses developments in unified elementary-lower secondary education and coordinated education, and clarifies the challenges in achieving continuity and linkage in terms of student development, educational systems/administration/finance/management, educational content and methods, and school facilities.

More concretely, the study seeks to: (a) advance theoretical and empirical research on student development characteristic to each stage of the compulsory education system; (b) consider new functions and roles for "compulsory education schools"; (c) explore paradigms for unified educational content/methods and student guidance across the nine years of compulsory schooling; and (d) consider what kinds of school facilities would be appropriate for unified elementary and lower secondary schools.

(2) Outline of Research Results

- Student development team
- Reviewed earlier literature in fields such as developmental psychology and educational psychology from the perspective of unified elementary and lower secondary education, and produced summary and list of basic works concerning the cognitive development of children for use in discussions on the nature of unified elementary and lower secondary education.
- Used the findings of the literature review and a study of actual conditions based on observation and interviews in unified elementary and lower secondary schools to determine specific topics for a questionnaire survey, which was then implemented.
- Found that the results of the above survey, when limited to students in the year levels targeted by the survey, showed no discrepancy—regardless of their forms of unified elementary and lower secondary education—in terms

of adaptation to class environments, friendships, motivation to study, or other features across the regions studied.

- Educational systems/administration/finance/management team
- Implemented supplementary surveys based on data from the first year of a survey of boards of education in prefectures, designated cities, and core cities, analyzed nationwide trends, and conducted case studies.
- Analyzed the feasibility of introducing unified education from the perspective of geographical distance, and identified challenges involved in implementation.

- Educational content and methods team
- Reviewed the challenges in terms of educational content and methods entailed in the introduction and implementation of unified elementary and lower secondary education systems, focusing on issues such as structures for implementation, curricular programming, divisions in and organization of the nine-year system, teaching and assessment, collaboration with families and the community, and student guidance.

Successfully consolidated a scheme of discussion points for each issue, by reference to practical cases of implementation of elementary and lower secondary education and the unified lower and upper secondary education system. As regards patterns for implementation and curricular standards, identified considerable potential for implementation of more unified education using the system currently in place.