

Research title	Comprehensive Study on Development of Educational Conditions
Period	FY2008-FY2010 (April 2008 – March 2011)
Objectives	This study aims to suggest a model for appropriate school placement according to demographic changes and local characteristics by summarizing relevant data. It also analyzes data on appropriate school sizes.
Methodology	<p>Two teams engaged in different tasks in order to conduct the study efficiently.</p> <p><School placement analysis> A questionnaire survey on amalgamation and reorganization of schools conducted with boards of education and elementary and lower secondary schools, inspection of prefectural and municipal boards of education as well as schools, a survey on students from a social capital approach, analyses of data from basic research on prefectural boards of education and schools, and organizing lectures and workshops.</p> <p><School size analysis> Surveys on school management and learning behavior at schools of diverse class numbers and sizes based on document-based analysis on school size in Japan and abroad and preliminary onsite survey of the impact of school size on teaching and student guidance (target population: lower secondary schools in a sample prefecture).</p>
Major outcomes and findings	<p><School placement analysis></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Amalgamation and reorganization of elementary and lower secondary schools has had a slight increase following major municipal mergers in the early 2000s. In the last two decades, the first ten years were characterized by amalgamation and reorganization in municipalities with smaller populations, while in the latter ten-year period we saw more amalgamations and reorganizations in larger municipalities. A survey of boards of education suggests that officials tend to believe the appropriate number of classes per school to be between 12 and 18, but these figures vary according to regions. There are some unique efforts being made, such as building a school network to retain small-scale schools. (2) Regarding the economic impact of school amalgamation and reorganization, we verified that amalgamations have a significant economic effect per student, but further research is necessary to elucidate social costs from a mid-/long-term perspective. (3) Opinion surveys of students regarding the learning environment before and after school amalgamations revealed that amalgamations caused no significant adverse effects, such as difficulties in adapting to the new environment, as the students' awareness of their performance remained constant through the amalgamation process. (4) There is an increasing trend of integrating community-based facilities into schools or forming a comprehensive school from elementary to lower secondary schools through amalgamations. Therefore, there is an urgent need for developing educational policies due to school amalgamation and reorganization. <p><School size analysis></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Comparative research of lower secondary schools has revealed that students in a smaller class are more likely to engage in revision at home. A longitudinal comparison revealed that a majority of students improved their in-class behavior and performance in their homework after their class size was reduced. (2) Small schools with many classes had higher performance in resolving issues concerning student guidance and students' problems with other students. This outcome indicates some advantages in reducing the size and increasing the number of classes. Schools with fewer classes per grade may also benefit from a further class-size reduction to achieve the same level of guidance-related problem solving effect as schools with many classes in one grade, as it enables annual class reshuffles.
Contributions to education policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In terms of the school placement research, we presented the results of the survey of municipal boards of education to the Consultative Council for Comprehensive Research and Study of the MEXT. We are also receiving visitors such as mayors, heads of boards of education, and council members to discuss school amalgamation, and responding to requests for advice or lectures on how to implement

	<p>school amalgamation and reorganization. Proactive contributions were also made to the MEXT case studies of amalgamation of public schools (elementary and lower secondary schools).</p> <p>(2) The results of the school-size research were presented at MEXT's "2nd hearing from experts regarding improving future class arrangements and the number of teachers to be allocated." The data were also submitted to the 68th meeting of the Elementary and Secondary Education Division, Central Council for Education. The study was partly included in the division's recommendation. We also presented our report, "Trends in class-size research and effects of class size on teachers' class management and students' changes," to the 4th discussion on improving the class size and teacher placement at public schools for mandatory education.</p>
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