

Research title	Research on Changes in Lifelong Learning Policies and Their Assessment
Period	FY2008-FY2010 (April 2008 – March 2011)
Objectives	This study aims to identify and assess the changes that have occurred in lifelong learning policies administered by the MEXT and by various municipalities, taking the perspectives of social survey and comparative pedagogy. It also aims to identify challenges thereby, and suggest future prospects.
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Analyze and identify the trends and characteristics of reports by the Central Council for Education. (2) Analyze and identify the trend and characteristics of past funding situations. (3) Understand the current situation of lifelong learning policies in municipalities by conducting an interview survey by visits. (4) Understand the current situation of lifelong learning policies in municipalities by conducting a questionnaire survey. (5) Understand the trends of lifelong learning policies within the EU and Asia through literature review and fieldwork. (6) Understand the current situation regarding a collaboration project between schools, households, and local communities, with the help of the board of education of Yokohama city. (7) Comprehensively analyze the data obtained through the above-stated activities, and contemplate the future of lifelong learning policies.
Major outcomes and findings	<p>The framework of lifelong learning in the 1990s comprised (1) development of the lifelong learning promotion system, (2) promotion of learning and provision of information, (3) provision of diverse learning opportunities, and (4) evaluation of learning outcomes. These elements established the area specific to lifelong learning policies. However, this framework proved to be difficult to adapt to various social requirements. Subsequently, emphasis was placed on the perspective of “utilizing learning outcomes” in the 2000s. In response to this trend, much of the budget was allocated for individual tasks such as “support for home education” and “support for career education” in the 2000s.</p> <p>In terms of social education administration, the environment for social education has become impoverished, seen in the decrease in the number of community centers and employees with specialist skills as well as progressive privatization. There is a growing need for reconstructing social education (social education administration) based on social demands.</p> <p>Within the EU, lifelong learning policies have been developed and pursued from the viewpoint of fostering competence at a global level. Japan also needs to consider arranging policies based on this kind of perspective.</p>
Contributions to education policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) This study has illustrated and characterized the changes of the lifelong learning policies administered by the MEXT over the years, thereby providing reference points and analytical perspectives for discussions on inherent challenges and future prospects. (2) The comparative study of lifelong learning policies between Japan and the EU or other Asian countries elucidated the shortcomings in Japan’s policies. (3) This study outlined the municipal lifelong learning policies and investigated the present states of these policies, thereby providing useful information for considering the effects and implications of the MEXT’s lifelong learning policies, and for discussing the directions to be taken by the municipal lifelong learning policies. (4) Although there are many challenges to be overcome for realizing collaboration between schools, homes, and local communities, the policy regarding this plays a central role in the policies of municipal boards of education. This study therefore identified the need for continued pursuit of this policy in the future. (5) This study also verified the necessity to reconstruct a system suitable for the new era of social education administration in areas such as social education facilities, institutions engaged in social education, and specialists in social education, thereby suggesting a future direction.