

# Overview of "Comprehensive research on issues related to upper secondary schools based on reviews of overall upper secondary school policies"

## 1. Purpose and Overview of the Survey and Research

### (1) Purpose of the Survey and Research

Upper secondary school education in recent years has been required to take further measures to diversify upper secondary school education, responding to learning needs and career selection of upper secondary school students, and to ensure and improve the quality of education. This research provides comprehensive reviews on policy making, the implementation process and its outcomes for upper secondary school education reform, and reorganization/rearrangement being carried out at the level of founders in municipalities responding to the decline of students. We also conducted a survey and analysis of people with experience of quitting jobs, in order to obtain basic data contributing to promotion and enhancement of future career education at upper secondary schools, aiming to gain basic insights into future upper secondary school policies.

### (2) Overview of the Survey and Research

Concerning upper secondary school education reform and reorganization/rearrangement, we conducted a survey of prefectural and municipal boards of education and upper secondary schools with general selection system/multiple-time (*Tabusei*) (morning-time, afternoon-time, night-time)/credit system by mail, collected data from web sites of the prefectural or municipal boards of education, and carried out interviews with boards of education and upper secondary schools taking unique initiatives. We also undertook interviews with people with experience of quitting jobs after graduating upper secondary schools, in cooperation with upper secondary school teachers.

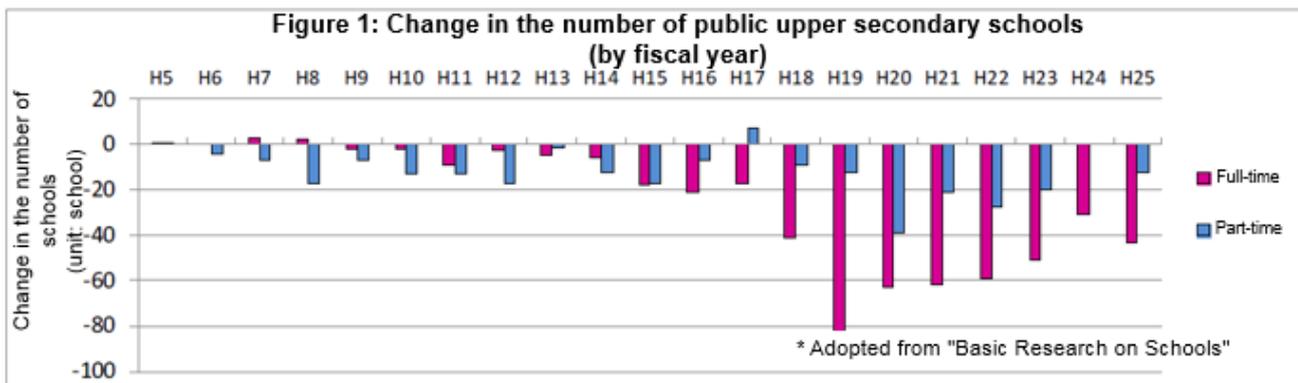
[Study period: FY 2012- FY 20123, Leader: SUGINO Tsuyoshi (Deputy Director-General)]

## 2. Outline of Research Results

### Part I: Study on the current status and challenges of upper secondary school education reform

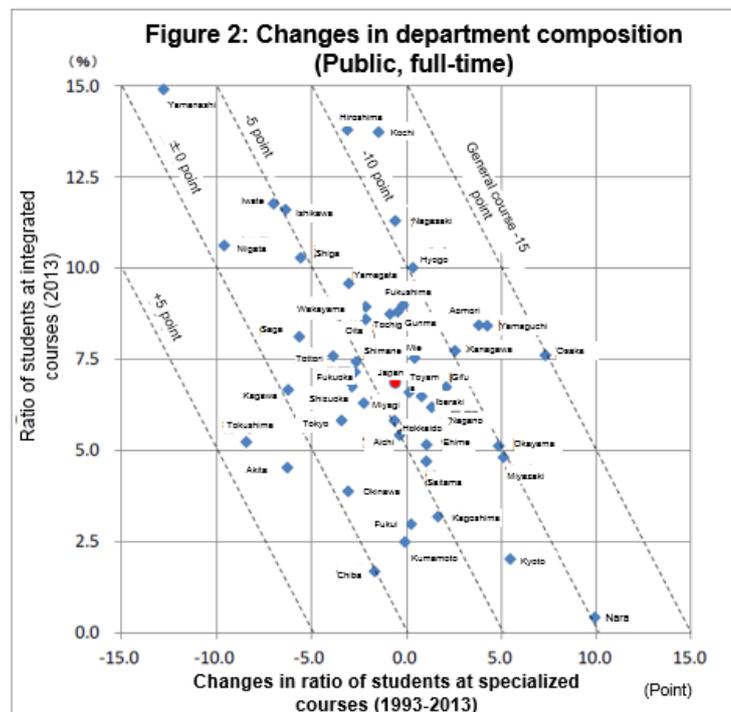
#### Chapter 1: Analysis of the point which has been reached by upper secondary school reform in prefectures

Steps from consideration of upper secondary school education reform and reorganization/rearrangement in prefectures to the implementation phase are: (i) report by council, (ii) publishing basic policies by boards of education, (iii) development of the mid- and long-term basic plan, and (iv) preparation of implementation plan. The development of the basic plan became active in early 1998, and, in 2013, more than half of prefectures had completed developing plans for the second term. Under the circumstances, integration of schools surged in the late 1998, and since then, dozens of schools have decreased every year (Figure 1).



Upper secondary school education reform is not progressing uniformly across the country. For instance, the status of development of integrated courses, which is a new type of upper secondary school, varies among prefectures (Figure 2). Differences in the progress of education reform is defined not only by regional differences between metropolitan and provincial areas but also by more detailed regional conditions and upper secondary school education policies in each prefecture.

According to the analysis of the development status of new types of upper secondary schools, prefectures where reorganization/rearrangement is progressing are relatively successful in reform of upper secondary school education in general.



## Chapter 2: Verification of the upper secondary school education reform and reorganization/rearrangement and the future policy vision

About a dozen prefectures are now carrying out a systematic verification operation regarding upper secondary school education reform and reorganization/rearrangement across the nation (Cases are shown in table 1). Verification results commonly show that setting up new types of upper secondary schools made students' choice of schools broader and that the expansion of subject selection and small-group learning allows students to choose the way of learning suited to each of them. In other words,

diversification and individualization of upper secondary school education is realized. Meanwhile, there are some issues remaining: students who cannot utilize systems for diversification and individualization enough; the necessity of responding to students more in depth along with changes in society and students; and improvement of personnel and physical conditions to maintain and enhance educational activities in a diversified and individualized manner.

Based on what has been seen in Chapter I and the previous analysis, the following five points were identified as issues in upper secondary school education policies: (i) further verification of upper secondary school educational policies, (ii) Dealing with future decline of student numbers, (iii) expansion of cooperation with guardians and community residents, (iv) exploitation of the new reform menu, and (v) enhancement of special needs education at upper secondary schools.

**Table1. Verification cases of upper secondary school education reform and reorganization/rearrangement**

Prefecture	Announced in	Published report
Miyagi	Sep. 2011	Prefectural High School future vision Council "Verification of achievements of high school education reform: System development for general education and specialized education (Report)"
Chiba	Dec. 2009	Chiba Prefectural Board of Education "Evaluation of first part of prefectural high schools reorganization plan (Final report)"
Tokyo	Apr. 2007	Exploratory Committee for Achievements of New Types of Schools "Exploratory Committee for Achievements of New Types of Schools (Report)"
Kanagawa	Aug. 2010	Exploring Project Conference for Future High School Education "Prefectural High School Reform Promotion Plan: Achievements and Challenges for 10 years – For Future Prefectural High School -"
Aichi	Mar. 2013	Exploratory Conference for the Creation of Distinctive Prefectural High School "Achievements and Challenges of Prefectural High School Education Reorganization/Rearrangement Plan - Exploratory Conference for the Creation of Distinctive Prefectural High School (Report)"
Osaka	Jan. 2008	Secretariat of the Osaka Prefectural Board of Education, Education Promotion Office, Senior High School Division "Progress and Examination Status of High School Reform based on 'Creation of Characteristics of Prefectural High School - Reorganization/Rearrangement Plan'"
Hyogo	Mar. 2007	Prefectural High School Long-term Concept Exploratory Committee "Prefectural High School Long-term Concept Exploratory Committee (Report)"

### **Chapter 3: Utilization of school evaluation in promoting upper secondary school education reform**

Analyzing data concerning school evaluation published on web sites, it was found that every prefecture is making organized efforts for school evaluation. However, in most prefectures, the evaluation point is rather broad such as "school's education activities and other management status" and evaluation results are at first provided about individual schools. Therefore, it is necessary to develop new evaluation methods incorporating school and administration evaluation in order to evaluate and examine outcomes and issues of upper secondary school education reform.

### **Chapter 4: Analysis of study on diversified upper secondary school education**

#### **Section 1: General selection system**

Upper secondary schools with general selection system set up in the 1980s basically as respond to the

diversity of university examination subjects and every school established itself as a school oriented toward college-bound students. Since reorganization/rearrangement started in the 2000s, specialized upper secondary schools and ordinary senior upper secondary schools have adopted the general selection system to develop new curricula targeting students with middle- and low-level academic abilities. Yet, these efforts for the reform are greatly affected by the reform of the entrants selection system such as the reduction of selection opportunities, and measures which will not diminish efforts to improve the quality of education need to be taken.

## **Section 2: "Encourage schools" focus on the enhancement of basic academic ability and re-learning**

Schools focusing on "the enhancement of basic academic ability and re-learning" include full-time upper secondary schools and part-time upper secondary schools with a multiple-time system but number of school remains a couple of dozen throughout the nation. Analysis of case examples indicates achievements such as realization of education security based on the actual situation in upper secondary schools, stability of schools which is significantly different from before, and increase in students with motivation and self-affirmation. One of the issues is difficulty differences between the subject set for "re-learning" and the compulsory subjects required in upper secondary schools. Difference between "re-learning" contents and ability demanded outside school which is necessary for course acquisition is another one.

## **Section 3: Upper secondary schools with multiple-time system and credit system**

Responding to demands from day-time school students, upper secondary schools with a multiple-time system and a credit system provided evening courses students more choice of subjects. Besides, educational conditions for students on part-time courses were significantly improved, such as the development of small-group classes and a counseling activity system. However, the number of upper secondary schools having this system is still small, and there remains a number of issues: lack of allocated schools, remaining high dropout rate, difficulties in independent selection of subjects and preparation of learning plans for students who haven't developed an ability to act independently, difficulties in building human relationships due to the lack of fixed classes, and teacher allocation not responding enough to students with difficulties.

## **Section 4: Unified lower-upper secondary school**

The analysis was made mainly of public lower-secondary schools and parallel-establishment type unified lower-upper secondary schools and it was pointed out that there are two models in prefectures having more than one school of these types: the regional-balance type and the city-competition type. The analysis also indicated the following: the necessity of clarifying what differences in abilities are supposed to be measured by aptitude tests and academic achievement tests respectively, as well as the possibility of measuring abilities; the necessity of examining if unique curriculum organization is effective at ordinary lower and upper secondary schools.

## **Section 5: Integrated course**

Students' recognition of the significance of the subject "industrial society and human beings," which is a

characteristic of the integrated course, is growing in recent years. It is safe to say that the credit system is promoting proactive learning among students. In addition, students' satisfaction level toward learning at integrated course is high. Yet, the integrated course has been affected by various changes in educational environment such as the trend of diversification, characterization and individualization of upper-secondary education, the spread of initiatives for career education, increasing initiatives for academic development.

### **Section 6: Specialized upper secondary schools**

Some distinctive initiatives common among specialized upper secondary schools are (i) collaboration with local communities and business sector, and (ii) connection and cooperation with institutions of higher education and other institutions. In the former case, the initiative has achieved some positive results from the aspect of career education, which is fostering basic and versatile abilities required in a real society and improving the ability to select appropriate courses, in addition to utilization of knowledge and skills learned through school education. In the latter, various programs of high school/university articulation reform have brought achievements, yet, there remains some issues from the aspects of continuity of curriculum and quality assurance of education.

### **Section 7: Super-Science High School (SSH)**

Previous studies and various reports indicate the achievements of SSH implementation as follows: (i) growing interest in math/science education among students, (ii) deployment of productive math/science education, and (iii) high ratio of graduates who go on to graduate schools. As challenges, (i) the burden on teachers, and (ii) high dependency on SSH in terms of school management and budget to continue the initiatives are indicated.

### **Section 8: International Baccalaureate**

We examined the purport/features of the creation of the International Baccalaureate and trends/changes in its establishment as well as initiatives and the actual situation in Japan, and concluded that the International Baccalaureate is highly valued as a preparatory course for university. On the other hand, however, there are still some issues to be solved: systematic development of language ability of students and teachers; securing and training of teaching staff capable of providing interactive lessons and their teaching methods, consistency with Japan's Course of Study, securing financing for membership fees and other expenses, and the development of systems to accept the International Baccalaureate at domestic universities. Additionally, we studied the case of Sapporo city which decided, as a part of the educational reform of upper secondary school, to found a secondary school providing a unified lower and upper secondary education program, and to introduce the International Baccalaureate to this school.

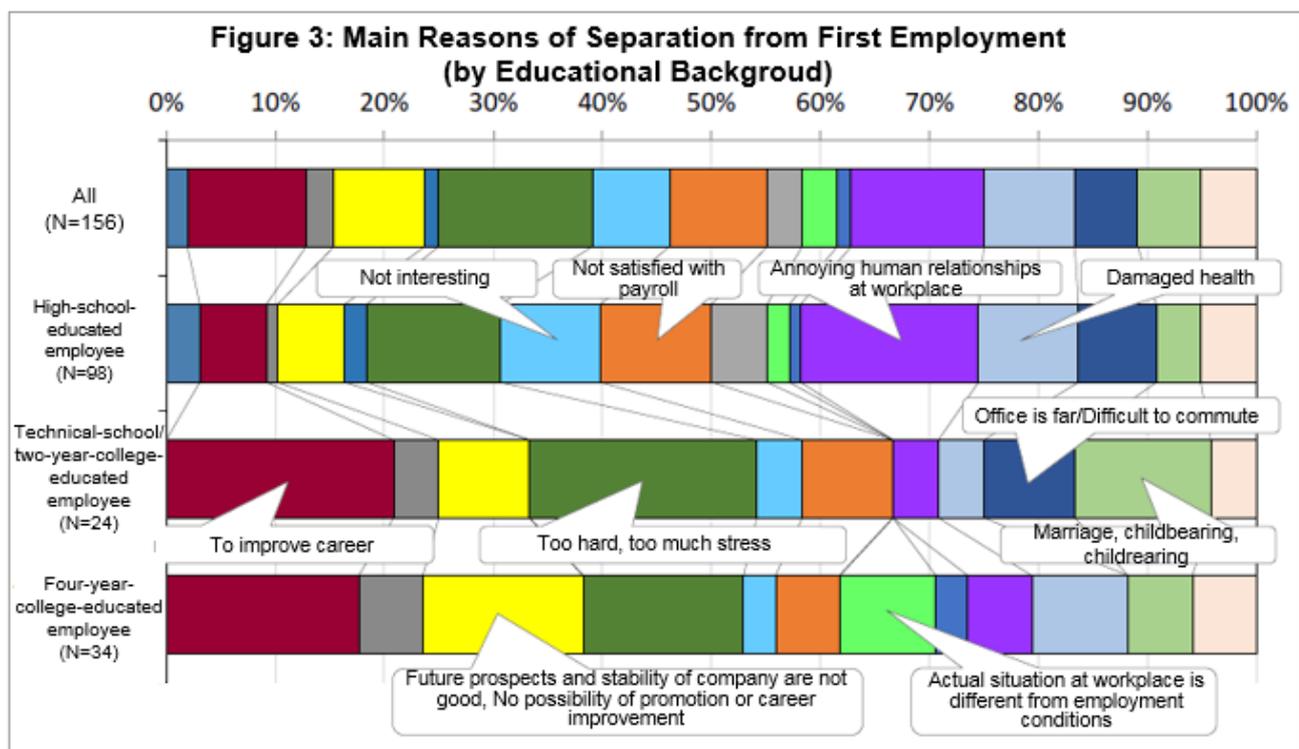
## **Chapter 5: Recognition of issues at school level through the lectures provided by representatives of the National Association of Upper Secondary School Principals, and future prospects**

This study included lectures provided by representatives from the National Association of Upper Secondary School Principals regarding the integrated course, part-time courses with the credit system, the general course, the technical studies course, and the agricultural studies course. Compared with the lecture on "Study on future upper secondary education" carried out between FY2006-2007, the above

lectures focused more on the general course while promoting unique initiatives and emphasized, as a common issue, the necessity of securing the teachers required to deal with the increase in specialized courses. Further, it is notable that lectures examined in this study promote the recognition of the issue, "quality assurance of upper secondary school education" and initiatives to standardize evaluation indices.

## Part II: Survey and research on career education at upper secondary school

The turnover rate of high-school-educated employees is reported to be around 40% within three years. Under the circumstance, we carried out interviews with people who took jobs after graduating from upper secondary schools or after going to higher education institutions and had experience of leaving the jobs, aiming to obtain data contributing to the promotion and enhancement of career education at upper secondary schools. The interviews were conducted, asking: (1) experience of learning at upper secondary schools and/or higher education institutions and experience in life in general (especially experience of career education and/or career building) and (2) reason(s) for leaving jobs, how they thought and acted between the decision to leave and actual leaving and career decision.



The findings of the survey are as follows:

- We could not identify any specific features that require special attention for counseling in terms of attendance at schools, attitudes in class, and so on through the life at upper secondary schools.
- The tendency of early separation from employment is higher when people were not actively involved in school life, for example, they did not participate in any club activities, were often late, have no motivation for qualifications, driving license and tests.

- The tendency of early separation from employment is also higher when counseling and career education at upper secondary schools do not touch for students. On the other hand, when people have a specific future plan with a time line, career-decision may be made early even after leaving their jobs.
- In the case of people who took jobs after finishing upper secondary school, a major reason for leaving their jobs is human relations at the work place (Figure 3). One cause of this is that, high-school-educated people tend to feel embarrassed and belittled about differences in age between them and their co-workers and huge gaps in terms of social experience.
- Not having a driving license and car can also be a cause of leaving their jobs for people who took jobs after graduating upper secondary schools.
- High-school-educated employees as well as junior-college-educated employees have a stronger tendency to feel an urge to "quit jobs" even when they have just taken their jobs. These people have low expectations of their working lives.
- Anxieties and frustration upon leaving jobs are generally small among high-school-educated employees. Rather, they tend to have a feeling of relief and freedom and may be in a psychological state where they have poor future prospects.