Local Educational Administration System in Japan
– The Board of Education System –

1. The Definition of Educational Administration
According to Ogawa (2016), educational administration is defined as a collective body that aims to achieve educational policy goals set by the government (i.e. the Diet and local legislatures) or set by market competition. These aims are achieved through legal and institutional procedures and regulations, customs, and markets in concert with the operation and management of educational administrative institutions (such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and boards of education) as well as educational institutions (such as schools), (educational) government officials, and faculty members who work there.

Educational administration is operated at both the central (national) and the local (prefectural/municipal) levels. The primary roles are given to MEXT at the central level and to boards of education at the local level. However, in recent years there are some other entities that take part in educational administration.

2. Educational Administration at the Central Level
MEXT has the primary role of managing educational administration at the central level in accordance with the Act for the Establishment of the MEXT and the Order for the Organization of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The six bureaus in MEXT (Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau, Higher Education Bureau, Science and Technology Policy Bureau, Research Promotion Bureau and Research and Development Bureau) share operational duties.

MEXT is not the only entity that is involved in educational administration; in some cases the prime minister sets educational administration policies as well. For example, the Education Rebuilding Implementation Council is part of the Cabinet and establishes the outline of educational administrative measures and policies. The council has so far sent nine proposals, as of February, 2017, which influenced national educational reform. The new board of education system that came into effect in 2015 was triggered by the council’s second report, “On the Board of Education System” sent in April, 2013.

In addition, in recent years, educational administration has been conducted in cooperation with other ministries as the nation implements “new educational content” that goes beyond traditional school subjects. For example, career education is conducted in concert with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Health, Labour and
Welfare, and food education is conducted in concert with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

3. Educational Administration at the Local Level

Boards of education take the primary role of operating educational administration at the local level, and they are responsible for the administration of school education in local municipalities, social education, sports, and culture. The board of education system has been enacted in accordance with the law regarding the organization and management of local educational administration (referred to as “The Act on Local Educational Administration”) and has been established in all local public communities (prefectures and municipalities). In general, boards of education can be divided into two categories: ones defined in a restricted sense and ones defined in a broad sense. The partial revision of the Act on Local Educational Administration in 2014 has brought a major change to the board of education system. This report gives an overview of the principles of the board of education system with a focus on the new system. Some references to the old system are made as needed.

A board of education is defined as a collective body that is comprised of four educational board members and a superintendent of education. The superintendent is appointed by the prefectural governor or the mayor and then approved by the educational board members. Educational board members serve four-year terms, and can be re-elected. In regular and ad-hoc meetings, board members make decisions on important matters and basic policies regarding educational administration. However, as educational board members are part-time government employees, the definition of a board of education in a broad sense sometimes includes a department (board of education office) that handles the day-to-day administrative tasks of the board of education.
### Division of Responsibility in Local Educational Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boards of Education (Article 21 of the Act on Local Educational Administration)</th>
<th>Matters regarding school education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment and management of public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personnel matters and training of faculty members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment and withdrawal of students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational structure, curriculum, and educational guidance of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textbook adoption and facility management (e.g. school buildings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters regarding social education</td>
<td>Opening courses and organizing assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation of social education projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment and management of social education facilities such as community centers, libraries and museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection of cultural properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters regarding Physical Education at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks that can be passed on to governors/mayors with the enactment of ordinances (Article 23 of the Act on Local Educational Administration)</th>
<th>Matters regarding culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation of cultural projects and establishment and management of cultural facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters regarding sports</td>
<td>Operation of sports projects and the establishment and management of sports facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governors/mayors (Article 22 of the Act on Local Educational Administration)</th>
<th>Matters regarding universities</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters regarding private schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquisition and disposition of educational resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signing contracts</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Enforcing budgets</td>
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</tbody>
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### 4. Principles of Boards of Education

The board of education is an administrative committee that was modeled after the American board of education system and was established during the postwar occupation of Japan by the United States. An administrative committee is a collegial institution that stands independent of general administrative organizations, and was established to achieve political neutrality, as well as professional/technical decision-making.

Initially, boards of education had the following three principles under the Board of Education Law (enacted in 1948): local autonomy (decentralization of power),
independence from general administration, and layman control. After the Act on Local Educational Administration was enacted in 1956, those founding principles were superseded by new goals, “political neutrality” and “stability and continuity”.

i.  **Independence from General Administration**
In the pre-war period, educational administration was operated as part of the general administration managed by governors/mayors. Later, in the post-war process of democratization, “democratization of education” was demanded which led to educational administration being separated from general administration, as instituted in the following two policies.

First, a popular election system was adopted for the selection of board members as a general rule under the Board of Education Law. By allowing voters to choose members, as they do governors/mayors and councils, the intention was to give the boards democratic legitimacy. Second, budget authority (draft-sending rights) was given to boards of education. Under this rule, if governors/mayors wanted to cut budgets, they had to explain the reason to the councils. As such, boards of education at the time of their founding were given strong authority to ensure democratic legitimacy and to achieve independence of educational administration.

However, escalation of electoral campaigns during the cold war era, strain on local government finances due to an increase in educational costs, deepening political conflicts inside local municipalities, et al., led to the establishment of the Act on Local Educational Administration in 1956, and The Board of Education Law. In addition, the two policies mentioned above were abolished. Under current law, independence from general administration is achieved by boards of education being operational institutions on equal footing with governors/mayors.

ii.  **Achieving Political Neutrality and Stability/Continuity**
Under the popular election system, many educational board members were elected from the Japan Teachers Union. To avoid this situation, the Act on Local Educational Administration states that the majority of board members cannot belong to the same political party and that the board members cannot take positions as board members in other political organizations. Since the educational administration should not be influenced by the thoughts and beliefs of the governor/mayor taking office, the system is structured in a way that does not allow board members to be replaced all at once, by, for example, setting the termination of a term at different times for governors/mayors and superintendents of education.
5. Organizational Structure of Boards of Education
The board of education system was introduced with the aim to achieve a balanced educational administration with layman control and professional leadership by having boards of education, (in a restricted sense) representing residents, and a group of specialists, the board of education offices, cooperating with each other. As a general rule, a board is comprised of a full-time superintendent of education and four part-time members.

Overview of the Board of Education System
Qualifications and Job Appointments of Superintendents of Education and Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendents of Education</th>
<th>Those with the right to hold office as the head of the said local government have virtuous personality and knowledge of educational administration (Article 4 Section 1 of the Act on Local Educational Administration)</th>
<th>To be appointed by the head of local governments with council approval</th>
<th>Three-year term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Members</td>
<td>Those with the right to hold office as the head of the said local government have a virtuous personality and knowledge of education, academics and culture (Article 4 Section 2 of the Act on Local Educational Administration) At least one parent has to be included among the board members (Article 4 Section 5 of the same act)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Four-year term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The Board of Education Office

A board of education is an operational institution that adheres to the council system. Therefore, it has supporting agencies or supporting employees. The Act on Local Educational Administration requires that an office be placed within each board, and the office here refers to internal organizations (such as divisions) within a board of education, outpost institutions (such as educational centers where administrative training of teachers takes place), and other educational institutions, excluding schools. The name differs from one local municipality to another, and in general municipalities, it is called “the board of education office,” and in prefectures and government-designated cities, it is often called “the education bureau” or “the education office.”

In general, employees at the board of education office, excluding ones who have worked as teachers (teachers might take positions as supervisors or department managers in charge of school education), are on temporary assignment from respective local municipalities, and were originally hired at the head office of the local government. There are some other educational employees who specialize as supervisors of school education and of social education. Supervisors of school education are defined as those who have insight into education as well as an academic background and experience in regards to school
curriculum, educational guidance, and special matters regarding school education. (Article 18-4 of the Act on Local Educational Administration) As a core entity responsible for educational administration, the board of education office connects boards of education and schools and engages in work such as school visits (as requested or planned), teacher training, curriculum development, collecting and providing information, attending meetings, writing documents, and making materials.

Due to its highly technical nature, it is difficult for general employees to handle tasks such as those described above, and thus teaching and giving advice on such technicalities to schools is important. In reality, however, boards of education in small, local municipalities do not have enough supervisors, for financial or other reasons. Generally, a minimum population of about 100,000 people is needed to have the financial capability of maintaining a job performance structure that can fully operate the educational administration system with adequate numbers of office employees and specialized educational employees. However, there are still many small-scale local municipalities that need support from the central and prefectural governments. (Article 55-2 of the Act on Local Educational Administration)

Placement of (teaching) supervisors/assigned supervisors, social education supervisors and dispatched social education supervisors per population range
(Reference: “Survey on Educational Administration of 2015, MEXT”)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of boards of education</th>
<th>Boards of education with (teaching) supervisors/assigned supervisors</th>
<th>Boards of education with social education supervisors/dispatched social education supervisors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placement ratio (%)</td>
<td>Average number of people per board of education</td>
<td>Placement ratio (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 500,000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300,000-500,000</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000-300,000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000-100,000</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000-50,000</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000-30,000</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8,000-15,000</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000-8,000</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5,000</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Job Duties of Superintendents of Education

Superintendents of education are members of boards of education. They organize and lead meetings, handle specific administrative tasks requiring the most responsibility, and manage all work that involves the authority of the board of education as the head of the board of education offices. Therefore, superintendents of education are expected to take a professional leadership role.

In the past, there were two people sharing these responsibilities, namely the school board president and the superintendent of education or head of the office, and it was pointed out that it was unclear who bore authority and responsibility. While representing their boards, school board presidents were part-time employees, the same as other board members, and their authority merely allowed them to call and host meetings and to announce the decisions of the boards under the title of chairperson. In recent years, the role of the school board president was abolished and a new superintendent position, was established. This new superintendent position integrates the responsibilities previously done by the school board president and the superintendent of education. This position was establish because it was deemed inappropriate that part-time employees were responsible for calling
meetings in cases of emergency, such as when a child’s life is in danger, the violation of children’s right to education, or the occurrence of serious damage such as that caused by earthquakes.

The following are the three characteristics of the new superintendent of education position established by the reform.

First, they are full-time employees responsible for the duties of both the old superintendents of education and the school board presidents. The new superintendents of education organize and manage board meetings and at the same time handle specific administrative tasks requiring the most responsibility as the primary supervisors of the office. In the new board of education system, new superintendents of education bear primary responsibility.

Second, new superintendents of education are directly appointed by prefectural governors or mayors. Under the old system, superintendents of education were elected by the members of the board of education who themselves had been appointed by the governor/mayor. In other words, the board of education had appointive power and held supervisory power over superintendents of education, and superintendents of education in turn were expected to provide guidance and advice based on their professional leadership. Under the new system, governors/mayors take the role of directly appointing and dismissing superintendents of education. The decision needs to be approved by the board. As superintendents of education were expected to have special knowledge and skills regarding educational administration, it had been the custom, under the old system, for governors/mayors to appoint as board members those who were expected to be subsequently elected as superintendents of education, and then have them approved by the boards as a procedural formality. Therefore, we can say that the reform aligned the system to what had already been the reality of the situation, and made clear that governors/mayors are responsible for appointing superintendents of education.

Third, the term of new superintendents of education was shortened from four years to three years. The revised law prevents new superintendents of education from having too much power and at the same time helps reflect the opinions of the governors/mayors in educational administration promptly. For this reason, their term of service is shorter than the 4-year term of the governors/mayors and of the board of education members, which enables every governor/mayor to appoint a superintendent of education at least once during their term.
8. How Governors/mayors Can Influence Educational Administration

The educational office work under the jurisdiction of the board of education is defined by the Act on Local Educational Administration and includes matters regarding school education, social education, cultural property protection, et cetera. Governors/mayors are allowed to involve themselves directly in matters regarding universities and private schools, and in the acquisition and disposition of educational resources. As for public schools, the authority of the governor/mayor is limited to actions such as sending draft ordinances and enforcing budgets. This limitation is due to the fact that educational administration is to be conducted independently from general administration, as mentioned earlier. The following is a summary of how governors/mayors can influence educational administration under the new system.

First, as the new system allows governors/mayors to directly appoint superintendents of education, they can choose individuals who hold the same views. For example, on matters such as the merger and abolition of schools and textbook adoption, governors/mayors can indirectly reflect their opinions in educational administration through the selection of like-minded superintendents of education under the new system. In this sense, we can say that governors/mayors are granted more power under the new system.

Second, general education conferences presided over by governors/mayors have been newly established. These meetings are attended by governors/mayors and boards of education. Previously, governors/mayors and boards of education did not have a chance to exchange opinions, but under the new system, governors/mayors can call general education conferences. General education conferences are a chance for governors/mayors and boards of education to freely exchange opinions about education (= discussion) and to balance the office work under the authority of the boards of education and that of the governors/mayors (= coordination). Topics to be discussed and coordinated are 1) planning the outlines of educational administration 2) important measures and policies such as educational conditions 3) actions to be taken in cases of emergency such as when children’s lives and physical well-beings are under threat. Not all work under the jurisdiction of the boards of education is discussed or coordinated. It should be noted here that there is no specific requirement on how general education conferences should be conducted, and governors/mayors are in charge of setting operational policies. General education conferences are not operational institutions with the power to make a decision. Therefore, whoever has the authority, whether it is a governor/mayor or a board of education, makes the final decision in cases where no agreement is reached in discussion. As a general rule, these meetings are open to the public.

Third, governors/mayors set “outlines” and publish them. An outline establishes policies
as a basis for goals and comprehensive measures for education in local governments, academies, and cultural promotion. “The policies as a basis for goals and measures” included in the basic plan of educational promotion designed primarily by boards of education in the past is said to be the equivalent of an outline, and local municipalities that have already designed the said plan are not required to design an outline. Things to be included in outlines are determined by each local municipality, but matters regarding the authority of governors/mayors such as budgets and ordinance proposals are expected to be defined there.

Specifically, the following matters can be included: making school buildings earthquake-resistant, the merger and abolition of schools, promotion of small-group teaching, comprehensive measures on after school activities, and strengthening early childhood education and care through kindergartens, day-care centers, and certified child institutions. In addition, policies on textbook adoption and criteria for personnel matters regarding faculty members might be included. Outlines are discussed in general education conferences, and governors/mayors make final decisions. All matters written in outlines need to be respected by both the governor/mayor and the board of education. As such, the transfer of power from boards of education to governors/mayors, allowing them to decide on basic directions of educational goals and measures, is a big change. Boards of education are not obliged to respect matters that could not be agreed on in general education conferences. However, governors/mayors are allowed to write outlines as they wish, and the decision-making on establishing measures is in the hands of governors/mayors. Thus governors/mayors can reflect their thoughts in education more easily now through the establishment of outlines.

<Shoma Makise>
(Febuary, 2017)

References

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/001/005/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2016/12/16/1372104_02.pdf
日本における地方教育行政—教育委員会制度—（記述の要点）

1、教育委員会制度の意義
教育委員会は、首長から相対的に独立した行政委員会であり、地方レベルで教育行政を主として行う。自治体の教育・学術・文化に関する行政をつかさどる合議制執行機関であり、「地方教育行政の組織及び運営に関する法律」を根拠法令に都道府県、市町村、教育事務に関する組合に置かれる。

表: 教育委員会の設置状況（平成27年5月1日現在：文部科学省「平成27年度教育行政調査」）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>都道府県</th>
<th>市町村等</th>
<th>市</th>
<th>特別区</th>
<th>町</th>
<th>村</th>
<th>組合・共同</th>
<th>広域連合</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>教育委員会数</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1,814</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

※「組合・共同」は一部事務組合、共同設置教育委員会をさす

2、教育委員会組織
一般的に「教育委員会」とよばれるものは、「(狭義の)教育委員会」と「(広義の)教育委員会」にわけられる。
まず前者は、首長が議会の同意を得て任命する教育長ならびに教育委員（原則4名）で構成する集合体をさす。教育長は教育委員会の会務を総理し、教育委員会を代表する常勤の特別職であるのに対して、教育委員は非常勤の公務員である。教育委員会会議では、教育行政における重要事項や基本方針を決定し、原則として公開で行われる。近年では「開かれた教育委員会」として地域住民が傍聴できるように、土日祝日や平日夜に開催するなど、開催の工夫が各地ですすめられている。

教育施策の方針等は教育委員会会議で決定するものの、実際の教育行政の執行にあたっては、教育長を長とする教育委員会事務局ですすめられる。委員会と教育委員会事務局をあわせて「(広義の)教育委員会」とよぶことがある。
このように、住民の代表である教育委員と専門家である教育長（専門家集団の教育委員会事務局）が相互に協力することで、民衆統制（layman control）と専門的リーダーシップ（professional leadership）の調和を図っている。

3、教育委員会の所掌事務
2000年代は分権改革のなかで教育委員会廃止や任意設置論が出されるなど、教育委員会制度は存廃の是非が議論された。そのようななかで、適宜制度の改善が模索されている。たとえば、社会教育事務の首長部局への移管、首長による教育行政への関与などは、その一端と
いえる。また、自律的な学校経営が要請されるなかで教育委員会からの支援の体制強化も強く求められている。

### 教育事務の権限分担

| 教育委員会 (地方教育行政法第21条) | ○学校教育に関すること  
・公立学校の設置・管理  
・教職員の人事・研修  
・児童生徒の入学、退学  
・学校の組織編成、教育課程、生徒指導  
・教科書採択・校舎等の施設の設備  
○社会教育に関すること  
・講座、集会の開設等  
・社会教育事業の実施  
・公民館、図書館、博物館等の社会教育施設の設置・管理  
○文化財の保護に関すること  
○学校における体育に関すること |
| 条例制定により首長へ移管可能な事務 (地方教育行政法第23条) | ○文化に関すること  
・文化事業の実施、文化施設の設置・管理  
○スポーツに関すること  
・スポーツ事業の実施、スポーツ施設の設置・管理 |
| 知事・市町村長 (地方教育行政法第22条) | ○大学に関すること  
○私立学校に関すること  
○教育財産の取得・処分  
○契約の締結  
○予算の執行 |

### 4、首長と教育行政

冒頭で示したとおり、教育委員会は首長から相対的に独立した機関である。一方で、首長は、教育長を直接任命でき、地域の教育に関する施策大綱（地方教育行政法では「教育、学術及び文化の振興に関する総合的な施策の大綱」とされる）を策定し、かつ大綱にかかる協議を行う総合教育会議を主宰することができる。これらを通じて首長が自らの考えを教育へ反映することは、制度的には可能である。

総合教育会議は、地方教育行政法の改正により2015年度より全教育委員会に設置されるようになった。首長が主宰し、教育委員会とともに、①大綱の策定、②重点的な施策の策定、③緊急時の措置について、原則公開による協議が行われる。首長と教育委員会がともに自由に意見交換を行い、相互の連携を強化することで、より一層民意を反映した教育行政を推進することが目指されている。なお、総合教育会議はあくまで意見交換（協議）の場であり、決定権はもたない。また、運営上の具体的な規定（協議する内容の範囲等）については法令上の規定がほとんどなく、首長に委ねられているところもある。