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REPORT 3

Study on the School System in Elementary and Secondary Education
Survey Research on the Current Situation of Unified Lower and Upper Secondary
School Education and the Policy Process of Institutionalization

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1. Purpose and outline of the research studies

(1) Purpose of the research studies

"School system reform" has been a subject of discussion in the meetings of the Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding and the Central Council for Education and other forums since 2013, and has since become an urgent policy issue. In light of this situation, the purpose of the research of the project titled, "Study on the School System in Elementary and Secondary Education" is to both provide basic materials on the issue of "school system reform" and to explore the knowledge that will serve to contribute to a more mid- and long-term discussion of school system reform.

More than 15 years have passed since 1998 when unified lower and upper secondary school education first became institutionalized, and since this system has since become well-established, the purpose of this report is to revisit the current situation of unified lower and upper secondary school education and the policy process of institutionalization.

(2) Outline of the research studies

The research studies on unified lower and upper secondary school education were conducted bearing in mind the following two perspectives.

(i) Current situation of unified lower and upper secondary school education

A survey was sent out in the autumn of 2015 targeting the secondary schools and joint-type lower and upper secondary schools out of the public schools implementing unified lower and upper secondary education asking for a general outline, and information about the curriculum, organization and management, selection of prospective students and subsequent path of graduates, the development and maintenance of facilities and major achievements and challenges. Moreover, in the process of the survey, a team was sent out to a number of unified lower and upper secondary schools to conduct interviews. Based on the results of the survey, an analysis was conducted of the current situation of unified lower and upper secondary schools.

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(ii) Policy process of institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education

An analysis was conducted of the various recommendations relating to unified lower and upper secondary school education (policy recommendations made in Council reports, etc.) and the newspaper coverage from just after World War II up until the time of institutionalization, and in addition, interviews were conducted with six of the policymakers who were themselves involved in the institutionalization. Based on the results of the analysis, while focusing on the analytical framework of the "politics of ideas", the research studies compiled information on the policy process up to institutionalization, and examined the elements brought about through the institutionalization.

(Reference) Other research studies in this project

Two reports have been published thus far as part of the research of this project.

Report 1 Study on the System of Free Pre-primary Education in Foreign Countries (March 2015)
Report 2 Study on the Achievements and Challenges of Unified Primary and Lower Secondary School Education (August 2015)

In addition, aside from the above, a separate international comparative study on school system reform at the stage of secondary education was conducted, and the results will be published as a paper of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research Publications Vol. No. 145.
(Survey period: FY 2014 - 2015, Keiko Watanabe, Principal Researcher (Director, Department for Educational Policy and Evaluation, National Institute for Educational Policy Research))

2. Summary of the research results

This report is composed of Part I, which analyzes the current situation of unified lower and upper secondary school education, and Part II, which analyzes the policy process of institutionalization. Moreover, transcripts of the interviews, which were conducted with

the policymakers in the analysis of the policy process of Part II, were included as additional materials. The following gives a summary of each of the chapters in Part I and Part II.

Part I Analysis of the current situation of unified lower and upper secondary school education

Chapter 1 Purpose and methods of analysis of the current situation

Kazuyoshi Yashiki (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

Part 1 reveals the current state of public secondary schools and public *heisetsu gata chuko ikkan kyoikuko* (joint-type lower and upper secondary schools) based on a questionnaire sent out by post, and aims to analyze the achievements and challenges, and to gain a useful insight into what happens when the national government or prefectural government considers policies for unified lower and upper secondary school education, and to provide reference material to be used in the measures for the unified lower and upper secondary school education. The questionnaire targeted all schools with a response recovery rate of 96.8% for the secondary schools and of 92.8% for the unified lower and upper secondary schools.

The survey questions intended to uncover some of the conditions required to support the measures for unified lower and upper secondary school education and to try and comprehend the structure leading to the achievements and challenges, and posed questions focusing on school management.

Chapter 2 The establishment of unified lower and upper secondary schools

Kazuyoshi Yashiki (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter gives a broad outline of the establishment of the unified lower and upper secondary schools, and aims to serve as basic material for the subsequent chapters. First, the establishment of the unified lower and upper secondary schools as of FY 2015 shows diverse expansion by the prefectural governments. The number of schools is in excess of the 500 schools originally laid down as the establishment goal by the government at the time of the introduction of the system of unified lower and upper secondary schools, but looking at the current situation, it cannot be said that there is at least one upper secondary

school within possible commuting distance of the students.

The majority of the established programs of the public secondary schools and the joint-type upper secondary schools are made up of general programs. In addition, a higher percentage of joint-type upper secondary schools have established specialized programs than secondary schools. Moreover, there are apparent differences with the secondary schools in that the joint-type upper secondary schools have established programs in which the internal students (students coming from the lower secondary school) do not enroll.

Currently, there is a movement underway in the prefectures to carry out a thorough examination of the results. In response to this examination, there may be cases where some unified lower and upper secondary schools will be abolished while there will be a number of cases where unified lower and upper secondary schools will be newly established. In light of the Upper Secondary School Development Plan, it is unlikely that there will be any great changes in the trend of establishing and maintaining public unified lower and upper secondary schools. Since the number of students is declining, the adjustments of the prefectures and municipalities are likely to become an important issue in the future, affecting the establishment of such schools.

Status of the establishment of unified lower and upper secondary schools (FY 2015)

Category	Secondary schools	Joint-type	Cooperative-type	Total
Public	31	3	80	194
Private	17	375	4	396
National	4	1	0	5
Total	52	459	84	595

∗ With the joint-type and cooperative-type schools, a lower secondary school and upper secondary school set was counted as one school.
The cooperative-type lower and upper secondary schools of national university affiliated lower secondary schools and prefectural upper secondary schools were included in the "public" category. Source: Prepared based on the Basic School Survey.

Chapter 3 Curriculum organization in the unified lower and upper secondary schools

Bunzo Kudo (Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences)

This chapter describes the efforts of the public unified lower and upper secondary schools from the perspective of organization and implementation of the curriculum, and aims to identify the achievements and challenges existing at the present time. For this purpose, the responses to the questionnaire and the school handbooks were used as supporting material.

The special exceptions to the curriculum criteria were used in about 60% of the schools, while the results confirmed that these were effective in systematic teaching and in retention of learning content. Meanwhile, it was also pointed out that ingenuity needs to be used in teaching when it comes to students who have a tendency to fall behind in their learning progress. It was also confirmed that diverse and unique teaching was being implemented in such subjects as mathematics, languages, international understanding, expression, career education and inquiry-based learning as a useful device in curriculum organization. In general, as was the point of introducing the system in the first place, it appears that the original aim was largely achieved, which was to ensure a relaxed school life free from the pressures of upper secondary school admissions screening, and to provide more effective and consistent education through six years of planned and continuous instruction.

Chapter 4 Assigned sections for school management

Ko Takahashi (Aomori Chuo Gakuin University)

This chapter discusses, based on the results of the questionnaire, the different sections responsible for school affairs established in an integral fashion by the unified lower and upper secondary schools for the purpose of school management, the organization of classroom teachers and homeroom teachers, and the percentage of teachers double teaching in joint-type lower and upper secondary schools.

According to the results of the survey, the trend of integration is becoming more pronounced in secondary schools with more than 90% of the secondary schools dividing the management of the schools affairs into the sections of "academic affairs", "student guidance", "individual subjects" and "careers guidance", which differs immensely from the organization seen in the joint-type lower and upper secondary schools. Moreover, even when looking at the number of sections, the division of school affairs was more detailed and specialized in the secondary schools, which suggests that a management system tailored to the work necessary as a school offering unified education is being developed.

In addition, it was also clear in the secondary schools that teachers were very likely to act as a classroom teacher or homeroom teacher for both the lower secondary and upper secondary schools. On the other hand, in the joint-type lower and upper secondary schools, it was noted that the percentage of teachers of the joint-type upper secondary school who also took on duties in the joint-type lower secondary school was overwhelmingly higher than the teachers of the joint-type lower secondary school who took on duties in the joint-type upper secondary school, and the report pointed out that the teachers of the joint-type upper secondary schools were most probably unilaterally taking on an excessive burden.

Chapter 5 Efforts to promote unified lower and upper secondary school education

Ko Takahashi (Aomori Chuo Gakuin University)

This chapter, although based on the results of the questionnaire, deals with the specific content of exchange activities where lower secondary school students and upper secondary school students work together, which are deemed to play a crucial role in achieving the goals of unified lower and upper secondary school education, and the class compositions which form the base for such activities.

According to the results of the survey, as a whole, "health and safety and physical education events" accounted for the highest percentage, which was almost the same figure as for "cultural events", closely followed by "ceremonial events". However, while "labor production and service activities" similarly came under "school events" in the "special activities", they accounted for less than half, and "travel and group accommodation events" showed an even lower percentage. On the other hand, "student council activities" accounted for more than half, but "classroom activities and homeroom activities" showed a low rate of less than 1 percent.

In addition, it became clear that secondary schools tend to be more proactively involved in efforts as was shown by the greater number of efforts of involvement in integrated events, etc. than by the joint-type lower and upper secondary schools. Moreover, the questionnaire revealed that with regard to the class composition of joint-type upper secondary schools in the joint-type lower and upper secondary schools, nearly half of the schools mixed the internal students (students coming from the joint-type lower secondary school) and external students (students coming from an outside lower secondary school) right from the first year of upper secondary school.

Chapter 6 Selection of students for the unified lower and upper secondary schools and

subsequent academic paths

Wataru Senoh (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter examines, based on the tallied questionnaire results, what the criteria were in selecting prospective students in the unified lower and upper secondary schools, and what kind of paths they followed afterwards.

The top three methods for selecting prospective students for both secondary schools and joint-type lower and upper secondary schools (referred to below as "joint-type schools") were interviews, aptitude tests and recommendation letters. In the secondary schools, recommendation letters were relied on the most (86%) and in the joint-type schools, aptitude tests were utilized the most (96.1%).

Taking a look at the trends in admissions to application rates, the popularity of the unified lower and upper secondary schools has seen a slight decline when compared to 10 years ago. The average application rate in FY 2015 was 3.53 times in the secondary schools, and the rate has remained at about three to four times during the past 10 years. In addition, the average application rate for the joint-type schools was 3.57 times, and therefore the application rate for joint-type schools is seeing a downward trend when compared to 10 years ago.

Of the students graduating from the latter course of a secondary school and the students graduating from a joint-type upper secondary school, the number of students going on to university accounted for the highest rate, and the percentage of students going on to university, including junior colleges, in FY 2014 was 79.7% for the secondary schools and 73.9% for the joint-type schools. These rates are higher than the university enrollment rate for students graduating from upper secondary school ordinary courses throughout the country. In addition, the percentage of students going on to university or some other educational institution has grown by around 10% in the last 10 years for both the secondary schools and joint-type schools, and this trend is likely to exceed the average growth of the overall university enrollment rate for the past 10 years.

Chapter 7 Status of development and maintenance of facilities in the unified lower and upper secondary schools and issues with the facilities

Katsumi Yamaguchi (Tokyo City University)

This chapter seeks to understand, based on the results of the questionnaire and data

collection, the actual situation of development and maintenance of the facilities of the secondary schools and the unified lower and upper secondary schools, and the situation of the sharing of facilities between the former course and the latter course, and between the lower secondary school and upper secondary school, as well as the advantages and challenges in terms of use of the facilities.

The majority of secondary schools and joint-type lower and upper secondary schools use existing buildings or maintain the schools through extension or renovation. Owing to such, there are large differences in the sizes of the school grounds and the square footage of the school buildings, and there are a number of schools that have to use narrow playgrounds and school buildings or indoor sports facilities, which is manifesting into a problem in terms of facilities. Schools which are using existing buildings face the problem of a shortage of special classrooms such as technology rooms.

In using the facilities, there is very little differentiation between the former courses and the latter courses in the secondary schools, and in most cases, the schools are being used integrally as one school. In the joint-type lower and upper secondary schools, most of the special classrooms and sports facilities are being shared by the lower secondary school and the upper secondary schools, but close to 40% of schools have the regular classrooms of their lower secondary school and the regular classrooms of their upper secondary school in separate buildings, and nearly 30% of the schools have separate teachers' rooms in the lower secondary school and upper secondary school and are not integrated, and therefore, there exist a large number of schools where the spaces designated to the lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools are divided. Although there are a large number of schools which have set divisions (stages) of school years in terms of the educational activities, there are very few schools which give thought to stages in terms of the arrangement of regular classrooms.

The advantages to being a unified lower and upper secondary school in terms of facilities is that it is possible to use the superior facilities of the upper secondary school in using the special classrooms and that the sports facilities are superior.

One point to note in future facility development is that in order to be able to take advantage of the features of unified lower and upper secondary schools, there appears to be a need to improve the special classrooms and ICT equipment, to develop the libraries and lunchrooms in order to promote exchanges, to create multi-purpose halls, and to integrate and improve the staff rooms which form the core of lower and upper secondary school coordination.

Chapter 8 Organization of the achievements and challenges of the unified lower and upper

secondary schools

Satoru Miyazaki (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter discusses, based on the information given in the questionnaire responses, the major achievements and challenges noted in unified lower and upper secondary school education.

For the most part, many achievements were noted as viewed from the perspective of the students. Rather than describing the achievements as would be expected by the parents and students such as improvements in academic performance and realization of the students' desired academic path, more conceptual achievements were described such as successful exchanges among mixed age groups and the implementation of more relaxed educational activities through unified lower and upper secondary school education. In addition, more unified lower and upper secondary schools described the achievement of promoting the growth of the teachers and office staff through the measures and coordination of unified lower and upper secondary school education.

Moreover, the trend was that the longer the timeframe for the unified lower and upper secondary school education measures, the more conceptual expectations such as less tension through the educational activities could be sufficiently and stably achieved, and the achievements of realizing the desired academic path held by the students and the parents could be realized.

On the other hand, the issue recognized by many schools was the lack of motivation caused by the fact that high school entrance examinations were not, in general, considered substantive, as well as the differences in the academic abilities of the students. In addition, in the secondary schools, the fixed relationships among the students tended to pose a problem while in the unified lower and upper secondary schools, there were differences in forms of implementation owing to the differences in the mindsets of the lower secondary and upper secondary teachers which tended to be an issue.

Major achievements recognized by the public unified lower and upper secondary schools

Achievements	Overall	Secondary schools	Joint-type schools	By period of overall efforts		
				1st to 6th year	7th to 12th year	13th year
Relaxed atmosphere throughout all of the educational activities	61.5%	70.0%	58.1%	79.2%	54.5%	60.0%

Nurturing of students through exchanges among mixed age groups	68.3%	70.0%	67.6%	75.0%	65.5%	68.0%
Improved results in terms of achieving the desired academic path	41.3%	43.3%	40.5%	20.8%	45.5%	52.0%
Stability and improvement of academic performance	49.0%	43.3%	51.4%	62.5%	43.6%	48.0%
Development of human resources with distinct abilities	26.9%	33.3%	24.3%	33.3%	23.6%	28.0%
Nurturing of a rich human nature	26.9%	33.3%	24.3%	25.0%	27.3%	28.0%
Reformed thinking and increased leadership of the teachers	28.8%	16.7%	33.8%	20.8%	34.5%	24.0%
Number of valid responses	104	30	74	24	55	25

Note: The content of the free descriptions were divided by topic, and only the main achievements listed by 20% or more of the schools were given.
Source: Prepared based on the questionnaire survey of this project

Main challenges identified by the public unified lower and upper secondary schools

Challenges	Overall	Secondary schools	Joint-type schools
Challenge of increasing motivation when the upper secondary school exams are not considered substantive (lack of motivation)	31.7%	34.5%	30.7%
Differences in academic abilities among the students (establishment of teaching methods in accordance with the individual)	35.6%	44.8%	32.0%
Fixed student relationships	10.6%	20.7%	6.7%
Differences in mindsets among the lower and upper secondary teachers (former and latter courses), and cooperative structures, etc.	23.1%	6.9%	29.3%
Number of valid responses	104	29	75

Note: The content of the free descriptions were divided by topic, and only the distinctive ones were selected.

Here the answers, including the omitted topics, were varied, and the information by period of efforts was omitted.

Source: Prepared based on the questionnaire survey of this project

Part II Analysis of the policy process for institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education

Chapter 1 Purpose and research methods, etc. of analysis of the policy process

Keiko Watanabe (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter discusses the background to the policy process analysis compiled as Part II, and its purpose, and the analysis framework and research methods.

Bearing in mind that it took 30 years to achieve the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education since it was first proposed, the purpose of analyzing the policy process is to conduct a preliminary study in order to determine the conditions for policy recommendations to have an influence on transforming policy.

The principles of the "three I's" generally discussed in political science and public policy studies, which make institutional change possible, are the "interests" of stakeholders and politicians, the "institutions" such as the decision-making mechanisms in the government, and the "ideas" of the policies, either individually or through a combination of these factors. Focusing especially on "ideas", this research was conducted using the following three research methods.

(i) Identification, mainly through the literature survey, of the content of past policy proposals, and the situation at the time of the government administration, the ruling and opposition parties, the education sector and the business sector affecting such content.

(ii) Examination of press coverage before and after the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education through newspaper articles.

(iii) Interviews with the policymakers who were involved in the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education.

Chapter 2 Proposals on unified lower and upper secondary school education and the

transformation of policy ideas

Masato Honda (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)
Motoko Yamada (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter focuses on the ideas included in the unified lower and upper secondary school education as policy agenda items, and further examines to what extent these ideas were associated with any frame. The timeframe which is the subject of study is from post-war reform up to the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education. The transformation was traced based on literature surveys and interviews with policymakers with regard to what kind of actors made what kind of recommendations in relation to unified lower and upper secondary school education from the time of post-war educational reform up to the institutionalization of 1998 (partial amendment of the School Education Act), what kind of ideas underscored these recommendations, and what the situation was within the government, the ruling and opposition parties, the education and economic circles surrounding the recommendations. The concept of unified lower and upper secondary school education contained various ideas depending on the timing of the proposal, but came to be institutionalized for the first time within the frame of "relaxed education" in the late 1990s through promotion of this policy.

Chapter 3 Interest of the media relating to unified lower and upper secondary education and the policy trends of local governments

Yoshihiro Nishimura (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

The proposal to introduce unified lower and upper secondary school education in Japan's post-war education policy community was frequently noted even when looking at the situation since 1966, but it took another 30 years until the implementation of institutional changes actually took place. Here, we focused on the salient points found in news reports relating to unified lower and upper secondary school education in the media during such time, especially in the major newspapers. For this chapter, we first collected newspaper articles which dealt with unified lower and upper secondary school education, and examined how it was being discussed in the media. Second, using the software "Word Miner", we extracted the important keywords contained in the collected news articles, and ranked them in importance. Third, groups of important keywords were set, and an

analysis was performed in light of the contents of the newspaper articles. Through these, the impact of the local policies were examined from the perspective of the perceptions of each local government with regard to the unified lower and upper secondary school education system in response to the transformations in national policy, and whether studies to be reflected in the policies of local education administration were carried out.

Chapter 4 Factors of institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education – based on interviews with the policy makers

Keiko Watanabe (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

In this chapter, the elements brought about through the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education in 1998 were identified based on the interviews with the six policymakers at the time. The following four points were raised as the elements realized through institutionalization.

(i) The institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education was positioned as latter course secondary education reform rather than school system reform

(ii) Gokase Junior High School and Senior High School in Miyazaki prefecture, which had substantially implemented unified lower and upper secondary school education in 1994 ahead of institutionalization, earned a good reputation for their educational activities carried out under all-round education, and this fact had a positive impact on the realization of institutionalization.

(iii) As a policy of the then Ministry of Education, a policy was issued to develop a "zest for living" within relaxed education, and since institutionalization was being proposed amid the tide of talks to fully implement a five-day school week, concerns about sitting the exams of so-called elite schools eclipsed this issue, and therefore the private schools were not opposed to the institutionalization

(iv) Owing to the fact that new cooperative-type schools were being conceived in addition to the secondary schools and joint-type schools, the potential for the expansion of such schools increased, and as a result, the conditional acceptance of the Japan Teachers' Union was obtained.

Chapter 5 Ideas affecting the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary education

Keiko Watanabe (National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This chapter studies the ideas affecting the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary education as compiled in Part II. First, based on the contents, which were clearly identified in Chapter 2 to Chapter 4, seven ideas affecting the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary education were extracted and categorized. They were (i) the policy of nurturing "a zest for living" in relaxed education, (ii) positioning as latter course secondary education reform rather than school system reform, (iii) adding the meaning of alleviating the sitting of competitive school admissions exams (in effect eliminating high school entrance exams) rather than elite education, (iv) the policy of unified lower and upper secondary school education itself, (v) the framework of selective implementation, (vi) the implementation of cooperative-type schools, and (vii) the example of Gokase.

Of the seven ideas, since five of them did not exist prior to institutionalization, the chapter pointed out that ideas were considered to have had a certain impact on policy transformation in the institutionalization of unified lower and upper secondary school education.

The future challenges that remain were cited to be exploration of the relationship between interests and the institutions, and examination of the definition of ideas.