Progress and Further Issues of Senior High School Reform

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze progress in senior high school reform based on material from boards of education in each prefecture, and contribute to verifying high school reform by going over new types of high schools and reviewing their achievements and challenges.

The advent of a period of falling student numbers has made serious high school reform possible, and over the past dozen or so years, high school reform has gone from reform implemented at the individual school level to a pattern of implementing coherent reform while conceptualizing an overall image of high school reform. In this process, alongside the advancing decline in student numbers, school consolidations were also adopted as an important adjustment method, and educational reform picked up pace, centering on the establishment of new types of high schools. Increased diversification and flexibility in high school education has gradually been achieved, via council reports and plan making. The first outcome of high school reform has been the realization of a goal to become more diversified and flexible. The second outcome has been the promotion of reorganization and adjustment. The third outcome has been that three pointers have been obtained regarding approaches to high school education: 1. Diverse education activity is restricted by reducing the scale of schools; 2. New systems function only in combination with appropriate management structures and labor; and 3. Achieving guaranteed academic ability, if left up to students’ free choice, is not easy and measures are needed.

Meanwhile, as to challenges to implementing high school reform, it has become clear that: 1. Due to the tight finances in recent years the requisite arrangements are not properly in place, and retreat and stagnation in reform can be seen; 2. The sequential implementation of a new reform menu gives rise to a situation where the effects of established reforms decline; 3. New types of high schools are not necessarily being operated according to the principles on which they were established, there are deviations in the schools’ management; and 4. Measures have to be taken in response to falling student numbers.

There are limits to the promotion of greater diversification and flexibility, and now, with high school reform having entered a new phase, there is a need to search for new approaches to high school reform that are efficient and are appropriate to a society with a declining birthrate, based on the results and accumulation of high school reform that has been implemented up to now in the pursuit of greater diversification and flexibility.