Consideration on the Critical Point for the Consolidation of Small Elementary Schools in Pupil Population Declining Areas through Two Cases of School Consolidation and Small School Networking in Northern Part of Japan

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Abstract

This paper aims to clarify the critical point and prerequisite for the consolidation of small elementary schools in pupil declining areas by picking up two cases of school consolidation and small school networking in small villages in northern part of Japan.

The judgment on critical point as to whether small elementary schools should be consolidated into a larger school or maintained as small elementary schools by emphasizing the merits of smallness and compensating the demerits of it differs greatly among local areas even with similar geographic and demographic traits. This fact shows that the usefulness of national standard for the reorganization of small elementary schools depends on the actual conditions of local communities in which those schools are placed.

Faced with nation-wide phenomenon of declining birth rate in Japan, we need to tackle the topics of reorganization of small elementary schools in local community. But public elementary schools have deep-rooted in local community as symbolic cultural center in each community. In addition to it, the allocation of elementary schools is determined by two factors. One of them is concerned with the “proper standard of school size” in relation to the efficiency and efficacy of schooling and school management. Another one is the limit and “proper standard of the size of school attendance district” in corresponding with the effect to mental and physical conditions of pupils and so on.

We have tried to apply the concept of “satisfying” as the analytical framework for reorganization of small elementary schools, which was introduced by Simon, H.A. He introduced it as alternative of “optimization” for the efficient management of social organization for productivity. The next topic for us to tackle is the development of various patterns for the reorganization of small elementary schools in correspondence to the patterns of pupil population declining areas from the viewpoint of the optimization of financial efficiency and social cost.