

Part I. Overview of the History of Japan's Education

Chapter 1.

The Modernization and Development of Education in Japan

The introduction of a modern education system into Japan, taking several Western countries as models, began in a real sense in the latter part of the 19th century. The arrival of modernization in Japan was therefore comparatively late, but since Japan was fortunate enough to be blessed with socio-cultural environmental factors (initial conditions) as listed below, education underwent very rapid development within a short space of time.

[Cultural maturity and the legacy of traditional education]

For the preceding 260 years, during which time Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1968) followed a policy of keeping the country closed the outside world, the country enjoyed peace and stability. During this period of time, the people of Japan were able to attain a high level of cultural maturity, and the literacy rate, even among the common people, was high by world standards at this time. This situation can be seen to be due, at least in part, to the relatively wide diffusion of distinctively Japanese educational institutions. For the samurai warrior class, these were public education institutions (fief schools) for study of the Chinese classics (Confucian doctrine, Chinese literature and Chinese history). For the common people, on the other hand, there were a large number of institutions called “*terakoya*” (popular places of learning or “community learning centers”), which concentrated on teaching reading, writing and practical skills. Quite separates from the fief schools and the *terakoya*, private schools, usually located in the homes of the instructor, developed and they were open to all regardless of class. And among merchants and the professional classes an apprenticeship system developed. Finally, mention must also be made of the popularity of learning aspects of Japanese culture such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement,

classical musical instruments and other traditional arts. In ways such as these, a foundation was laid for the national enthusiasm for education.

[The secular character and linguistic uniformity of education]

Education had a strongly secular character, and the traditional religions such as Buddhism and Shinto did not have their own distinctive educational institutions. Moreover, thanks to comparatively homogeneous cultural and linguistic traditions, there was no problem about making Japanese the sole medium of instruction from the start.

[Recognition of the issue of national unity through education]

As a result of the feudal Shogunate system and the system of social classes, the formation of a common national consciousness was held back. However, in the atmosphere of crisis in the face of external pressure at the end of the Edo era, there was a strong awareness that national unity and national consciousness could be formed through education. In the process of groping for the best way to modernize the Japanese nation, a consensus was formed with the aim of abolishing the traditional class system and offering equal educational opportunity to all the people of Japan.

[The emergence of a system of appointing people on the basis of educational attainments]

In the final years of the Edo era, a system of recruiting people on the basis of individual knowledge and ability was introduced in place of the traditional class system. Through this process, the elite members of the population came to be selected on the basis of academic attainment. And in this way, the preparatory conditions were laid down for the

advent of a society in which academic credentials formed the determining criterion for a person's employment and social status.

[The possibility of choosing from a wide diversity of models]

Because Japan maintained its independence and did not have the experience of being colonized by the Imperial Western Powers, it did not have the colonial legacy of an education system introduced by former rulers as was the case with many developing countries. Consequently, when Japan introduced its own modern educational system, it was able to select at will and to try out various models provided by the advanced countries.

1. Introduction of a Modern Education System

[Opening of the country and the Meiji Restoration]

In 1868, a political revolution took place in Japan, marked by the collapse of the political power held by the Tokugawa Shogunate which had long dominated Japan as the head of the samurai warrior class, and the birth of a new system of political authority with the Emperor at its head. The beginnings of the modernization of Japan can be seen in this revolution, known as the Meiji Restoration.

The period of domination by the Tokugawa Shogunate, which began at the start of the 17th century and continued for about 260 years, came to be known as the Edo era, because its power base was located in the town of Edo (present-day Tokyo). The Shogun exercised direct rule over Edo, Osaka and Kyoto as politically important locations, while the rest of the country was divided into about 250 feudal domains, each of which was ruled over by a feudal lord who had sworn an oath of loyalty to the Shogun. During the Edo era, Japan adopted a policy of excluding the outside world, so that trade and contact with foreign countries was effectively forbidden. In the early part of the 19th century, as the Edo era drew to a close, the political rule by the Tokugawa Shogunate became the target of mounting criticism.

A number of powerful domains developed plans to overthrow the shogunate, and Japan fell into what was effectively a state of civil war. It was also around this time that squadrons of ships from a number of Western countries appeared in the waters around Japan, demanding that Japan open its doors. Hence, the revolution that is termed the Meiji Restoration took place against a background of political confusion in the closing years of the shogunate, and in the midst of what was felt to be a crisis situation, engendered by the military threat and pressure from the Great Powers.

[A policy of civilization and enlightenment]

In the newly born era (called the Meiji era from the name of the Emperor Meiji), the reins of power in the new Meiji government were seized by relatively low-class samurai warriors of a revolutionary cast of mind from the Satsuma domain (present-day Kagoshima Prefecture) and the Choshu domain (present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture). Both these domains had taken the lead in making plans to overthrow the former shogunate government. Adopting three main slogans, "Civilization and Enlightenment," "Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Military," and "Industrialization," the new government looked for models in various Western countries, and by introducing modern social and economic systems, promoted policies aimed at throwing off outdated ideas and turning Japan into a unified, modern nation-state. Education reforms were also included within this modernization package.

[The educational legacy of the Edo era and its limitations]

Even in the Edo era, the level of education in Japan was by no means low. The shogunate government, and many of the feudal domains of the shogunate, established specialized schools focusing primarily on teaching the Chinese classics (Confucian Studies) to the children of the samurai warrior class (Shoheizaka school, fief schools). In addition to these, private "academies," teaching Chinese studies, Japanese studies, and in the closing years of the shogunate, also Dutch studies (for many years before

the fall of the shogunate, Dutch works of learning brought in through Nagasaki in Kyushu provided the only window on the Western world) and Western studies, multiplied all over Japan. The children of the common people studied reading, writing, and the practical skills needed for daily living in the *terakoya*, which were quite widespread in rural areas as well as in urban areas. But despite the existence of these various types of educational institutions, the system of education was characterized by such things as bias in the direction of emphasis on classical culture, disparities and discrimination arising from the class system, a lack of uniformity in terms of the duration of the education provided and of the learning content, by antiquated teaching methods and by insufficiency in terms of examinations, progression through grades, and acknowledgement of work studied; in short, the characteristics that one would expect to find in a modern school system were lacking. It was clear that the kind of education system that could serve as the foundation of a modern nation-state simply did not exist. Against this background, it came to be felt strongly that there was an urgent necessity for a unified national education system to be introduced under the leadership of the central government. The result of this was that immediately after the Meiji Restoration, ahead of the establishment of a central Ministry of Education, a start was made on the task of assembling information about and carrying out investigations into the school systems of several Western countries.

[The concept of the Education Ordinance]

In 1871, the Ministry of Education was established as a part of the central government. And in the following year, 1872, the first systematic education regulation was promulgated in the form of the Education Ordinance. America was the model for the school system, which consisted of three levels of schooling, elementary school, middle school and university. On the other hand, France was the model for the centralized system of educational administration and the system of school districts. Under the Education Ordinance, the plan for the establishment of schools took the following form.

The entire country was divided into 8 university districts, each of these was divided into 32 middle school districts, and each of these was further divided into 210 elementary school districts. In each district a school of the appropriate type was to be established. The result of this was a plan to establish throughout Japan 8 universities, 256 middle schools, and over 50,000 elementary schools. In the conditions of the time, this was an extremely large and ambitious educational plan. An elementary school consisted of an upper division and a lower division, each of 4 years, making 8 years in total. In principle, all children were required to attend, without regard for differences in sex, parental occupation or social status.

In some cases, new, modern schools were established in imitation of Western architectural models, but in many cases the schools used the premises of *terakoya* or private homes borrowed for the purpose. The teachers too were in many cases the *terakoya* teachers, who simply continued to teach, samurai who were left without an occupation after the Meiji Restoration, or priests from a temple or shrine or others who were able to read and write. Many of the fief schools were transformed into local middle schools. The Shohei-zaka Gakumonjo, the superior Confucianist institution established by the shogunate government, was abolished, but two other similar, Western-style educational establishments set up in the Edo era, the “Kaisei-jo” and a medical school, continued to exist after the Meiji Restoration and eventually developed into the University of Tokyo.

[Employment of foreign nationals and dispatch of students for overseas study]

In the context of actual education policies, emphasis was put on the broad diffusion of elementary schools with the aim of raising the intellectual level of the Japanese people, and on the establishment of a system of higher education with the aim of absorbing advanced academic knowledge, skills and systems from the West. In the early years of the Meiji era, the government, very eager to achieve the rapid acquisition of Western knowledge

and skills, employed many foreign specialist teachers while paying them exceptionally high salaries. In the early institutions of higher education, classes were carried out in foreign language by these foreign professors. At the same time, the government sent large numbers of capable young people to study overseas. After studying for a number of years, these young people returned to Japan and in a very short space of time replaced the foreign instructors. The government was forced to spend a very large part of the educational budget on these enterprises. In this situation, the government became dependent, for the establishment and running of elementary schools, on local government funds, taxes on the residents of school districts, and tuition fees.

[Imitation of Western schools and stagnating school attendance]

The content of elementary school teaching was modeled on that of American schools, and individual subjects were simply taken over without any change. The textbooks used were also either translations or copies of Western textbooks. This kind of education made both teachers and parents, who were used to the *terakoya* type of teaching with its emphasis on meeting the practical needs of everyday living, feel uncomfortable and aroused feelings of resistance. Also, with regard to the duration of education, in the *terakoya*, teaching had normally lasted for one or two years, but the 8 years of school attendance imposed by the Education Ordinance were far removed from the social customs of the time. There were many small-scale farmers at this time who depended on family labor, and the loss of children's participation in the labor force through schooling was a very considerable burden for them. An additional burden was imposed by the need to pay school fees. The government tried to encourage school enrollment by explaining the beneficial effects of education, but the enrollment rate did not improve, and in 1883, 10 years after the Education Ordinance was introduced, the official enrollment rate was 47%. However, the actual rate was even lower than this, and despite the provisions for sex equality in the Ordinance, the enrollment rate for girls was particularly low,

reaching less than 30% in 1883. It was a common occurrence for pupils to remain in a lower grade because they were unable to pass the examination to go on to a higher grade, and many pupils dropped out before completing the required schooling. In local areas, there were uprisings by the people against the taxes imposed to pay for school buildings and the new system of education, leading even to cases of schools being burned down.

[The establishment of Normal Schools]

As a means of modernizing the content and methods of elementary education, the government put great efforts into training and ensuring a supply of teachers. As early as 1872, the government invited Professor Marion Scott from the United States as a specialist in teacher education, and the Tokyo Normal School for pre-service training was established. All the necessary equipment and teaching materials were imported from America, and the teaching methods used in the public schools in the United States were utilized and drummed into the students. The Tokyo Normal School was also responsible for the selection of school textbooks, compilation of the new curriculum, and the preparation of handbooks for pupils and students, so its influence on elementary education in Japan was very considerable. When students began to graduate from the Tokyo Normal School, the government established Normal Schools in main cities in the 8 university districts. In addition to carrying out pre-service training, these Normal Schools also ran intensive in-service training courses lasting between 1 and 3 months on the new teaching methods for elementary school teachers transferred from *terakoya* and elsewhere. With the aim of implementing these intensive programs to cope with the insufficient numbers of trained teachers, at least 1 or 2 prefectural Normal Schools were established in each prefecture by the end of the 1870s.

[A compromise with reality]

The educational development plan formulated in the early years of the Meiji era by means of the Education Ordinance was ambitious and magnificent

in its scale, but at the same time, it was too uniform and unrealistic. Of the 8 universities that it planned to establish, by 1877, only one, the University of Tokyo, had actually been created. In 1879, the government, in an effort to come to terms with reality, abolished the Education Ordinance and promulgated the Education Order. The objectives of the new Order were to introduce a democratic education system from the United States and to meet the demands of local people. The system of school districts was abolished, and schools were to be administered by the municipalities. The school curriculum was also to be determined by local boards of education in accordance with the actual conditions of the locality concerned. The duration of schooling was also greatly shortened, bringing it into line with reality, from 8 years to “at least 16 months during the total period of schooling”, and compulsory school attendance rules were relaxed. However, under this “liberal” Education Order, enrollment rates worsened still further and criticism mounted, so that after only one year, in 1890, a revised Education Order was issued. Under the revised Order, central control was once again strengthened, and the elementary school attendance requirement was strictly set at 16 weeks or more per year for a period of 3 years.

[A clash of ideologies]

Also around the end of the 1870s, changes began to appear in the ideological context of education. Opposing the course of Westernization that had been followed since the Meiji Restoration, a movement emerged, driven primarily by the conservatives faction, seeking a change in education policies. The supporters of this movement pointed to a decline in public morals resulting from Westernization, and emphasized the need for a restoration of moral education based on traditional Confucianist ethics. In line with this trend, in 1879, the Emperor sent the Imperial Will on the Great Principles of Education to the head of the Ministry of Education. In this document, emphasis was placed on Confucianist ideas such as duty, loyalty and filial piety, and patriotism as the fundamental directions of education. Against this background, a fierce debate ensued, even

within the Meiji government, between the pragmatists in the bureaucracy who wanted to develop enlightened education policies along the lines of the Westernization espoused since the Meiji Restoration, and the conservatives in the bureaucracy, over what should be the fundamental direction of educational policy in the future.

[The Freedom and Popular Rights Movement and strengthened control over education]

On the one hand, those who were opposed to strong political control by factions drawn from the former feudal domains, along with politicians who had lost out in the power struggle within the government, developed the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement in local areas, demanding political democracy (the establishment of a National Assembly elected by the people). For its part, the government agonized over how it should respond. Among teachers, there were many who actively supported the movement, and schools were frequently used as meeting places for the movement’s supporters. With a view to responding to the democracy movement, the government began to feel a need to strengthen control over educational content as well as over the words and actions of teachers and gradually strengthened its position of seeking a compromise agreement with the advocates of a conservative, Confucianist ideology. In the revised Education Order of 1880, “Morals, Reading, Writing, Mathematics, History, Geography, etc.” were specified as subjects that had to be taught in elementary school, thus placing “morals” on the highest rank of school subjects at this level of schooling.

2. The Development and Expansion of Education

[Minister MORI’s conception of the education system]

In 1885, a cabinet system of government was introduced, replacing the system of bureaucracy that had been modeled on the old Imperial Court system. Ito Hirobumi was appointed as Japan’s first Prime

Minister. When the question of a constitution came on the political agenda, Ito looked not to Britain or France, which the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement saw as ideal democracies, but to Prussia, where conditions were seen as resembling those of Japan. From this time on, German influence became stronger in both the academic and technological fields.

As the first Minister of Education, MORI Arinori was appointed, an enlightened bureaucrat with diplomatic experience of both Britain and the United States. It was thanks to Minister MORI that the fundamental framework of an education system, which was to become the foundation of educational development in Japan, was put in place. MORI was also deeply aware of the role that education should play in the wider framework of national development. In 1886, in place of the previously existing Education Order which took the form of a regulation encompassing the whole of the education system, Mori issued 4 separate orders for different parts of the educational system, namely the Elementary School Order, the Middle School Order, the Normal School Order, and the Imperial University Order. The objective was separately specified for each of the types of educational institution designated under the Orders. The sole university up to this time, the University of Tokyo, was designated as an "Imperial University," which was in turn identified as an institution with the purpose of "giving instruction in the arts and sciences that are an indispensable requirement for the nation and carrying out research into their innermost secrets." As the institution which had a monopoly on training the technocrats and elite leaders who were to be equipped with the advanced Western knowledge and skills deemed necessary for the modernization of Japan, the university received both privileges and a considerable amount of academic freedom. Furthermore, with a view to strengthening the Imperial University, a number of specialist institutions of higher education falling under the jurisdiction of other ministries, including the law school of the Ministry of Justice, the Industrial College of the Ministry of Industry, the Tokyo

Forestry School and the Komaba Agricultural School of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, were integrated one by one into the Imperial University. The middle schools were the institutions designated to prepare students to enter the Imperial University. On the other hand, the elementary school was strongly identified as having the character of the central institution responsible for bringing up and teaching children to become loyal subjects of the Emperor. In organizational terms, the elementary school was divided into two levels, consisting of the ordinary division and the higher division, and 4 years' attendance in the Ordinary Division course was imposed as a duty on all citizens. The Elementary School Order, which imposed this duty, was therefore the first example in Japan of a clear legal requirement for compulsory education. However, depending on the actual conditions prevailing in local areas, permission could be given for a 3-year Simplified Elementary Course to be set up and for children to attend that course in place of the compulsory education requirement.

[The importance attached to Normal Schools]

Education Minister MORI also understood the importance of elementary school teachers within the context of national education, and put great emphasis on the role of the Normal Schools. His aim was to ensure that all future teachers were inculcated with a thoroughgoing nationalist ideology. The ideal qualities with which Normal School students were expected to equip themselves were expressed in the three terms, "Obedience, Trust, Dignity." Specifically, the attitude expected of them was that they should obey the orders of their superior, inspire their contemporaries with trust overflowing with affection, and strictly regulate the behavior and attitude of children. Students trained their bodies through a military-type gymnastics program, and became imbued with a sense of belonging and of group discipline through the dormitory-style living which was imposed on all students. Students were given many special privileges, including exemption from military service, and enjoyed free tuition and free meals, as well as receiving other allowances for

clothing, miscellaneous expenses, and some other items. In return, they were obliged to work as teachers for a specified period immediately after graduation. By putting together an education system in the ways described here, Education Minister MORI aimed to harmonize the twin objectives of, on the one hand, modernizing Japan and, on the other hand, realizing the spiritual unity of the people through a strengthening of national morality. In addition, by means of the Normal School Order, Higher Normal Schools were established afresh as the institution responsible for training middle school and Normal School teachers.

[The Imperial Rescript on Education and the promotion of Imperial public education]

The promotion of Imperial public education was greatly strengthened by the proclamation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. Basing its stance on ideas drawn from Confucianist principles and the Japanese classics, the Rescript set out the standards of behavior expected from the Japanese people and strongly emphasized the virtues of patriotism and loyalty to the Emperor. A copy of the Rescript and a photograph of the Imperial Highnesses, the Emperor and the Empress, were distributed to every school in Japan, and on the occasion of school ceremonies or national events, the Rescript was solemnly read aloud to all pupils and students. Moral education textbooks were compiled in accordance with the moral principles of the Rescript. For the next 50 years, right up until the end of World War II, the Imperial Rescript on Education continued to have a great influence on Japanese education and society.

[The development of industry and the structuring of the education system]

Following the Meiji Restoration, the government embarked on a path of modernizing industry by introducing advanced technology from overseas countries and establishing nationally run companies, but by the 1890s, rapid expansion and development could also be seen in private industry, centering particularly on light industries. And so Japan's first

industrial revolution came into being. In this situation, demand also expanded for technical training which would train workers up to a set level of skill. In the face of this demand, in 1893, immediately before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, the government issued the Vocational Supplementary School Regulations and in 1894, the Apprentice School Regulations, thereby aiming to provide a structure for elementary industrial education. In addition, with the aim of providing a structure at secondary education level, the government issued in 1899, in quick succession, the Vocational School Order, covering schools for industry, agriculture, commerce, mercantile marine, and practical vocational skills, and the Girls' High School Order. Through these Orders, secondary education was established as a tripartite system, consisting of middle schools, practical vocational schools, and girls' high schools. There was also a rise in demand, going hand in hand with the development of society, for human resources who had undergone specialist education of a high level but not as advanced as the level of Imperial Universities. It was to meet this demand that in 1903 the government issued the Professional College Order. Unlike the case of Imperial Universities, which required applicants for entry to have passed through middle schools and high schools, in the case of Professional Colleges, graduates from a middle school or girls' high school were deemed to have the basic qualification for entry, and could then undertake specialized training in a range of subjects, including medicine, pharmacy, law, engineering, and commerce. In this way, the Japanese higher education system acquired a dual structure consisting on the one hand of Imperial Universities, which educated the top elite for subsequent employment primarily in government service, and on the other hand, of Specialized Colleges, which provided skilled manpower with practical training for the industrial world and society generally. For a long time, there was only one Imperial University, but in 1897, a second one was established in Kyoto, and others followed, in 1907 by one in Sendai, in 1910 by one in Fukuoka, and elsewhere.

[The teaching force as a sacred profession and social status]

In 1897, accompanying the promulgation of the Normal Education Order, considerable energy and effort was put into the expansion and strengthening of the teacher training system. Normal Schools and Girls' Normal Schools were rapidly established one after the other. In addition, in an effort to try and cope with the insufficiency in teacher numbers, a special one-year pre-service training course was offered to graduates of middle schools and girls' high schools who expressed a desire to become teachers, thus opening the way for them to become elementary school teachers. The teachers licensing system was also taken forward, and teacher's licenses were granted to graduates from a teacher training establishment and to others with a different academic record who were successful in the teaching certificate examination. In this period of the initial creation of a modern school system, there were of course many unqualified teachers who did not possess a teacher's license. In 1890, the percentage of such unqualified teachers was 58%, comprising more than half the total teaching force, but in 1895, the percentage stood at 20%, in 1900 at 23%, and by 1905 it had been reduced to 16%. At this time, the dominant view vis-à-vis teachers was one which saw teaching as a "sacred profession," and teachers were required to have a noble character and high professional ethics. In general, the teaching profession was looked on with respect and gratitude by parents and the public at large. On the other hand, the status of teachers was quasi-official as employees of local municipalities, and their remuneration and working conditions were not necessarily good. It was frequently the case that teachers were faced with the agonizing dilemma of the contrast between the ethics of a sacred profession and inferior economic conditions ("living in honest poverty"), and with the fact of ambivalent social status. In 1896, the "Imperial Education Association" was established as a nationwide organization of teachers, and local education associations were also organized at prefectural and sub-prefectural levels. These teacher organizations, in addition to carrying out all kinds of educational research activities,

campaigns for improvements in working conditions and for a systematization of financial support from the national treasury.

[Extension of compulsory education]

In the 1880s, the school enrollment rate had languished, but throughout the 1890s, a steady improvement could be observed. By 1898, the school enrollment rate during the compulsory education period had reached 69%. In 1900, the 3-year Simplified Elementary Course was abolished, and compulsory education was unified at 4 years. In the same year, it was also decided that no tuition fees would be required for attendance at elementary school. Also in 1900, the system of progression by examination through grades was replaced by a system of automatic progression. Then in 1907, the duration of compulsory education was extended from 4 to 6 years. And in a wider social context, adult illiteracy is seen as having virtually disappeared by the early years of the 20th century.

[The expansion of secondary and higher education]

Stimulated by the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and World War I (1914-1918), Japanese capitalism underwent rapid development. At the same time, popular demand for education increased, and there were rising calls for expansion and reorganization of the education system. In 1917, the government set up the Special Council for Education as an advisory body under the direct jurisdiction of the Cabinet, and began the task of taking a fresh look at the problems of the education system as a whole. In accordance with the recommendations of this Council, reform measures focused primarily on the higher education sector, resulting in the promulgation of the University Order in 1918. Under this Order, approval was given for the establishment of single-subject universities and private universities in addition to the comprehensive Imperial Universities that had existed up to this time. Specifically approval was given for the establishment of the Tokyo University of Commerce as a public university, and Waseda, Keio, Meiji, Hosei, and Doshisha had their

Table 1-1 Evolution of number of the institutions of secondary and higher education: 1886-1945

year	Middle School (old-type)	Girls' High School	Vocational School	Normal School*	High School (old-type)	Professional College (old-type)	University (old-type)
1886	56	7	25	47 (1)	2	66	1
1890	55	31	23	49 (2)	7	36	1
1895	96	15	55	49 (2)	7	52	1
1900	218	52	139	54 (2)	7	52	2
1905	271	100	272	69 (3)	8	63	2
1910	311	195	481	84 (4)	8	79	3
1915	321	366	541	96 (4)	8	88	4
1920	368	514	676	98 (4)	15	101	16
1925	502	805	797	103 (4)	29	135	34
1930	557	975	976	109 (4)	32	162	46
1935	557	974	1,253	106 (4)	32	177	45
1940	600	1,066	1,479	107 (4)	32	193	47
1945	776	1,272	1,743	63 (7)	33	309	48

* () are Higher Normal Schools

Source: Data from the Ministry of Education.

status upgraded from professional colleges to universities. Professional colleges and high schools also saw an increase in numbers. At the same time, Normal Schools, which had hitherto been regarded as secondary education level institutions, gradually advanced to the level of professional colleges, in other words, grew closer to the higher education sector. Table 1-1 shows the kinds and increase in numbers of secondary and higher education institutions in the period up to the end of World War I.

In addition, the Special Council for Education also recommended that the duration of compulsory education, which by this time had reached 99%, should be extended from 6 to 8 years, but this recommendation did not reach the stage of implementation. In short, it is fair to say that a modern education system was virtually in place in Japan by around 1920.

[National subsidization for compulsory education costs and its limits]

Since the time of the Education Ordinance, the costs of compulsory elementary education had consistently been a charge on school districts, and since the introduction of an administrative system of cities, towns and villages in 1888, the costs were completely devolved onto their respective budgets. As a result of the expansion of school enrollment rates, the abolition of tuition fees for elementary

education, and the lengthening of the duration of compulsory education, local governments were faced with a considerably increased burden in terms of financial costs. The remuneration and working conditions of teachers showed a steadily worsening trend. In this situation, with a view to securing high-quality teachers as the primary objective, a petition was presented to the government asking for subsidization from national funds of part of the cost of improving the remuneration of teachers. The result of this was that one part of the demand was met by the enactment in 1900 of the “Law concerning the National Treasury’s Share of Municipal Elementary School Education Expenses.” However, the amount of the subsidy was very small, and the problem was still a very long way from being solved. 1919 saw the enactment of the “Law concerning the National Treasury’s Share of Municipal Compulsory Education Expenses.” Under this law, in the form of a special fund for the remuneration of elementary school teachers, the national treasury would disburse the sum of 10 million yen a year, and this would be distributed to municipalities in proportion to the number of teachers and children. But that said, even with this measure in force, the financial burden on cities, towns and villages in terms of compulsory education expenses was far from light, and after the economic panic of 1929, depending on the locality, there were cases of delays in the payment of

teachers' salaries and requests for donations. In 1940, during the course of World War II, a system of local education financing was introduced, and continued until the end of the war, whereby teaching expenses during compulsory education were made a charge on prefectural budgets, and half the cost would be met by a subsidy from the national treasury.

[The Progressive Education Movement of the Taisho era]

In the area of educational theory and educational methodology, the decade from 1910 and the following decade from 1920 saw the introduction into Japan of the ideas of John Dewey and other educationalists, and the influence of the global movement known as the New Education Movement was also felt here. The ideas of this movement did not permeate as far as becoming the mainstream of public-sector education, but child-centered and activity-centered education was implemented in some elementary schools attached to Normal Schools and in private elementary schools that sympathized with the new ideas, including Seijo Elementary School, Jiyu Gakuen Elementary School, Myojo Gakuen Elementary School, and Tamagawa Gakuen Elementary School. There was also a rise in popularity at this time of the children's literature movement as represented by the Free Painting Movement, which emphasized free expression by children, and the "Red Bird" magazine. These various movements were grouped together under the generic name of the "The Progressive Education Movement of the Taisho era."

[The rise of ultra-nationalism and militarism]

But with all the above said, as Japan moved into the 1930s, ultra-nationalist coloration rapidly became strongly discernible in Japanese education policies. The growth of this coloration can be seen as a reaction against the democratic trends that began to be felt in Japan as part of an international movement after the end of World War I. As a result of the worldwide recession that began in the late 1920s, Japan experienced a severe economic crisis. In this kind of environment, positions and attitudes opposed

to democratic trends very quickly gained in strength. A national policy of expansion in armaments as advocated primarily by the military, began to exert an influence on education. In 1937, with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, militarism became increasingly prominent, and following Japan's entry into World War II, militarist education was strengthened. Serving officers were attached to middle schools and schools at a higher level, and students were given military training. Nationally approved school textbooks incorporating ultra-nationalist content were produced. Control over ideas and academic content was strengthened, and one after the other, academics with liberal inclinations had pressure put on them or were driven from their posts. In 1941, elementary schools were renamed as national schools. It was decided that "national schools, in line with the Imperial nation, have the objective of carrying out elementary, general education and implementing the fundamental training of the people." In this way, it was made clear that ultra-nationalist education would be still further strengthened from the level of primary education onwards. In the final stages of the war, students were drafted to produce foodstuffs or military supplies. The immunity of students from military service was abolished, teachers were also drafted into the armed forces, and children from urban areas were evacuated into farming districts to escape from aerial bomb attacks. At the end of the war, in 1945, Japan's school system was virtually completely paralyzed.

3. Education Reforms and Their Modifications after World War II

[Defeat in war, and education reforms under the occupation]

With defeat in war in 1945, Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces. From that time until 1951, Japanese sovereignty was placed under the control of the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces (GHQ). Under this system of control, demilitarization, democratization, and the rebuilding of the country were all taken forward. In 1946, a new Constitution proclaiming pacifism and democracy

was promulgated. As one element in the democratization of Japan, education reforms were also taken in hand. In the first place, teaching in the three subjects which had encouraged militarism, namely Morals, Japanese History, and Geography was suspended, and the textbooks in these subjects were withdrawn. Also a purge was ordered of those educators with connections to militarism. In addition, with a view to examining the overall conception of postwar Japanese education reforms, GHQ requested the U.S. to dispatch an investigation group of education specialists in the form of the “United States Education Mission to Japan.” The investigating group arrived in Japan in March 1946, set to work in a very positive fashion analyzing and investigating Japanese education in cooperation with the committee of educationalists that the Japanese side had assembled, and after about one month, issued a report containing a series of recommendations. With democratization and equality of opportunity as the main pillars, the large-scale postwar reform of the Japanese education system was essentially carried out on the basis of the recommendations of this report. In August 1946, the Education Reform Council, composed mainly of the educationalists who had cooperated with the U.S. Education Mission, was formed as a special committee responsible for education reform. Thereafter, postwar education reforms were carried out in accordance with the decisions made by this committee.

[The main points of education reform]

What came to form the core of education reforms was the Fundamental Law of Education, enacted in 1947. This law clearly set out the fundamental principles of postwar education in Japan, and effectively replaced the prewar Imperial Rescript on Education. Following the enactment of the Fundamental Law of Education, a number of educational laws and regulations determining the structure and management of the education system were passed, including the School Education Law in 1947, the Board of Education Law in 1948, the Social Education Law in 1949, and the Private

School Law in 1949. The basic framework of the new education system could be characterized under the following five headings:

- (1) a shift from the prewar, dual school system to a single track system, known as the 6-3-3-4 system.
- (2) the extension of compulsory education to 9 years, including elementary school and middle school.
- (3) the adoption in principle of co-education.
- (4) the establishment of boards of education at prefectural and municipal level.
- (5) the abolition of Normal Schools and the establishment of a university-based pre-service training system.

In the context of an impoverished country following the defeat in war, it was no easy task to implement reforms of this kind. In particular, it was exceedingly difficult to construct campuses for the new type of lower secondary schools and to secure teachers, consequently there were those who argued for a postponement of the introduction of the new 6-3 system, but in the light of public support for the new system, it was decided to press ahead with full implementation.

[Reform of the teacher training system]

The teacher training system was also reformed to a considerable extent. The prewar Normal Schools were isolated, closed establishments. On the one hand, teachers were said to show professional enthusiasm, but on the other hand, there was criticism, both in the form of external criticism and self-criticism from within the schools, that the schools produced the “normal school type” with narrow vision and a sense of subservience to authority. In 1949, all Normal Schools were abolished, and in their place 45 faculties of education were newly established within national universities. Furthermore, after 1947, it became possible for pre-service training courses to be offered in other faculties than the Faculty of Education in all national and private universities, and for students to acquire a teacher’s license in specified subjects. Pre-service training carried out in accordance with this type of

formula became known as an “open system.”

[The democratization of educational administration]

In the area of educational administration, before the war, authority had been concentrated in the Ministry of Education, and there was a feeling that education had been excessively dominated by central control. As a result of reflection on this state of affairs, it was decided to abolish central government control of the contents and methods of education and instead to formulate new Courses of Study. These Courses of Study constituted guidelines for the formulation of the curriculum and production of textbooks. At this time, the term ‘draft’ was added to ‘Courses of Study’. Educational administrators and teachers were able to use these as criteria, and make decisions on educational content and methods as well as select textbooks, in accordance with the needs of the children in a particular locality. In addition, from the perspective of the democratization of educational policy decision-making and the advance of regional devolution of authority, American-style local boards of education were introduced as the institutions responsible for educational administration in local areas. The boards of education were made up of a number of members publicly elected by citizens, and a superintendent who was responsible for execution of the decisions made. Boards of education were given authority extending over the establishment and closure as well as the administration and management of schools and other educational institutions, repair and preservation of school buildings, educational content and ways of dealing with it, the selection of textbooks, the appointment of educators, and the preparation and execution of educational budgets. Prefectural boards of education were additionally given authority over the issuing of teachers’ licenses, the authorization of textbooks used in all schools in the prefecture, and the provision of technical and specialist help and guidance given to municipal and local boards of education.

[Abolition of the system of nationally approved textbooks]

The textbook system was also revised. Since 1903, at elementary education level, a system of national editing of textbooks had been in force. In principle, only one kind of nationally approved textbook existed for each subject. This system of national editing of textbooks was abolished, and in its place, a new system of textbook authorization was launched. Under this new system, multiple copies of textbooks written by academics and others were examined by central government (according to the initial conception, this authority was also vested in prefectural boards of education), which decided whether or not a textbook was suitable for use, after which local boards of education made a selection, from the list of authorized textbooks approved for use, of the textbooks to be adopted in the schools over which they had jurisdiction. Central government formulated and made public the criteria for textbook authorization.

[The formation of the Japan Teachers Union]

Labor union activity by teachers, which had been the target of very strong pressure from the government in prewar years, was made legal and was encouraged. In 1947, the Japan Teachers Union (J TU) was formed. Within a very short space of time, J TU grew to be a giant organization with over 500,000 members, and put a great deal of effort into working for an improvement, in the difficult financial conditions after the war, in teachers’ living standards, and working to promote the democratization of education, focusing particularly on the complete implementation of the 6-3 system (6-year elementary, 3-year lower secondary school).

[Review of postwar reforms]

In the postwar Japanese education world, influences were felt from the U.S. Education Mission to Japan and from a resurgence in popularity of the New Education Movement, which had flourished for a time during the 1920s. Child-centered teaching methods, community school planning, which aimed to incorporate the realities and problems of local

areas into study programs, the Core Curriculum Movement, centered on learning aimed at solving everyday living problems, developed along with other similar movements.

However, with the advent of the 1950s, changes became discernible in the socio-political environment. As East-West antagonism and Cold War structures became clearer, the basic direction of occupation policy gradually changed from an emphasis on democratization and increased freedom to clearly articulated anti-communism. The “red purge” began, with teachers who were sympathetic to Socialism or Communism being driven out of the teaching profession. Following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, and the end of the GHQ occupation marked by the signing of the San Francisco Treaty of Peace with Japan, a move emerged, driven primarily by Japan’s conservative factions, calling for a re-evaluation of postwar education reforms in the context of a restoration of Japan’s independence. Minister of Education Amano Teiyu issued a comment recommending that on the occasion of school events and special celebratory days, the “national anthem” (kimigayo), should be sung in unison and the national flag hoisted; he also advocated the restoration of “Morals” as a school subject and issued a “Compendium of Moral Guidance for the People of Japan.” A fierce debate ensued over pronouncements and documents of this kind.

[Teacher labor union activities]

For its part, the Japan Teachers Union saw this re-evaluation of occupation education policies as a “reverse course” aiming at the restoration of conservatism, and developed activities in opposition to it. The slogan, “Never send our students to the battlefield again,” was adopted in 1951, and for a long time became the central feature of JTU activities. For a long period, while maintaining its opposition to the government and the Ministry of Education over a range of educational issues, JTU developed an aggressive campaign. On its side, the Ministry of Education also strengthened its confrontational stance toward teacher union

activities, using the slogan “Safeguarding political neutrality in education.” In the 1950s and 1960s, the opposition between the two sides reached its peak, with confrontation over the implementation of work performance rating for teachers and implementation of nationwide achievement tests. Alongside the radical student movement, “Zengakuren” (The National Federation of Students’ Self-Government Associations), the JTU became a focus of attention from foreign researchers as the symbol of an aggressive teachers’ movement in Japan.

At the same time as the above, the JTU also began to organize, on its own initiative, large-scale educational research activities. Spontaneous research and training activities were organized by teachers in successively larger units, first in individual schools, then at municipal and local level, and then at prefectural level, and once a year, teachers from all over the country came together at an “Educational Research Gathering.” This kind of spontaneous research activity, organized by teachers, in particular the strengthening of “school-based in-service teacher training” as an everyday occurrence, played a major role in maintaining and raising the quality of teachers’ educational activities in Japan.

[Re-evaluating the Board of Education system]

In 1956, the Board of Education Law, which had been enacted after the war, was annulled, and in its place, the “Law concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration” was enacted. Under the new law, the public election of board of education members, which had been a major pillar of the previous Board of Education Law, was abolished, and a system was introduced whereby members were to be appointed by the head of the administrative organization concerned. At the same time, the superior-subordinate relationship linking the Ministry of Education, prefectural boards of education and municipal boards of education was strengthened. The system of having boards of education remained, but the independence and authority of local boards of education was somewhat curtailed and the appearance of central control was

once again strengthened.

[Toward a restoration of the National Curriculum]

In 1958, after a 7-year interval, following the 1951 revision carried out during the Occupation, the Ministry of Education issued a revised version of the official "Courses of Study," but whereas the previous "Courses of Study" had the character of a draft and were treated as a reference document, the revised Courses of Study were formally designated as an official notice, and acquired the status of "national criteria," and their legally binding force was strengthened. In the revised version, a special time slot for "Moral Education" was inserted into the curriculum. In addition, other characteristics of the revised version were the way in which, in response to criticism that the academic ability of children had fallen as a result of the "new education" introduced from America after the war, everyday life oriented study units in, for example, science and mathematics, were abolished and a more systematic form of study was incorporated into the curriculum.

[The enactment of laws concerned with improving the school and learning environment]

From the 1950s on, a series of laws were enacted with the aim of improving and structuring the school and learning environment. In 1954, the "Law for the Promotion of Education in Isolated Areas" was enacted with the aim of improving educational conditions for children living in, for example, mountainous areas or on remote islands. Under this law, for example, special financial provisions were made available for the purpose of improving and upgrading facilities and equipment in schools in these areas, and special allowances were paid to teachers who worked in them. Also in 1954, against the background of a recognition that the postwar insufficiency of food had improved and a need to set out criteria for the improvement of school lunches, the School Lunch Law was enacted. The school lunch program was expanded to lower secondary schools in 1956. 1956 also saw the enactment of the

"Law concerning the National Treasury's Share for the Encouragement of School Attendance of Pupils having Financial Difficulties." As the name of the law shows, it was aimed at facilitating financial assistance from the national budget for children who found it difficult to attend school because of financial problems. And in 1968, the "School Health Law" was enacted with the objective of making provisions for maintaining children's health, administering a hygienic environment in schools, promoting health education, and the like.

[Promotion of industrial education and science education]

Also enacted were two laws which aimed to promote areas of education that had a particularly deep connection with Japan's postwar reconstruction and the revitalization of Japanese industry, namely the "Industrial Education Promotion Law" in 1951, and the "Science Education Promotion Law" in 1953. Government support for practical or vocational education had a long history, dating back to the "Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Vocational Education Expenses" enacted in 1894, but it was decided to annul this law in the course of postwar financial reforms. And as far as the implementation of vocational education was concerned, some was carried out in lower secondary schools (the former middle schools), but the larger part was transferred to the newly created upper secondary schools. However, due to the postwar confusion, there were delays in providing the facilities and equipment that were needed for the practical work and experiments that formed part of vocational education. The Industrial Education Promotion Law mentioned above had the aim of promoting and encouraging industrial education and, with this aim in mind, the law specified that central and local advisory councils should be set up, that the government should establish criteria relating to the facilities and equipment needed for industrial education, and that where equipment needed to be improved in order to satisfy the criteria, in public or private schools, the national budget would meet all or part of the costs. The Science Education Promotion

Law aimed to promote science education, which it saw as the foundation of the development of science and technology in Japan, in elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. In particular, the law recognized the importance of experiments and practical work in science education, and set out criteria concerning the teaching materials and equipment that should be provided for experiments and practical work in every school. It was further specified that schools which did not meet the criteria could apply for a subsidy, when extending or upgrading equipment, amounting to half the cost involved.

[Free distribution of textbooks at the compulsory education level]

Regarding the provision of textbooks, the principle was that these were charged for and that the cost was borne by parents or guardians. Exceptionally, textbooks could be provided free of charge, primarily in the case of those pupils who had difficulty in attending school for economic reasons. However, strong pressure mounted for the implementation, as government policy, of the free distribution of textbooks, in accordance with the principles of free compulsory education as stipulated in the Constitution of Japan. The result was the enactment in 1963 of the “Law concerning the Free Provision of Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools,” which introduced the system of free distribution of textbooks. The system of free distribution was expanded year by year until the point was reached in 1969, when textbooks for the entire period of compulsory education were distributed free of charge.

4. The Expansion of Education and the Emergence of New Problems

[Expansion of popular demand for education]

There were of course many cases, as described, where turbulence and ideological confrontation surrounded Japanese education, but the education system that constituted the foundation of postwar education reforms underwent rapid quantitative

expansion from the 1950s on. The newly established lower secondary schools experienced agonizing financial birth pangs in their early stages, but by about 1950, the extension of compulsory education to 9 years was virtually complete. On the economic front, the Japanese economy received a devastating blow as a result of World War II, but with special procurements arising from the Korean War (1950-53) as a foothold, it too moved forward along the road of postwar reconstruction. Industrial production quickened the pace of reconstruction. By the mid-1950s, prewar productivity was already being exceeded. And on moving into the 1960s, a further surge forward was achieved with the period of high economic growth. Characteristics of this period were stability of household incomes, an expansion of the urban middle class, an increase in the number of employed workers due to a decrease in the primary industry population, and a widening of the importance attached to academic achievement. As a result of these factors, there was an increase in the number of people who wanted to go on to a still higher level education than what they had already achieved. In the first place, this affected the latter part of secondary education, and subsequently, the higher education level. 1962 saw the start of the movement “Upper Secondary School is Everyone’s Entitlement,” an educational movement of parents demanding that every child who wished should be given the opportunity to go on to upper secondary school.

[Educational demands from the economic world]

On the other hand, fuelled by the postwar economic recovery, and with the prospect of still faster economic growth in the future, demands on education were also made by industry and the economic world. In 1956, the Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations issued a paper entitled “A view on technical education to meet the demands of the new age,” and in it called for the planned education of technical specialists, the promotion of science and vocational education, and the expansion of science and technology-oriented university

education.

In 1962, the Ministry of Education issued a White Paper entitled "Education and Japanese Growth – the Development of Education and the Development of the Economy." As well as introducing the theory of the then emerging discipline of educational economics, the White Paper emphasized the contribution that education had made to Japan's economic development, comparing the history of Japan with that of a number of overseas countries. Concepts such as the returns on investment in education and "education development plans" were frequently used as keywords at this time.

And in the following year, the Economic Council, a government body, issued a report entitled, "Issues and Measures concerned with Human Ability Development in the context of Economic Growth." Focusing on the future development of the heavy chemicals industry, the report called for the planned training of a labor force, divided into layers consisting of a small number, about 3% to 5%, of highly talented people to administer and manage the industry, a large number of middle-level technical specialists, and a very large number of technicians to support them. To meet these requirements, the Council called for the diversification of Japanese education and training system. A number of these educational demands from the economic world were met in the form of incorporation into education policies such as the diversification of upper secondary education and an expansion of vocational and technical upper secondary schools, the creation of colleges of technology as a new type of institution, and the creation of new universities and university faculties in areas of science and technology.

[Educational reforms lag behind educational demands]

However, even given all the above, looking at the entire picture of Japan's educational system, it would not necessarily be easy to maintain that planned, rational development took place on the basis of the pattern of educational development planning as outlined above. The people's demands for increasingly higher levels of education did not

necessarily match the educational demands of the economic world, and at times took the form of pressure aimed at emasculating government education policies. For example, around this time, in Toyama Prefecture and some other areas, diversification of upper secondary education was implemented under what was known as the "3-7 formula," i.e. a division of upper secondary schools in terms of 30% offering general courses and 70% industrial courses. However, the plan evoked very strong criticism from both parents and students.

Moreover, both at the upper secondary stage of secondary education and at higher education level, private institutions were acquiring a larger share of student enrollment, and although criticisms were made to the effect that they were lowering standards of admission or engaging in mass-production education, they were happy to absorb public demand for more education at an advanced level, given their precarious financial position and lack of financial support from the government. From the government's point of view, there were definite limits to any control that they were able to exercise over private institutions of this kind. A further factor, within the context of postwar higher education reforms, was the existence of many professional colleges which were having difficulty in raising their status and becoming universities. As a means of helping the struggling institutions, they were allowed, as a temporary measure, to become "Junior Colleges" offering courses of 2 to 3 years. As a means of satisfying the demand for higher education, particularly from girls, these institutions became very popular. The government's intention was to transform these new "Junior Colleges" into "special subject universities" offering courses lasting 5 or 6 years unifying them as institutions operating in the latter part of secondary education, with the objectives, quite separate from universities of providing vocational training or training in the abilities needed for everyday living. However, as a result of the opposition from those connected with "Junior Colleges," this plan was never realized. Instead, the plan for "Special Universities" was slightly modified, and was realized in part by the

Table 1-2 Shifts in the number of pupils and students at each level of education in the period 1948-1990
(Unit: thousand)

Year	Kinder- garten	Elementary school	Lower secondary school	Upper secondary school	Junior college	University
1948	199	10,775	4,793	1,203	-	12
1950	224	11,191	5,333	1,935	15	255
1960	742	12,591	5,900	3,239	83	626
1970	1,675	9,493	4,717	4,232	263	1,407
1980	2,407	11,827	5,094	4,622	371	1,835
1990	2,008	9,373	5,369	5,623	479	2,133

Source: Data from the Ministry of Education, Japan

Table 1-3 Increase in the kinds and numbers of higher education institutions: 1955-1990

Year	Universities (private universities within this figure)	Junior colleges (private colleges within this figure)	Colleges of Technology
1955	228 (122)	264 (204)	-
1960	245 (140)	280 (214)	19 (2)
1970	383 (274)	479 (414)	60 (4)
1980	446 (319)	517 (434)	62 (4)
1990	507 (498)	593 (498)	62 (4)

Source: Data from the Ministry of Education, Japan

establishment in 1962 of Colleges of Technology, which offered technical education focusing particularly on engineering and mercantile marine studies. In 1964, under a revision of the law, it was agreed that the system of junior colleges should be made permanent. Looking at the development of Japanese education in the 1960s and 1970s, it is surely arguable that far from seeing it as something that took shape as a result of government planning and control, one very strong facet of it is the way in which, in the face of the tremendous build-up in pressure in the form of popular demand for increasingly high levels of education, government education policies took the form of lagging behind demand and acknowledging events as a fait accompli.

[The rapid expansion of education]

Table 1-2 gives an overview of the shifts in the quantitative expansion of the education system in the postwar period.

School enrollment during the compulsory education period of 9 years including elementary and lower secondary school had reached 99.2% by 1950. The advancement rate to the newly established upper secondary schools stood at 42.5% in 1950, rising to

57.7% in 1960, but during the 1960s, it rose very sharply, reaching 82.1% in 1970, and rising again to 94.1% in 1980. The number of children experiencing between 1 and 2 years of pre-school education before entering school also showed an increase. The kindergarten enrollment was a mere 8.9% in 1950, but it rose swiftly to 28.7% in 1960, 53.8% in 1970, and 64.4% in 1980. In terms of facilities for pre-school children, in addition to kindergartens, there were also day nurseries falling under the jurisdiction of the then Ministry of Health and Welfare (now Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), and if statistics for children attending both types of institutions are combined, it is fair to say that a system enabling the vast majority of children aged 4 to 5 in Japan to obtain some form of preschool education was virtually completed by 1990.

At the top of the education scale, in higher education too, a noticeable expansion can be seen. Table 1-3 shows the changes in the number of higher education institutions established between 1955 and 1990.

In particular, the increase in higher education institutions during the 1960s was very striking. During these 10 years alone, 138 4-year universities and 199 junior colleges were newly established. In

this same decade, the number of newly established colleges of technology in 1962 also almost completed the number of this type of institution. In the 1970s, the speed of increase of junior colleges and colleges of technology slackened, but the increasing trend continued in the case of universities, and more than 60 universities were newly established during each of the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s. The percentage of students going on from upper secondary school to junior colleges and universities also increased. In 1954, the percentage going on to higher education was a mere 10.1% of the age cohort (15.3% of boys, 4.6% of girls). By 1960, the figure had reached 10.3%, having hardly changed at all and showing that entry to higher education was still tinged with a select elitism. But by 1970, the figure had reached 23.6% (29.9% of boys and 17.7% of girls). This was the age when people talked of the mass popularization of higher education. By 1980, the figure had risen still further, to reach 37.4% (41.3% of boys and 33.7% of girls). In the same way as in the U.S., the universalization of higher education was seen as having become a reality.

[The launch of the system of subsidies for private educational institutions]

In the Private School Law enacted in 1949, a stipulation allowed for the possibility of necessary public financial assistance to be given to private schools, but in fact for a long period no subsidy was ever made. However, with the advent of the 1960s, the large quantitative expansion of private institutions particularly at the pre-school education level and the higher education level combined with a number of factors to bring about a rise in demands for a system of government aid to private education. Specifically, these included a realization of the public service role being performed by the private sector and a realization of the need both to safeguard healthy management of private educational institutions and to reduce the financial burden of educational costs falling on parents. With a view to responding to these demands, the government launched in 1970 a system of financial aid to private higher education institutions. 1975 saw the enactment

of the Private School Promotion Subsidy Law, containing a provision for a subsidy toward running expenses for private universities and a formula for a subsidy from prefectural governments to private schools at upper secondary level and below. Specifically, under the law, central government was able to pay a subsidy of up to half the cost of running expenses deemed necessary for the maintenance and upgrading of educational and research expenses of private institutions of higher education. Taking the number of staff and the number of students as criteria, the subsidy was calculated on a sliding scale in accordance with the actual status of education and research arrangements including the administration of student capacity, the strength of the teaching staff structure, and so on. In 1975, the year in which the measure was enacted, the state subsidy amounted to 20% of running costs. In 1980, this increased to a maximum of around 30%, but subsequently decreased, and in the 1990s, settled down at a plateau of about 12% to 13%.

[Japanese growth and the role of education]

The kind of rapid quantitative expansion described above did not necessarily form a precise match with the demands of the economic world or with government plans and expectations, but taking a broad view, there can be no doubt that it did constitute the driving force for economic, social and cultural development in Japan. Looked at as a whole, Japanese education was able to provide a large number of people who possessed the qualities wanted by the industrial world and Japanese society, specifically people who possessed the basic knowledge and skills to respond to technical change, who were disciplined and diligent, who had staying power, and who had the cooperative skills needed to work in a group situation.

[Good results in international educational evaluations]

Japan's educational results were also affirmed by international comparative studies on educational achievement levels. Specifically, Japan participated in the first international mathematics educational

investigation implemented over the three years 1964 to 1967 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Among the 12 countries that participated, including European countries, the U.S. and Israel, Japan was placed in the top rank, alongside Israel for the excellent performance of 13-year old children in Mathematics. Furthermore, in a later survey (1970-73) on science education, Japan ranked first among 19 countries for achievements in science by 5th grade elementary school children and 3rd grade lower secondary school children.

[The emergence of educational problems]

But on the other hand, Japanese education did face a number of problems. Among the problems pointed out were excessive uniformity and strengthened administration leading to an excessive degree of control over children's behavior. In addition, the intensification of competition for entry to the best high schools or top-class universities inflicted psychological stress on both children and parents. This intensive examination competition was often referred to in the media as "examination hell." The report of an OECD education mission to Japan in 1970 referred to the "distortion" that the severe examination competition had brought about in elementary and secondary education. One sentence in the report saying that "a student's performance in one crucial examination at about the age of 18 is likely to determine the rest of his life" evoked a very strong reaction.

Criticisms were made that a compulsion to rote memorization and educational force-feeding was robbing children of the spirit of inquiry and of creative ability. Attention was drawn to the increase in the number of children who were unable to keep up with their classes and became dropouts, and a special term "Ochikobore" (literally, "children who fell by the way") was coined to describe them. To supplement the studies they carried out in school, many children commuted to "juku," private educational establishments that offered supplementary lessons during the evenings and/or weekends. In addition to these problems, the growing

seriousness of other problems was frequently alluded to in the media, including in-school violence, juvenile delinquency, juvenile suicides, a deepening dependence on sniffing paint thinner and other drugs, and so on.

On the other hand, there was a general impression that once students had cleared the entrance examination hurdle to get into university, Japanese higher education institutions did not demand strict study from their students and that within a person's whole life, the time spent at university was the time when it was easiest to relax and enjoy life. No particularly great effort was required to enable a student to move up a year, and students could expend their energies on club activities, recreation and part-time work. The number of students who dropped out of courses was extremely small, and virtually everyone graduated. Universities were accused of turning into what were called "leisure lands," in other words, places for people to enjoy a life of leisure. The mediocre quality of higher education, in complete contrast to the high level of elementary and secondary education, became a major problem issue. A major part of the OECD report was also concerned with an analysis of the current state of Japanese higher education and suggestions for reform.

5. "The Third Educational Reform" and its Setbacks and Disappointments

[The Central Council for Education and the Third Educational Reform]

With Japan's entry into the 1970s, voices were increasingly heard advocating the need to take a fresh look at the whole of Japan's education system in the light of the turbulent economic and social change and the rapid expansion of education experienced in the 1960s. In 1971, the Central Council for Education, an advisory body to the Minister of Education, submitted a report consisting of "a fundamental policy for the comprehensive expansion of Japan's education system." Calling as it did for comprehensive educational reforms aimed at restructuring all levels of education from kindergarten through university, it was seen at the

Box 1-1 The Report of the Central Council for Education “Basic Measures for the Quantitative Expansion of School Education”

The main points of the report are as follows:

Firstly, the basic concepts for the reform of elementary and secondary education are detailed under the following 10 headings:

- Developing a school system adapted to the different stages of human growth (pilot projects aimed at integrating 4 to 5 year old children with the early stages of elementary education in one institution);
- Reforming the curricula in accordance with the characteristics of each school level;
- Improvement of guidance given to students regarding appropriate selection from a diversity of courses;
- Improving educational techniques and methods in line with students' individual abilities (small group instruction, individual study opportunities, creating a flexible system enabling simultaneous guidance to be given to students of different grades, implementing a system allowing students to skip a grade);
- Maintaining and improving the standard of public education and equality of educational opportunity;
- The positive expansion and development of kindergarten education;
- Positive expansion and improvement of special education;
- Improvement of the management structure within schools and the administrative structure of education (establishing an administrative structure within schools in which the duties of the vice principal and teachers in charge of different activities are clearly divided and specified, taking steps to create a system of unified local administration in charge of public and private schools);
- Policies aimed at the training and recruitment of teachers and the improvement of their status (the introduction of special training for newly appointed teachers, licensing talented individuals from outside schools to teach, establishing graduate schools and institutions for advanced educational research and training, improving teachers' salaries;
- The promotion of research aimed at educational reform.

Secondly, the concepts for the reform of higher education are shown under the following 13 headings:

- The diversification of higher education (classification of higher education institutions into 5 categories in line with their objectives and their characteristics);
- Improving the curriculum (integration of general education and specialized education);
- Improving teaching methods;
- The necessity of making higher education open to the general public and of establishing a system of certification (establishment of the University of the Air, etc);
- The organizational separation of teaching and research;
- Status of “research centers”;
- Size of institutions of higher education and rationalization of administrative and managerial organization (expansion of the authority of the president and vice-president);
- Improving the employment of teachers;
- Establishment procedures for national and public universities (consideration of a new administrative status for universities);
- Improving governmental financing of higher education, the system of costs to be borne by the beneficiaries and the scholarships system
- A national plan for the co-ordination of higher educational improvements
- Improving students' environment
- Improving the procedures for the selection of students (utilization of school records, development of a common test, use of essays and/or interviews).

time as ranking alongside the two previous reforms, the first educational reform at the beginning of the Meiji era, and the second reform after World War II, and in this spirit, called for “the third major educational reform.”

[Resistance and setbacks]

The report engendered a fierce debate, both among those who approved of it and those who opposed it. In particular, the Japan Teachers' Union adopted a clear oppositional stance, claiming that the report put forward reform proposals without making a critical examination of the postwar reforms and subsequent changes, that it made no mention of the responsibility of the educational administration for having brought about the current state of affairs, that it envisaged a restructuring of the entire educational system on the basis of perceived ability and elitism, and that it aimed to strengthen the administrative structure within schools. As a measure to show its resistance to the Central Council for Education, the JTU, with the cooperation of a number of scholars and others, set up a “Committee to Examine the Education System,” and issued its own independent reform proposals. Criticisms of inadequate preparation and feelings of unease were also voiced by organizations such as the Association of School Principals over the proposal for a pilot scheme on a 4-4-6 basis, integrating kindergartens, elementary schools and lower secondary schools. And with regard to the proposals in the area of higher education, opposition was expressed by large numbers of people connected with higher education. The result was that of the reform proposals made by the Central Council for Education in 1971, with the exception of one part of the proposals, the rest were shelved. The reasons for this were not only to be found in the deep-rooted opposition of the JTU and the higher education world. A major cause must also be located in the atmosphere of economic retrenchment and budgetary cutbacks following the “oil shock” of 1973; it would have been extremely difficult at this time to implement the financial measures necessary for large-scale education reforms.

[A law to secure teaching personnel]

Among the relatively few proposals in the report of the Central Council for Education that were implemented, mention should be made in particular of those relating to the teaching profession. The three specific measures in this connection are the enactment of a law to secure teaching personnel, the systematization within a regulatory framework of the posts of deputy principal and teachers charged with various administrative duties, and the new concept of the establishment of education universities. 1974 saw the enactment of the law concerning educational personnel or, to give it its rather long, formal title, the “The Law Concerning Special Measures for Securing of Capable Educational Personnel in Compulsory Education Schools for the Maintenance and Enhancement of School Education Standards.” This law was based on a recommendation in the report by the Central Council for Education on the need “to change and renew the system of teachers’ salaries so as to ensure that the salary a teacher receives is sufficient to encourage outstandingly capable personnel to wish to enter the teaching profession of their own accord and to be ready to respond to the responsibility of a post that demands a high level of professional specialization and administrative skill.” The intention was to recruit people of outstanding talent into the teaching profession in opposition to the tendency for such capable people to concentrate in private companies in the context of the lively activity that the labor market had displayed during the period of high economic growth. Following the enactment of the law, during the period 1974-78, the salary of teachers in compulsory education schools was revised three times, so that at the end of this process it had risen by 30% and was higher than the salary paid to general civil servants. There is no doubt that after these reform measures were implemented, the traditional image of a teacher’s job as low paid, which went hand in hand with the pessimistic view held by many would-be entrants to the profession that “if I can’t do anything else, I suppose I can become a teacher” was completely dispelled. Following the measures, the competition in the examination organized by

prefectural boards of education for appointment as a teacher rose sharply, and in economic terms too, the teaching profession became a very popular option among young people.

[Establishment of a structured system for administering and managing schools]

Until this time, within a school, including the vice principal with the job of assisting the principal, various teachers had administrative and supervisory responsibilities, such as the teacher in charge of classes in a particular grade, the teacher in charge of student guidance, and so on), but in legal terms, nothing was clearly specified regarding their status, the content of their professional duties, or their working conditions. After the question of formalizing the administrative structures within schools was raised in the report by the Central Council for Education, the Ministry of Education immediately set about the task of systematizing and clarifying the nature of these posts in the context of educational law. In addition, a system was introduced whereby special allowances were paid to teachers with administrative and supervisory responsibilities. In response to this move, the Japan Teachers' Union developed an opposition movement, arguing that strengthening the administrative system would damage democratic school management and the creation of middle-level managerial posts would change the school staff structure into a hierarchical structure. They implemented resistance by returning the allowances, but despite their opposition, the system gradually became a fixture in Japanese schools.

[The establishment of new graduate universities of education]

The new conception of universities of education denotes universities of education centered on graduate-level study and research established with the objective of providing serving teachers with an opportunity of undertaking 2 years of advanced research and study. In 1978, Hyogo University of Education and Joetsu University of Education were established, followed in 1981 by Naruto University

of Education. The student intake for one year was set at the level of 300 persons, and the majority of students entered the student body while continuing to have their teaching status guaranteed and their salary paid by the prefectural board of education that employed them. The degree of Master of Education was awarded upon graduation. Moreover, stimulated by the creation of these new universities, the establishment of Master's courses in education became more widespread in the faculties of education of national universities, providing additional opportunities for continuing education to serving teachers.

6. The Education Reform Debate in the National Council on Education Reform

[Prime Minister Nakasone's eagerness for education reform]

The "Third Education Reform," proposed by the Central Council for Education during the 1970s and effectively shelved, was brought out again when Japan moved into the 1980s, specifically, following the formation of the Nakasone Cabinet at the end of 1982. In addition to his designation of administrative reform as one of the main issues to be tackled by his administration, Prime Minister Nakasone also showed great eagerness to bring about education reform. Taking as a model the Second Provisional Administrative Reform Commission, which had been set up within the Cabinet with the aim of promoting administrative reform, Nakasone announced the establishment of an Educational Reform Commission. In 1984, as an advisory body under the direct jurisdiction of the Prime Minister, the National Council on Education Reform (NCER) was launched. At this time, to an unusual extent, there was frequent reporting in the media of educational problem issues or what was called "the dilapidation of education," for example, the numbers of children absenting themselves from school because they "disliked school," or in-school violence, bullying among pupils, corporal punishment, and so on. Against this background, great interest was shown by the mass communications media in the launching of the

NCER. It remained in existence for 3 years and issued a total of 4 reports.

[Appreciation of the real state of education and issues for examination]

The first report, issued in 1986, characterized the current state of Japanese education in the following ways:

Japanese education has developed into the driving force of Japanese society. In a comparison with numbers of foreign countries, the level of elementary and secondary education in Japan is highly evaluated.

On the other hand, there is the problem of the delay in Japan's response to internationalization, and abuses have arisen as a result of uniformity and rigidity in the system and its management. The dilapidation of education as seen in such phenomena as excessive examination competition, bullying, juvenile delinquency and so on, is something to be very much regretted, and its roots are intertwined with the state of schools, families and society.

In the background and among the major causes of this situation are the materialism and absence of emotional contact brought by our scientific and technological society, the diminution of direct contact with nature, the insufficiency of respect for life felt from the heart, and so on.

Since the Meiji Restoration, one of the aims of Japan has been to catch up with the West, and in the educational field too, efficiency has been emphasized in the name of implementing a speedy introduction of the science and technology, and the systems of advanced industrialized countries, but the result has been uniformity. Education in Japan is lagging behind changes in the times and social demands.

Against the above background, the Council lists the following 8 points as the basic direction for education reform:

- the principle of putting emphasis on individuality;
- putting emphasis on fundamentals;
- the cultivation of creativity, the ability to think, and the power of expression;
- the expansion of opportunities for choices;

- humanization of the educational environment;
- shift to a lifelong education system;
- coping with internationalization;
- coping with the information society.

[The white heat of the reform debate]

As an advisory body directly attached to the cabinet, the National Council on Education Reform aroused great expectations and bore a heavy responsibility. And in the Council's early stages, stimulating and splendid educational reform debates developed on the basis of key terms such as liberalization and greater respect for individuality. But soon the debate became more scattered and abstract, and the Council went through a process where conflicting opinions among Council members came to the surface, and it became extremely difficult to bring together and summarize concrete proposals. This process was reflected in the fact that the second and third reports were massive volumes containing many tens of thousands of words, but were evaluated as being "long on educational commentary, but short on specific proposals."

[The final report]

In August 1987, the fourth and final report was published, summarizing the content that had filled the three previous bulky reports. Fundamental perspectives on educational reform are presented in the form of three principles:

- the principle of emphasis on individuality;
- the move to a system of lifelong learning;
- the response to changes such as internationalization and informatization.

In addition, "specific reform measures" are listed in the form of proposals grouped into 6 fields as shown in Table 1-4.

There is no doubt that this report by the National Council on Educational Reform was systematic and comprehensive. With regard to educational administration and financing, a lot of attention focused on calls for the promotion of devolution and for new division of responsibilities between public and private sectors as well as for the establishment of a system of cooperation; on the positive

Table 1-4 “Specific reform measures” presented in the final report of the National Council on Education Reform

<p>Structuring of a lifelong learning system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The correction of abuses in a society dominated by a quest for academic credentials and the introduction of a multi-dimensional system of evaluation (correction of abuses in a society dominated by a quest for academic credentials; introduction of a multi-dimensional system of evaluation; reform of the system of employment used by companies and by government offices). • Activating and linking the various functions of families, schools, and communities (restoration of the educational capability of families; the role of school education in the promotion of lifelong learning; activation of the various learning functions possessed by society). • Encouragement of sport (encouragement of sport as a lifelong activity; upgrading of competitive sports; promotion of sports medicine and sports science and establishing a framework of sports fundamentals). • Establishing a basic framework for lifelong learning (creation of communities with the will to promote lifelong learning; creation of “intelligent” educational, research, cultural and sporting facilities).
<p>Reform and the diversification of higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving higher education a greater emphasis on individualization and high-level sophistication (making university education richer and more individually oriented; diversifying and linking higher education institutions; achieving the rapid strengthening and improvement of graduate schools; opening to the public evaluations of universities and university information). • Reform of the system of selecting students for university admission (introduction of a “common test” in place of the common first-stage test). • Introduction of greater freedom and flexibility into qualifications for university admission (granting of university entrance qualifications to graduates of the upper secondary course of specialized training colleges). • Positive encouragement of academic scientific and research (promotion of fundamental research in universities; strengthening of links between universities and society; promotion of international scientific exchanges). • Establishment of a Universities Council. • Higher education financing (further strengthening of public financial disbursement; creating multiple sources of funding; strengthening of an autonomous funding base). • The organization and management of universities (confirmation of autonomy and independence for universities; teaching personnel and other personnel; open universities) • Criteria for the establishment of universities (radical examination).
<p>Strengthening and reform of elementary and secondary education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of educational content (strengthening of moral education; thorough emphasis on basics and development of individuality). • Reform of the textbook system (basic directions; upgrading of the authoring and editing functions involved in the production of textbooks, and establishment of a research and development system; new textbook examination system; adoption and supply of textbooks; free distribution system; long-term development of reforms). • Upgrading of teacher quality (improvements in teacher training, teacher licensing, and teacher appointment; creation of a study training system for newly appointed teachers; systematization of study training for serving teachers). • Improvement of the educational environment (abolition of excessively large schools; maintenance of current class size of 40). • Increased structural flexibility in upper secondary education (6-year secondary schools; credit-type upper secondary schools; increased flexibility in the number of years required for graduation from upper secondary school; diversification of upper secondary education). • Encouragement of pre-school education as well as encouragement of education for the physically impaired). • Establishment of open schools and of a system of administration and management (new issues aimed at bringing new life into schools; promotion of nature schools; re-examination of the situation of school attendance areas; establishment of a system of school administration and management).

Reforms aimed at responding to internationalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the education of Japanese children who returned from overseas and those living abroad, and schools that are internationally open. • Putting in place and strengthening a system of accepting students from overseas. • Re-examination of foreign language learning. • Strengthening of Japanese language education. • The form of higher education in an international perspective. • Establishment of identity and sense of relativism.
Reforms aimed at responding to the growth and spread of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of information morality. • The construction of systems geared to an information society. • The activation of information devices. • Putting an information environment in place.
Administrative and financial reform of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform of criteria and authorization system (reconsideration of the criteria for university establishment and of the criteria for the official Courses of Study; promotion of the establishment of private elementary and lower secondary schools). • Promotion of devolution (re-examination of the division of responsibility between national and local governments; mission performance and revitalization of boards of education). • Responding to the private education industry, for example, juku (a new role for the private education industry; accurate estimation of the current situation and presentation of information; responding to excessive attendance by children at supplementary learning juku). • The desired shape of educational fees and educational financing (priority-oriented distribution of funds for education, research, culture and sport; a new division of roles between the public and private sector and establishment of a system of cooperation; strengthening of educational financing and a priority-based system of distribution; rationalization and increased efficiency in educational financing; introduction of private vitality; reducing the burden of educational fees on family finances).

encouragement given to the establishment of private elementary and lower secondary schools, very few in number up to this time, and on the recognition of the existence of the private education industry in the form of “juku” and other establishments, or, in the words of the report, a demand for “a fundamental examination of the form that the relationship between schools and private educational establishments such as “juku” should take and the kind of response that should be made by the educational administration.” But all this said, and despite the heading “Concrete measures for reform,” a detailed examination of the text under each heading reveals unexpectedly few really specific suggestions, and a large number of items that go no further than pointing to the direction that reform should take and calling for an “examination” or a “re-evaluation” of policies. The NCER itself, when it presented its final report in August 1987, made what amounted to an acknowledgement of a dearth of concrete results when it declared: “The deliberations of this Council can properly be termed a kind of giant symposium on educational reform, and have become an unprecedented occasion for a national debate,

something which can be thought of as being in itself of great significance for the further advance of educational reform in Japan.”

But whatever one may think of these doubts, concrete suggestions that the Council did make, such as the establishment of a University Council with the authority to make recommendations to the Minister of Education, obligatory in-service training for newly appointed teachers, the creation of 6-year secondary schools, the creation of credit-type upper secondary schools, the change in the type of test set by the University Examinations Center from the previous “first-stage test” to a “common test,” and the reform of the teacher licensing system, were quickly transformed into policies and taken forward to implementation.

7. Education Reform in the 1990s

[Education reform in the 1990s]

Although the NCER did not in itself suggest many concrete policies, many of the directions for reform and concepts put forward, including the principle of putting emphasis on individuality, the “back-to-

basics” emphasis, the need for fundamental principles underlying the Standards for the Establishment of Universities, and the call for a re-examination of the criteria of the Courses of Study, were passed over to the Ministry of Education. And with the advent of the 1990s, via a process of examination by various specialist bodies, including the Central Council for Education, the Curriculum Council, the Educational Personnel Training Council, the University Council, and the Lifelong Learning Council, educational reform came to assume a concrete shape.

In 1991, the Standards for the Establishment of Universities were revised. Under the revision, basic principles for the university curriculum were outlined (the requirement for a definition of subject areas was abolished, the practice of requiring students to obtain a minimum number of credits in each subject area was discontinued, and the formulation of the curriculum was made more flexible). Each university was given greater discretion to construct a curriculum independently. Taking the opportunity presented by this revision, a succession of universities adopted measures such as abolishing the general education requirement in the curriculum or reducing the teaching of foreign languages or physical education. On the other hand, as the other side of the coin to the expansion of discretion, universities were placed under an obligation to give a detailed report in the form of “self-monitoring and self-evaluation,” on their educational and research activities.

[“Zest for living” and “Room to grow”]

In July 1996, the Central Council for Education submitted the first report of its deliberations on “A model for Japanese education in the perspective of the 21st century.” In the report, the Council set out a vision of Japan’s future, forecasting that as a result of many factors, including intensified internationalization and the growth and spread of information, the development of science and technology, global environmental problems and energy problems, also the rapid development of an aging society coupled with a declining birthrate, Japanese society faced “a difficult period of change,

in which the way ahead would be difficult to discern.” On the basis of this standpoint, the Council pointed out that the children who would have to live in this society with its lack of transparency would need to be equipped with:

the abilities and the qualities conducive to identifying issues for themselves, studying on their own initiative and thinking for themselves, exercising their own judgment and acting independently, and solving problems properly;

a rich sense of humanity, embracing the ability to control oneself, a willingness to cooperate with others, and to be sensitive to variable and precious things;

the health and physical strength enable them to live an active life.

The Council summed up the abilities and qualities outlined here in the phrase “zest for living.” The Council stressed that for this “quality” to be cultivated, it was important for the school, the home and the community to be linked together, and while supplementing each other, to function as a single unit. In addition, the Council said, in order to develop “zest for living,” it was important for children, their schools, and the whole of society, embracing the family and the community, to have “room to grow.” If children were to develop a “zest for living,” it was necessary for them to be given opportunities to have direct contact with the reality of society and nature. The Council’s view was that if children, in the busy lives they currently led, were given room to grow and time to reflect, it would become possible for the first time for them to really see themselves, to think for themselves, and for them to build up a rich accumulation of everyday life experiences and social experiences in their families and the societies in which they lived. For some time after this, these two phrases were taken up and used as the key words in any debate about education reform. It may be that phrases of this kind reflected the atmosphere of the time, but it cannot be denied that after the emergence of terms which were difficult to define and were emotionally charged, an element of confusion was added to subsequent debates about education reform.

[The reform of school education]

With regard to school education, the Central Council for Education made the following recommendations.

Review carefully the content of education to reduce the teaching of mere knowledge or of rote memorization material, identify examples of duplicated content in different subjects and make a strict selection of content that really needs to be taught, and ensure that children have a firm grasp of the basic and fundamentals. In order that children can have “room to grow” in their school lives, shorten the number of teaching hours;

With a view to implementing education that allows each child’s individuality to flourish, promote flexibility in the curriculum and improve the methods of teaching, and work toward creating schools that have their own distinctive characteristics;

In order to cultivate children with a rich sense of humanity and a vigorous physique, strengthen hands-on activities such as volunteer work, contact with nature, work experience, and so on;

With a view to promoting cross-curricular, comprehensive studies such as international understanding, information education, environmental education, volunteer activities, nature contact experiences, and so on, create, in addition to subject classes, a Period for Integrated Study.

This period was seen as a time slot without textbooks, in which each school was expected to use its own initiative in developing learning activities without relying on textbooks. A further recommendation from the Council, closely linked to these points, was the proposal for a phased introduction of the five-day school week (once a month from 1992, and twice a month from 1995), scheduled to be implemented in full at the beginning of the 21st century.

[Establishing and implementing the new curriculum]

The report was received by the Ministry of Education, which instructed the Curriculum Council to deliberate on a revised curriculum. In July 1998, the Curriculum Council issued a report indicating the

basic direction of revision of the curriculum including the creation of a Period for Integrated Study, the further strengthening of selective courses, and the reform and strengthening of moral education as its main pillars. After receiving the report, the Ministry of Education announced new Courses of Study, in December 1998 for elementary and lower secondary schools, and in March 1999 for upper secondary schools and special education. Under the new Courses of Study, the teaching hours for Grade 6 of elementary school were to be reduced from 1015 to 945 hours, and for Grade 3 of lower secondary school from 1050 to 980 hours. The educational content for elementary and lower secondary schools was to be cut by around 30%. The Period for Integrated Study would take up 3 hours a week in elementary school and 2 to 3 hours a week in lower secondary school. The new Courses of Study and the five-day school week were to be completely implemented from 2002.

[The debate about academic ability]

But when faced with the reality of the new Courses of Study, criticisms began to openly voiced about the assertion on “room to grow” that had underpinned the educational reform discussions of the 1990s. A number of science and engineering professors expressed their dissatisfaction and unease over the new curriculum. According to them, the level of knowledge of science and mathematics among present-day university students had clearly sunk when compared to that of the previous generation, and they warned that any further reduction of teaching hours or reduction of the educational content in science and mathematics would result in a further large drop in academic ability. In the background to this debate are a number of factors, including the stagnation of economic development in Japan, the sharpening of international competition with science and technology as a base, and the rise of the rankings of a number of Asian countries (Singapore, Korea, Taiwan) in international evaluation comparisons of educational achievement. On the other hand, there is no objective data demonstrating that children’s academic ability has

fallen. And it is also argued that a degree of responsibility for any drop in ability among university students may also be ascribed to a relaxation in university selection methods taking such forms as a reduction in the number of subjects to be taken by students in the entrance examination or a widening of the number admitted on the basis of recommendations by school principals. Consequently, the issue has escalated into a major debate. For its part, the Ministry of Education has issued a pamphlet aimed at teachers in which they emphasize that “the Courses of Study represent the minimum criteria that must be satisfied in teaching pupils and students in every school throughout Japan.” Pupils and students who do not sufficiently understand the study content should undertake “supplementary study,” while on the other hand, it is necessary for those who do have sufficient understanding to undertake more advanced study and have their understanding deepened through such methods as individual guidance or work in small

ability groups. The Courses of Study are the “essential minimum,” and depending on the interests and abilities of children, teachers should not feel bound by these and should feel free to extend children’s ability through more advanced study.

However, although the Ministry says this, there is no clear guidance in the Courses of Study themselves relating to the content or level of more advanced study. Authorized textbooks based on the new Courses of Study are starting to be slimmer than they used to be. The formula of allowing flexible application of the Courses of Study by schools and teachers will not dispel the fear that confusion will be caused in the school and the classroom in terms of the actual educational practice of teaching and learning activities and evaluation. Within this context of debate, the Courses of Study were fully implemented in April 2002.

<SAITO Yasuo>

Chronological Table: The History of Japan's Education

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1797		Establishment of the Shoheizaka Gakumonjo (the highest seat of learning at the time) under central government control			
1868	The Imperial Oath of Five Articles				
1869	Restoration of the fief ("han") lands to the Emperor	Establishment of the Grand School			
1870		Drafting of Middle and Elementary School Regulations Drafting of University Regulations Enactment of regulations for students studying overseas All-Japan survey of schools			
1871	Abolition of fiefs and creation of prefectures			Work begins on editing and translation of textbooks	Establishment of Ministry of Education Appointment of persons responsible for devising a unified national system of education
1871				Introduction of translated textbooks	Adoption of school district system
1872		Promulgation of the Education Ordinance	Establishment of the Tokyo Normal School		
		Promulgation of Elementary and Middle School Regulations Establishment of Tokyo Girls' School (government school)			Establishment of Inspectors Office and appointment of school district supervisors
1873	Rioting (elementary school destroyed)	Adoption of an examination system for grade progression Revision of regulations for students studying overseas	Adoption of an examination system for appointment to government service		Decision on amount of grants from the national treasury David Murray comes to Japan from the U.S. as adviser (later superintendent) to the Ministry of Education
1874		Establishment of Girls' Normal School in Tokyo Establishment of foreign language school	Establishment of National Normal School	Establishment of Editorial Section within Ministry of Education for textbook editing Issuance of list of books for use in elementary schools	
1875		School attendance age range set at age 6 through age 14	Implementation of certification examination for elementary school teachers		
1876		Dr William Clark takes up his post at Sapporo Agricultural College	Inauguration of middle school teacher training course at Tokyo Normal School Establishment of Tokyo Women's Normal School		Establishment of School Affairs Section
1877	Seinan War	Foundation of the University of Tokyo	Establishment of Normal School to train middle school teachers		Establishment of post of officer responsible for schools

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1878 Meiji 11		Abolition of elementary school and middle school regulations Opening of Japan's First School for the Blind and the Deaf in Kyoto Promulgation of the Education Order			Prefectural schools throughout Japan are put under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education
1879 Meiji 12	Drafting of the Imperial Will on the Great Principles of Education	Abolition of school districts Permission granted for peripatetic teachers Promulgation of revised Education Order	Appointment of teachers by order of the prefectural governor	Editing of textbooks in line with the direction of educational policy	Public election of "educational committeemen" Establishment of Music Research Section in Ministry of Education
1880 Meiji 13		Clarification of criteria for attendance enforcement regulations		Prohibition of the use of textbooks which do not conform to the direction of national education	Expansion of the authority of the prefectural governor vis-à-vis educational administration Decision that "educational committeemen" will be "appointed"
1881 Meiji 14		Issuance of General Guidelines for the Course of Study for Elementary Schools and the Guidelines for the Course of Study for Middle Schools Issuance of criteria for the establishment of elementary schools Clarification of criteria for attendance enforcement regulations	Setting of regulations for Awarding Elementary school Teacher Licenses Setting of regulations for elementary school teachers Setting of Regulations for Examining the Conduct of School Teachers Issuance of General Guidelines for the Course of Study for Normal Schools Setting of regulations for the certification of teachers		Abolition of national subsidy
1882 Meiji 15		Issuance of General Regulations for Medical Schools Issuance of General Regulations for Music Schools Establishment of Girls' High School attached to Tokyo Normal School	Issuance of regulations concerning the nomenclature of educational personnel in prefectural and municipal schools as well as auxiliary nurses		
1883 Meiji 16		Issuance of General Regulations for Agricultural Schools	Issuance of General Guidelines for Prefectural Normal Schools	Implementation of textbook approval system	

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1884	Meiji 17	Issuance of General Regulations for Middle Schools Issuance of regulations for vocational course for Ordinary Middle Schools Issuance of General Regulations for Commercial Schools	Issuance of regulations for teacher licenses for Higher Normal Schools	Revision of the school curriculum	Abolition of "educational committee"
1885	Meiji 18	Creation of a cabinet system Revision of the Education Order			Establishment of post of Minister of Education Collection of tuition fees for town and village schools made compulsory
1886	Meiji 19	Promulgation of the Elementary School Order Duration of compulsory education set at 4 years Promulgation of Middle School Order Establishment of simplified elementary school course Issuance of General Regulations for Schools Promulgation of Imperial University Order	Enactment of the Normal School Order Issuance of regulations for licenses for elementary school teachers	Issuance of Regulations for the Authorization of Textbooks Implementation of textbook authorization system	
1887	Meiji 20				
1888	Meiji 21	Promulgation of the City System and Town and Village System Law			
1889	Meiji 22	Promulgation of the Greater Japan Constitution			
1890	Meiji 23	Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education	Establishment of Girls' Higher Normal Schools	Enactment of Law concerning the Adoption of Books for School Use in Public and Private Elementary Schools	Establishment of post of county inspector Issuance of General Regulations for Local School Affairs Elementary school expenses are made a charge on cities, towns and villages Establishment of "educational committee"
1891	Meiji 24	Issuance of regulations concerning elementary school facilities Issuance of General Guidelines for the Course of Study for Elementary Schools		Issuance of standards for approval of textbooks to be used for Morals in elementary school	
1892	Meiji 25				Start of a movement demanding national subsidies for elementary school expenses

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1893		Issuance of Simplified Agricultural School Regulations			
1894	Outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War	Issuance of Vocational Supplementary School Regulations Issuance of Apprentice School Regulations Issuance of regulations for entry to ordinary middle schools Promulgation of the Higher School Order Promulgation of the Higher Conference on Education Order	Issuance of regulations for the training of industrial educational personnel Establishment of an institute for the training of industrial educational personnel Inauguration of the Imperial Education Council Enactment of the Law for Subsidizing City, Town and Village Teachers' Long-Service Increments from the National Treasury Promulgation of the Normal Education Order Issuance of regulations for pre-service training for vocational school teachers		Enactment of a law concerning subsidy from the national treasury for vocational school expenses
1896					
1897		Founding of Kyoto Imperial University			Creation of the post of local supervisor
1899		Revision of the Middle School Order Promulgation of the Private School Order Promulgation of the Vocational School Order Promulgation of the Girls' High School Order Promulgation of the Third Elementary School Order			Creation of the post of chief supervisor; change of name of "local supervisor" to "school supervisor." Establishment of a subsidy from the National Treasury toward elementary school education expenses
1900					Enactment of a law concerning special accounting measures for educational funds Enactment of the Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Municipal Elementary School Education Expenses
1901		Compulsory education made free of charge Issuance of Regulations for the Enforcement of the Elementary School Order and the Middle School Order Issuance of Regulations for the Enforcement of the Girls' High School Order Promulgation of the Specialized Schools Order		Revision of the regulations for the enforcement of the Elementary School Order in order to prevent misuse of the adoption of textbooks for use in elementary schools The textbook bribery scandal Adoption of the system of state editing of textbooks	
1902					
1903					
1904	Outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War				

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1907		Duration of compulsory education set at 6 years Revision of the Elementary School Order	Issuance of the Normal School Regulations		
1908				Establishment of a Textbook Survey Committee within the Ministry of Education	
1910		Establishment of Tokyo School for the Blind	Issuance of major points for Normal School classes		
1912		Establishment of practical course-type girls' high schools Revision of implementation regulations for the Elementary School Order Promulgation of the Higher Middle School Order	Teacher licenses to be awarded by prefectures		Establishment of the Education Investigation Council as an advisory organ to the Ministry of Education
1913					
1914	Outbreak of World War I				
1917		Establishment of the School Hygiene Society	Promulgation of the Order concerning Educational Personnel at Public Schools		Promulgation of the Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Municipal Compulsory Education Expenses
1918		Promulgation of the Higher School Order			Establishment of the Special Committee for Education
1919		Promulgation of the University Order Revision of the Elementary School Order and Middle School Order Revision of the Imperial University Order, the Vocational School Order, and the Girls' High School Order			
1921					
1922	Abolition of the "gun" as a unit of administrative jurisdiction				
1923	Great Kanto Earthquake	Promulgation of the Order concerning Schools for the Blind and Schools for the Deaf and Dumb	Granting of maternity leave to women teachers		
1926					Establishment of School Affairs Sections within prefectural offices
1927	World panic				
1928		Establishment of student supervisor post in universities and higher specialized schools Issuing of regulations to encourage school attendance by children of school age			Student Affairs Department established within the Ministry of Education

Year	Social movements	School education	Teachers	Curriculum	Educational administration and finance
1929 Showa 4					Enactment of law concerning special measures for the National Treasury's share of municipal ordinary elementary school expenses
1930 Showa 5				Issuance of regulations concerning book recommendations	Establishment of the Committee for the Investigation of the Student Thought Problem
1931 Showa 6	Manchurian Incident				Implementation of salary reduction of government officials and teachers in public schools
1932 Showa 7		Enactment of Law concerning Emergency Implementation of School Meals			
1933 Showa 8	Japan withdraws from the League of Nations			Start of the use of newly edited, nationally approved textbooks for elementary schools	
1935 Showa 10		Promulgation of the Youth School Order	Promulgation of the Youth School Teacher Training Center Order		Establishment of the Ideological Control Bureau (~ 1935)
1937 Showa 12					Establishment of the Education Renovation Council (~ 1937)
1938 Showa 13	Promulgation of General Mobilization Order				Establishment of the Education Council
1939 Showa 14		Youth schools made compulsory			Final report of the Education Council on main points concerning national schools
1940 Showa 15					Enactment of the Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Youth School Expenses
1941 Showa 16		Promulgation of the National School Order			Enactment of the Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Compulsory Education Expenses
1943 Showa 18		Teachers in charge of children's health recognized as school personnel Abolition of the Middle School Order and the High School Order Promulgation of the Middle Level School Order	Revision of the Normal School Order		Confirmatory decision on the student wartime mobilization system
1944 Showa 19		Abolition of the Vocational School Order Revision of the Specialized School Order Promulgation of Order assigning students and teachers to work on production of munitions, etc.	Abolition of Youth School Teacher Training Centers and Establishment of Youth Normal Schools		Promulgation of the Japan Scholarship Foundation Law

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1945	End of World War II	The Ministry of Education announces an "Educational Policy for the Construction of a New Japan"			
1946	Promulgation of the Constitution of Japan	GHQ issues an order forbidding state Shinto	Start of screening of suitability of educational personnel		
1947	Promulgation of the Local Autonomy Law	Revision of the Secondary School Order	Government order concerning the removal, employment prohibition and return to work of educational personnel	Revision of Courses of Study (Introduction of daily life-oriented, unit-based learning) Announcement of the implementation of a textbook authorization system	Establishment of the Education Reform Committee Directive to the Ministry of Education and prefectures to abolish the inspectorial system
1948	Promulgation of the National Public Service Personnel Law Promulgation of the Child Welfare Law	Promulgation of the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law Start of elementary schools and lower secondary schools under the new school system GHQ announces purge of 110,000 teachers	Formation of the Japan Teachers Union Japan Mutual Aid Association of Educational Personnel renamed as the "Japan Mutual Aid Association of Public School Teachers"	Promulgation of the Law concerning Provisional Measures on the Publication of Textbooks	Promulgation of the National Diet Library Law Promulgation of the Board of Education Law
1949		Issuance of Criteria for the Establishment of Upper Secondary Schools Start of upper secondary school correspondence courses Start of upper secondary schools under the new school system Promulgation of government order concerning compulsory attendance at lower secondary schools as well as at schools for the blind and schools for the deaf and concerning the compulsory establishment of such schools Implementation of screening process for advancement of higher specialized schools	Promulgation of the Educational Personnel Certification Law Promulgation of Implementation Procedures for the Educational Personnel Certification Law		Start of the Board of Education system Promulgation of the Local Finance Law Promulgation of the Law Governing the Share of Salaries of Municipal School Personnel Promulgation of a law concerning subsidy from the National Treasury for the expenses of teachers on part-time courses at public upper secondary schools Promulgation of the Law concerning Special Regulations for Educational Public Service Personnel Opening of the First Conference for Prefectural Superintendents of Education Promulgation of the Ministry of Education Establishment Law
		Establishment of the Council for Health and Physical Education Promulgation of the Private School Law Promulgation of law concerned with the establishment of national schools Establishment of 69 national universities under the new system			

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1950	Promulgation of the Law concerning Public Service Personnel	Promulgation of the Library Law	Enactment of the Educational Personnel Certification Law		
1951		Promulgation of the Industrial Education Promotion Law	Revision of the order concerning the removal and employment prohibition of teachers, and promulgation of an order concerning re-investigation of the suitability of teachers	Establishment of the Textbook Survey for Authorization Council Revision of the General Courses of Study	
1952	Declaration of the Treaty of Peace with Japan and the US-Japan Security Treaty	Formation of the All-Japan Upper Secondary School PTA Council Promulgation of the Private School Promotion Law	Decision by the Japan Teachers' Union on an Outline of Ethical Principles for Teachers		Inauguration of the Central Council for Education (abolition of the Education Reform Council) Establishment of municipal boards of education throughout the whole of Japan
1953		Promulgation of the Law for the Promotion of Upper Secondary School Part-time and Correspondence Education Promulgation of the School Library Law and the Science Education Promotion Law			Promulgation of Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Compulsory Education Expenses Inauguration of members of the Central Council for Education
1954		Promulgation of a law governing special measures for the promotion of repair and construction of dangerous school premises Promulgation of the Law for the Promotion of Education in Isolated Areas Promulgation of the Law for the Encouragement of Attendance at Schools for the Blind, Schools for the Deaf and Schools for the Handicapped other than the Blind and the Deaf	Revision of the Educational Personnel Certification Law		Ministry of Education issues a statement by the Vice-Minister confirming the continued neutrality of education Promulgation of Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Expenses for Public School Facilities and Equipment continued neutrality of education
1955		Revision of the Courses of Study for Upper Secondary Schools	Promulgation of a law concerning a guarantee of implementation of normal school education during maternity leave by female teachers		

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1956 Showa 31		<p>Promulgation of the School Lunch Law</p> <p>Promulgation of the Law concerning the National Treasury's Share for the Encouragement of School Attendance by Pupils having Financial Difficulties</p> <p>Enactment of Law governing special measures for the establishment of special schools for the disabled</p> <p>Promulgation of a law concerning the provision of school meals in upper secondary schools offering night courses</p>	<p>Formation of the Japan Senior High School Teachers' and Staff Union</p>	<p>Ministry of Education appoints Textbook Survey Officers</p>	<p>Promulgation of Law concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration</p> <p>Start of a system of appointing Board of Education members</p>
1957 Showa 32		<p>Implementation of a sample academic ability survey of the top grades of elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools throughout Japan</p>	<p>Issuance of rules concerning the professionalization of the post of deputy principal and the content of the post's professional duties</p>		<p>Agreement to the formation of the All-Japan Council of Prefectural Superintendents of Education and to the preparation by the Council of "performance appraisal of educational personnel"</p>
1958 Showa 33		<p>Promulgation of a law concerning the provision of school meals in the kindergarten sections and upper sections of schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and schools for the otherwise disabled</p> <p>Promulgation of the School Health Law</p>	<p>Payment of administrative allowances to school principals</p>	<p>Revision of the Courses of Study for Elementary and Lower Secondary Schools (systematic learning)</p>	<p>Law concerning the National Treasury's Share of Facilities Expenses for various Compulsory Education Schools</p>
1959 Showa 34		<p>Promulgation of a law concerning standards for the composition of grades in public compulsory education schools and for the number of teachers</p>			
1960 Showa 35	<p>Signing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty</p> <p>Decision on plan to double national income</p>	<p>Publication of the Courses of Study for upper secondary schools</p>	<p>Payment of administrative allowances to deputy principals</p>		
1961 Showa 36		<p>Revision of part of the School Education Law</p> <p>Implementation of education on the basis of the new Courses of Study for elementary schools</p> <p>Ministry of Education implements a national academic ability survey aimed at Grades 2 and 3 of lower secondary school</p> <p>Promulgation of a law concerning standards for the composition of grades in upper secondary schools and for the number of teachers</p>			<p>Formation of the All-Japan Association of Town and Village Superintendents of Education</p>

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1962	Promulgation of Law concerning a mutual aid association for local public servants	Ministry of Education decides countermeasures to cope with the rapid increase of students in upper secondary schools Implementation of national academic ability survey aimed at elementary and lower secondary schools		Promulgation of the Law concerning the Free Provision of Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools	
1963				Promulgation of the Law concerning Measures for the Free Provision of Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools	
1964	1964 Tokyo Olympic Games				
1966			Promulgation of a law concerning the establishment of an institute for the training of teachers at schools for the disabled		
1967	Promulgation of a law concerning compensation to local public servants in the event of disasters				
1968		Promulgation of law governing special measures concerned with university management			
1969	Promulgation of a special measures law concerned with countermeasures to assist under-populated areas			Complete implementation of the system for the free distribution of textbooks	
1970	International Education Year OECD Education Mission visits Japan to investigate educational problems	Announcement of partial revision of Courses of Study for Upper Secondary Schools Report by the Central Council for Education on "Basic concepts of reform in elementary and secondary education"	First in-service training lectures for middle-management level teachers	Announcement of Courses of Study for Lower secondary schools	
1971			Recommendations to the National Personnel Authority, the Diet and the Cabinet concerning the problem of overtime pay allowances for teachers Promulgation of Special Measures Law concerning the payment of salary, etc, to educational personnel at national and public compulsory education schools	Partial Revision of Courses of Study	Ministry of Education launches a push for fundamental educational reform
1972		Report by the Central Council for Education on "Reform of the curriculum in the upper sections of schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and schools for the otherwise disabled"	Implementation of the Special Measures Law for the payment of salary etc, to educational personnel	Announcement of Courses of Study for elementary and lower secondary departments of schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and schools for the otherwise disabled	

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1973			Enactment of the Special Measures Law concerning the Securing of Educational Personnel in Various Compulsory Education Schools for the Maintenance and Enhancement of School Education Standards (Law for the Securing of Capable Educational Personnel)		
1974			First improvement in teachers' salaries on the basis of the Law for the Securing of Capable Educational Personnel Legal systematization of post of Deputy Principal		
1975		Promulgation of the Private School Promotion Subsidy Law	Promulgation of law concerning childcare leave for assistant educational personnel in various compulsory education schools as well as for nurses and nursery nurses in medical and social welfare facilities Second improvement in teachers' salaries on the basis of the Law for the Securing of Capable Educational Personnel	Revision of part of the Courses of Study Announcement of Courses of Study for upper secondary schools	
1977			Report by the Central Council for Education on "Enhancing the Qualifications and Ability of Teachers"	Announcement of Courses of Study for schools the blind, schools for the deaf and schools for the otherwise disabled	
1978					
1979		Report from the Curriculum Council on the "Improvement of Curriculum Standards in the elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary departments of schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, and schools for the otherwise disabled" Implementation of a common first-stage test for entrance to national universities			
1983		Prime Minister Nakasone announces "Seven Concepts of Educational Reform"	Report by the Council for the Training of Educational Personnel on "Improvements in the pre-service training and licensing system for teachers"	Central Council for Education issues report on the appropriate use of textbooks	
1984		Revision of part of the implementation procedures of the School Education Law			
1985		Decision by the Japan Association of National Universities to expand opportunities to sit the entrance examination	Start of training system for newly appointed teachers		Promulgation of a law concerning the establishment of the National Council on Educational Reform
1987		Report from the Curriculum Council on the "Improvement of Curriculum Standards in elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools"			

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1988	Showa 63	Promulgation of a law concerning the revision of one part of the Law on Standards for the establishment of national schools (reform of the test implemented by the National Center for University Entrance Examinations)	Revision of the Law concerning Special Regulations for Educational Public Service Personnel and the Law concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration		Launching of the Lifelong Learning Bureau within the Ministry of Education
1990	Heisei 2 UNESCO International Literacy Year	Revision of the implementation procedures for the Educational Personnel Certification Law Implementation of a common test by the National Center for University Entrance Examinations			
1992	Heisei 4	Implementation of five-day school week			
1995	Heisei 7 The Great Hanshin Earthquake				
1997	Heisei 8		Completion of the Educational Personnel Certification Law (addition of an obligatory requirement for holders of an elementary school teacher's license to have experience in care for the elderly)		
1998	Heisei 9 Enactment of a law concerned with the advancement of regional devolution		Revision of implementation procedures for the Educational Personnel Certification Law		
2002	Heisei 10			Teachers start to use textbooks based on the new Courses of Study (incorporating the concept of "room to grow")	