

**REPORT BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION
ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

17 PROPOSALS FOR CHANGING EDUCATION

DECEMBER 22, 2000

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM

INTRODUCTION

This Report has been compiled by the National Commission on Educational Reform inaugurated in March 2000 under the auspices of the Prime Minister. We strongly hope that the following 17 proposals will be urgently addressed for implementation.

Fostering Japanese people with a rich sense of humanity

Be aware that the basis of education is in the home.

Schools should not hesitate to teach morals.

Community services should be performed by all school students.

Be clear in the treatment of children who cause trouble at school.

Protect children from harmful information.

Develop the talent of individuals and foster individuals who are rich in creativity

Remedy standardized education and introduce an educational system that develops individuality.

Remedy the excessive emphasis on rote learning and diversify university entrance examinations.

Reinforce the education and research functions of universities/graduate schools in order to create leaders in various fields.

Introduce a system to promote learning suitable to universities.

Promote education that cultivates a view of a career and work.

Create new schools for the new age

Create a system in which teachers' eagerness and efforts are rewarded and evaluated.

Promote the creation of schools responding to the trust of communities.

Introduce the idea of management organization into schools and the board of education.

Make school teaching easy to understand and effective from the children's point of view.

Promote the establishment of new types of schools (such as "a community school").

Basic Promotional Plan for Education and the Fundamental Law of Education

Devise a promotional plan for the comprehensive promotion of educational measures.

Create a Fundamental Law of Education that is suitable to the new age.

1. OUR GOAL FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

(The existence of society is based on education.)

The greatest characteristic of mankind is its ability to grow through education. Through education, we learn the wisdom and culture accumulated by our predecessors and also discovers new ideas and conduct. Also, education cultivates individuals' talents. Through education individuals learn to become independent, respect each other either as a fellow member of a family, a society, a nation, or as a global citizen, and learn to live with pride and responsibility. Educational issues are not only important for accomplishing social independence and for realizing a better existence but also for determining the future of our society and nation. Education is the basis for human society.

(Japanese education on the verge of crisis)

Japanese people and Japanese society have always valued education and exerted efforts towards its enhancement. Wide-ranging educational reforms have been implemented on occasions, such as the period at the formation of the Meiji Government and the period at the end of World War II. Education in Japan became the driving force of economic development and achieved other results by meeting the demands of the times.

At the threshold of the 21st century, however, the reality is that Japanese education is deteriorating, and this cannot be overlooked. Continued occurrences of bullying, students who refuse to go to school, school violence, classroom disruption, violent juvenile crimes and other problems concerning education have become serious. We are on the verge of a crisis; our society will be unable to carry on if the current situation continues.

Japanese people have been able to enjoy a period of long-sustained peace and material affluence. How education should respond to some of the consequences of this affluent age is now being questioned. Children tend to be weak-willed and unable to control their desires. Adults who are responsible for raising children do not look at life with their feet firmly on the ground but have selfish values or a simple-headed sense of justice. They are sometimes unable to make the distinction between fiction and reality. Also, Japanese people have lost their ability to think and create by themselves, they have lost their spontaneity and courage in taking initiatives, their capability to endure hardships, their consideration for others, and the ability to show self-control when necessary.

Furthermore, although we continue to have hope for society when we think of the reality that both good and bad exist in society and individuals, we have lost our sense of balance for taking action and judging situations.

(Wide-ranging changes in the education system in society)

The 21st Century is an age in which IT, life science and other sciences, and technology with evolve at a pace never seen before. People in the world are linked directly, information is instantly shared, and the globalization of the economy is progressing. The Structure and aspects of society

have been changing on a global scale, and complexities have emerged which are difficult to cope with given existing organizations and systems. The possibilities open to each person are increasing and, at the same time, the weakness and self-interest of individuals is also increasing, which accordingly increases the fragility of society. The traditional educational system is lagging behind the current of the times.

Pre-war traditions of a centralized educational administrative system have not been entirely erased from the consciousness of school principals, teachers and staff, and administrators of educational administrative agencies. There still remains a situation where people relied on others and evade their own responsibilities. Also, we have witnessed the introduction of ideological conflict into the world of education, and the decline of the prestige of educators through their behavior and remarks. The unfortunate conflict between the educational administration agencies and teachers has continued for many years despite the fact that they should have made concerted efforts together to tackle the problems in education, and this has greatly damaged the people's trust in education. It is necessary for people who are engaged in education to ask themselves from their own positions how they should proceed.

(Viewpoints about the future of education)

We think the following three viewpoints are important in the reform the current situation and betterment of education for future generations who will play roles in the future of Japan and the rest of the world.

The first viewpoint is to foster the sociality of children, promote independence and enrich the lives of Japanese people.

Self-discipline, consideration for others, love of nature, a feeling of deep respect for that beyond an individual's capability, respect for traditional culture and social norms, fostering a mentality and attitude which show affection toward one's own home country or nation, learning basic knowledge or culture required for life in society must be the basis for all education. Today's educational crisis in Japan is rooted in the neglect of these basics of a natural and fundamental education. Not only schools and homes but also society as a whole are required to share this understanding and address the situation in order to realize these basics of education.

Parents have the greatest responsibility for the formation of children's behavior and consciousness. The home is the place to conduct basic training, such as sincerely respecting life, knowing simple good from bad, exerting self-discipline, greeting others, and following group behavior. The more children grow, the heavier these responsibilities are.

However, education is not effective if parents or children are isolated from society. There are many cases where the education of the parents themselves is a problem. Nuclear families, urbanization, and other situations have substantially changed the conditions of the home. For this reason, education should not be left to parents alone. Homes, educational institutions, and communities should recognize their respective missions and roles, collaborate, and extend support by gathering the knowledge and wisdom of society. After all, children are not just members of a

household but also a form of shared hope for mankind.

The second viewpoint is to develop talents innate to each person, to realize an educational system which fosters leaders rich in creativity in different fields.

The important role of education is to bring out the innate talents that individuals possess and to have individuals develop such talents to their full capacity. Everyone was born with different talents. Plants are quite varied: some like humid places; some like acidic soil; some can grow only with fertile soil; some hate direct sunlight. It is necessary to grow plants according to their own characteristics. The same thing is applicable to human beings.

Post-war education did not allow for being "different from others" and "standing out." Egalitarianism, which was highly valued in post-war education, always had the risk of creating uniformity and homogenization. The trend of stressing similarity to others has created the tendency to hamper the creation of new values and the emergence of leaders who can lead society. As this is a period of great change, education in Japan needs to be reformed, making it possible to develop children's talents and abilities and to educate people rich in originality and creativity.

It is necessary to build an educational system where from elementary to higher education, entering and graduating from schools quickly isn't necessarily a positive thing but where students are able to select an education suitable to their own way of life and to reenter the education system at all stage. Also, we must foster the leaders needed by society and realize a society which recognizes and supports such leaders.

The third viewpoint is to create new schools suitable for the new age and to realize a support system for this purpose.

Schools of the future must be restored as a place where children prepare for social independence and develop diverse capabilities and talents of their own.

Schools must be converted from closed and self-righteous institutions centered on the theory of teaching to schools offering quality education needed by the children and parents who receive the education. Each school must exert ceaseless efforts for the betterment of education and those schools which show results should be evaluated accordingly.

The Board of Education, the Ministry of Education and other educational administration bodies should not only prize management and the managers, but also must have the idea of supporting the establishment of the independence and the autonomy of schools in this new society which is witnessing increasing diversification. It is indispensable for the reform of the education system to disclose information concerning educational administration and schools, and promote sound competition by conducting proper evaluations.

Parents hope that their children feel safe to go to school. For this, schools must not lead an isolated existence. They must exist together with the parents and local communities. Whether or not a school becomes a good one depends on its community. It is necessary to have the viewpoint that the community creates the school and the school creates the community.

(Basic idea for educational reform)

It is needless to say that education is not an activity which is conducted unrelated to other social activities. The deterioration of education is ultimately caused by the whole society. However, just saying that the whole society is wrong and people's consciousness should be changed blurs where the responsibility lies. Such an attitude will eventually lead us to the irresponsible situation where nobody does anything.

We, the National Commission on Educational Reform, propose a reform plan which shows concrete measures concerning who should do what in order to reform and improve the future of education. When reviewing the reform plan, we considered the following two areas as the fundamentals:

The first is go back to the basics.

Sociality and humanity are, of course, important in education. However, in the situation where a society is rapidly changing and becoming more affluent, it is important to reconsider education afresh. Recognizing traditions and culture and emphasizing the importance of education in the home are, by no means, intended to restore a narrow nationalism. Such an approach is considered fundamental from the perspective of fostering people who, while having identity as a Japanese, are able to contribute to mankind in the progress of globalization. Various opinions have been expressed so far, which include a rejection of uniformity, emphasis on individual talents, and the way school education and educational administration systems should be, and it is in these circumstances we proposed that the reform or improvement should involve going back to the basics.

The second is to make practical efforts for reform.

It is necessary to implement reform and improvement suitable to the times and make concrete efforts. In recent years, the reform plans of the Ad Hoc Council on Education and other councils have been frequently proposed and efforts for reform were made. However, complaints are widely heard that the speed of realizing such reforms at schools is slow and that the reform is not advancing speedily. Just calling for reform does not change anything after all. This feeling of frustration has deepened among the Japanese people.

What is needed now is action. It is important to implement immediately what can be done at each level, so that those who have enthusiasm are able to play an active part. We should not be afraid of making mistakes and we should implement the necessary reform in a courageous manner. Also, we must keep an eye on the results of implementation, evaluate, and lead further reform.

Based on the above two fundamental ideas, we would like to make 17 proposals for changing education. The path of reform is rough. However, there are no paths that are not rough. We, together with the rest of the people in Japan, continue to have hope for the future of education.

2. FOSTERING JAPANESE PEOPLE WITH A RICH SENSE OF HUMANITY

Be aware that the basis of education is in the home

Education in the home can be representative of education. Disciplining children is one of the responsibilities and joys of parenthood. The home is responsible for sending children out into society, completing the necessary basic life training for the period between birth and pre-school. The home is a place for strict discipline and, at the same time, "the mind's garden," filled with conversation and laughter. Any type of education starts with "imitation." We should not forget that children unconsciously imitate the words and behavior of their parents without distinguishing between good and bad. Parents should be well aware that they are the first teachers of their children.

Proposal

- (1) Parents should have strong confidence and create, for example "three disciplining principles" at home. Parents should increase the time spent with their children as much as possible.
- (2) Parents should actively take part in the educational activities of PTAs, schools, and communities. Companies should also introduce an "education leave" system in addition to annual paid holidays.
- (3) The government and local public bodies should strive for improving the utilization of the Education in the Home Handbook and the Education in the Home Notebook, and enhance the systems for supporting education in the home through such measures as actively offering opportunities for all parents to take child-raising programs and counseling.
- (4) Based on the current situation, in which the situations of the home are diversified, support measures should not only be from an educational perspective but also combine with other measure such as welfare. In particular, efforts should be exerted to enhance the educational functions in kindergartens and day nurseries.
- (5) In order to enhance educational strength of communities, active support should be provided for autonomous social educational activities such as Public Hall activities. Some measures should be taken to enhance interest and assistance for education in communities, for example by establishing, an "Education Day," etc.

Schools should not hesitate to teach morals

School is where children's social independence should be promoted, and it is important to emphasize the cultivation of a sense of society and to promote the balance between freedom and discipline. Also, we should keep in mind that the sense of knowing good from bad precedes intellectual training. Human beings must learn from their own various experiences while learning from their predecessors. Learning through experience is required for the formation of one's ego and the cultivation of a sense of society in the age of a declining birth rate and nuclear families.

Proposal

- (1) Courses on morals, "humanity courses," and "life courses" should be established at elementary schools, junior high schools, and high schools respectively, taught by teachers specialized in these fields and members of society with considerable experience of life. Such courses will teach children basic models for living as a person, including what it means to live and die, giving students enthusiasm and ambition to create their own ways of living.
- (2) Language education, such as reading, writing, and speaking, should be valued to further enrich the humanities. In particular, great importance should be placed on language education during infancy.
- (3) In school education, traditions and culture should be respected and the learning of classics, philosophy, history, etc. should be emphasized. Also, music, art, theatre and other artistic/cultural activities, and physical activities should be a main pillar of education.
- (4) Children's hands-on learning activities should be enhanced, including experiences in nature, at working places, and artistic/cultural experiences. Also, cross-age interaction through such programs as "Tugaku-Gasshuku" (students live together for one or two weeks and commute to school from their accommodation) and participation in social educational activities in communities should be promoted.

Community services should be performed by all school students

Education up until now has put the focus on demands. From now on, however, it is desirable for both those who give and those who are given to create a warm relationship on the individual level and in society. Independence and self-realization makes it possible for individuals to dedicate themselves naturally and serve on the behalf of local people, and moreover, leads to a public outlook which hopes for the happiness of all people. It is also important to promote community service to encourage people to feel empathy for others.

Proposal

- (1) Community service activities should be performed for two weeks in the case of elementary and junior high schools and for one month in the case of high schools. It is desirable that students do so while living together. The details of the activities and the methods for carrying out such activities should be devised by each school according to the stages of development of the children.
- (2) For the instruction of community service activities, the participation of people who have experience in each field of society and instructors of youth activities should be asked. Parents, teachers and other adults should make efforts to participate in various community service activities.
- (3) Looking to the future, it should be considered that young people of 18 years old and over will take part in community service activities for a certain period of time in fields covering a wide area such as environmental protection, farming and caring for the elderly. Schools, universities, companies and community groups should cooperate to create quickly a social system for the

realizing of participation in community service activities.

Be clear in the treatment of children who cause trouble at school

The behavior of one child should not be allowed to threaten other children or create feelings of antipathy in other children to school life. Of course, care should be taken with children who, for example, refuse to go to school or are reluctant to leave their home. However, measures taken against children who cause trouble at school should be clearly understandable. On the other hand, it should be fully noted that is possible that some children who are said to have problems are blessed with their own special talents or fine sensibilities.

Proposal

- (1) Education for children should not be disturbed by other children who cause trouble.
- (2) The board of education and schools should take proper action, including imposing suspensions for children who cause trouble, and at the same time, taking sufficient measures to educate these children.
- (3) To overcome these difficult problems, it is natural that teachers should make constant efforts so that parents and children trust them. However, these problems are difficult to solve solely by schools alone. They should be tackled in a wider sense by societies and the nation respectively.

Protect children from harmful information

With the progress of the IT society, children have been exposed to a large amount of information. This provides learning opportunities, but also brings some bad effects. The importance of “freedom of speech” and of “fostering children with healthy bodies and minds” should be recognized simultaneously by all people who are engaged in the information industry. Some system is necessary to protect children from information that intentionally promotes pornographic, violent, annoying or criminal activities, and from commercial activities harmful to the education of children.

Proposal

- (1) Parents’ groups, non profit organizations (NPO), study groups and several other private organizations should voluntarily study and check on what is harmful information, etc. By providing results of their studies, a system for protecting children from harmful information can be created. In the cases of such studies, the policies of such groups should be disclosed.
- (2) Private organizations should appeal to the companies which sponsor programs containing harmful information, etc.
- (3) The nation should assist such attempts to protect children from harmful information and legislative measures should be developed for this purpose.

3. DEVELOP THE TALENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND FOSTER INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE RICH IN CREATIVITY

Remedy standardized education and introduce an educational system that develops individuality

In order to make the most of quality and the talents of individuals, it is necessary to revise the uniform education of the past. As well as having children acquire basic knowledge, it is necessary for children to find and develop their innate talents, and to make learning achieves which cultivate the ability to think.

Based on the fact that there are big differences in the development of children, some arguments were made to allow more flexibility at the age at which compulsory education starts so that children are able to enter elementary school between the ages of 5 - 7 years old. Further deliberation is necessary on this issue.

Proposal

- (1) Small-group instruction should be implemented to ensure the acquisition of basic scholastic ability at each stage of elementary, junior, and senior high school. Learning according to the level of proficiency should be promoted, and the introduction of a system where it is possible for students to study certain subjects beyond their grade.
- (2) A learning achievement test measuring learning outcomes should be implemented for the purpose of improving scholastic ability at high schools. This learning achievement test should be conducted several times a year and students should be allowed to take the test as many times as they want regardless of their grade.
- (3) A united lower and upper secondary school system should be promoted further to decrease the harmful effects of entrance examinations which students have to take twice by the age of 18 years old, to ensure that students learn the basics during their junior and senior-high school years, and to foster student's creativity, originality and career choice through hands-on learning activities. From the perspective of broadening children's choices, drastic measures should be taken to increase the number of united lower and upper secondary schools to half of the total of all schools.
- (4) The age limit for entering universities - currently set at 18 years old in principle - should be abolished, so that outstanding students are able to enter universities early if they are suitable when considering the educational goal of the universities. Also, utilization of the system, which allows high school students to take university courses and acquire credits, should be promoted further.

Remedy the excessive emphasis on rote learning and diversify university entrance examinations

It is noted that children in Japan become dull as they advance to junior and senior high schools and universities, although elementary school children are lively. The reason behind this is that

students are so conscious of university entrance examinations that they study only several examination subjects, and, moreover, their study is mainly concentrated on rote learning. University entrance examinations should not be one dimension and measure only the student's ability to remember.

Proposal

- (1) University entrance examinations must properly evaluate diverse talents, including the ability of identifying a problem, the ability of finding a way to solve the problem, reasoning and the ability to think logically. From this standpoint, university examinations should be diversified based on the principles and goals of each university, so that admission offices conduct comprehensive entrance examinations which include such elements as learning achievement tests at high schools, interviews, essays, and recommendations.
- (2) From the perspective of Internationalization and allowing high school graduates to gain experience in society, September entry into universities should be promoted and implemented.
- (3) Flexibility should be shown to the regulation concerning the fixed number of new students at entrance time. Universities should be allowed to offer a provisional entrance system at their own discretion. Students could be offered a challenging opportunity by the university. For example, a university could tentatively admit a certain percentage of examinees who are close to the pass line in the entrance examination and, based on the achievement made over the year after entrance pass or fail them, decreasing the number of students down to a fixed number.

Reinforce the education and research functions of universities/graduate schools in order to create leaders in various fields

Our nation needs leaders with ambition and good judgment, who will lead the world in politics, economics, environmental issues, science, technology and other new fields, and contribute to the development of society. Also, in order for Japan to compete with other countries in various fields in which experts with a doctor's degree or a master's degree are playing an active role, we need to foster human resources that have expertise, culture and education. For this purpose, the structure and the role of universities/ graduate schools should be reformed.

Proposal

- (1) At the undergraduate level, liberal arts and the basic knowledge for each specialty should be covered. Cases of outstanding students progressing to graduate schools after finishing their third grade should be promoted widely, so that such cases will not be unusual. For those who graduate after four years, specialist lessons should be provided in the fourth grade and internship programs (including working experience at companies, administration bodies, educational bodies, NPOs, etc.) that promote collaborative interaction with industries should be actively carried out so that students are able to play an active role in society soon after graduation.
- (2) Graduate schools should be established following diverse models-for example, a professional school to learn practical expertise needed in society or a graduate school to foster researchers.

The selection of graduate students should be completely open by impartially accepting candidates from other universities and members of society. Also, those who are particularly outstanding should be allowed to obtain a master's degree or a doctor's degree in as short a period as one year or three years respectively. The opportunity for members of society to enter and learn at universities and graduate schools should be expanded.

- (3) Professional schools should be promoted in order to develop engineers who have a high level of technological capability through projects conducted in collaboration with companies, etc. and in business schools and law schools etc., to develop experts in such areas as management and administration, legal practice, finance, education and public policies.

As for national public service personnel and teachers, the increase in demand for graduate schools, humanities in particular, should be expanded through such measures as making the acquisition of a master's degree a prerequisite in principle.

- (4) In the case of rival, world-leading research institutes resources should be invested in a concentrated manner in such research institutes on the basis of a rigorous evaluation. The infrastructure, including an increase in research assistants and research education space, should be improved. Educational/research infrastructure at universities and graduate schools should be strengthened by promoting the RA (research assistant) system which allows graduate students to participate in research projects as assistants, the postdoctoral system which provides postdoctoral fellows with the opportunity to devote themselves to conducting research at universities or research institutes, and by improving the scholarship system.

Introduce a system to promote learning suitable to universities

There are some students who do not study despite the fact they have entered university. Although universities have also been criticized for allowing students who do not study to graduate easily, the situation has not changed. Universities must take measures to make students study harder.

Proposal

- (1) Liberal arts education should be enhanced so that students will be able to have a great understanding, show empathy to others, and deepen understanding of other people and themselves. A learning system to promote active participation in community service activities should be introduced. Also, small-group instruction should be promoted to give finely textured lessons that allow students to study and think by themselves. The TA (teaching assistant) system in which graduate students will engage in educational assistant work such as providing instruction for undergraduate students, should be enhanced further.

At the same time, the improvement of the educational skills of university teachers should be promoted. To promote highly concentrated lessons, the Internet and other IT technologies should be utilized.

- (2) A double-major system (a main major and a sub-major) should be introduced, so that more than one major in different areas can be selected to acquire broader knowledge and understanding and,

from the perspective of internationalization, to enhance language education.

- (3) From the perspective of motivating students to learn and fostering the student's ability to think by themselves, certain measures should be addressed to promote learning systems appropriate for each university. Such measures include the introduction of a system for evaluating learning results to promote more rigorous evaluation of learning results, and enforcing the system for failing and suspending students who fail to reach a satisfactory level.
- (4) The evaluation system for universities and university teachers should be established to improve the educational capability of universities. The mobility of university teachers should be secured by promoting the introduction of a fixed-term system.
- (5) Considering that the final year of students at universities is almost entirely spent job hunting, companies should postpone the time for recruiting activities and employ students on the basis of their learning results at university by asking students to submit records of their learning results.

Promote education that cultivates a view of a career and work

More and more people don't have a stable job or quit soon after being employed by a company. While this represents the mobilization of human resources on one hand, it is also considered that young people's views on their career and work has weakened. There are other indications that for carrier people the sense of responsibility and duty toward work has been lacking recently. It is necessary to promote education that cultivates a positive view of a career and work.

Proposal

- (1) Specialists, counseling on career options (career advisors), should be placed and utilized positively at junior and senior high schools, higher vocational schools, and universities, etc. The content of education for crafts, career education, and education to cultivate entrepreneurship should be enhanced. Also, hands-on leanings should be actively implemented, including visits to work places, career experience, and internship (working experience) programs.
- (2) Career education should be strengthened further at institutions fostering practical engineers - higher vocational schools, vocational high schools, and special training colleges. The establishment of integrated study courses, where high-school students become familiar with crafts and think about the course they would like to take in the future, should be promoted further. There should be smoother transitions also for those who wish to go to or transfer to universities.
- (3) Collaboration among companies, organizations, public offices, educational institutions should be promoted to eliminate a mismatch between the human resources fostered by high schools and universities and those required by companies.

4. CREATE NEW SCHOOLS FOR THE NEW AGE

Create a system in which teachers' eagerness and efforts are rewarded and evaluated

The most important people in school education are the individual teachers. The evaluation of each teacher should reflect on his or her actions so as to recognize the eagerness and efforts of individual teachers, develop their merits and enhance their effectiveness.

Proposal

- (1) Teachers who have exerted much effort and shown remarkable results should be rewarded through "special allowances" and other financial means, treatment as semi-management and other personnel measures, commendations and other measures.
- (2) Not all teachers should have direct relationships with children/students until they retire and continue teaching. They should be allowed to assume a different role within school according to the aptitude of each teacher and to select a different type of work to school education, if necessary.
- (3) Training opportunities for acquiring expertise and opportunities for taking long-term work experience training at companies should be enhanced.
- (4) As for the teachers who are repeatedly evaluated as being unable to conduct effective teaching and class management and who are judged not to have made any improvement, action should be taken to make it possible to order such teachers to move to a different type of job and eventually to dismiss them or to take other measures.
- (5) Types of employment should be diversified, including the use of part-time teachers, fixed-term teachers, and teachers employed from members of society. Concerning the method of employing teachers, entrance should be diversified and more focus will be placed on the working conditions after employment. The introduction of a system for renewing a teacher's license should be considered.

Promote the creation of schools responding to the trust of communities

Schools, public schools in particular, without exerting effort are likely to be left as they are, it is difficult to reform schools from the inside. The creation of schools, which are fostered by the community and, in turn, fosters the community should be promoted. We should aim at a situation where schools and society support each other's new ideas and rather than a hierarchy of single values and evaluation standards, various values are possible.

Proposal

- (1) Parents are eager to have various information about schools. It is necessary to create an open school and accountability. School information, including the objectives of schools, activities and achievements should be positively disclosed to parents and communities, and schools should promptly take action from the parent's daily opinions and notify them of the outcome.
- (2) From the perspective of showing the characteristics of each school, a school evaluation system,

including an outside evaluation, should be introduced, and the evaluation results should be shared among parents and communities for the improvement of schools. The range of options to choose schools should be expanded, including further flexibility in choosing schools in school zones.

- (3) Participation in school management by parents or communities should be promoted through a school council system, etc. Whether or not a school becomes a good one depends on its community. The community creates the school and the school creates the community.
- (4) Companies should cooperate so that parents are able to take time off for school activities, PTA meetings, and educational activities in communities.

Introduce the idea of management organization into schools and the board of education

To improve school management, major effects are not expected even if the authority of the school principal is strengthened without changing the current system. The idea of management organization should be introduced into the school, so that the school principal will be able to display his or her leadership and autonomy. The idea of organization is required not only for the school. The same should apply to educational administrative bodies. Such administrative bodies should, across the board, disclose information and take the idea of management organization. Also, educational administrative bodies must employ a system providing appropriate assistance for the realization of schools needed by a diversified society.

Proposal

- (1) Discretionary powers of school principals should be expanded to include budgets, personnel affairs, class composition, and other matters, and a staff operation system including a system placing more than one deputy school principal to assist a principal should be introduced. A program to foster school principals and deputy school principals should be created. Young school principals should be appointed actively to prolong the term of their principal ship.
- (2) A system allowing consultation with specialists should be created, including the assignment of highly capable school counselors. An open specialist network should be built so that consultation will be available from with various specialists when necessary.
- (3) The boards of education responsible for education are required to reform. Well-qualified people with great insight, a sense of management, ambition, and high-spirit should be appointed as superintendents and members of the board of education. By establishing institutional measures to determine the constitution of members of the board of education, participation of parents and age/gender diversity should be guaranteed. A meeting of the board of education should be open to the public in principle, and a system for the disclosure of information should be instituted.

Make school teaching easy to understand and effective from the children's point of view.

It is important to promote class organization, teaching methods and collaboration with communities from the perspective of those who receive education, rather than the perspective of

those who provide education.

Proposal

- (1) Schools should be allowed to display their autonomy concerning class organization according to subjects and characteristics of each grade. Community groups and learning groups should be differentiated, and, depending on the subject, classes should be organized into small groups according to the learning level.
- (2) Schools should actively create opportunities for members of society to participate in school education and utilize their career and experience.
- (3) Information concerning outstanding teaching methods should be widely shared.
- (4) IT education and English education should be promoted as early as possible by exposing children to "authentic and realia". Responsibility for reaching and the way of teaching are important issues. Assistant foreign language teachers (ALT) whose native language is English and staff who have expertise and experience should be actively invited from outside.

Promote the establishment of new types of schools (such as "a community school")

Diverse educational opportunities should be provided to make it possible to establish new types of schools. Japanese educational communities need to be revitalized by promoting new challenges, and attracting entrepreneur-minded people into school education.

Proposal

- (1) Standards for school establishment should be clarified and requirements for obtaining facilities/equipment should be eased, so that private schools can be easily established. In addition to diminishing the burden on parents of educational costs, subsidies for the promotion of private schools should be expanded to realize new types of education.
- (2) Pilot schools for research purposes expanded so as to include each region and new challenges should be implemented with the collaboration of local communities.
- (3) Based on the unique need in each community, the possibility of establishing new types of public schools ("a community school") by cities, towns, or villages should be studied. In such schools, communities should take part in school management. In this system, cities, towns, or villages will recruit school principals, examine suggestions made by supporters and establish schools. School principals will appoint school management teams and manage schools, possessing the right to employ teachers. School management and operational results will be regularly examined by community school councils, set up at each school by cities, towns or villages.

5. BASIC PROMOTIONAL PLAN FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PROMOTION OF EDUCATIONAL MEASURES

For the steady implementation of educational reform, it is necessary to clarify the basic direction to be taken concerning educational reform, map out a basic educational promotion plan, like the Science and Technology Basic Plan and the Gender Equality Basic Plan, and to promote comprehensive and well-planned educational measures.

The basic plan will show the direction to be taken, including the policy concerning the promotion of educational reform. At the same time, the basic plan will list specific items and set up objectives for development/improvement and details of implementation measures for each item such as:

Lifelong learning, social education, pre-school education, education in the home, hands-on learning, community service at schools, artistic/cultural education, sports, etc. from the perspective of fostering Japanese people with enriched lives;

Unified lower and upper secondary school system, development of university facilities and other education/research infrastructure, strengthening of graduate schools, such as the development of professional schools and schools to foster researchers, fostering and securing of young researchers and research supporters, grants-in-aid for scientific research, scholarships, subsidies for the promotion of private schools, etc., from the perspective of fostering people and leaders rich in creativity;

IT education, English language education, environmental education, health education, education for disabled children, science education and career guidance, placement of teachers at public schools, training of teachers, development of public schools, facilities, subsidies for the promotion of private schools, etc., from the perspective of the creation of new schools;

Education for Japanese children overseas, international exchange in every educational field such as exchange of students/pupils/teachers, support for foreign students, etc. from the perspective of coping with globalization.

With past educational reforms, it has been repeatedly stated that "Education is the foundation of society" or "Active investment should be made into education and research, which represent the most basic social capital." Society in the 21st Century is said to a knowledge based society. With the rapidly declining birthrate, we must seriously consider investment in education as a national strategy.

Reform cannot be implemented if investment in education is spared. The expansion of financial expenditures is required for the implementation of educational reform, and the establishment of performance targets also should be studied. In such a case, the most essential thing is not to invest precious taxes while leaving the organization unchanged and ineffective measures intact. Rigorous evaluation should be made of plans at the stages of planning and after implementation, and based on the results of evaluations more financial support should be allocated

to places where reform is actively being carried out at the expense of less successful examples. Information should be positively disclosed to taxpayers concerning how taxes are spent on education reform and what achievements have been attained.

6. A FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF EDUCATION THAT IS SUITABLE FOR THE NEW AGE

Education in Japan has been carried forward under the Fundamental Law of Education for more than 50 years since the war. During this period, education has been propagated to a remarkable degree, and the level of education has improved, which has contributed to the social and economic development of our nation. However, the social conditions have greatly changed since the time the Fundamental Law of Education was established, and it is also true the content of education should be questioned. Based on these new circumstances, we have been considering the new direction of education and proposing specific measures so that children, to whom our future generations are entrusted, are able to have a dream and ambition. In addition to that, we have had a straightforward discussion on the Fundamental Law of Education and how the Law lends itself to demonstrating the educational basis for the new age.

When considering future education, it is important to value the universal principles of mankind such as individual dignity, truth and desire for peace. At the same time, it is necessary to think how to foster Japanese people living in a new age where science and technology - such as information technology and life science - and globalization are progressing. Under such conditions, it is also necessary to develop and give a great deal of respect for our traditions, culture, and other elements to be handed down to the Japanese in future generations from the viewpoint of contributing generally to mankind while possessing an awareness and an identity as a Japanese person. It is necessary to reform the educational system from the above two viewpoints and also to consider the Fundamental Law of Education. Based on this standpoint, a Fundamental Law of Education, suitable to the new age, will need to reflect the following three perspectives:

The first perspective is to foster Japanese living in a new age. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to consider the changes in times, which include the progress of science and technology and the accompanying new bioethics, the necessity of cooperation in globalization, environmental problems and the visible limitations of natural resources on a global scale, the aging society, the declining birthrate, a gender-equal society, and the advancement of a lifelong learning society. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the clarification of the role of school education in the new age, the importance of education in the home, and cooperation between schools, the home and local communities.

The second perspective is to develop and give deep respect to the traditions, culture, and other elements to be handed down to future generations. From this viewpoint, respect for nature, tradition and culture, and such visual elements as home, home area and nation are required. Concerning religious education, religion should be perceived as related to the existence of individuals. It is necessary to discuss religion from the perspective of the human understanding and character building accumulated by religion through the centuries and fostering more in education these ideas and religious sentiments.

The third perspective is to provide not only ideological content but also specific measures in the contents of the Fundamental Law of Education to realize an education suitable for the future. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to establish provisions concerning the drawing-up of the educational promotion basic plan, like other many fundamental laws, to improve rapidly administrative and financial measures for education.

The above three perspectives are important when considering the Fundamental Law of Education for the new age, and we believe that they are indispensable in the discussion of the review of the Fundamental Law of Education.

Concerning the Fundamental Law of Education suitable for a new age, not only discussion and consent among the members of the National Commission on Educational Reform, but also national discussions are necessary to build up a national consensus. We expect that extensive discussions will be held at the national level. The government is required to fully respect the meaning of this report and address the review of the Fundamental Law of Education. It is needless to say that discussions on the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education should not incorporate nationalistic and totalitarian ideas.

CONCLUSION

The National Commission on Educational Reform, comprising of 26 members, has been studying extensively the future shape of education by examining the basis of education. Since the first meeting on March 27, 2000, we held four general meetings, and held discussions on the current situation of education, post-war educational reforms and other issues. Later, three subcommittees - the first "humanity" subcommittee, the second "school education" subcommittee, and the third "creativity" subcommittee - were set up, and each theme came under review at each subcommittee. The first subcommittee, the second subcommittee and the third subcommittee deliberated six times, seven times, and seven times respectively, and the outcome of deliberations were announced as "Report on Deliberations of Subcommittees" on July 26.

On August 28, the general meeting was resumed, deliberations were held five times based on the report of the subcommittees, and the "Interim Report by the National Commission on Educational Reform - 17 Proposals for Changing Education" was announced. In the deliberations, valuable opinions were received from well-informed people in various fields and the ideas of many people as possible were sought.

After the announcement of the Interim Report, a "One-day National Commission on Educational Reform" was held in Fukuoka, Osaka, Tokyo, and Niigata from October to November, and at the same time, we strove to listen to the opinions of as many people as possible by inviting opinions, holding explanatory meetings for various organizations and by inspecting schools. Based on these opinions, we held deliberations for four times on and after November 14, and compiled the Report by the National Commission on Educational Reform.

We didn't impose any restrictions on the deliberations and each member was involved in free and intense discussions. Also, we tried to discuss the educational system, not from the logic of providing education, but from the side of children and students receiving education and their parents. Although we covered overall education from preschool, elementary, junior, and senior, high schools to universities/graduate schools, in our discussions we focused on several themes rather than dealing with themes in every field of education. As a result, we haven't made specific proposals for some themes even though they are important.

When compiling the Report, we aimed at creating an informative and easy-to-understand report and decided to make specific and constructive proposals instead of developing ideologies or abstract arguments. As a result, we have not included in the Report all the opinions and proposals submitted by the members. Not all the proposals included in the Report reached consensus. In order to understand the background of our discussions, we hope that you will see the "Report on Deliberations of Subcommittees," "Interim Report," and "the Minutes of the Meetings."

Children are the treasures and the hopes of every home, but they are also the treasures and the hopes commonly shared by the whole society and mankind. Education should be given in

cooperation with parents, concerned personnel, and the whole society, and it is necessary that educational issues should not be left to homes and schools only, but that each one of us seriously thinks and tackles educational issues. For this reason, when promoting educational reform, a national movement should be promoted by inviting a wide range of opinions from the people concerning how education should be and by receiving cooperation from the media, etc.

We strongly wish that the whole government, beyond the borders of each agency and ministry, will address the realization of these proposals, and we will pay attention to the progress of implementation of the proposals. We sincerely would like to ask for your understanding and cooperation.