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ABSTRACT

Surveying the Japanese educational research and development system, this paper contains information on education agencies, research institutes, and universities and colleges. The keystone of the Japanese system is the Ministry of Education, from which most authority and funds derive. Its activities include gathering and publishing statistics, funding scientific research through grants to universities, coordinating the activities of research institutes, commissioning research studies, and nominating pilot schools for research. Among the approximately 400 educational research institutes in Japan, two are national: the National Institute of Educational Research (NIER) and the National Institute of Research on Special Education. In addition, each prefecture and important municipality has an institute, as do many private companies. The discussion lists the various types of Japanese institutes conducting educational research and outlines their activities. (Author)

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN JAPAN -- 1972

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Having participated in the planning of the recently created National Institute of Education, which is to serve as a focal point for educational research and development in the United States, I approached the Japanese educational research system with anticipation and a readiness to learn. I knew before arriving that there was a National Institute of Educational Research (NIER), and that it had been in existence for many years. I was vaguely aware that the research system was highly ramified, with branches reaching deeply into prefectural and municipal education agencies. Indeed our preliminary itinerary had proposed a visit to the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute for Educational Research, and in doing so had conjured up expectations of a relationship between educational research and public schooling that is still some distance from American experience. (Imagine a New York City Institute for Educational Research -- perhaps even with Al Shanker, Rhody McCoy, and Ken Clark on the Board.)

The advantage of a field trip like this one (except for the romantics among us) is that reality quickly clarifies the blurry images formed through the incomplete testimony of the written word read 8,000 miles away. Trips to the NIER, to a local school, and to the Research Division of the Ministry of Education, while certainly not adequate to make us experts on Japanese educational research, were more than enough to bring our lofty expectations firmly to ground.

The Japanese are clearly ahead of us on the organization charts; the infrastructure they have created is formidable and in many respects

*This paper was prepared for inclusion in the report on a field trip by the Educational Staff Seminar, Washington, D.C., to study education in Japan. The trip took place from December 3-20, 1972.

worthy of emulation. Before educational R&D will reach its full effect here, we shall have to establish some similar network of institutions infiltrating every level of educational policy -- national, state, and local. But when we turn to the substance of what that system does, with what eventually affects the classroom, the gap is very probably in the other direction. Here our evidence is less adequate; the three visits I noted were concerned only slightly with substance, and we talked with no researchers about their work. Nevertheless, the written material we received and our general discussions pointed strongly to a program of activities reminiscent of U.S. research before the impetus provided by the programs of the early 1960s. The content seems to comprise the conventional academic research agendas (educational psychology, history, philosophy, curriculum), the usual local activities (statistics gathering and in-service training), and some nationally organized, qualitatively evaluated field trials of innovative programs in pilot schools. Altogether, although we obtained no comprehensive figures, the annual Japanese investment in educational research and development appears to be both absolutely and relatively much smaller than ours. Indeed even the advantage in infrastructure may be illusory. We learned at the Ministry of Education that a new R&D Division was created in May to "coordinate education research and development" and that they had used a copy of our NIE preliminary plan to help organize it!

The organization of the Japanese educational R&D system is not easily comprehended, despite their much more highly centralized system of education. The keystone is certainly the Ministry of Education, from which most -- but not all -- authority and funds derive and which has a large influence over what gets done; but, the system is best viewed as embracing three segments, defined by the location of the constituent research units. The three are education agencies (national, prefectural, and local), research institutes, and universities and colleges.

EDUCATION AGENCIES

Both the national government, in its Ministry of Education, and the prefectural and local education agencies have research constituents.

Ministry of Education

Educational research has several homes in the Ministry of Education, each having different goals and modes of operation (see Figure 1).

Secretariat. Within the Minister's Secretariat there is a [illegible]; its research component has a staff of 50 professionals of whom -- it turns out -- 43 are gathering and publishing

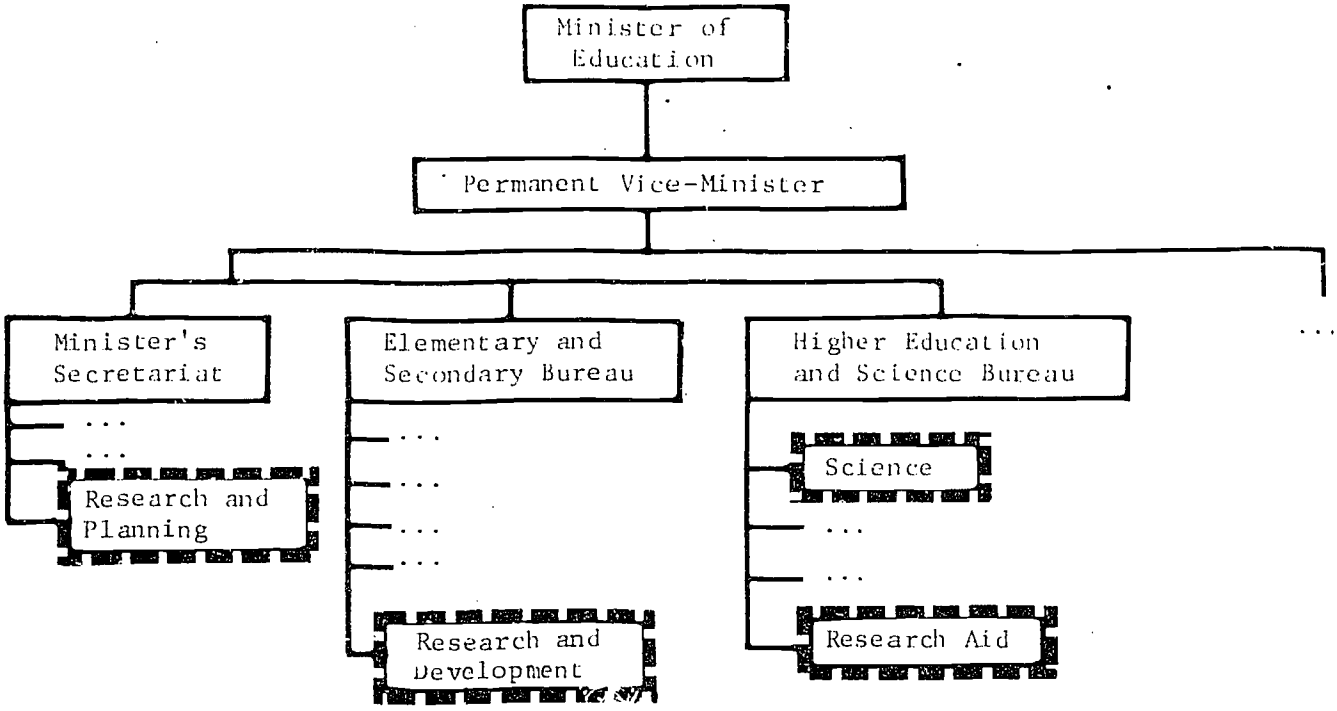

Figure 1 -- Research components of the Ministry of Education
(Dotted lines indicate bureaus with a research responsibility.)

statistics and 7 are conducting comparative education studies. They are the counterparts of USOE's National Center for Educational Statistics and portions of its Institute for International Studies. Each year this research (statistics) group runs three regular surveys (basic school statistics, local educational expenditures, expenditures shared by parents) and two or three special studies. This year, for example, they are doing a basic survey concerning "lifelong learning." These surveys are actually conducted by the prefectural research institutes, whose funds come from the Ministry of Education on a formula basis to pay for the surveys. In sum these surveys appear to cost between $15 and $20 million annually.

Higher Education and Science Bureau. In the Higher Education and Science Bureau there is a *Research Aid Division*, which funds scientific research through grants to the universities. Slightly less than 2 percent of these funds are for research in education, about $500,000 in 1971. This paid for 118 projects, one-third on educational technology and curriculum, one-third on science and industrial education, one-sixth on philosophy and history of education, and the remainder comprised a miscellany of studies of special, higher, and social education, and research in the sociology and psychology of education.

The Higher Education and Science Bureau also has a *Science Division*, which has administrative and budgetary responsibility for the NIER. Should development of innovative programs be undertaken in higher education, their support would fall to one of the other divisions of this bureau, such as that on teacher training, technical education, or university education.

Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau. In May 1972, the Ministry of Education created a *Research and Development Division* within the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau. The staff of this nascent division now numbers nine and controls only a small budget; the figure we were given translates to less than $9 million, but even this figure may be high. The division will coordinate the activities of the NIER, the 46 prefectural research institutes, roughly 100 private research institutes, and research undertaken by faculties of education. Its other tasks are (1) to make overall plans for educational R&D and

to commission research studies and development affecting school systems, curricula, and teaching methods at the elementary and secondary levels; and (2) to collect and utilize information and materials concerning educational R&D, sponsor and attend study meetings, and coordinate pilot schools for research. The use of pilot schools will, presumably, follow the current pattern. The Ministry assigns schools to conduct trials of innovative programs, providing whatever additional funds may be needed. After the trial is completed, the Ministry sponsors a national "consultation" to which both the participants in the trial and appropriate experts are invited. They form a qualitative judgment of the success and value of the program, which is published and distributed nationwide to all schools. Such consultations may also be arranged locally. The current emphasis in the pilot school program is on the use of technology. Fifty experimental schools have been selected for the national program. Each prefecture will, in addition, assign its own experimental school to explore topics related to the national theme. The prefectural research institutes will work with the prefectural experimental schools. In the past, experimental programs of this sort have been managed and supported through a division of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau; it is not clear whether the R&D Division will now take exclusive responsibility for all of them or whether it will share it with the other divisions.

Prefectural Boards of Education

The Prefectural Boards of Education also have research sections, which apparently are limited to ad hoc, administrative activities.

RESEARCH INSTITUTES

According to the staff of the NIER, there are on the order of 400 educational research institutes in Japan. Two of these are national: the NIER and a National Institute of Research on Special Education, which has just recently been formed. In addition, each prefecture and important municipality has one, and so do many private companies. (It appears that the reference to private research institutes may be the

result of national differences in linguistic usage;* these "institutes" may simply be the research and product-development components of private firms. (Our term "laboratory" might be a better translation.)

Local and Prefectural Institutes

About 170 local and prefectural institutes belong to the [illegible] Federation of Educational Research Institutes, with offices at the NIER. Each year the Federation organizes two cooperative projects (this year, Systematization of Education and Social Recognition of Children) and a series of conferences on such topics as Education in the Family, Mathematics Education, School Management, and Infant and Family Education at which each institute reports on its studies.

The prefectural research institutes each have staffs of about 100, of whom 20 or 30 are research specialists. They receive money from the National Budget on a formula basis according to the number of students and teachers in the prefecture. Only one-third of these institutes have funds beyond those provided from the National Budget. As noted earlier, their principal roles appear to be the gathering of statistics and assistance to the pilot schools in the prefecture.

Municipal research institutes are supported by the municipal and prefectural governments. Their primary function appears to be in-service training. For example, at the Momoi Daisan Shogakko primary school that we visited in the Suganami ward of Tokyo, we were told that the teachers were released from the classroom a day or two a week for in-service training at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute for Educational Research. Of somewhat greater interest, because of the favorable British experience with Teacher Centers and the consequent American interest in teacher-centered R&D projects, is the fact that Suganami ward has its own institute for educational research and in-service training that each year establishes several themes relating to problems faced in the ward's schools. The institute has a separate building and a staff of five,

*Another hypothesis is that there exists some provision of Japanese tax law or bureaucratic procedure that confers special benefits on research institutes and not on laboratories.

assisted by eight clerks, who do teacher counseling and research. Teachers from the ward schools serve on its research committees.

National Institute of Educational Research

The National Institute of Educational Research was created in June 1949; like the NIE, it inherited staff from a predecessor -- the National Educational In-service Training Center. The NIER's function is "to carry out fundamental and comprehensive research on education with the purpose of providing basic information and materials which should be useful directly or indirectly for the establishment of educational policies of the State and local governments."* In strong contrast to the NIE, the NIER does not support research done elsewhere; its sole function is to perform research itself. Its total staff is 90, of whom 63 are research workers. They are organized into five numerically designated research departments and then into twenty research sections, each having a chief and two research workers. In addition, a closely associated [illegible] appears to funnel funds from industrial and business firms to support another 30 or 40 researchers at the NIER. Another 200 part-time collaborators participate in the Institute's activities. The Institute's funds are provided principally by the government, through the Ministry of Education as mentioned earlier. In 1971, these amounted to $650,000 with another $80,000 provided by industry. The precise degree of control exercised by the Ministry of Education is unclear. Relations between NIER and the Ministry appear to be good; however, the NIER asserts that the Ministry cannot order them to make a study. At the same time, there is clearly a close linkage between NIER administrators and the Ministry power structure; consequently, embarrassment as a result of NIER research findings is not likely to be a major concern for Ministry officials.

The interests of the five research departments provide a good guide to the NIER's program:

*"NIER," brochure published by the National Institute for Educational Research, Tokyo, Japan, 1971.

I. History and philosophy of education; comparative studies.

II. Educational planning, administration, and finance; education in Asia.

III. Pupils' abilities; measurement and evaluation; guidance, counseling, and selection; infant education.

IV. Primary and secondary school curricula; industrial education; adult and youth education.

V. Mathematics and science education.

The subjects of recent projects have included the history of modern Japanese education, international comparisons of higher and teacher education, educational planning, selection of university students, pre-school curriculum, programmed learning, life-long education, and educational functions of the family. The last project comprised a survey of Japanese families that selected 14,000 families with children for a study of intentional and unintentional education. They found that in Japan, as in the West, with the decline of the extended family (and consequent growth of nuclear families) the relationships between parents and children are becoming weaker, the traditional way of life is declining, and more and more education is being turned over to the school.

The NIER relies on three techniques for implementation of its findings. First, its research reports are distributed widely. Second, through its External Service Department assistance is provided to teachers, researchers, and authorities at national and local levels who visit NIER or who occasionally receive NIER staff visits. Third, many NIER staff members serve on the advisory councils and committees that appear to wield so much influence on Japanese educational policymaking. Dr. Hiratsuka, Director-General of NIER, told us that he serves on more than ten such councils, including the influential Central Advisory Council on Education.

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

We learned very little about the research activities of the faculties of education at Japanese universities and colleges. The situation appears to be similar to that in the U.S., many researchers conducting small projects with little direct influence on the schools. The NIER indicated that about 2,000 professors, lecturers, and assistants were conducting educational research. Other figures we saw suggested that the number may be closer to 7,000 or 10,000. Differences of definition of research and of level of effort may account for this discrepancy.

JAPANESE TEACHERS UNION

One of the potentially more interesting research activities of which we heard, but could not explore fully, is *Minken -- The People's Education Research Institute*, established by the Japanese Teachers Union (NIKKYOSO) in 1957. According to the union's brochure:

> MINKEN devotes itself to educational research to serve the real interests of the people in close and broad cooperation with scholars, men of culture, teachers and parents as well as other democratic educational organizations. Its theme of study covers the history and theory of democratic education as follows; [*sic*] study of the realities of educational reform made under national monopolistic capitalism, study of educational rights of teachers and nation, study of the tradition of democratic education, etc.*

In addition, the union has held 21 annual *National Assemblies for Educational Research*. Both the Institute and the Assemblies appear to be more devoted to in-service training than to research; both are very strongly motivated by the union's clearly expressed desire to oppose the policies and activities of the Ministry of Education.

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*"Japan Teachers Union: Its Organization & Movement," a brochure published by Kyoikukaikan, Tokyo, Japan, 1972.