SCHOOL EDUCATION REFORMS IN JAPAN: 1984-2007

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KIMNEIJOU ROSY LOTJEM

JAPANESE STUDIES DIVISION
CENTRE FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय

CENTRE FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI- 110 067 (INDIA)

Phones : 91-11- 2670 4346
Fax : 91-11-2670 4346

26/7/2010

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled **"School Education Reforms in Japan: 1984-2007"** submitted by me is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The Dissertation has not been submitted for any degree of this University or any other university.

Kimneijou Rosy Lotjem

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Lalima Varma
(Prof. Lalima Varma)

CHAIRPERSON, CEAS

Chairperson
Centre for East Asian Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India

Lalima Varma
(Prof. Lalima Varma)

Supervisor

SUPERVISOR
Centre for East Asian Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

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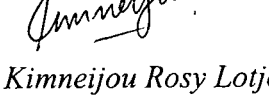

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Kimneijou Rosy Lotjem

Preface

Education is an integral part of the Japanese society and government. Education has always been regarded as a vital factor in achieving the general aims of both the society and the government. Japan's transformation from a highly feudal state to a modern democratic and advanced nation can be studied through its dependence on the formal education system. The question of how education can transform a society and a nation can be studied by studying the education system in Japan that was broadly divided into three phases. The first was the Tokugawa period 1603-1868, then the Meiji Period 1868-1945, followed by the Occupation period from the year 1945 with the end of the Second World War. Each period had its distinct system in imparting education to the students, depending on the socio-political and economic environments.

The socio-economic and political development affects the society and especially the youth in this context. To what extent does school education play a role in directing government goals? If in the past Japan achieved much of its development with the help of education the why is there a need for reforms in the present school system? And what were the reforms that were initiated by the government from 1984 and how far has the government able to achieve the same? After a brief introduction of education and its role in the society, the following three chapters will discuss mainly on the impact of economic growth on the society especially on the youth. How has this change in social trends affected the youth and what are the problems that have arisen consequently.

Second chapter will discuss the progression of society along with the economic and cultural progress till the 1980s and its effect on the youth in particular in relating to their education. The changes in society were mainly due to economic factors that affected the social milieu of Japan after the end of Second World War. These changes that came about in the social environment due to the stability of the economy added to the changes that were incorporated in the social system by the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in the modern period. Economic stability had different impact on the social environment in different ways and Japan though modern and highly efficient in terms of technology have come into confrontation with certain new issues which the government was trying to deal with by incorporating

changes within the education system. By the 1980s Japan had become an economic power, the per capita income increased and so did the increase in the nuclear families. At present the problem of ageing society, internationalisation and decrease in birth rate, unemployment problem among the youth are some of the relevant problems which the Japanese government is trying to grapple.

The third and fourth chapters are a study on the kind reforms that were introduced by the government. The third chapter will look into the creation of the Ad Hoc Council or National Council on Educational Reform. What were the politics involved in the reform creation and what were the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Council for reforms? Consequently, what were the reforms that came about from this period onwards? The basic focus of this chapter is on the creation and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Council.

The fourth chapter is a continuation of study of reforms that were initiated during the Nakasone era, and how effectively the Ad Hoc Council recommendations were implemented through the 1990s. This chapter also deals with education reforms which were introduced subsequently

The fifth chapter gives a conclusion of all the chapters where the reforms' is discussed. Has there been any positive impact through these reforms on the schools, the children and the society at large? An attempt is made in analyzing the future prospects and role of schools and education and the role that the society can play at large.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCE----------Central Council for Education

CIE----------Civil Information and Education Section

GHQ----------General Head Quarters

JTU----------Japan Teachers Union

LDP----------Liberal Democratic Party

MESSC----------Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

MEXT ----------Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

MOE----------Ministry of Education

MOFA---------- ----------Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NCER ----------National Council on Educational Reforms

SCAP----------Supreme Command for the Allied Powers

U.S----------United States

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preview of the Education System in Japan

Role of education in Japan has always been a subject of immense interest for many scholars over the centuries. School education in particular has always played an important role in the history of Japan. Education in Japan since the end of the Second World War has accomplished a great deal by responding to the demands of the times, first by realising a policy of equal opportunity for education, then by raising the educational level of the Japanese people, and further by serving as the engine for the development of the nation's economy and society. At present, however, people's trust in education appears to have been shaken enormously (MEXT published White Papers 2001)[1]. Education is an integral part of every society and government and it is regarded as a vital factor in achieving the general aims of the government and society.

Two distinct periods and events in Japanese history define the background and the development of formal education as both played a great role in nation formation. One was the Tokugawa period which was based on feudalistic pattern and the other was the Meiji period which brought an end to feudalism and ushered the foundations of democracy in Japan. In 1871, the Ministry of Education was established and with that, began the history of Japan's modern education system with the establishment of the Fundamental Code of Education promulgated by the Meiji Government in 1872. It was the period (1868-1912) that Japan moved from her pre-industrial, agrarian, feudal past to modern industrial nationhood. And by the end of the Meiji Period, her principal modern institutions were well established. Virtually the entire population had attained functional literacy, and compulsory school attendance was as close to one hundred per cent as it could be[2].

Formal education itself had its legacy from the Tokugawa period which began from in 1603. Also, the history of education system in Japan is determined by the type of

[1] Note: MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology also, known as the "Ministry of Education".

[2] Formal education became prominent during the Meiji Period in Japan. It is due to the fact that reading and writing were already very popular during the Tokugawa period. School education formed the backbone of the Japanese society as the foundation of morals, character and work ethics were taught as part of the curriculum in schools. For more details, see (Passin 1965).

government that comes into power. With each new government in power, its desires are subjective by the kind of social, political or socio economic environment that is prevailing at their time. There is a strong cultural consensus that education provides a valid criterion by which roles of society can be allocated. The education system should ideally be the institution which provides all students with a 'level playing field' of opportunity, in which each individual has an equal chance to obtain the highest level of achievement possible, and which will help meet the needs of the society (Tanabe 2000:124). In the current scenario, three important decision making bodies in the education system are the Central Government, the Prefecture and the Municipalities. The roles and relation among the Central Government, Prefecture, and Municipalities are as stated: within the Municipalities, school exercise increasing power and responsibilities as the direct providers of compulsory education. The prefectures carry out wider regional coordination and the Central government guarantees fundamentals of compulsory education (equal opportunity, high standards, and free educational services).

1.1.1 Education During Tokugawa Period: 1603-1868

The long historical process through the Edo (or Tokugawa) period generated a distinctively Japanese style of life and thought, which was destined to have a profound influence on the development of modern educational institutions. The main political institutions on Tokugawa society were established in the first four decades of the seventeenth century by Tokugawa Ieyasu himself and lasted till the time of Meiji Restoration in 1868. Japan as a country during this period was isolated without any diplomatic or official contacts with foreign countries. Internally, the system followed was the '*Bakufu*' system or the 'camp government' and was ruled by the Shogun or the Generalissimo – a traditional committal of temporal authority, which became the hereditary prerogative of the Tokugawa family[3].

It was a highly feudalistic form of government with the traditional stratification of classes into samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants with an especially strict

[3] A detailed account of the kind of school, the curriculum and the whole education system that was followed during the Tokugawa period is mentioned by Dore. He gives an account of not only the school but also the political implications of these schools that were established. People were educated in the art of reading and writing however the implication of education in its practical application was not utilised in optimum (Dore 1965).

distinction made between the samurai and the remaining strata. In this period, each fief had a school patronised by the Daimyo or landlord to bring up men of ability and they employed Confucian scholars. Instruction was based on Chinese classics which were emphasised upon Confucian doctrine, along with the history and literature of China. This fact colored the entirety of social and cultural life in the Edo period. In the area of education, distinctive schools were developed for each strata-the fief schools (*hanko or hangaku*) for the samurai and the *terakoya* for the commoners. Learning was based upon Shogunal policy, and was thoroughly imbued with Confucian thought. Therefore, during this period there was a vibrancy and growth of formal education at a fast pace.

During the early days of the Edo period, only a few fiefs had established fief schools but from about the middle of this period there was a rapid increase of such institutions, culminating in a total of some two hundred and seventy schools at the end of the period. Numerous elementary educational institutions for the general public were set up and at the lowest level were the "*terakoya*" and "*gogaku*" (schools in fiefs). The "*terakoya*" provided elementary education in the three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic to the children of part of the non-warrior general public and also taught them the moral rules necessary for commoners to live in the severely restrictive feudalistic society of that time. Each "*terakoya*" consisted of one teacher and about thirty pupils in each class which was managed by the meagre tuition fees collected from the pupils (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan Published, Education and Japan's Modernization 1972)[4]. Besides the fief schools and the *terakoya's*, there were country school called the *gogaku* or *goko* and the private school *shijuku*. Girls however were few in attending these terakoya though a good number of the Samurai women were well educated.

Throughout most of the Tokugawa era, officials were mainly interested in samurai education. Commoners were left to their own devices. It was the beginning of the modern concept of three levels of schooling- primary, secondary and higher, which were already visible in the three grades of Tokugawa schools, the *terakoya*, the *gogaku* and the higher academies of the domain and the Shogunate (Passin 1965: 27-28). The bulk of instruction in the *terakoya* was in reading and writing. Education

[4] Note: henceforth shall be termed as MOFA published Education and Japan's Modernization.

had become so popular from this period on that even illiterate parents sent their children in increasing numbers to schools in which many thousands of teachers earned a livelihood by teaching them to read, write and do arithmetic. It was a society which now depended on the written word for its efficient operation.

The two main facts of growth of scholarship were mainly on Chinese scholarship and the spread of literacy which was the ability to read and write Japanese. Additionally, the Japanese scholars from this period adhered to Confucianism as a philosophy and ethic. The reason for this transformation to Confucianism was due to the fact that Buddhist priests had monopolised the religious and social life of the Japanese, they were corrupted and the people were morally degraded. This in turn formed the backbone of the moral education that came to be followed over the centuries. The emphasis on moral education is outstanding because it is responsible for a wide variety of educational and social outcomes: the orderliness of the classroom and of society, the comparatively harmonious social interaction characteristic of Japan, and the unity and cohesiveness of the Japanese nation (Cummings 1980:278). This was a tool for disciplining and character formation of the individual. There were many well read scholars but one well known as the leader of this emancipation was Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619) (Dore 1984:14).

The other important emphasis of study was the military education known as the '*bu*' – the military arts and besides that, was the '*bun*' ('civil studies', 'learning', 'culture', 'intellectual matters', 'the literary arts'). An established government needed a strong and capable military as well as an efficient civil service system. Additionally, Western sciences, mainly medical and military were introduced at the time of the Meiji Restoration. The fast pace for the spread of literacy was largely the work of the thousands of teachers who taught with dedication in the schools. Education by the schools of feudal clans and the Tokugawa Shogunate was directed primarily to the "*Shikozu*" ("*samurai*" or warrior) class, which accounted for a mere two per cent of Japan's total population. And modern Japan inherited this class, primary recipients of a high level of education, as a reservoir of talented men (MOFA Published, Education and Japan's Modernization 1972:6).

Since the samurai's were the warrior class or the legal guardians, they were made to undergo strict formal training and were initially the only class who received a

full-fledged formal education. Due to their moral obligation and duty to maintain law and order they were instructed well in the Confucian ethics. Emphasis was laid on moulding or influencing the development of a) Moral attitudes b) Intellectual capacity, techniques, attitudes or knowledge, c) Artistic or physical attitudes or skills. At the same time the early scholars also strongly adhered to the concept of "man's changeability" means that, man can be changed to a desirable direction by the power of the man. This way of thinking is typically shown in the words of Nakae Toju, a noted Confucian scholar in the early part of the Edo Period that "learning should make a man saint" (MOFA Published, Education and Japan's Modernization 1972:4).

The strong emphasis was on moral education which would imbibe in him qualities and attributes that will enable him to serve the society with dedication and without hoarding any personal material benefits. Therefore, according to Kobayashi (1976), the first Japanese school system was set up with three distinctive characteristics which have since then been observed in most of the Japanese school systems through the ages, and which have, indeed, become almost inherent characteristics of Japanese schools. These three are the following: firstly, the schools were set up on the initiative of the government for the training of the personnel necessary to the state, secondly, from an individual point of view, the schools provided a way to social success for ambitious youths, and thirdly, the schools taught the elements of a new civilization abroad, and thus functioned as an effective tool for allowing Japan to "borrow" a culture. And this by and large formed the backbone of the education system that was to be followed in the future development of education in modern Japan.

1.1.2. Education During Meiji Period: 1868-1945

The year 1868 is a landmark in Japanese education as it was the year from which date the start of her "modernisation" was usually counted. There were about 17,000 schools of all kinds, ranging from Confucian "colleges," the iron frame of Tokugawa orthodoxy, to Terakoya (parish schools) for the commoner. However, much of these schools were scrapped or transformed when the modern school system was adopted from 1872. This new system could only be adopted due to the change in the political governance during this period. Visible fissures and weaknesses in the internal governance of the country was exposed in 1853 with the appearance of the

American fleet demanding trade with threats, and her vulnerability to defend herself. Also, this brought about a significant change in the political history of Japan. And along with it, it brought an end to the powerful Tokugawa Shogunate which had ruled Japan for over two hundred and sixty years with its rigid feudal system and ushered the era of Meiji Restoration. Their immediate purpose was to replace feudalism by a modern system based on Western practice in order to be able to compete with the West. In the same year the government ordered the abolition of Han schools, and the Ministry of Education was established to control the nations' schools. The first job of the Ministry was to develop a national education plan (Kobayashi 1965:296-7).

During the Meiji period Japan began to evolve as a modern state and many factors contributed towards its transformation. One important parameter to define its 'modern state' was the introduction of modern education system. Two prominent figures who had laid the foundations of the modern school system were educators such as Mori Arinori and Tanaka Fujimaro. The new government wished to develop education for all the people based on the concept of Civilisation and Enlightenment so as to create a strong modern nation.[5] Among the more important of these may be mentioned: the overthrow of feudalism, with its accompanying caste privilege; the introduction of modern code of laws and a judicial system, giving protection to all classes and to all legitimate interests of the people; the reform of the administration of the finances and of taxation; as well as the introduction of modern banking system; and finally the introduction of the representative form of government (Yokoi 1901:188).

The new leaders, who assumed power when the Emperor Meiji was crowned, were determined to modernise Japan's institutions and avoid the fate of colonisation. Exercising firm central leadership, they imposed a formula of "western technology and Eastern spirit" on the Japanese people (Cummings 1980:16). The government launched a movement for the indoctrination of nationalism and patriotism. And education not only supplied the skills needed for military and economic development

[5] MEXT published *Japan's Modern Educational System*, is very informative and useful for understanding the development of modern education in Japan. It provides a detailed account of the transition from samurai education of the Meiji Period to a modern education system post the Second World War. It mentions in detail the policies made by the government as far as the education system is concerned.

but also furthered the creation of a national state out of the 280 feudal domains into which the country had been divided (Passin 1965:62).

By this time, scientific revolution has swept over Europe and America and Japan had to catch up with the west. Though education in the form of reading and writing had spread far and wide in Japan, there was no real application of it in its relevance. The first modern educational system was established just after the Meiji Restoration through the promulgation of the Law on School system (*Gakusei*) in 1872. It was a large scale plan on the model of the French educational system founded by Napoleon (Oshiba 1961:229). The government made efforts to attain universal literacy all over the country. It therefore started establishing schools throughout the country and sought to disseminate education in order to change Japan fundamentally.

On the other hand, the Japanese people on their part did not hesitate to seize the opportunities thus provided. The challenges faced by the new government were not only the question of funds to finance these schools but also the fact that the borrowed Western education did not really fulfil the daily needs of the common people. It brought in confusion which triggered the decline of demand for school education among the masses. Therefore, the Department of Education issued an 'Ethical Guide' for Elementary School Teachers in June, 1881, which reminded teachers of their crucial role in moral education and in fostering the spirit of 'Reverence for the Emperor and Love of the Country' (*Sonno Aikoku*). Again in July of that year regulations for examining the conduct of school teachers were issued which also prescribed close supervision of the conduct of these instructors. For the course of study for normal schools (*Shihangakko Kyosoku Taiko*) of August, 1881, special emphasis was placed on the position of morals within the curriculums. In effect morals became the most important part of the curriculums (MEXT published Japan's Modern Educational System).

Japan, as a late developer, was one of the first societies to treat education as a tool for national development. The central government and business elites look upon education as a means for training a skilled labour force and highly qualified manpower, for identifying prospective elites, and for teaching a common culture (Cummings 1980:3-15). Therefore, by 1886, the Meiji government promulgated various ordinances concerning schools which were a fusion of the old Tokugawa

legacy and the Western education to prepare the stage for modernisation of the education system which would in turn transform the nation. Since the beginning of this period on, a selected number of students were sent abroad to study. Education became an important mechanism of social ascent. Learning was the royal road not only to the professions and to government, but also to business success as well. Additionally, many girls' schools (*jogakko*) were also founded after the Meiji Restoration. Although the girls' schools varied in their objectives, most established by the time of the proclamation of the Education System Order were of the elementary level (MEXT published, Japan's Modern Education System).

The single most important factor which transformed Japan in the space of half a century from a society of hereditary "estates" with clearly institutionalised boundaries to a society in which few people knew or cared what estate his neighbour's ancestor belonged, was the decision embodied in the decree of 1872 to establish a universal compulsory system of elementary education for all (Kobayashi 1976:25-26). It became an important tool for the government to further its goals in catching up with the west. Japan experiences a huge shift in its experience with the school education system from the Meiji period. The Tokugawa legacy in fact laid the foundation and this led to the fulfilment of the application of education in the new changing eras that followed. The government in disseminating education also adopted a strong policy of equal opportunity for all (Ahmed 1988:1674).

The aim of education was to cultivate fine personalities and to enable individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest extent so they can realise desirable objectives. Nothing, in fact, has been more central in Japanese society or more basic to Japan's success than its education system. Fundamental Law of Education aims to create citizens for a peaceful nation and society. The objective of education for the development of personality should be to help people acquire the abilities for building a satisfactory and spontaneous life, for adapting to social realities and for the creative solutions of difficulties. An important figure in the educational field was Mori Arinori, who from 1885 to 1889 served as minister of education, played a key role in articulating the new policy that was to remain as the framework for Japanese education through Second World War. Mori's concept of education consisted of the following three pillars-

(i) Education for enriching and strengthening the State,

(ii) Education for enlightenment designed to alter the old consciousness and

(iii) Education for the maintenance of Japan's traditional national polity, as typically expressed by his following statement: "Under an unbroken line of Emperors continuing through all eternity like heaven and earth, Japan, with superior power, has never been subjected to humiliation by any foreign country, and moreover, the people's spirit of defending the country and their character of loyalty and allegiance, inherited from their forebears and steadily cultivated and strengthened, still remain untarnished"(MOFA published Education and Japan's Modernization 1978).

The school system begins with children from their sixth year enter the primary school to receive elementary education in morality, Japanese reading and writing, arithmetic, Japanese geography and history, drawing, music and physical culture. Above this was the middle school course to receive secondary education of five years in the following subjects: morality, Japanese and Chinese Literature, one foreign language (English, German or French), geography, history, mathematics, natural sciences, physics and chemistry, principles of law and economy, drawing, singing and gymnastics. Most elementary schools lower secondary schools, and special schools for handicapped were public funded and supervised by the local government, while the share of private sector is significant in the rest of education levels (Tanabe 2000:123).

Moral and military education occupied a great part in the plan of the system of public education in the whole empire (Villamor 1925:111). Since very low or no emphasis is placed on religious teachings in the schools, the government turns to the moral education to emotionally control its citizens. In moral education, individualistic and sometimes utilitarian morals were emphasised in place of the feudalistic morals based on "loyalty and patriotism" (Morito 1955:339). Moral education gained prominence due to the fact that earlier, during the Tokugawa period, Japan was fragmented into more than three hundred units and the warriors and the common people owed loyalty more to their local Lords than the national government.

Therefore, the Meiji reformers were faced with the challenge of altering this pattern of old allegiance. The new curriculum of spiritual training, richly infused with centrist themes of loyalty to the emperor and allegiance to the national purpose, was a principle means toward this goal of national integration. To ensure that local areas

received the message, the young government quickly moved to a system whereby the central government exercised extensive control over local schools: text were authorised by the central government, school principals were government appointees, expenses in the compulsory schools were supported by central government subsidies, and central government inspectors made annual visits to each local schools.

In these ways the government directed local schools to adhere to national policy (Cummings 1980:20). Concerning the idea of equal education, whereas the samurai and commoners had gone to different schools during the Edo period the Education System Order indicated all people should attend the same elementary schools. In fact for some time they tended to go to different schools, but as the educational level of the new public schools improved both groups began to attend together. Thus the Education System Order through modernising the schools promoted social equality, and it is especially for this contribution that it is remembered.

Though primary education was compulsory and at the same time accessible to every individual, not so in the higher education system. The idea of equal opportunity through education did not really break into the social classes of the society. Higher education was very expensive and only those who belonged to the richer classes were able to avail of this opportunity. Many poor youth living in the rural villages resented the inequalities promoted by the educational system. By the time of the Second World War, the enrolment rate for elementary school had reached almost hundred percent, while the rate of the secondary education was about twenty percent (Shimizu 2001:194).

1.1.3 Education Since 1945

In August, 1945, Second World War ended in Japan's defeat, and with the formal surrender of Japan, supreme authority passed into the hands of General Douglas MacArthur (1880 -1964), as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). Under SCAP, for the control of the Japanese government was established the General Headquarters (GHQ) and as one of the Special Staff Sections of GHQ the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) was set up to advise SCAP on policies relating to "public information, education, religion, and other sociological and cultural problems of Japan" (Ministry of Education 1980). To aid in the development of concrete proposals for educational reform, the SCAP or occupation authorities invited

twenty-seven distinguished U.S educators to Japan in March of 1947. These educators, known as the U.S. Education Mission to Japan, produced a report that provided the clearest statement of the philosophy underlying the subsequent reform (Cummings 1980:31).

The evolution of Japanese education closely parallels the growth of the Japanese economics and socio-political structure. Major difference from the pre-war system are: the multi-track school system was changed to a single track system; co-education was introduced also into secondary and higher education; compulsory education was extended to cover the lower secondary level, (through grade nine), and, as a result the time for the differentiation of courses was shifted from the lower stage to the higher stage of secondary education; various courses including general and vocational courses, full-time and part-time or correspondence courses, were created at upper secondary schools; and teacher training was introduced in the universities (MEXT Published, Japan's Growth and Education, 1963).

In brief, Japanese education both anticipates and responds to the country's critical needs (Shimahara 1992:7). At the end of the Second World War, Japan was faced with a situation which was very different from the pre war days. The pre war remarkable achievements had come to nothing. The whole nation was devastated and the horrors of the war were evident all over the nation. The reasons for Japan's participation in the war and its ambition for colonial expansion were linked to its educational policy. A centralist system of mass education was established by the imperial state in the mid-nineteenth century to act as an engine for transforming a feudal society into a modern and industrialised state that could resist Western colonisation. The General Headquarters' goal was to implement fundamental reforms throughout Japanese society in order to foster a democratic and peaceful nation, and the educational system was considered the cornerstone for this effort (MEXT Published, Japan's Modern Educational System).

Therefore, following the Second World War, the allied occupation authorities established a new system of schooling with the aim of affecting another social transformation, from an ultra nationalist state to a democratic society and to strengthen growth. By the late 1970s, Japan became a successful liberal democracy and the world's second largest economy, characterised by a relatively even wealth distribution

(Okano 2008:2). The new system promoted the "6-3-3 system" of education. This system set up a new six-year primary school followed by three-year lower secondary schools and made attendance at them compulsory. The Occupation was instructed to work through the existing Japanese government and emperor but not support them. In the early months, the Occupation issued of a number of directives to the Japanese government, and among them were several intended to remove all militaristic and ultra nationalistic influences. The Japanese school is required to hold classes for at least two hundred and forty days each year or roughly six days a week for forty weeks.

1.1.3.1 School Curriculum

The curriculum at the primary level covers three different areas – moral education, special events (such as ceremonies, excursions and athletic meetings, and classroom guidance on health, safety and so forth), and regular subjects which consists of eight subjects: Japanese language and literature, social studies, mathematics, science, music, arts and handicrafts, homemaking, and physical education. The primary children also spend relatively more time on music, fine arts, and physical education the kind of subjects that young children mostly enjoy. Music plays a very important part of the children's life as well as the curriculum. The vast majority of schools have special rooms for music equipped with pianos, organs, accordions, xylophones, and several standard percussion instruments.

At the middle school level, the children are introduced to school clubs for activities such as tennis, basketball, soccer, music, art, and history, and virtually every middle school student belongs to one. Middle school brings an end to the uniform pattern that is followed however for the high school, children are exposed either to an academic or vocational curriculum depending on the high school they enter. Thus in the field of education, the courses of moral education, geography, and Japanese history that were considered supportive of wartime ideology were temporarily suspended (Cummings 1980:31-39).

For the Ministry of Education, its main concern soon after the war was to dismantle the war time mobilisation structure where in students were directly trained or recruited to work in areas which were directly related to war. The goal was to reinstate the nation's education system to a normal state as soon as possible. The overall motive was for the abolition of the militaristic, ultra-nationalistic thought and

education which had dominated the preceding decade in order to create a more democratic environment. The share of public schools is relatively larger in upper secondary schools (about seventy five percent in statistics in 1999), whereas private schools share more than public schools in both kindergarten (about sixty percent) and higher education institutions (about seventy five percent). There are some state schools established by the central government in each education levels (Tanabe 2000:123).

The roles and relation among the Central Government, Prefecture, and Municipalities are as stated: within the Municipalities, school exercise increasing power and responsibilities as the direct providers of compulsory education. The prefectures carry out wider regional coordination and the Central government guarantees fundamentals of compulsory education (equal opportunity, high standards, free educational services) (MEXT Published, Japan's Growth and Education: 1963).

The guiding principles to be adopted under the new educational system were democracy in place of fascism, freedom in place of control, decentralisation in place of centralisation, education of the masses rather than the elite, diversity in place of uniformity and internationalism in place of parochial nationalism. And the Fundamental Law of Education was promulgated in March 1947 (MOFA published Education and Japan's Modernization 1978:65). Its objectives were liberated from the militaristic values of the Imperial State and rededicated for the creation of a democratic and pacifist society. Thus, the ultimate aim of education was no longer conceived as producing loyal, passive subjects, but as cultivating the kind of human beings who would never waver in their commitment to pursue truth and demand justice in their social relations (Horio 1986).

Additional to that, this new system promoted the local governments to control the educational administration with the creation of the Education Commission Law of July 1948 and the Law Relative to the Establishment of the Education Ministry of May 1949. As a consequence, a large portion of the administrative function, including the selection of textbooks and appointments of teaching personnel, was entrusted to local Education Commissions elected by popular vote, while the role of the Education Ministry changed drastically from supervision, control and instruction as in the past to guidance and advice for the Education Commissions and educational and research

establishments as well as various services. Japan has been following the norms laid down by the occupation authorities and no significant changes have been made. However, with the changing nature of the Japanese society over the years, especially from the late 1970s, it has become necessary to bring about reforms in the school system to adjust to the changing social needs. There has been a sharp rise in the social problems especially among the youths and school children.

There has been no significant change in the school education system after the Second World War as Japan has been following the same system. However, from the late 1970s onwards, Japanese society and education is confronted with significant challenges. From around 1980, against the backdrop of the spread of the nuclear family and the progress of urbanisation, Japan increasingly witnessed a loss of social solidarity and decline in educational functions of the family (MEXT published White Papers: 2001). Also, it was from this period on that, there were significant rise incidents of student non-attendance (*futoukou*), acts of violence (*konai bouryoku*), class room breakdown (*gakkyu houkai*) and bullying (*ijime*). Also, Japan's status as an economic power is challenged as it has experienced more than a decade of stagnation beginning from the 1990s. And with the Japanese economy increasingly dependent on international business and fast-changing science and technology industries, therefore, the government faced demands from many quarters calling on it to reform its education system to bring it into line with the growing need for more diversely talented and creative workers and a 'life-long learning system'(Schoppa 1991:2).

1.1.3.2 Role and Status of Teachers

As in the past reiterating from history, teaching is considered an honourable job in Japan. Even at the present time, teachers are allocated tremendous responsibility upon the education of their pupils. Though they are allocated respect in the society, they are meagrely paid. Added to that, they do not have the authority to make decision regarding the school system and suffer from lack of autonomy. Often there was a lot of interference in the classrooms by the government officials such as the bureaucracy. The Ministry of Education is the authority on school related matters. However, a critical new factor in the political scene was the emergence of the *Nikkyoso* (the Japan's Teachers' Union) following the conclusion of the Second World War to fight for the improvements of the working conditions of the teachers. The union developed

a close association with the progressive camp and became the leading articulator of opposition to the conservative's camp's educational policies.

Though there may be various reasons behind the creation of the teachers' union one major reason was for creating a pressure force to improve the economic status of the teachers. Traditionally, the ideal teacher was a selfless person who stayed at school long after normal classroom duties were finished to play with the children, provide extra lessons, attend teachers meetings, and so on. These traditional expectations carried over to the new system, but *Nikkyoso* insisted that teachers should not be expected to perform these activities unless they were paid for overtime just as an assembly-line worker is paid when he responds to the extra demands.

1.2 Present Situation of School Education in Japan

In the present context, the organisation and management structures of the educational institutions are as follows: the popularly elected National Diet designates the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, in turn, appoints the Minister of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (hereafter referred to as the Minister of Education). The prefectural boards of education consist of five members who hold office for four years. These members are appointed by the governor with the consent of the assembly of the prefecture. The prefectural superintendant of education is appointed by the board with the approval of the Minister of Education. Cities, towns and villages have municipal boards of education consisting of three to five members. They are appointed by the mayor with the consent of the municipal assembly, and hold office for four years. The superintendent of municipal board of education is appointed from among the members of the board, with the approval of the prefectural board of education (Muta 2000: 4).

Education has always played a significant role both in transforming society and economy and its impact is all pervasive. The overall development and economic achievement of Japan is made possible with the proper channelising of human resources. Japan's education system has served as a driving force behind social development through the fostering of human resources. Nevertheless, while post-war education system has served as a driving force behind social development, the environment surrounding children as changed significantly, and a variety of issues have come to light. Looking at the current status of education, it appears that confidence in education is wavering, and that education is facing a number of

significant problems. In addition to bullying, truancy, and school violence, horrific incidents that should not be happening are taking place in which children are both the victims and the victimisers. Furthermore, factors such as the decline in the normative consciousness of society as a while and changes in family and community values are casting shadow on the sound growth of children.

At the same time, a dwindling birth rate, the trend toward nuclear families and the advancement of urbanization have led to a striking decline in the educational functions of the home and local community-which had always shouldered the responsibilities of teaching children how to behave with people, cultivating self-discipline and collective spirit, and passing on culture and traditions. Such circumstances have formed a backdrop against which various problems have emerged, including bullying, non-attendance at school and the worsening issue of juvenile delinquency. Moreover, school education to date has fallen into a form by which knowledge is one-sidedly instilled in students, thus leading to the neglect of education and activities that cultivate thinking faculties and an enriched humanity. In addition, with the excessive emphasis placed on equal opportunities in education, the concept of education in accordance with the essentially diverse individuality and capabilities of each and every child has not been taken into full consideration. These are some of the points upon which we must reflect (MEXT Published White Papers: 2000).

Also the present fundamental expectations which underlie each level of schooling are moral education and ways of responding to internationalisation, the growth of an information-centered society, environmental problems, unemployment problems among the youth, a society with a low birth rate with a high proportion of the elderly. The National Council on Education Reform (NCER) was established in 1984, as an ad hoc advisory committee to then Prime Minister Nakasone. The Council submitted four reports in which it identified fundamental principles for educational reform: (1) putting emphasis on individuality; (2) putting emphasis on fundamentals; (3) the cultivation of creativity, thinking ability, and power of expression; (4) the expansion of opportunities for choices; (5) the humanisation of the educational environment; (6) the transition of lifelong learning; (7) coping with internationalisation; (8) coping with Information Age.

The NCER described its mission as nothing less than completing the third educational reform in modern Japanese history that was begun by the Central Council on Education in 1974. Also, The National Council on Education Reform was inaugurated in September 1984 as an advisory organisation for the Prime Minister to deal with education reform. "The Council's basic ideas about educational reform "towards the 21st century," expressed in its recommendation reports were condensed in the following three goals: (MEXT published White Papers: 2001)

1. The principle of respect for the individual;
2. Transition of lifelong learning system; and
3. Response to internationalisation and the information society.

The basic aim of the reform is to cultivate and develop a rich sense of humanity and a deep sense of cooperation among children from a tender age. Once again an emphasis is laid on the improvement of moral education as a part of the school curriculum due to strong desire in the basic manners and ethics of children and their moral development. Also, singing the national anthem (*kimigayo*) and upholding the national flag (*hinomaru*) to inculcate patriotism in the classrooms as education aims at nurturing respect for tradition and culture and a sentiment of loving the country and homeland which Nakasone would have wanted to call it 'healthy nationalism'.

So, Japan faced with these challenges, the question arises as to what kind of reforms should be carried out in the near future. These are the areas which this proposed research paper will focus and what are the likely chances for the reforms to help in the near future. The close association between schools and the children, the vast amount of time spent in schools in learning and the resources spent on education sums up for the government to direct its objectives towards reforming the schools in the 21st century. The basic purpose for education is not only for fulfilling and sustaining the economy of the country but also responding to the social needs of the community.

1.3 Some Noted Works Referred to in Understanding the Education System in Japan:

Passin Herbert, (1965) *Society and Education in Japan,* is a comprehensive study about the Japanese society and its profound base on education. It is a detailed

work on education as it has progressed over since the Tokugawa period and how during the Meiji period it was developed as a major instrument in developing the society and utilising it for the economic growth and development of the nation. Passin has done a thorough work on the particular implementation of the Japanese understanding of education and its far fetching reliance upon the same.

Cummings K. Willaim, (1980) *Education and Equality in Japan*, focuses on the building up education of Japan which the government used as a tool in meeting the needs of the nation. Earlier the Meiji reformers were caught up in the 'catching up' with the West so school education were based on the same lines that were followed in United States, Britain, France and Germany. However, a huge emphasis was given to moral education during this period. Moral education was a more practical lessons imparted to the students as they were made to work on certain areas where they could co-operate and work together. This was a way to inculcate a feeling of equality and a sense of belongingness among students. His main emphasis is the understanding of education as a means of achieving oneness, equality and homogeneity in the Japanese schools. This book will form the background in the understanding of development of schools in Japan and also how it has come to evolve over the years.

Schoppa J. Leonard,(1991) Education *Reform in Japan, A Case of Immobilist Politics*, highlights the difficulties for Japan to bring out reforms in school education despite the government policies due structure. He gives a historical background of Japanese school education from the Tokugawa period, through the Meiji in 1868, to the Occupation period till the time Nakasone became Prime Minister in 1982. His main emphasis is in understanding the politics at play that prevents the government from taking a proactive role in implementing the reform policies. The book goes through transformation till the period Prime Minister Nakasone ended his tenure in 1987. He is primarily interested in the policy making progress and used the issue of education reform as a means to study this. Also, he forms the idea that Japan's education system was not able to change significantly as genuine reform in Japan cannot be possible owing to the conflicts between the government and the bureaucracy.

Hood P. Christopher, (2001) Japanese Education Reform Nakasone's Legacy, examines the reform policies implemented by Prime Minister Nakasone during the 1980's and the contents of the reform programme. Nakasone was an advocate for a

strong 'radical reform' in the school education when he took up office. Education is a subjective area and there is no agreed way in which education should be pursued. And it is important that education is not seen in total isolation from the rest of the Japanese society. It interacts with other parts of the society in many different ways, both influencing the rest of the society and being influenced by the changes and demands of the society. He states that the Nakasone-initiated education reform programme is the third great education reform in Japan. The creation on the ad hoc council in 1984 and internationalism was the most successful areas of the Nakasone education reform in the early years of reform.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

It was during the 1980s that social problems became rampant among the youths or the school children. Since schools play a major role in determining one's character and building one's capabilities, and with the declining morals, the need for school reforms came under serious consideration. The proposed research will use social problems as an independent variable and reforms as the dependent variable. It is due to the changing social, political and economic atmosphere within the state which also led to the rise in crime rates among the youth. The proposed research will look into the economic changes within the larger scope of the society. Also, this study will employ historical sociology as it will analyse the educational changes in Japan that evolved over the years. The inductive method will also be used to study and understand this proposed research.

A broad understanding of the education and society in Japan can be based on the research work of Emile Durkheim, a renowned French Sociologist, in *Education and Sociology* (1956). He treats system of education in terms of their relationships to the total social systems in which they occur; this leading principle of his method is one of the basic factors of much contemporary sociological inquiry, and the details of the analysis, prove the fruitfulness of this mode of attack, in the clarification of the functions of education. His main proposition of education is that, it is not the school that dictates the society; rather it is society that dictates to the school. Any changes in the society are reflected and witnessed in the education curricula of that period. Therefore, *"Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain*

number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined". An individual is born into the society and so he has to adhere to the needs and demands of the same. The right means of achieving a certain set of goals is by implementing the techniques through the medium of curriculum taught in schools so that these ideas are embedded in the young minds and they learn to strive from an early age. School education is important means for growth not only for an evolving society but also for the government. It is a means to achieve the objectives of both the society and the government. 'Education' is for the sustenance and continuity of life for the future accompanied with a sound knowledge and understanding of the past. In the case of Japan, each time a new government came into power, the past experiences is always taken into consideration so as to make better policies that serve the needs of the people and the society as a whole.

Also, John Dewey an eminent educationist, determines education as a process of growth and it is trough this concept that he links education with democracy. Dewey believed that there is an intimate connection between education and social action in a democracy. And democracy is understood as a mode of associated, conjoint, communicated living and it is the only type of society in which individuals are able to grow and socially participate in a manner that allows for the realization of their unique interests and gifts. Additionally, for a democracy to flourish, it requires individuals who maximise their potential in activity with others. This is also true when seen in the Japanese context as learning in isolation perpetuates the duality of mind and action, and of the individual and society. His passion for democracy, for educating so that all may share a common life, provides a strong rationale for practice in the associational settings in which informal educators work.

Dewey believed that school should teach students how to be problem- solvers by helping students learn how to think rather than simply learning rote lessons about large amount of information. Dewey also believed that schools should help students learn to live and to work cooperatively with others. His idea of progressive growth is very much in lines with the Japanese approach towards education. Japan has experienced phenomenal changes in its policies towards school education based on the needs of the society and the nation from time to time.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL GROWTH: IMPACT ON EDUCATION SINCE 1980s

2.1 Japan's Economic growth: Impact on Education.

Education and society have been progressing simultaneously over the centuries in Japan. Education in the early Meiji period provided the foundation on which the modern Japanese economic system was based. In other words, the diffusion of elementary education raised the quality of the people's skills, modernised their thought, and made it possible for them to participate successfully in modern economic activities. This was followed by the educational policies during the 1960s and much of the 1970s was consciously designed to foster economic development after the defeat and devastation caused by the Second World War. Also, the new social system and political system was based on democracy and egalitarianism. Academic achievement became very important to many Japanese children not only as individuals but also as members of their families and society at large.

Though the education system was borrowed from the American school system, however unlike Americans, who value individualism, the Japanese frown on deviance and value conformity to a group, whether one's family, one's school, or one's company[6]. This intrinsic nature of the Japanese society thus established an egalitarian and uniform social environment beginning from the school level.

Following the Second World War, the American led Occupation made radical changes in the education system with three main goals which in turn affected the whole social system in unprecedented ways. The first goal was demilitarisation, to uproot the ultra nationalistic education system of the pre-war Imperial state; Second was democratisation, and equal opportunity; and the third was a move for a higher degree of decentralisation in the education administration with control shared between the Ministry of education and the local government.

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[6] To understand the Japanese society, their nature, mannerism, attitude, outlook, etc,. Nakane has formulated the criteria of 'attribute' and 'frame' and the ways groups are formed in Japan. A large degree of importance is given to the group above the individual. The egalitarian system of education followed in Japan can be understood by understanding the society at large. (Nakane 1972).

The new system was, thus, called the '6-3-3-4' system. This system was simpler then the pre-war system and was aimed at providing greater opportunities to advance to secondary and higher education. The conservative government at the time in partnership with the *Zaikai* stressed the link between economic growth and the education system through a new concept of *'Noryokushugi'* or the 'ability first' principle. The rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s was both a product of the Occupation's revolutionary reforms and a means for sustaining them. The school produced large supply of high school and higher education graduates to meet the needs of the expanding labour market (Green 2000:420).

Indeed, there is little doubt that since the middle of the 1950s the interests of industry have been extremely influential in shaping educational policy (Beauchamp 1987:310). And these efforts have paid off because by the 1980s the Japanese society had by far and large witnessed tremendous changes within it. It had become an affluent, modern society with high standard of living and held the second highest economy right after the US. This educated and competent work force contributed to post-war Japanese economic recovery and development (Fujita 2004:1) Japanese economy between the years 1956-1973, grew at the spectacular rate of almost ten percent a year. This growth declined but still maintained a respectable growth of three point eight percent, until 1991 despite two outright recessions (Schoppa 2001:78). Without doubt, demographic changes also took place with a massive increase in the share of the population living in urban areas since the end of the Second World War, most of it having taken place by 1970.

2.1.1 School and Job Market

Additionally, Japanese education was related to business and economy in regard to Japanese companies' hiring practices and school connections. First-class business organisations that offers ("lifetime commitment") and *nenkosei* ("seniority pay") still tend to recruit only from certain top-level universities. Rosenbaum and Kariya (1989) also argue that Japan offers a clear example of institutional linkages between schools and workplaces as employers allocate a number of jobs to each high school and school staff nominate and rank students for these jobs. This situation created severe competition to get admissions to good schools. Thus, a student's education determined his or her occupation and quality of life. Also, these companies

contain cliques and hierarchies of cliques that were based on the university one graduated from; one's clique often influences one's promotions and raises (Ito 1993:373 and Refsing 1992:124). Under such circumstances, the pressure to get accepted in a prestigious university becomes all the more necessary.

A common explanation for excessive value placed on the educational background of individuals is that there remains a practice where leading corporations often open their employment opportunities only to those who graduate from prestigious universities (MEXT Published White Papers 1989). Therefore, this practice is followed by the common trend which is to get admission into one of the prestigious universities so as to be able to get acceptance in one of the reputed companies. A child is mentored from a very early age to aim for a seat in one of these universities.

2.1.2 Examination Hell

A strong attachment between educational achievement and employment defined the social status of the individual. A good social status depended on the educational credentials and so resulted in the intense preparation to enter high ranking universities. In Japan competitive exams provide access to upper secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions. Japanese society's preoccupation with academic achievement and competitive examinations resulted from the close fit between educational career and future life chances (Knipprath and Arimoto 2007:206). The 'one chance' nature of the educational system based on highly competitive entry using entrance examinations had concentrated the minds of young people and their parents (McCormick 1988, 1989). The highest rewards, as well as the most responsible positions should go those who do well in education.

This leads to intense competition for students to do well on entrance examinations to get to the best universities. The excessive value placed by society on entrance examination leads to undue stress on young people and caused students to focus their academic efforts exclusively on subject materials covered by examinations. A lot of parents believe that the excessive competition of entrance examinations has a negative influence on the development of children, and the many children attending private cram schools (*juku*) miss other important experiences related to play, community activities, and general living (Gordon 1998:1-17). The university entrance

examinations in turn constitute one of the most important educational problems in Japan.

The post-war reformation of the educational system brought a rapid increase in the number of high-school pupils. In 1956 their number had increased to 765,000 but lack of facilities prevented the colleges and universities from accepting more than 12,35,000 students. Consequently, the competition for university admission had become more rigorous. In 1956, 55,000 high-school graduates attended special preparatory schools after they had failed college entrance examinations (Yoda and Hidano 1962:268).

2.1.3 Jukus

The proliferation of the *juku*[7] (cram schools) was fuelled by an increasing intensification of entrance competition in the 1970s. Parents' expectations from schools are of a high degree. They seemed especially positive about the school's extensive program aimed at developing the non cognitive aspects of personality – for example, ambition, social attitudes, and moral orientations (Cummings 1980:115). Children quickly become aware of the importance of the entrance examinations, and some parents suggests that negative effects of becoming immersed in this system are apparent by the time children enter junior high school (Stevenson 1991:115).

Table 1. *Juku* Attendance

Juku

	Elementary grade					Junior high school grade			
Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1976	3.3	4.8	7.5	11.9	19.4	26.6	37.9	38.7	37.4
1985	6.2	10.1	12.9	15.4	21.1	29.6	41.8	44.5	47.3
1994	12.1	14.1	17.5	25.6	31.1	41.7	52.5	59.1	67.1

(source: LeTendre Et al 1998:288)

[7] *Juku* are privately run, after school hours tutoring school geared to help elementary and secondary students perform better in their regular daytime school work and to offer courses in preparation for university entry examination. *Juku's* had gained popularity during the past two decades and played an important role in the lives of high school students who appear for college entrance examinations. A large percentage of high school students in large cities attend *juku*, but *juku* are not as popular in smaller communities. Attendance at after-school *juku* extended the school day to early hours of evening, a situation that was considered to be demanding for children. And the teaching method employed by the *juku* teachers considered a place too great a reliance on learning by memorisation. The major influence of the examination system was on secondary school students but its effects spill over into the elementary schools. There are about 50,000 *juku's* in Japan.

The Fundamental Law of Education is the basic legislative framework which identifies and sets out the objectives and principles of education in Japan. Specially, the law covers such objectives and principles as equality of educational opportunity, compulsory education, co-education, school education, out-of-school education, the prohibition of politically partisan education, the prohibition in public sector schools of religious education pertaining to specific religion, and the prohibition of inappropriate control over education by a sectional interest wishing to subvert education for its own purposes (Numano et al 2002:36).

For Japan, education was the transforming factor for the society. The high quality of teaching and learning has been demonstrated by the four international comparative studies on student performance in math and science conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 1964-70, 1978, 1994-95 and 1999. Each time the average scores of Japanese students were among the top three countries. The results of these comparative studies and Japan's post-war economic success have attracted the attention of other countries to Japanese schooling, which has been highly appraised since the 1980s.

Table 2: Achievement in Mathematics of 1995 (Top Five Countries)

Country	Average Achievement
Singapore	643
Korea	607
Japan	605
Hong Kong	588
Belgium (FL)	565

(*Source: Kurosaki 2002:585*)

Table 3: Achievement in Science of 1995 (Top Five Countries)

Country	Average Achievement
Singapore	607
Czech Republic	574
Japan	571
Korea	565
Bulgaria	565

(*Source: Kurosaki 2002:585*)

Table 4: Achievement in Mathematics of 1999 (Top Five Countries)

Country	Average Achievement
Singapore	604
Korea	587
Chinese Taipei	585
Hong Kong	582
Japan	579

(Source: Kurosaki 2002:585)

Table 5: Achievement in Science of 1999 (Top Five Countries)

Country	Average Achievement
Chinese Taipei	569
Singapore	568
Hungary	552
Japan	550
Korea	549

(Source: Kurosaki 2002:586)

It is very ironic however, that Japan launched the third major education reform just when many other countries paid attention to and tried to learn from the Japanese schooling (Fujita 2000:2). Despite high scores in math and science for decades in the international assessments conducted, Japan required to reform its education system. Many Japanese, the commercial sector in particular, were critical of the traditional education system and called for change (Leung 2004:4 and Rohlen 1995:105). They started to question the effectiveness and efficiency of Japanese schooling to meet various needs and demands of the postmodern society, using phrases like "the end of catch-up type development and schooling" and "the end of uniform schooling" (Fujita 2004:3). Kurosaki (2002) argues that most parents, educators and policy makers in Japan were not satisfied with the quality of Japanese schooling. There are approximately 139, 000 students in compulsory education who do not attend school for more than thirty days in one school year without any special reasons for such absence, such as economic problem or illness. This number has doubled in ten years and now one in thirty six students of Japanese high school (twelve to fourteen years) belong to this category.

Schools were required to hold classes for at least two hundred and forty days each year or roughly six days a week for forty weeks. Even though the school days were much longer in Japan, attendance rates were higher. Parents believe their children should go to school, no matter what (Cummings 1980:113). Large number of

students competes for very few seats in the few prestigious national universities. Entrance examinations determine which student had the best intellectual abilities and were therefore appropriate to be admitted into these schools or universities (Mori 2002:27). So this also calls for the reform of the educational system as it attributes to internal pressures as the intensity of the competition for university entrance extensively damages the personal growth and development of large number of children as it created hindrances and impediment to a more varied and reason for discouraging creativity.

Indiscipline and aggressive behaviour among student is sometimes alleged to be a by-product of the 'examination hell' syndrome as it affects the junior high school system (McCormick 1989:134). The entrance examinations for high school and college were accused of exerting excessive pressure on students and of undermining their interest in learning. Furthermore, large number of students were said to be failing in school, unable to keep pace with a demanding curriculum (Bjork and Tsuneyoshi 2005:620). Since a lot of time is spent in schools, a possible and positive approach for the government to deal with such crisis is to redefine the education system.

The 'aim of education' was amiss in the present circumstances and a new system was mandatory to tackle and redefine the goals of education. This move is to make education and studies more proactive and significant in solving the crisis. Inculcation of good manners and morals became mandatory for reconstruction. One of the most radical changes that came about in the 1980s was the introduction of the Ad Hoc council in 1984. The then Prime Minister of Japan Nakasone was instrumental in formulating such change in the educational system. According to Beasley (2001), Nakasone's interest in education, motivated in part by his wish to strengthen traditional values, also had international dimensions. In April he set up a Council of Education to advise the Prime Minister on how to remove those features of the country's education system which seemed outmoded, and how to fit it to be a suitable preparation for the qualities which Japan would need in future in dealing with the outside world.

2.1.2 Juvenile Crime and Delinquency in Japan

According to the Police White Paper in 1996, the crime rate for juvenile's ages 14 years old to 19 years old was the highest in the previous twenty years. In 1989, the number of arrested juveniles became the largest among the entire number of criminals, and from then, the rate of juvenile delinquency tends to increase (Nakanishi 2003:23). This in turn challenged the age old system of education that was supposed to create an all round development of the individual. With wide media coverage of such crimes, rise in juvenile crimes became a major cause of concern for all sections of the society. Since the latter half of the 1970s, school problems such as violence, truancy, bullying, suicide, and dropping out have become serious. According to the National Police Agency's survey on juvenile delinquency, the number of juveniles arrested for criminal offenses in FY2000 declined from the previous fiscal year but still remained at a high level in what police called the fourth wave of juvenile delinquency in the postwar period.

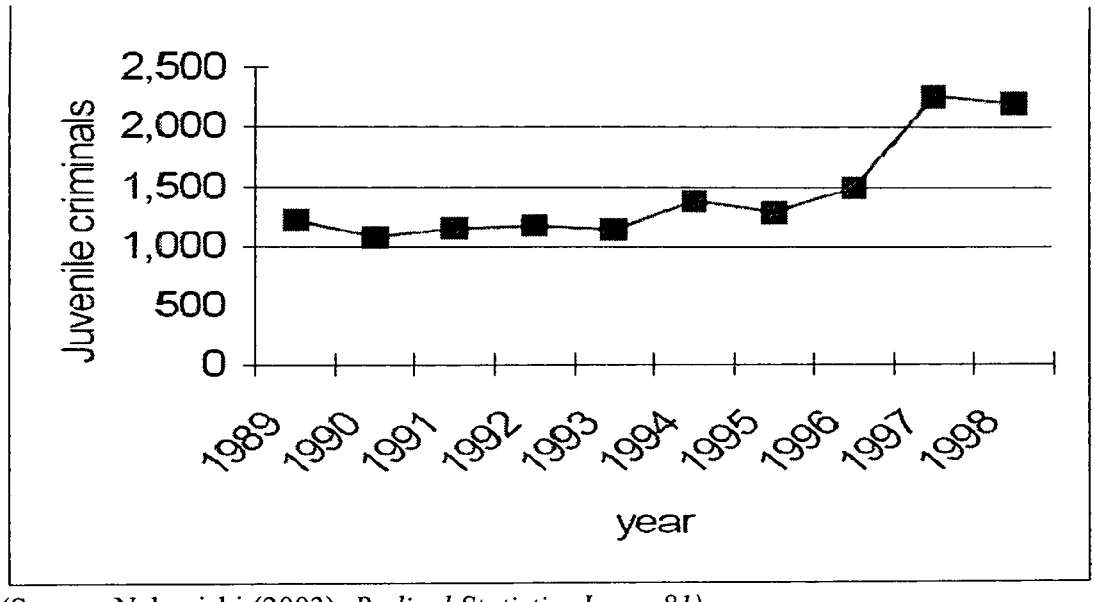
Particularly between 1999 and 2000, there was a string of heinous crimes by young people. Juvenile delinquency being one of the major problems even during the 1990s, the government undertook measures to amend or revise the juvenile laws. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, for example, the number of students refusing to attend school (elementary and junior high school students who were absent from school more than 50 days a year) increased three times by 1985, five times by 1990, and eight times by 1996, compared with the level in 1975. The number of school violence incidents increased three times from 1986 to 1996. With regard to these school problems, junior high schools have had considerably higher level of problems than high schools and elementary schools. Responding to this situation, educational policies have increasingly emphasized the fostering of individuality and creativity as well as more study in the humanities.

In addition, bullying has been recognised as an increasingly serious issue, although cases of school violence have decreased over the course of the 1990s (Otsu 2000:54). Additionally the year 1997 witnessed the highest number of youth crimes since 1975. Those aged fourteen to nineteen comprise only nine percent of Japan's population, but accounted for thirty four percent of the serious crimes of murder, robbery, and fully forty five percent of violent crimes including assault and battery.

In the first two months of 1998, according to the National Police Agency a total of thirty eight crimes were committed by juveniles armed with knives, including seven murders, twelve robberies, and eleven physical attacks. Middle school students' classes seven through nine were arrested in nineteen of these cases. Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, taking the situation very seriously, assembled a conference to discuss issues related to the young people who will be responsible for Japan in the coming years. The gathering was attended by representatives from the world of education, the media, the police, and parent-teacher association. Some of the heinous crimes committed by the juveniles were in November 1999 (Hideki 2000:35). The cruelty of these incidents, the enormity of the damage they entail, and the vagueness of the motives underlying them proved bewildering to adult members of society.

Since there has been a trend of increase in the crime rates committed by these school going children, more and more Japanese are coming to believe that the Juvenile Law, by exempting underage criminals from harsh punishment for their actions, is tempting people under twenty into violent behaviour. Under the present law, juveniles who have committed a serious crime are sent to juvenile halls for rehabilitation; upon parole, they are placed under the supervision of official and volunteer probation officers so as to return to normal society in accordance with the Offenders Rehabilitation Law.

Table 6: Trends of Brutal Juvenile Offences



(Source: Nakanishi (2003): *Radical Statistics Issue, 81)*

Though steps have been taken by the Ministry of Education to curb the juvenile crimes, in recent years, there has been a remarkable rise in crimes that victimise young people. Criminal offenses that victimized youth totalled three hundred fifty two thousand seven hundred and fifty three in 2000. Of those offenses, sharp rises were registered particularly in heinous crimes totalling 1,916 cases and violent crimes totalling twenty three thousand four hundred and eighty seven cases. The victims of sexual offenses (rape, indecent assaults) also increased to five thousand six hundred and eight cases (MEXT published White Papers 2001). According to the White Papers of the National Police Agency Juvenile Division, March 2007, the number of juveniles who committed felonious crimes decreased by eighteen point eight percent compared to the previous year to one thousand one hundred and seventy. And the number of juveniles who committed crimes also decreased by six point one percent to nine thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

Additionally, in lieu of the environment surrounding the life of the school children, the government wants more proactive roles from families and the local communities to closely cooperate in taking measures to foster children with rich humanity. And as of FY2000, there were seven hundred and twenty five Children's centre nationwide and the government plans to open more of these centres in each city from FY1999-FY2001. The Children's Center's help you when you want to know where to take children to experience activities in a natural environment on a Saturday off from school, where parents and children can go together to do volunteer work on the weekend, etc (MEXT published White Papers 2000). The statistics on the continuing rise in juvenile crimes according National Police Agency Divisions are as follows:

Table 7: Number of Juvenile who committed Felonious Crime (Murder and Robbery)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total	1,986	2,212	1,584	1,441	1,170
Murder	80	93	57	67	69
Robbery	1,586	1,771	1,273	1,146	892

(*Source: National Police Agency, Juvenile Division, March 2007*)

Table 8: Number of Juvenile Who committed Violent Crimes

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total	15,954	14,356	11,439	10,458	9,817
Bodily injury	9,140	8,110	6,408	6,103	5,919
Threat of violence	4,616	4,065	3,073	2,616	2,117

(Source: National Police Agency, Juvenile Division, March 2007)

2.1.3 Education of Japanese Returnee Children

Due to business expansion, it was estimated that approximately eight thousand school age children were living overseas for more than a year as late as 1969 and fifty eight thousand three hundred and four by 2006 (MEXT Published Education in Japan 1970. Also, Fry (2009:365) mentions that business expansion in the 1960s and its associated international strategies have meant that many Japanese company employees and their families were sent abroad on long-term assignments. The children who accompanied their parents on such assignments and then returned to Japan were first described as 'educational refugees' and were regarded as culturally ambiguous, socially marginalized and academically disadvantaged.

The Japanese government considered that special measures were needed for these children, as they had missed out on the standard education that they would otherwise have received. Consequently, it introduced various educational options so that they could reintegrate smoothly into Japanese society and its educational system. Later, in the 1980s, when 'globalisation' became vital to Japan, the attributes associated with such children were recast and they began to be regarded as 'valuable national assets' for their supposed rich cross-cultural awareness and bilingual abilities, the very qualities the government sought in the new generations of Japanese. They were now seen as a barometer of Japan's globalisation and, with their new high-flying, global image, universities and companies began to actively enrol them.

2.2 Changes in Social Trends Among Youth

The socio-economic advancements had an adverse impact to a certain degree on the younger generation, and the incentive base of schooling and learning has been undermined by the advent of an affluent and consumption-oriented society. Since the 1980s when the economic affluence spread throughout Japan, many students started

not to have much incentive to study and to run away from learning (Fujita 2004:5). The youths are no longer motivated for hard work or study as higher standard of living and comfortable lifestyles created a consumerist youth who were not ready carry on the legacy created by the previous generation. And the Japanese society began to witness a period of degeneration and moral degradation among the youths. They spend much of their time shopping for the latest fashions, playing video games, and even driving automobiles in increasing numbers.

The consumer orientation of young people in the late 1980s was a far cry from that of the 1960s youth. Whereas politically active students a quarter of a century ago were committed to idealistic goals and were intensely interested in building what they perceived to be a better society; and a majority of them in the 1970s worked hard to become "salarymen". However, the youths since the 1980s were more engrossed in personal pleasure. The combination of a rigid and inflexible educational system, along with this new orientation of students, led to an increase in dropouts, and an increase in school violence (Beauchamp 1987:322). The high ideals of hard work and ethics set by the previous generation seemed to be ignored or forgotten in the new social environment that emerged by the turn of the twenty first century.

Emphasis on internationalism has become more since the twenty first century due to its economic interests in large number of countries. Japan has to respond to these social and economic necessities so as to be a responsible member of the international community. The Japanese government needs to change the education system to keep pace with the domestic and international scenarios. The twenty first century is said to be the era of "knowledge-based society," and it is essential for a country like Japan, that is not blessed with natural resources, to foster excellent talent in order to maintain its vitality and further develop as a nation with wealth and education (MEXT Published White Papers 2005). Until 1990s, the economic situation had been good and graduates had little difficulty finding jobs. Unlike most industrialised nations, Japanese companies relied on their own in-house training programs for new recruits and did not depend on what students learned at universities and colleges.

However, since the 1990s dramatic changes began to take place in Japan and reforming the system of education was seen as a necessity. Another problem confronting the youth is that of unemployment. Since employment opportunities are directly linked with education, the Japanese government through its reforms is trying to respond to it. Japanese government's effort is to both anticipate and respond to the country's critical social and economic needs. Therefore, in Japan, both the social and economic growth and problems have an undeniable link to the education system. Post Second World War Japan witnessed extreme poverty and devastation and it was not until the 1970s that Japan underwent through the reconstruction period.

The evolution of Japanese education closely paralleled the growth of the Japanese economic and socio-political structure. And at the same time, the education system is trying to change with the changing international and domestic social environment. In a rapidly changing society, Japanese educational policies were products of specific times. Development of information and communication technologies, globalisation of knowledge-driven economy, intensification of international competition, all these have become major concerns of politicians, business leaders and media people as well as educationists. The egalitarian set up of the school system was regarded as rigid and inflexible to the changing needs of the modern society.

Therefore, they started to question the effectiveness and efficiency of Japanese schooling to meet various needs and demands of the postmodern society, using the phrases like "the end of catch-up type development and schooling" and "the end of uniform schooling." Japanese schooling was also regarded as stressful since cramming students' heads with standardised knowledge was useful only for passing entrance examination. The emphasis was on the importance of creativity and problem solving ability, expansion of individualised learning and liberalisation of schooling was advocated.

School rules and regulations were criticised in the 1980s and the 1990s when Japan's economic development accompanied cultural changes toward consumerism and individualism. School rules were criticised because they did not reflect the social and cultural trends of contemporary Japan. Also, by the 1980s, though it had been close to four decades since the establishment of the Fundamental Law of education not

many changes were introduced in the school system, but the same highly centralised egalitarian pattern which was established by the Occupation authority continued.

Japan was still following the 6-3-3-4 system of schooling which means six years of elementary, three years of secondary and three years of higher secondary. There were no opportunities for individual growth in this set system. Even in regular classroom activities, few opportunities are provided for children with special skills, knowledge, or interests. All students at each grade follow the same curriculum and must proceed through the curriculum at the same rate. Whether the child is gifted in mathematics, writing, or some other area is irrelevant; it is unheard of that children would skip grade or follow a course of study different from that of other members of their class (Stevenson 1991:113).

In recent years, many western and Japanese observers have commented that in recent times, youth in Japan have shown a significant decrease in their commitment to serving society, and indeed to anything serious. Instead they have shown a shallow form of egoism dominated by trivia, instant gratification, and materialism. In general they have become characterised by dissatisfaction towards the state and society as a whole, yet at the same time, reluctance to do anything about it. As a result they merely withdraw into themselves and end up apathetic, relatively complacent with their own personal lot in life. Apathy and self-centred trivial gratification seem to be key characteristics of present-day Japanese youth (Henshell 1999:117).

It was clear that there was an urgent need to bring about reforms in the education system. All adopted the "school stress" theory to explain these problems, blamed school education in general and public schools in particular for these disorder problems, calling these problems "educational pathology" or "school pathology," and expressed repeatedly distrust in public schools and teachers.

Thus, the tide of assaults against public schools and teachers came to stay in the subsequent reform arguments (Fujita 2004:3). The Japanese society was confronted with these alarming social issues. Reform within the education system is a means to lighten the existing burden and create an atmosphere which appreciates individuality for enhancing creativity of an individual.

2.3 Low Birth Rate and Problems of Ageing Society

Besides the social problems of juvenile delinquency and crime among the youths, the other important issue confronting the Japanese society was the problem of ageing and low birth rate. The population in Japan, which increased for a long time, started to decline under matured welfare state as well as change of industrial structure. To some extent, changing social trends among the educated Japanese women have been instrumental in determining the low birth rate of the nation. In the past, conservative social norms limited the career choices, especially for women, dictating that they eventually marry, leave their jobs and have children, today; however, highly educated Japanese women have the opportunity to hold well paying jobs and to opt out of marriage altogether.

Indeed, in 1999, the country's total fertility rate fell to one point three four children per woman of child-bearing age, a record low (Schoppa 2001:81). By 2025, Japan will have a population with one of the highest proportions of over sixty five's in the world (McCormick 1989:135). Also, even if a woman is employed, it becomes difficult for her to balance between both work and marriage especially after child birth, so this is also one reason, why women choose a career to marriage.

Japanese society is the fastest 'greying' society on earth, as a result of a combination of the decreasing birth rate and increasing longevity. Improved medical and health facilities along with good diet have led to advancement of longer life. There is a shrinking work force with low birth rate and an over aged population that needs care and the gap between the young and the old is getting wider. As to the size of the working population aged fifteen to sixty four years, it had incessantly increased from 1950 to 1995, but since 1995 has started to decrease, and this rapid decline will continue until 2050. Japan's rapidly aging society, due to increasing life expectancy and a declining birth rate, is creating a growing elderly and retired population. The proportion of elderly (age sixty five and over) will increase from seventeen percent of the total Japanese population in 2000 to twenty seven percent in 2020 (Gordon 1998:1-17). Consequently, Japan will lose thirty two point five million of its working population between 2000 and 2050 which is more than the decrease in the total population.

Table 9: Japan's Population Percentage of Young and Old

Years	%Young (15)	% Old (65+)
1920	36	5
1930	37	5
1940	37	5
1950	35	5
1960	30	6
1970	24	7
1980	23	9
1990	18	12
1997	15	16
2025	?	27?

(Source: Henshall 1999:140)

2.4 Growth of Information Technology and Internationalisation

With the Japanese economy increasingly dependent on international business and fast changing science and technology industries, therefore, the government faced demands from many quarters calling on it to reform its education system to bring it into line with the growing need for more diversely talented and creative workers and a 'life-long learning system'(Schoppa 1991:). Education in Japan since the end of Second World War has embodied the principle of equality of opportunity, raising the education level of the people and serving as the engine of social development, nurturing human resources in response to the changing demands of time.

However, although Japan's educational level ranked high internationally, a closer look at the state of education today reveals that confidence in education is eroding and that the country's educational system is confronting several major issues. Firstly, it is pointed that educational functions of families and local communities have declined markedly against a backdrop of urbanisation and falling birth-rates. Bullying, School Non-attendance, school violence are the major problems confronting school education. Other problems such as child abuse are also occurring within families, which is originally the starting point for education. Secondly, many say that social awareness and respect for rules and morals among our young are deteriorating. Deterioration in the socialisation and moral consciousness of children is believed to be accelerating the tendency for adolescents to break away and seclude themselves from their communities. Thirdly, education suited to the personalities and abilities of individual children has often been neglected in favour of the standardisation of

education and excessive drilling of knowledge brought about by an egalitarianism gone too far. Education system, including the school system and entrance examinations, does not seem to cater to students' individuality and talent. Fourthly, dramatic progress in science and technology, economic globalisation and the march of the information technology revolution are accelerating change in society and the economy.

Therefore, many consider that the education system overall from elementary and secondary education to higher education and the knowledge of those associated with it are not necessarily equipped to deal with the changing conditions of time and the society. It thus appeared that education, as it stood, was not responding adequately to economic and social change. Fully dealing with the various issues of education requires systemic reform and improved strategies, principally of schools, as well as Education Reform in the context of society as a whole including schools, households and communities. By this fact, system which efficiently worked under growing economy does not work well and it becomes necessary to reform them.

Besides encouraging individualism to promote talents, the government also wants to bring the society and the individual closer through different programme which are interactive to inculcate awareness of humanity and social responsibility, such as the sense of norm, ethical value, value for life, consideration towards others, and rich sensitivity. The government seeks changes in the curriculum and methods of studying so that it is not based on learn by heart or mere adaptation to the system. Japanese schooling clearly does need to be more flexible if it is to respond better to the needs of individual students, cater to the demands for new types of knowledge and creativity and begin to abate the problems of excessive competition, bullying and school refusal (Green 2000:427).

2.5. Growing Rate of Youth Unemployment in Japan

Unemployment among the youth began to be noticed around the 1980s. In the earlier decades, the youths were guaranteed employment both in government and private companies soon after they complete school or college. Japan had a very low youth unemployment rates at the beginning of the 1980s – around four percent. However, more recently, Japan with its close cooperation between schools and

businesses, have a youth unemployment rates in or near the ten – percent range[8]. Followed with the onset of Japan's economic recession in the early 1990s, the number of company positions available for prospective high school and university graduates dramatically declined, and young Japanese ceased to enjoy the favourable situation, that had long prevailed in which the great majority of job seekers were able to become permanent employees of companies. At the same time, there was a great increase in the number of young people who were engaged in unstable forms of employment, such as temporary or part time work.

Japan, like other nations, is constantly seeking ways to reform its schools in order to counter the criticisms made by its citizens. The need for reform is perhaps felt more keenly in Japan then in other countries because of the importance Japanese place on education as the avenue for personal advancement (Stevenson 1991:119). It has been pointed out that the present educational system, including the school system and modality of entrance examinations, has not been constructed in a manner that encourages the maximum growth of individuality and capability in each and every child (MEXT published White Papers 2001).

Also, one of the main proponents for reforms in the 1980s was due to the unprecedented crimes among youth and the degree in which they were carried out. On the other hand, the school education system had come to be regarded as outmoded by the fact that it was too centralised and rigid. There was no flexibility and no scope for personal growth of an individual with its highly uniform and centralised control which was unable to meet the demands of the twenty first century. And education reform has been used as a means to bring about wider social reforms. It is important that education is not seen in total isolation from the rest of Japanese society. It interacts with other parts of society in many different ways, both influencing the rest of society and being influenced by the changes and demands of the society (Hood 2002).

In fact, there has been a cry for reforms in the school system to adapt and adjust to the changing times and environment which had differed from the past decades, but certain elements in the Japanese society prevents from fulfilling these reforms.

[8] United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics: http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2009/ted_20090804.htm

Education is a highly debated topic and the complex politics involving different parties and stake holders often obstructs in bringing out reforms in the system. By the late 1970s, Japan as a nation had witnessed and experienced unprecedented growth both in economic and social terms. Simultaneously, education also gained unprecedented attention for change in its system. The correlation between these different parameters for reforms in the education system is because all of these factors have a strong and undeniable link to the larger effect it has on the youth in this present context. Social and economic development meant that the Japanese society had become affluent, with higher standard of living, higher per capita income and longer life expectancy.

A reform is needed when the existing system fails to deliver the required expectations. Schools in this regard had failed to perform in its basic function as it failed to deliver the kind of children that the nation expected. The school atmosphere by the early 1980s became stagnant in many ways and education began to lose its desired principal for all round personality development. The society dependence on the education system to deliver the desired character building in the young minds began to witness fissures in the same system that had built the Japanese society. One of the basic principles of education is 'character formation', one which comprises of an all round development which was now apparently lacking in the youth. The education system was a means to carry on the achievements of the past and to sustain itself as a nation for the future.

CHAPTER 3

Reforms in School Education: 1984–1990

Reform: Meaning and Definition according to Thesaurus:

1. Improvement, 2. Reorganisation, 3. Restructuring, 4. Modification, 5. Transformation, 6. Alteration, 7. Change, 8. Development, 9. Amendment

Web Definitions:

(v) To return to a good state; to amend or correct one's own character or habits

(n) Amendment of what is defective, vicious, corrupt, or depraved; reformation: as reform of elections; reform of government.

(v) To put into a new and improved form of condition; to restore to a former good state, or bring from bad to good; to change from worse to better; to amend; to correct.

3.1 Background to Reforms

Education is a good measure for human resource development and management. At the simplest level, it is to teach the facts and skills that are necessary for future life. Education is also important in character formation and with the increased in the number of social problems especially among the youth, the Japanese government wanted to reform the education system in order to bring about wider social changes. Education has a role to play in the evolution of a society, but it is not a one way relationship as education does not exist in total isolation from society. Education must also respond to the changes going around it (Hood 2001:13-17)

The Ministry of Education is responsible for setting national standards, for instance, school establishment, standards of teacher certification, curriculum guidelines. Further, it provides support to local governments in educational provisions, finances salaries of school personnel and buildings and subsidises private schools. To guarantee implementation of educational administration, MEXT applies textbook screening and provides guidance, advice and assistance concerning educational content and school management to local boards of education, approves education superintendent appointees of prefectural boards of education, and implements and supports in-service training (MEXT Published, White Papers 2000).

3.1.1 Different Critiques

According to Fujita (2000) many education critics who are mostly committed to progressive ideas have emphasised upon individuality, self-realisation, self-cultivation, and freedom in learning, and have argued that the "cramming" style of education, standardised curriculum, uniform teaching, and strict school management obstruct authentic learning, a stress-free, human life, and the development of individuality and creativity. Neo-liberals have stressed the importance of freedom and choice in education, have criticized the state monopoly in education, and have argued that freedom of school choice and the existence of a variety of alternative schools are the prerequisites for releasing children from the pressure of entrance examination, for repairing the deteriorating school climate, and for improving the quality of schools and children's lives.

Neoconservatives, mostly economists and business leaders, have emphasised the necessity for deregulation and the improvement of education to cope with the socioeconomic changes like computerisation, and have argued that market competition is more effective than state monopoly because it will stimulate creative endeavours, raise incentives to learn, and thus improve education. The mass media and critics have repeatedly brought up serious cases of bullying, violence against teachers and peers, and juvenile crimes.

At the backdrop of all the problems and challenges that Japan faces, one of the probable solution is by reforming the education system are the intricate politics involved. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the bureaucracy mostly conform to the same ideology. The other influence groups are the Education (*Zoku)*, they are 'Dietmen' who are members of unofficial policy-specialised cliques. The continuing rule of the LDP and the development of *Zoku* have given the LDP an increasing ability to influence the policy formulation activities of the ministries. The Teacher's Union (*Nikkyoso)* and other progressive parties are in the other ideal party. The main distinguishing differences between the Conservative's and the Progressive's ideologies lies in fact that the Conservatives though they want to have change in the education system, still hold on to the backbone of the Occupation Reforms.

Whereas, for the Progressive party, a desire for more flexibility and decentralisation of both teachers and in the governance of the local schools. Clash of

ideologies between the Conservatives and the progressive parties often come in the way of policy making. A whole range of interest groups, through their respective ties with different sections of the bureaucracy and different sections of the LDP, take part in the policy making process (Schoppa 1991:120).

Notwithstanding the serious juvenile delinquencies, there was a growing need for 'flexible' education system to meet the needs of the twenty first century and a debate over modern and traditional values which were at the same time centralised, meritocratic and modern in nature. Education had always been used as a tool or a machinery of maintaining social order by the policy makers. The idea was to return to traditional values particularly on moral education to preserve order and contain the highly degrading moral standards among the youths.

The traditionalists have never given up on its moral precepts, for the fact that it was these moral ethics which turned the pre war generation of Japanese into loyal, self sacrificing servants of Japan's rise, among the company of nations. Confronted with these signs that the post World War youths are no longer as self sacrificing or obedient, these conservatives decry the occupation reform which killed the Imperial Rescript. Therefore, the solution to such problem they claim lies in a new education reform aimed at restoring the traditional morality and work ethic swept by the Imperial Rescript. The nationalism of the pre war education Rescript with a strong emphasis on traditional morality and 'filial piety' where militarist abuse of the education system with complete allegiance to the service of the nation and highly regimented centralised and absolute control was not something that the Progressive parties wanted. Teachers and other progressive camp with their strong aversion to governmental intervention in education and the schools wanted 'Japanese ethics' with its meritocratic and rational structure. Along with the left parties, they wanted a strong measure to maintain these features of the system.

3.2. Formation of the Ad Hoc Council: 1984

According to Hood (2000) Nakasone was always interested in changing some aspects of Japan and its society, including elements of the education system. He also wrote a book which laid down his five key educational principles: individualism (*jinkaku shu)*, nationalism (*kokumin-shugi*), internationalism (*kakusai-shugi)*, merit system (*jitsuryoku-shugi)*, and regionalism (*chiho-shugi*). One of his fundamental goal

was to move away from the influence of the American occupation system and bring about a truly independent Japan. Despite the strong ideological differences and

the race for power, control and influences over the education system between the Ministry of Education, the Education *Zoku* and Nakasone's personal ambitions over education reforms, on 1st February, 1984, Nakasone met the education minister and finalised his decision to create Ad Hoc council under the prime minister's authority. He was instrumental in taking this radical step in forming the Ad Hoc Council to initiate reforms in the educational system. Nakasone and *Monbusho* sorted out the specifics in drafting a bill for the creation of the Ad Hoc council after the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal 1984 Budget Bill on 14 March. On 21st March, the bill was approved by the LDP's Education Division as well as by the Education System Research Council. The Ministry of Education, the different lobby groups and the *Zoku* built around a cabinet-level council rather than just an MOE council, it began with a much greater opportunity to build government-wide support for education reform: the council was authorised to make policy recommendations on behalf of the entire government rather than just a single ministry. Equally important, the council had been established through a process which gave it a clear mandate to reform the education system (Schoppa 1991).

Nakasone had the final authority in choosing the members of the council. Although it would appear on the surface that Nakasone had to make a compromise over the membership of Ad Hoc Council, there was certainly many that had been directly chosen by Nakasone and his aides and many of the members were previously associated with him. There were twenty five members in the Ad Hoc council and they comprised of not only educationists but also people from diverse background and different field of works and expertise. These members with diverse knowledge were to hold deliberations and give their feedbacks on how to improve the education system of Japan.

Table 10: Membership of the Ad Hoc Council

Name	Experience
Amaya Naohiro	Former MITI senior official. Member of the Kyoto Group. Served in the LDP think-tank closely associated with the Rincho privatising ideas.
Arita Kazuhisa	Former Education Zoku member. Former member of Chukyoshin. Once chair of Nikkeiren's Education Committee.
Dogakinai Takashi	Former governor of Hokkaido. Given place after failing to win LDP House of Councillors seat.
Hosomi Takashi	Former Ministry of Finance senior official. Member of LDP think-tank and Nakasone 'brain'.
Iijima Soichi	President of Nagoya University. Worked with Chukyosin and Monboshu as advisory councils.
Ishii Takemochi	Tokyo University professor. member of the Kyoto Group. Advisor to Prime Minister Ohira and then Nakasone. Chaired one of Nakasone's private advisory councils.
Ishikawa Tadao	President of Keio University. Member of three Monbushu advisory councils. Member of GDCE
Kanasugi Hidenobu	Advisor of Domei Labour Confederation. Close links to DSP. Member of Rincho.
Kimura Harumi	Chiba Institute of Technology professor. An essayist known for her view that Japanese have gone soft. Member of Kyoto group.
Kobayashi Noboru	General Director of Children's Medical Research Centre, National Children's Hospital. Member of Ministry of Health and Welfare advisory councils. A former Ohira 'brain'.
Komaya Ken'ichi	Gakushoin Univesity professor. A former advisor to Prime Minister Ohira and one of Nakasone's chief 'brains'.
Minakami Tadashi	Tokyo education superintendent. Long time local education administer of Tokyo.
Miyata yoshiji	Senior advisor of a Sohyo-affiliated labour union. Member of Nakasone's private advisory council on the 'peace problem'.
Nakauchi Isao	President of Daiei. Member of Zaikai group supporting Nakasone.
Nakayama sohei	Former president of Industrial Bank of Japan. Served on Nakasone's private advisory council on the 'peace problem'.
Okamoto Michio	Former president of Kyoto university. Had worked with both Nakasone and Monbusho before.
Okano Shunichiro	Former association football player. Head of Japan Olympic Committee. Member of Chukyoshin.
Saito Sei	Former Monbusho administrative vice-minister. President of national Theatre. Member of Monbusho advisory councils, including Chukyoshin.
Saito Toshitsugu	Executive director, Daishowa Paper Manufacturing. A relative of Nakasone
Sejima Ryuzo	Member of Rincho. Close advisor of Nakasone and member of his private advisory council on the 'peace problem'. Member of Chukyoshin to provide link to Rincho.
Miura Chizuko	Author. One of Ohira's brain-trust who went on to advise Nakasone. Member of two of Nakasone's private advisory councils, including GDCE.
Sunobe Ryozo	Former ministry of Foreign Affairs administrative vice-minister. Kyorin University professor.
Tamaru Akiyo	Elementary school teacher. Participated in Monbusho moral education project.
Tobari Atsuo	Lower secondary school principal. Head of Tokyo Association of Lower Secondary School Principals.
Uchida kenzo	Was long-time journalist for Kyodo Press. Retired to become Hosei University professor.

(Source: Hood 2000)

3.3. Deliberations and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Council

The Ad Hoc Council on Education began its deliberations on fifth September 1984. The foremost task was to address the problems of growing school violence and juvenile delinquency as well as the more basic problems of 'a social climate that places too much value on the academic background of individuals, a uniform and flexible structure of formal education and a need for internationalising Japan's educational institutions'(Hood 2002:). The council was then divided into four sub-committees and dealing with different issues related to the teacher problems, the higher education problem, the textbook problem, the school system problem and the 'fundamental problem of education'. The council was in existence for three years out of which it met for a total of ninety times and published a total of four reports.

3.3.1 Proposed Reform Themes

The composition and work of the sub-committees are first on the theme of "Education for the twenty-first century". This theme covered the issues of fundamentals of character formation, internationalisation, ageing society, liberalisation, information society, high-level science, research etc and the role of national and regional organisations. The second theme was "Revitalisation of educational functions of society" and the issues were 'diploma disease', promotion of culture and international relations, relationships between schools and the home and society and lifelong learning. The third theme was on "Reform of primary and secondary education" and the issues were Reform of the curriculum (including the text books) and changing the school system. The fourth theme was on "Reform of higher education" and the issues were on financing of higher education, types of institutions, higher education system, entrance requirements, improvement of teaching quality and special education. In some sense, teachers and educators were accused of not fulfilling their duties. One of the imperatives of the education reform is to establish effective and efficient systems and programs to cope with these educational problems. Program for teachers' training, based on knowledge of pedagogy and psychological counselling were also deliberated to improve the quality of teachers.

On twenty sixth June 1985, the council submitted its first report while including its basic philosophy the other reports are of the over standardisation of education system seeking for both greater diversity and conformity. Recommendation

for the abolition of the examination system to enter into university and relaxing on the emphasis of school background so that there can be a more egalitarian system. Measured to facilitate the establishments of more private elementary and lower schools so that people can have more choice in choosing their elementary school and their choices should not be restricted.

Another important recommendation of the council was for the 'flexibilisation' of the curriculum. A policy aimed at ending the uniformity of the content of Japanese education. These recommendations are basically for the improvement of the entire school system so that the youth are better prepared to face the challenges of the future. Also, the first, second, third and fourth reports of the Ad Hoc Council on Education Reform appointed by the Japanese Prime Minister in August 1984, all emphasised the need to "create a lifelong learning society based on a long-term perspective" (McCormick 1989:134). Along the same lines is Nakasone's personal move for a more internationalised outlook and at the same time promoting a healthy nationalism through the singing of the National Anthem and the raising of the national flag. These are to imbibe in the youths a sense of moral obligation symbolising the love for the nation. NCER spent three years reviewing the nation's education system and generated four reports to the prime minister that have been the basis for the subsequent neo-liberal and neo-conservative reform movements (Fujita 2000:1).

Renewed emphasis on moral education was propagated as it was basic for imbibing and planting the seeds for love towards the nation and promoting a healthy nationalism. At the same time, it was a means to control and contain the juvenile related crimes. However, according to Shimbori (1960) it is not lack of moral education that has given birth to juvenile delinquency and other disorders among youth but rather the whole confused social structure with its confused values, commercialised mass culture, and pessimism. Youth degeneration is merely a reflection of that among adults. Morality is action, and mere preaching and intellectual instruction produce only dead and monotonous morality. Moral behaviour is a problem of the whole personality.

To establish moral education in a special curriculum is to subordinate the pupils to the moral authority of the teachers. But this makes the teacher-pupil relationship cool and impersonal and encourages moral arrogance in the teachers.

Hypocritical teachers are not effective. A sense of awe for the teacher does not create moral commitment. Moral principals are created by the society, however morality is something that cannot be forced on someone, but it is a way of life that an individual has to learn and practice and evolve. Therefore, the emphasis on moral education was outstanding because it was responsible for a wide variety of educational and social outcomes: the orderliness of the classroom and of society, the comparatively harmonious social interaction characteristic of Japan, and the unity and cohesiveness of the Japanese nation (Cummings 1980:278).

3.4. Implementations of the Ad Hoc Council's Recommendations

According to Schoppa (1999), there were three basic functions of the Ad Hoc Council; the first was deliberation, second recommendation and the third implementation. At the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Council, Nakasone said that its task was to address the problems of growing of school violence and juvenile delinquency as well as the more basic problems of 'a social climate that places too much value on academic background of individuals, a uniform and inflexible structure of formal education and a need for internationalising Japan's educational institution'. At the first stage, the policy of so-called relaxed education (*Yutori Kyoiku*) started with the revision of the national course of study (curriculum guidelines) implemented in 1980 in order to make school life enjoyable and free of pressure.

Calling for 'internationalisation' and 'individualisation', Nakasone wanted to create a more cost-effective, flexible education system though decentralisation, deregulation, and privatisation, in order to produce more assertive and creative Japanese workers for the economic development of the county in an increasingly competitive world economy (Motani 2005:313). The National Council on Education Reform wrote four recommendation reports in three years, with the first report coming in June 1985 and the fourth and final report in August 1987. To bring out the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Council, the Government established the ministerial council for the promotion of educational reform.

The MESSC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) created the headquarters for implementation of educational reform in August 1987. And further in October 1987, the Cabinet introduced the Outline for the Promotion of Educational

Reform as the guiding basic policy to reform. The Council's basic idea about educational reform "toward the 21st century," as expressed in its recommendation reports were condensed in the following three goals:

1) The principle of respect for the individual;

2) Transition to a lifelong learning system; and

3) Response to internationalisation and the information society (MEXT published White Papers 2001).

3.4.1 Revised Curriculum

This curriculum reduced the number of lesson hours as well as the contents of major subjects, introduced the flexible lesson hour called relaxed or flexible hours (*Yutori no Jikan)* and suggested the importance of child-centered teaching and learning. The major thrust to this reform came from as a sensational response to the upheaval of various school disorder and maladjustment problems such as school vandalism, school violence, bullying, school refusal (truancy) and some serious juvenile crimes since the late 1970s. Schools and schooling are expected to cope with these problems, not because these problems are caused by schools and schooling are one of the major policy variables to which we can manipulate more or less, expecting them to cope with these problems (Fujita 2004:3).

The Courses of Study were fully revised in March 1989 for kindergartens, elementary schools, lower schools and upper secondary schools, and then in October 1989 for schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and special schools. From the standpoint of cultivating the infrastructure for lifelong learning and aiming to develop children and students who can independently respond to changes in society, the revisions created the subject of life environmental studies at elementary schools, expanded the range of elective subjects at lower secondary schools and introduced greater flexibility into the curriculum at upper secondary schools (MEXT published White Papers 2001).

3.4.2 Integration of Courses'

The other changes that were incorporated with the help of the recommendations were the integration of courses at upper secondary schools, and the institutionalisation of six-year unified lower and upper secondary schools. Further, diversification of the

selection methods of entrants to upper secondary schools and the use of multiple in the selection criteria were recommended. Nakasone's vision was for the creation of a country where people have a respect for 'freedom, creativity and joy of life' as part of its culture and to have 'love for the country'. These include the introduction of new subjects, 'life environmental studies', for children in the lower grades of elementary schools; the improvement of history education; restructuring of upper secondary schools 'social studies' into 'geography', 'history' and 'civics'; the improvement of foreign language education, enhancement of oral and aural skills in Japanese language; enhancement of moral education, including prioritising teacher content according to children's stage of development; and enhancement of education concerning the national flag and the national anthem. Students now also have to study world history which was one of the main subjects that Nakasone wanted to introduce in the curriculum.

3.4.3 Lifelong Learning

The major recommendations were a deregulation of administrative process, and the liberalisation of education (Leung 2004:6). The recommendations of the Council specified "education in the future should have 'lifelong learning' as its basic premise" and emphasised a transition to a lifelong learning system away from an education system divided into school education and social education (McCormick 1989:133-149). A new course of study was established in 1989, partly as a result of the education reform movement of the 1980s and partly because of ongoing curriculum review. Important changes scheduled were an increased number of hours devoted to Japanese language, the replacement of the social sciences course with a daily life course instruction for children on proper interaction with the society and environment around them and an increased emphasis on moral education.

In July 1988, the Ministry of Education, Science Sports and Culture reorganised the Social Education Bureau to create Lifelong Learning Bureau as a step aimed to shift the focus of education policy as a whole to the lifelong learning system, including school education. Lifelong learning (*shogai gakushu*) encompasses learning that takes place at all stage of life and includes both formal learning at school or other places and non-formal learning. Consequently, lifelong learnong includes all types of social education activities. Lifelong learning activities may be carried out at

companies, formal schools, community centers, libraries, museums, or many other different kinds of facilities. Non-formal learning includes "knowledge gained through participation in, for example, sports activities, cultural activities, recreational activities, volunteer activities and hobbies" (Gordon 1998:1-17).

The relationship between lifelong learning and school education was with the creation of reforms measures where in upper secondary institutions as well as university and higher education institutions were made easily accessible to adults. These measures included the institutionalisation of credit-based upper secondary schools, the establishment of additional evening undergraduate and graduate schools and the creation of the National Institution for Academic Degrees that award academic degrees to junior college graduates under certain conditions (MEXT published White Papers 2001).

3.4.4 Promotion of Healthy Nationalism and Healthy Internationalism

Also, given the nature of declining moral standards among the youth, the council with the support of Nakasone introduced 'healthy nationalism' terming it as 'healthy internationalism' in the curriculum. In responding to internationalisation, revisions to the Courses of study in 1989 improved the content of each subject to expand international understanding at all levels of the school system. The Ministry of Education created provisions for student exchange programmes and from the FY 1988, a system for studying abroad was created at the upper secondary school level.

With the growth of information technology and globalisation, it was imperative for Japan to respond accordingly to these changes. Other measures included the invitation of native speakers to Japan so as to improve Japanese education in foreign languages. As for the acceptance of foreign students, various measures were taken toward the smooth achievement of the one hundred thousand Foreign Students Plan," with the goal of accepting up to one hundred thousand students from abroad in the early twenty first century. In response to the information society, the Courses of Study for 1989 tried to improve information education through measures such as having various subjects regard the fostering of information literacy as an achievement goal. Also, the installation of computers and software at schools was facilitated, while adequate training to instructing teachers was provided (MEXT published White Papers 2001).

During this period, a very important figure in bringing about school education reform was Nakasone. He was instrumental to the education reform process, for he not only initiated the creation of the Ad Hoc Council, but also presented ideas and selected many of the members who would represent and support these ideas. He wanted a radical reform and its quick implementation. However, this was not possible due to the various other factors involved in implementing changes within the system. Most of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc council did not take immediate effect; however, these recommendations were central in establishing means through which future reforms came to be based.

CHAPTER 4

Reforms in School Education: 1990-2007

4.1 Socio-Political Background: 1990s

Evaluating the education system which was begun by the Ad Hoc Council formed the basis for the reforms which came about in the 1990s. Social problems among the youth remained constant or even worse. At school, the so-called "class disruption" phenomenon became prevalent. Quite shocking crimes were committed by youth, and child abuse and other serious social problems came to the fore in Japan. Also, the twenty first century problems of bullying seem as severe as ever, and there are major concerns about truancy (more usually termed "school refusal") as well as declining academic standards (Potter 2008). In order to deal with the widespread and rapid changes seen after the report of the National Council on Education Reform (NCER), it was deemed necessary to launch broad-based discussions going back to the basics of education.

In the 1990s, the country went through a series of shocking events that caused almost everyone in Japan to ask for fundamental questions about their values, life goals and the purpose of education, pressuring the Ministry of Education to come up with innovative and concrete proposals for educational change. In addition to these national catastrophes, in 1997, Japan was shocked to learn that a fourteen year old boy murdered an elementary school boy, as well as another younger girl previously. Even more shocking was that he put the dead boy's head in front of the school gate where he attended, 'trying to disturb' the police. He also sent a letter to the local newspaper, which could be interpreted as justifying his crime because he was a victim of the Japanese educational system. The series of events left a disturbing sense among the Japanese in general.

Social problems such as refusal to attend schools, juvenile delinquency and bullying continue to plague the atmosphere surrounding the school children. These problems are not new and the government has been trying to understand and contain these problems since the past decades. At the same time, with such rapid social changes such as the declining birth-rate and increasing elderly population, increasing sophisticated use of information and internationalisation, Japan was confronted with

diverse challenges. These challenges include social security problems, environmental issues, and difficulties in sustaining economic vitality, widening regional disparities, socioeconomic disparities feared to be transmitted from generation to generation and hard work to ensure security and safety in society (MEXT published White papers 2008).

Added to these, Japan was expected to confront more drastic social changes in the near future. With declining birth-rates, the population will decrease and the ratio of young people to the entire population will decline. At the same time, Japan will be a super aged society where elderly people of sixty-five years old or older occupy one-fourth of the total population. To address these situations, the country was, thus, required to reconstruct its social systems, including education systems.

At the backdrop of the reforms, the egalitarian system was criticised by the politicians, the business class and the educational critics, stressing that Japan needed a more liberalised and a system that will help in the development of open-mindedness and individual character, to nurture creativity and skills for self expression. These critics advocated the need for space in enhancing personal talents and scope for developing the same which was not possible in the current egalitarian system. The role of education was not simply to gain knowledge to fulfil the economic requirements but also for an all round development of an individual.

Schools focussed mostly on those subjects that culminate to memorised learning and it left little scope for creativity or personality development. They criticised Japanese schooling as stressful on the one hand and on the other as cramming students' heads with standardised knowledge useful only for passing entrance examination. Instead, they emphasised on the importance of creativity and problem solving ability, and advocated the expansion of individualised learning and liberalisation of schooling (Fujita 2004:4).

As it was it the past decades, Japan's youth continued to deteriorate and the problems became even more complex. The different lobby groups for education reforms continued to push the government in the direction of their ideologies. The fruits of the Ad Hoc Council or the *Rinkyoshin* which only existed for a period of three and a half years began to slowly unfold from the 1990s onwards. The recommendations did not take effect immediately and it was not until the later 1990s

and in the 2000s that they came to be slowly incorporated within the system. The Ad Hoc Council made few concrete proposals, but was highly influential in setting an agenda for subsequent policy through its focus on key directions for education, notably internationalisation (*kokusaika*), information technology (*johoka*), lifelong learning (*shakai kyoiku*) and perhaps most fundamental, a move towards individuality (*koseika*) (Cave 2001:178).

With the end of the Nakasone period, the only prime minister who came strongly on education was Shinzo Abe. As most of the prime ministers were in a very short term in office and it was practically not possible for them to bring about phenomenal changes. Therefore, the reforms which came about slowly in the 1990s were mostly based on the recommended reforms of the Ad Hoc Council. Already we are informed of the role of education in the society and how far it had achieved objectives. But the same system is still ailing even at this stage when about the entire population of Japan is literate.

Education remained a perennial issue of considerable interest to the Japanese public, and there always seem to be many problems to be addressed. In addition, the school system tends to become a scapegoat whenever people try to assign blame for social ills. To address these social problems, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe established an Education Rebuilding Council. The council comprises three cabinet members-the prime minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki Yasuhisa, and Education Minister Ibuki Bunmei –along with seventeen experts from various fields, with Nobel laureate Noyori Ryoji serving as the chair. The council's secretariat is directed by Yamatani Eriko, a member of the upper house and special advisor to the prime minister. The council submitted its first report to Prime Minister Abe on January twenty fourth, citing "seven recommendations" and "four urgent response measures".

As in the 1980s, and in the period following, the politics involved are much on the same differing ideological principles of the different political parties on one hand, and the education *Zoku* on the other, and that of the Japan Teacher's Union. The progressive and the neo-liberalists party's stance are on the same grounds and very little progress has been witnessed in this period following the 1990s. According to Cave (2001) reforms initiated by the government from the late 1980s and the 1990s are under the slogan of 'stress on individuality' (*kosei jashi*) and are purportedly aimed

at encouraging creativity by introducing more freedom and choice into the education system and the purpose was to break away from the egalitarian set up and nurturing of rich humanity.

4.2. Implementations of Ad Hoc Council's Recommendations in the 1990s.

According to Tanabe (2000: 125), the basic strategy in Japanese education reform for the last decade is that planning and implementing were closely linked in a united fashion with another major reforms, i.e. governmental administration, economic structure, financial system, social welfare system, and fiscal structure. It expected a whole system restructuring in every public sector, not only in the field of education. One of the foremost recommendation of the Ad Hoc Council was the follow up of the policy of so-called "*Yutori Kyoiku*" (relaxed education) started with the revision of the national course of study (curriculum guidelines) implemented in 1980 in order to make school life enjoyable and free of pressure. This was to tone down the stress level of stress on the school children due to examination pressure for entrance to upper secondary schools and university.

4.2.1 Introduction of Five School Days

During the 1990s, the first reform was adopted in 1997 which was revised again in the same year, in 1998 and 1999. The two most important and emphasised points were promoting flexibility and to look beyond the school's frame and acquire broader view so as to tackle the educational reforms. Earlier, the school year had a legal minimum of two hundred and ten days which was inclusive of Saturdays, but most local school boards add about thirty more days for school festivals, athletic meets, and ceremonies with non academic educational objectives, especially those encouraging cooperation and school spirit. The number of days devoted to instruction is about one hundred and ninety five per year. Hence, the first phase to lower the school day was the introduction of a five-day school week, which made one Saturday off per month in 1992, which was the followed by two Saturdays off in 1995, and finally all Saturdays off from the year 2002.

4.2.2 Reduction of Lesson Hours

Followed by the reduction of the school days, it reduced the number of lesson hours and the contents for most subjects including math and science on the one hand,

and on the other, created a new cross-subject lesson entitled "comprehensive study (for example, of one hundred and ten lessons lesson hours per year at the fifth and sixth grades and seventy lesson hours at the lower secondary level). Another very significant recommendation was the freedom to choose elementary school. Given the fact that elementary education was limited to the area of residence, the pupils had limited choice but to compulsorily attend the local area school. The problem with the district school system is that an individual have a very limited choice to elementary schools, which in a way is not progressive. The advocates of the 'free school' wanted freedom to choose and not be restricted to an egalitarian system.

The introduction of combined junior and senior high school education (six-year secondary schools) which will inevitably lead to the transformation of the existing single-track 6-3-3 school system into partially multi-tracked one; and the introduction and gradual expansion of "school choice" plan at the elementary and lower secondary levels which, along with the introduction of the six-year secondary school, will make the problems of school ranking at these levels a major issue and problem of the next decade.

As part of the movement to develop an integrated curriculum and the education reform movement of the late 1980s, the entire Course of Study for Lower-Secondary Schools was revised in 1989 and took effect in the 1992-93 school-year. The main aim of the reform was to equip students with the basic knowledge needed for citizenship. In some measure, it meant increased emphasis on Japanese history and culture, as well as understanding Japan as a nation and its relationships with other nations of the world. The course of study also increased elective hours, recommending that electives be chosen in light of individual student differences and with an eye toward diversification.

Following the Ad Hoc Council, another important report on policy direction was produced in 1996 by the government's chief educational advisory body, the Central Council on Education (*Chuo Kydiku Shingikai* or *Chukyoshin*). The report effectively authorised the mainstream view of the failures of Japanese education and socialisation, outlined above. On the one hand, it deplored what it saw as the decline in the quality of children's socialisation, linking this to a decline in local community and correspondingly, in children's ethics, social skills (*shakaisez*) and independence (*jiritsu*). On the other hand, the report also urged the need for more creative self-

starters to cope with what it envisioned as a rapidly changing future society in which knowledge would quickly become obsolete. Japan has been undergoing a transition period during the 1990s and early 2000s, which impacted upon the dominant discourse on educational reform. The country witnessed a series of catastrophic events and unsettling incidents over the decade, including the drastic slowdown of the economy, the Hanshin (Kobe/Awaji) Earthquake, and increasingly conspicuous violent crimes and misbehaviours among school-age children. Japanese citizens and political/economic leaders were forced to ask fundamental questions about their traditional values and way of life (Motani 2005:310).

The recession that Japan has witnessed over the last two decades indicated a possible parameter to check the ailing economy by bringing in a more neo liberal reforms in the school education. As in the past, the neo liberals are the advocates for an individualised and non-egalitarian system of education. According to Hood, though Japan education system is egalitarian in its outlook it is at the same time meritocratic, as entry into key universities is through the competitive entrance examinations.

Like the previous decade, the politics for reform proposals from the left and centre-left have points in common with those from business and its associates, despite the polarisation of views and the mutual suspicion that has historically existed between these two groups. Like the Keidanren, the Japan Teachers' Union (*Nikkyoso*) advocates decentralisation of curriculum formation to schools and localities, together with smaller class sizes. Both *Nikkyoso* and the smaller, more left-wing union *Zenkyo* wanted less competition in schools, advocating that high school entrance exams should be abolished and all children to enter high school. Interestingly, however, *Nikkyoso* too made this proposal in the name of increasing choice for students, arguing that the current system forces many students into high school courses not of their preference, whereas comprehensive, credit system high schools would allow students more genuine choice. This suggests the appeal of the idea of freedom of choice in 1990s Japan (Cave 2001:177).

The council emphasised deregulation of administrative processes and advocated the liberalisation of education. The promotion of decentralisation, reconsideration of the roles of the national and local governments, revitalisation of boards of education, enrichment of the opportunity to select schools, and

resonsideration of school distrcits were recommendations made before the Council was dissolved in 1987. Consequently, the reform process emphasising the need for deregulation launched an educational liberalisation movement in Japan (Muta 2007:1-14). During the 1990s, two reforms stood out of which one was the curricular reform and the other was the introduction of the five day school week. These reforms have particular significance because they affect all or almost all Japanese school children. However, the politics that is involved in achieving the goals of education are still in the same manner divisive and driven by different political ideologies. Japan's economic status also plays an important part as the neo liberalists are the lobby group for more of business promotion through the reforms. And economically, Japan was still facing the recessions and the bubble economy effect was still prevalent. Among the various factors, the two major reasons that continue to cloud the educational reforms was the fact that Japan populations was ageing and at the same the juvenile crimes were still on the rise. Ageing population needed to be addressed in such a manner that Japan is able to maximise out of its own setbacks.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) started to stress in its documents and education policy the 1990s the importance of the acquirement of intellectual curiosity, thinking faculties, creativity and the ability to learn independently and to have motivation to learn a life-long, besides basic skills as the appropriate outcome of education. Along with these new desirable outcomes MEXT first called "new kinds of achievements (*shin gakuryoku*)" and lately "real achievement (*tashikana gakuryoku*)", it is emphasizing the need for emotional education (*kokoro no kyoiku*,) that enhances a zest for living (*ikiru chikara*).

In March 1989 the Ministry revised the Courses of Study for kindergartens, elementary schools, lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. The basic aim of the revision was to help children develop the competence to live a positive life, adapting themselves to various changes in society. The revised Course of Study for Kindergartens was put into effect in 1990. It is scheduled that the Course of Study for Elementary Schools would take effect in 1992 and the Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools will be put into force in 1993.The Course of Study for Upper Secondary Schools will take effect in 1994 for the tenth grade, in 1995 for the eleventh grade and in 1996 for the twelfth grade (MEXT published White Papers 1991). In the revised Course of Study, drastic improvements were attempted in the content of moral

education, with the aims of: (l) Restructuring the content of moral instruction and concentrating it on the essentials; (2) Enriching instruction regarding how to live as a human being; (3) Enriching moral education activities throughout the entire school activities; and (4) Strengthening links with the family and the community. In 1990 the revised content of moral education came into effect in schools.

In March 2000, there were discussions on the modality of future education in Japan, and the commission came up with a report on educational reform in December of the same year. The report makes specific proposals from the standpoint of cultivating Japanese people with rich humanity and cultivating Japanese with rich creativity by letting individual abilities grow, as well as building new schools befitting the new era. Specific measures based on the proposals are being implemented, including small-group education and guidance according to degrees of advancement, promotion of hands-on activities, and measures for teachers lacking in abilities (MEXT published White Papers 2002). The other proposal was for promoting richness of mind by encouraging individuality and liberalising the egalitarian system. Therefore a series of reports in moving the liberalization forward followed. New courses of study for kindergartens, elementary and lower secondary schools were introduced in 1998, and those for senior secondary schools were introduced in 1999. In contrast to the old curriculum, the new courses of study allow a certain percentage of the curriculum to be flexibly designed by the school, thus delegating the school with more control over the curriculum (Leung 2004:6).

Meanwhile, the Central Council on Education released in 1998 a report on local education administration and emphasised anew the need for improvement of the educational functions of the community. The Central Council on Education stated that schools should strengthen bounds with the community and parents and should be allowed at the same time to have more freedom to determine its own policy. Based on this report, the Ministry of Education promulgated in April 2000 an ordinance to encourage schools to create the possibility to install a school council (*hyogiin seido*). This school council gathers people from the community, and preferably neither from the school itself nor from the local education boards. The object of the school council is to assist the school head with school management by providing advice when he or she requires to (knipprath 2005:103).

In June 1990, the Ministry's Headquarters for the Implementation of Educational Reform reported on the "measures taken to meet the recommendations of the National Council on Educational Reform". The measures listed can be classified into:

(1) Amendments to laws, cabinet orders and Ministry regulations;

(2) Budgetary measures such as financial subsidies to prefectures and new budgets or increased budgets for specific programs;

(3) Innovations in the administration and management of various programs within the existing institutional framework or within the present budgets; and

(4) Consideration of specific ways and means by the Ministry's relevant committees to materialize rather general and abstract proposals by the Council. Clearly, the direction of 2002 educational reform initiatives was largely influenced by the ideas from *Zaikai*: demanding more cost effective education, preparing independent and creative students for an increasingly competitive world market economy, and meeting the interest of their own country. Motani (2005:314) argues that while the philosophy behind curriculum content reduction and the introduction of Integrated Studies may be described as a progressive, child-centred educational approach, and while they could be utilised to promote progressive education, the origin of these initiatives is not egalitarian or democratic.

In the context of the recent rapid and drastic changes in the social circumstances surrounding children it has become a national task to develop citizens who have well-rounded personalities and who can cope positively with various changes which will take place in the coming years. The social changes which were visible such as the increase in nuclear families with one or two children who lack basic manners, customs for a daily life as well as desirable manners in socialising. The reason behind such degrading basic moral principles was due to the fact that in many cases both parents are employed and have no time to spend with their children and try to make up loss time by giving them more material gifts. This attention deficiency that the child suffers was often related to the outbursts in the form of bullying and other types of problem behaviour. Such violence pervades the society and they are prevalent among the schools and the home. In junior and senior high schools alone, the number of cases of violence hit a record high during the 1991-91 school year, according to the survey by the Ministry of Education (Tubbs 1994:507).

With a view to providing a sound base for improving moral education, the Ministry of Education had taken a variety of measures, including the designation of a certain number of pilot schools, which were to conduct pilot studies concerning moral education. In 1990 in addition to this pilot school program, the Ministry prepared and distributed materials (teachers' guides and video materials) for moral instruction to contribute to the enrichment of the education of this area. In the 1990s, following the recommendations in the Report of the Ad Hoc Council for Education (1985-87), global interdependence and international exchange have come to the fore and qualities, abilities, and skills required to live in this period of turbulence and constant change have been stressed. The curriculum focussed more on social Studies in high schools and they were divided into two subject areas, History and Civics in 1994.

The former comprises 'World History' and 'Japanese History;' the latter comprises 'Contemporary Society,' 'Ethics' and 'Politics/Economy.' At that time, 'World History' became a required subject in an attempt to foster qualities required of Japanese to live in the interdependent world of the twenty first century (Otsu 2000:56). Once again, the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Council is taken into consideration. It is important to note that the Nakasone initiated reforms of the 1980s and 1990s provided progression for the subsequent reforms of Koizumi beginning in 2001 and facilitated Japan's ability to map their reform agenda to neo-liberal oriented broader national economic and industrial policies (Burnett and Wada 2007:5)

The characteristics of this renewed curriculum are as follows. First, the system of a five-day school week was introduced. Komatsu (2002) argues that in accordance with this reduction, the scope of content that students will learn in the classroom would be reduced by about thirty percent. The government wanted to reduce the school day so that parents and children could spend more quality time together. Also, the new national curriculum standards have became more flexible than ever, each school is now also able to devise educational programs on their own. This is also a way to tone down the examination pattern of memorised learning and develop a wider mental growth for the children. To develop students' individuality, more elective subjects were to be provided at the junior high schools. This trend was more likely at the senior high schools. The "Period for Integrated Study" was introduced as the fourth area in addition to subjects, moral education, and extra-curricular activities to encourage individual schools providing interdisciplinary and comprehensive programs.

4.2.3 Introduction of 'Six-year' Secondary Schools

In April 1999, a new type of six-year secondary education school, called "Secondary School" was introduced into the school system. Secondary schools combine lower and upper secondary school education in order to provide lower secondary education and upper secondary general and specialised education through six years. The lower division in the first three years provides lower secondary school education and the upper division in the latter three years gave upper secondary school education (MEXT published White Papers 2004). The government's objective through these newly initiated policies was to develop the individuality and personal abilities of the children. However, according to Motani (2005) though it is clear that the educational policies and guidelines are formulated by the Ministry of Education, how these new reform initiatives evolve is not always as clear, as policy-making is a complex socio-political process.

4.3. Proposed Reforms from 2000 Onwards

The year beginning from 2000 witnessed the zeal from the Ministry of Education, in which the Central Council for Education issued a report titled "Redesigning Compulsory Education for a New Era," the product of deliberations conducted in keeping with an agreement between the government and the ruling parties which concluded in November 2004. Reform of Japan's compulsory education system was to be implemented henceforth on the basis of the recommendations in this report (MEXT published White papers 2004).

4.3.1 Creation of the National Commission on Educational Reform (2000)

The National Commission on Educational Reform was set up in March 2000 as a private advisory organ to the Prime Minister by the former Prime Minister the late Keizo Obuchi. The Commission was created to consider educational reforms, including bullying, non-attendance at school, class disruption and decrease in academic ability, as well as the causes of recent incidents involving children and other serious issues, and fundamental issues such as the way society should improve. Once again, as in the past, the member of this commission was diverse and comprised of different heads of institutions and business companies. This only confirms the

seriousness and importance of school education; it role and functions in the society and the nation as a whole.

Table 11: Member of the National Commission on Educational Reform (2000)

Names	Experience
Keita Asari	Representative, shikhi Theatrical Company
Jukan Chin	14th Head of the Satsuma-yaki (Satsuma ware) School
Clark Gregory	President, Tama University
Leo Esaki	President, Shibura Institute of Technology
Hidenori Fujita	Dean, Faculty of education, University of Tokyo
Hiroshi Hamada	Chairman, Ricoh Company, Ltd.
Sachiko Imai	Chairperson, National Congress of Parents And Teachers Associations of Japan
Takako Ishihara	Superintendent. Kanazawa City
Eiichi Kajita	President, Notre Dame Women's College of Kyoto
Ikuyo Kaneko	Principal, Keio Yochisha Elementary School
Kichitaro Katsuda	President, Suzuka International University; Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University
Hayao Kawai	Director, International Research Center for Japanese Studies
Ryouichi Kawakami	Teacher, Kawagoe Municipal Jonan Junior High School
Tsutomu Kimura	President, National Institutions for Academic Degrees
Shunji Kono	Chairman, Board of Directors, The Tokio Marine and Fire Insurance Co., Ltd.
Reiko Kuroda	Professor, University of Tokyo
Tadayoshi Kusano	Vice chairman, Japanese Trade Union confederation (Rengo)
Takao Mori	Professor Emeritus Ochanomizu University
Eiko Oya	Journalist
Ayako Sono	Chairperson, the Nippon Foundation; Author
Tetsuo Tamura	President, Shibuya Kyoiku Gakuen
Shigeaki Tanaka	Professor, Kyoto University
Kazuyashu Ueshima	National President, Japan Junior Chamber, Inc.
Jiro Ushio	Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Ushio Inc.
Tetsuo Yamaori	President, Graduate School, Kyoto University of Art and Design
Yasuhiro Yamashita	Professor, Tokai University

(Source: MEXT Published White Papers 2000)

4.4. Recommendations of the National Commission of on Educational Reform

The National Commission of on Educational Reform presented its final recommendation report in December 2000 after a broad-based discussion on the modality of future education in Japan. It had numerous sessions of its plenary meeting and three subgroups since the Commission's establishment in March 2000. The outcome of these meetings led to the submission of the Report by the National

Commission on Educational Reform - seventeen Proposals for Changing Education on twenty second December 2000. The Commission laid out two basic principles that should be followed in considering reform proposals contained in its report:

1. Standardisation in education should be broken down, individual talents should be encouraged to grow and a back-to-basics approach should be adopted in examining school education and educational administration; and
2. Specific movements should be created to achieve reform. The Commission then set forth its seventeen proposals, emphasising the particular importance of three standpoints: (a) realising education that fosters Japanese with rich humanity; (b) realising an educational system that lets individual abilities grow and fosters Japanese with rich creativity; and (c) building new schools befitting the new times and realising a support system for that goal.

The government on its part wanted to do away with the uniform approach towards education and convert the educational system into one that encourages individuality. The ultimate goal is to ensure freedom, high intellectual and moral standards, sustainability and richness in the society, while contributing to the international society to gain trust and respect around the world. Another legacy of the Nakasone reforms is that for the first time it provided clarification of roles of national, prefectural and local governments and in doing so provided a technocratic roadmap to embed structural transformation into practice. This transformation includes a move to a five-day school week, the promotion of a skills/outcomes based curriculum, a liberalised higher education market, the promotion of lifelong learning, an emphases on addressing juvenile delinquency or bulling *(ijime)* and the restructuring of the national entrance examination system long termed or examination hell *(juken jigoku)*.

It is possible to argue that the cornerstone of the Nakasone led reforms centered on notions of deregulation for the Council maintained that the emphasis on competition should be the schools and universities rather than between individual students attempting to gain entrance to these institutions (Burnett and Wada 2007:5). The basic idea of cutting down the school days and also improving on the university exams were essentially to ease the tension and make learning more fun. Another reform measure carried out was the improvements on programs in the selection of university entrance examinations directed at making versatile judgments on the

capabilities, appropriateness and other qualities of students in order to realise a better mutual selection between university applicants and universities.

4.4.1 Introduction of School Advisor

In elementary and secondary education, the decentralisation of educational administration should be promoted and boards of education should be revitalised to make them more appropriately responsive to various requests from the community. In order to promote schools that were open to local communities, the School Advisor system was introduced as a way to directly reflect the opinions of local communities on the way schools were operated. School Advisors are chosen on the basis of a recommendation from the head teacher, after which they were appointed by the establishing bodies of the school, such as the board of education and the school corporations. The School Advisor offered opinions and advice in response to requests from head teachers.

Through the introduction of the School Advisor System, opportunities would increase for parents/guardians and people living in the community around the school to have explained to them the basic policies and activities of the school, such as educational goals, educational plans, and the modalities of promoting further cooperation between school and community (MEXT published White Papers 2000). The reason being schools themselves needed to be given greater discretion over personnel and budgetary matters so that they could take the initiative in promoting distinctive education activities on their own. It was a way of consensus building and at the same time fostering a more proactive participation and relation between the schools and the parents' body. The other important fact to be considered was the quality and social skills of teachers which must also be enhanced through an appropriate evaluation process. For this process, an appropriate method of evaluation should be established to open the way to commend excellent teaches with accompanying rewards and treatment and transfer teachers with questionable track records to non-teaching positions. It was also necessary to expand opportunities for teachers to help enhance their sociality through expanded social experience training courses and the promotion of schools open to society.

This report clearly indicated that the Ministry of Education prepared the reduction of curriculum content and focus on the basics, cultivation of abilities to meet

the rapidly changing social needs and creativity, and encouragement of each individual's unique ability (Motani 2005:314). Educational interest groups in Japan were forced to come together when faced with a series of serious educational and social crises. In 1995, the Japan Teachers Union announced they were no longer opposed to the Ministry of Education. National newspapers reported this incident as a 'historical reconciliation between the Ministry of Education and JTU' (Asahi Shinbun: 2003). Another possible interpretation is that progressive educational forces in Japan have further weakened in the midst of socio-political changes. In recent years, the JTU has been having trouble recruiting new teachers to join the union and has been losing their influence. In the past, as many as eighty percent of teachers belonged to the JTU, while the current rate is only about thirty percent, the rate for new teachers is less than twenty percent (MEXT published White Papers, 2002). The latest development in this course of action was the revision of the Fundamental Education Law in 2006.

The revised law passed in the Diet without major objections amid the series of bullying problems surfacing nationwide, but it was a highly symbolic policy. The revision demonstrated that the order is now being established top-down through the shift of education from the hands of individuals to those of the national government. The revision does not have immediate effect on solving problems such as bullying. It aims rather mid- to long-term educational effect. The revision, of course, does not mean that the country is returning to the post-war era, because creativity and initiative are demanded in the market today (Isozaki 2009).

Further, in December 2006, the Basic Act on Education was revised in light of the change of diverse situations surrounding education, to specify the basic principles of new age education. In Article 2 of the Act, newly introduced objectives of education were specified particularly as follows.

1. To foster an attitude to acquire wide-ranging knowledge and culture, and to seek the truth, cultivate a rich sensibility and sense of morality, while developing a healthy body.
2. To develop individual abilities while respecting the values of each individual; to cultivate their creativity; foster a spirit of autonomy and independence; and foster an attitude to value labour while emphasising the connections with career and practical life.

3. To foster a value for justice, responsibility, gender equality, mutual respect and cooperation, and active contribution, in the public spirit, to the building and development of society.

4. To foster an attitude to respect life, care for nature, and contribute to the protection of the environment.

5. To foster an attitude to respect our traditions and culture, love the country and region that nurtured them, along with respect for other countries, and a desire to contribute to world peace and the development of the international community.

Motani (2005) is of the opinion that while traditionally the progressive forces resists the status-quo, clearly the Conservatives have dominated educational policy, which has continued at the start of the new millennium. The Ministry of Education promulgates all policies affecting the entire educational system, which are based on reports called (*toshin*) issued by its councils. The members of these councils include famous novelists, poets, athletes, business executives, as well as a variety of educators, but are chosen by the Ministry of Education. While the LDP has lost dominance as a single party since 1993, it continues to control the current Japanese political system.

With all the special councils formed in order to bring about new changes in the education system to suit it to the prevailing times and conditions, the Ministry of Education has been able to make some significant changes in this decade. Specially trimming the school days with Saturdays' off so that children have more time to spend with their parents and also have time to interact with the community. The objective of the government is to form a more humane society and impressing upon the children so as to live in harmony and individual fulfilment. And at the same time developing a community where there is active interaction between the young and the older generation to promote a safe and secure environment.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

One of the visions of the twenty first century is to promote education that encourages development of individual capability of the citizens which forms the bedrock of the nation. The underlying importance and functions of school education as an integral part of the Japanese society and government is undeniable. School education in particular has always been regarded as a vital factor in achieving the objectives of the government and society. The objectives of school education in the twenty first century as stated in the White Papers in FY 2005 are as follows:

1. To foster people who are independent-minded and seek self-actualisation.
2. To foster people who are warm-hearted and enjoy a healthy body.
3. To foster people to become creative leaders of a Century of Knowledge.
4. To foster Japanese people based on the traditions and culture of Japan to live in a globalised community.

Two distinct periods and events in Japanese history define the background and the development of formal education and both played a significant role in nation formation. The early period was the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) which was based on feudalistic pattern and the other was the Meiji period (1868-1945) which brought an end to feudalism and ushered the foundations of democracy in Japan. During the early days of the Edo period, only a few fiefs had established fief schools but from about the middle of this period there was a spread of such institutions, which culminated in a total of some two hundred and seventy schools by the end of the period.

The first Japanese school system was set up with three distinctive characteristics which have since then been observed in most of the Japanese school systems through the ages, and which have, indeed, become almost inherent characteristics of Japanese schools. These three are the following: firstly, the schools were set up on the initiative of the government for the training of the personnel necessary for administration, secondly, from an individual point of view, the schools provided a way to social success for ambitious youths, and thirdly, the schools taught the elements of a new civilisation abroad, and thus functioned as an effective tool for allowing Japan to "borrow" a culture. This by and large formed the backbone of the

education system that was followed in the future development of education in modern Japan.

In 1871, the modern education system was established in Japan with the establishment of the Ministry of Education and the Fundamental Code of Education propagated by the Meiji Government in 1872. The Fundamental Law of Education is the basic legislative framework which identifies and sets out the objectives and principles of education in Japan. Specially, the law covers such objectives and principles as equality of educational opportunity, compulsory education, co-education, school education, out-of-school education, the prohibition of politically partisan education, the prohibition in public sector schools of religious education pertaining to specific religion, and the prohibition of inappropriate control over education by a sectional interest wishing to subvert education for its own purposes (Numano et al 2002:36).

It was because of this modern education system that Japan, in between 1868-1912 moved from her pre-industrial, agrarian, feudal past to modern industrial nationhood. By the end of the Meiji Period, her principal modern institutions were well established. Virtually the entire population had attained functional literacy, and compulsory school attendance was as close to one hundred per cent as it could be. Nothing, in fact, has been more central in Japanese society or more basic to Japan's success than its education system.

The aim of education was to cultivate fine personalities and to enable individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest extent so they could realise desirable objectives. Education not only supplied the skills needed for military and economic development but also furthered the creation of a nation state (Passin 1965:62). Therefore, in this period Japan's faith in education was duly proved.

The third important period in Japan's school education system was at the end of the Second World War. In August, 1945, Second World War ended in Japan's defeat, and with the formal surrender of Japan, it came under the Allied Occupation. General Douglas MacArthur (1880 -1964) was designated as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). The allied occupation established a new system of schooling with the aim of bringing about drastic changes in social and political transformation in Japan i.e., from an ultra nationalist state to a democratic society. To aid in the

development of concrete proposals for educational reform, the Occupation authorities invited twenty-seven distinguished U.S educators to Japan in March of 1947.

Radical changes were incorporated in the education system with three main goals. The first goal was demilitarisation, to uproot the ultra nationalistic education system of the pre-war Imperial state; Second was democratisation, and equal opportunity; and the third was a move for a higher degree of decentralisation in the education administration with control shared between the Ministry of education and the local government. The new education system was, thus, called the '6-3-3-4' system. It set up a new six-year primary school followed by three-year lower secondary schools and made attendance at them compulsory. This system was simpler then the pre-war system and was aimed at providing greater opportunities to advance to secondary and higher education.

Major differences from the pre-war system are: the multi-track school system was changed to a single track system; co-education was also introduced in secondary and higher education; compulsory education was extended to cover the lower secondary level, (through grade nine). As a result the time for the differentiation of courses was shifted from the lower stage to the higher stage of secondary education; various courses including general and vocational courses, full-time and part-time or correspondence courses, were created at upper secondary schools; and teacher training was introduced in the universities (MEXT Published, Japan's Growth and Education, 1963).

The conservative government at the time in partnership with the *Zaikai* stressed the link between economic growth and the education system through a new concept of '*Noryokushugi'* or the 'ability first' principle. The rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s was both a product of the Occupation's revolutionary reforms and a means for sustaining them. The school produced large number of high school and higher education graduates to meet the needs of the expanding labour market (Green 2000:420). Over the past decades following the post-war years, Japanese society changed fundamentally. By the late 1970s, Japan became a successful liberal democracy and the world's second largest economy, characterised by a relatively even wealth distribution (Okano 2008:2). Indeed, there is little doubt that since the middle of the 1950s the interests of industry have been extremely influential in shaping

educational policy (Beauchamp 1987:310). Also, by the 1980s the Japanese society had witnessed tremendous changes within it. It had become an affluent, modern society with high standard of living and held the second highest economy right after the U.S. This educated and competent work force contributed to post-war Japanese economic recovery and development (Fujita 2004:1). From 1956 to 1973, the Japanese economy grew at the spectacular rate of almost ten percent a year. This growth declined but still maintained a respectable growth of three point eight percent, until 1991 despite two outright recessions (Schoppa 2001:78).

However, despite social and economic transformation, there was no significant change in the school education system to match up to this social transformation. Schooling system remained egalitarian throughout the country. From the late 1970s onwards, Japanese society and education was confronted with significant challenges. It was from this period onwards that, there were significant rise in incidents of student non-attendance (*futoukou*), acts of violence (*konai bouryoku*), class room breakdown (*gakkyu houkai*), the *ijime* (bullying). Shocking crimes committed by the youths have caused a great deal of alarm and distress among the public. Japanese society began to witness a period of degeneration and moral degradation among the youths. They spend much of their time shopping for the latest fashions, playing video games, and even driving automobiles in increasing numbers. The high ideals of hard work and ethics set by the previous generation seemed to be ignored or forgotten in the new social environment that emerged by the turn of the twenty first century.

While juvenile crimes continue to dominate attention for the reformers, the other challenges are of the ageing population and low birth rate, for which the government is trying to promote welfare programmes that will involve school, family and the community. Thus the "school stress" theory was adopted to explain these problems. It blamed school education in general and public schools in particular for these disorder problems, calling these problems "educational pathology" or "school pathology," and expressed repeatedly distrust in public schools and teachers (Fujita 2004: 3). Besides juvenile problems, there are problems of unemployment among the youths. Also, Japan's status as an economic power faced challenges as it has experienced more than a decade of stagnation beginning from the 1990s. With the Japanese economy increasingly dependent on international business and fast-changing science and technology industries, the government faced demands from many quarters

calling on it to reform its education system to bring it into line with the growing need for more diversely talented and creative workers and a 'life-long learning system' (Schoppa 1991:2). Japan's phenomenal economic progress has increased the demand to change its outlook with the international scenario. This has further made internationalisation and globalisation another major attributor of change in the twenty first century.

5.2 Future Course for School Education

Japan, confronted with all these challenges and problems needed change, a transformation to meet the challenges of the present situation and a strategy to meet future demands. The Japanese government needs to change the education system to keep pace with the domestic and international scenarios. In the White Papers published in 2005, the government stated that the twenty first century is the era of "knowledge-based society," and it is essential for a country like Japan, that is not blessed with natural resources, to foster excellent talent in order to maintain its vitality and further develop as a nation with wealth and education.

At the backdrop of the reforms, the egalitarian system was criticised by the politicians, the business class and the educational critics, stressing that Japan needed a more liberalised and a system that will help in the development of open-mindedness and individual character, to nurture creativity and skills for self expression. These critics advocated the need for space in enhancing personal talents and scope for developing the same which was not possible in the current egalitarian system. The role of education is not simply to gain knowledge to fulfil the economic requirements but also for an all round development of an individual.

Reform within the education system is a means to lighten the existing burden and create an atmosphere which appreciates individuality and enhance creativity of an individual. Japan's Prime Minister Nakasone (1982-87) initiated a very important reform in the school education system. This led to the formation of the Ad Hoc Council or the National Council on Education Reform in 1984. The foremost task was to address the problems of growing school violence and juvenile delinquency as well as the more basic problems of 'a social climate that places too much value on the academic background of individuals, a uniform and flexible structure of formal education and a need for internationalising Japan's educational institutions'(Hood

2002:35). Juvenile related crimes were blamed on the rigorous and 'stress' related school system, therefore at the first stage of reform, the policy of so-called relaxed education (*Yutori Kyoiku)* was introduced. It started with the revision of the national course of study (curriculum guidelines) implemented in 1980 in order to make school life more enjoyable and free of pressure. Additionally, the courses of study were fully revised in March 1989 for kindergartens, elementary schools, lower schools and upper secondary schools, and then in October 1989 for schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and special schools.

To address the issue of 'internationalisation' and 'individualisation', Nakasone created a more cost-effective, flexible education system though decentralisation, deregulation, and privatisation. This was a push to create a more assertive and creative Japanese workers for the economic development of the county in an increasingly competitive world economy (Motani 2005:313). Moving on to the 1990s, the two most important and emphasised points were promoting flexibility and to look beyond the school's frame and acquire broader view so as to tackle the educational reforms. In its first phase, the school day was reduced to five-day school week, which made one Saturday off per month in 1992, which was the followed by two Saturdays off in 1995, and finally all Saturdays' off from the year 2002. Five school days were introduced so that children could spend quality time with family and interact more with the community.

Just as the government had taken steps to promote liberalisation in the education system, it is a positive and progressive decision for the twenty first century. Children are the best resources and to sustain the future of Japan and it is empirical that they are nurtured and brought up in the best possible manner. The problem of low-birth rate and increasing elderly population no doubt is haunting Japan but the government has taken a very commendable steps in promoting life-long learning and encouraging the elderly to take part in it. As mentioned in the previous chapters, one major hurdle is the system of 'overstructuration'[9] of the education system. According

[9] The fact that the Japanese society places too much importance on the education system to decide the fate of an individual by the school or the university they attend has become a hurdle in the lives of the younger children. Employment opportunities are majorly decided by the school and the university that an individual attends. Therefore, the status that an individual hold in a society is decided by the job position and the company he works with for which the deciding factor is the university or the alma mater to which one belongs.

to Amano (2003) in the past the focus of discussion was either on the educational system itself or in its relationship with other social systems, especially the economy. With the key themes based on efficiency and equality to catch up with the West, the educational system was expected to provide a higher level of efficiency in selecting and training the work force to meet the demands of the economy.

However, today, it is neither efficiency nor equality but a 'crisis' in the education system which forms the basis of the education reform debates. The system has to be blamed, for the declining aspiration among the youths. For this he places the blame on the "overstructuration" of the system. This crisis is created right from the middle school, with the extreme burden on the young child to prepare for the entrance examination so that he/she can enter a prestigious or a high ranking university. Securing a seat in one of the prestigious universities is a very important factor in employment opportunity. Therefore, in order to secure a seat, students prepare rigorously for the entrance examination as the common exam serves as the first stage in university admission which in turn has created the 'stress' theory on the system. Competition in the job market is one important reason why high school graduates compete with each other to be selected to the most prestigious universities.

With regards to the declining birth rate, if Japan is to cope with the aging of its population, it needs many more women to choose both work and children. But creating the sort of environment that will allow them to do so will require expanded government programs and changes in the attitudes of employers, schools and husbands that most Japanese has not even begun to contemplate (Schoppa 2001:81). Education reforms at the eve of the twenty first century inspired by the philosophy of new public management creates and encourages deregulation and enhanced opportunities for external review of educational institutions by parents and community members as well.

Despite the objectives mentioned year after year in the White Papers published by the Ministry of Education, Japan, it has not been able to achieve its objectives to transform the existing ills of the system. The problems are deep rooted within the social context of Japan for which the proposed and recommended reforms will take gradual effect to absorb in the system. The knowledge base of schooling has been changing along with the rapid development of sciences and new information communication technologies. The range and volume of knowledge that schools are expected to cover are expanding along with this change of knowledge base.

The status of schooling has changed along with the advent of the information age and development of various information media. Schools are not a monopolistic institution providing valuable knowledge anymore, but one of many institutions including mass media. Students can now learn from various sources and that various places outside schools. In this context, the status of schools has declined relatively and significantly. Needless to say, however, this does not mean that thinking capacity, creativity and the like are not important, nor traditional approaches to teaching, learning and curriculum design are superior than various new approaches like situated learning, individualised learning, cross-curricular subjects. Which of these approaches are more appropriate or effective varies, depending on subjects, lesson materials, students, teachers, and many other factors. It is a matter of appropriate combination that is needed, a place where each teacher as well as each school can and should display his/her professional ability to the full.

Despite the introduction of a more flexible environment along with changes in the teaching style and curriculum design adopted in the new reform measures, critical for successful learning are student's participation in learning activities; commitment to the subject as well as to learning community; encouraging students to make sufficient efforts; and appreciating student's efforts to dignity. Sources of motivation, value do not pre-exist there in each subject or learning materials. Motivation is something to be developed and values and meanings are something to be found or to be created through the participation, commitment and making efforts.

It is appropriately stated by Fujita (2004) in the following five points for the creation of good schools and dedicated students. School are the culmination of whatever the society expects out of the children. And eventually schools firstly form a life space. And it should be a secure and safe place where anybody can be accepted and trusted.

Second, school is a learning space. Thus, it should be good enough to develop basic skills and knowledge and to prepare students for further learning. In addition it is desirable that the process of learning is lively and pleasant.

Third, school is a space for identity formation. Therefore, dignity, autonomy and diversity of all members should be appreciated. Acceptance and participation are also critical for students to develop their ability, motivation and identity.

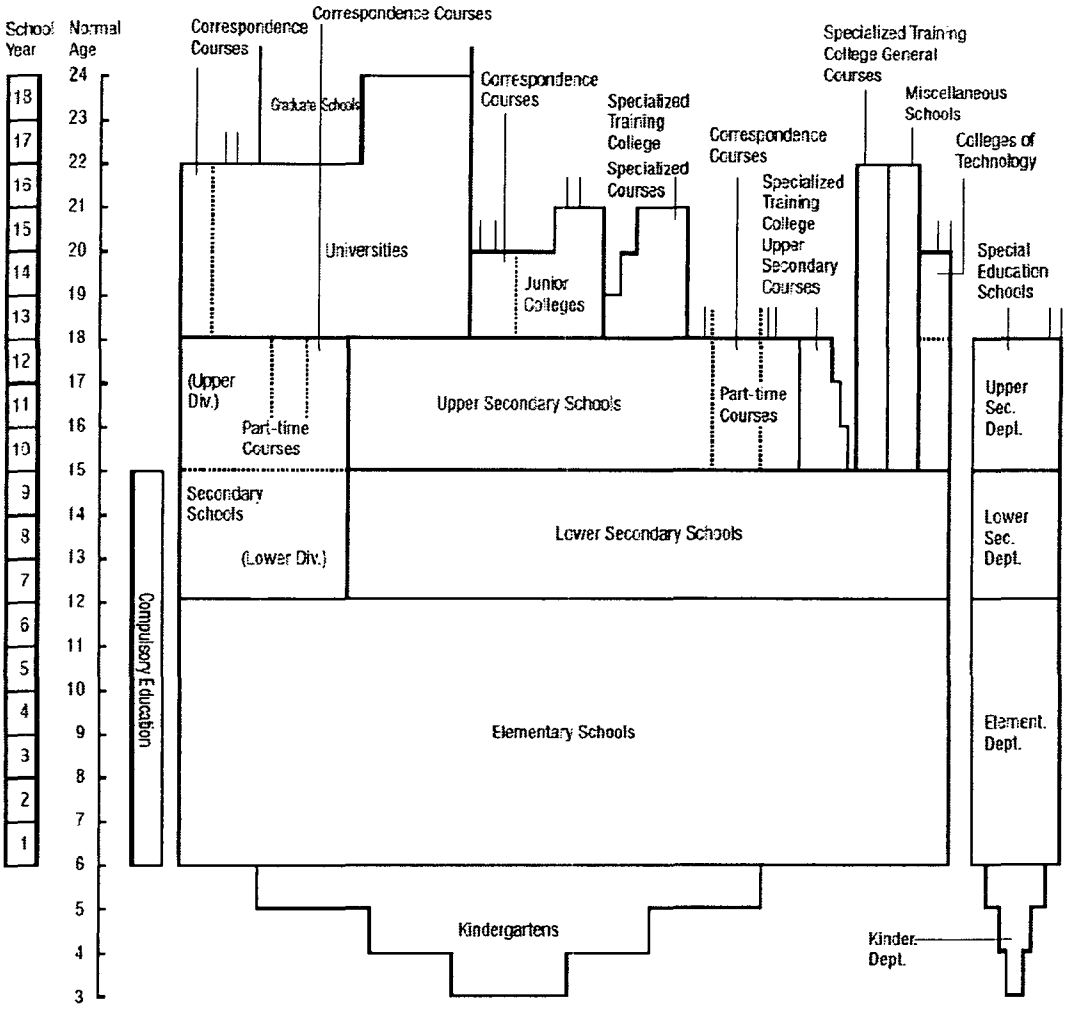
Fourth, stable and rich time and rhythm are critical for successful learning and stress-free, enjoyable school life.

And fifth, education is an unfinished project. Its success depends on the continuous efforts and sincere practices that are worthy of trust and at the same time will make possible to secure trust.

It is indeed true that education formed the backbone of the Japanese society and continues to play a vital role. Major social, economic and political developments were based right from the school education system. Therefore, Japan's dependence on school education will continue even for the future, not only to meet the social changes but also to form a strategy to fulfil the visions of the twenty first century.

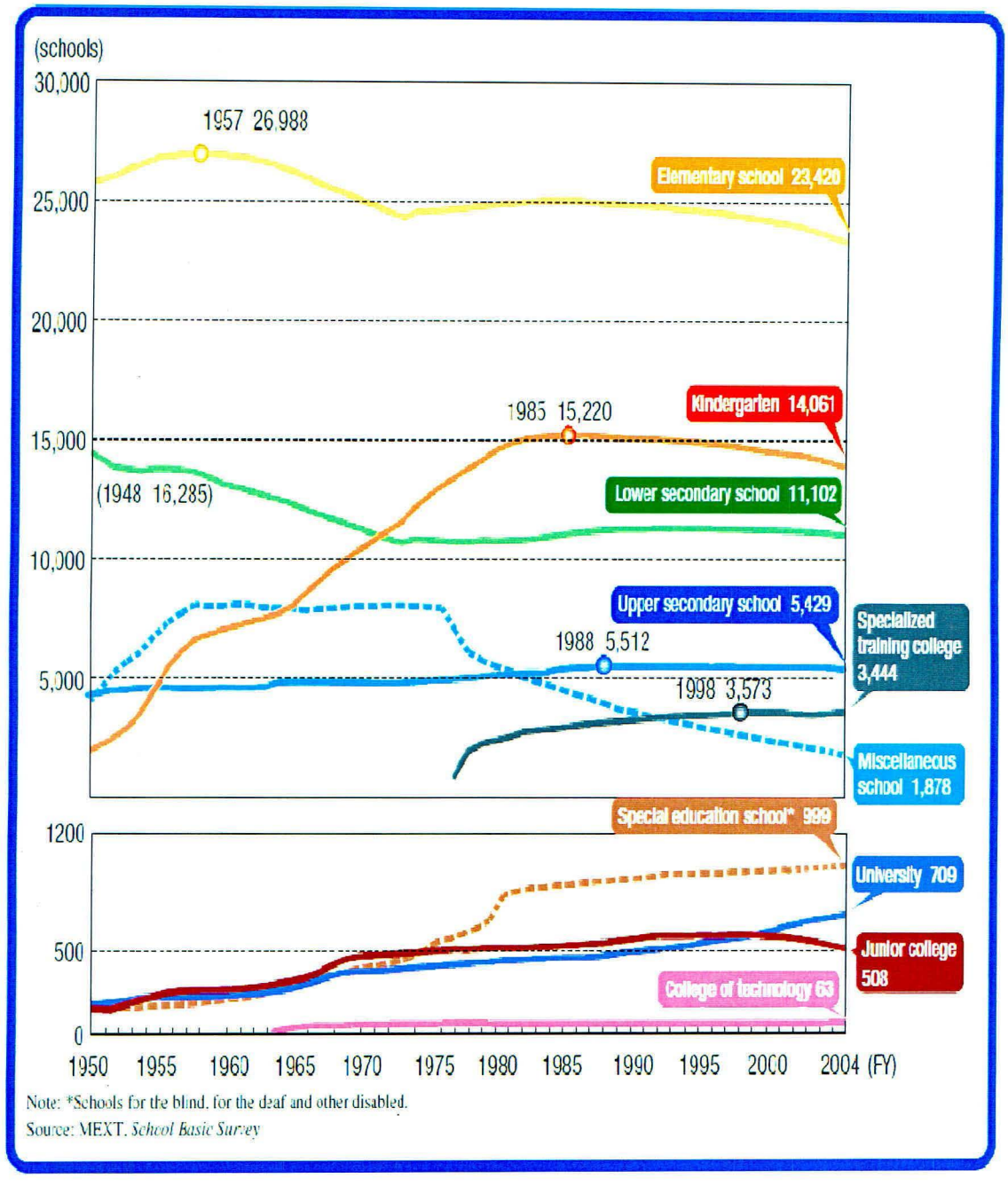
The Ministry of Education is completely aware of the loopholes of the existing education system. And it has put its best efforts to introduce changes and reforms from time to time. However, school education per se will not solve the social problems which are so naturally blamed on the education system. Family is the first place of learning and schools are an extension of learning away from the family. Therefore, it is imperative for the society to change its outlook and approach towards schools. The society as a whole has to make conscious efforts to realise its own weaknesses and treat it rationally rather than narrowing it all down on the school system.

Appendix 1.Organisation of the School System in Japan



(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005)

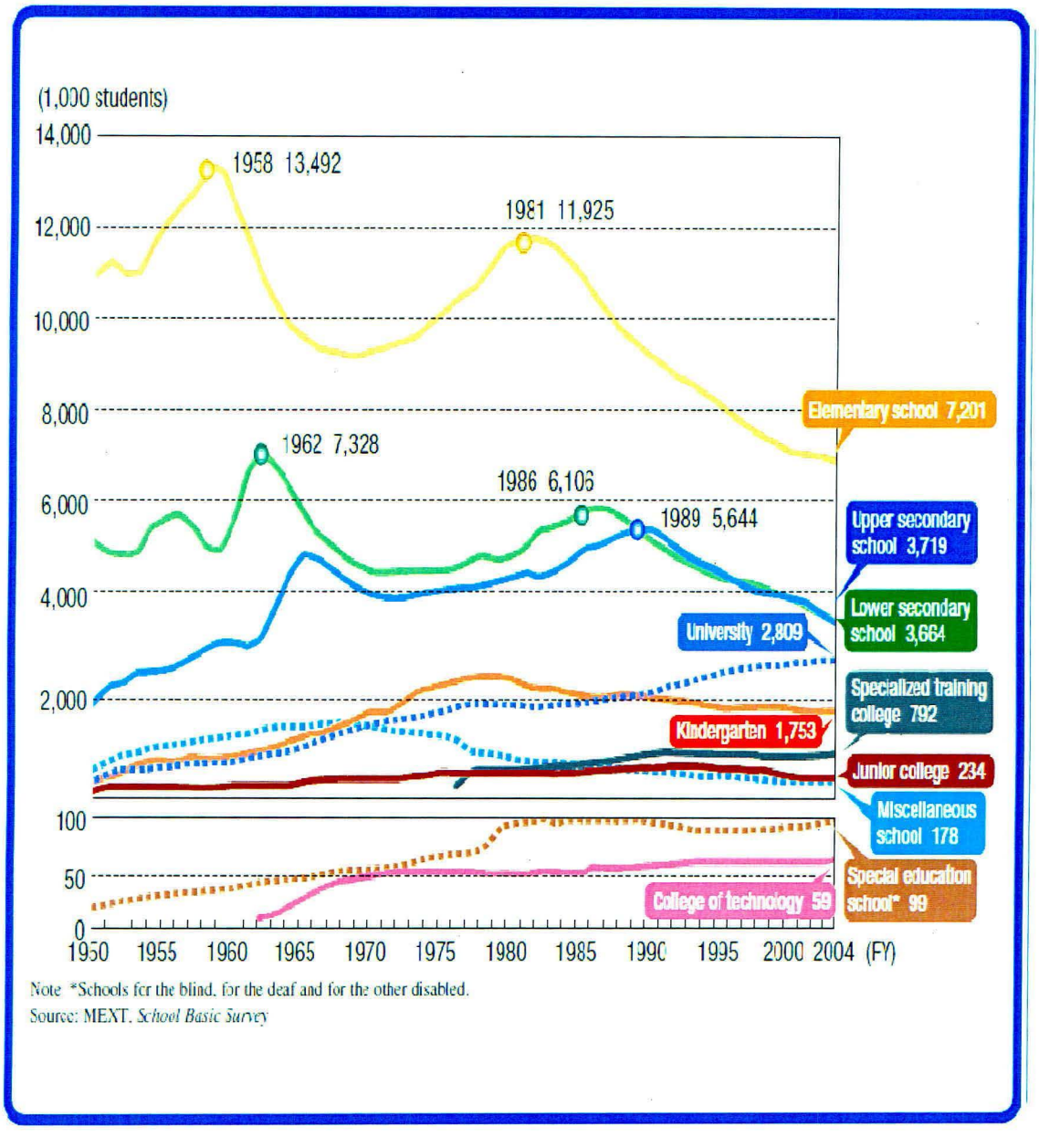
Appendix 2: Trends in Number of Institutions



(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005:1)

The number of institutions at the primary and secondary education level is on the decline as schools merge of close due to the low childbirth rate. However, the number of universities has increased consistently.

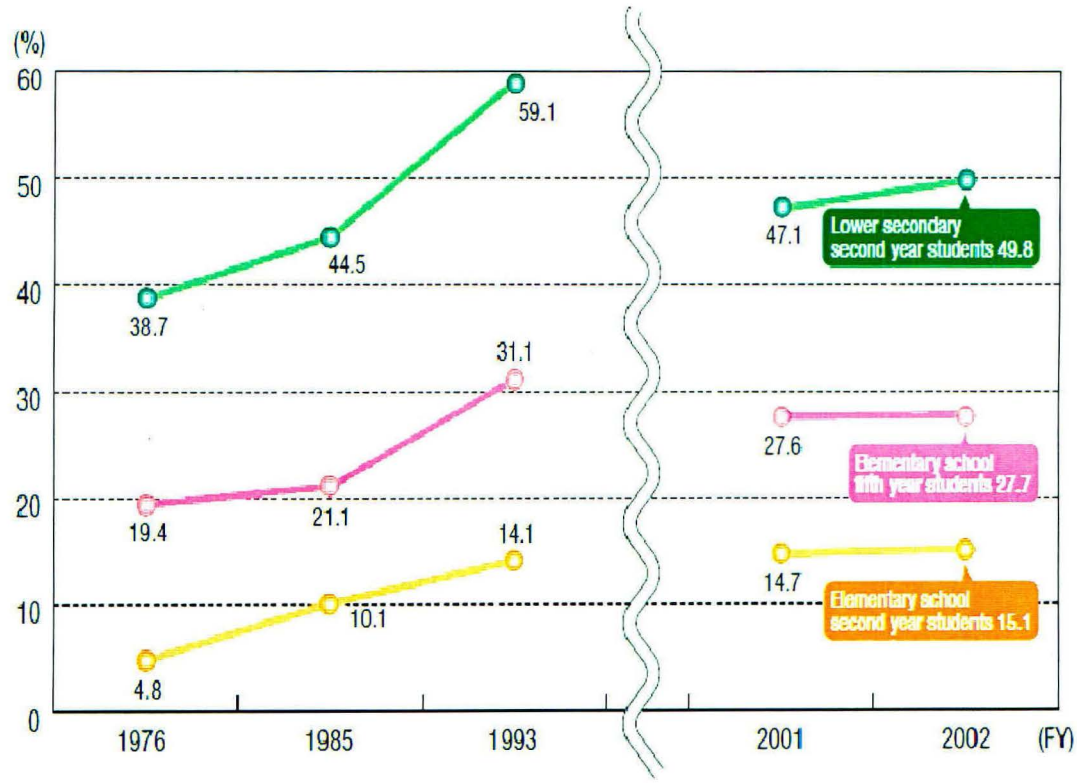
Appendix 3: Trends in the Number of Students



(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005)

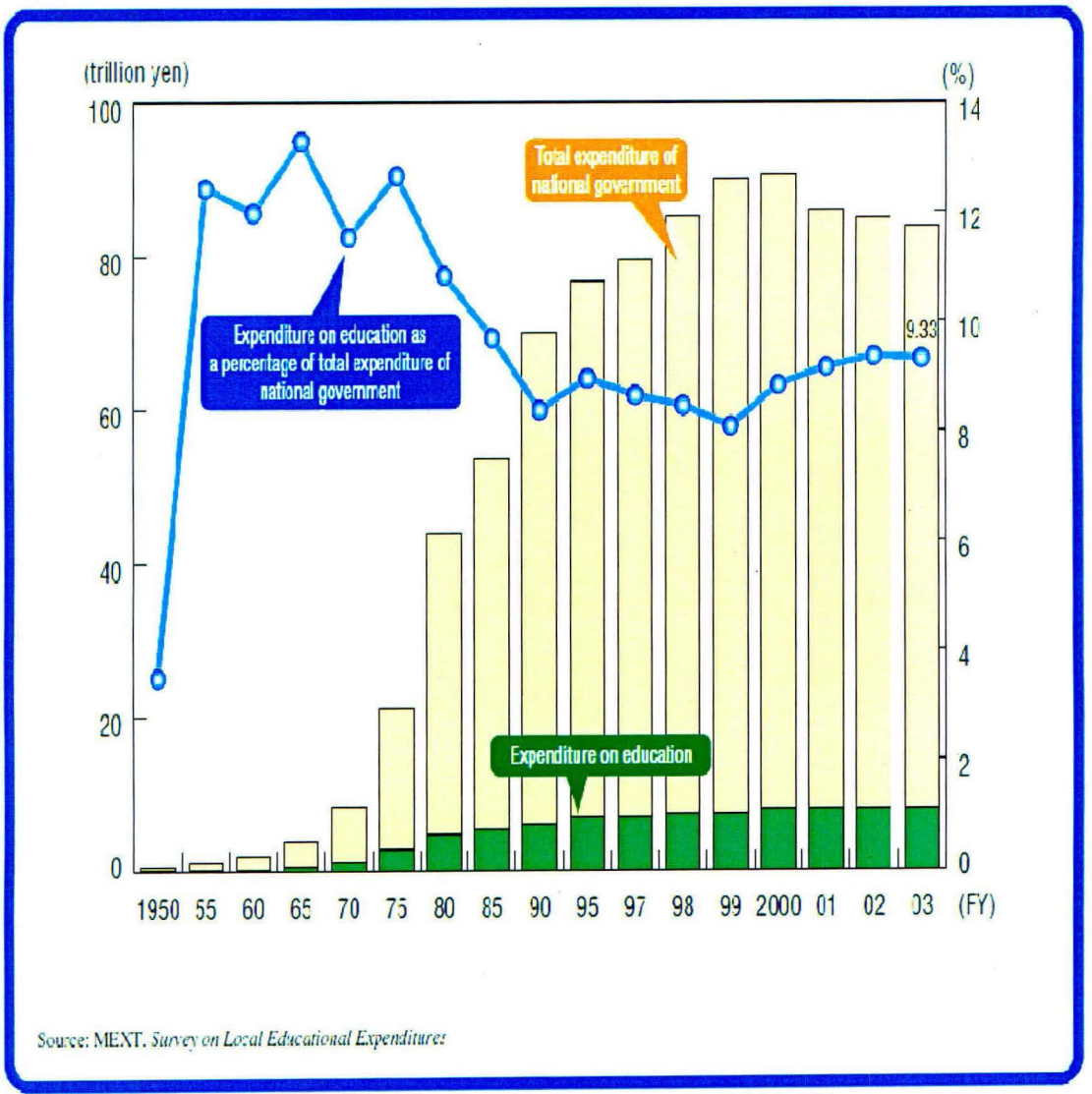
The number of students continues to decline at the primary and secondary education stage, as well as at junior colleges. However, the number of students at universities continues to grow.

Appendix 4. Trends in Percentage of Students Attending Private Cram Schools (7, 10 and 13 years olds)



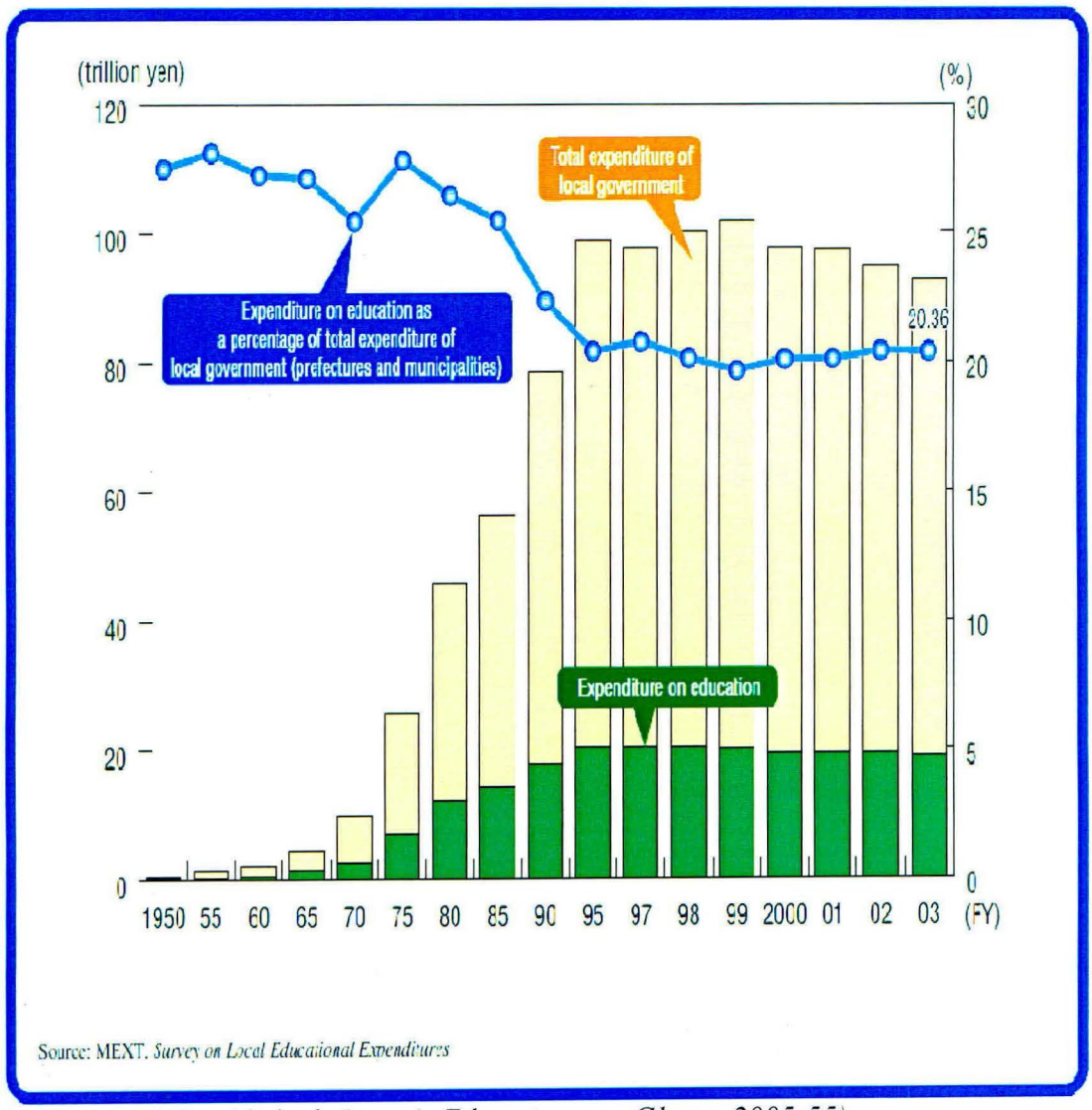
(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2004:14)

Appendix 5. Trends in Expenditure on Education and Total Expenditure of National Government



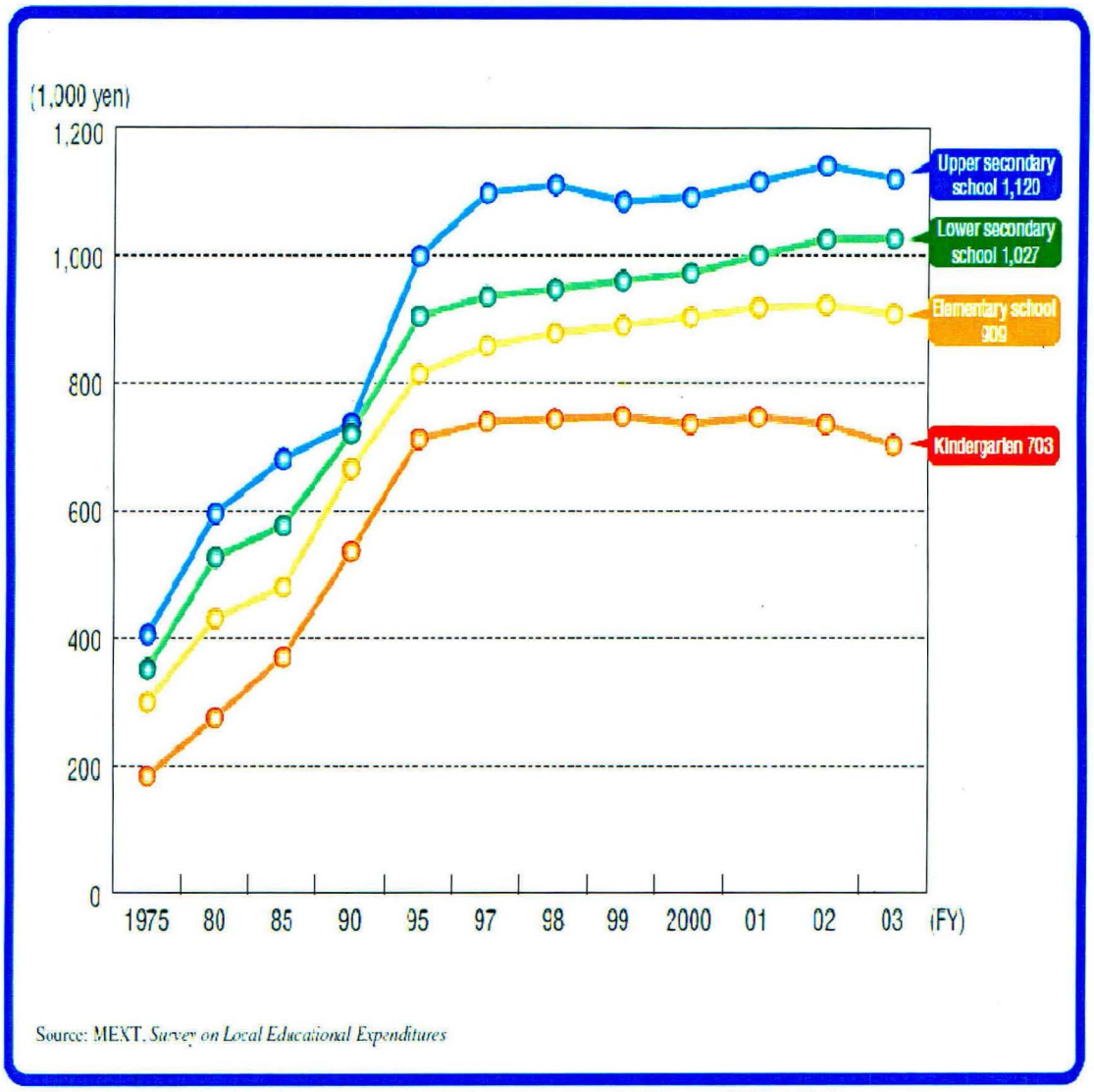
(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005:55)

Appendix 6. Trends in Expenditure on Education and Total Expenditure of Local Government.



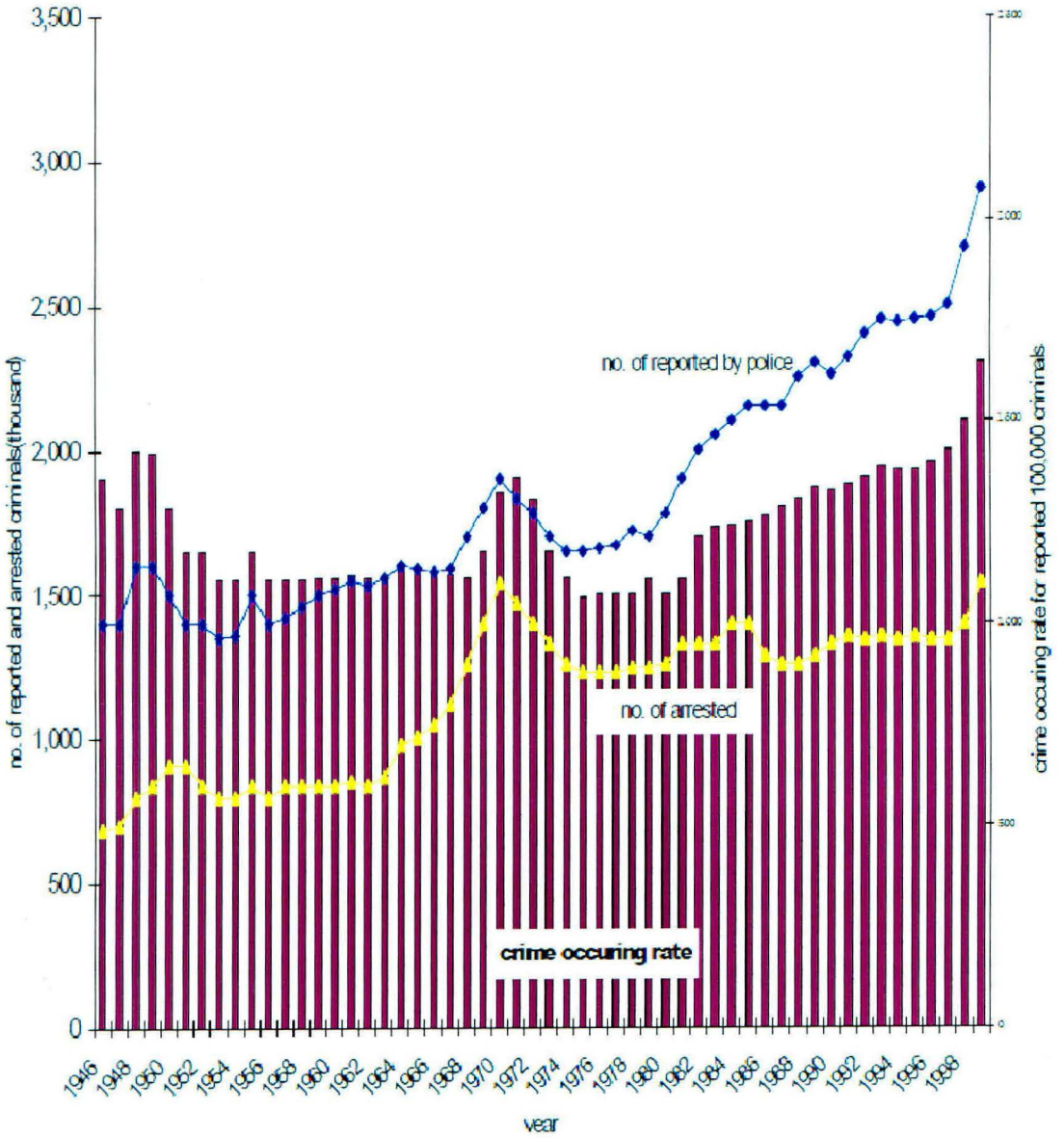
(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005:55)

Appendix 7. Trends in Public Expenditure on Education per Student



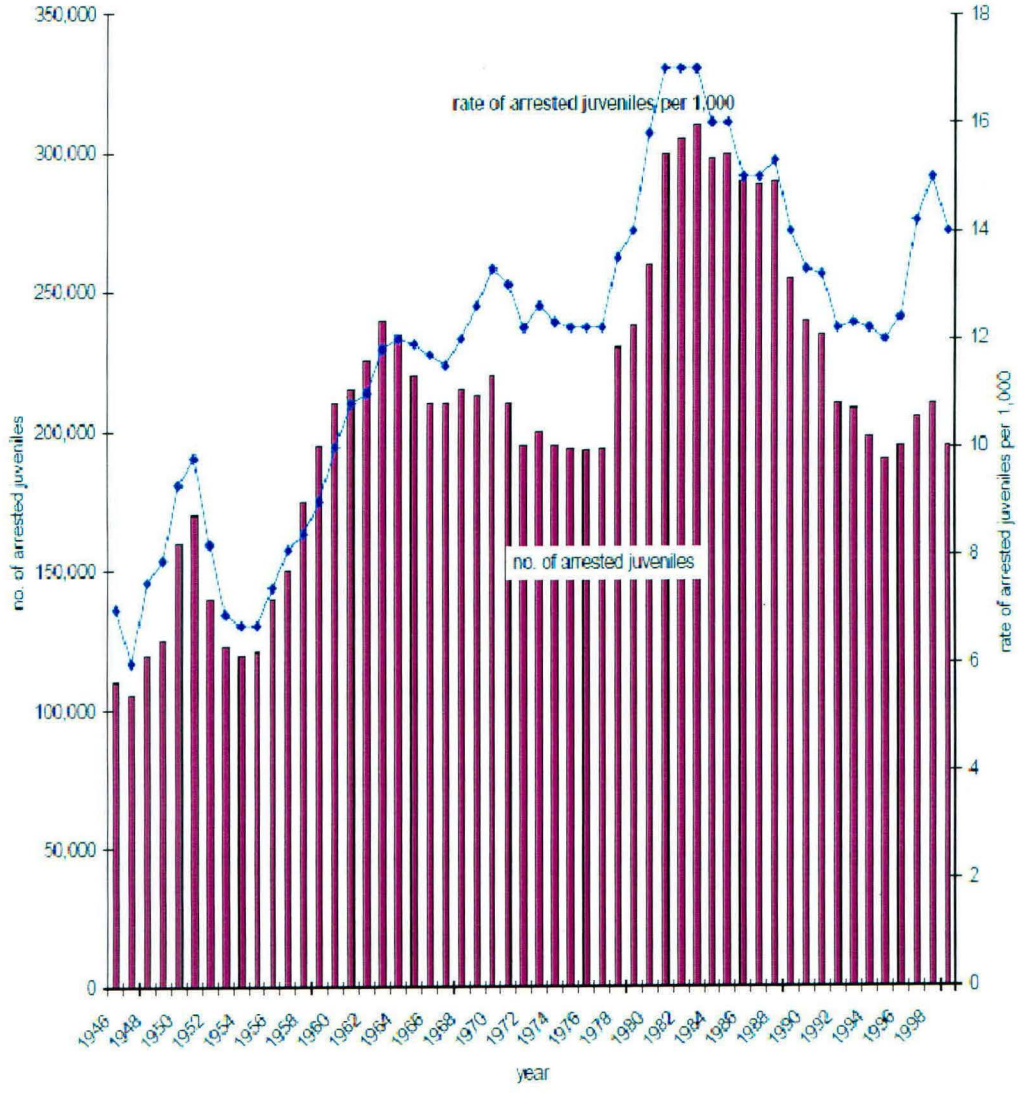
(Source: MEXT published, Japan's Education at a Glance 2005:56)

Appendix 8. Trends of Number of Criminals and Crime Rate



(Source Nakanishi 2003:35)

Appendix 9. Trends in Number of Arrested Juveniles Compared to Total Population



(Source Nakanishi 2003:36)

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