
A Study of the Education Area Plan for Postwar Educational Reform

– Focusing on the Imperial Diet –

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This paper analyzes the education area plan for postwar educational reform until the establishment of the Fundamentals of Education Act was established in 1947. It focuses on how this plan, which was presented as an important reform framework for education authorities, was debated at the Imperial Diet, a legislative assembly that was one of the three branches of government (namely legislative, executive and judicial) which supported the Japanese Emperor's *tenno taiken* (literally, "Emperor's prerogative"), or his sovereign power. The paper also attempts to study the features and character of the initial framework for postwar reform of the systems of education authorities. Until the Fundamentals of Education Act (the starting point for postwar reform of the educational system) was established on March 31, 1947, the man at the center of the reform debate was Tanaka Kotaro. Tanaka considered that the essence of education reform was establishing a right to education. He believed that, as a measure to achieve this, the whole of Japan was demarcated into a number of blocks with independent regional educational authorities, and that the burden of their autonomy should be independent education officials, or presidents of Imperial universities. This was the "university district" concept. However, Tanaka's ideas had a negative reception at the Imperial Diet and the Educational Reform Committee, and so he was compelled to revise them. The result was that the separation of educational authorities into blocks, the theory at the core of the university district concept, remained part of his new design conception, and was realized in the form of regional education committees.

The objectives of this paper are to collate, analyze, and consider how these changes were received and debated at the Imperial Diet. The reform framework for education authorities that would fulfill Tanaka's objective, the establishment of a right to education, was something very different from the Fundamentals of Education Act or publically elected boards of education, which were the starting point for the postwar education system. This paper undertakes a historical re-examination of the reason why Tanaka embraced these frameworks.