



Japan

Education for All 2015 National Review

This report was prepared by the relevant national authorities in view of the World Education Forum (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 19-22 May 2015). It was submitted in response to UNESCO's invitation to its Member States to assess progress made since 2000 towards achieving Education for All (EFA).

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The paper can be cited with the following reference: "Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Japan". For further information, please contact: efa2015reviews@unesco.org

National EFA 2015 Review

June 2014

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

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Educational reform (Legislation).....	1
1. The outlook for education in the 21st century at the Central Council for Education subsequent to the National Council on Education.....	1
2. The National Commission on Educational Reform.....	2
3. Revisions to the Basic Act on Education.....	2
4. The Education Rebuilding Council.....	3
5. Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.....	4
6. The Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.....	6
Chapter 2. Teachers.....	6
1. Measures for the comprehensive promotion of the capacities and abilities of teachers.....	6
2. Compulsory Education System Funded by Tax Revenues.....	7
Chapter 3. Courses of Study.....	8
Chapter 4. Governance (Local educational administration system).....	10
Chapter 5. Lifelong learning.....	11
Chapter 6. Vision for the post-2015.....	13
1. Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.....	13
2. Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).....	15
Annex 1. Japanese School Systems.....	18
Annex 2. Number of Schools, Students and Teachers.....	19
Annex 3. Trends in Advancement Rates.....	20
Annex 4. Roles of the National, Prefectural and Municipal Governments in Educational Administration.....	21

Introduction

As well as enriching life by allowing the diverse personalities and abilities of individuals to shine, education is the foundation for implementing future development in society as a whole. Through the steadfast efforts of each and every individual citizen, education in Japan realizes the ideal of equal opportunity, raises the education standards of the nation, and responds to the needs of the times while making significant contributions to the development of society. As a result, education has achieved major successes, including the affluent economic society and secure lifestyle of the postwar period.

This report is to overview the transitions of the educational policies in Japan after the year 2000, focusing on the following six elements:

1. Educational reform (Legislation)
2. Teachers
3. Course of Study
4. Governance (Local educational administration system)
5. Lifelong learning
6. Vision for the post-2015 period

Chapter 1. Educational reform (Legislation)

1. The outlook for education in the 21st century at the Central Council for Education subsequent to the National Council on Education

In the 1990s, Japanese society underwent great transformations. After the findings in the four reports by the National Council on Education, the Cold War structures between East and West crumbled, and socioeconomic globalization advanced, but on the other hand, school violence, bullying, school absenteeism and the phenomenon of “class disruption” became evident in schools, and juvenile crime and child abuse turned into social problems. With the imminent arrival of the 21st century, the Central Council for Education started to study future models for education based on the prospects for future society.

The Central Council for Education deliberated for two years after the findings of 1995, compiling two reports on The Model for Japanese Education in the Perspective of the 21st Century (Findings) which made a range of proposals premised on nurturing “zest for life” in children, and the necessity to focus on education that matches the abilities and personality of the individual to realize self-fulfillment and a richness of spirit. In 1998, the University Council reported on A Vision for the

University of the 21st Century and Future Reform Measures (Findings), which proposed policies aimed at creating universities that would allow individuality to shine in the competitive research environments of the 21st century.

2. The National Commission on Educational Reform

At almost the same time, the National Commission on Educational Reform under the leadership of the Prime Minister was inaugurated in March 2000 in light of the need for a broad-based national discussion about returning to the basics in education in order to respond to the social changes since the report of the National Council on Education. The Commission compiled its final report in December the same year. The report listed seventeen concrete proposals for making changes to education including “be aware that the basis of education is in the home,” “remedy standardized education and introduce a system of education that develops individuality,” “promote education that nurtures careers and employment,” “introduce schools and boards of education to the concepts of organizational management,” and “promote the establishment of new types of schools (School Management Council System (Community Schools) etc.).” The report also proposed a review of the Basic Act on Education with a view to its suitability for the new age.

The following three aspects were indicated as requirements of a new Basic Act on Education

- (a) Considering the changing times, there is a need to nurture Japanese people who now live in a new age.
- (b) Develop and respect traditions and culture to be handed down to future generations
- (c) Stipulate concrete policies, not only ideological matters, in the Basic Act on Education in order to deliver an education that is suitable for the future. From this perspective, and similarly to other Basic Acts, it is necessary to include provisions for the formulation of a Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.

On receipt of the proposals of the National Commission on Educational Reform, discussions aimed at revising the Basic Act on Education went ahead at the Central Council for Education.

3. Revisions to the Basic Act on Education

The new Basic Act on Education was enacted in December 2006. The revised Act clarifies the principles that are currently considered extremely important. While retaining the universal ideals adopted by the previous Act, it sets great store by the

normative consciousness of Japanese people such as their public-spiritedness and their respect for their traditions and culture that have nurtured these norms.

Chapter 1 of the Act stipulates the aims and principles of education. As the aims of education, Article 1 states that education shall aim for the full development of personality and strive to nurture the citizens, sound both in mind and body, who are imbued with the qualities necessary for those who form a state and society. As the objectives of education, Article 2 stipulates the matters which are considered important in order to realize the aims of education. As the principles of education, the revised Act adds a new article for the concept of lifelong learning (Article 3), in addition to equal opportunity in education (Article 4).

Chapter 2 stipulates the basics of education provision, and in the revised Act new stipulations are added, including “universities” (Article 7), “private schools” (Article 8), “education at home” (Article 10), “early childhood education” (Article 11) and “partnership and cooperation among schools, families and local communities” (Article 13).

In Chapter 3, a new stipulation is added in the paragraph 1 of Article 17 that the government shall formulate a basic plan (Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education) in order to facilitate comprehensive and systematic implementation of measures for the promotion of education. The paragraph 2 of the same Article stipulates that local governments shall also endeavor to formulate a basic plan suited to their local circumstances by referring to aforementioned plan.

As a result, the Special Committee on the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education was set up in the Central Council for Education in February 2007. Upon receipt of the finding report in April 2008, the first Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education was endorsed by the Cabinet on 1 July 2008.

4. The Education Rebuilding Council

In October 2006, the Education Rebuilding Council was set up in the Cabinet with the aim of rebuilding education and structuring an educational system befitting the 21st century. The Council carried out studies of policies to rebuild education that rely on society as a whole.

The Education Rebuilding Council compiled three reports over a period of approximately one year and four months, as well as a final report aimed at securing the efficacy of the policies. To start with, in January 2007, the Council compiled the first report, which zeroed in on urgent issues in elementary and secondary education with a focus on compulsory education and the issue of bullying. Referring to this

report, the Central Council for Education discussed concrete system designs before implementing revisions to the so-called three laws on education, i.e., the School Education Act, the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration, as well as the Education Personnel Certification Law and Special Law for Education Officials, at an ordinary session of the Diet in 2007. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) gave notification of firm guidance and punishment for students in relation to the issue of bullying.

The second report proposed placing the focus on improving academic performance, moral education, reforms at universities and graduate schools, and the fiscal basis of education. The third report proposed developing flexibility in the 6-3-3-4 system of integrated education in elementary and junior high school, reforms to English language education, local autonomy, and comprehensive support for children, young people and families. Based on this, MEXT revised the courses of study in elementary schools, lower and upper secondary schools in 2008 and 2009 based on Improving Courses of Study for Kindergartens, Elementary Schools, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, and Schools For Special Needs Education (Findings) by the Central Council for Education. Also, in order to promote fall enrollment at universities, the Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act was also revised to abolish the principle of April enrollment.

In February 2008, the Education Rebuilding Council passed the baton to the Meeting on Education Rebuilding, which was established by the Cabinet and compiled four reports over a period of one year and nine months. The reports followed up on the proposals by the Education Rebuilding Council, investigated the state of education, and made proposals about initiatives to enhance social security in the first half of life. At the recently established Cabinet-level Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding, the whole Cabinet is vigorously pushing ahead with education rebuilding based on the abovementioned discussions and the actual results of the Education Rebuilding Council.

5. Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

Japan's first Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education was formulated in July 2008 based on paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the revised Basic Act on Education (the First Basic Plan). The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education is the government's basic plan for the fundamental guidelines, measures to be adopted, and other important matters concerning measures to promote education in order to plan for

comprehensive and systematic implementation of measures relating to the promotion of education. The First Basic Plan clarified the educational vision which should be pursued over the next ten years, codified the four basic policy directions for measures that should be addressed over a five-year period (2008 to 2012), and comprehensively and systematically implemented a range of initiatives in accordance with the basic policy directions with the goal of realizing the educational ideals indicated in the Basic Act on Education.

Educational vision which should be pursued over the next ten years

- (a) To cultivate, in all children, the foundations for independence within society by the time they complete compulsory education
- (b) To develop human resources capable of supporting and developing our society and leading the international society

Four basic directions of education measures to be implemented over a period of five years

- Basic Direction 1: Materialization of society-wide commitment to improve education
- Basic Direction 2: Development of people's basic strengths to lead the lives of independent citizens and members of society, through ability building on the basis of respect for individuality
- Basic Direction 3: Development of human resources with a wide range of essential knowledge, expertise and intelligence to support social development
- Basic Direction 4: Materialization of safety and security for children and creation of an environment for high-quality education

In light of the circumstances described above, there is still some way to go before we achieve the “educational vision which should be pursued over the next ten years” outlined in the First Basic Plan. New issues are also emerging such as the issue of the education divide, the importance of cooperation with the local community and the use of ICT, as well as the need to create innovation.

Most educational reform in the past has focused on 21st century society including social demise and the maturation of the economic society, and has been intended to catch up with and overtake the West. In particular, the First Basic Plan was a comprehensive plan first formulated under circumstances where the majority of the principal industrialized countries were formulating medium to long-term plans that included results objectives, and were strategically advancing educational policies.

6. The Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

When formulating the Second Basic Plan, changes in social circumstances and the situation around the implementation of the First Basic Plan, as well as the impact and lessons of the Great East Japan Earthquake were carefully verified and assessed, and on this basis, clarification of basic guidelines and measures for a new approach to promoting education were requested.

The Second Basic Plan covers a period of five years from fiscal 2013 to fiscal 2017. The foreword presents the concept of the Basic Plan as “what is truly needed in Japan is independent-minded learning by individuals in order to realize independence, collaboration and creativity,” and, additionally, “to specify clear achievement targets to ensure educational outcomes, as well as the concrete and systematic measures to deliver on them.”

The Second Basic Plan is broadly divided into three parts. Part 1 addresses the overall image of future education in Japan in the form of general remarks; Part 2 is a detailed discussion about the educational measures that should be implemented in the next five years; and Part 3 describes each of the matters required for the comprehensive and systematic promotion of said measures. (Regarding the detail of the Second Basic Plan, refer to ‘Chapter 6. Vision of the post-2015’)

Chapter 2. Teachers

1. Measures for the comprehensive promotion of the capacities and abilities of teachers

The quality of school education greatly depends upon the capacities and abilities of teachers, who are directly engaged in education at school, and therefore, the improvement of their capacities and abilities is considered to be an important policy issue in realizing a quality education for children. Teachers are required to develop in all children solid academic abilities and normative consciousness, and to nurture social competencies for survival. At the same time, they are required to cope with complex and multiple issues, such as strengthening English language education in view of globalization, coping with bullying, fostering special needs education and enhancing the use of ICT. It is, therefore, of great necessity to secure quality teachers who are well endowed with senses of mission and ethics, and also with high expertise and practical leadership skills which enable them to cope with these issues.

In order to improve the quality of teachers in a comprehensive manner, various measures are being taken, such as the enhancement of teacher training, the

improvement of recruitment for securing qualified and talented teachers, the enhancement and up-grading of in-service teacher training including induction training, and the encouragement of collaboration between the boards of education and universities.

As an example of recent undertakings, the Professional Graduate Schools for Teacher Education were established as from fiscal 2008 to provide more practical teacher training at a graduate school level. In fiscal 2009, the system for renewing educational personnel certificates was introduced, which requires teachers renew their licenses every 10 years. Under this system, teachers are supposed to acquire the most advanced knowledge and skills on a regular basis, so that they are able to teach with confidence and pride, and eventually gain respect and trust from society.

2. Compulsory Education System Funded by Tax Revenues

The Compulsory Education System Funded by Tax Revenues is to ensure that every child can receive the same level of compulsory education, free of charge, anywhere in Japan. Under the system, the salaries of teachers and staffs in public compulsory education schools, which constitute a major portion of compulsory education expenses, are totally borne by the national and prefectural governments. Together with a law which stipulates the standards for class size and the staffing levels of teachers and other personnel, this system plays an important role for securing equal opportunity in education and maintaining and improving the level of education. As a result, the salaries of approximately 700,000 teachers and staffs nation-wide, amounting in total to about 5 trillion yen, are ensured. As regards the salaries of teachers, the Act on Special Measures concerning Assurance of Educational Personnel for Compulsory Education Schools for the Purpose of Maintenance and Improvement of School Education Standards was enacted in 1974, in order to secure talented teachers and to maintain and improve the level of school education. Under the Act, teachers are given preferential treatment for their salaries over other public officials.

In 1980, the monthly salaries of teachers were higher than those of other administrative officials by more than 7%, reflecting the preferential treatment assured by the Act. However, the preferential ratio has decreased year by year, and in 2012 it eventually declined to 0.3%. Nevertheless, MEXT considers it important to retain the objective of the Act.

In fiscal 2004 the “Block-Grant System” was introduced, which expanded substantially the degree of freedom given to local governments, by enabling them to

decide the salaries of teachers and the assignment of teachers and other staffs within the amount of fund for compulsory education from tax revenues.

Subsequently, the so-called “Trinity Reform” started, which reviewed in an integrated manner subsidies from the national treasury, the re-allocation of tax sources including the transfer of tax revenue, and local allocation tax system. As a part of the reform, the Compulsory Education System Funded by Tax Revenues was a subject of review, and as from fiscal 2006 the national share was reduced from a half to one third.

Chapter 3. Courses of Study

MEXT determines, based on the School Education Act, the standards for all schools to formulate their curriculum, in order to ensure an equal standard of education throughout the country. They are called the Courses of Study.

The Courses of Study set broad standards for the objectives and contents of each subject at elementary schools, lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools respectively. Besides, the Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act stipulates, for example, the standard number of annual class hours for elementary and lower secondary schools. Each school formulates its curriculum corresponding to each local circumstance, referring to the relevant Course of Study and the standards set by the Ordinance such as annual class hours,.

The first Courses of Study were made soon after the World War II as a trial, and since 1958, they have generally been revised once every 10 years.

The first report on the Model for Japanese Education in the Perspective of the 21st Century, compiled by the Central Council for Education in 1996, proposed to emphasize the importance of nurturing “zest for life” in a relaxed and comfortable environment. According to the report, “zest for life” is composed of: “abilities/capacities to enable children to identify tasks, to learn and think on their own, to make judgments proactively, and to act for making better solutions”; “a rich personality to discipline oneself, to collaborate with others, to care for others and to get emotional sensations”; and “health and physical strength for living”. In view of nurturing “zest for life” in a relaxed and comfortable environment, the report proposes to introduce a complete five-day school week system, and emphasizes that the contents of education should be carefully selected in order to realize this objective.

In this regard, the Curriculum Council was consulted in August 1996, concerning “the improvement of curriculum standards for kindergartens, elementary, lower secondary

and upper secondary schools, schools for the blind, for the deaf and for those with other disabilities”, and the Council submitted its report in July 1998, which recommends to take improvement measures, placing special emphasis on the following points:

- (a) to focus on developing in all children rich personality, sound social awareness and self-consciousness as a Japanese citizen living in an international society;
- (b) to shift from the one-way cramming of knowledge to nurturing the abilities of children to learn and think spontaneously;
- (c) to build solid academic basics and foundations, and to foster educational activities to maximize children’s individualities, in the process of developing a relaxed and comfortable environment; and
- (d) to ensure that each school makes its own efforts for realizing a characteristic education in a characteristic school environment.

Based on the recommendations made by the report, the Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act was partially amended on 14 December 1998, and the Course of Study for elementary schools was entirely revised and put into practice as from April 2002.

Main points of the amendments of the Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act are as follows:

- (a) to create “the period of integrated study” in the 3rd grade and above, in order to conduct original and creative educational activities suited to the respective circumstances, such as cross-curricular and comprehensive studies and children’s interest-based studies;
- (b) to reduce annual total teaching hours by the number of hours on Saturdays in line with the introduction of the complete five-day school week system, resulting in the annual reduction by 70 unit hours (68 hours for the 1st grade), in other words, by 2 hours weekly; and to adjust teaching hours for every subject of each grade, moral education, special activities and integrated studies; and
- (c) to ensure that cross-curricular teachings can be promoted in the 3rd grade and above.

The underlying objective of the amendments was to enable each school to develop its characteristic education for nurturing rich personality, building academic basics and foundations, maximizing children’s individualities and developing “zest for life”

including an ability to learn and think spontaneously.

In 2008, the Central Council for Education compiled a recommendation report concerning the improvement of the Courses of Study. Upon receipt of it, MEXT revised the Courses of Study for kindergartens, elementary and lower secondary schools in the same year, and those for upper secondary schools and schools for special needs education in the following year.

The underlying concepts of the revisions of the Courses of Study in 2008 for elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools are as follows:

- (a) to nurture “zest for life” in view of the educational principles clarified by the revision of the Basic Act on Education;
- (b) to maintain a good balance between the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills and the development of abilities to think, judge and express;
- (c) to cultivate richness in humanity and a sound body by strengthening such subjects as moral education and physical education.

Chapter 4. Governance (Local educational administration system)

The Board of Education plays a core role in local educational administration. Each and every prefecture and municipality has its own board of education as an organ to handle the matter related to school education, social education, culture and sports in its locality. The Board of Education is a representative council independent of the heads of prefectures and municipalities, in order to maintain political neutrality in education, to secure its continuity and stability and to reflect multiple opinions of local citizens in its policies. It is composed of five members in principle (possibly six or more for prefectures and cities, and three or more for towns and villages), and they are appointed by the governors or the mayors upon approval by the local assembly. The Board is to make decisions on the important issues and basic principles of educational administration in each locality. The Superintendent of the Board, selected from among the members, undertakes the execution of authorized affairs under the supervision of the Board.

The Board of Education has been recognized as an administration organ close to local citizens, and favorably evaluated that it has contributed to the democratization and decentralization of educational administration in terms of the improvement of equal opportunity and educational standards as well as the promotion of education corresponding to local surroundings. On the other hand, due to the recent problem of suicides caused by school bullying, such issues are becoming obvious as the ambiguity of

responsibility, merely formal deliberations and the lack of risk management abilities of the Board.

Under such circumstances, the Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding, headed by the Prime Minister, compiled the second proposals on the “Ideal Modality of the Board of Education” in 2013, and the Central Council for Education compiled a report on the “Future Outlook of the Local Educational Administration”. Subsequently, the Bill for the Partial Amendment of the Act on the Organization and Operation of Local Educational Administration was approved by the Cabinet in 2014 after the deliberation by the ruling parties, and it is currently under deliberation at the Diet session in April 2014.

The Bill aims, while securing political neutrality in education and the continuity and stability of education, to clarify responsibilities in local educational administration, to rapidly build risk management systems, to foster the collaboration between the heads of local governments and the Boards of Education, and also to review the involvement of the national government in local administration. MEXT is keen to continuously address the fundamental reforms of the Board of Education.

Meanwhile, in order to respond to diversified expectations from the nation towards public schools and to develop schools closely connected to local communities, MEXT is positively working to strengthen the system of “Community Schools” both in quality and quantity, where parents and community residents are given certain authorities and responsibilities for participating in school managements.

On the assumption of local autonomy, MEXT is determined to undertake the furtherance of local educational administration under balanced responsibility-sharing and collaboration between the national and local governments.

Chapter 5. Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning refers to education at home, school education, social education, learning on one’s own, and other learning that takes place throughout the life of an individual. Aiming to implement the lifelong learning society that capitalizes on the outcomes of learning and where “anyone can study anywhere and at any time,” MEXT encourages the measures outlined below to promote lifelong learning

- Support for community efforts to assist children’s education, such as School Support Regional Headquarters and After-School Classes for Children, and promotion of social education including improvement of Citizens’ Public Halls and libraries as hubs of learning in the community

- Promotion of measures for supporting education at home, such as organization of teams to support it and measures for sound development of youths
- Provision of diverse learning opportunities, such as extension courses at universities, improvement of the Open University of Japan, and promotion of specialized training colleges
- Promotion of appropriate assessment and application of outcomes of learning through measures such as the Upper Secondary School Equivalency Examination and improvement of the quality of private education
- Handling of contemporary issues such as response to the aged society, promotion of human rights education, and advancement of learning activities aimed at forming a gender-equal society.

In 2008, the Central Council for Education compiled a report, “Improvement Measures for Lifelong Learning for a New Era: Toward a Knowledge Circulating Society”. It emphasizes a growing necessity and importance to foster lifelong learning, and it refers to “zest for life” as a quality necessary for children who lead the next generation, and to capabilities required for adults who can survive in a rapidly changing new era. Then it proposes, in pursuit of establishing a “knowledge circulating society”, practical measures concerning two broad objectives, namely, to “provide each and every nation with necessary supports for his/her lifelong learning”, and to “enhance the educational capabilities of our society as a whole”.

The Central Council for Education published a Policy Report entitled, “Future vision on career education and vocational education at school” in 2011. The Policy Report defines career education and vocational education as given below, and proposes measures regarding the ideal format for career education and vocational education to be in accordance with the following three basic directives from the perspective of encouraging peoples’ career building over their lifetimes.

- (a) Promotion of Systematic Career Education from Early Childhood through Higher Education
- (b) Emphasis on Practical Vocational Education and Reassessment of the Significance of Vocational Education
- (c) Encouraging Career Building from the Perspective of Lifelong Learning
Career education: Education which encourages career development by

cultivating the abilities and attitudes needed to raise the social and vocational independence of individuals.

Vocational education: Education to develop knowledge, skills, competencies and attitude required to work on a certain or specific job.

Chapter 6. Vision for the post-2015

1. Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

As mentioned earlier, the Government endorsed the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education by its Cabinet as a five-year plan covering from 2013 to 2017. This Plan broadly consists of three parts.

Part 1 (general remarks) gives overall views on current social situation, stating that Japan faces the rapid changes of surrounding situations and is in a critical position with many problems which have become more urgent and accelerated due to the Great East Japan Earthquake. In order to overcome the crisis confronting Japan, and to build a sustainable and vital society, it is recommended to strive for realizing a lifelong learning society where three principles can be implemented, namely “independence”, “collaboration” and “creativity”. For realizing such a society, four Basic Policy Directions in education administration are identified which cut across all lifelong learning opportunities, as follows:

- (a) to develop social competencies for survival;
- (b) to develop human resources for a brighter future;
- (c) to build safety nets for learning; and
- (d) to build bonds and establish vibrant communities

Part 2 (detailed discussion) sets, based on the above four directions, achievement targets and indicators to ensure educational outcomes, and also proposes concrete and systematic measures. The followings are the examples of such measures for each direction:

- (a) to develop social competencies for survival
 - to surely nurture “zest for life” (from kindergartens to upper secondary schools)
 - to develop ability to explore and tackle issues (from universities)
 - to develop abilities necessary for independence, collaboration and creativity (throughout lifelong learning)
 - to nurture abilities and attitudes for social/vocational independence and to enhance activities based on the new Courses of Study, such as

foreign language education

- to conduct National Assessment of Academic Ability (continual implementation of nation-wide surveys)

(b) to develop human resources for a brighter future

- to develop human resources capable of creating new values and of working globally (to nurture human resources of science and mathematics backgrounds, to enhance foreign language education and foreign students exchanges)
- to establish “super global high schools”, which develop not only foreign language skills, but wide-ranging knowledge and international abilities including problem-solving skills

(c) to build safety nets for learning

- to ensure learning opportunities for all who are motivated to learn (reduction of educational cost burden in each educational level)

Example 1: the creation of the High School Tuition Support Fund in 2010, to reduce financial burden of tuition in accordance with family income level

Example 2: the creation of the Educational Grant Aid Scheme in 2014, to provide low income families having high school students with non-compensatory financial aid to be used for educational expenses other than tuition

- to ensure safe and secure environments for education and research (strengthening earthquake resistance of school facilities)
- to ensure continuous financial assistance to reduce educational cost burden throughout all learning stages
- to strengthen earthquake resistance of school facilities

(d) to build bonds and establish vibrant communities

- to establish vibrant communities through complementary and mutual assistance (the formulation of collaboration systems between schools and communities, and the enhancement of assistance schemes for home education); to build school-community collaboration systems in every school district
- to strengthen assistance schemes for education at home

In addition to the above-mentioned measures, the followings are considered to cover all four Basic Policy Directions and to enhance better environment to support them:

- to enhance field-oriented school management, and to reform local educational administration
- to strengthen a system to promote social education

Besides, assistance to restoration and revival from the Great East Japan Earthquake is considered to be one of important measures.

Part 3 of the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education indicates that the matters necessary for promoting these measures in a comprehensive and systematic manner are to adequately deliver necessary information, to grasp and reflect the nation's opinions, to monitor the progress of the measures, and to review and revise them.

Based on the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, and with strong belief in the potential and possibility of education, the Government of Japan is determined to work wholeheartedly on educational reforms in the years to come.

2. Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The Dakar Framework for Action, which aims at the achievement of Education for All (EFA), sets out in its goal 6 the attainment of improving all aspects of the quality of education. In the post-2015 education agenda, the quality of education is taken as one of crucial issues. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), launched by a proposal from Japan, fosters leaders of a sustainable society. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for the sake of improving the quality of education and reorienting education.

In March 2014, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO compiled a report entitled "Recommendations regarding the revitalization of UNESCO activities in an era of growing diversity: Towards a sustainable society", which points out the importance of further promoting ESD through school education and social education in the years to come.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD), proposed by Japan, was adopted at the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2002. During the last ten years between 2005 and 2014, Japan has been actively engaged in the promotion of ESD in close collaboration with UNESCO, a leading agency of UNDESD, and is going to continue its efforts to promote ESD for the post-2015, in line with the following directions:

Promotion of ESD at UNESCO Associated Schools

In 2008, MEXT and the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO positioned UNESCO Associated Schools (the schools which practice international collaboration in order to realize UNESCO's ideals expressed in its Constitution) as a base for ESD promotion, and have been making efforts to foster ESD through these Schools. In the post-2015, the following measures are to be taken with a special emphasis on the promotion of overseas exchanges:

- (a) to publicize more clearly about the participatory exchange function of the UNESCO Associated Schools Website and the activities of schools introduced on it;
- (b) to identify topics in which participating schools have interest in common, such as climate change and disaster prevention and mitigation, in order to ensure the continuity of exchange programmes;
- (c) to expand the framework of teachers exchange to the ASEAN countries, in addition to the existing programmes which Japan is implementing with the United States, People's Republic of China and Republic of Korea as of April 2014;
- (d) to make a vital use of intellectual resources possessed by universities, to formulate networks among UNESCO Associated Schools in Japan and overseas, and to promote collaboration with local educational institutions, with the support and cooperation of the Interuniversity Network supporting the UNESCO Associated School Project Network (ASPUnivNet).

Besides the above-mentioned measures in terms of quality improvement, efforts will be made for increasing the number of the Associated Schools.

Promotion of ESD at schools other than UNESCO Associated Schools

In the Courses of Study, the concept of building a sustainable society is integrated, and in the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, the promotion of ESD is clearly addressed. Therefore, in order to promote ESD at schools other than UNESCO Associated Schools, various measures are being taken as follows:

- (a) to enhance the sharing of ESD best practices through exchanges among schools and the Boards of Education;
- (b) to publicize the concept of ESD in such a way that the general public including parents can easily understand;
- (c) to further enhance ESD in elementary and secondary educational administrations both at national and local levels, for example, by giving

sufficient consideration so as to clearly set out how ESD can relate to the content of each subject;

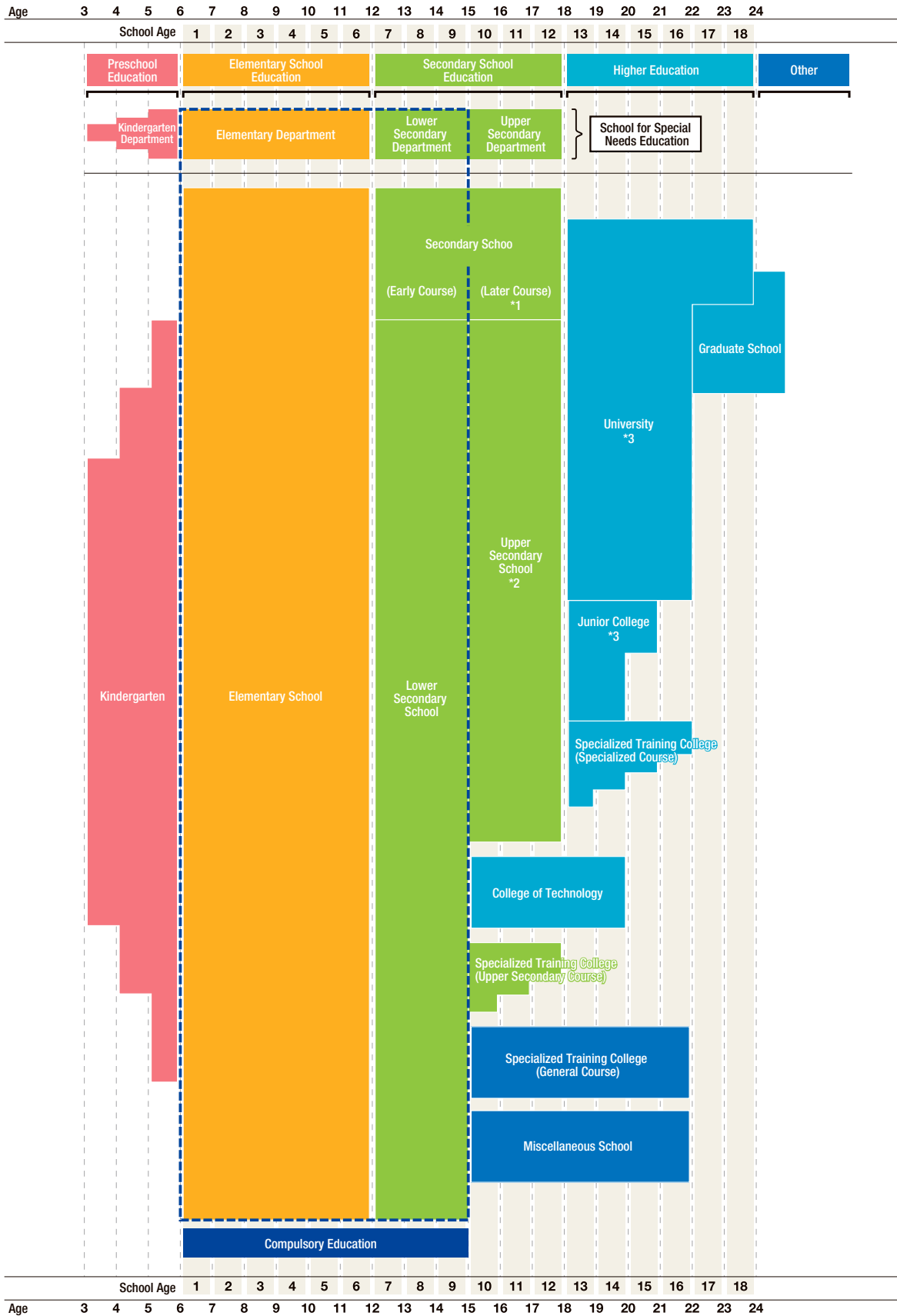
- (d) to organize a consortium composed of UNESCO Associated Schools, universities, the Boards of Education and other stakeholders, as a mechanism to promote the dissemination of ESD to other schools than Associated Schools; and
- (e) to formulate networks participated by RCEs (Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD), JICA's local branches, companies, NPOs and other stakeholders, in order to disseminate ESD in local communities.

Promotion of ESD in light of UNESCO World Conference on ESD

The UNESCO World Conference on ESD will be held in Japan in November 2014, the final year of UNDESD, co-organized by UNESCO and the Government of Japan. The Conference aims to review the implementation of UNDESD and to discuss future measures to promote ESD, and to adopt a declaration that all stakeholders will strengthen their efforts for the promotion of ESD and take action forward for practical implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, which is positioned as a follow-up programme of UNDESD.

Japan will implement various ESD-related projects in line with GAP with the participation of relevant stakeholders including business companies, in addition to its contributions to UNESCO through Funds-in-Trust. Thus, Japan is willing to continuously work as a driving force behind ESD promotion among UNESCO Member States in the post-2015, and is also determined to further promote ESD based on GAP within Japan.

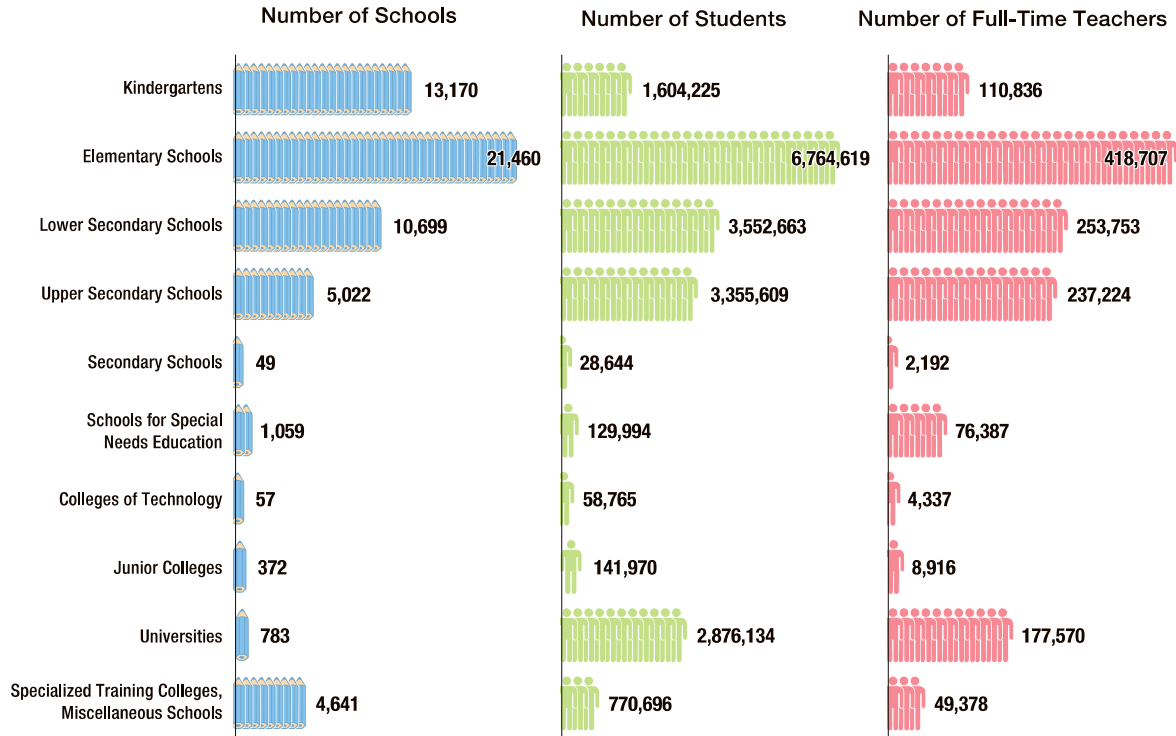
Japanese School Systems



Notes

- (*1) This chart shows the average years required for graduation from Japanese schools.
- (*2) Includes schools that offer part-time or correspondence courses.
- (*3) Includes schools that offer correspondence education.

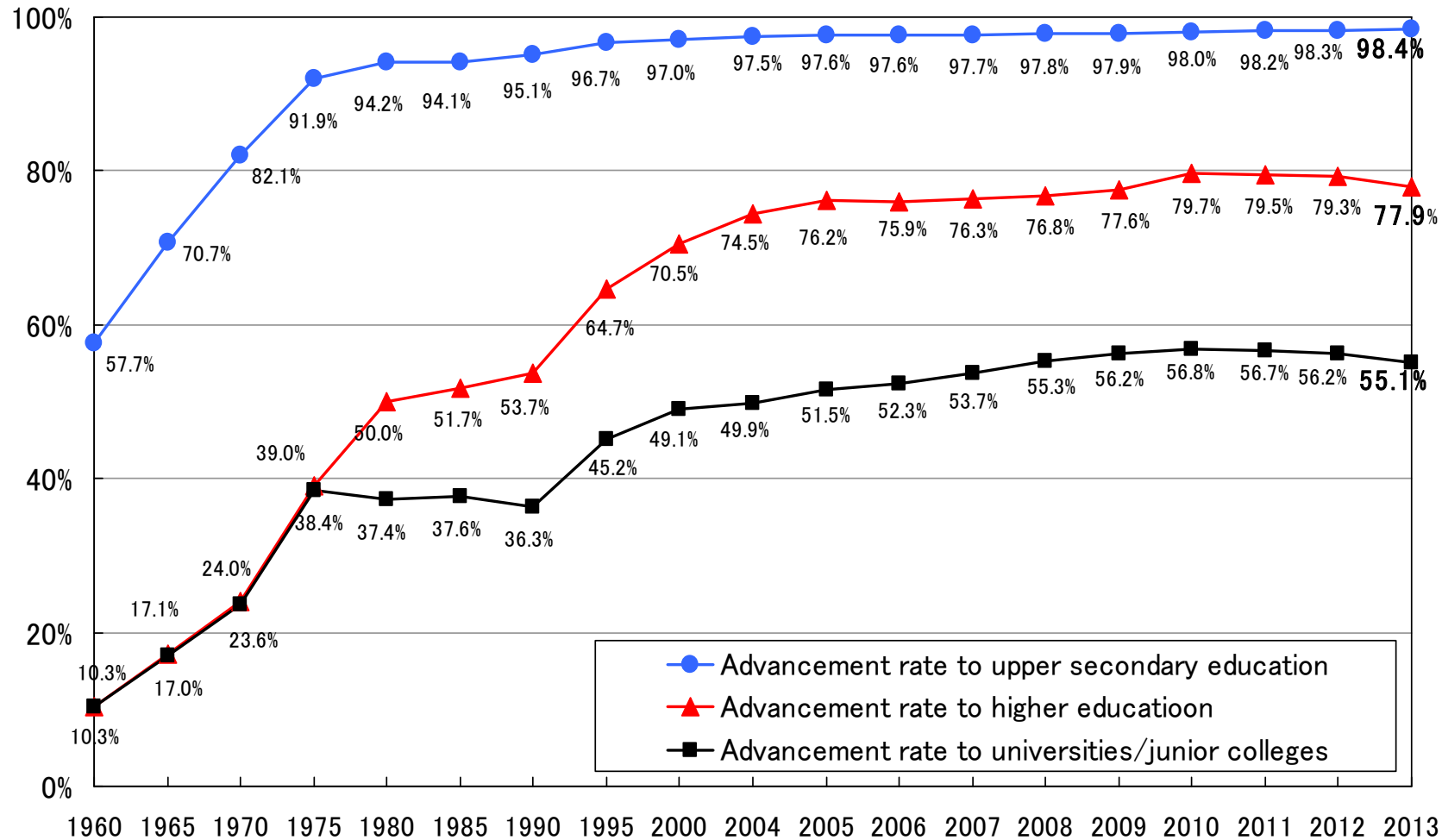
Number of Schools, Students and Teachers (As of May 1, 2012)



* There are correspondence schools for upper secondary schools, universities and junior colleges in addition to these.

Data: FY2012 School Basic Survey

Trends in Advancement Rates



* Advancement rate to upper secondary education : The ratio of new graduates advancing to upper secondary education, divided by the total new graduates.

** Advancement rate to higher education : The ratio of students enrolling in university undergraduate programs, junior college regular courses and professional training college post-secondary courses (including those enrolling over a year after graduating from upper secondary school and secondary school) and the number of students in the fourth year of colleges of technology, divided by the total of students who completed lower secondary school or lower division of secondary school three years ago.

Source : *Basic Survey on School, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*

Roles of the National, Prefectural and Municipal Governments in Educational Administration

