

Analysis of Groups' Needs for Small-scale Schools in Korea: With a Focus on Operation and Educational Activities

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Abstract The purpose of this study is to analyze the operating conditions, educational activities, and needs for small-scale schools in Korea, often operated as integrated schools, to obtain plans for small-scale schools that will increase in the future. A survey and an in-depth interview were conducted on the perceptions and needs of small-scale school-related groups such as students, parents, teachers, and professionals. As a result, students were generally satisfied with their schools, especially their teachers, but they felt relatively deprived compared to students in

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large cities. Parents were less satisfied than students. Teachers showed somewhat different perceptions from parents. The related groups were generally satisfied with small-scale schools, but the area of satisfaction differed depending on the groups. Resolving the relative deprivation of students, parents' demands for improving academic skills such as foreign languages, and preparing support plans from local governments were suggested for improving the educational activities of small-scale schools.

Keywords small-scale school · integrated school · operating conditions · educational activities

Introduction

A small-scale school is defined as “a school in which the number of students is less than 100, the number of classes is less than five, and there is no assistant principal” for elementary schools (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2003). These small-scale schools, paradoxically, are increasing due to the declining population. As the population was concentrated in the metropolitan area, the population of many rural areas in Korea was already declining. Because of the one-school-per-town policy, at least one school is being maintained in a town or *myeon*. In some rural areas, small-scale schools are operated in the form of integrated schools that integrate elementary and middle schools.

Since education is an important factor in maintaining the country, it is necessary to examine the current operating conditions of small-scale schools and find implications from them in order to prepare for the future when more schools will become small-scale schools. It is necessary to find and compare cases of small-scale schools abroad, but due to the nature of education that must reflect the country's specificity, it is more important to understand the perception of various education-related groups that have experienced small-scale schools in Korea.

As the number of students decreases, the number of elementary and middle schools, where regular curricula are difficult to operate due to the small size, is also increasing. The decrease in the number of students caused by the overlapping phenomenon of population decline and concentration in the metropolitan area is more prevalent in rural areas, but urban areas are not free from this problem, either. This is because schools with a sharp decline in the number of students are appearing in urban areas as well. Accordingly, schools in various cities and rural areas are operating an integrated elementary and middle schools or are preparing alternatives through joint operation between schools. By analyzing the growing awareness and needs of small-scale school-related groups in this study, it will be possible to obtain implications for the operation of small-scale schools that will gradually increase in the future.

Theoretical Background

Integrated Elementary and Middle Schools

As of July 2020, there were 45 schools that integrated elementary and middle schools, which accounted for 44% of all integrated schools. The biggest issue with regard to integrated schools is whether the advantages and possibilities of integrated schools actually have a positive effect on the students. Theoretically, an integrated school has the advantage of operating a curriculum suitable for the levels of students. For example, 6th graders of elementary school and 1st graders of middle school are on a continuous development level, but in the current educational system in Korea, they experience separation and disconnection upon graduating from elementary school. Therefore, students who graduate from elementary schools may experience anxiety and maladaptation as they enter middle school. In this respect, the curriculum connecting elementary and middle schools can have a positive effect on the physical and psychological growth and development of students (Seong, Kang, & Lee, 2019).

Even if integration between school of different levels is inevitable, it is necessary to study at which school level integration is most effective. Currently, elementary and middle schools have different curricula and teacher training systems, but integration of elementary and middle schools is most common. However, in the long run, the demand for other types of integration may increase (Oh, 2010). In addition, it is currently possible to integrate elementary and middle schools, but it is necessary to expand the integration to kindergartens (Kim, Kim, Kim, Kim, & Hwang, 2019). According to Kim (2019), as a result of a survey on teachers, 49.3% of the subjects mentioned elementary and middle schools as the stage that needed integrated education most, but 21.3% mentioned kindergartens and elementary schools need integration too.

In addition, the current integrated school uses the 6-3-3 school year system for elementary, middle and high schools. In other words, the integrated elementary and middle school is operated as a 9-year system, the integrated middle and high school has a 6-year system, and the integrated elementary, middle, and high school is a 12-year school. In the future, it is necessary to operate such a system flexibly. The specific age should be determined based on the learning level, instead of the student's physical age, and it would be appropriate to give the principal a flexible operating right (Jung et al., 2017).

Kim (2008), Ban and Lee (2010) criticized that the integration of schools was limited to physical integration rather than organic integration. On the other hand, Lim (2016) points out that there is no need to worry about the degree of integration. In foreign countries, there are various types of integrated schools, from separate operations to completely integrated schools. Schools with integrated management should first start with the joint management of human and material resources and administrative and office integration, and then increase the degree of integration while gradually promoting the integration of educational activities and the integration of student groups. In this way, it is necessary to classify the areas of school integration and the degree of integration by domain, and to create a scenario for the establishment, timing, procedures and types of integrated schools, which will be of great help in revitalizing integrated schools in the future (Kim et al., 2019).

Curriculum and Other Obstacles

Even if it starts with the physical integration of educational facilities, organic integration of the entire school operation, including the teacher training system and curriculum, is necessary for integrated schools to settle down in the long term. Among these, the integration of the curriculum will be the key to continuous integrated operation. However, Kim (2008) and Seong et al. (2019) point out that domestic integrated schools have rarely operated an integrated curriculum, and integration was only limited to arts, physical education, or foreign languages.

One of the characteristics of the Korean curriculum in recent years can be said to be a customized one suited to the intended career and aptitudes of students. Since the 6th revised national curriculum of Korea, autonomous and flexible curriculum operation has been promoted (Hong, Kim, Lee, Cho, & Choi, 2019). The 7th national curriculum also states “There is no strict course related to the student’s career. In principle, individual students create their own courses by collecting the subjects they have chosen and completed” (Ministry of Education, 1997), continuing the purpose of the customized curriculum. In this way, the basis for integrating the curriculum in the integrated schools is already in place. However, it is still difficult to find examples of integration of the curriculum

It can be pointed out that the primary reason for the insufficient integration of curriculum is that the class format is different between elementary and middle schools. Elementary schools have 40 minutes for one class time while middle schools have 45 minutes. In the case of the block time system, which is a way to manage class time flexibly, the purpose is to secure sufficient time by using multiple class times consecutively, so it cannot be a fundamental solution to the problem. In addition, a variety of teaching and learning activities such as project-based learning are being conducted more in elementary.

The biggest obstacle to the integration of the curriculum is that the teacher training system is separated, so there is very few manpower with both primary and secondary teacher qualifications. In such a situation, it is difficult to solve the curriculum integration only as a problem of teacher competency or school autonomy, and it will be necessary to find a solution at least at the level of the provincial and provincial offices of education (Kim, 2008).

Research Method

In this study, a questionnaire was prepared to explore the operating conditions and educational activities of small-scale schools, and a survey was conducted between October 23 and November 11, 2020 for students, parents, teachers of small-scale schools along with education professionals and civil servants. But only surveys of students and teachers are analyzed in this study, and responses from parents and professionals are only briefly mentioned when needed.

A total of 123 students responded to the student survey from seven schools including four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, covering six regions including Seoul, Daegu, Gangwon, Chungbuk, Chungnam, and Gyeongnam. As can be seen in Table 1, the number of students, classes, and teachers in seven schools was about 104, 8 classes, and 18, respectively, and there were two integrated elementary and middle schools. By school location,

there were one school in special cities and metropolitan cities, two schools in other city areas, and four schools in eup/myeon (rural town) areas.

Table 1 Background information of participating students

(n = 7)

Subject	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>
Student	104.14	70.67	10	218
Class	7.57	3.36	3	12
Teacher	18.14	5.93	10	24

Based on the survey results, in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the current status and educational needs of the field. The subjects of in-depth interviews were teachers (12 people) working in small-scale schools, parents of small-scale schools (8 people), education professionals (3 people), small-scale school administrators (6 people), civil servants (3 people), etc. In-depth interviews were conducted by mail.

The interview questions were the concerns about small-scale schools (or integrated schools), the advantages and disadvantages related to the operation and educational activities of small-scale schools, the curriculum and extra-curricular programs of small-scale schools, environments needing improvement, support from local governments, the Office of Education, or the central government, ways to promote collaboration between local communities and small-scale schools, experiences with small-scale schools or integrated schools, etc.

Results

Results of Student Survey

Advantages and Disadvantages for Educational Activities

The results of students' responses to the pros and cons of small-scale school educational activities are as follows Table 2. The average of five positive questions out of seven total questions was 4.13 on a 5-point scale, indicating that students have a positive perception of the educational

Table 2 Advantages and Disadvantages for School Educational Activities

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Because students understand each other well, good relationships can be formed.	4.11	.847
Since the teacher can provide detailed guidance to each student, it helps to improve academic ability.	4.11	.842
There is ample space in the school facilities, allowing various educational activities to take place.	4.15	.810
Classes are lively and lively.	4.11	.889
The friendship between students is good.	4.17	.947
The school is outdated and the educational environment is not pleasant.	2.32	1.089
Because of the small number of classes and students, it is difficult to conduct various educational activities or programs.	2.52	1.210

activities of small-scale schools. For the two negative questions (the last two questions), the averages of 2.32 and 2.52, respectively, can be converted to 3.68 and 3.48 by reverse-scoring, which is slightly lower than the average of the other questions. This may be because many students responded thinking that a higher category would be a positive response.

Teacher

The results of responses to school teachers are shown in Table 3. It was measured with 6 items, and an average of 4.19 points to the items on a 5-point scale showed that students had a very positive perception of teachers. The highest response was given to the question ‘I am actively reflecting it in my activities’ with a score of 4.28.

Table 3 Teacher

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Our school teachers give lessons considering the individual student level.	4.08	.855
Our teachers work hard to improve students’ grades.	4.25	.795
Our school teachers are good at giving life guidance, counseling, and career guidance to students.	4.18	.779
Our teachers are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of small-scale schools and actively reflect them in their educational activities.	4.28	.833
Our teachers are running classes suitable for small classes.	4.23	.838
Our teachers have a high level of interest and understanding of each student.	4.11	.842

Guidance and Counseling for School Life, Career and Further Education

As shown in Table 4, the school life guidance and counseling, career guidance, and further guidance were measured with a total of 5 questions. The average points to the first three questions about satisfaction with life guidance and counseling, career guidance and college guidance was 4.09, which was high, but for the remaining two questions, the average was 3.46, which was a predominantly negative opinion. The two items with the low average were ‘our school has a professional counselor for life guidance and counseling’ and ‘our school has well-equipped facilities and spaces for career guidance and guidance.’ It can be seen that the manpower and facilities for guidance are relatively poor.

Table 4 Guidance and Counseling for School Life, Career and Further Education

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Life guidance and counseling are well conducted in our school.	4.10	.824
Our school has good career guidance and academic guidance.	4.08	.816
Our school life guidance and counseling activities are helpful for school life and adaptation.	4.08	.836
Our school has professional counselors for life guidance and counseling.	3.25	1.205
Our school is well equipped with facilities and spaces for career guidance and academic guidance.	3.67	.988

Local Conditions of the School

As can be seen in Table 5, the average of students' responses to local conditions was 3.91, and in particular, it showed an average of 3 points for all 4 questions about local conditions. In particular, the lowest average of 3.81 was shown for 'our school district is well equipped with support facilities for children and youth (training center, training center, etc.).'

Table 5 Local Conditions of the School

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Our school district is safe and the living environment is good.	3.94	.935
Our school area is well equipped with programs, facilities, and spaces for extracurricular activities outside of school (creative experiential activities, free semester system, etc.).	3.91	.914
Our school area is well equipped with support facilities for children and adolescents (training center, training center, etc.).	3.81	.970
Our school district provides students with a lot of support they need for their career and further education.	3.98	.958

Results of Teacher Survey

Small-scale school Support Program

Teachers' needs for small-scale school support programs are presented in Tables 6-8. First, among the after-school programs, the demand for arts and physical education programs was highest. Regarding the policy to be implemented first by the Office of Education, the response rate of 'supplying educational ability improvement programs in small-scale schools' was overwhelmingly high at 57.1%, and 'regular education (included in the curriculum)' as an educational activity to overcome the low birth rate. Teachers who chose 'implementation of education' accounted for 36.8% of the total, followed by 'autonomous implementation of special activities for students.' With support from local governments, about half of the teachers answered that they needed 'support to improve the level of academic achievement.' Lastly, as to the preference of the local government level support policy, 'professional manpower support (instructor, volunteer manpower, etc.)' accounted for the highest percentage.

Table 6 After School Support Program

What educational support program should be supported and strengthened first in after-school educational activities?		
Item	Freq.	%age
English (foreign language) program	29	21.8
Arts and Physical Education Program	65	48.9
Science program	11	8.3
Character education program	21	15.8
Etc.	7	5.3

Table 7 Educational Activities to Overcome the Low Fertility

What kind of educational activities is your school conducting in relation to overcoming the low birth rate? (Multiple responses possible)		
Item	Freq.	%age
Implementation of population education through regular education (included in the curriculum)	49	36.8
Implementation of population education through non-regular education (not included in the curriculum)	28	21.1
Operate programs related to population education for parents	11	8.3
Conducted autonomously in students' special activities	46	34.6
Etc.	8	6.0

Table 8 Support from Local Government

In what areas do local governments need the most support to improve the educational capabilities of small-scale schools?		
Item	Freq	%age
Support to improve the level of academic achievement	67	50.4
Arts and Physical Education Program	40	30.1
Science program	6	4.5
Character education program	14	10.5
Etc	4	3.0

Advantages and Disadvantages of Small-scale School Operation and Educational Activities

The results of teachers' responses to the pros and cons of small-scale school operation and educational activities are given in Table 9. The average of the responses to "It is helpful for improving academic ability because teachers can provide detailed guidance to individual students"

Table 9 Advantages and Disadvantages for Operation and Educational Activities

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The students understand each other well, so the friendship between the students is good.	4.21	.731
Since the teacher can provide detailed guidance to each student, it helps to improve academic ability.	4.25	.703
It is easy to share various educational methods by creating an environment that is easy to communicate among faculty and staff.	4.14	.799
As the school facilities have room to spare, various educational activities can be provided to students.	3.95	1.055
It is difficult to secure talented people from the local community to be used for school education activities.	3.71	.993
Due to the decrease in educational finance, it is difficult to manage surplus school facilities.	2.96	1.219
It is difficult to conduct various educational activities and educational programs due to the small number of students and classes.	3.27	1.186
Due to the shortage of teachers, administrative tasks other than educational activities are heavy.	4.14	.939

was the highest at 4.25, which was the same as that of parents. Also, similar to the responses of parents, the average of the responses to 'It is difficult to secure a pleasant educational environment due to the deterioration of schools due to the difficulty of managing surplus school facilities due to the decrease in educational finance' was the lowest at 2.96 and lower than the middle value of 3.

Support Plan at the Local Government Level

Requests for support measures from local governments are shown in Table 10. The demands for these items were also at the highest level, and it was confirmed that teachers had high expectations for local governments. Among the various questions, the average of 'expansion of educational and cultural facilities' was the highest at 4.28, and 'strengthening the educational community network' was the lowest at 3.88.

Table 10 Support Plan at Local Government Level

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Expansion of educational and cultural facilities	4.28	.667
Expansion of education support project for the underprivileged	4.17	.740
Support for experiential learning activities	4.02	.763
Professional instructor support	4.02	.839
Expansion of financial support (education subsidy) from local governments to schools	4.02	.830
Strengthening the educational community network	3.88	.826

Results of In-depth Interview

Concerns about Small-scale Schools

As a concern about small-scale schools, several officials mentioned issues with the operation of the curriculum. Teachers and education professionals, as well as elementary school parents expressed a concern that "the supply of teachers for the subjects necessary for educational activities will not be smooth." Along with the increase in undersized schools, the problem of "difficulty in teaching and learning guidance due to the lack of appropriate teachers for the normal operation of the curriculum" was raised.

Also, another concern was issued that it was difficult to provide guidance according to the stage of student development. Concerns have been raised that students who should live in various human relationship will not have sufficient experience while attending a small-scale school. There were many elementary and secondary teachers who agreed on it.

In particular, many pointed out that if schools become smaller and disappear in rural areas, it will have a deep impact on the region. A high school teacher expressed a concern that "if the school, which served as the focal point of local culture, arts, and education, is closed, the focal point of local culture, arts and education will disappear." In addition, there were general public officials who pointed out that there were limitations in educational activities for each class and limitations in individual education activities for each student because the proper number of

students needed for smooth educational activities was not met.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Small-scale School Operation and Education Activities

Key words extracted as the strengths of small-scale schools are improvement of the relationship among teachers and peers, various experiential activities or classes by level. First of all, many people asserted that the teacher relationship and peer relationship are generally better in small-scale schools. A principal of a high school in Sacheon, Gyeongsangnam-do, said, “All students know each other, so there is less conflict between students and there is no bullying or school violence.”

In addition, experiential activities and classes by level, which are difficult to experience in large-scale schools, were selected as strengths. The principal of a middle school in Geoje, Gyeongsangnam-do, said that “Public education is revitalized and the need for private education is reduced by enabling one-on-one customized classes with students” as an advantage. There was also an opinion of the principal of Gimje Elementary and Middle School, who pointed out that “the assistant teacher is in the class, so the students who are late or want to learn more can be coached one by one...”

As for the shortcomings, first, many teachers, parents, and professionals pointed out differences in growth and development among students. There were many opinions such as “the difference in the growth and development of elementary and middle school students is so large that it is difficult to have educational activities that meet the purpose of an integrated school” (Principal of Gimje Elementary and Middle School, Jeonbuk). Parents of Gimje Elementary and Middle School in Jeollabuk-do also suggested that, “Meals suitable for age and growth should be provided from kindergarten to middle school students, but there are concerns about the imbalance in school meals as it is tailored to middle school students.”

In addition, many people cited the difficulty of experiencing large-scale activities as a disadvantage of small-scale schools. There was also the opinion that “the future society will need problem-solving skills through cooperation, and it will be difficult to experience cooperation among various students and large numbers of people” (the principal of Geoje Middle School), and a teacher at a high school in Gyeongsangnam-do pointed out that it is particularly difficult to do sports. And some parents were concerned that it was difficult to form a big sports club. Another issue was also raised that the workload of the faculty and staff was high. The principal of a secondary school in Ulsan pointed out that “teachers who take adjunct classes for middle and high schools due to the dual appointment feel a lot of pressure in research and class operation” and said that administrative office staff are also performing heavy tasks due to the integration.

Curriculum and Extra-Curricular Programs in Small-scale Schools, Improvements in the Environment

The principal of a middle school in Geoje, Gyeongsangnam-do said, “As a teacher has to take on multiple subjects, professionalism may decrease, so it will be necessary to dispatch teachers

for various subjects to small-scale schools.” He also suggested a plan to increase the number of administrative staff members. A high school teacher in Sacheon, Gyeongsangnam-do pointed out that “the operation of the high school credit system requires elective subjects that are linked to the students’ career paths, and there are many difficulties. The principal of an elementary school in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do said, “There is a need for an individualized learning guidance program for students who do not have basic academic skills.” In particular, there were many requests from parents for learning support in after-school programs. They asked for a program that all students could participate in, measures against lack of learning, etc. The demands of professional and general workers were similar.

Measures for Coexisting and Converging Between Regions and Schools

Teachers, parents, and professionals all agreed on the point that the regions and the schools should coexist and converge. The principal of an elementary and middle school in Gimje, Jeollabuk-do, said, “It is necessary to operate a village education community where local residents can participate in school education activities by operating regional clubs.” The principal also argued that the school should be a space for local educational activities, not just a space for students. Some parents suggested specific proposals such as career education and experience activities in connection with local government offices and groups, operation of a teach-a-day system for local seniors, operation of programs that take advantage of regional characteristics such as oceans and mountains, and operation of a night library for all local residents. Professionals from the Education Support Office in Gunsan also suggested opening up schools for the village, and a number of general public officials also actively suggested a plan for local residents to act as after-school program instructors.

Opinions against the Operation of Small-scale Integrated Schools

Many people argued that integrated schools are inevitable because they should exist and serve as a regional hub. They even asserted that convergence classes are possible outside of the school. However, there was another opinion opposing the integrated school due to the imbalance in the curriculum among elementary, middle, and high schools. Some parents abhorred the idea of integrating schools because of economic reasons. They said one of the main purposes of education is to prepare the society for the future and economy should not dominate education.

Discussion and Conclusions

Perceptions and Needs of Students and Teachers

Although there are some differences depending on the area, it was found that the students were generally satisfied with the small-scale school. They responded positively to educational activities, teachers, counseling, career and academic guidance, school programs, environment, and local conditions, and showed the most positive response to teachers in particular. The

positive teacher-student relationship in small-scale schools may have influenced educational satisfaction of students.

Although students are generally satisfied with small-scale schools, they feel relatively deprived compared to students of large schools in the metropolitan area. It can be inferred from the relatively low level of satisfaction with professional manpower, facilities, programs for relieving deprivation, and local conditions. In the long term, measures such as improving local conditions and replenishing professional manpower will be required, but this will be difficult in a short term. In addition, since the feeling of deprivation by the students of small-scale schools cannot be resolved only by expanding the infrastructure, emotional support measures such as the placement of professional counselors and the strengthening of the teacher-student bond should also be devised as well.

Teachers selected 'art and physical education programs' as the content that should be strengthened the most as an after-school activity, and the demand for 'science programs' was the lowest. The lowest demand for 'science program' was the same as that of parents, but it was different from parents who chose 'English (foreign language) program' as the content that should be strengthened the most. Small-scale schools are often located in areas with relatively poor educational infrastructure. Even though arts, physical education, and English (foreign language) are included in the regular curriculum, teachers need to supplement arts and sports programs through local educational infrastructure.

It has been confirmed that education related to overcoming the low birth rate is already being provided. This is because 20-30% of the respondents said that education was already taking place in regular and non-regular curricula and special activities, respectively. Overcoming the low fertility through education of students may not have an immediate effect, but it needs to be continued as a long-term task.

In the teacher survey, the question 'It is helpful for improving academic ability because the teacher can provide detailed guidance to each student' received positive responses as an advantage of running a small-scale school. At the same time, as the area that needed the most support from local governments, about half of the teachers selected 'support to improve the level of academic achievement.' In other words, the perception that small-scale schools help improve students' academic ability and the perception that external support is needed to improve students' academic achievement level coexist. This somewhat contradictory phenomenon will require further in-depth analyses.

In addition, unlike students and parents, teachers did not raise any major problems in terms of facilities. In addition, since the joint opening and operation of educational programs between small-scale schools in the vicinity is not yet active, it is necessary to seek ways to strengthen it. And the fact that the request for 'strengthening the educational community network' was the lowest as a support measure from local governments may be a result of reflecting the awareness that local governments do not view them as members of the education community. In order to solve the problem of the decrease in the school-age population due to the low fertility, it is necessary to spread the awareness that the school's efforts alone are not enough and that local governments must also work together as a member of the educational community.

Further Investigation into Needs

The participants in this research had a common perception that a decrease in the number of local school students would lead to a negative impact on the overall community, such as a rapid decline of population and local economy. This shows that they are interested parties as they live in areas with a small population and have concerns about population decline.

As an advantage of a small-scale school, the groups had common interest. Bonds between students (between classmates, seniors and juniors), emotional intimacy between teachers and students, and intimacy between teachers and parents were recognized as having a positive effect on prevention of school violence, student guidance, and character formation. Rather than concerns or demands about character development and life guidance for students in small-scale schools, the majority of requests were for program support such as improvement of academic achievement or provision of various experiences. In the case of parents, they were well aware of and satisfied with the existing support programs.

The educational problem of small-scale schools recognized by all interview participants is lack of an appropriate number of students for educational activities. Concerns were expressed that educational activities would be limited or atrophy due to the lack of static students in educational activities, or that the educational experience of students would be limited.

In relation to the operation of the integrated school, interviewees pointed out the difficulties caused by differences in the development of students between school levels and differences in the operation of the curriculum. In particular, it was confirmed that integration between elementary and secondary schools experienced conflicts between teachers due to differences between school levels.

The common point pointed out in school integration operation is that the workload of teachers is high. Not only the teachers, but also the administrative staff working at the integrated school were concerned about the burden of the teachers in charge of adjunct classes. Maintaining an appropriate number of students is essential to securing an adequate number of teachers and ensuring high-quality teaching activities, and various social experiences through exchanges with peers were also recognized as important in terms of protecting students' right to education. In addition, it was recognized that existence of schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) where children can attend in the region can be important as emotional and cultural basis for residents.

Although the role of the Ministry of Education and the local government should be oriented in a common cooperative relationship in the case of integrated operation, the role of each institution (Ministry of Education, Office of Education, and the local government) should be unconditionally and broadly defined rather than clearly divided into areas. Support was recognized as essential. In particular, the desire for autonomy of the schools through budget support was high. Currently, regional and education-related institutions are aiming for a cooperative relationship, but it is insufficient to a satisfactory level in the educational field (small-scale school, integrated school). Although foundation for cooperation is solid, regulations need to be clarified and further endeavor is for all interested groups.

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