

Education Reform in Japan: Toward Revising the Course of Study for 2020

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Improving educational institution has been shown to advance socioeconomic development, reduce inequality, enhance the economic competitiveness of nations, and fortify governmental institutions. Nevertheless, the Japanese school system faces many obstacles in getting meaningful education reforms approved or implemented.

Recently, the central government of Japan has proposed a new educational system different from that of the past. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) will revise the Course of Study by 2020 for all schools, from kindergarten through higher education, and reorganize their programs in order to ensure a fixed standard of education throughout the country.

MEXT has two aspirations for the new national education system. First, it should directly serve the needs of the rapid economic development taking place in the world. Second, it should include “equal opportunities” for education, as proposed by the Liberal Democratic Party. Based on these two ideas, they will reorganize the national education system according to the educational model of “active learning.”

Firstly, this presentation analyses recent scholarship on the hurdles that education reforms tend to encounter. It also identifies theoretically informed hypotheses based on recent successes and failures of reform in Japan.

The second purpose of this presentation is to show how the issue of “equal educational opportunities” has been discussed while going through the education policy and the education reforms in Japan for 2020. It will discuss current issues, how the study of education can approach these issues, and indicate a focused method on the perspectives of equal opportunity.