

The Challenges and Prospects of Policies Promoting the Restructuring of School-community Relationships

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Abstract: This research paper explores the problem setting concerning policies implemented since the 2000s to promote parent and community involvement in school management and education. These policies, including school councils, school management councils, and community-school collaboration headquarters, have aimed to enhance school-community relationships and foster a more inclusive and democratic decision-making process. However, from the perspective of social education, this paper highlights issues related to “deliberation” in these policies and its impact on achieving policy objectives. It examines problems in “deliberation” discussions within school management councils, issues concerning the relationship between “participation” and “collaboration” in school-community relations, and challenges faced by parent community organizations. The paper proposes new strategies based on the “deliberative system” theory to promote meaningful “deliberation” at both micro and community levels, fostering transformative change in educational values and community awareness. The ultimate goal is to support an integrated educational management approach that encompasses schools and the broader community.

Keywords: Deliberative system; School-Community relations; Parent participation and collaboration

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1. The problem setting in this research paper

Since the 2000s, policies have been implemented to encourage the participation of parents and community residents in school management, as seen in the introduction of the school council system and school management councils. Additionally, the initiatives such as the School Support Regional Headquarters introduced in the late 2000s transformed the mechanism of “community education” introduced at the municipal level into a policy, leading to the organization of the Community-School Collaboration Headquarters in the late 2010s. Furthermore, as the transition to “education curriculum open to society” is advocated under the new curriculum guidelines, the reconstruction of school-community relationships is being pursued with the school management councils and community-school collaboration headquarters working together.

In the field of educational administration and educational management, there has been a significant accumulation of empirical and critical research focusing on school management, school governance, and the impact on the educational curriculum, regarding these policies (as referenced in Section 3). In contrast, this research paper takes a perspective from the field of social education and views the current policies as initiatives that encourage the reorganization of education at the community level. It places the “deliberation”

perspective at the core and aims to present policy challenges and future directions.

The structure of this research paper is as follows: first, it examines the transition of current discussions on school-community relationships (Section 2). Then, it identifies the issues with the current policies in terms of problems in deliberative settings, the relationship between “participation” and “collaboration,” and the transformation of the underlying community organizations (Section 3). Based on this issue analysis, strategies for enhancing deliberation at the micro-level and community level are proposed (Section 4), followed by the presentation of a framework for community empowerment towards its realization (Section 5).

2. The evolution of the discourse on school-community relationships

In this section, based on the author’s organization (Ogino 2022, Chapter 1) ^[1], we trace the evolution of discussions regarding school-community relations since the 1970s, aiming to clarify the characteristics of current debates.

Since the high economic growth period, the first period in which the focus was placed on school-community relations was from the 1970s to the 1980s. During this time, comprehensive educational systems that encompassed school education and education within the local community were discussed. These discussions included the coordination of school and community, restructuring the regional educational system, and managing education within the community. Although there were differences in the emphasis of each discussion, they all aimed to address the issues of breaking the closed nature of school education and dealing with the decline of the “educational power of the community.” Various topics were discussed, such as promoting cooperation between schools and the community based on the awareness of these challenges, organizing methods for addressing educational demands from residents, and defining the roles of schools, families, and the community.

The second noteworthy period is the late 1990s and onwards, when a system was designed to achieve “open schools” in response to the recommendations of the Provisional Council on Education. During this period, the reorganization of school-community relations and the direction to be pursued were questioned. For instance, Kariya (2004) ^[2] notes that the issue of “education and the community” began to be discussed in the context of “participation” and “collaboration” around the 2000s, leading to a regression in the discourse about subject formation and implying that residents who engage actively are unconditionally presupposed. As a result, the problem of “education and the community” shifted towards discussions of participants’ “agency,” and it was pointed out that in an individualized society, the challenge was to create a foundation for “shared responsibility” according to the circumstances of each local community.

Furthermore, Mizumoto (2002) ^[3] points out that as the reorganization of the relationship between schools and the community progresses, dilemmas related to the “subject of educational power” and issues concerning the “subject of educational intention” arise. In the latter case, discussions about the “subject of educational intention” based on the “legitimacy deficiency of schools” highlight the problem of “lack of collectivity” within the local community. To resolve these dilemmas and issues, a suggested approach is to establish a mutually defining relationship between the “definition of the community” by the school itself and the “definition of the school” by the community.

The discussions presented by Karaya and Mizumoto succinctly illustrate the shift of focus from discussions at the level of educational system reorganization, accompanied by the dissemination of systems seeking parental and community involvement in schools, to the level of relational perspectives. As the emphasis shifted, the discussions moved towards building a foundation of shared responsibility within the local community and establishing a mutually defining relationship between schools and the community. This transition signifies a move from debates about the reorganization of the educational system to the establishment of interdependent relations between schools and the local community.

Since the 2010s, a third stage leading to the present has emerged, with research focused on educational administration and educational management. In this field, studies have been conducted to empirically clarify the trends of reorganizing school-community relations, primarily targeting school management councils ^[4-7]. Particularly concerning the school management councils, the success and failure of this institution as a governance reform for schools have been questioned, with a specific focus on the development of social relational capital through the implementation of this system. These studies operate on the premise of institutions and policies such as school management councils and school support community headquarters. They explore conflicts and confrontations both within and outside the organizational structures of schools and communities, highlighting operational issues and unintended consequences.

In summary, the discussions regarding school-community relations have evolved from macro-level debates about reorganizing the educational system involving school education and the local community to a focus on the relational perspectives between schools and the community. In recent years, these discussions have even delved into the politics surrounding the operation of the institutions. Thus, while building upon traditional discussions, the following section will examine the current issues of the existing system, taking a comprehensive view from the micro to the local community level.

3. The issue of policies aimed to reorganize school-community relations

3.1. Problems in “deliberation” discussions

The first issue in the policy of restructuring school-community relations is the issue of the school governing council as a place of “deliberation”. Deliberation is a concept that has spread across various fields, with a focus on political science, aiming to explore the reasons behind justifying collective decision-making through communication practices. Democratic theories that emphasize deliberation are characterized by finding “legitimacy” in the decisions formed through public discussions, contrasting with the “interest model” that seeks to maximize individual interests ^[8].

The significance of deliberation, according to Saito (2012), can be summarized into four points ^[8]. First, in the process of examining each other’s arguments and their reasons, incorrect factual perceptions and interpretative frameworks are corrected and reflected upon, resulting in a change in preferences. Second, deliberation provides an opportunity for individual perspectives to change to a more unbiased one. Third, the practice of deliberation, in which participants listen to the opinions of others and try to respond to them by offering reasons of why they are acceptable to them, fosters a culture of mutual respect among participants. Fourth, deliberation opens the opportunity for the minority to raise objections to the majority, and to reconsider the reasons relied upon by the majority. This is not only useful in reaching a consensus, but also in the process of clarifying where non-consensus lies. However, for the decision-making to be considered to have “democratic legitimacy,” it is crucial that minority opinions are not suppressed, and opportunities to reexamine the decision are available.

In order to extract the significance of the deliberations described above, it is important to overcome the time constraint and to improve the conditions for equality and mutuality of speech. Additionally, it is crucial to prevent economic and administrative powers from intruding into the dialogue process, and to address challenges related to bandwagon effects (conforming to dominant opinions) and group polarization (strengthening initial biases) to support publicness and collaboration in the learning/educational space ^[8].

In order to realize such an ideal place for deliberation, it is necessary to compare it with the realities of existing discussion settings and identify the challenges present in those spaces. When we consider the school management council as a forum for decision-making based on deliberation, certain issues emerge. For example, Nakata (2015) analyzed the gender and the categories of election of committee members, Nakata (2015) analyzed the politics of school governing councils and the process and consequences of the

“inferiority of women and parents It highlighted problems related to the dual burden experienced by women committee members, who are chosen as representatives from existing organizations, including PTA. Additionally, it revealed the process of giving greater value to enthusiastic and influential local residents who actively support the school [5].

Similarly, Kashiwagi (2021) also points out the need to address various issues to ensure “democratic legitimacy” in school governance [9]. These issues include addressing the hierarchy among school management council members, addressing imbalances in agenda setting, establishing criteria for adopting opinions in contentious matters, and defining responsibility in decision-making processes. Furthermore, Kashiwagi identifies several problems associated with real school management councils [9]. These issues include school dominance by exclusive and controlling figures within the community, avoidance strategies of parent representatives who are detached from traditional communities, and the “marginalization” of impoverished, low-income, and minority individuals.

Here, we would like to discuss the five criteria for measuring the “quality” of deliberation, as listed by Fishkin (2009) [10]. First, “information,” that is, how accurate and sufficient is the information related to the issues at hand provided to the participants. Second, “substantive balance,” i.e., how much counterarguments are raised by individuals holding different perspectives against a particular viewpoint. Third, “diversity,” or the extent to which major opinions found in society are represented in the discussion. Fourth, “sincerity,” which gauges how genuinely participants examine the merits of different opinions. Fifth, “equality of consideration,” whether the opinions of all participants are considered, regardless of who is speaking, during the deliberation process.

Referring to Fishkin's discussion, when revisiting previous research, it can be considered that the school management council does not fully meet all five criteria, with particular emphasis on “substantive balance” concerning its composition, reflecting the “diversity” of societal opinions, and ensuring “consideration of equality,” which are crucial elements of deliberation. Furthermore, the school management council faces both “external exclusion,” where certain hierarchies or groups are excluded from the deliberative decision-making process, and “internal exclusion,” where specific attributes of individuals may lead to biases in the deliberation process or outcomes [10]. As a consequence of these issues, the realization of the intended benefits of deliberation, such as transformative change in participants’ perceptions and the establishment of “democratic legitimacy” based on cumulative deliberation, may not be fully achieved. These concerns have been raised in the context of the school management council.

3.2. Issues concerning the relationship between “participation” and “collaboration”

Secondly, the overall issues concerning the policies aimed at reorganizing school-community relations, which encompass not only the school management council but also initiatives like the school-supporting regional headquarters and its successor, the community-school collaboration headquarters project, can be viewed from the perspective of the relationship between “participation” and “collaboration.”

This perspective of “participation” and “collaboration” is based on Nawata’s (2009) discussion concerning local governance [11]. Nawata refers to the movement of providing institutional status to local communities through laws and regulations as “institutionalization of communities.” According to Nawata, since the 1990s, the emphasis has shifted more towards “collaboration” rather than “participation.” While “participation” has been accepted as a fundamental concept since the 1970s, indicating involvement in the process of policy planning, implementation, and evaluation, in the 1990s, “collaboration” started to be advocated, highlighting the responsibility or obligation of local communities to provide public services in partnership with the government. Nawata points out that in the context of local autonomous organizations under local government law, there is a strong emphasis not only on “participation” to make public decision-making accessible but also on “collaboration” to provide services that the administration does not offer [11].

Furthermore, Sakamoto (2017) discusses that in the context of regional management organizations established as part of the local revitalization policy since the mid-2010s, discussions related to citizen “participation” and citizen autonomy have taken a backseat, and there is an increasing tendency to expect the organization to take on the role of an executive agency or service provider rather than focusing on citizen participation compared to community autonomous organizations ^[12].

Taking the perspective of “participation” and “collaboration” in the context of local governance, let’s apply it to policies that promote the reorganization of school-community relations. Firstly, the school council system and school management council can be seen as mechanisms that encourage “participation” by parents and community members to reflect diverse opinions in school management. However, in reality, as Iwanaga (2011) points out, they largely function as “community-supportive community schools.” ^[4] Similarly, Nakata (2015) also reveals that the deliberations of the council primarily revolve around supporting the school and community activities, with their statutory authority to approve school management policies or submit opinions on teacher appointments not being fully utilized ^[5]. In other words, while the school management council was designed to expand the scope of “participation” by parents and community members, in practice, it operates more as a mechanism to promote “collaboration” by enhancing support for the school from parents and the community.

In addition, the School Support Regional Headquarters Project introduced in 2008 and its successor, the Community-School Collaboration Headquarters Project, are characterized by placing the core focus on support from the community to schools. For example, the School Support Regional Headquarters project is acknowledged to have contributed to promoting the understanding that it is essential for the community and residents to support schools through activities like volunteer-based school support ^[6]. This highlights the emphasis on “collaboration” rather than “participation” in these initiatives.

Furthermore, based on the “Next-Generation School-Community Creation Plan” formulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in 2016, an integrated operation between the School Management Council and the Community-School Collaboration Headquarters was envisaged. The 2017 amendment to the law gave the school management councils the role of discussing the systematic promotion of school support. In other words, in terms of policy, the complementary relationship between “participation” and “collaboration” has become more strongly recognized. However, this movement has not solved the problem of deliberation mentioned above in 3.1., but could potential exacerbate them. Specifically, the problems associated with deliberation may expand beyond the public domain of the School Management Council to include planning and implementation of school support and collaborative activities, leading to a risk of “external exclusion” and “internal exclusion” spreading across various contexts ^[6].

Examining the difficulty of achieving a complementary relationship between “participation” and “collaboration” in the context of regional autonomy ^[13], it becomes evident that simply promoting the establishment of both the School Management Council and the Community-School Collaboration Headquarters as policy measures may not immediately fulfill the objectives of both “participation” and “collaboration.” To achieve the intended complementary relationship in the current policy, it is essential to consider factors such as the allocation of authority and resources between the two organizations, the relevance of their respective agendas and activities, the methods of selecting parents and community members involved in “participation” and “collaboration,” the extent of overlap in their roles and responsibilities, and the distribution of burdens among participants. In addition, understanding the actual implementation of the system is crucial. This includes examining who takes the lead in public decision-making spaces and the actual conduct of activities. By closely monitoring these aspects, policymakers can gain insights into how discussions and decisions are conducted and ensure that the intended complementary relationship between “participation” and “collaboration” is realized effectively.

3.3. Issues concerning parent community organizations

Thirdly, at a structural level when viewed from the perspective of the local community, there are issues related to the selection of members for the school management council and the transformation of influential parent organizations serving as key bodies for organizing collaborative activities between schools and communities. As frequently highlighted, in public decision-making bodies such as the school management council, representatives from local parent organizations often occupy a significant portion of the seats, leading to imbalances in age and gender representation. This situation may result in the inadequate representation of diverse community voices and the potential for decision-making to be unduly influenced by the opinions of specific individuals, leading to the risk of unjust oppression. Recent transformations in local parent organizations have added to the complexity of this issue, potentially exacerbating these risks.

The first aspect of this transformation is the structural-level change known as “de-organization” among residents^[14]. Membership rates in influential local parent organizations, such as neighborhood associations, community councils, children’s groups, and PTAs, have been declining in recent years, with an increase in individuals who do not belong to any of these organizations. These organizations have traditionally existed in seamless units based on specific areas (school districts) within municipalities, and by maintaining residents’ participation in these organizations, they have played a crucial role in sustaining the “participation-based lifestyle structure” of the community^[15]. Additionally, even if some residents initially engage in the activities of these organizations out of a sense of obligation or reciprocity, through this process, they build relationships with other community members, fostering a sense of belonging as members of the local community over time^[1]. This underlying structural change in community consciousness is characterized as “reserved social capital” in contrast to R. D. Putnam’s concept of “strong voluntary social capital”^[16]. However, recent trends of “de-organization” have significantly reduced the possibility of building community relationships and engaging in informal learning within the community, thereby challenging the established position of these organizations as the basis for selection and representation.

The second aspect of this transformation is the issue of “legitimacy” at the cognitive level concerning local parent organizations. Many of these organizations have operated as voluntary associations while maintaining comprehensive coverage in various regions without overlapping. This widespread existence and high membership rates have served as the basis for justifying these organizations as representatives of residents and, consequently, have led to the selection of their representatives to serve as members in administrative committees and various advisory boards. In other words, the “legitimacy” of these organizations has encouraged a significant number of residents to join, and their high membership rates have been considered as ensuring the “representativeness” of residents. Additionally, their role as “administrative intermediary civil society organizations”^[17] that partially provide administrative services has garnered robust support from the government, contributing to the bestowed legitimacy. However, the decline in membership rates within neighborhood associations and community councils has significantly undermined their “legitimacy” itself^[18].

In recent years, there has been an active discussion that questions the very existence of organizations such as neighborhood associations and PTAs, as joining these organizations is no longer mandatory or given^[19,20]. These discussions highlight issues such as outdated meetings or events that do not align with the current times, difficulties in accommodating diverse family and employment patterns, and persisting organizational characteristics with gender imbalances in roles and responsibilities. In the midst of debates that directly challenge the “legitimacy” of neighborhood associations and similar organizations, it becomes essential to exercise extreme caution when selecting representatives or members of such organizations as participants in public decision-making forums and regarding them as representatives of residents and parents.

The third aspect of transformation is the restructuring of neighborhood associations and similar

organizations, which has been triggered by municipal mergers and school consolidations. The process of municipal mergers has led to organizational restructuring as communities align themselves with other municipalities ^[15]. As an “unintended consequence,” this has resulted in the dismantling of neighborhood associations and similar organizations. Similarly, school consolidations have forced many communities to reevaluate the one-to-one relationship between schools and their respective neighborhoods ^[21]. These changes are challenging the very foundation of traditional school-community relationships.

Despite these trends, there are movements within the entire community to reconstruct the framework of education. For example, in response to the decline of neighborhood associations and social educational activities due to municipal mergers, some communities have utilized the school support mechanism, which is more acceptable to parents and residents. They have formed educational councils to facilitate the reconstruction of various organizations ^[1]. Additionally, in the context of school consolidations, there are cases where communities selectively pursue school-community cooperation ^[21]. Some communities actively engage with schools during school district reorganization, initiating dialogues between public halls and schools or building networks between public halls to renew school-community relationships ^[22].

These moves reverse the reorganization of communities and school districts and attempt to create new relationships between schools and communities. The key to this process is the formulation of a vision for rebuilding education throughout the community, the organization to realize this vision, and the decision-making process based on deliberation among the parties involved. In the midst of changes in the structure of local communities, there is a need to organize a place to consolidate the will of parents and residents, either by converting existing local kinship organizations or utilizing councils related to school district reorganization or merger.

4. New strategies based on the “deliberative system” theory

4.1. The “deliberative system” perspective

In order to overcome the problems mentioned in the previous section, we would like to consider strategies for weaving a new relationship between schools and communities. Here, we refer to Tamura’s ^[23,24] discussion of facilitation in “deliberative systems.” Tamura’s idea of an “embedded deliberative system” refers to a system where the deliberative spaces of the “intimate sphere” and the “public sphere” are nested in multiple layers. In this discussion, families and the “intimate sphere” are not only places where opinions are formed and conveyed to higher-level “decision-making spaces,” but also serve as a kind of “public space” where “collective decision-making” on daily matters within families or the “intimate sphere” takes place ^[24]. Moreover, from a system-level perspective of deliberation, even non-deliberative actions, such as protest movements, can play a role in revising existing norms and policies, contributing as a crucial element in constituting macro-level deliberation ^[24].

Based on this “deliberative system” theory, Tamura (2021) extended the concept of facilitation in the dimension of a “system,” or in other words, it focuses on initiatives, mechanisms, and devices to organize deliberations in the dimension of a system ^[24]. Let’s elaborate on the strategy to enhance micro-level and community-level deliberation.

4.2. Enhancement of “deliberation” at the micro level

First, we consider strategies for implementing micro-level deliberation platforms, focusing on public decision-making forums such as school management councils. This section will discuss the elements and conditions for designing and facilitating a decision-making forum that leads to deliberative discussion.

First, as is often pointed out, it is important how to ensure “representativeness” in the public forum. One condition for deliberation is the presence of “others” with backgrounds and values different from one’s own in the space. This aligns with Saito’s (2000) argument that “plurality” of perspectives is an important

element of the “public sphere.”^[25] In light of the changing conditions of local communities, it is necessary to design a forum in which the composition of diverse opinions in the local community is reflected in the deliberative process.

Secondly, it is essential to create an environment in the space of deliberation where participants can engage in “reflectivity.” Adult learning theories have accumulated research on environments that facilitate “critical reflection,” leading to the transformation of individual cognitive frameworks. This knowledge can serve as a valuable reference. Specific measures may include providing support for learning critical reflection and discussion methods, introducing narrative approaches to enhance self-reflection (such as recording or role-playing), utilizing artistic, cultural, and film tools that expose participants to diverse realities, and designing a learning environment that fosters psychological safety to support the process of reflection^[26]. Introducing these elements into current public decision-making forums can prove to be effective.

The conditions for participants to become “reflective” are not only the cultivation of their linguistic and negotiation skills, but also the environment that encourages deliberation. This point leads to the third argument that the issue of deliberation should not be reduced to the issue of participants’ subject formation. Tamura (2021), in discussing facilitation, takes issue with the “subject-capability-oriented” concept of deliberation, that is, the idea that the realization of deliberation is viewed in terms of “individual qualities and abilities.”^[24] The potential of facilitation is seen in the introduction of various mechanisms and devices to encourage deliberation regardless of the abilities of the participants, and to nurture the collective abilities of the participants through such opportunities.

The fourth strategy is to facilitate a process where participants deepen their understanding through deliberation and explore the conditions for achieving it. In this regard, the analysis conducted by Tanma (2015) on the discussions surrounding school consolidation can provide valuable insights^[27]. Tanma identifies four key points for advancing dialogue and “collaboration” between residents and the administration. The first is establishing rules for discussions at a common table and promoting voluntary learning to make informed and substantiated statements. Secondly, emphasizing the importance of information sharing, using the information provided by the other side as a mirror to accumulate one’s own knowledge. The third point is recognizing the layered nature of challenges and the significance of mutually exploring and understanding each other’s perspectives to identify common ground. Fourth is building a relationship where alternative proposals are exchanged^[27]. Implementing strategies to foster deep deliberation should go beyond the differences in underlying systems and require comprehensive exploration.

4.3. Development of “deliberation” at community level

Next, we discuss strategies for promoting the practice of deliberation on a daily basis, rather than confining it to the public decision-making space. In this regard, Sato *et al.* (2021) suggested that, by including members of the school management council in the deliberations of local residents and parents, it is possible to learn about their needs in advance and to represent them^[28]. Kashiwagi (2021) states that the school management council is required to create an “intimate circle” that picks up the unvoiced voices of the marginalized groups while relativizing the dominant codes of discourse is required to promote substantial participation^[9]. The “intimate circle” is a separate space from the public decision-making space where participants can speak openly, and establishing pathways and mechanism to incorporate their narratives into public deliberations are emphasized.

From these discussions, we can identify the point of how to organize deliberative spaces in the intermediate area between the “intimate circle” of family and friends and the “public sphere” of formal decision-making. In this regard, Ito (2021) states that in local communities, in addition to organizations responsible for decision-making and public service provision, there is a need for deliberative spaces to

facilitate opinion formation ^[29]. This new direction in community policy aims to organize “community deliberative spaces” that share the issues faced within the “intimate circle” and connect them to the public decision-making process, distinct from the traditional approach of forming decision-making spaces within local autonomous organizations and community policies.

Designing deliberative spaces in the intermediate area that mediates the “intimate circle” and the “public sphere” becomes a crucial component of the “deliberative system.” For example, the management of “community spaces” in local communities can be seen as a practical setting for deliberation at this level. Community cafes, local gathering places, children’s meal centers, and interaction salons, known as “community spaces,” are where people facing challenges that cannot be fully addressed within the existing institutional and facility frameworks attempt to find solutions in their immediate neighborhoods ^[30]. In this context, these spaces serve as venues where the stakeholders and their supporters and companions take the lead in pursuing the fulfillment of needs that may not be easily expressed in public decision-making settings. They aim to materialize the needs and sentiments of stakeholders that may be overlooked within existing institutional frameworks and to relativize dominant values. Thus, these spaces have the potential to facilitate deliberation by providing a platform where these needs and values can be actualized.

In addition, there are numerous organizations in the local community that aim to address issues related to childcare, welfare, and community development. Moreover, the process of reevaluating the significance of existing local affinity organizations, where their “legitimacy” is greatly questioned, can also lead to opportunities for deliberation. In the past, the “participation” and “collaboration” in schools and local communities have been questioned in terms of their connection to decision-making by educational institutions and municipalities and their “democratic legitimacy.” In addition to these considerations, focusing on the presence of deliberative spaces as a goal in themselves or spaces where deliberation occurs as a result, and recognizing the conditions under which these spaces allow the expression of “intimate sphere” needs and thoughts, enables the formulation of strategies to enhance the quality of deliberation in the entire community.

5. Toward the realization of a community that supports “deliberative” discussion

Recent policies are aimed at restructuring school-community relations, with school management and school support as the focus. In contrast, this paper clarifies policy issues by taking a bird’s eye view from the micro to the local community level. The strategy is to enhance the opportunities for parents and community members to question their own thinking by making deliberative discussion a part of various community activities based on the concept of the “deliberative discussion system.”

This strategy aims to encompass not only the enhancement of deliberation in public decision-making spaces but also the deliberation in activities within spaces that complement “participation” and “collaboration.” It seeks to capture the overall deliberation in the intermediate realm between the “intimate sphere” and the “public sphere.” By facilitating deliberation in each setting and fostering loose connections between different deliberative spaces, this approach can support the empowerment of parents and community members by fostering transformations in their educational values and awareness of the community. To design this process effectively, it is essential to consider the changing circumstances in the evolving community, ultimately aiming for an integrated educational management that encompasses both school education and the broader community.

Regarding this point, there is much to learn from the research on community management that has been accumulated in the fields of urban planning and community development. For example, Ito (2021) has advocated for the realization of a “nested deliberative system” mediated by community circles as the purpose of community management ^[29]. Koizumi (2016) also discusses three elements of “community design”: social relationships, places, and the social mechanisms that support them ^[31].

The author, while recognizing the precariousness of the traditional local affinity organizations' continuity, turned to the referenced research and arrived at the conclusion that the framework of "community empowerment" could be effective in interconnecting the transformations at three levels: residents, resident organizations, and the local community. Specifically, the envisioned approach involves understanding the actual conditions of the community through methods like "local knowledge," identifying challenges, planning for their resolution, organizing groups, implementing solutions, and conducting mutual evaluations to foster both problem-solving and a sense of ownership among the stakeholders. However, this approach requires careful consideration of various aspects, such as how to deepen deliberations at each stage, establish connections with existing institutions and programs, and define the roles of facilitators and allies ^[32]. The exploration and accumulation of practical analyses and action research in different regions will be essential to present concrete proposals, making it a significant research challenge for the future.

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