

Research Trends in Educational Administration Studies in Japan under New Public Management

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Abstract: *With the continuous development of global public management theories, New Public Management (NPM), as an important public management reform model, has profoundly influenced governments and their management practices worldwide. In Japan, the practice of educational administration has also been significantly influenced by the theories of New Public Management, driving the modernization and efficiency improvement of educational management. This paper aims to systematically explore the research trends in educational administration studies in Japan under New Public Management, analyzing its theoretical foundations, implementation effects, and its profound impact on educational management.*

Keywords: *New Public Management, Educational Administration, Japanese Education, Quality Assessment, Management Innovation, Teacher Development*

Introduction

New Public Management (NPM), as a modern public management reform theory, aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector by introducing market mechanisms and management tools. Since the late 1970s, New Public Management theory has been widely applied globally, showing significant reform effects, especially in the field of educational administration. As one of the leading countries in global education, Japan's educational administration system has undergone profound changes under the influence of New Public Management. Understanding the impact of New Public Management on Japan's educational administration helps to reveal the successes and challenges of educational reforms and provides valuable insights for other countries.

1. Overview of New Public Management

1.1 Theoretical Foundations of New Public Management

1.1.1 Definition and Core Concepts of New Public Management

New Public Management (NPM) refers to a series of market-oriented and management-driven theories and practices introduced into the public sector in the late 1970s and early 1980s, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Its core concepts include market orientation, performance management, customer orientation, decentralization, and empowerment.^[1]

1.1.2 Historical Development and Evolution of New Public Management

New Public Management theory originated from reflections on the inefficiencies in the public sector and the recognition of market mechanisms. Starting in the 1970s, Western countries, particularly the UK and the US, gradually introduced market-oriented elements into public sector reforms, leading to the formation of NPM. Key milestones in this process include the marketization of the public sector, performance-oriented management, and customer satisfaction surveys. These developments marked a shift in public administration from the traditional bureaucratic model to a more flexible, results-oriented management approach.

1.1.3 Main Practice Models of New Public Management

NPM practices include setting clear performance indicators and goals to monitor and evaluate public sector outcomes; improving the quality and efficiency of public services through competitive bidding and public-private partnerships (PPP); adopting a customer-centric service model by fully considering

customer needs in service design and delivery; and implementing organizational reforms, such as decentralization and devolution, to enhance decision-making efficiency and service flexibility. These practices collectively drive the modernization of the public sector.

1.2 Differences between New Public Management and Traditional Public Administration

1.2.1 Efficiency and Effectiveness

Traditional public administration typically focuses on the execution of regulations and procedural compliance, with less emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. In contrast, NPM prioritizes improving efficiency and effectiveness, emphasizing productivity in public services through streamlined procedures, reduced redundancy, and optimized resource allocation.

1.2.2 Market-Oriented Operations

Traditional public administration tends to rely on government monopolies to provide public services, with resource allocation depending on administrative measures. NPM introduces market mechanisms, encouraging public sector collaboration with private entities and even outsourcing certain public services to private organizations to enhance competitiveness and service quality.

1.2.3 Management Models

Traditional public administration is based on a hierarchical system where power is concentrated in upper leadership, resulting in long decision-making chains and slower response times. NPM advocates for decentralized management, emphasizing the dispersion of power and increased decision-making autonomy at the grassroots level, making management more flexible and efficient.^[2]

1.3 Interaction between New Public Management and Educational Administration

1.3.1 The Mechanism of New Public Management's Influence on Educational Administration

The influence of NPM on educational administration is primarily reflected in aspects such as performance evaluation and target management, the introduction of market mechanisms, customer-oriented service models, and increased decentralization and autonomy.

1.3.2 The Reciprocal Impact of Educational Administration Reform on Public Management Theory

The application of NPM in educational administration provides empirical support for the applicability and limitations of public management theory. In practice, NPM theory needs to be adjusted and innovated according to the specific context of Japanese education. The feedback from educational reform practices influences the development of public management theory, driving its revision and improvement.

1.3.3 Comparison of New Public Management and Educational Administration from an International Perspective

From an international perspective, the application of NPM in the educational sector shows both commonalities and differences. In Western countries, market mechanisms and performance evaluations under NPM are widely applied in educational administration. Countries tailor the implementation of NPM according to the characteristics of their educational systems. Comparing the application experiences of NPM in education across different countries helps to understand its effectiveness and limitations, providing international references and lessons.

2. New Public Management in the Japanese Education System

2.1 Overview of the Japanese Education System

2.1.1 Structure and Characteristics of the Japanese Education System

Japan's education system is known for its highly structured and centralized nature. The education system comprises basic education (elementary and junior high school), secondary education (high school), and higher education (university). It is characterized by centralized management (with educational policies and curriculum standards formulated and implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), a unified education system (with standardized education standards and examination systems nationwide), an emphasis on entrance examinations (especially for high school and university admissions, which play a decisive role in students' academic progression),

and a focus on moral education and collectivism (with educational content and forms emphasizing social harmony and collective spirit).

2.1.2 Historical Evolution of Japan's Post-War Educational Management System

Japan's educational management system has undergone several major reforms, deeply influencing the direction and model of Japanese education. After Japan's defeat in 1945, the American occupation forces carried out comprehensive social reconstruction, including reforms in the education sector. According to the Basic Act on Education (1947) and the School Education Act (1947), Japan established a compulsory education system, popularized basic education, and adopted the American-style 6-3-3-4 educational system (i.e., 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high school, 3 years of high school, and 4 years of university).^[3]

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the Japanese government further promoted the modernization and popularization of education, particularly the rapid expansion of secondary and higher education. During this period, the core of Japan's education policy was aimed at equality and universal access, with efforts focused on eliminating inequalities in the distribution of educational resources. However, with the development of society and the economy, the centralization and uniformity of the educational management system gradually revealed drawbacks, such as overly rigid curriculum settings and a lack of administrative flexibility.

Entering the 1980s, Japan's educational management system began transitioning towards decentralization, particularly in expanding local educational administrative powers and enhancing school autonomy. The 1984 report of the Provisional Council for Educational Reform marked a new phase in educational reform, emphasizing diversity and individuality in education to meet the challenges of globalization and the information age.

2.1.3 Basic Framework of the Current Japanese Educational Management System

The modern Japanese educational management system continues the basic framework established after the war but presents more complex and diversified characteristics in management models and policy implementation, particularly in the politically dominated ideology. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology acts as the national educational authority, and although it is officially limited to guiding and advising various levels of education committees, in practice, the educational administration system is still politically dominated, with an emphasis on school accountability and autonomous management to meet the educational needs of different regions.

2.2 The Introduction and Adaptation of New Public Management in the Japanese Education System

2.2.1 The Infiltration of New Public Management Concepts into Japanese Educational Policy

The principles of New Public Management (NPM), which include market orientation, performance management, decentralization, and customer orientation, have significantly influenced the management models of public sectors globally. These concepts gradually permeated Japan's educational policies, profoundly affecting their formulation and implementation.

Firstly, market orientation has prompted Japanese educational policies to emphasize the introduction of market mechanisms. The Japanese government has promoted private schools and introduced competitive mechanisms to encourage the diversification of the education market. This policy shift not only increased the diversity of educational resources but also enhanced the efficiency and quality of educational institutions. Against this backdrop, the Japanese government introduced a series of policies to encourage the development of private education, such as financial support and policy incentives, leading to the rapid growth of private schools.

Secondly, the introduction of performance management has made Japanese educational policies more result-oriented and efficiency-driven. The government strengthened performance evaluations of educational institutions, different from the single-directional evaluation system of the post-war period. By setting specific performance indicators, such as student academic achievement, graduation rates, and employment rates, the management effectiveness and quality of education at these institutions are measured. The results of these evaluations affect not only government funding allocations to educational institutions but also the promotion and incentive mechanisms for school leadership. This change has encouraged educational institutions to focus more on teaching quality and student development, thereby improving the overall level of education.^[4]

Additionally, the customer-oriented concept has been widely applied in Japanese educational policies.

Under traditional educational management models, schools often centered around teachers, neglecting the needs of students and parents. However, under the influence of NPM, educational policies have paid more attention to meeting the needs of students and parents. Schools are now providing diversified educational services and personalized education programs to enhance students' learning experiences and satisfaction. This shift has not only improved educational services but also increased schools' reputations and competitiveness in society.

In summary, the infiltration of NPM concepts has shifted Japanese educational policies from a government-centered management model to a modern management model that is market-oriented, performance-managed, and customer-oriented. This transition has not only improved the efficiency and quality of the education system but also provided new momentum for the further development of Japan's educational management system. In contrast, the Japan Teachers' Union, representing the interests of teachers, has argued that these reforms may be too radical, potentially undermining the professionalism of teachers and exacerbating the existing shortage of teaching staff.

2.2.2 Background of the Introduction of New Public Management in Japan's Education Sector

As the social and economic environment evolved, the traditional education system faced pressure to improve efficiency and quality; in the context of globalization, Japan's education system needed to adapt to international standards and enhance its competitiveness; fiscal constraints prompted the government to seek improved efficiency in educational services through market mechanisms and performance management; advances in information technology provided new management tools and methods, facilitating the introduction of market-oriented and performance-driven management models.

3. New Trends in Educational Management Studies in Japan

3.1 Educational Quality and Performance Evaluation

3.1.1 Construction and Implementation of an Educational Quality Assessment System

In the context of New Public Management, the quality assessment system of Japan's education system is undergoing significant changes. The core of constructing a modern educational quality assessment system lies in establishing scientific and comprehensive evaluation standards and ensuring their effectiveness in practical operations. The current challenges in the assessment system include accurately measuring educational outcomes, balancing the weight of quantitative and qualitative data, and effectively translating assessment results into improvement measures.

3.1.2 Models and Challenges of Educational Performance Management

The introduction of educational performance management models aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of educational services. The main models include setting specific educational goals and regularly evaluating their achievement to enhance the performance of educational institutions; establishing performance indicators covering aspects such as teaching quality, student outcomes, and faculty strength for systematic evaluation; using students' academic performance and development outcomes as the primary evaluation basis to promote continuous improvement in educational quality. The main challenges include avoiding over-reliance on quantitative indicators while neglecting the comprehensiveness of educational quality, handling large amounts of complex performance data, and ensuring the authenticity and validity of the data, as well as flexibly applying performance management models in different types of educational institutions and regions with varying circumstances.^[5]

3.1.3 Empirical Research: Strategies and Effects for Enhancing Educational Quality

Empirical research on enhancing educational quality primarily focuses on studying the actual effects of strategies for improving educational quality, including their impact on student performance, teacher teaching levels, and school management. By conducting case studies on specific schools or regions where educational quality improvement strategies have been implemented, successful experiences and existing problems can be summarized. Utilizing big data analysis techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions aimed at improving educational quality provides quantitative research conclusions and improvement suggestions. These studies help reveal effective pathways for enhancing educational quality and uncover potential issues in practice, providing scientific evidence for policymakers and educational administrators.

3.2 Innovative Practices in Educational Management

3.2.1 Application of Market Mechanisms in Educational Management

The introduction of market mechanisms aims to improve the quality and efficiency of educational services through market competition. In Japan, the application of these mechanisms is reflected in school choice (allowing parents and students to choose schools based on educational quality and specializations, thereby incentivizing schools to improve their standards); contractualization of educational services (introducing private sector participation in educational services through competitive bidding, enhancing service diversity and professionalism); and market-oriented allocation of educational resources (linking the distribution of educational resources to school performance and demand, promoting efficient resource utilization).

3.2.2 The Impact of Digital Transformation on Educational Management

The widespread application of information systems has made integrated management of educational resources, teaching activities, and student data possible. By introducing advanced Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS), educational institutions can manage teaching resources, course scheduling, teacher performance, and student data in an integrated manner. This integrated management not only improves the efficiency of educational management but also enhances data transparency and traceability. For instance, through real-time data collection and analysis, educational administrators can more swiftly identify and respond to issues within the education system, optimizing resource allocation and improving teaching outcomes. Furthermore, these systems support automated process management, such as student attendance, performance evaluation, and enrollment management, reducing human error and management costs, thereby further enhancing management efficiency. Using information systems for integrated management of educational resources, teaching activities, and student data improves management efficiency and transparency; offering online courses and distance education through the internet and digital technology expands educational coverage and flexibility; employing big data and artificial intelligence technology for deep analysis of educational data provides a scientific basis for educational decision-making.

3.2.3 The Role of School-Based Management and Local Autonomy in Educational Reform

The introduction of school-based management and local autonomy aims to enhance the flexibility and responsiveness of educational management. School-based management increases schools' autonomy in curriculum design, teaching methods, and management models to better meet the needs of their students; encourages community members and parents to participate in school management and decision-making, improving the localization and personalization of educational services; promotes schools to enhance educational quality through school-based performance evaluation and incentive mechanisms. Local autonomy in educational reform allows local governments to have greater decision-making power over the allocation and management of educational resources, enabling flexible adjustments based on local circumstances and enhancing the competitiveness and characteristics of local education.^[6]

3.3 Professional Development and Training of Teachers

3.3.1 Innovation and Practice in Teacher Performance Evaluation Systems

The innovation in teacher performance evaluation systems aims to enhance teachers' teaching effectiveness through scientific and fair evaluation mechanisms. In addition to student performance, this includes data from multiple perspectives such as observation of the teaching process, peer evaluation, and self-reflection. By combining regular evaluations with real-time feedback, issues in teaching can be promptly identified and addressed. The system emphasizes the professional development and growth of teachers, offering targeted training and support based on evaluation results.

3.3.2 Optimization and Challenges of Teacher Training Mechanisms

Regularly updating training content according to new trends in education development and teachers' professional needs, such as new technology applications and educational theory advancements; combining online and offline training to provide flexible training options to meet the diverse needs of teachers; improving training programs based on the evaluation and feedback of training effectiveness to enhance practical outcomes. Challenges include ensuring that training content matches actual teaching needs, increasing participation and effectiveness of the training, and evaluating and improving the long-term impact of the training.

3.3.3 Research on Teacher Job Satisfaction and Effectiveness

Research on teacher job satisfaction and effectiveness focuses on teachers' well-being and job performance in their professional development. The main research directions include factors influencing job satisfaction, such as work environment, compensation and benefits, career development opportunities, and workload; exploring ways to improve teachers' job effectiveness through training, professional development support, and incentive mechanisms; analyzing the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and their teaching effectiveness to develop targeted improvement measures.

Conclusion

The implementation of New Public Management (NPM) policies in Japan's educational sector has significantly improved the efficiency of educational management and has had a profound impact on the allocation of educational resources. However, it has also exacerbated inequalities in resource distribution. To address this issue, it is necessary to enhance policy regulation to ensure the equitable distribution of educational resources and to develop effective measures to mitigate the consequences of unequal resource allocation. In-depth exploration of these research directions will contribute to the further refinement of the application of NPM in the field of education, thereby advancing the development of educational management theory and practice.

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