

Conflict over Education in Postwar Okinawa under the American Rule (1945-1972)

Yasuo SAITO

Researcher Emeritus, National Institute for Educational Policy Research

This paper aims to describe the struggle and conflict over education in postwar Okinawa under the American rule (1945-1972). After the Second World War, for a long time Okinawa was ruled over by U.S. military government. In the meanwhile, the sovereignty over education in Okinawa was restricted. Rehabilitation of the education facilities destroyed by fierce battles and reorientation of the education in Okinawa was largely entrusted to the care of the military authority. The occupation authorities presumed that Okinawan people as an ethnic minority in Japan and they have been treated with contempt and exploited by Japanese. Their occupation policy showed a notable tendency toward separating Okinawa from mainland Japan and cultivating its own identity among Okinawan people. Education policy reflected this trend. However, in the face of the education policies, occasionally took place conflict and friction between the military government and educators in Okinawa. For example, there was controversy over the issues such as editing of new textbooks, teaching language and English education, establishment of Ryukyu University, fund-raising for rehabilitation of school buildings, enactment of education laws, educational aids from Japanese government and the antecedent partial returning of the competence of educational administration. Educators in Okinawa took the initiative in the movement against the military rule. They had a strong desire that the education in Okinawa to be identical with Japanese education. In the early stage of the occupation, the idea of adapting English as the teaching language and introduction of English education in the elementary school was frustrated. In 1958, with great pains Okinawa achieved the enactment of its own education laws in the legislature that replaced the Ryukyu Education Code imposed by the military government. From the 1950s on, Japanese government gradually expanded the scope of the educational cooperation to Okinawa.