

Zenkyo calls for drastically increasing the number of teachers

Zenkyo submits 526 civil organizations' signatures
On December 21, members of Zenkyo visited the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (hereafter MEXT) and handed the 526 civil organizations' signatures collected from all over Japan to solve teachers' excessive long working hours. And they demanded not to introduce An irregular working hour system on yearly basis but to implement a realistic solution to achieve shorter working hours. "It is prohibited to order teachers to work overtime in principle, so MEXT has to make efforts so that teachers can work in accordance with the principle," and "Reducing teachers' heavy workloads is essential to improve the quality of education, develop teachers' expertise, and protect their life and health," the representatives of them insited. In addition, they called on MEXT to drastically increase the number of teachers and revise the government' s education policies that managed children and made children compete.

Zenkyo talks with various organizations about how to ease teachers' heavy workload

The special committee on "the work style reform at schools" , one of the Central Council for Education' s committees, has started discussing the introduction of an "irregular working hour system on a yearly basis." Zenkyo has published materials for discussion on the system, and fliers in which teachers at schools can discuss this issue. Using these materials, union

members have been making efforts to clarify controversial points in the system for teachers at schools. From its opposing view about the introduction of the irregular working hour system for one year, Zenkyo are having talks with officials of the National Governors' Association, the Japan Association of City Mayors, and the National Association of School Principals. Among the talks, there was agreement on Zenkyo' s opinion that the government should increase the number of teachers to correct teachers' heavy workloads. And there were also the following voices from each organization against introducing the system and setting an upper limit on teachers' overtime.

"The system is proposed on the premise that teachers are not busy during the school holidays, but this is not true. Teachers have a lot of work even while school is on holidays. For example, Teachers working in a commercial high school conduct a certificate examination and give supplementary tuition during summer and winter holidays. So the introduction is not practical."

"The government believes that teachers' long working hours will improve as long as it introduces the system. But I think it is optimistic, so I demand that MEKT take through measures to reduce teachers' enormous workloads."



60,000 people cry out for “No to Article 9 revision!” on Constitution Memorial Day

“The upper limit of overtime has been newly set, which is inconsistent with teachers’ workstyle because teachers are not paid overtime work in the first place.” On May 3 (Constitution Memorial Day), nationwide actions such as rallies and marches took place to shatter Prime Minister Abe’s ambition to revise the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution. In Tokyo, 60,000 people, including 370 members of Zenkyo, assembled in a park in Koto Ward.



Appearing on the stage, scholars, journalists and lawyers as well as citizens spoke to the gathering. And then the representatives of citizen groups who had coped with problems such as the U.S. base construction project in Okinawa, the nuclear power accidents in Fukushima and "work-style reform" bills, talked about their efforts and explained those current situations. High school students also appealed for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of tuition-free for

Korean schools in Japan. In addition, opposition party leaders such as the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, delivered speeches and cried out with participants for “No to Article 9 revision!” , “Resign, Abe Cabinet!” Liberal Party leader sent the message of support to the rally. The organizing committee stated that the number of the 30 million-signature campaign calling to protect the Constitution, reached 13.5 million as of April 30, and everyone in the assembly built a consensus on the determination to block PM Abe’s revision by collecting 30 million signatures. After that participants joined a march.

At the rally, the members of Zenkyo requested cooperation in Zenkyo’s signature campaign. Many participants such as families with children, teachers and retired teachers as well as a young man who were repaying a student loan, signed them one after another. The contents Zenkyo has demanded in the signatures are as follows: increasing drastically education budget and the number of teachers, expanding the range of applicable students who can receive a scholarship, setting standards for establishment of special support schools, improving standards for the classroom formation of special support classes.

Results of the Questionnaire Survey on the “Achievement Tests

The “Nationwide Study on the Academic Achievement and Learning Conditions (hereafter Nationwide Test)” has been conducted simultaneously in every primary and middle school by the Ministry of Education. Similar tests, separate from the Nationwide Test, have also been made by a large number of prefectures and municipalities (hereafter Local Tests). However, many teachers and parents as well as education stakeholders around the country have expressed their concerns about “the Nationwide Test being used to establish a

national ranking that would make schools and teachers compete among themselves.” In this context, Zenkyo decided to conduct a questionnaire survey to identify the effects of both the Nationwide Test and the Local Test on schools, especially on children and teachers. This survey revealed that the Nationwide Test and the Local Test had a big impact on education. The findings include the contents below:



(1)The Tests make both children and teachers compete because their contents as well as the results are made public. They thus bring strains into normal education activities.

(2)At more than 40 percent of the schools, special lessons are given to children for preparing them to the Tests. In over 70% of these schools, the tests of previous years are used for these lessons. Over 40 percent of schools, children are given homework based the Tests.

(3)At more than 10% of schools, the lessons are rescheduled according to the Test dates. Some schools have increased the number of hours dedicated to teaching Test subjects while decreasing the lessons of the subjects not taken up by the Test.

(4)20% of schools have made public the average marks.

(5) "The Test conducted in April at the beginning of school year often hinders classroom building and class management and poses problems on other educational activities.

(6)The Test puts additional heavy work burden on

teachers who have to mark the test papers, compile and analyze the results" and thus constitutes one of the causes of long and intensive work of teachers.

The Nationwide Test and the Local Tests must be stopped immediately

This system hampers the normal lessons and other initiatives of each school. Even the MEXT is easily swayed by the "average good answer ratio" which the Ministry itself considers as a mere "numerical value that shows one part of the academic ability of children" .

Our survey has shown once again that the Nationwide Test and publication of its results are driving both teachers and children into a heated race for good scores, that is nothing to do with the academic achievement assessment, and distorting the academic ability in the true sense of the term. The Nationwide Test must be stopped at once. It is possible to grasp and analyze the academic ability of children and their actual learning conditions at national level by conducting a sampling survey every two or four years fox example.

Participants from all over Japan have discussions in "Education Forum 2018"

About 4,200 parents, citizens and teachers participated in the "Education forum 2018" from August 17 to 19 in Nagano City. The latest forum was held amid increasing moves of the revision of the Constitution making Japan into a country capable of waging war. Under the current

that the realization of education and society having a regard for truth and protecting peace was required, participants acknowledged the need to focus on children' s actual conditions and respect education that ensured the growth and development of all children.

Zenkyo Youth Committee announces the results of its second survey on teachers' parenting

Zenkyo Youth Committee has announced the results of the 2017 questionnaire survey on teachers' pregnancy, childbirth, and child care at a press conference. Following its first survey in 2016, this has been conducted in 2017.

More and more young people rapidly become a teacher. However the survey showed that young teachers have to work in a difficult work environment, such as a shortage of teachers and excessive long working hours at school, even when being pregnant or bringing up

their children. It also showed following facts:

- Young teachers are doing their jobs remaining uninformed of supporting systems for workers' parenting,
- Pregnant teachers have to work long hours and do jobs such as physical education and extracurricular activities, which is likely to badly affect pregnant women,
- The colleagues of workers on maternity or parenting leave are getting much busier because few substitute staff are assigned,

• Among the results of this survey, there were a lot of answers that teachers suffered maternity harassment by people in the managerial position at workplace.

In order to solve these problems, it is vital to create greater awareness of the actual situation in young teachers whose pregnancy, childbirth and childcare

among the management and those at work, as well as to increase teachers in number and correct excessively long overworking. Zenkyo Youth Committee is determined to make the survey results known to teachers at work and the public.

Study tour of disaster-stricken areas in 2018 Keep the memories of Fukushima from fading

Although 8 years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, 56,341 people still have to live as evacuees in 1,009 municipalities in all 47 prefectures as of October 30. About 6,000 people remain in provisional houses, so rebuilding their houses is an urgent issue. They call on the government to take measures reflecting their voices more.

However confining a reconstruction period to a decade after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the government intends to abolish the Reconstruction Agency in 2020 and end its reconstruction assistance measures as well as to cut spending on its reconstruction project. It will withdraw the support for the earthquake victims.

Zenkyo conducted a study tour to “see, walk, and think in disaster-hit areas” in Fukushima Prefecture. Participants visited afflicted districts such as Iitate Village, Minamisoma City, and Futaba County (Namie, Okuma and Tomioka towns) with a local guide. Seeing there to

be flexible container bags with a lifespan of 2 years piled up here and there even in 7 and half years, they felt how serious damage was. The flexible container bags with radioactive waste are collected in volume reduction facilities little by little and burnable things of them are made to be burned, but according to the guide, the disposal of ashes will become an important issue in the future.

In Iitate Village, the evacuation order for which had been lifted, schools resumed classes in April. Also, public facilities like a sports park had been developing on a budget of several billion yen. Nevertheless, most people commute from surrounding cities, towns, and villages, and not many people return to Iitate Village.

On the way back, participants shared the impressions of the tour, such as “I really feel the disaster in Fukushima was man-made” and “I must talk to children about Fukushima in order not to forget it.”

Donations to Western Japan heavy rain disaster

In 2018, large-scale natural disaster such as Osaka earthquake on May, the torrential rain in Western Japan on July, a huge typhoon and Hokkaido earthquake on September, occurred frequently.

Zenkyo collected contributions to the children and the schools of disaster-stricken areas from its members all over the country. Then its officers visited afflicted districts and handed the donations to the school boards and the schools, such as Makibi special support school, that had been flooded above the second floor of school building in Okayama prefecture. And during the summer vacation, teachers from many parts of the

country, also went to the stricken areas to help with the restoration as a volunteer.

Using the collection that Zenkyo sent, air cleaners were installed in all classrooms of elementary school in Saka Town, Hiroshima Prefecture that had suffered tremendous damage from heavy rains.



For a World without Nuclear Weapons

The 2018 World Conference against A&H Bombs was held from August 2 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the opening ceremony with 5,000 participants, "Sogakari kodo jikko iinkai" (Committee for all-out action) co-chair Shingou Fukuyama delivered an address of solidarity, and received a lot of applause from the floor. And participants affirmed the things below: there is no longer any obstacle to the entry into force of Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, it is important to advance the movement for the abolition of nuclear weapons by the support for Hibakusha and the solidarity of many people. Then they built a consensus on the determination to indicate their intentions to each government by collecting International Signatures Campaign in Support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha for Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

During the Conference, Zenkyo, together with many teachers, organized "Teachers Forum for Peace". About 80 participants at the forum listened to a peace education in postwar Hiroshima from Mr. Nobuo Takahashi, who was a former junior high school teacher. And a young teacher in Hiroshima explained how he had told children about peace. There were many young teachers who participated for the first time in the forum, and they discussed what they could do with other teachers. Delegates of the Philippines invited to the World Conference by the "Oleander Initiative" program, also took part in the forum and exchanged with participants. So they spoke of their experience in Japan attending Peace March and making a peace artwork with high school students.

Struggles against the construction of a new U.S. base contributes to Denny's win

Zenkyo regarded the October gubernatorial election in Okinawa as a struggle for stopping the Abe administration undermining democracy from pushing forward the U.S. base construction in Henoko. It also put importance on the race for preventing Prime Minister Abe from making Japan into a nation to wage war as well as protecting the Constitution and realizing a society based on it. As a result, the union supported Tamaki Denny as a gubernatorial candidate, helped him to win.

However, Ministry of Land、Infrastructure and Transport withdrew the Okinawa prefectural government's revocation of its previous approval for reclamation of the Henoko shore, in the repeated defiance of the military base construction among Okinawan people including the result of the election in October. In addition, the ministry's decision on withdrawal was made based on an interpretation of

law distorted by it.

On the other hand, a prefectural referendum over the construction of a U.S. base in Henoko was held on February 24. We are driving the Abe



administration into a corner.