

# COMPLETION REPORT

## Research Summary

### **Toward Better Governance: A Case study of Japanese Local Governance**

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Japan promoted a decentralization policy for many years and that development affected many neighboring countries including South Korea and others. Among various findings, I have attempted to review local public governance in Japan and found two interesting cases: (1) each prefectural-level local authority has an independent standing “Personnel Commission” in addition to a “Personnel Department” in a local government;; and (2) each municipal-level local authority has an “Equity Commission”. These commissions have been established in Japanese local authorities in order to avoid employment malpractices in the area of appointment, promotion, and the like.

In comparison, there is “Personnel Committee” in Korea local authorities, but it is neither a standing commission nor independent. The Personnel Committee in Korea lical governments is composes of government officials and external experts, and it is a non-standing advisory committee in its nature. Therefore, it is often blamed for not being independent of the will of the chief executive of the local government. The chief executive of local government sometimes exercises his/her authority based on loyalty rather than one’s competency because the chief executive is elected by popular election every four years. In that regard, the Japanese experience in personnel administration may provide a good lesson for other countries. It is expected that the establishment of the “Standing Independent Personnel or Equity Commission” could protect neutrality and fairness in the local civil service.

Furthermore, financial decentralization is the most important and critical issue in decentralization and local autonomy arounf the world. The Japanese experience in the financial decentralization provides an informative lesson for other countries. The “trinity reform” was a particularly interesting case although it was somewhat controversial in Japan.. In general, Korean local governments have a “strong chief executive system”, which means that governors and mayors are exercising stronger power than local councils. Under such circumstances, Japanese cases provide a number of useful policy implications for further development of decentralization and local autonomy in many countries. The result of my research was published in the *Journal of Regional Studies and Development* (2007).

