

ZENKYO publish 7 proposals; “Teachers will not be able to run school properly anymore!”



Teachers' intensive long working hours and teacher shortage have been more serious social problems in Japan. Teachers have been forced to be in a critical situation of “We will not be able to run school properly anymore!”.

Now, the Central Council for Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has deliberated on the matter of a synthetic plan for laying down the infrastructure to secure high-quality teachers. ZENKYO insists that it is urgent for teachers to have a better working condition as human beings and children to be in a guaranteed education environment where they can grow.

Teachers in Japan are restricted from the basic labor rights by the law. Under the Act on Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Education Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools (1971), they do not get paid for overtime work, at least they only receive the pay for over 4 percent of the basic salary as an adjustment. What is more, they are forced to work overtime over

96 hours per month on average.

ZENKYO made a fact-finding survey on the teachers' working conditions across the country in 2022 and researched on the actual condition of a nationwide teacher shortage every year. The union released the results and problems from the surveys to the public. At the same time, ZENKYO kept requesting for administrations and relevant education associations. Furthermore, they held the assembly and collected signatures to reflect our and parents' hope in the discussion of the Central Council for Education.



On October 7, the union published the “ZENKYO's 7 proposals” titled “We will not be able to run school properly anymore! We will make a school where children are guaranteed to grow and teachers can work lively” in the national meeting ZENKYO held. Not only teachers but also educational scholars, parents, and students who want to be teachers participated in the gathering. They paraded to appeal their voices demanding “We want to work with fair pay!”, “We need more

teachers!” through the city of GINZA which is a symbolic place as “cool Japan”.

Here are our main 7 proposals below;

- **Fundamental reform in the number criteria of basic teachers to be able to complete all duties including class preparation on duty-hours.**
- **Realizing small class sizes to guarantee every child a good education to take care of.**
- **Reshaping Japanese competitive education policy.**
- **Amending the Act on Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Education**

Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools to make it be able to pay for overtime work.

- **Establishing the Industrial Safety and Health structure in every school to improve a working environment on legal binding force.**
- **Build a structure to adopt the voice of teachers in the policy which the Central Council for Education makes.**

ZENKYO further commits to promote our actions further based on the proposals.

ZENKYO point out Teacher shortage becomes a nationwide problem



On December 25, ZENKYO released the results of the fact-finding survey of domestic teacher shortage at a point of October 1.

The survey result made clear that at least 3,112 teachers were short in 32 prefectures and 12 ordinance-designated cities in the October survey. The most characteristic of the survey result was there were more vacancies of sick leave backups than vacancies of maternity and parental leave backup.

ZENKYO previously conducted the research on the actual condition of teacher shortage across the

country at the point of May 2023. We compared the answers of 22 prefectures and 4 ordinance-designated cities which filled out both months and found out that more than 2,396 teachers were short in October as it marked 1.44 times higher than 1,666 teachers were short in May. The union announced that the vacancies for sick leave backup exceeded the vacancies of maternity and parental leave backup. The total vacancy of alternative teachers was 1,042 in October as it marked 2.62 times higher than 397 in May.

We analyzed that both May and October survey results showed the way teachers work had become more severe in 5 months. Teachers raised voices filled with sorrow comments appealing how tough they get through every day on the free description in the questionnaire. ZENKYO continuously strives to demand the improvement of teacher’s working conditions and treatment.

ZENKYO start “the Grassroot Movement for Better Education” Calling for having open meeting space to make education we really want!

ZENKYO has committed the action called “grassroot movement for better education 1741” since October 2023. “1741” points to the total number of all local governments in the country. We aim to have an open meeting space to discuss education with teachers, parents, and community groups in all municipalities.

Teachers have a lot of problems and worries; work

environment, treatment, content of education, and the way that practice should be.

On the other hand, parents are anxious about parenting to take care of children refuse to go to school or often are absent from schools. They worry that it may affect children’s study progress. Both teachers and parents are lack of opportunities discussing children. ZENKYO suggests them to

exchange opinions and talk about children and education together.

At this point of August 2023, the school lunch fee has been free in 491 municipalities. This is the fine efforts of the campaigns that parents, local groups, and teachers' unions have cooperated to collect signatures and asked for years. There were areas that parents and the unions asked the prefectural assembly to increase a greater number of teachers.

ZENKYO has promoted the grassroots movement



to make education that the people, children, parents, teachers, and citizens, who involved really demand.

Stronger friendship and solidarity with American and World's teachers' union members in UCORE 2023 CONFERENCE



On July 28 to 30, ZENKYO participated in UCORE 2023 CONFERENCE held in New York City, the United States of America. Barbara Madeloni, an education coordinator at Labor Notes and a former president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), who ZENKYO has maintained friendly relations with, invited us to the conference. From ZENKYO, Takaya Dambara, General Secretary, and Ritsu Takagi, a member of the board of directors, and 2 union members attended the gathering.

UCORE, United Caucuses of Rank-and-File Educators, is a national network of educator caucuses whose members share strategies, challenges through workshops, and support each other once a year as we work to transform unions in the U.S. Beside the caucuses of rank-and-file educators across the U.S., representatives of teachers' unions from Canada, the U.K, Puerto Rico, and Japan. About 140 people, who were around

mainly 20's to 40's, came together in an elementary school as the venue in New York City.

We listened to the discussions in the symposium:

- 1) One teachers' union promoted the campaign against adopting a new standardized test with parents (guardians) and communities and they succeeded in not adopting it.
- 2) The efforts that one teacher's union tried to enhance their bargaining power.
- 3) The hardships of increasing the union members.

We discussed the topics below in the closing session:

- 1) The way of building relationships with colleagues and parents (guardians) in taking part in union activities.
- 2) What should the role of leader be?

Dambara, General Secretary, spoke on behalf of ZENKYO at the closing session in front of about 140 participants:

- 1) In 1991, ZENKYO was established to stand



independent and act on a democratic reform and operation, not taking the path of labor management cooperation and a partnership with the government.

2) What is special about the teacher's union is that we are the union of working educators.

3) Education happens with students in classrooms, schools. This is for real. What we do is building the future, we are not working to raise someone who is convenient for the governments.

4) As one of the leaderships of ZENKYO, I want to make a true democratic society.

5) In here, I'm very encouraged to meet so many of you who are working to the same goal beyond the national borders. Solidarity to you all. Thank you for having us.

There were great cheers and claps from the audience when he finished each line every time.

In UCORE 2023 CONFERENCE, the union members of ZENKYO learned these lessons that we should:

- 1) have a dialogue with colleagues for 10 minutes at least every single day with a radical respect for each other.
- 2) solve the problems happening together in society and school to make a better world.
- 3) encourage every single union member to deepen the relationship with our associates.
- 4) remember there are always our associates who struggle for a true democratic society while worrying as well as us around the world.



ZENKYO's Allegations to CEART against the Japanese Government to eliminate teachers' intensive long working hours

*CEART (the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel)

	Overtime in school	Taking work in home	Total hours of both overtime
Weekday / per day	2 hours 51 minutes	24 minutes	3 hours 15 minutes
Saturday / per day	2 hours 30 minutes	41 minutes	3 hours 11 minutes
Sunday / per day	1 hours 10 minutes	1 hours 00 minutes	2 hours 10 minutes
Total hours in 4 weeks	71 hours 40 minutes	14 hours 44 minutes	86 hours 24 minutes
Total hours in a month	76 hours 47 minutes	15 hours 47 minutes	92 hours 34 minutes

【data】 The average hours of overtime in school and taking work in home (all occupations)

※Overtime hours in school on weekdays = working or being hours in school — a designated limit (7 hours and 45minutes)

※Working or being hours in school = Hours between coming to school and leaving from school - break time they took

※Total hours in a month = Total hours in 4 weeks ×30 / 28

ZENKYO has tried to promote social dialogue with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan for observance of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966 for years.

In September 2023, ZENKYO submitted the CEART, the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel, allegations against the Japanese government on; 1) the analysis of the teachers' working conditions across the country ZENKYO made in 2022 and 2) the trend that MEXT amends the Act on Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Education Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools. The CEART accepted our allegation in November 2023.

The Japanese government has been dishonest to realize the 1966 Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers for many years. It means that the government has not tried to solve the actual condition of teachers' limitless overtime work. ZENKYO reported that the current trend MEXT

amends the Act on Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Education Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools, which does not need to pay teachers for overtime fee. ZENKYO demanded in the allegation that MEXT as which ratifies the Recommendation should accept to have an honest discussion (social dialogue) to eliminate teachers' intensive long working hours and make the education condition better with us.

For the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2024

ZENKYO will visit the Head Office of International Labour Conference (ILO) in Geneva and ILO Office in Paris as members of Liaison Council of Zenroren Public in May 2024. We will lobby the specialists of the Public and Private Services Unit of ILO for ZENKYO's allegation and we claim that public employees in Japan are deprived of the rights to conclude collective agreements and to strike, before ILO will hold the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference in June, 2024.

***ZENKYO's additional information against MEXT's opinions in the end.**

For a Swift Settlement of the War, ZENKYO Send Donation for Humanitarian Assistance to War Victim in Ukraine and Palestine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been 2 years since it began on February 24, 2022. Furthermore, Israel invaded Gaza in the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, 2023. Children in Japan have been worried about wars happening around the world. The teachers' unions of ZENKYO and Liaison of a Joint Struggle Teachers' unions (KYOSOKYOTORENRAKUKAI) raised voices of "Do not export weapons which are against Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution!" "Missiles cannot make peace!" with many citizens in the assemblies and actions demanding peace across the country. We strongly oppose the military expansion and the large tax increase. The members of ZENKYO National Office went on a sit-down strike in front of



the Japanese Israeli embassy. We were jointly with citizens who requested Israeli to stop the genocide in Gaza and a swift settlement of the war.

ZENKYO and Liaison of a Joint Struggle Teachers' unions donated money from all over Japan to give humanitarian assistance to war victims in

Ukraine and Palestine in 2023. We have fundraised over 4.3 million yen for Ukraine in total since 2022. The money has been sent to the Japan Committee for UNICEF and UNHCR: The Japan Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees several times.

We newly called on the union members of fund-raising for humanitarian assistance to war victims in Palestine in November, 2023. The unions raised over 700,000 yen for Palestine and contributed to the Japan Committee for UNICEF in March, 2024.

ZENKYO Send Donations for Children and Education in Quake-hit Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa



On January 1, 2024, an earthquake hit Noto Peninsula of Ishikawa Prefecture in the Hokuriku region of Japan took the lives of more than 241 people and caused tremendous damage all over the area.

ZENKYO and Liaison of a Joint Struggle Teachers' union (KYOSOKYOTORENRAKUKAI) called on the union members to fundraise for humanitarian assistance to earthquake victims in the peninsula. As the primal donation, they

collected 1.8 million yen and handed it out to Ishikawa Prefecture on February 9.

Naoki Miyashita, President of ZENKYO and Representative of Liaison of a Joint Struggle Teachers' unions, and 3 representatives of Ishikawa Prefectural teachers' association discussed with Kazuya Nakamura, the head of the pay office in Ishikawa Prefecture. Miyashita and representatives of Ishikawa Prefectural teachers' association told Nakamura that we truly hope and pray for a speedy recovery, and we want children to be able to stay safe. Nakamura explained their situation after a month passed; schools in Noto area have been reopened, on the other side, citizens still have been forced to face the difficulties such as a water pipe and sewage has not been recovered yet.

13 years after, considering what is “the true recovery” Keep the memories of Fukushima from fading



ZENKYO organized a group study tour to “see, walk, and think” in the disaster hit-areas of the Great East Japan Earthquake and TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in Fukushima Prefecture on November 3 to 4, 2023. 29 delegates from 17 teachers' unions and 1 civil organization participated in the tour.

The delegation members invited 3 teachers as

speakers who experienced the earthquakes and the accident in a study group. They told the delegates using the data and photographs; the way children and teachers took refuge when they suffered from tsunami, and the circumstances of a nuclear accident and radioactive contamination right after the accident happened.

On the bus tour of inspection, participants visited Hōkyōji Temple and Fukushima Prefectural Futaba high school in Naraha Town, the former site of Ukedo elementary school and the Tsushima branch of the Namie Town as the earthquake ruins. They walked around the towns, farmlands, and school where people still have never returned yet because those were still lifted the difficult home coming area.

Additional information on All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union (ZENKYO)'s view regarding MEXT's information document dated on April 8, 2024

ZENKYO

All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union

On '2. MEXT's views regarding the allegations by ZENKYO'

Regarding (2) 5-7

○ As MEXT states, Article 6 of the Special Measures Act stipulates that “cases when educational personnel are required to work beyond regular working hours are limited to only those cases specified by ordinance pursuant to standards specified by Cabinet Order.”

MEXT's 2016 survey on the teachers' actual working conditions revealed how serious teachers' excessively long working hours are, and the Central Council for Education discussed efforts to reform the work styles of public school teachers. Following the council's recommendations, the Act on Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Educational Personnel (Special Measures Act) was amended in 2019 to introduce a “variable work hours system” and a guideline that limits overtime work at 45 hours per month and 360 hours per year.

Up until 2019, it had been considered the teachers will not be paid for overtime work under Article 6 of the special measures act concerning the salaries of educational personnel on the grounds that teachers overtime work is voluntary work. With its amendment a new notion of “hours teachers spend at school” was introduced to manage teachers' work time, including their overtime work at school. MEXT uses the term “time teachers spend at school” to describe such overtime work.

But MEXT does not recognize “time teachers spend at school” as working hours. Teachers, including child-rearing ones, are forced to take work home. But the hours spent on such work is not counted as “time teachers spend at school.”

○ The special measures act was enacted in 1971. It provided that “teaching staff in principle will not be ordered overtime work. It is obvious from the ministry's survey on the teachers' working conditions that working time management has belittled fair time management and left unquantified amount of overtime work intact.

MEXT says that a survey on Teachers' Workload Dairy Survey conducted in fiscal 2022 shows that the amount of time teachers spend at school has decreased compared to the situation revealed by a similar survey conducted in fiscal 2016.” It also says that “some teachers stay at school for a long time.”

True the hours teachers spend at school decreased by about 30 minutes at elementary and junior high schools but the average amount of overtime work is 2 hours 15 minutes at elementary school and 2 hours 31 minutes at junior high school. On Saturdays and Sundays, teachers work 36 hours at elementary school and 2 hours 18 minutes at junior high school. MEXT's understanding that only some teachers remain at school for a long time is dead wrong.

○ MEXT explains that “instead of an overtime allowance, teachers receive additional adjustments for the teaching profession based on a comprehensive evaluation of their work both within and outside of working hours (These additional adjustments are different in nature from fixed overtime payment).” The amount of salary adjustment paid to teachers in place of overtime pay is 4 percent of their monthly pay. This amount was decided based on the findings of a survey the education ministry conducted in 1967—four years before the enactment of the special measures act—which found that the teachers’ average overtime work was about four hours a month.

The 2022 MEXT survey found that teachers on average worked 41 hours of overtime a month at elementary school and 58 hours at junior high school. But they are not paid for overtime work because they receive adjustment pay. It is undeniable that the adjustment pay is a de facto fixed amount of payment for overtime.

MEXT also says that it does not manage overtime work “since the special nature of teachers’ duties makes it difficult to break down the extent of their duties.” But it is responsibility of an employer to manage working hours. In fact, national university-attached schools and private schools have a time-management system and their teachers are paid for overtime work. The “special nature” should not be used to justify not carrying out time-management for teachers or not paying them for overtime work.

(2) Regarding MEXT views on 10-2 (second half of paragraph), 14, 15, (3) 16, 20-22, 24 and (3) 23, 24

○MEXT says that it in May 2023 requested the Central Council for Education and has since been engaged in discussions. It says, “In addition to principals from elementary and junior high schools, specialists with experience as teachers and the vice-chairman of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, of which some teachers’ unions are members, are participating as members of the Central Council for Education.”

The vice-chairman of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation is a temporary member of the Central Council for Education’s 20-member special panel. Thus, there is only one member representing labor, who does not represent the teachers’ union. Teachers’ union representative should be part of the panel that discusses teachers’ work style, treatment, and assignments.

Look at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW)’s Labour Policy Council. The council is made up of 30 members—10 each from three sectors: public-interests, labor, and employers. This composition is in conformity with the ILO principle of equal representation of the three sectors.

○MEXT says, “MEXT solicited the views of 36 related organizations, including ZENKYO and several teachers’ organizations, on the advisory matters, and based on the views submitted, discussions are moving forward at the Central Council for Education.”

On the occasion of the recent discussions, ZENKYO submitted its opinions. Even though these opinions were distributed as reference materials, no explanation was made on individual opinion. The panel only explained that it will use our opinions in future discussions.

○MEXT says that it “has already held multiple exchanges of views with relevant organizations, including ZENKYO, every year, and in the future as well, MEXT will continue to respond appropriately to these views as necessary,” adding that “The number of exchanges of views with ZENKYO in fiscal 2023: 19.”

Since prefectures and government-designated cities have the authority to appoint public education employees in Japan, ZENKYO is not able to take up issues related to education policy and legal systems, which have direct bearings on the nation’s school education, in direct negotiations with MEXT. It is only allowed to exchange views with the ministry. It is clear from the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 9 and 10(k), that engagement of teachers’ official associations in policy-making on education is necessary. MEXT says exchange of opinions took place 19 times. They include exchange of opinions on issues related to special support education, *yogo* (nursing) teachers, nutrition staff, and other individual matters between ZENKYO’s specialized sections. MEXT and ZENKYO headquarters had exchange of opinions only twice over the issues of long working hours and understaffing in just half an hour. Social dialog should be held as necessary and sufficiently.

○MEXT says, “The working conditions for teachers will be determined by local government ordinance just as those for other local government employees. In the process of decision making the board of education will not be legally excluded from negotiations on working hours with teachers’ organizations.”

Japanese public employees have limited basic labor rights. Since they are deprived of a right to conclude labor contracts over their working conditions and improvement of wages, they cannot hold direct talks for such contracts as provided by law. The right to collective bargaining and the right to strike are basic labor rights. Restoring basic labor rights to them is an important issue also in education policy decision-making.