

Local self-government is the best school of democracy

Osamu Koike
Yokohama National University

Introduction

- I am teaching governance, public policy and administration at YNU
- Working for Japanese local governments for decades in collaboration with the MOHA
- At local level, I have involved in the training programs for local public employees and engaged in the formulation and evaluation of local public programs

Key word

- My key word is simple: “local self-government is the best school of democracy”.
- Local government is not a field office of central government.
- People use local government to enhance common interests such as education for children, safety and security, sanitation, and environment.

Trust

- Local government is a public institution serving for local people.
- Local people can initiate policy actions, participate in the policymaking process, and implement programs with local government.
- Such collaborations enhance public trust in local government.
- If there is no public trust in government, governing body becomes authoritative. It only enhances distrust and confrontation.

Peace-building

- The most important thing for post-conflict society is to establish public trust in government through citizen engagement in community development.
 - Working with local government, people can realize that they can improve quality of life and construct a peaceful community.
- “We can do it!”
- Thus, “local self-government is the best school of democracy” (Bryce 1921).

The Way Forward

- Central government in the post-conflict country should empower local governments to be able to serve for local communities.
- In the promotion of decentralization, professionalization of local public service is required.
- Central government can provide education and training for local public officials. It enhances mutual trust among governments. 'Cooperation' is a key word.
- Human resource development is not a kind of 'one size fits all.' It must be tailored and 'home-grown.' This is our methodology. It takes time, but the most effective way in the long run.