

Survey of the transformation of community consciousness in the mid-mountain and depopulation area

- In Tonohara area, Ryujin village, Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture –

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1. Background

Since 1960's, the population migration to urban areas in Japan has been accelerating by the rapid economic growth and the distrust of the primary industries. Depopulation areas has many difficulties in their daily life such as education, insurance, aging, welfare, risk management, which are essential to sustain the basic requirements in societies and also those areas decline in production capacity. As a result, it has become difficult to keep their lifestyle.

Accordingly, the number of closed schools has increased. Since 2005, the number has been more than 400 every year. This trend seems to be continued in the future.

2. Purpose

I focus on the condition of closed schools among the issues those areas have. Based on the surveys since 2007, I found the transformation of the community consciousness which is considered to be connected to the closed school. Before the school were closed, almost all said "what a sad the school has gone", "Just makes this community decline and disappear". All felt sadness and anxiety against their future. I guessed that the community thus was getting disappear. It however, was seemed that the community consciousness was activated after the school had been closed. The purpose is to discuss what makes this unexpected change in this survey.

3. Contents

Classified previous researches into 7 types and clarified those trends along the time flow in order to define my survey position among those researches.

The survey area is Tonohara where is the middle size among 15 areas in Ryujin village, Tanabe City. The population is 239 and the rate of aging is 46.9% which is much higher than the national average 23.1%. In the centre of Tonohara area, Tonohara elementary school is located. It was opened 111 years and closed down in 2009 due to the reduction of children. After the school closed down, it is still under the jurisdiction of the board of education in Tanabe City and the maintenance cost are paid by the organization. The substantial management is left to community. By the hearing survey, I clarify how the community consciousness changes through the school was closed down.

4. Conclusion

The Community consciousness has changed before and after the school was closed. Before all said, "What a sad the school has gone", "Just make the community decline". It, however, seems new activations by the closed school use. This change towards the activation in Tonohara is supported to three points 1) the respect for the predecessor's remains, 2) the network between community, 3) to keep asking oneself their aims and how to live.