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Contemporary Educational Issues of Dowa school: The initiatives of one public elementary school

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Abstract

The Buraku issue is a problem of human rights violations in Japan against people who are from, live in, or are related to the community where were prejudiced as contaminated and polluted. The term "Dowa schools" refers to schools that provide human rights education on the Buraku issue. The aim of this paper is to clarify the current state and challenges of education today based on the case study of an former Dowa school to make academic recommendations for contemporary Dowa education research, referred to as “the redefinition of the Buraku issue.” to this end.

The findings are as follows: X Elementary focuses on providing continuous support to students’ academic performance to ensure career paths for the children. Furthermore, initiatives of systematic human rights learning rooted in the local area have been passed down as a core resource of Dowa education even after the end of the Dowa Measures Act, contributing to the maintenance of a high level of academic support provided for students, regardless of their backgrounds. However, the age composition of the teaching occupation is currently undergoing a transition, and this shift brings challenges to the continuation of such initiatives. Moreover, with increased local destabilization associated with fluidization of community, worsening economic conditions, and decreased government support for community collaborations, I observed difficulties in continuing these practices, exacerbated by teachers’ busier schedules.

What we learn from this case of a “former Dowa school” is the reality of the school’s difficulties as it explores ways to continue effective practices established for marginalized students with limited support, especially with widening social inequalities in Japan and the destabilization of former Dowa districts since the Dowa Measures Act lapsed.

Key words : Buraku; Dowa education; Dowa school; Japanese minority; ethnography

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1. Statement of the problem

The aim of this paper is to make academic recommendations for contemporary Dowa education research, referred to as “the redefinition of the Buraku issue.” To this end, the current state and challenges of education today in a former Dowa district[1)] will be clarified based on the case of an elementary school in Kansai, a former Dowa education promotion school[2)].

In March 2002, Dowa administration in the form of special measures implemented with the establishment of the Act on Special Measures for Dowa Projects (the Dowa Measures Act) ended. Alongside this, the basis for public support of schools for the promotion of Dowa education research (hereinafter, “Dowa schools”) lapsed. This had previously played the role of promoting the research and practice of education for children who are discriminated against or suffer social hardship, and had been commissioned to conduct education research projects with government support based on the Dowa Measures Act. More than 10 years have passed since the end of these education projects, which constituted affirmative action for a minority group (children in Dowa districts) and continued for about half a century.

Furthermore, the rapid development of the neoliberal economy since 1990 has widened inequalities in Japanese society and is negatively impacting the children who will make up the society of tomorrow. Japan’s child poverty rate was 10.9% until 1985, but reportedly, 16.3% or 1 in 6 children were in a state of relative poverty by 2013 (Abe, 2014). In response, the government established the Act on the Promotion of Policy on Child Poverty in 2013. Combatting the hardship of children living in the social periphery is becoming an important topic both socially and politically.

Amid calls for a society that opposes disparities, research in education studies and the sociology of education in recent years has begun exploring ways schools can resist social exclusion. These studied have found new meaning in the educational practices accumulated by the former Dowa schools in the context of the pursuit of social inclusion emerging from more practical research interests (Nishida, 2012). The former Dowa schools have been discussed in research on “educational communities,” which focus on transforming schools into more democratic and fair institutions through collaboration between the school and local area (Ikeda, 2001; Takada, 2005), and research on “effective schools” and “empowering schools,” which aim to overcome academic disparities (Nabeshima, 2003; Shimizu, 2009). We are also on the way to clarifying the potential for social inclusion in that practical education. Moreover, studies discuss practice in Dowa education as a precursor to school social work (Osaki, 2012), and efforts based on Dowa educational practices are being made to overcome disparities at schools (Kanagawa Board of Education, 2006; Kobayashi, 2008). Takada (Shimizu, Takada, et al., 2014) refers to this reevaluation of Dowa education in recent years as “the renaissance of Dowa education research.”

Reportedly, the academic ability of Buraku children and students decreased considerably after the end of the Dowa Measures Act. As such, the academic ability, educational attainment, and employment of Buraku children and youths are worsening (Takada, 2008; 2012). To reverse this trend, I believe it is necessary to gain a clear understanding of current education in former Dowa schools. However, since the conclusion of special measures for Dowa education, the government has not conducted any investigations or even referred to the state of education in former Dowa districts. Moreover, although Imazu (1996) established the unique school organizational culture of former Dowa schools prior to the end of the Dowa Measures Act, as far as I know, no survey study has been conducted on the education of children and students in Dowa schools since then. Furthermore, regarding the aforementioned education studies approaches such as research on "effective schools" and "educational communities," Dowa schools have been discussed as being "excellent" and "desirable" from a social inclusion perspective; however, these studies reflect the investigators' preferences a priori and solely emphasize the effectiveness of Dowa school practices. Thus, now that more than 10 years have passed since the end of the Dowa Measures Act, no studies have examined through a substantialist approach schools engaged in Dowa education to identify the obstacles and challenges they face.

Therefore, this paper will clarify the state of schools that have practiced and inherited Dowa education by analyzing the case of an elementary school that has engaged in Dowa education for many years. I expect this study to assist our understanding of what educational challenges are appearing in former Dowa districts across Japan now when we have been redefining the Buraku issue since 2000 (Shimizu, Takada, et al., 2014).

2. Study outline

I now provide an outline of the study. This study uses field data from public elementary school X (hereinafter, "X Elementary") in Kansai as well as interview data from a group of teachers. Founded 140 years ago, the school is medium-sized with about 400 children. The school district of X Elementary contains a former Dowa district where the main occupation was in the meat industry, a public housing area for low-income earners built to improve the living environment as part of the Dowa projects since the 1970s, and a settlement house.

Table 1. X Elementary profile (2013 fifth-years)

N (total)	Cram school attendance rate (average)	Mother junior college or university graduation rate (average)	Enrollment rate for households in need of welfare
66(1444)	35.9%(34.0%)	23.9%(36.7%)	5-10%

*Compiled by the author based on the results of the Kansai Academic Ability

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of X Elementary in AY2013 based on the Kansai Academic Ability Survey[3] conducted in 1989, 2001, and 2013, along with the averages for all schools in the survey. The children's cram school attendance rate is about average, but the mother junior college or university graduation rate is more than 10 percentage points lower than the average. When 1.7% of households reportedly receive welfare (MHLW, 2014), the enrollment rate for households in need of welfare at X Elementary is a yearly average of 5% to 10%. This shows that a proportion of children in the school come from socioeconomically disadvantaged households.

Located in this type of school district, X Elementary was designated a "school for the promotion of Dowa education research" by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in the 1970s. With this, teachers started collaborating with the Children's Association for Buraku Liberation (Buraku *kaiho kodomo kai*) and their parents' organizations to conduct school reforms rooted in the local area, starting with the "home learning movement" that sought to overcome "roughness" and "low academic ability." It was again designated a "local project for promoting comprehensive human rights education" by MEXT in 2010, and is known as a school that promotes human rights education[4]. Table 2 shows the rates of children achieving 130 points or more (60% or more) in Japanese and arithmetic at X Elementary along with the average of all schools in the Kansai Academic Ability Survey. The schools were divided into two groups: "Cram school" and "Not a cram school." As seen, X Elementary never goes below 80% at any time point for both cram or non-cram schools. Moreover, for "Not a cram school," the difference between the X Elementary average and total average is between 20 and 30 percentage points. This shows a continuous trend that the difference in basic academic achievement is small between children who go to cram school and those who do not, and that children who do not go to cram school can acquire basic academic ability. As X Elementary demonstrated these outcomes despite its tough context, it became well known as a school of "guaranteed basic academic ability"[5]. There are 25 teachers who are generally young, with around 40% aged in their 20s and 20% in their 30s.

Table 2. Basic academic achievement by cram school attendance (2013 fifth-years)

		Average	X Elementary
1989	Not a cram school	71.9%	95.5%
	Cram school	80.7%	96.7%
2001	Not a cram school	51.9%	82.8%
	Cram school	66.1%	100.0%
2013	Not a cram school	60.5%	90.2%
	Cram school	80.3%	100.0%

*Compiled by the author based on the results of the Kansai Academic Ability Survey.

The initiatives of X Elementary, which has implemented practices both as a Dowa school and now one that promotes human rights education, as well as of its teachers as the principal actors, seem a suitable case for purpose of this paper, which is to clarify the state of education in former Dowa schools. As such, I begin my analysis in the next section. I conducted participation observation at X Elementary from September 2012 to 2017. I wrote field notes

Table 3. Survey profiles (job titles mainly from AY2014)

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role in the organization
1	Teacher A	M	40s	Vice-principal
2	Teacher B	F	40s	Teaches human rights education
3	Teacher C	M	40s	Teaches human rights education
4	Teacher D	M	30s	Senior year teacher (school year rep)
5	Teacher E	F	30s	Intermediate year teacher (school year rep)
6	Teacher F	M	30s	Junior year teacher (school year rep)
7	Teacher G	F	30s	Junior year teacher (school year rep)
8	Teacher H	F	20s	Junior year teacher (second year since graduation)
9	Teacher I	M	20s	Junior year small-group teaching (first year since graduation)

on the teachers and conducted semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. I selected persons for inclusion to make the sample as diverse as possible with regard to sex, years of experience, and role in the organization. As a result, I selected the nine people in Table 3. As Table 3 shows, 5 men and 4 women participated, of which 3 were aged in their 40s, 4 in their 30s, and 2 in their 20s. Note that all school, teacher, and child names that appear in the text are aliases.

The data collected for this study was analyzed using a grounded theory approach. A grounded theory approach differs from methods that use a general theory to analyze the data deductively in that it advances the analysis based on the data and demonstrates the mechanisms behind the phenomena found in the data (Saiki-Craighill, 2016). The data gained in the field is derived from a complex real world, so the concepts identified there will also be highly diverse. Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that paradigm analysis is an effective way to give these diverse elements context and connect them to an analyzable process. A paradigm is the researcher's perspective for extracting contextual elements from data and identifying the relationship between context and process that gives rise to those elements. A paradigm fundamentally consists of 1) conditions, 2) actions/interactions and emotions, and 3) consequences. The existence of the first conditions is a way to summarize the answers to questions about why, where, how, and what happened, and signifies the environment or conditions that lead people to react in a certain way. The second actions/interactions and emotions are the responses of individuals or groups to a situation, issue, happening, or event. The third conclusions are the results of the second actions/interactions and emotions by which the actors respond, and signify the outcomes of what happened. I articulate the concepts gained from the field data as 1) existence of conditions → 2) existence of actions/interactions and emotions → 3) existence of consequences that result therefrom. It is argued that conducting your analysis from this paradigm perspective will enable elucidating theoretical concepts and mechanisms from the phenomena that occur.

As such, I employ Corbin and Strauss' approach in this study to analyze my data. After collecting the data through observation and interviews, I encoded the field data by school

and categorized topics with similar attributes. I then extracted data concepts by category and used the paradigm perspective to analyze correlations between articulated concepts as the 1) existence of conditions → 2) existence of actions/interactions and emotions → 3) existence of consequences that result therefrom. Using this inductive method is effective, as it does not depend on existing theoretical frameworks and enabled me to approach the reality of former Dowa schools more vividly. Moreover, I used an interpretive approach to analyze the teacher actions I observed at X Elementary. An interpretive approach is "a method that frames social phenomena as the accumulation of individuals' interactions and that values subjective meaning-making in the actions of actors when trying to understand social phenomena" (Shimizu, 1985, p.195). Thus, the world of former Dowa schools apparent in this paper is a direct reflection of the process of "subjective meaning-making=interpretation by the actors (teachers)" through my use of this approach, to which I add my own "interpretation" of subjective meaning-making as I reconstruct the world as seen by those teachers.

The following clarifies the initiatives of the teachers at former Dowa schools by focusing on the teachers at X Elementary (Section 3). Next, I analyze the challenges faced today by schools that promote Dowa education as they engage in practice (Section 4). Finally, I summarize and discuss the insights provided by this paper (Section 5).

3. Traditional practices as a former Dowa school

In this section, I clarify traditional practices engaged in by teachers at X Elementary as a former Dowa school: "Continued practices to guarantee academic ability to guarantee a future course" (3.1) and "Cultivating connections and pride in the local community: Systematic human rights learning" (3.2).

3.1. Continued practices to guarantee academic ability to guarantee a future course

How do teachers at X Elementary ensure the children's basic academic ability? Particularly characteristic is the exceptionally cordial educational guidance given to those with low academic ability. With the exception of the current first years, team teaching (TT) teachers are available for all school years at X Elementary, providing small-group teaching. The TT teachers closely discuss the teaching contents with the homeroom teachers and in most cases, teach using the same teaching plan. Therefore, especially in mathematics, the class is divided into an "unrushed course" (developmental teaching) and "rapid course" (supplementary teaching) according to proficiency level and the children's own choice following a check test for each teaching unit. Class division using TT teachers is a practice currently conducted at schools countrywide, but how the division happens at X Elementary is special. Most schools divide each class into two, half and half, but at X Elementary, the "unrushed course" consists of about one-quarter of the class, so each teacher has about seven or eight children,

which means a more replete teaching system. Furthermore, the children who belong to the "unrushed course" fluidly come and go for each teaching unit and lesson in consultation with the teachers. Thus, at X Elementary, a child who was in the "unrushed course" yesterday may be in the "rapid course" the next lesson, or the opposite. In this way, by forming super-small and fluid classes, the children do not regard learning in the "unrushed course" as negative. If they struggle with a teaching unit, they work "unrushed" in a cordial environment until they understand, and once they do, they start learning "rapidly."

Moreover, teachers at X Elementary teach in a cycle. Until last year, an entire wall in the staff room was covered with files containing teachers' practice records, which included learning and teaching plans as well as printouts for each teaching unit by school year, academic year, and subject. Individual teachers at X Elementary do not create their teaching unit teaching plans from scratch, but design their lessons based on these files. Aside from the lessons, they also configure learning time called "supplementary learning" as daytime learning before lunch, after-school learning after the end of the school day, and home learning as homework. Homeroom teachers print printouts from the file according to the learning and teaching plan, distribute them to the children, and grade them. They then attach post-it notes where there is a mistake and ask the children to redo them (called "fixing") until everything is correct (called "all correct"). This is called the practice of "systematized learning" at X Elementary, and teaching is conducted using uniform learning and teaching plans across the school. The following data is the practice record of a teacher who worked at X Elementary more than 20 years ago that summarizes the key points of the practice of "systematized learning."

> The opinions of colleagues become important if you want to reject so-called "law-of-the-jungle education" and try to provide academic ability for overcoming discrimination. Take the case of cram schools. There's a widening gap between families that can send their children and those that can't. The children are very sensitive to this, and colleagues discuss this together from a viewpoint of how to gain academic ability. Initiatives like this require agreement among the teachers, which must be based on serious discussion so that everyone is on the same page.
>
> (1990, X Elementary practice record)

When the aforementioned school reforms started at X Elementary, academic ability and lifestyle surveys were eagerly conducted with local children following the enactment of the Dowa Measures Act in 1969 (Nabeshima, 2003). These surveys highlighted the differences in academic ability between children living in the Dowa district and those living outside. In response, the teachers mobilized the school to create their original systematic teaching plans and overcome the low academic ability of children in the district. At X Elementary, "serious

discussion so that everyone is on the same page" is still conducted today as part of lesson study. The school independently analyzes the children's academic ability in the previous year, identifies teaching units with low scores, conducts lesson study, and revises the teaching plans. I also had opportunities to take part in lesson study meetings during my investigation. The person doing the lesson this time was Teacher D, a mid-level male teacher in charge of senior-year students. The meeting started as soon as everyone was gathered.

> Teacher D: I actually changed the flow of the lesson from what I had before, but I'm not really sure how well it worked out. Please help me on this. Okay, so I'll start. Math class starts now.
>
> (May 28, 2014, X Elementary)

Once the lesson started, a veteran teacher said, "This isn't just for children able to go to cram school, so you have to be more specific with the struggling children in mind. For example," giving tips about what to write on the blackboard and what questions to ask. There were also suggestions about how to teach specific children, such as "If you teach like that, X and Y won't understand, you know." Around the veteran teacher, younger teachers were enthusiastically taking notes on the learning and teaching plan handed out in advance, turning red from their feverish writing. When asked why they continue doing this practice, the veteran Teacher B answered as follows.

> Teacher B: Let's say it's a different school but still elementary-school students. They'll be taught different things from year to year, but we'd never to do that to the children at X Elementary. (…) We have curricula for Japanese and math, clearly saying that "this" needs to be taught during the six years and that the children should graduate with "these abilities." That's something everyone before me has taken seriously, and we feel that it's important for the children we're teaching now.
>
> (Teacher B, May 29, 2014, X Elementary)

All teachers at X Elementary engage in lesson study as a matter of tradition, using opportunities such as the joint lesson study meetings with the nearby elementary and middle schools three times a year, internal lesson study, and public lessons on the municipal and prefectural levels. Often, a mid-level teacher like Teacher D is "made" into the representative lecturer, but lesson study is never done by yourself. This is because the lesson he does is a lesson that has been left to X Elementary through a file in the staff room, and it is considered the role of all teachers at X Elementary to improve it. The newly appointed Teacher H mentions the following as something she keeps in mind in her lesson-making since arriving at this school. (Hereinafter, text in brackets is my own notes.)

> Teacher H: Teacher C often says, “Consider from whose standpoint you’re thinking,” and I tend to think so too. It’s like “don’t leave anyone behind.” You shouldn’t say, “You’re at fault for not understanding” just because they don’t understand “the learning contents.” I always keep in mind to pay attention to the children at the bottom. I shouldn’t say bottom, but I mean the bottom of academic ability. I always think about whether I’m able to stand at the “here (draws a circle beside her using her right hand)” of the children who are always struggling.
>
> (Teacher H, September 24, 2014, X Elementary)

These collective teacher efforts make it possible to ensure a level of lesson quality at X Elementary regardless of the teachers’ experience. The history of teaching practices by teachers at X Elementary is that of generations of teachers taking the perspective of children suffering from poverty and discrimination in the discriminated Buraku district, and that ethos is being carried on today.

3.2. Cultivating connections and pride in the local community: Systematic human rights learning

Next, I discuss “systematic human rights learning,” which is taught during “Integrated study” and is a practice passed on over many years at X Elementary. As mentioned, “guaranteeing academic ability” has been a mainstay of practice at X Elementary since the 1970s. That practice became more substantial with the “home learning movement” that started in 1975 and the “home visits” that supported it. Taking on the task of “establishing home learning” with parents who worry about childrearing amid difficult living conditions, the teachers conducted home visits so that the parents and school could work together. These efforts not only created opportunities for the children to learn, but according to the teachers at X Elementary, the visits also taught them the importance of understanding each child’s life outside of school as well as the parent’s strength and love for their children as they refuse to yield to poverty and discrimination.

Entering the 1980s, learning at X Elementary reached a major turning point through the interview-based learning implemented for victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima as part of school trips. The teachers realized the importance of interview-based learning when they saw the victims valuing encounters with other people and speaking of their lives as well as the children earnestly listening to them. They considered also hearing from the children’s parents, and collaborated with local children’s associations to devise and create interview-based learning to address the Buraku issue. Subsequently, in 1996, this learning on the Buraku issue was reorganized and systematized as learning on human rights issues with the local community and parents, based on the City Works[6)] practiced in black liberation pedagogy in the United States. Through such initiatives, generations of teachers at X Elementary have

established their own practice style of “examining the children’s own lives and bringing attention to their parents’ feelings and hard work.” This is based on interviews and fieldwork with parents and people in the local community conducted by the children. The following is in a practice record compiled by teachers at X Elementary in the 1990s.

> We have attached importance to children in all school years interviewing their own parents. There were also those who spoke not only to their own children but also to everyone in the class. What does it mean for people to live? Irreplaceable words woven from the weight of that life, the joys and sorrows of living, and living through life. Moreover, these are words spoken by the people closest to the children. As the children listen earnestly, they learn about various values and human perspectives, while getting the chance to think about their own lives.
>
> (X Elementary practice record, 1999)

A major goal of this past human rights learning was to help the children take pride in their parents’ jobs, mainly in the meat industry, which have been subject to discrimination. In this sense, it was conducted with a strong focus on the Buraku issue. However, since 2002, when the Dowa Measures Act lapsed, it has been reorganized into learning contents that extend beyond the Buraku issue and consider a wider range of human rights challenges including multicultural education, disability issues, elderly issues, and gender. This learning valued its connections with the local community, “connecting school and local community, cultivating pride in the children,” and is providing the children with opportunities to acquire a rich sense of human rights rooted in their own lives.

Currently, learning on human rights issues at X Elementary is conducted mainly during “Integrated study.” The curricula for each school year have yearly themes: “Playing and friends” for year 1, “Friends and community” for year 2, “Welfare and volunteering” for year 3, “Work” for year 4, “My personal history and living together” for year 5, and “Future course and dream experiences” for year 6. Based on these themes, the children in each school year participate in programs that are about one month once every semester. I observed the introductory lesson “Learning from work experiences in the school district and parents’ work,” which was part of the first semester of “Work” for year 4. During “Town works,” Teacher E wrote “Exciting work” as the unit name for this lesson on the blackboard, and asked the children the following.

> Teacher E: You’ll be doing town works now, but do all of you know what “work” means?

One child raised their hand and spoke.

Child A: I think I'm probably wrong, but… job?
Teacher E: Exactly! That's right. Work means job in Japanese. (She writes, "What is a job?" in big letters in the middle of the blackboard.) When you hear the word job, what comes to mind? I think everyone has their own idea about what job means. I want each of you to value the idea about job that you have now. So, I would like you to write down on the printout what you do in a job and what you think a job is. You probably have an idea about the jobs of family members, the image you got from the water filtration plant you visited recently (on an education field trip), things you've seen on TV, and the jobs of people near you. Please write down the idea of what a job is that you have now by yourself, without talking to your neighbors.

Having received the printouts, some children wrote busily, some looked afar with pen in hand, and others stared at their printout. It seemed that the children were thinking about their own ideas of "job." Looking at the filled in printouts, I saw varied ideas such as "getting paid," "becoming tired," and "baseball player." After a while, Teacher E said, "Okay, let's present what you've all written!"

Teacher E: Child B, what's your idea of a job?
Child B: I think a job is to do your own part.
Teacher E: Why do you think so?
Child B: I think we're able to live properly because everyone does their part.

Teacher E wrote the children's answers on the blackboard, drawing arrows between their ideas and their reasons as a way to organize them. Other responses were presented, including "shopkeeper → because you can't buy things," "thinking about difficult things," "cool → because you keep people in the town safe," and "earning money for our sake → we can't eat (if there's no money)." Once all the opinions in the class were presented, the teacher summarized the lesson.

Teacher E: Today, you presented your ideas about what a job is. I want you to keep the ideas you presented today and go out into the local area to speak with people working here directly. I want you to discover with what mindset these people work and why they are working. Okay, please collect today's printouts.

(June 5, 2014, X Elementary)

The children going out into the local area spent the following month learning about the struggles, pride, passion, and love of family of working adults they would not normally meet in their school life. They conducted interviews with local residents and their own parents who

cooperate with the school. The children took notes on the things they heard and wrote down their own ideas on the worksheets they received, which were later compiled in a single file. This task was done in all school years, but as indicated by the teacher's comment that "(no matter how much a child struggles,) I think everyone works hard with the town works," the children wrote their feelings on a large volume of papers with the help of teachers and friends. Through this learning, the children are able to reexamine how their own lives are maintained and with what feelings their own parents are interacting with them. The words that gush forth as the children reflect on their own lives and reencounter the strength and love of their parents do not simply move the hearts of their classmates, who are in a similar position. They also resonate strongly with the teachers who organize the presentations, giving them an opportunity to reflect on their own perception of the situation of the children and their families.

> Teacher B: When I was first put in charge of town works for fourth years, as we were learning about jobs, there was a girl who transferred in and was really troublesome, like seven or eight of them banding together like some "li'l *gyaru* shoplifting gang" and being in a really rough spot. But as we did the town works, she talked about her parent interview and started crying, and all the other children started crying too. She said this was her first time talking about it. She really had wanted somebody to understand her, but could never say it and so spoke about her difficult feelings, and seeing that, I cried with the children too. I realized, and this learning taught me, for the first time that even though she acted in a troublesome way, she had been carrying all these emotions. Once I knew that, I made more connections with the parents and felt that I need to understand the children's feelings better, reflecting on how things might have been if I had created more group cohesion. I thought that I mustn't forget what I felt back then. I felt it to my core.
>
> (Teacher B, May 29, 2014, X Elementary)

Going back to the start of the home learning movement, 40 years have passed since the beginning of the learning on the Buraku issue with a local connection. This began with the teachers' feeling that "everyone at school has no way of taking pride in the school district, X Elementary or themselves when the Buraku children don't feel proud of their dads and moms working at the slaughterhouse." The accumulation of practice over a long period has brought some changes, but the fundamental pedagogical approach of "cultivating connections and pride in the local community" has been passed down by generations of teachers at X Elementary without change. This educational practice refuses to look away from the harsh reality of the children's living conditions, makes connections with parents and local residents, and cultivates pride together with the children, which is something valued and inherited by the teachers at X Elementary.

4. Difficulties faced by former schools in promoting Dowa education research today

This section analyzes the difficulties faced by former Dowa schools today as they engage with the abovementioned practices, employing the two perspectives of "Inheriting and local collaborative practices and local destabilization" (4.1) and "Fewer and busier teachers" (4.2).

4.1. Inheriting local collaborative practices and local destabilization

As noted, X Elementary has received considerable assistance from educational authorities as a school designated for the promotion of Dowa education. One form of assistance was the additional hiring of teachers. The "Report of the Dowa Measures Deliberative Council" submitted to the prime minister by the Dowa Measures Deliberative Council on August 11, 1965, proposes under "Measures for educational issues" "steps to incentivize and improve the quality of teaching staff." It recommended incentives for hiring teachers in schools with Dowa districts. I discuss this in more detail later, but although the numbers have decreased compared to earlier times when the additional hiring of teachers was prioritized for designated Dowa education research schools, every school year except for the first still have teachers in charge of small-group teaching. In this way, the "educational practice" at X Elementary is supported by the additional hiring of teachers.

The teachers in charge of human rights education (hereinafter, "HR teachers") play an especially important role here. The origin of the HR teachers is the "welfare teachers." Welfare teachers encouraged the school attendance of children in Dowa districts who have long been absent, and they do not have any homeroom class and have personally functioned as a link between the school, welfare, and authorities. Similarly, they have also accumulated and passed on human rights education practices through their connections between education and welfare (Kuraishi, 2007). At X Elementary, HR teachers are hired independently from the school years and are in charge of youth training groups in the local area with community collaboration as the cornerstone. Within the school, they have acted as research staff to build teacher professionalism, collected information within the school, and played the role of middle leaders who accumulate and pass on practices of "systematized learning" to overcome "behavior problems" and "low academic ability."

However, at present, this passing on of practices inherited continuously seems to be facing obstacles. The main cause of these is the rapid generational shift of teachers. According to MEXT (2013), of about 548,000 teachers in Japan, approximately 216,000 (39%) are aged 50 years or older, and with the predicted number of teachers retiring in 2018 being about 23,000, we are entering a period of massive hiring due to massive retirement. This trend also holds true for X Elementary, and teachers' average age is becoming younger each year. Teacher I, one of the teachers in their 20s who make up 40% of the total, made the following comments.

> Teacher I: I know the general framework, but I might not understand the contents at all. That made it very difficult to do anything the first semester. What's best to do? In reality, I'd go and discuss things with those doing the work, but I wouldn't know what to ask. You know, you want to ask about these things in advance because there's something you want the children to learn by the end. But because I (as a teacher) don't understand it at all, it felt like I was asking only very superficial things. I don't really know about that. I feel it's hard. Yup.
>
> (Teacher I, October 15, 2014, X Elementary)

Teacher I's comment that it was "very superficial (…) because I don't understand it at all" indicates a lack of proper understanding of the meaning of the practices implemented at X Elementary. The issue of how to pass on practices with the influx of new and transferring teachers is a challenge that X Elementary must have regularly faced with past initiatives as well. However, because of the macro factor of the biased population composition of all teachers in Japan, the school is experiencing an unprecedentedly rapid generational shift. This is why HR teachers and other veteran teachers have a sense of crisis about whether continuity of practices can be maintained.

> Teacher B: Because we're having such a rapid generational shift, it's like we're really in a pickle. You see, right now, there's only a few the same age as me and Teacher C.
>
> (Teacher B, May 29, 2014, X Elementary)

> Teacher A: Why is X Elementary so hospitable to minorities? I know the answer, and my predecessors have created this school while taking good care of Buraku children (in the discriminated Buraku district). When young people come here, they change things by themselves without a second thought, like it's easier if I do it by myself. But our system will collapse if things are changed willy-nilly. They have to be told they can't do whatever they like.
>
> (Teacher A, July 25, 2016, X Elementary)

> Teacher C: The average age is 31 years and we have teachers who are 23 or 24, so we really have to do whatever we can to pass on this tradition (as a former Dowa school). We're all desperate about this.
>
> (Teacher C, September 24, 2014, X Elementary)

The comments from the veteran teachers show that the passing on of practices has become a challenge for the school as a whole with the massive retirements of the teacher generation that supported the practices at X Elementary since before the lapsing of the Dowa Measures

Act and the rapid influx of young and inexperienced teachers since the lapsing thereof.

Responding to this current situation, veteran teachers pay renewed attention to the starting point of the historical background of the community that originally accumulated the practices of "systematized learning." That starting point is "education that collaborates with the local community," which promotes learning about the poverty and reality of the discriminated Buraku district and providing learning consistent from school to home. Many Dowa schools conducted various educational projects using youth centers and nursery schools under the leadership of school teachers and organizations as part of the system under the Dowa Measures Act. X Elementary has such a history of school-making in collaboration with the local community, and even now that the Dowa Measures Act has lapsed, they are actively engaging with local educational councils, various youth training organizations, and collaborative projects in the middle-school district. Having returned to this starting point, X Elementary has implemented organizational reforms such as appointing a "teacher in charge of community collaboration" for each school year and strengthening exchanges between various local organizations and the school. The aim is to share the community collaboration functions fulfilled by the HR teachers alone with all teachers in the school year and deepen understanding of the community background that served as the starting point of the practices accumulated at X Elementary.

> Teacher A: We want to place community collaboration at the heart of the school's educational objectives again. In the past, the HR teachers in charge of community collaborations would go around and attend board meetings, but we're stopping that and saying that one teacher in the school year should do that. Instead of the HR teacher doing it, it's supposed to connect the school years they're in charge of. If something happens (in the local area), the HR teachers' cell phones would ring, but that's not the case this year, because everyone comes running to the school directly, you know. Calling for Teacher E, calling for Teacher D. I think that's a big deal. I feel the mood of (teachers) being connected with the community and bringing something they gain there back to the school finally started coming back this year and last.
>
> (Teacher A, August 12, 2014, X Elementary)

The organization that had persisted since before the end of the Dowa Measures Act had the teachers in charge of human rights take the primary responsibility for collaborating with the local community including children's association activities at the settlement house. However, the cutting of additional hiring support made it more difficult to appoint teachers dedicated to community collaboration, which undermined the group's self-evident perception that education should be conducted in tandem with the community. Thus, they created the new post of "teacher in charge of community collaboration" to increase collaborative efforts with

the community.

However, returning to the starting point of community collaboration does not necessarily mean reviving educational activities as they were practiced during the former Dowa school period. Certainly, the end of Dowa projects as special measures was a major turning point for the community education movement, and the projects related to youth training and social education implemented as general projects after the end of Dowa special measures have been suspended in many areas. This situation has also had some impact on X Elementary, which continuously passed down educational practices in collaboration with the local community after the end of the Dowa Measures Act. The veteran teachers who know about X Elementary since before the Dowa Measures Act lapsed expressed the following concerns about the local area's reduced educational capacity.

> Teacher B: I do think the movement itself has weakened, and while the children that belong to the children's associations in the area of X Elementary live there, they don't get together so much. I feel that their parents don't convey to the children all that they have wanted to convey in the movement as much as they did before.
>
> (Teacher B, December 14, 2016, X Elementary)

> Teacher A: With the law lapsing in 2002, the format has changed, yeah. Regarding the parents' organization, many parents still wanted to protect the children's associations even when there were no legal provisions or laws in place. However, I think difficult situations have gradually become more frequent since 2002, like there not being enough board members (in the PTA or parents' organization in the former Dowa district).
>
> (Teacher A, December 14, 2014, X Elementary)

Furthermore, looking at the Buraku situation in recent years, the economic situation also seems to have deteriorated with both local fluidization and employment destabilization. The Buraku districts where public housing was built for low-income earners as part of the Dowa projects see a constant influx of people with precarious life situations. Increases in irregular employment forms such as dispatch work in recent years and the stagnation of the global economy since the Lehman shock has once again caused a trend of unstable employment for Buraku, especially the young and poor (Tsumaki, 2012). Moreover, the poverty pump phenomenon of stable persons flowing outside the districts and unstable persons flowing inside (Okuda, 2002) has exacerbated this trend. The loss of public assistance since the end of the Dowa projects has coincided with the deterioration of the global economy to cause the manifestation of difficulties associated with social exclusion and poverty, especially in Buraku areas (Tsumaki, 2012). These waves are also reaching the shores of the X Elementary school district, and there are concerns regarding a worsening employment situation, particularly for

the child-raising generation involved in the community's educational activities, such as the PTA and children's associations.

> Teacher A: In the past, dad working at the slaughterhouse would basically be the chairman of the children's association, but now that you have to work part-time (after your regular job's over), I feel that it isn't easy for dad to step up.
>
> (Teacher B, December 14, 2014, X Elementary)

> Teacher C: Some parents suddenly lost their jobs (caused by the recession). So there are parents who say (I'm looking for work now) and if they happen to be the parent of a fourth-year, there's the learning about work (in human rights integrated study). So the parent will say, "What should I talk about?" (when I don't have a job), and this seems to affect (the feelings of) the child as well. We've talked about what they should talk about in situations like that. We have discussed it.
>
> (Teacher B, December 14, 2016, X Elementary)

The Buraku areas already had high concentrations of poverty and social exclusion. However, with the class differentiation in connection with the rapid economic growth and development of the Dowa measures, the middle class flowed out to general areas, low-income earners remained in the Buraku areas, and there was a clear trend of new influxes of persons with difficult life circumstances (Noguchi, 2000). The teachers' statements suggest that the reality of the community organization factor, which assisted educational activities under the Dowa Measures Act system, has changed with the increasing local fluidization, which they perceive through actual experience. The community–school scheme cultivated through Dowa education is currently shaky on the community side. With this, relations with the school on either side have also become less stable. That the teachers at X Elementary are returning to the "starting point" of the initiatives developed at the school signifies that socioeconomic difficulties are growing and that they must face the harsh reality of a local community that is increasingly destabilized.

4.2. Fewer and busier teachers

I analyzed the reality of X Elementary's challenges in the form of a rapid teacher generational shift and community destabilization. In this section, I discuss another challenge, namely the issue of "busier teachers" at former Dowa schools. According to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), government expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2010 was 3.8%, placing Japan at the bottom of comparable member countries. The working hours of Japanese teachers are 53.9 hours per week, placing Japan at the top among member countries (OECD ed., 2014). Media outlets have reported on this

phenomenon as “busier teachers” in recent years and it is becoming a social issue.

The educational practices at X Elementary are also supported by the tremendous workloads of teachers there. Like teachers at regular schools, X Elementary teachers not only teach in the classrooms and conduct basic administrative tasks. They also work in school-year teams to conduct teacher meetings and prepare teaching materials every day to pass on and practice initiatives to guarantee academic ability and human rights integrated study that have been passed on since the Dowa school days, as mentioned. Furthermore, if there is anything out of the ordinary with a child, they actively visit their home. They also attend various trainings at the school to unite the school’s overall policies, and make presentations and prepare for research lessons inside and outside the school. These daily tasks force the teachers to work even later when there are sports day trainings and PTA events.

> After school 22:50
> There are currently four people in the staff room: Teacher D, Teacher F, Teacher A, and Teacher G. Teacher A enters the schedule on the whiteboard. Teacher F corrects the “fixing” of summer homework, while Teachers D and G are preparing their respective teaching materials for tomorrow.
> “I’m done. Going home now!” It seems Teacher A is done with writing on the whiteboard. Teacher D yawns. Teacher A addresses Teacher D.
> Teacher A: How long are you going to work today? D, let’s go home. Do you really have that much to do?
> Teacher D: There’s a lot of stuff I gotta do.
> Teacher A: Leave it and let’s go home for today. How long are you going to go on for?
> Teacher D: Until it’s just me here.
> Teacher A: Are you for real? F, G, everyone, let’s go now. He’ll go when it’s just him, so let’s go home. D’s a scaredy-cat, so he’ll go home once we’re gone.
>
> (October 1, 2014, X Elementary)

This increase in how busy teachers are at X Elementary has to do with the decrease in the additional hiring of teachers. The set number of additional teachers hired was institutionalized with the revision of the Compulsory Standards Act in 1969, and additional teachers were assigned to schools with educational difficulties in coal mining, Dowa, and other districts. Conditions were especially suitable in the Kansai area, and as mentioned, schools were assigned Dowa education instructors (Dowa additionals) as dedicated instructors for local education projects (Takada, 2014). These teachers in charge of Dowa education (corresponding to today’s teachers in charge of human rights education) were involved in local education activities. They managed the “children’s associations” and “community collaboration,” thereby contributing the practicing and passing on of education in collaboration with the

community. However, since the end of the Dowa Measures Act in 2002, all additional hiring measures relating to Dowa education were discontinued and abolished. Thus, all engagement with educational practices in collaboration with the local community came to depend greatly on the self-help efforts of the teachers working there. Under such circumstances, the teachers' sense of busyness is becoming more apparent.

> Teacher A: (Compared to before the end of the Dowa Measures Act,) the school really doesn't have enough people now. We have no choice but to do with that. Everyone's doing their best to make the most of it. Amid all that, there's school year management, class instruction, lesson preparations, and parent support, so I think teachers in the school years are really feeling "gotta do this, gotta do that" more than before.
>
> (Teacher A, August 12, 2014, X Elementary)

Currently, schools receive additional hires on the legal basis of additional hiring for child and student support (additional hiring for schools with challenges in learning and student instruction) and additional hiring to improve instructional methods (small-group instruction, TT etc.). As mentioned, X Elementary receives a certain number of students with difficult life circumstances every year, so the authorities have provided support for hiring additional teachers using such systems also after the end of the Dowa Measures Act. Nevertheless, this uniform government support has not covered support for initiatives in collaboration with the local community in specific areas like a "Dowa district," such as Dowa additionals managing "community collaboration" and "children's associations." This is also true for schools like X Elementary, which have worked to pass on and develop initiatives in human rights education (≒Dowa education) rooted in the local area after the abolition of government support related to Dowa education. Since 2002, the number of additionally hired teachers has decreased at X Elementary compared to the time of Dowa additionals. Mid-level teachers, who are the school's mainstay, express views like the following.

> Teacher E: You know, I really think our foremost challenge is how to convey this to the people coming next. Although I'm not sure how much there is we can do. I'm living freely like this because I am not married, but I sometimes feel this can't go on forever. Physically speaking.
>
> (Teacher E, June 18, 2014, X Elementary)

> Teacher D: You can't help but relent if they say, "Come home early, dad." If my child turning four says, "Dad, when is it today?" and I say, "Maybe past 22:00 today too," they'll say "Got it. That's fine," you know. Because they think they have to say it.
>
> (Teacher D, October 1, 2014, X Elementary)

It is difficult to conduct initiatives to guarantee academic ability and collaborate with the local area based on Dowa education under these circumstances. Actually, it is a burden on the teachers. However, abstracting such initiatives too easily risks reducing the children's academic ability. In 2003 and 2006, academic ability surveys were conducted in Osaka, which is located in Kansai like X Elementary. It was reported that the academic ability of Buraku children and students had decreased significantly after the end of the special measures (Yonekawa, 2007). Moreover, the situation in the local areas has become more fluid in recent years and the lives of residents less stable. It is precisely because X Elementary has continuously worked to realize "guaranteed academic ability" rooted in the community that they are facing a dilemma between initiatives to guarantee the children's academic ability and the issue of "busier teachers."

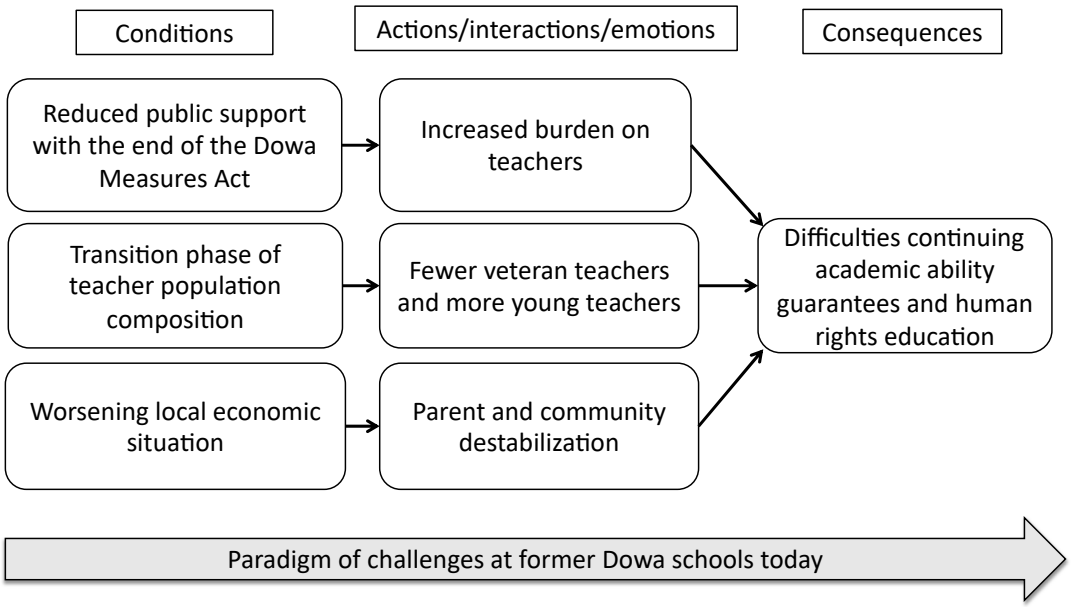
> Teacher A: The reality of children (in former Dowa districts) and the community is actually becoming harsher, so we can't cut down on the initiatives. If you take that young school year group, their everyday consensus-building might be a "lifeline," you know. So we end up having to go "let's have a meeting." If so, (the end of the workday) becomes 22:00 or 23:00. I'd love to sever this vicious cycle somewhere, but it hasn't been possible. I don't know if the academic ability remaining is a result of not being able to sever that cycle. I do the administrative job thinking that this is a "double-edged sword."
>
> (Teacher A, August 12, 2014, X Elementary)

I think this dilemma can be referred to as a conflict on the borderline between education and welfare (Kuraishi, 2007) that happens in teaching characterized by a lack of borders (Sato, 1998). Since the Dowa Measures Act lapsed in 2002 and the legal basis for educational resource redistribution that prioritizes Dowa districts disappeared, this conflict has only become more apparent in former Dowa schools like X Elementary. It is easy to imagine how it has cornered the teachers who are passing on and practicing Dowa education. This "busyness" problem is surfacing more aggressively in schools located in areas with higher concentrations of social problems, like X Elementary. This is because practices of dealing with the educational issues of children affected by social exclusion and poverty have been passed on by teachers at the former Dowa schools also after the loss of government support through the Dowa Measures Act.

5. Conclusion

This paper employed the case of an elementary school and former Dowa school in Kansai to clarify the educational situation in former Dowa districts today. It analyzed the case of X Elementary. The following summarizes the insights gleaned thus far (Figuve1).

Figuve1. Correlations between concept categories



First, X Elementary has continuously worked to guarantee academic ability to ensure career paths for the children. Furthermore, initiatives of systematic human rights learning rooted in the local area have been passed down as a heritage of Dowa education also after the end of the Dowa Measures Act, contributing to the maintenance of the guarantee of a high level of academic ability (Section 3). However, the macroscopic population composition of the teaching occupation is currently undergoing a transition, and this generational shift is challenging the continuation of such initiatives. Moreover, with increased local destabilization associated with fluidization and worsening economic conditions, as well as decreased government support for community collaboration compared to the Dowa school period, I observed difficulties in continuing these practices, exacerbated by teachers becoming busier (Section 4). The above summarizes the insights gleaned from this case. What we learn from this case of a "former Dowa school" is the reality of the school's difficulties as it explores ways to continue educational practices with limited support, since it faces widening inequalities in society and the destabilization of former Dowa districts since the Dowa Measures Act lapsed. This reality may be considered a contrasting dimension not yet examined in other studies, which represent former Dowa schools as positive models for countering child poverty in this "renaissance of Dowa education research." Former schools for the promotion of Dowa education are facing severe educational difficulties, contrary to the excitement we see in empirical research.

Thus, what academic suggestions do these insights imply? The first insight is the limited scope of Dowa education research. Until now, sociological studies on Dowa education have focused on the living conditions of families in discriminated Buraku areas (BLHRRI, 2001),

research on subcultures as student culture (Imazu & Hamano, 1991), linguistic code research (Ikeda, 1987), and resulting inequalities in educational attainment in the form of low academic ability and low rate of advancement. As such, the focus is on the victims of discrimination (children, students, families). However, these studies have had only a slight interest in teachers and other surrounding actors who support the victims and battle social inequalities and discrimination to free them from these issues. The insights in this paper demonstrate that paying attention to surrounding actors is important for understanding the Buraku issue today. Future Dowa education research should not limit the analysis of the issue's reality to just the victims of discrimination, but should also engage in debate that includes surrounding actors. This should contribute to elucidating the entirety of the issue and lead to solutions. I believe this perspective is also valid for analyzing surrounding actors in other areas such as caregivers for persons with disabilities and allies to sexual minorities.

Second, we need the comprehensive development of government support to educational institutions in areas with high concentrations of social difficulties. The teachers at X Elementary, who make up the case of this paper, have gone beyond the framework of government support in their collaboration between school and community. This stems from the school's historical background as a former Dowa school, but even with the limited educational resources after the end of the Dowa Measures Act, the teachers are facing the harsh reality and engaging in the children's education. The educational authorities should support teachers' initiatives from the outside. However, this is not a call to revive the support of the Dowa Measures Act prior to 2002. The core of my claim in this paper is that the current system, which is putting a heavy burden on the teachers' self-help efforts to improve the educational circumstances of children who belong to social minorities in this age of widening inequalities, has already reached its limit. It directly leads to the exclusion of children in socially difficult circumstances from school education. No school has the same community context. Each has its own unique class structures and ethnic compositions, and the children go to school within that community context. This suggests the urgent need to develop comprehensive educational support for schools in areas with high concentrations of social difficulties as well as flexible support measures that can accommodate the community contexts of individual schools. This is indispensable in preventing social disparities from widening and rectifying the cultural reproduction of inequalities.

Last, I want to mention the limitations of this paper to frame future research tasks. The insights of this paper stem from the analysis of the data of a single former Dowa school in Kansai. If community contexts come in many forms, as mentioned, then the realities and challenges not identified in this paper can be found in the educational circumstances of children in other former Dowa districts. Moreover, I limited the analysis in this paper to an elementary school, which is only one kind of educational institution, because of lack of space. However, educational activities in former Dowa districts are also conducted in

children's associations, settlement houses, middle schools, high schools, and pre-employment educational institutions, so we can anticipate a diverse range of potential research objects. Therefore, I believe we need to analyze the reality of more diverse cases and conduct mutual comparative analyses to understand the actual educational circumstances in former Dowa districts more accurately. These are tasks for future research.

Although limited in these ways, this paper is meaningful in that it has elucidated one aspect of the educational circumstances in former Dowa districts that has not previously come to light. I expect the insights of this paper to become an important viewpoint when discussing the Buraku issue and measures to improve the educational circumstances that accompany child poverty measures in the future.

Appendices

1) The administrative division of "Dowa districts" no longer exists following the end of the Dowa Measures Act. In this paper, I use "former Dowa districts" to mean "districts previously designated a Dowa district by the authorities." To clarify, this does not mean that discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion do not exist in these districts and other Buraku areas.
2) Since the end of the Dowa Measures Act, the administrative division of "Dowa districts" has disappeared, along with the designation of projects for the promotion of Dowa education research and schools for the promotion of Dowa education. In this paper, I use "former schools for the promotion of Dowa education" in the sense of "schools previously commissioned to conduct Dowa projects" from a viewpoint of describing the schools' current reality after the end of government support in the form of Dowa projects.
3) Academic ability and lifestyle surveys conducted at former Dowa schools and surrounding schools in one Kansai prefecture.
4) Based on "On future measures to quickly resolve the Buraku issue" (1996), which was about education and public awareness to dissolve the sense of discrimination in the Dowa issue, the "Domestic action plan for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education" (1996) motivated the reorganization into projects of human rights education and public awareness. The contents of the principal projects aim to promote public awareness about human rights issues, public awareness projects by small-scale actors, instruction and public awareness projects for employers, regional projects for comprehensive promotion of education, projects of schools designated for human rights education research, projects for the comprehensive promotion of human rights education, and projects to spread human rights ideas. Support in the form of allocating additional staff and funds is provided based on the type of project.
5) For a more detailed but similar discussion, see "Effective schools" (Nabeshima, 2003).

6) For more details, see Michael W. Apple, James A. Beane, (2007), Democratic School; Lessons in Powerful Education 2nd ed, Portsmouth. NH: Heinemann.

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