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Conflicts and Deviations between Free Schools and Public Education: Redistribution and Recognition as Seen in the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities*

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As public education faces multiple issues, including the surfacing of children's struggles in society and the formation of capabilities suited to the times, free schools are tasked with expectations for their role as a supplement to public education, leading to a change in the onetime structure of opposition. However, attention must be paid to the risk of forcing free schools into the position of troubleshooters for the issues in public education, given that their position in regard to school education remains unbalanced. Will the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities be able to bring about a "cultural/symbolic revolution" in public education?

Keywords: free schools ; alternative education ; public education ; redistribution ; recognition

Introduction

The Act on Securing Opportunities for Education Equivalent to Ordinary Education During the Stage of Compulsory Education (below, Act on Securing Educational Opportunities) passed in December 2016. In retrospect, from the 1980s—when school non-attendance became a social problem, drawing attention to spaces to be outside schools—until now, spaces for children not attending school have been provided by the private sector[1)] as just one of various diverse formats, including new types of schools among Article 1 schools (schools as stipulated in Article 1 of the School Education Law; below, "school" refers to "Article 1 schools").[2)] This situation is now moving into a new stage which takes into account the potentials for spaces outside schools in compulsory education.

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However, this current is being formed not only by the discussion arising from school non-attendance. For example, the need to deal with children struggling in society in various forms is increasing, with schools failing to handle problems like the many non-Japanese children who are not enrolled in school and the increasing manifestations of child poverty (Egawa 2016). In addition to all this, the latent structure includes what Shiomi refers to as the two paths: that is, as well as the debate within the framework of school non-attendance, there is also the policy debate promoting diversification of schools with an orientation toward "suitable innovation of the school system for the times" (Shiomi 2016, p.4). The Ninth Proposal of the Education Rebuilding Implementation Council refers to free schools, implying, however, the ability formation of "children who have not been able to develop their abilities fully in education so far" (Education Rebuilding Implementation Council 2016, p.1). As these differing dynamics intersect, the debate of recent years on the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities requires close consideration. In this context, this paper examines the current state of free schools and other private-sector spaces which have accepted children not attending school from the perspective of their relations with the societal situation of public education. While these spaces go by various names, such as free spaces and so on, as well as free schools, in order to avoid confusion this paper uses "free school" to refer to private-sector spaces outside schools frequented by children mainly at the compulsory education stage who are not attending school.

Regarding free schools, in addition to attempts to clarify internal processes through qualitative research such as Asakura (1995)'s participant observation and more recently Sagawa (2010)'s discussion of staff emotional labor, Kikuchi and Nagata (2001)'s nationwide survey was the first of a number of quantitative studies which have also worked toward attaining an overview, followed by Fujine and Hashimoto (2016) and MEXT (2015a). Allowing for the difficulty of grasping free schools as a formalized existence, knowledge has been provided in the form of the reverse image of mainstream public education.

Free schools have been called on to "question the ideology of public education" (Kikuchi & Nagata 2001, p.66), with attention focused on their characteristic positioning in opposition to existing school education. However, in recent years there have been trends toward actively connecting to public education, as well as proposals on the need for an evaluation mechanism targeting free schools; reconsideration of the significance of free schools to public education is now required. So far, educational sociology and critical pedagogy have shed light effectively on the internal process through which schools justify and reproduce social inequity: when questioning public education through the lens of free schools, it is important to address how the elements of critique of this kind and reforms in existing school education can be included.

Below, the paper first looks back over Japanese currents oriented toward alternative education, referring to Fraser's politics of redistribution and recognition to confirm the status quo. Thereupon, it provides an overview of the characteristics of current free schools based on recent surveys. Next, it examines the inclusion in recent policy debates of free school learning and accreditation evaluation for free schools as one of the tendencies toward the "mainstreaming" of alternative education.

1. Free schools as alternative education

According to Nagata, Japan's alternative education movements can be divided into three main currents[3]: first, the educational movement of free schools as spaces accepting children not attending school; second, schools adopting educational principles stimulated by Western educational movements such as Steiner education, mainly gaining impetus from the 1980s on; and third, the civil movements toward creating non-mainstream, publicly funded schools such as the "Associations for Creating New Public Schools" which sprang up around Japan from the 1990s on (Nagata 2005, pp.6-7). Each of these movements ended up going in a different direction. For example, the Tokyo Steiner Schule, an example of Steiner education as in the second movement, was launched in 1987 and became the private school corporation Fujino Waldorf School upon receiving approval in 2004 (Fujino Waldorf School website). As well, the "Association for Creating a New Shonan Public School," begun in 1997 and well known as an example of the movement to create new public schools, was accredited as an NPO in 2000; however, the Shonan Sho School project, launched in 2004, was wound up in 2007 due to a lack of operating funds[4] (Association for Creating a New Shonan Public School website). In contrast, free schools intended for children not attending school still retain relatively the same format; however, the diversity of the currents oriented toward alternative education must be understood along with the social context of public education in recent years.

These forms of alternative education were present as well in the phenomena driving public schools to make radical changes based on socioeconomic factors from the 2000s on in particular, including the accelerating marketization such as school selection, criticism of so-called "leisurely education" along with the return to "solid academic ability," and the shift to new views of ability accompanying globalization. In addition to the context of nationalized educational reform, contexts such as the awareness of parents expecting higher academic ability and new abilities from their children and the expansion of options have also changed views on alternative education, just as on public education. In this situation, the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities will lead to a crossroads for free schools; where will the roads lead[5]?

This law focuses on the securing of educational opportunities equivalent to ordinary education during the stage of compulsory education, defining the securing of educational opportunities as "securing of educational opportunities equivalent to ordinary education at the stage of compulsory education, such as securing educational opportunities for students not attending school and providing opportunities to attend schools offering classes at night and at other special times, and support for those not receiving sufficient education of this kind" (MEXT 2016). What this means is, with reference to Fraser's politics of redistribution and recognition (Fraser 2003=2012), that the emphasis is placed on the redistribution of educational opportunities in regard to the "more equitable distribution of resources and wealth" (ibid., p.8). However, elsewhere, the mechanisms which justify and reproduce social inequality are still embedded in existing school education, so that the resulting inequality is individualized and the structure kept in place. Based thereupon, we must consider the process of the recognition of "affirming difference" (ibid., p.8) without assimilation into existing education as a precondition[6]. In short, in addition to the securing of educational opportunities as the redistribution of resources, the structure of reproduction of inequality built into existing school education

must be shifted toward the adoption of a recognition paradigm as "cultural/symbolic reform" (ibid., p.16) affirming the cultural value patterns which have been excluded from existing school education.

Extending this debate, we find the potential for recognition of diverse forms of education other than existing ordinary education, which have so far been cast outside public education. Specifically, these include North Korean-oriented schools and others involved in ethnic education, as well as educational practices based on original principles in conflict with existing public education. As well, the question arises of how the originality developed by free schools will connect to public education. Based on these, the context of free schools today cannot be understood simply through the redistribution debate; an understanding is also required of the deviations and conflicts surrounding recognition, that is the relations with the changes and oppositions in values related to recognition.

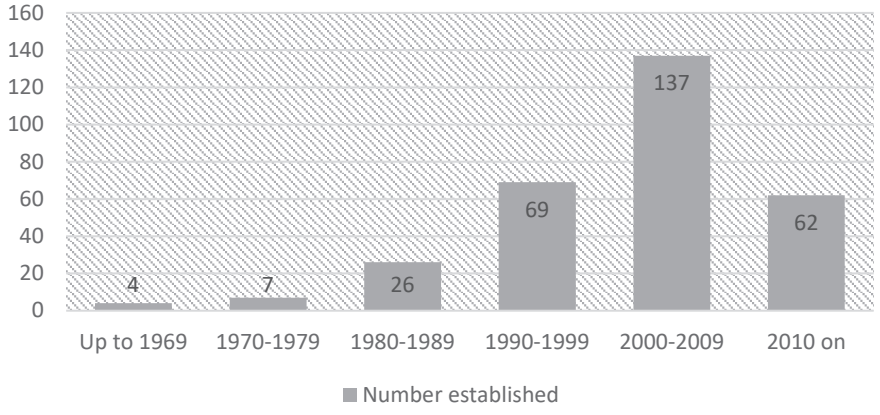
2. The development of modern free schools

2.1. Increasing numbers of free schools and policy shifts

Let us begin with an overview of the current state of free schools, as a hint to questioning public education as well, from existing survey data and policy. Free schools and free spaces, learning spaces outside schools, have been on the increase since the 1980s (Kikuchi & Nagata 2001, p.70). According to the MEXT "Survey on Private Organizations and Facilities Attended by Children at the Compulsory Education Stage Not Attending Elementary or Junior High Schools" (2015), as shown in Figure 1, many of the current free schools were established in the 2000s[7], with about 70% of the current private-sector organizations established in the 2000s or later (MEXT 2015a).

The quantitative expansion of free schools is also related to trends in facilities for school non-attendance. Table 1 shows the major public policies relating to non-attendance; after time spent at extramural private-sector facilities became recordable in guidance records as attendance, at principals' discretion, from the 1990s on, in the 2000s "special non-attendance model

Fig.1 Timing of establishment of private-sector organizations attended by students at the compulsory education stage not attending school (n=305)



*Based on MEXT 2015a

Table 1. Major policies relating to free schools

Year	Facilities involved with school non-attendance and free schools
1992	Notice: "The Truancy (Non-attendance) Issue"
	Notice: "Applicability of the School Commuter Pass System for Attendance of Truant Children Attending Extramural Official Institutions, etc."
1993	"Guidelines for Private-Sector Facilities (Tentative)"
2003	Notice: "Future Approaches to School Non-Attendance"
2004	Establishment of special non-attendance model schools
2005	Notice: "Handling Attendance on Guidance Records for Children Not Attending School When Studying at Home Via IT, etc."
2009	Notice: "Handling Consultations and Support at Public Institutions or Extramural Private-Sector Facilities for High School Students Not Attending School"
2015	Council on Free Schools established
2016	Act on Securing Educational Opportunities comes into force
2017	Notice: "Full Academic Support at Non-School Spaces for Students Not Attending School"

*Created by the author

schools" with curricula designed for non-attending children appeared as one aspect of the more flexible operation of the existing school system in order to support non-attending children. As if in response to these trends, private-sector free schools have increased in number.

Shifts in facilities involving free schools can be seen in recent years as well. Since the Ministry of Education (of the time) stated officially in "The Truancy (Non-Attendance) Issue" (Notice) of 1992 its view that "it can happen to any child," the school commuter pass system has become applicable to children at the compulsory education stage attending extramural institutions; in addition, the "Guidelines for Private-Sector Facilities (tentative)" were released, making attendance at private-sector facilities count as registered school attendance at principals' discretion. Subsequent policies of the 2000s were oriented toward attendance at or connection with extramural organizations, such as treating extramural study or attendance at private-sector institutions as school attendance for high school students as well. As the expression of the time, "a space for the heart," succinctly indicates, the emphasis was on relationships and on spaces where children not attending school could feel secure. On the other hand, no specific framework was demonstrated for how children were to spend time at spaces outside school. Even the "Guidelines" referred to above stated that the main objective of project operation was to be "consultation and guidance for children not attending school" and called for no egregiously for-profit operation, clearly defined entry and lesson fees, and information provided to parents, without ever mentioning the content of activities or study (National Institute for Educational Policy Research Guidance and Counseling Research Center 2004, p.99).

The "Council on Free Schools"[8], launched in 2015, cited four issues to examine: "(1) positioning of free schools in the system of study, (2) academic support for children, (3) economic support, (4) other issues concerning free schools" (Council on Free Schools 2017, p.1), with a clear focus on academic study at free schools. In addition, the issuance of "Full Academic Support at Non-School Spaces for Students Not Attending School" (Notice) and the *Full Academic Support at Non-School Spaces for Students Not Attending School* report in 2017, roughly contemporaneous with the passage of the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities, also made it clear that the focus was now on academic study at free schools. The issue of how time is spent, in particular how study takes place, at free schools, so far unques-

tioned, has now come up for discussion.

Based on the process so far, one possible view is that free schools have gone through a period of quantitative expansion and are now, as the next stage, being questioned on issues of quality. However, we must first consider the details of the quantitative expansion of free schools briefly touched on above.

2.2. The "increase" of free schools

Let us examine the distribution of free schools by region. According to the MEXT survey noted above, the number of private-sector organizations by prefecture is (going by the number of survey targets) the highest in Tokyo at 54, followed by 45 in Kanagawa, 27 each in Hokkaido and Osaka, 22 each in Saitama and Hiroshima, and 21 in Chiba. Elsewhere, prefectures with only one or two organizations each include Aomori, Iwate, Gunma, Ishikawa, Fukui, Tottori, Kagawa, Kochi, Oita, and Miyazaki (MEXT 2015a, p.18); while major cities and in particular the capital area have many free schools, a good number of prefectures have just one or two, making the regional distribution uneven. As well, the number of children at the compulsory education stage attending each institution is under 20 for over 80% of the total, with just 1 to 5 students attending 40% of institutions; most free schools are on a small scale[9] (ibid., p.9). With regard to staff, almost 70% of the whole work five days a week or fewer, of whom paid staff comprise 1099 people and volunteers 835 (ibid., p.10). Overall, most free schools at this time are small in scale and rely on volunteer labor.

In addition, of the total of roughly 120,000 elementary and junior high school students nationwide not attending school, how many attend free schools? The absence records found in the 2015 "Survey on Student Guidance Issues Including Problem Behavior" (Table 2) show that even among students with 30 days' absence or more, a total of 72,324 were absent for 90 days or more (12,404 elementary schoolers and 59,920 junior high schoolers), amounting to a significant number of children requiring a place to go outside school. Elsewhere, of students not attending school, a total of 4,196 attend free schools (1,833 elementary schoolers and 2,363 junior high schoolers) (MEXT 2015a, p.8), as well as about 16,000 attending public institutions such as adaptation guidance classrooms (MEXT 2017, p.8). Clearly, the number of children at the compulsory education stage not attending school who are attending receptive institutions is by no means large, even when combining private and public institutions[10]. While the survey above may not have grasped the precise numbers, even adding those who slipped through the cracks means that private-sector free schools are coping only with a small fraction of children not attending school.

Regarding attendance qualifications at the school of enrollment as well, while principals

Table 2. Number of children not attending school by days absent and present (AY2015)

	30–89 days absent		90 or more days absent, 11 or more days present		90 or more days absent, 1–10 days present		0 days present		Total
Elementary schools	15177	55.0%	10522	38.1%	1199	4.3%	683	2.5%	27581
Junior high schools	38508	39.1%	48538	49.3%	7663	7.8%	3719	3.8%	98427
Total	53685	42.6%	59060	46.9%	8862	7.0%	4402	3.5%	126008

*Created from MEXT (2017, p.5)

Table 3. Percentage of enrolled students with attendance recognized (AY2015)

	Educational Support Centers (adaptation guidance classrooms)			Private organizations such as free schools		
	Number of students receiving guidance (a)	Recognized attendance (b)	Percentage (b/a)	Number of students attending (h)	Recognized attendance (i)	Percentage (i/h)
Elementary schools	3219	2219	68.9%	1833	969	52.9%
Junior high schools	12893	10917	84.7%	2363	1372	58.1%
Total	16112	13136	81.5%	4196	2341	55.8%

*Created from MEXT (2015a, 2015b)

may count students as attending at their discretion, this issue is in fact handled differently depending on the Board of Education and the school, so that not all students' attendance is recognized. As shown in Table 3, attendance at their school of enrollment is recognized for fewer than 60% students attending free schools (52.9% of elementary schoolers, 58.1% of junior high schoolers) (MEXT 2015, p.8). In addition, there is a difference of over 10 percent for both school levels between the recognition of attendance at free schools and at public Educational Support Centers (adaptation guidance classrooms), suggesting that attending free schools is less likely to be seen as compulsory education attendance. The power relationship between public education schools and free schools remains unbalanced.

When we consider afresh the nature of free schools as small groups relatively distinct from public education, the characteristics of systematized public education become visible in contrast. The bureaucratic aspects of school education have inevitably included a rigid and hierarchical character. Free schools have, as a space to question modern schools and the unified, efficient transmission to many children of standardized knowledge enforced therein, made themselves felt as the possibility of small-scale, holistic relations.

However, based on the status of free schools as seen here, we must also reconfirm their characteristics: "what makes alternative education 'alternative' within society is its status as the 'minority' in relation to mainstream education" (Nagata 2005, p.37). As noted above, children attending free schools constitute only a small number of all those not attending school; free schools are not positioned to handle all the children currently not attending school. Most of those operating in the long term have a network of mutual support organizations which underpins the free school's activity and principles as social expansion, but the individual free schools themselves are almost all small-scale operations managed by the family of those concerned or by individuals. In other words, free schools are able to carry out unique practices because the schools themselves are small minorities, enabling them to present themselves as alternative: they are not on a comparable basis of system or size with existing school education. Some free schools go out of their way to accept children struggling in society and to offer family support. However, it is not appropriate to call on free schools to address all the difficult issues which existing schools are unable to handle. As the problems faced by public education become visible, free schools will be called on for more, but the power imbalance risks burdening them with an overload of social issues.

In this way, while free schools are increasing in number, they remain in the position of

a minority compared to public education, and are characterized by their spread as a grass-roots approach. Within the status quo of recent years, as academic study at free schools becomes a matter of debate, let us consider the context thereof.

3. Attention to "study" at free schools

3.1. Connection between free schools and (public) schools

As noted above, in the public debate of recent years on free schools, the focus has been on academic study. However, the status of individual free schools—with regard to their size, staffing, and principles—differs from the premises taken for granted at existing schools. The Council on Free Schools mentions their current status thus in its report: "Overall, the scale of private-sector organizations, etc., is not large; with originality and diversity, they provide academic study, hands-on experience, opportunities for interpersonal contact, and places to secure peace of mind in accordance with the status of the individual children not attending school" (Council on Free Schools 2017, p.10). They also point out that the lack of connection with schools and Boards of Education underlies the lack of recognition of free schools by parents and regional residents. In response to this point, the Notice on "Full Academic Support at Non-School Spaces for Students Not Attending School" begins with "full support through connections between Boards of Education/schools and civil organizations," citing active connection as a method of increasing awareness of academic study at free schools.

Some municipalities have already created systems for collaboration between Boards of Education or schools and free schools. For example, in Kanagawa Prefecture, adjacent to Tokyo, 30 free schools and the Board of Education have established a collaboration council as of 2006: as well as holding regular advice meetings and career path briefings for parents and children not attending school, they offer regular free school observation and include free schools in teacher training, with 11 teachers (ten in high schools, one in a junior high school) receiving this training so far (Council on Free Schools 2017, appendices p. 20). As well, Kawasaki City in the same prefecture has designated an NPO managing a free space as the manager of its municipal youth education facility, creating a public-private connection between a space for children not attending school and an afterschool program (ibid., p. 22).

As well as this kind of collaboration with public projects, child consultations in Chigasaki City, Kanagawa, include introductions of free schools to children not attending school and their parents, with free schools actively positioned as "valuable social resources enabling children to lead basic daily lives" (Council on Free Schools 2017, appendices p.31). These examples show that free schools and public education are no longer in opposition, but rather mutually supplementary. Free schools are positioned to offer support in cases where the school education and systematized frameworks of support are not working, or to provide fuller educational resources.

3.2. Difficulties in collaboration

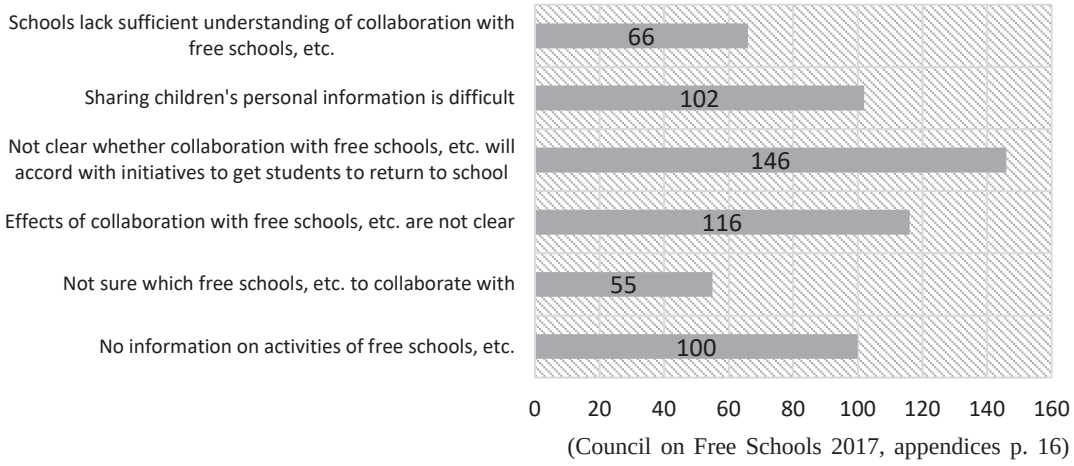
However, the connection is not always smooth. According to a survey of Boards of Education in 2016, the most common response in regard to specific collaborative initiatives was, as shown in Table 4, "No collaborative initiatives in particular," followed by observation of free schools (Council on Free Schools 2017); cases like the ones noted above are still

Table 4. Initiatives on collaboration between Boards of Education/schools and free schools, etc.
*Only responses with over 20 respondents excerpted. Multiple responses n = 288

- No collaborative initiatives in particular (153)
- Board of Education staff observe free schools, etc. (92)
- Information on free schools, etc. provided to schools, schools encouraged to visit free schools (67)
- Free schools, etc. permitted to participate in Board of Education projects (46)
- Other (23)
- Introduction of free schools, etc. on website, etc. (21)

(Council on Free Schools 2017, appendices p. 15)

Fig.2 Issues regarding the process of collaboration with free schools, etc. (n = 288) Numbers include multiple responses



(Council on Free Schools 2017, appendices p. 16)

scarce, and most Boards of Education and schools are not at the stage of making connections with free schools. Reasons why the relationship between schools and free schools remains difficult most often include, according to the survey responses, “Not clear whether collaboration with free schools, etc., will accord with initiatives to get students to return to school” and “Effects of collaboration with free schools, etc., are not clear” (Table 2). Clearly shown here is that it remains difficult to achieve mutual understanding between schools and free schools on the question of learning outside of schools.

As well, we saw above that most free schools are small and individually operated, without necessarily providing easily accessible information on their activities to the outside world. About half of all free schools have an educational curriculum; they conduct academic study in accordance with their individual situations, using existing resources such as textbooks and commercially available learning materials as well as making their own (MEXT 2015a). In this context, schools and Boards of Education are finding it difficult to get a grip on the activities of free schools in themselves. As the need to adjust this misalignment between free schools and school education is pointed out, the quality of free school activities and their evaluation has also become a matter for debate.

4. Discussion on the quality and evaluation of free schools

The Act on Securing Educational Opportunities did not go so far as to recognize free schools directly as compulsory education, but consideration with an eye to the issue has taken place (Free School Network/Association for a Law Ensuring Diverse Learning 2017). However, when operation on public funds comes to mind, accountability and quality assurance will also be queried.

The Council on Free Schools' report, *Full Academic Support at Non-School Spaces for Students Not Attending School* (2017), mentions mutual recognition in relation to the guarantee of quality at free schools. Here it proposes that free schools also apply a framework using as reference the accreditation of institutions of higher education: "As independent movements among private-sector organizations, etc., possible options include providing information on one another's activities and creating a mechanism for mutual recognition within a given framework" (p.21), or the construction of a mechanism for recognition and evaluation through peer review among free schools.

Existing frameworks for free schools include the 1993 "Guidelines for Private-Sector Facilities (Tentative)," but as noted above, this does not touch on the content of their activities. As shown in the examples given in the Council on Free Schools' proposal ("initiatives in which [free schools] learn about and publicize one another's activities or evaluate one another's initiatives in regard to the organization's goals and release the results of the evaluations"; Council on Free Schools 2017, p.21), this proposal now emphasizes the evaluation of each free school's activities and the release of the results thereof. Under the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities, if free schools are positioned as a means of redistribution of opportunities for ordinary education, they will be called on for accountability and the public release of evaluation results. The same social pressure as that placed on current school education—quality guarantees and external accountability—is to be placed on free schools.

In this way, the tendency to position free schools within the same structure as mainstream school education can be found in other countries as well. According to Nagata (2008), the tendency toward the "folding into the public education system" of alternative education, or in other words its "mainstreaming" (Nagata 2008, p.161), is found in South Korea and elsewhere as well, with governmental control making strides into alternative education along with active support. Similar tendencies can be said to appear in the current discussion of free schools.

In addition, the trend toward the visualization and evaluation of free schools' activities being discussed here is not direct governmental management and control but evaluation among free schools themselves and accountability toward the children and parents who are their users; the format of this management and control could conceivably be handled in multiple aspects, like a fine-meshed net, and might thus serve to promote qualitative changes in free schools.

Since the diversification and individualization of school education came into vogue at the Provisional Council of Educational Reform of the 1980s, various policies varying the nature of school education within the structure of public education have made progress, such as the introduction of community schools with the participation of local residents and parents in the operation of public schools, as well as the establishment of special non-attendance model schools from the 2000s on. School education now calls for flexible operation and diverse

curricula compared to the one-time lack of diversity in the school system. However, in contrast, the attempt to conduct educational practice along original principles outside existing public education faces competition with marketized education, without sufficient public support. Minority education from the grass-roots, outside the public education framework, such as residents' local educational movements and ethnic schools, may face even more difficulties within the competition against the options of marketized educational services. In this context, there may be added impetus in the movement toward receiving public funds for alternative education as it enters the framework of public education. In the long term, this may even serve to encourage changes in public education from the inside. On the other hand, it may also demand of free schools the transformations required to become a part of ordinary education. It is unknown whether the kind of changes that will lead to the "cultural and symbolic reform" of existing public education will result.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the crossroads which lies ahead of free schools now that the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities has passed. Since the 1980s, when attention was drawn to free schools as a space for children not attending school, there have been multiple currents of, as it were, Japan-style alternative education. Their subsequent paths have diverged considerably. Among these, while free schools serving children not attending school have increased in number by now, many of them are small-scale in terms of both users and staff, serving only a small number of the 120,000 or so children at the compulsory education stage who are said not to be attending school. This small scale enables them to treat their users holistically and attempt various flexible activities, characteristics which have drawn attention; however, direct demands for free schools to handle the various troubles now facing school education—such as the problem of children left behind due to structural inequality caused by socioeconomic factors, or the formation of global capabilities as recommended by the Education Rebuilding Implementation Council (2016)—risk forcing the free schools into the same cul-de-sacs faced by school education.

Further along the point made by the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities when it refers to "securing of educational opportunities equivalent to ordinary education at the stage of compulsory education" (MEXT 2016) is the possibility of recognizing free schools as compulsory education. Alongside this, the debate on the visualization and evaluation of their activities is also moving forward, so that free schools may be called on to enter the same structures as existing school education. Currently the focus in the debate on securing educational opportunities is on the redistribution of opportunities, but if attention is paid to the power structures embedded in existing public education, one question likely to arise is the process of recognition for the cultural value patterns heretofore excluded by public education.

The number of children considered not to be attending school has grown no smaller, and there is likewise no change in the fact that children in socially disadvantaged positions remain structurally more likely to be excluded from existing school education. We must face with integrity the fact that the number of children left out by the existing structure of public education has reached a significant size. In this situation, in addition to the logic of the redistribution of ordinary education, we must consider the serious significance of examining

paths to the recognition of approaches from outside existing public education.

Notes

1) Representative formats other than free schools include support schools linked with correspondence education, but many children not attending school also find spaces to be at existing cram schools or children's facilities.
2) "Schools conducting education based on a specially organized curriculum with attention to the status of students not attending school" (special non-attendance model schools) have been in operation since being decreed in 2005, under individual curricula; there are currently 10 such schools, both public and private, as well as a "Challenge High School" established by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government which actively accepts students who have been non-attending.
3) Nagata (2005, p.31) notes that "In the US, as the strongly anti-authoritarian free school movement withered, the term "free school" shifted from the mid-1970s on to "alternative school," which was also used by public education reformers. That is, at the same time as the conventional free school movement was criticized for its lack of universality as an educational movement and its lack of connection to the diverse public schools, the "public alternative school" argument (that true reform could be achieved only in the reform of public education for all) was emphasized." In this way, the US term has shifted from "free school" to "alternative school," while in Japan, in close connection to non-attendance, the former term persists.
4) The website explains the winding up of the project as follows. "… If the child and the parents agreed with the school's vision, anyone could enter. However, there were not many children and parents who not only agreed with our vision but were willing to quit public school in order to enter the school. As well, unlike free schools for non-attending children who receive public and private funding aid, we had to come up with our operating funds entirely on our own. …" (Association for Creating a New Shonan Public School website). This suggests that among alternative education-oriented projects, those unconnected to school non-attendance found it difficult to obtain funds.
5) However, the operators of free schools vary in nature as well, with differing and conflicting opinions on the debate over the bill (Shiomi 2016).
6) According to Fraser, the goal of the politics of recognition is "a difference-friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of respect" (Fraser 2003=2012, p.8). For example, the recognition as compulsory education of schools for foreign students whose purpose is ethnic education would also become an issue within this debate.
7) Of the organizations responding to this survey, 45.8% were specified non-profit corporations (NPOs); another factor may be the support for the establishment of private-sector organizations provided by the passage of the Act on Promotion of Specified Non-profit Activities in December 1998.
8) The Council on Free Schools was established "in response to the Educational Rebuilding Implementation Council's Fifth Proposal, 'Future School Systems' (July 3, 2014), which stated that 'the national government, based on the current status of extramural educational opportunities such as free schools where students not attending elementary or junior high schools are learning and international schools conducting education suited to internationalization, will examine their positioning, including compulsory enrollment and public funding.'" (Council on Free Schools 2017, p.1).
9) According to the survey, there were 4,196 students at the compulsory education stage enrolled in free schools, and 2,815 aged at the high school level or older.
10) Some children also attend both public and private-sector institutions, so naturally the numbers would be less than the total.

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