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Schools that Overcome the Disparities of Academic Achievements among Children: Searching for Japanese Effective Schools[1]

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We reported the major findings of our research based on our own academic achievement tests towards elementary school and junior high school pupils in 2002. We then pointed out the fact that the differences of achievement between social groups have been expanded. Nowadays, that issue is seen to be one of the most serious educational problems in contemporary Japan.

Although the differences of various educational outcomes such as academic achievements or educational aspirations between social groups are always emphasized, it is surprising that they seldom discuss about the ways in which those differences could be made smaller. I myself have been exploring the issue in these several years. In this paper, I will describe the progress and the future directions of our academic exploration on this particular educational issue.

1 Introduction

A research group, of which I am a member, reported the results based on its own study of academic achievement in 2002 (Kariya, et al, 2002). At the time I was still a member of the faculty of the University of Tokyo. What we emphasized in this report was the fact that the disparities in academic achievement between social strata had expanded. At the time, that assertion sounded novel to those who heard, but today at the start of 2006 the existence of this problem of "expansion of disparities in academic achievement" is well-known to everyone, and the seriousness of the matter has become the topic of broad discussion. The very fact that this urgent special edition of the Japanese Journal of Educational Research provides evidence of how pressing the situation is.

The thing that catches the eye in particular is the debate attempting to grasp the issue by tying this expansion of disparities in academic achievement to the state of social stratification in Japanese society. The tone of the argument is that advance of economic stratification exemplified

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by the words "winners" and "losers" has caused the phenomena of the "incentive divide" (Kariya, 2001) and "disparity in aspirations" (Yamada, 2004), and has greatly expanded the disparities in academic achievement by bringing about disparities between social groups in the striving and drive for study in schools. Such a debate is also strongly related to the discussion about part-time workers (*furita*) and NEETs and that about truancy and social withdrawal (*hikikomori*).

A prudent examination is needed of what the actual state is of the "disparity in drive", or the "flight from learning" (Sato, 2000) that derives from it, and moreover about whether or not these words accurately capture the true state of today's children and youths belonging to a certain social stratum, but I will not venture to examine this issue here. What I want to point out here is the fact that even though the relationship between the advance of social stratification and the expansion of disparities in academic drive and academic achievement is being emphasized in this manner, to take the matter one step further, quite amazingly no debate about the question of "How can we shrink this gap?" has developed.

I have been considering this problem for the last 5 years as the main theme of my own research. In this article, I would like to relate candidly the results of the collaborative research in which I have been engaged with my colleagues to date, and the outlook for the research that we want to carry out henceforth, under the aegis of the theme "schools that overcome disparities in academic achievement".

Below, in Section 2, premised on an examination of specific research results, I undertake some examination of the basic concepts of "academic achievement" and "disparities in academic achievement", after which I position the idea of "schools that overcome disparities in academic achievement" in the lineage of research on "effective schools" in Europe and the United States. Then in Section 3, I present a summary of the "University of Tokyo Kansai Study" implemented in 2001, after which I add an examination of the essence of "effective schools". In Section 4, I touch on the contents of the "School Effects Study" being conducted by our research group in Osaka since 2003 and discuss the launching of effective school research in Japan. Finally in Section 5, I raise topics for the future and examine the prospects for effective school research.

2 Prerequisite Discussion

1) Academic Achievement

"Academic achievement" is an extremely polemical concept. In the "Debate over the Decline in Academic Achievement", which flared up in 1999, and then apparently wound down from 2002 to 2003, it has been pointed out that "It has been said countless times that 'There is something vague about the term academic achievement' and 'I have the feeling that the meaning of academic achievement in the debate over the decline in academic achievement is restricted'" (Ichikawa, 2002, page 226). Nagao, a scholar of educational methods who actively engaged in the debate at that time, stated that "Responding to the question of 'what is academic achievement' is not easy. In addition, it is not simply expressed by saying 'This is academic achievement'" (Nagao, et al, 2002, page 123). He, thereby, issued a warning against the tendency for the debate to proceed by focusing only on academic achievement that can be measured by scores on tests.

Much of the arguing at cross-purposes seen in the above-mentioned "debate over the decline in academic achievement" is no doubt derived from the multiple meanings of the word *gakuryoku*, translated here as "academic achievement" in Japan. Although the English words best

corresponding to the Japanese word *gakuryoku* are probably "academic achievement", the Japanese word *gakuryoku* is a concept that is clearly much broader and fuller than that (Shimizu and Tokuda, 1991). In the philosophy of academic performance that guided educational sites in postwar Japan, as seen in the former "Hirooka Model", it was held that academic achievement consisted of several elements, and it stands out how the attitudinal aspects among these are placed at its core. Unlike "academic attainment", which makes an issue instead of the portion that is "visible" and "can be expressed by scores", academic achievement in Japan traditionally emphasized strongly the portion that was "invisible" and "cannot be expressed in scores" (Nemoto, 1996). It was not without cause that teachers engaged in actual classroom teaching and educators had an emotional reaction to the proponents of "decline" who made an issue of so-called "scores".

On the one hand, today there is gathering momentum to try to measure a new type of academic achievement, which is not the conventional type of academic achievement chiefly inculcated by teachers. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study implemented every 3 years by the OECD, which has attracted attention recently, is a good example of this (International Educational Policy Research Institute, 2004, Rychen and Salganik, 2006). In Japan as well, new types of academic achievement tests are currently being developed in several places (Basic Academic Achievement Research and Development Center, 2006, Ochanomizu Women's University 21 Century COE Program, 2005).

On the other hand, what we educational sociologists are generally using is the conventional type of academic achievement tests. In response to this, the criticism has been lodged that "Educational sociology has no theory of academic achievement" and "the unreflective use of conventional tests only abets the obsession with scores", but ordinarily the following kind of rebuttal is used to address such criticisms. "What we are making an issue of is academic attainment as referred to in Europe and the United States", "What the public truly cares about are tests, but we want to make an issue of that reality".

I propose that we view the complicated structure of academic achievement as a metaphor of the "tree of academic achievement". This is a schema wherein academic achievement is taken to comprise a tree of three parts, namely "leaves", "trunk" and "roots", and these correspond respectively to the three main constituent elements of academic achievement, namely "knowledge and skills" (academic achievement A), "thought, judgment and expression" (academic achievement B) and "drive, concern and attitude" (academic achievement C) (for the details, see Shimizu, 2005, Chapter 1). The main point of this metaphor lies in the way it captures academic achievement as a unified whole consisting of these three parts, and how it grasps how "visible academic achievement" (all of academic achievement A and part of academic achievement B) exists with the support of "invisible academic achievement" (academic achievement C and the other part of academic achievement B).

In addition, as an educational sociologist I have solely made an issue of the equation of "visible academic achievement" with "academic achievement that can be expressed by test scores." But it is not that I do not recognize the importance of the "invisible academic achievement" stressed by teachers and educators. Rather, it is quite the opposite. This is because without the latter children probably could not nurture adequate "visible academic achievement". However, something that I feel strongly is that a school's first mission is to make children acquire solid "visible academic achievement".

For example, the current Labor Party government in England has forged ahead on a "course for improving academic achievement", which continues the educational policies of the Conserva-

tive Party under Thatcher and Major, but this is because of the rationale that "Imparting appropriate academic achievement and educational qualifications to all children is indispensable for the realization of an inclusive society". To put it oppositely, it is acknowledged that those persons lacking adequate academic achievement and an adequate educational background will inevitably the hardship of being excluded from mainstream society. I fundamentally agree with this viewpoint.

2) Disparities in Academic Achievement

Accordingly, this is a problem of "disparities in academic achievement". To phrase it more accurately, it is a problem of "disparities between groups" in academic achievement, or of "disparities between social strata" in academic achievement.

What I want to confirm first of all is that "individual differences" in academic achievement are not what are ordinarily referred to by the word "disparities". Let us assume that there are children who can study well and those who cannot study well in a class. Among teachers, cases probably arise where there are some teachers who think that fact itself is the problem, and who strengthen their encouragement of the students who cannot study in order to "eliminate the disparities". However, if we consider the matter, a situation where there are capable and incapable children in a class, this is, in a certain sense, inevitable. It suffices to consider the case of a 50 meter dash, in which there are those children that can run the race in 7.5 seconds and those that can only manage to finish in 11.0 seconds. What sort of guidance should be given after such results appear will likely differ depending on the teacher.

On the other hand, what we educational sociologists are making an issue is not such so-called "individual differences", but rather the "differences" that are seen statistically between groups. In the period immediately after WWII, there was a time when "disparities in academic achievement" was taken to be a problem in Japan, but the focus at that time was the problem of the "disparities between cities and the countryside". That is, a marked difference in academic achievement was found between "urban children" and "rural children", and this was viewed as a social problem. In addition, and this is something with a strong correlation to my own research treated in this article, in the Kansai area, the "problem of low academic achievement by young students in so-called social integration districts" that had as its historical origins the problem of *burakumin* or outcaste people was considered to be one of the most important issues in educational institutions from the 1970s (Harada, 2003; Kanbara, 2000). What was at issue in both cases were the "disparities between groups" that could not be reduced to "individual differences", and the "disparities" in the social environment that produced the former.

The educational philosopher Miyadera has organized this relationship between "individual differences" and "group differences" with the terms "disparity" and "deviation" (Miyadera, 2006). According to him, a "deviation" is "a difference between an individual and an individual in the same social stratum" (page 27), and "the dimension of the significance between the correction of disparities and that of deviation is entirely different" (locus cited). That is so. This is not to negate the efforts by teachers on the front lines who are fixated on the "correction of variation", but what we ultimately want to consider is the "correction of disparities".

What lies in the background thereof is the tradition of scholarship in educational sociology that deems crucial "equality of education", or "justice of education". According to the dictionary definition, social inequality indicates a "state wherein social resources or the opportunity to obtain these are not granted equally between people, owing to differences in social status" (*Iwanami Abridged Dictionary of Sociology*, Takashi Miyajima, Editor, Iwanami Shoten, 2003, pages 109-

110). It may be claimed that somehow rectifying such a situation by the power of schools is one of the chief moments of modern public education. In addition, contained in the notion of social justice is that "There are two aspects to this, distributive justice, which determines what degree of distribution of what kind of social resources to which sort of people is appropriate, and procedural justice, which is about how the appropriate distribution method should be determined in the first place" (locus cited, page 107). It is no exaggeration to say that main role aimed at by modern education was indeed to embody social justice in such a sense. Educational sociology took as its own mission the assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of various educational systems from these standpoints.

The major point of contention that arises in debates over disparities in academic achievement between groups is the problem of how to specify a group. The term "race" (or "ethnic group") in the case of American sociology, or that of "social class" in England, have long been adopted as the chief demarcations between groups. That said, this is because "low attainments by blacks" in America and "failure by the working class" in England had come to be acknowledged as major educational problems in the post-WWII era. Although there were disparities in academic achievement between whites and blacks, or disparities in the educational advancement rate of the middle class and the working class, clarifying the actual state of affairs and elucidating the causes for this was a major concern of educational sociology in Europe and the United States. In the case of these groups, the group categories given from the environment (for example, "blacks") and the self-consciousness of the members (for example, "I am a black") match relatively well. That is, it is easy to grasp that group as a real entity.

However, in the course of the development of educational sociology, various other group categories ended up being produced based on the requirements of analysis or reality. These are such things as "occupational strata", "income strata", "strata based on educational background" and "cultural strata". Since on the whole these assume in the background more or less "wealth" or "resources" of some kind or other, it is appropriate to give them the generic name of "stratum" categories that can be ordered by a quantitative scale rather than "group" categories that have qualitative differences. In the past when the low academic achievement of children in social integration districts was made an issue, this was positioned as a "disparity between groups", but today when disparities in academic achievement based on the "cultural strata" established by our research group has been raised for debate, this may be better treated as a problem of a "disparity between strata". Then, something to which we must pay attention is that the concept of "cultural classes" is something that was first and last established by researchers, so it is not necessarily the case that the parties in question are aware that they themselves are located in the upper ranks or lower ranks of the cultural strata.

The issue can perhaps be rephrased as follows. "Disparities academic achievement" can primarily only be defined operationally. As noted above, it is natural that there are both capable and incapable children in a class, but only when this is tied to some group category is it finally recognized as involving a "disparity". To put it the opposite way, group categories are invoked so that "disparities" can be recognized (Miyadera, 2006, page 26). As argued in this article, what we want to make into an issue is children's academic achievement "that may be due to a disadvantageous educational environment", and this may be concretely defined for example in the form of "group in the lower ranks of the cultural strata". We believe that circumstances such that their academic achievement is neglected are seriously problematic from the standpoint of the equality and justice of education.

3) Schools that Overcome Disparities in Academic Achievement

As noted in Section 3, I encountered "schools that are overcoming to a considerable degree disparities in academic achievement" in the course of research that attempts to grasp the actual state of children's academic achievement. In other words, it was not the case that I was looking for "schools that overcome disparities in academic achievement" from the outset; rather, I stumbled across this type of school as a by-product, so to speak, of my research. This type of school is called an "effective school" in Europe and the United States. In the United States and England, research on effective schools already has a history of about 30 years, and nowadays international conferences and international journals are devoted to them, and a wide variety of research results have been reported in countries around the world.

The origins of the matter lie in the publication of the "Coleman Report" (1966) and its successor report "Inequality" (1972) in the United States. What these reports made clear was that, to put it briefly, "schools can only play an extremely limited role in the reduction of social inequality". To put the matter more simply, this means that "academic achievement cannot exceed the strength of the home". These debates, which can be linked to the "theory of school powerlessness", caused a variety of reactions in various fields, but one of these was the rise of effective school research or "school effects" research based on a stance of "re-examining one more time the power of schools".

Although there can be no doubt that environmental factors centered on the home are deeply related to the formation of a child's academic achievement, it is not the case that schools are entirely powerless. "Schools make a difference." This was the slogan of the researchers who gathered for effective school research or "school effects" research. One can cite the works of Weber (1971) and Edmonds (1979) in the United States and Rutter, et al. (1979) and Mortimer, et al. (1988) in England as the major research in the initial period. For reviews of the literature on effective school research, see inter alia Nabeshima (2004) and Kawaguchi (2006).

My impression is that such a research trend is flowering today in England in particular. That is, one can see that, school effects research in England, after the development of consciousness of various problems and methodological sophistication, is having a substantial effect on the educational policies of the current Labor government (Shimizu, 2006). Concretely, the performance (the status of academic achievement and results of the children) of each school is publicly announced each year in England today, and ethnic information has been added thereto for the last few years. In other words, by examining the circumstances surrounding academic achievement by ethnic group, a mechanism that makes it possible to check whether or not the principle of equal opportunity is being respected has been put in place. In addition, the philosophy of the "added value system" has been introduced, and not only the "mean value" and the "relatively high values" for academic achievement but also the "growth rate" in children's academic achievement have come to be assessed publicly. All of these are viewpoints that have been produced in the course of the development of school effects research.

Compared to this, with a few exceptions researchers in Japan have not expressed deep interest in these research results. This is probably because until recently there was no foundation for applying such research results to Japanese schools as the conditions in Japanese schools did not warrant the application. That is, the viewpoint of "overcoming disparities in academic achievement between strata" could not be easily accepted in the climate reigning in Japanese schools, where from the very start a mood of avoiding the exposure of group differences in academic achievement has been dominant.

The sole exception has been the response at the classroom level and researcher level to the "problem of low academic achievement by young students in so-called social integration districts" that was discussed above. Among this response, there were also researchers who aimed at the early application of effective school research to this problem (Nabeshima, 2004). The research study described in Section 4 is currently being advanced as a collaborative effort with research groups in Kansai that are concerned with the problem of social integration districts.

To add one comment to the above, the perspective of "effective schools" is concerned first and last with "academic achievement that can be expressed in test scores", and does not mention at all "academic achievement that cannot be expressed in test scores". It has been pointed out that seeking "effective schools" myopically can result in an obsession with test scores, and cause the role of school education to wither (Ikeda, 2005). The accumulation of research that pursues both the effectiveness and limits thereof is desirable.

3 The Discovery of Effective Schools: the University of Tokyo Kansai Study

1) Finding "Schools that are Trying Hard"

When I was at the University of Tokyo from 2001 to 2002, I was engaged in two research studies with my fellow researchers there. We called these the University of Tokyo Kansai Study and the University of Tokyo Kanto Study. I was solely involved in the University of Tokyo Kansai Study, a summary of whose analytical results has been assembled in the Iwanami booklet "Research Report: The Actual State of 'the Decline of Academic Achievement'" (Kariya, et al, 2002). In addition, the comprehensive analytical results combined with the Kanto Study have been published by Iwanami Shoten in 2004 under the title of "The Sociology of Academic Achievement".

The planning and implementation of these studies occurred at the time when the polemic about the decline in academic achievement was in full swing. As a social scientist, whose motto is to speak based on the data, I wanted to make some waves in the debate over the decline in academic achievement with my own data. What was singled out there were two studies of the actual state of academic achievement that had been implemented in the past. The first was the one that had been implemented by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research in 1981, and this served as the basis of the Kanto Study. The other was the study carried out primarily by the Osaka Group in 1989, and this is the study that constituted the basis for the Kansai Study introduced in this section.

This study was planned as a study of the actual state of academic achievement of students in social integration districts, and involved the implementation of an academic achievement test in Japanese, arithmetic and English and a questionnaire of the life and study circumstances, with the subjects being fifth graders in elementary school and second year students in middle schools in more than 10 elementary and middle schools respectively in Osaka Prefecture. We wanted to implement the same thing as the preceding study at the same target schools, and to compare the results. That is, our aim was to make statements based on the actual state of decline in academic achievement, through a comparison of the data from 1989 and the data of 2001, which were separated by a period of 12 years.

A variety of opinions were submitted based on the analysis of the data, but for the details see the chapter in question in "Sociology of Academic Achievement". Here, I want to introduce what became clear from my own analysis (Shimizu, 2004).

First of all, what became clear from the initial analysis was the following four points:

① One cannot avoid concluding that the level of children's basic academic achievement has fallen.

② The trend for students to study less in the home is progressing, and this is one of the factors in the decline in academic achievement.

③ Signs are appearing of a "two-humped camel" pattern of a capable stratum of children and an incapable one.

④ The relationship between children's academic achievement and their family background and home life has strengthened markedly.

When these results became clear, a heavy mood hung over our research group. In these 12 years, the actual state of children's academic achievement had worsened, and moreover the relationship between academic achievement and stratum-related factors had strengthened. Should this be viewed as evidence that the problem surrounding academic achievement and social strata found previously in Western societies had begun to manifest itself in Japanese society as well? One piece of accepted wisdom in educational sociology—that "Academic achievement is prescribed by the social stratum"—appeared to have gained further endorsement.

However, I thought that it was not acceptable to let things conclude with only that. There is nothing particularly interesting in the statement that "Children from well-endowed homes easily obtain high academic achievement, while those whose homes are not like that have difficulty meeting basic academic achievement." I felt that unless we indicated some positive prospects or some direction for improving the situation, it was not worth carrying out the study, and in addition, that we had let down the teachers and students of the target schools who had cooperated with us. With that in my mind, a ray of light shined in when I was carrying out the aggregation by school. The numerical values of specific schools (one elementary school and one middle school) were extremely good. I named these "striving schools", and reported some of these analytical results (Kariya, et al, 2002, pages 59-66).

Figure 1 and Figure 2 below are the graphs shown at that time. Both show the score distribution for arithmetic (mathematics), but while Figure 1 shows a smooth mountain shape with a peak around 80 points for all schools, the mountain shape of Elementary School A, the striving school, is extremely steep, and there is the surprising result that there is not a single low-scoring student under 30 points. Figure 2 shows middle schools, and the overall distribution and the distribution in Middle School X, the striving school, are inverted such that the axis of symmetry is the 50 point level. That is, Middle School X has succeeded in checking the manifestation of a low-scoring stratum, by propping up the scores of the students overall.

If we examine the results of the questionnaire, a situation can be observed where a variety of efforts at and improvements of classroom instruction have been promoted at both schools, and the students' attitude towards learning has been positively formed, as though it were interlocked with the former. In addition, when we analyze the results of academic achievement tests with several group indices, we can see that the academic achievement of groups like "lower ranks of cultural strata" and "father did not graduate from college" have reached a rather high level. Quite simply, a picture emerges here that the patient efforts aimed at ensuring academic achievement in these schools has raised the basic academic achievement of the students, and particularly of the students living in an unfavorable environment. Is it not appropriate to call these schools "effective schools"? As I repeated the analysis, "desire" changed to "conviction".

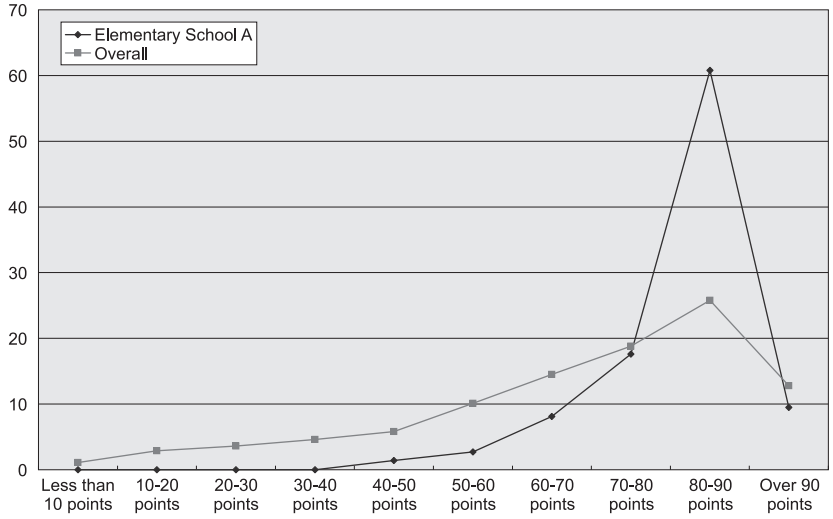

Figure 1 Distribution of Scores in Arithmetic for Elementary Schools

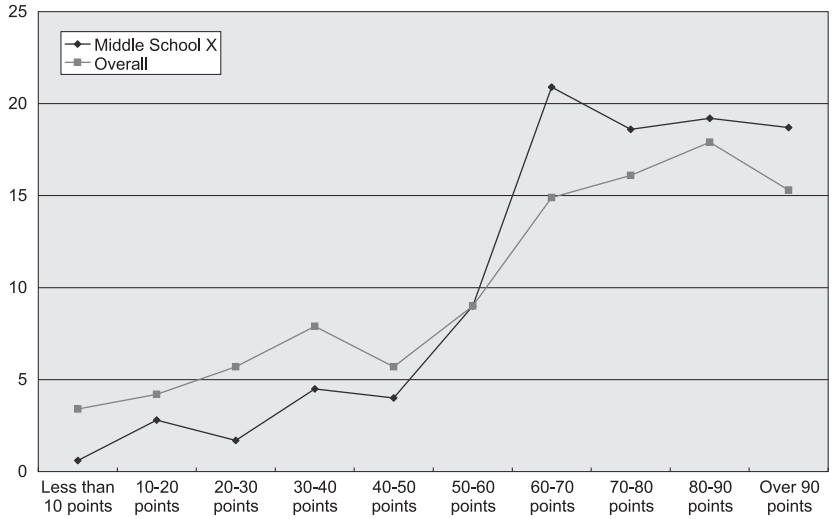

Figure 2 Distribution of Scores in Mathematics for Middle Schools

2) Examples of Effective Schools

I fortunately happened to change jobs from Tokyo to Osaka, and began fieldwork at both of these schools from 2003. Specifically, I frequently visited Elementary School A in the 2003 academic year, and then Middle School X in the 2004 academic year, and engaged in participant observation and interviews. The aim of the fieldwork was to search for the secrets that had brought about such marked results in the two schools. I have already summarized the results of that examination elsewhere (Shimizu, 2003; Shimizu, 2005, Chapter 4), so see those discussions for the specifics.

These two schools are located in Matsubara City, which neighbors on the southern part of Osaka City, and Elementary School A is connected to Middle School X. That is, these two schools are both in the same school district. In this school district there are settlements of *burakumin* who have suffered relatively large-scale discrimination. In addition, the history of education at the two schools cannot be related without discussing the relationship with these *burakumin* settlements. If

I were to organize the salient features commonly observed at both schools, I can probably summarize them by the following three points.

The first feature is that something that should be termed a "system for ensuring basic academic achievement" has been put in place at both schools. Specifically, first of all, sections whose purpose is "ensuring academic achievement" have been located in the school organization and division of school duties, and a "director" is present. In addition, efforts are made to clarify goals at the start of the academic year, and concrete plans are drawn up. Then, a variety of forms of learning, such as TT or small-group guidance, have been adopted for classroom teaching. In particular, differentiated guidance according to the level of proficiency, which is one of these forms, has been adopted flexibly and boldly. Outside the classroom, time for "supplementary learning" has been established for rest periods, lunch recess and after school, and support is being given to children who have begun to show signs of falling behind. In addition, "diagnostic tests" are given in each subject at the end of unit, the end of each term and the end of the school year, and the students' progress in learning is carefully monitored. To summarize, a multilayered safety net has been set up inside the school so that the children do not "fall behind the others" in daily learning activities.

What can be cited as the second feature is the thoroughness of "making friends" or "forming groups", on the foundation provided by such efforts at ensuring basic academic achievement and various other applied learning activities. The tradition of education to eliminate discrimination harbors the notion of "creating classes and schools centered on problem children". One of the main purposes of antidiscrimination education has been to prepare a space for kids that are enduring the toughest home environment and are beset with a variety of "difficulties", and to continue forming human relationships that make it possible to create a place where these children's faces can light up, but at these two schools that tradition has been observed consistently. In particular, the orientation of the children's "valuing helpmates" and "making friends" at these schools, based on the encouragement from the teachers that I have called "angry guidance", has been maintained at a high level (Shimizu, 2005, Chapter 4). It is precisely in such a climate that the above-described efforts for ensuring basic academic achievement might have become so effective.

The third feature observed in both schools is the high level of "teamwork by teachers" or "action as one body". In today's Japanese schools, a high proportion of the teachers are so-called "veterans" between the ages of 45 and 55, and these teachers' competence may be regarded as rather high even in light of global standards. However, since the "vectors" of these teachers are not aligned, it is not infrequent to come across the spectacle of "no characteristics as a school overall being visible", or of "the teachers canceling out each other's strengths rather than reinforcing them". Compared to this, as tends to be observed in the "schools for promoting antidiscrimination education", the average age of the teachers' group is relatively low, and I had the strong impression that they are exceptional when it comes to "action as one body". The managerial staff and mid-level leaders propose common objectives and a common vision, and elicit the active engagement and sense of responsibility of the individual teachers. In sum, precisely because the vectors of the teachers' group are aligned, the process whereby they draw forth one another's energies and strengthen one another can be observed regularly.

The more closely I observed the education at both schools, the more I could not but sense the sound state of the philosophy and concrete methods of "antidiscrimination education". The notion of "ensuring the basic academic achievement of all children" lies at the root of antidiscrimination education, and "teamwork by teachers" or "action as one body" is a precondition for

realizing this. Then, the principle of "making friends" or "forming groups" is positioned as an indispensable means for continuing to motivate the children.

Education with such features has been put into practice at present at not a few schools throughout the Kansai region, beginning with Osaka Prefecture. However, it is becoming difficult to maintain the previous type of antidiscrimination education in any region or school, owing to such factors as the termination of antidiscrimination measures project in 2002 (the so-called "law expiration") and the reduction in the number of additional teachers accompanying this, changes in the structure of the social integration districts themselves, the transformation of residents' consciousness inside and outside the social integration districts, the retirement or severance of teachers that have experienced past antidiscrimination education, the increase in the number of teachers who know nothing about antidiscrimination education, etc. Elementary School A and Middle School X, which emerged as actual examples of effective schools in Japan, were also not able to enjoy the good results exhibited in the 2001 University of Tokyo Kansai Study in the school effects study discussed in the next section. What is being sought for in these schools now is the renewal of antidiscrimination education.

To put it in the context of the research, the discovery of a Japanese version of an effective school was one epoch-making event for us, but as is clear from the description up to now, if one had to say one way or another the content of the education discovered at those schools is lacking in universal applicability. It was actually not rare to receive the comment that "That is possible because it is Elementary School A (or Middle School B)". Accordingly, my co-researchers in Osaka and I embarked on a study aimed at finding effective schools other than Elementary School A and Middle School X. I will recount in the next section the course of this study and the point at which we have arrived at present.

4 Features of the Japanese Version of an Effective School: the School Effects Study

1) Search for Effective Schools

We started new joint research from the 2003 academic year. The objective of this research was to try to discover effective schools widely throughout Japan, and to depict their features, by means of organized research activities.

First of all, we tried to find schools that can be called effective schools by means of a large-scale quantitative study. The schools that volunteered as cooperative schools were 27 elementary schools and 26 middle schools in Osaka Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture and Tokushima Prefecture, for a total of 53 schools. At this time we used the method of the American researcher Edmonds as the framework for analysis.

The specifics of the method can be found in Chapter 2 of Nabeshima (2004), but the biggest characteristic of Edmonds' method is that it does not make an issue of the high value of the average score but rather measures the effects of schools with the "passing rate" as the chief index. That is, when viewed from the standpoint of equality and justice of education, the most important thing is that "all the children clear the hurdle (benchmark)", and the higher the "passing rate" is, the more one can consider that school to be effective. Therefore, from what those in the Edmonds school say, when the passing rate of the student group that are living in a disadvantageous environment educationally (for example, "black students") is in no way inferior to that of group of ad-

vantaged students (for example, “white students”), that school can be called an effective school. Vice versa, if there is a disparity between the scores for the two (in almost all cases, the scores of “whites” probably exceed those of “blacks”), it is not possible to call that school an effective school.

Table 1 shows the study results for elementary schools. Since the average score for arithmetic was 56.3 points and the average score for Japanese was 63.2 points, scores that were somewhat higher than these average scores were set as the benchmark. That is, a score of 60 points in mathematics and one of 70 points for Japanese were set as the hurdles for the children to jump over. The column furthest to the left in the table shows the number of the school in rank from highest to lowest overall score. The “average scores” for these two subjects and the “level of the passing rate” generally correspond, but the reader can probably grasp that there is some variation depending on the school.

There are “stratum indices” that we established in this study, namely “educational background of the guardian” (“college graduate” or “non-college graduate”), “cultural stratum” (“upper rank”, “middle rank” or “lower rank”) and “attendance at cram schools” (“attending a cram school” or “not attending a cram school”). The item that requires explanation among these is probably the notion of “cultural stratum”. During the University of Tokyo Kansai Study, a one-dimensional yardstick showing the cultural environment of the home was created with the statistical method known as principle component analysis, based on the responses to the 5 questionnaire items, “My family watches news programs on television”, “My family makes homemade sweets for me”, “When I was young, my family read picture books to me”, “Sometimes my family takes me to museums and art museums”, and “There is a computer in our home”. Grouping was done so that the number of respondents for elementary and middle school students respectively becomes roughly one-third for each of three categories, “upper rank”, “middle rank” and “lower rank” (Kariya, et al, 2002, page 42).

The right side portion of the table groups the children by these three stratum indices, and calculates the respective passing rates. What we want to draw attention to is the passing rates of the three groups thought to be in a relatively unfavorable environment, namely those of “non-college graduate”, “lower ranks (of cultural strata)” and “not attending a cram school”. If the scores are 60% for arithmetic and 65% and higher for Japanese, these are indicated in bold type since the passing rate is sufficiently high. In sum, when these three groups exhibit a sufficiently high passing rate for both arithmetic and Japanese (that is, when one can find 6 numbers in boldface when one views horizontally the column for a certain school), one can decide that that school is an effective school.

When the table is examined this way, one can see that out of the 27 schools, a total of four schools can be regarded as effective schools, namely school 7, which is shown in the second row from the top, and schools 13, 11 and 15, which follow below that. In addition, the results were that 5 schools, namely schools 3, 2, 1, 16 and 5, are “effective” in Japanese, while 2 schools, namely schools 25 and 14, are “effective” in arithmetic. In sum, in a strict sense, the school effects of 4 schools (14.8%) out of 27 schools, or based on a looser criterion, those of 11 schools (40.8%) out of 27 schools, were confirmed.

Although the table cannot be presented here for reasons of space, the results when the same analysis was conducted for middle schools were that only two schools could be deemed to be effective schools, and three schools that were effective for Japanese and similarly three schools that were effective for mathematics were found. If a strict standard is used, school effects were found

Table 1. Analysis of School Effects of Elementary Schools

School No. (By rank of total score)	Total Score (200)	Mathematics (AverageScore)	Mathematics (Ranking)	Japanese (AverageScore)	Japanese (Ranking)	Mathematics Passing Rate (% Scoring above 60 points)	Mathematics Passing Rate (Ranking)	Japanese Passing Rate (% Scoring above 60 points)	Japanese Passing Rate (Ranking)	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Education Background of Guardian: College Graduate	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Education Background of Guardian: Not College Graduate	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Cultural Environment: Upper Rank	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Cultural Environment: Middle Rank	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Cultural Environment: Lower Rank	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Cram School Attendance Status: Attending	Passing Rate of 60 Points in Arithmetic: Cram School Attendance Status: Not Attending	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Education Background of Guardian: College Graduate	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Education Background of Guardian: Non-College Graduate	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Cultural Environment: Upper Rank	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Cultural Environment: Middle Rank	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Cultural Environment: Lower Rank	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Cram School Attendance Status: Attending	Passing Rate of 70 Points in Japanese: Cram School Attendance Status: Not Attending	School Effects	Guardians' College Graduation Rate (Ranking)	Upper Rank of Cultural Strata (Ranking)	Passing Rate (Ranking)
Overall	133.9	62.1		71.6		56.3		63.2		69.5	49.5	66.9	58.9	46.5	68.0	48.0	75.1	57.2	73.6	66.4	53.0	73.7	55.8					
3	162.9	77.0	1	85.9	1	**83.0**	1	**95.7**	1	88.5	**80.0**	76.5	92.6	50.0	95.8	**72.7**	100.0	**90.0**	94.1	96.3	**100.0**	100.0	**90.9**	Japanese only	4	1	6
7	154.8	76.4	2	77.4	4	**80.5**	2	**76.3**	5	79.5	**81.8**	85.7	77.1	**86.7**	81.5	**78.3**	76.2	**78.8**	76.9	80.9	**66.7**	77.4	**77.3**	Both	3	12	1
2	149.3	68.7	5	79.9	2	**73.3**	4	**83.8**	2	86.0	53.8	81.3	78.4	30.8	85.2	51.4	91.1	**71.8**	81.3	83.7	**85.7**	86.9	**76.5**	Japanese only	1	2	2
13	148.9	70.2	3	78.7	3	**79.1**	3	**77.6**	4	83.3	**78.0**	72.7	81.3	**81.8**	81.3	**78.8**	87.5	**75.6**	81.8	84.4	**72.7**	93.8	66.7	Both	11	5	11
11	146.7	69.3	4	76.6	5	**71.6**	5	**77.9**	3	73.9	**69.6**	81.3	69.5	**70.4**	71.7	**71.4**	85.1	**71.9**	76.5	78.3	**77.8**	79.6	**76.0**	Both	5	15	7
15	143.1	68.1	6	75.1	6	**66.7**	8	**71.3**	8	80.6	59.7	71.4	61.3	**73.0**	65.0	**67.1**	83.3	**65.4**	80.0	71.0	**67.6**	75.6	**68.5**	Both	13	20	17
19	140.7	66.4	9	74.1	9	59.6	10	**74.5**	7	80.0	48.4	72.7	65.0	50.0	77.8	41.7	85.0	**67.7**	81.8	70.0	**75.0**	88.9	58.3		9	10	5
1	140.7	65.3	10	75.1	7	**60.8**	9	**67.9**	11	73.5	51.1	78.9	60.0	40.0	80.0	51.9	77.1	62.2	90.0	60.0	**66.7**	76.9	64.8	Japanese only	6	6	19
25	139.1	66.8	7	72.4	13	**68.9**	7	62.2	15	73.3	**64.3**	50.0	59.1	82.4	75.0	**64.5**	62.5	59.3	100.0	60.9	52.9	76.9	53.3	Arithmetic only	12	25	20
14	138.0	66.7	8	71.4	14	**69.9**	6	61.4	16	68.2	**69.5**	84.0	61.3	**64.0**	81.0	**65.0**	59.1	62.7	60.0	61.3	64.0	76.2	56.7	Arithmetic only	18	20	24
16	137.2	62.6	13	74.2	8	56.4	12	**75.0**	6	69.2	53.8	42.9	71.0	35.7	69.2	53.8	92.3	**68.4**	71.4	76.7	**71.4**	92.3	**68.4**	Japanese only	20	19	23
6	135.7	62.7	12	73.0	11	51.2	15	**63.4**	12	50.0	51.7	53.8	43.8	58.3	56.5	44.4	66.7	62.1	76.9	56.3	58.3	65.2	61.1		16	3	3
17	133.5	62.3	14	71.2	15	56.0	13	**68.0**	10	71.4	30.0	57.1	75.0	33.3	50.0	58.3	71.4	60.0	71.4	87.5	44.4	75.0	58.3		2	4	9
5	133.0	59.3	18	73.7	10	47.4	17	**71.1**	9	55.6	42.9	55.6	42.9	42.9	57.9	33.3	55.6	**78.6**	77.8	64.3	**78.6**	78.9	**66.7**	Japanese only	21	7	8
22	131.1	60.6	16	69.8	17	50.0	16	58.3	18	-	-	62.5	57.7	31.3	53.8	48.6	-	-	87.5	61.5	35.7	66.7	55.6		-	16	22
12	128.6	58.1	19	69.6	18	47.4	18	54.4	20	72.7	40.0	60.0	52.4	40.0	61.5	41.9	81.8	47.7	60.0	70.0	43.3	69.2	50.0		22	24	25
10	127.7	60.7	15	66.7	22	53.3	14	57.1	19	72.7	47.1	71.4	56.0	38.5	58.3	50.0	73.9	51.5	50.0	66.0	44.4	73.0	46.3		19	17	13
20	125.7	63.5	11	61.8	25	58.9	11	41.3	25	71.4	56.3	83.3	67.7	50.0	62.9	58.8	42.9	40.8	50.0	48.4	33.3	40.0	42.9		14	24	10
23	125.1	52.0	25	72.7	12	38.0	24	62.7	13	50.0	34.5	42.1	49.3	28.8	51.7	31.3	65.2	62.1	78.9	68.7	53.9	73.3	56.9		17	21	16
24	125.0	59.4	17	65.5	23	45.5	19	46.8	24	69.6	35.2	58.8	51.4	26.1	68.3	19.4	60.9	40.7	70.6	43.2	34.8	73.2	16.7		15	9	4
26	124.2	53.4	23	70.7	16	44.0	21	62.6	14	62.2	31.5	50.0	44.7	38.5	63.2	30.2	64.9	61.1	66.7	66.0	53.8	73.7	54.7		8	11	12
27	123.9	55.7	21	68.2	19	42.3	23	52.1	21	43.3	41.5	58.8	36.7	37.5	54.2	36.2	66.7	41.5	76.5	50.0	37.5	70.8	42.6		7	8	18
21	120.7	56.7	20	64.0	24	45.0	20	50.0	22	60.0	36.0	66.7	60.0	14.3	62.5	33.3	86.7	28.0	50.0	70.0	21.4	62.5	41.7		10	18	14
9	120.3	52.5	24	67.8	20	30.6	26	47.2	23	16.7	33.3	0.0	13.3	50.0	57.1	24.1	50.0	46.7	33.3	40.0	55.6	42.9	48.3		25	26	27
4	115.9	48.4	27	67.4	21	26.7	27	60.0	17	20.0	28.0	100.0	21.4	26.7	33.3	25.0	100.0	52.0	100.0	64.3	53.3	50.0	62.5		25	27	26
8	114.9	54.4	22	60.5	26	43.8	22	34.4	26	66.7	38.5	63.6	44.4	34.6	45.8	42.5	58.3	28.8	54.5	44.4	15.4	37.5	32.5		23	13	15
18	104.9	50.0	26	54.9	27	37.5	25	29.2	27	33.3	38.5	20.0	28.6	50.0	64.3	26.5	55.6	23.1	40.0	23.8	31.8	35.7	26.5		23	22	21

Note: The figures in bold type indicate schools whose passing rates exceed 60% in mathematics or 65% in Japanese.

in 2 schools (7.7%) out of 26 schools, while by a looser standard they were found in 8 schools (30.8%) out of 26 schools.

2) Rules for Improving the Academic Achievement of Problem Children

As the second step of the research study, a qualitative study was carried out from the 2004 academic year through the 2005 academic year. Specifically, we picked up more than 10 elementary and middle schools whose school effects were acknowledged in the quantitative study noted above, and launched a study based on interviews in order to clarify the factors in the schools that may be contributing to the achievement of such results. Finally, the six members of our group divided up 11 schools that agreed to participate in the study (six elementary schools and five middle schools), and engaged in research activities such as participant observation and interviews over the course of more than one year.

At this time, what we had in mind was the list for organizing the shared features observed in effective schools in Europe and the United States, as shown in Table 2.

Eleven items have been extracted for the above list, which was produced from a comprehensive review of effective school research or school effects research in Europe and the United States from the 1970s through the middle of the 1990s, but are the features of effective schools in Japan the same as these or greatly different from them? Our concern in our research lay in depicting the features of the Japanese version of an effective school. What we deduced tentatively with the cooperation of the classroom teachers in the summer of 2005, based on the results of the qualitative study carried out over more than one year, were the "seven rules for improving the academic achievement of problem children" cited in Table 3.

Although these carry the label "rules", the above seven items are not so grandiose. In reality, they fall under the heading of items that might better be termed the "factors" that contribute to the improvement of academic achievement. In addition, there still remains some room for examining whether one can conclude that these seven items are really necessary and sufficient, or what kind of connection can be envisaged between the items. Leaving the specifics of the contents of the respective items to Shimizu (2005, Chapter 4), here I would like to comment about the issue of what sort of points of difference can be observed between Table 2 and Table 3. That is, what kind of contrasts can be observed between effective schools in Europe and the United States and effective schools in Japan?

The key issues may be organized by the following four points.

First, there is the contrast between the "school principal" and the "leader stratum". The item

Table 2 Features of Effective Schools in Europe and the United States

(1) Professional leadership
(2) Shared visions and Goals
(3) A learning environment
(4) Concentration on teaching and learning
(5) Purposeful teaching
(6) High expectations
(7) Positive reinforcement
(8) Monitoring progress
(9) Pupils rights and responsibilities
(10) Home-school partnership
(11) A learning organization

(Source) Sammons et al. (1997), pp. 89-124

Table 3 7 Rules for Improving the Academic Achievement of Problem Children

(1) Do not let the children run wild
(2) Create groups that empower the children
(3) School management that values team strength
(4) A positive school culture with a practical orientation
(5) Creation of a school with ties to the local community
(6) A system for firmly establishing basic academic achievement
(7) Presence of leaders and leadership

(Source) Shimizu (2005), pages 164-169

"Leadership of the school principal" has been placed uppermost in Table 2. As is symbolized by this, the school principal has a strong presence in schools in Europe and the United States. To put the matter dramatically, the creation of a good school and whether or not a school worsens depends on the skill of the principal. Compared to this, in the case of Japanese schools there is no want of examples of schools that operate well even when the principal is not particularly competent. Among those schools that we visited, there were many schools where the leader stratum was solid. It is the solidarity among these leaders, their executive ability to translate a shared vision into concrete activities, and their organizational capacity for eliciting a can-do spirit from every one of the teachers which formed the nucleus of school building.

Second, one can cite the contrast between "individual and learning guidance" and "group and life guidance". Many items related to the individual relationships between teachers and students and teaching and learning guidance are noted in the list for Europe and the United States, but there is nothing at all related directly to teaching and learning guidance. In contrast, things related to student guidance and life guidance like those in (1) and (2) are listed in the case of Japan, and one can see that the viewpoint of raising the quality of the student group is emphasized here. In addition, as shown in (3) and (4) the focus is on those items that inquire into the role and quality level of the teachers' group. I noticed these contrasts when I placed these two lists side by side and reviewed them, but I feel that this difference could even be considered dramatic.

Third, one can cite the contrast between "school-centered" and "emphasizing ties with the home and local community". Although one finds the item "Good relations with the home" in tenth place on the list for Europe and the United States, but the creation of schools in Europe and the United States basically has the feeling of "a contest inside the school", and the current situation is that almost no home visits are being made. Compared to this, at many of the schools that we visited, cooperation with the home and then the local community was highly valued. The teachers feel in their bones that there is limit to the school's power alone, and adopted the stance of continuing to manage the school while tapping into the strength of guardians and people in the local community.

Thus, although certain shared points may be observed between the two lists, major contrasts rooted in differences in initial school culture and educational climate were confirmed. There are of course many points that we should study in the theory of effective schools in Europe and the United States, but I believe that we must aim at constructing our own theory of effective schools rooted in the cultural climate of Japan.

5 Future Issues

In the course of pursuing further the theory of effective schools in Japan, a number of issues have accumulated. Among these, I would like to point out 4 points that may be considered the chief ones, and thereby bring this article to a close.

First of all, there is the issue of the development of appropriate academic achievement tests. The term effective schools describes "schools that are supporting the academic achievement of children who are in a disadvantageous environment educationally", but what becomes a problem first at that time is the key point of "What kind of academic achievement should be considered important?" or "What part of academic achievement should be at issue?"

In our study, questions relating to the basis and foundation of each subject, which the representatives of the classroom teachers prepared through joint consultations, were asked on the tests. Compared to this, there may also be the view that "Wouldn't it be better to ask more applied questions with a higher level of difficulty?", and "Shouldn't precisely those questions that make it possible to measure children's ability to think be asked on the tests?" Naturally the results that emerge will differ depending on the nature of the questions that are established. There is a high likelihood that the lineup for the effective schools that are discovered will change depending on the content of the academic achievement tests. Settling on the qualities of the academic achievement about which we should inquire constitutes the first stage of the work.

In connection with this, secondly, there is the problem of creating suitable indices for family background. There is the problem of what indices should be used to grasp the circumstances of "being in a disadvantageous environment educationally." This is also a problem that must be solved suitably for the construction of our own theory of effective schools in Japan.

Since the University of Tokyo Kansai Study in 2001, we have adopted two indices, "father's educational history" and "cultural stratum", as the chief group categories. Assuming that it is possible to use "parent's profession" or "income stratum", it may be possible to deduce more interesting results, but when we examine the current state of Japan, systematically collecting such information is more or less impossible from the standpoint of protection of privacy, etc. Our creation of the index of "cultural stratum" was so to speak a next best solution, but if we consider the matter from this time forward, there is a feeling that this makeshift index of "cultural stratum" may be rather appropriate from the standpoint of grasping the educational skills of the household. However, this is not a perfect solution. The development of indices that make it possible to "reach those spots that itch" is highly desirable.

Thirdly, the design of successive school effect research is desirable. That is, the implementation not of snapshot-like, one-shot studies, but rather of effective school research that brings "the passage of time" into the field of vision, is deemed to be necessary.

The research studies that we carried out were implemented in an exploratory sense, and could not escape being isolated and snapshot-like in nature. No one knows what the span of time is during which the effective schools found in our research will maintain their sound state. To overstate this point, there is absolutely no way for us to know whether a school that is judged to be an effective school at a certain point in time was such a year prior to that, or will be such a year later.

On this point, I want to underscore strongly the importance of incorporating the viewpoint of the theory of effective schools in the academic achievement studies that are being actively implemented at present at the level of municipalities. The general rule is that academic achievement

studies at the municipal level are periodically implemented, either annually or once every two or three years. If a framework like that developed in this article can be incorporated into this, we can anticipate that insights about the themes of "efforts by schools" and "sustainability of results" will be gained. At present, in the study of the actual state of academic achievement in Osaka Prefecture implemented in May 2005, an analysis adapted to the theory of effective schools is being conducted at the initiative of my research department.

Finally, in connection with the above points, I want to mention the necessity of research related to the school improvement process. In England, where the theory of effective schools has blossomed the most, the accumulation of school improvement research was observed along with school effects research, and today exchanges between the two are being promoted, and several fascinating studies and educational practices continue to be developed (White & Barber, 1997; Harris & Bennett, 2001).

School improvement research means practical research that aims at elucidating the process of "how a school becomes an effective school". In England, one observes commonly a form wherein university teachers with teaching experience are taking the lead in school improvement research in cooperation with teachers in the classroom, but the "qualitative visitation study" that we attempted in the "school effects study" may perhaps be viewed as an embryonic form of such a type of school effects research. The future scenario has already been written about how we should proceed from statistical research, which depicts statically what kind of school is effective, to practical research, which depicts dynamically the process of the construction of such schools.

If we take another look backward, 7.13 million children, which corresponds to 99% of the 7.20 million elementary school students in Japan, are attending public elementary schools, and similarly 3.38 million children, which corresponds to 93.3% of the 3.63 million middle school students in Japan, are attending public middle schools (The word "public" here also includes "state-run"; the numbers for both are based on the "Basic Survey of Schools", 2005). At the present time, when bashing of public schools is intensifying and the fever for private education has risen to previously unseen levels, the vast majority of elementary and middle school students are still passing through the gates of public schools.

If we assume that imparting to children the "academic achievement" and "social skills" that are indispensable for continuing to live as responsible adults is one of the duties of public education, the main stage for accomplishing this is probably "public schools". It is precisely at public schools, where a wide variety of people congregate, that children can nurture definite academic achievement and rich interpersonal and social skills. What we should do is to acknowledge the good aspects of public schools, which are continuing to struggle under a variety of restrictive conditions, and continue to protect and nurture these schools. It would appear that unfortunately the trend of educational reforms based in neoliberalism, which continue to be promoted today, may harbor the risk of undermining the foundation itself on which such public schools exist. Japan's future can only be realized through a resurgence of public schools. With this firmly in mind, I want to continue my journey in search of a Japanese version of an effective school.

Note

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