Poverty, Education, and National Policy in the “Affluent Society”:
A Comparison of the United States and Japan in the 1960s

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1965 is significant for both American and Japanese education, especially for those who are concerned with the interrelation between education, discrimination, and poverty. In the United States, under President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty and Great Society policies, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA 1965) for federal aid to education for disadvantaged children, especially black children. Exactly in the same year the Japanese government published a truly epoch-making report based on the intense debates at the Special Council for Integration of Buraku People (Japan’s outcaste),¹ which later lead to the Law on Special Measures for “Dowa Projects of 1969. In this essay I compare the Unites States’ Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Japan’s Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects.

In both cases the national government, after a long period of hesitation, decided to take action to resolve the extremely difficult social problem of poverty and discrimination against their minority people. However, the historical context for racial minorities in the United States, especially that of

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African American (blacks), differs considerably from that of Buraku people in Japan. There is no doubt that discrimination against black people has its roots in the history of slavery, but it should not be ignored that in the postbellum period the status of black people was not improved because of the actions of the white majority, and progress was made very slowly. It was not until the 1960s that the civil rights of black people were practically secured. In contrast, Buraku discrimination in Japan has its historical roots in the feudal system of the medieval period. Unlike discrimination against black people, Buraku discrimination is not based on racial or ethnic difference but exclusion within the same “ethnic” group based on superstitious concepts such as that of “impurity.” In 1871 the Meiji government officially declared the abolition of feudalism and the emancipation of Buraku people. Discrimination against Buraku people, however, still continued widely in many aspects of everyday life, though in terms of political rights Buraku people were indistinguishable from non-Buraku people. As a result, Buraku people generally remained in an economically disadvantaged status. Occupation and reform by the U.S. Army after World War II did little to help improve their economic and social status; however, the postwar democracy greatly helped the growth of the Buraku liberation movement. By the 1960s, the Japanese government could not ignore the power and demands of the Buraku Liberation League (Buraku Kaiho Domei), the most powerful organization in the movement.

Looking at the legislation in these two cases, we can discern some slight differences. While the Elementary and Secondary Education Act sought to improve the social conditions of not only blacks but all Americans in poverty, the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects limited its target to the Buraku people. Importantly, we can find in both cases, however, a similar transformation of recognition on the part of the national government. In this transformation, a historically deeply rooted and extremely difficult problem of discrimination was translated, in the new context of an affluent society and great economic growth, into the paradox of poverty in the affluent society. For the resolution of this paradox, education was underscored in both cases. As we trace in detail in the next section, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 appears in such a context and addresses the issue of education directly. In contrast, the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965 and the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects of 1969 seem to be not about education at first glance. However, large sections of the report were, in fact, dedicated to the issue of education, and the law of 1969 mandated that the government provide financial support for “Dowa education,”
education for the liberation of Buraku people and the abolition of discrimination against them. It is important that without affluence and economic growth in both countries in the 1960s, and the concurrent recognition by the respective national governments, neither could have taken this new step toward the rectification of deep-rooted discrimination. The approaches taken in resolving the problem of poverty, and the assumed role of education, however, differed between the United States and Japan. This difference may be related, as discussed later, to the interrelationship of welfare and education.

There have been many studies about both of these cases, although those by English-speaking scholars on the Dowa Projects or Buraku discrimination are much fewer in number than Japanese scholars’ studies on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or the War on Poverty.3 In the case of comparative studies, however, the matter is more complex. First, of the writings on minority education and welfare policy in the United States, few discuss the Japanese Buraku problem or Dowa education in a comparative way, either in English or Japanese, with the exceptions of those by John U. Ogbu and Michael W. Apple.4 Second, although writings on Japanese minority education and welfare policy often take the form of comparative studies with Western countries in general, and the Unites States in particular, most scholars hesitate to draw an analogy between Buraku people and racial or ethnic minorities in Western countries.5 Furthermore, as Keita Takayama, a critical analyst of education, argues, such comparative studies are often dominated by Anglo-American scholarship and cannot avoid committing to an “Orientalist” framework.6 I steadfastly believe, however, that the attempt at undertaking an acrobatic feat in finding a parallel between the United States and Japan in the 1960s can open a path for overcoming such Orientalism.


Here I will briefly consider the history of the American War on Poverty in the 1960s. The goal is to understand how education was incorporated and assigned its meaning within this attempt to tackle poverty, by focusing on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Before deliberately considering the act, it is best to begin by describing its background. Three points need to be discussed: the “rediscovery of poverty,” debates on a “culture of poverty,” and the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime (PCJD). This background context will clearly illuminate
the underlying contradictions of ESEA 1965.

A. The Rediscovery of Poverty: Background

In retrospect, it can be said that the 1960s was the period of the “rediscovery” of poverty. By the late 1950s the assumption that the United States was an affluent society was believed to be beyond doubt. Challenging this was the claim that poverty existed not only in areas far outside the country’s borders but within American society itself. As a result, writers such as Michael Harrington, author of *The Other America* (1962), were faced with his readers’ embarrassment that reflected the optimism of middle-class Americans.

In his influential book, Harrington used the term “new poor” to distinguish the poverty he and his contemporaries in 1960s observed from the poverty that had been widespread in the “older ethnic slum” in the earlier part of the twentieth century. In his view, people in such slums not only had had a vital community life but also aspirations for a better life. Most modern slums, however, were populated by the “dregs,” who could not get out of their position, and by ill-prepared migrants for urban life from the South, many of whom suffered from the burden of racial discrimination.7

Another aspect of Harrington’s “new” poverty lay in his emphasis on the breakup of the family that was quite frequent in black slum communities. He worried especially about the growing tendency of young adults to engage in “serial monogamy” and the increase of illegitimacy in the slum. Other writers of Harrington’s era, in line with his “pathological” argument about the black family, drew attention to the increase in the number of female-headed households in black slum communities, and attempted to relate such tendencies to the frequency of delinquency.8

Such “pathological” views of the cultural traits of the black family as seen by Harrington and his colleagues, however, were dismissed in the research and debates that followed afterward. The later findings were that social problems such as illegitimacy and family breakup correlated best with low-income households; all the other presumed causes of social ills were relatively insignificant compared to racial and economic problems.9 Harrington’s point on the “new” poverty was, however, correct in that in comparison to previous times, a higher percentages of the poor in the 1960s were sick, disabled, old, nonwhite, poorly educated, or members of female-headed families.10

The crucial assumption underlying Harrington’s book, as pointed out by James Patterson, a leading American historian, was that “poverty was both anomalous and immoral in such an affluent society; indeed it was funda-
mentally un-American.”11 Key words such as “anomalous” and “un-American” may help us understand Harrington’s recognition of the predicament of racial minorities, especially black people. Here, the historically deep-rooted problem of racial discrimination was transformed, in the new context of an otherwise affluent society with great economic growth, into the paradox of poverty in that wealthy society. It is well known that Harrington’s book greatly influenced the leaders of the federal government in the 1960s.12 This recognition correlates with the drawing up of the ESEA 1965 just a few years later.

B. Culture of Poverty: Background

Although Harrington’s claim of “rediscovering” poverty attracted much attention, his suggestion that the disorganizing characteristics of black families, such as high rates of illegitimacy and female-headed households, was the cause of their poverty and dependency on welfare was widely challenged by scholars and critics. They criticized Harrington by arguing that the “cultural” traits of the poor are the result, not the cause, of their severe economic conditions and that community life in the slum is far better organized than is generally imagined.13

Nevertheless, the very question whether the cultural traditions of particular groups, blacks for instances, explain their low-incomes was eagerly explored during this period. According to Patterson, scholars used the term “culture of poverty” in this context mainly to distinguish “something” from the lower-class that had positive ethnic or regional characteristics.14 This long-running inquiry into “culture” indicates that there was a desire to find a pathological cause of poverty. I refer to three passages from Harrington’s book:

Poverty in the United States is a culture, an institution, a way of life. . . . There is, in short, a language of the poor, a psychology of the poor, a world view of the poor. To be impoverished is to be an internal alien, to grow up in a culture that is radically different from the one that dominates the society.

The most important analytic point to have emerged in this description of the other America is the fact that poverty in America forms a culture, a way of life and feeling, that makes it a whole.

There is, in a sense, a personality of poverty, a type of human being produced by the grinding, wearing life of the slums. The other Americas feel differently than the rest of the nation. They tend to be hopeless and passive, yet prone to bursts of violence; they are lonely and isolated, yet often rigid and hostile. To be poor is
not simply to be deprived of the material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal, 
futile universe, an America within an America, a twisted spirit.\textsuperscript{15}

It is worth noting that Harrington’s argument on “culture of poverty” is 
heavily influenced by Oscar Lewis, a leading anthropologist and the author of \textit{The Children of Sanchez} and \textit{La Vida}.\textsuperscript{16} First, both scholars agree that the 
culture of poverty produces psychological consequences such as “present- 
mindedness” and an inability to “defer gratification.” Second, they both em- 
phasize the familial and intergenerational level of the culture of poverty.\textsuperscript{17} 
Harrington claimed that “there is a very real possibility that many, even 
most, of the children of the poor will become the fathers and mothers of the 
poor.”\textsuperscript{18}

Harrington and Lewis were criticized by many scholars for their misuses 
of the concept of “culture,” for example, where culture is described by Har- 
rington and Lewis as an independent variable that can be isolated from the 
socioeconomic setting. Other researchers contested on empirical grounds of 
Harrington’s assertion that poverty is long term and intergenerational.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite such academic vulnerabilities, the claim by Harrington and his 
colleagues that there existed a “culture of poverty” successfully attracted the 
American public’s attention to this problem, resulting in active public mea- 
ures against poverty by the federal government. In fact, Harrington’s argu- 
ment reemerged in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act’s approach 
as a cause of deficiency, whereby disadvantaged students suffering from a 
“culture of poverty” could only succeed if they were taught middle-class 
values.\textsuperscript{20} Although it’s worth noting that an approach that focuses on defi- 
ciency does not show us the complete picture of the act, it should also be 
noted that the popular theory of a culture of poverty does loom in the back-
ground of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

C. The President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime: 
Background

Most scholars agree that the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delin- 
quency and Youth Crime, established in 1961 under the Kennedy adminis- 
tration, had a great influence on the educational legislation in the 1960s, es-
pecially the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.\textsuperscript{21} In fighting 
delinquency, the committee emphasized structural defects in the social sys-
tem as the most important factor. That is, “any attempt to prevent delin-
quency implied changing the social system to make institutions more re-
sponsive to the poor and perhaps challenging the power structure itself.”\textsuperscript{22} In
the end, the committee took the view that “the answers to lower-class delinquency and poverty lay in a massive reform of institutional practices in schools, social-welfare agencies, and employment services.”

In particular, David Hackett, the leading member of the Committee, “had always seen change within the schools as a vital part of any effort to deal with delinquency,” and “he perceived his delinquency program as a model for an antipoverty effort.” Hackett, who later became an important member of President Lyndon Johnson’s task force planning team for the War on Poverty, pursued a theoretical line that sought to combine the topics of poverty and education, and this subsequently became significant for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This combination, however, was also rooted deeply in American history. As Michael B. Katz points out, in the nineteenth century “crime and poverty, in discussion of the time, did not constitute two distinct problems.”

Another influence on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that came from the Committee was the emphasis on community action. Here community action refers to the active participation of community residents in the formulation and administration of their own programs. A book that influenced the members of the committee, Cloward and Ohlin’s *Delinquency and Opportunity*, pointed to “the need for a redistribution of power downward and outward to communities of the poor” to prevent delinquency. The aim of recognizing both the importance of opportunity and of community action resulted in the government requiring “the establishment of local agencies to receive and spend federal funds” that “bypassed local political structures, empowered new groups, and challenged existing institutions.” Katz argues that the promotion of community action as “orthogonal, if not contradictory, to” the principle of equalizing opportunity, with its focus on the individual and its avoidance of redistribution of wealthy and power.

D. Contradictions in the Underlying Assumptions of the Act

President Johnson inherited the War on Poverty policies from Kennedy. He was successful in having the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) pass Congress and established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), which was to run the poverty program. The basic policy on poverty of the Office of Economic Opportunity was, as Hugh Davis Graham has argued, giving a “hand up, not a handout,” that is, rejecting an income-transfer strategy in favor of a service strategy that placed a premium on job training and education. It was generally consistent, Graham argued, with the antipoverty strategy as a whole. He pointed out that the greatest principle was “equal op-
portunity” and asserted that it “stressed improved and expanded services, especially those related to education and job-preparation.” From this it is easy for us to understand why Johnson’s War on Poverty and Great Society emphasized the role of education to such a high degree. Julie Roy Jeffrey also argued that “the support of federal aid to education as a crucial element in the attack on poverty rested on the belief that schools were effective agents of upward mobility in American life.” President Johnson and administration planners appealed to the American people’s “traditional and tenacious belief in the power of education,” the belief that public schools could “cure a variety of social ills without revolutionizing existing political and economic arrangements.”

However, Patterson makes a notable comment on this point. He contends that the programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity depended at first on the structuralist insight that economic growth, however beneficial, could not pull all people out of poverty, and that the government was therefore required to transfer payments of the rich to the poor. In fact the Economic Report of the President in 1964 stated, “In the future, economic growth alone will provide relatively fewer handicaps that deny the poor fair access to the expanding incomes of a growing economy.” The targeted group mentioned here overlaps with what Harrington referred to as the “new poor”: the unfortunate left out of economic growth. Patrick J. McGuinn points out that “ESEA was intended to be primarily a redistributive bill.” Nevertheless, the policies Johnson’s administration later adopted stressed, as seen above, the need to enhance opportunity, rather than give handouts to the poor who had been left outside the labor market. According to Patterson, “The most fundamental faith of many of the planners was in opening up ‘opportunity,’ a goal that again emphasized helping the poor help themselves and offering services, not cash, much like the manpower training programs and the public welfare amendments. It aimed to get the poverty out of the people—and afterward the people out of poverty.”

This contradiction in the underlying assumptions of ESEA 1965 deeply influenced its characteristics, resulting in vagueness in the language of the legislation, as will be discussed later. Refusal of income redistribution in favor of policies that focus on the individual with an emphasis on education and job training is contrary to the idea of structuralism shared by the earlier influential figures of antipoverty programs and their designers such as John Kenneth Galbraith and Gunnar Myrdal. The implications of the concept “culture” are also at issue. Culture is principally a phenomenon of the collective level, but in the context of the War on Poverty it was generally used
to mean the traditional and conventional American view that the problem of poverty is the problem of the individual and a problem of immorality. It was, more or less, rhetoric to avoid “revolutionizing existing political and economic arrangements.” Nevertheless, the odd combination of individualistic “opportunity” and the emphasis on community action and the “redistribution of power” should also be highlighted. This is an extremely important point because in the history of the relationship between the power structure and American education, the intervention of the federal government was for a long time strongly resisted and inhibited.

II. ESTABLISHMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

With the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, for the first time in the history of the United States a massive infusion of federal funds went into schools attended by poor children. The bill was signed by President Johnson on April 11, 1965, and was landmark legislation for federal educational policy for the poor and minority people in the United States. First I will describe how the act was put together and approved by Congress. Then I address the implementation phase of the act. This will show the contradictions involved in the act. Finally, I discuss the possibilities and limits of the act as a strategy of the antipoverty program.

A. Preparation for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

In spite of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Francis Keppel, the commissioner of the Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), deemed it inadequate. The Economic Opportunity Act was “not a vigorous attack on either the educational deficiencies due to poverty or the weakness of the public school system.” 37 HEW and Keppel began to seek a chance to establish a new bill for educational aid.

It is well known, however, that “the old issues of religion, federal control, and money” had prevented bills granting federal aid to education from passing in Congress.38 Indeed, the Kennedy administration had failed to pass such a bill in 1961 and 1963. Kennedy sent a bill to Congress that would have provided general aid for teachers’ salaries and construction, appealing to the fundamental importance of education for economic growth. Kennedy’s attempt, though, was in vain. This is why Keppel, just after being appointed as commissioner to the Office of Education, began direct communication with Catholic interest groups. Despite planners in the Office of
Education who were “still attracted to the department’s traditional type of school bill offering public schools general aid for construction and teacher salaries,” Keppel also began to seek a new rationale. His answer was the “poverty approach,” namely, that inadequate education and poverty are interrelated.

As pointed out, the War on Poverty and the Great Society favored a service strategy over cash distributions. Furthermore, Harrington’s assumption that poverty is an “anomalous” phenomenon in an affluent society was a widespread view of the times. Such a climate influenced the national government’s perspective so that the historically deeply rooted problem of racial discrimination came to be seen as a paradox of poverty in an affluent society.

The “poverty approach” also led to a breakthrough in difficulties in regard to distribution of funds. According to Jeffrey, “One favored method of computing school aid was based on the number of children in school. But if only public school children were counted, Catholics objected; if all children in school were counted, public school interest groups objected.” Good rural-urban funds distribution was also necessary. Eventually, the planners found a solution by substituting “all of these controversial, complicated things for two thousand . . . dollars.” That is to say, “the final formula distributed funds to states based on the total number of children from families with an annual income under $2,000 and on the state’s average per pupil expenditure.”

In 1964, a year before the establishment of the ESEA 1965, President Johnson organized his legislative task force on education, whose chairman was John W. Gardner, and whose executive secretary was William B. Cannon, with members including Francis Keppel, Richard Goodwin, David Riesman, Ralph W. Tyler, and Jerrold R. Zacharias.

In early November 1964 a secret report by the task force was delivered to the White House, with a total of eighteen recommendations. In the report “the first priority was the antipoverty emphasis on equal educational opportunity or ‘access’ for children of disadvantaged background.” It “went on record as favoring general federal aid, especially for school construction; but it noted that if such aid (with an equalization formula favoring poorer areas) was politically infeasible, then it favored exploring other avenues of channeling federal funds into disadvantaged areas.” Eventually, “the other avenue” was selected: “a program of categorical aid for the children of the poor in the slums and depressed areas, one that would reach children in both public and private schools,” which is the prefiguring of Title I of ESEA 1965.
B. The Passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

1964 was an election year. When President Johnson’s campaign got under way, he made the passage of an education bill a major issue. Soon after his great victory in November, Johnson told the Office of Education to begin drawing up the legislation in detail. Meanwhile, Keppel was negotiating with the two major interest groups over how to resolve the religious issues: the National Education Association (NEA), with its insistence on excluding parochial schools from federal aid, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference, with its equal insistence that they be included. As the fruit of Keppel’s effort, on December 16, 1964, the NEA announced that aid for parochial students would be acceptable.45

The bill was sent to Congress in early January 1965. It established two goals: “to strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities” in the nation’s schools. Title I, focusing on the children of poverty, recognized their “special educational needs . . . and the impact that concentrations of low income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs.” It was “the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance . . . to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low income families.” Title I was the heart of the bill because most of the money was concentrated in it, and it was related to the goal of improving educational opportunities, while the other four titles related to the goal of improving educational quality. In Title II grants were established to provide library books and other materials for the use of private and public school children. Title III set up supplementary education centers to furnish educational programs and services unavailable in local schools, to conduct experimental programs, and to serve as models for regular schools. Title IV sought to support regional centers of research. And Title V gave funds to state education departments to be used for the purpose of making them stronger, more efficient, and responsive.46

The House Subcommittee on Education and Labor began its hearings on the January 22, 1965. In the hearings the secretary of HEW, Anthony J. Celebrezze, emphasized that the goals of ESEA were “to break the cycle of poverty and to pull the poor into the economic mainstream.” “The educational problem,” he suggested, “was largely one of inadequate financing for schools in poverty districts, and the solution was, of course, federal aid.”47 Some fundamental questions were asked that revealed the uncertainty of a number of assumptions in regard to ideas of education, but these never resulted in amendments to the bill. Charles Goodell, a Republican from New
York, pointed out that a good deal of educational research indicated that a child’s early years were the most fruitful for educational intervention and asked why the bill focused on children between five and seventeen. John Brademas, a Democrat from Indiana, wondered whether there would be enough trained teachers to implement the program. In addition, he asked “how Congress could be sure that spending money would really improve the quality of education” and “how much was really known about educational programs for the poor.” Receiving ambiguous answers, he proposed that “the money should be concentrated not on Title I but on research.” Senator Robert Kennedy warned that money without knowledge was useless: “Unless there is a meaningful program developed at the local level, which is really tested and checked by you, I don’t think this program is going to be effective.” Roger Freeman, an authority on school financing, suggested: “No evidence is being advanced for such charges except that there is a correlation between low family income, low educational achievements, and unemployment. That correlation does not itself prove what the cause of the trouble is, where it all starts, and how it can be corrected.” Indeed, the definition of the key concept “educational deprivation” was not well considered, and Keppel’s answer was confused. While he mentioned that an educationally deprived child was not necessarily poor, in the hearings he resorted to studies correlating low income with low achievement. Senator Peter Dominick, a Republican from Colorado, saw the commitment of the bill to overcoming cultural deprivation as incomplete and suggested that all five titles, not just the one, focus on this problem. Finally, after the entire legislative process, the bill passed the House on March 29 and the Senate on April 9, 1965. In signing it, President Johnson commented: “No law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America.”

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is made up of Titles I, II, III, IV, and V. The most important for discussing our theme is Title I, “Financial Assistance to Local Educational Agencies for the Education of Children of Low-Income Families,” very often coupled with the well-known concept of “compensatory education.” This bill enabled funding of more than one billion dollars “to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means . . . which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children.”

Title I aid was calculated by multiplying 50 percent of the state’s average per pupil expenditures for the school year 1963–64 by the total number of
five-to-seventeen-year-old children in the local school district who were from either families with an annual income below $2,000 or those from families with higher incomes resulting from Aid to Families with Dependent Children relief payments. This sum was then divided by two. Naturally, in order to receive federal aid, local school districts had to submit plans for improving and expanding their educational programs for disadvantaged children. Questions were raised during the hearings in the House in regard to this calculation formula for funds distribution. Jeffrey wrote: “Since the allotment a state would receive was based not only on the numbers of deprived children but also on the average amount that state spent on each pupil’s education, rich states would get more money than poor states with an equal number of poor children.” Some doubted whether it was a fair way to distribute funds meant for helping poor and deprived children.

C. Implementation and Evaluation of the Act

Patrick J. McGuinn sums up the generally agreed difficulties the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act confronted in five points:

First, the legislation itself . . . incorporated multiple goals and methods, some of which were incompatible with one another. Second, the Act gave federal administrators few tools to force compliance with federal directives and goals in the use of funds. Third, even if such tools had been available, the agency charged with implementing the Act—the U.S. Office of Education—was for several years after its passage disinclined or unable to make use of such compliance tools. Fourth, lingering opposition to federal control of education ensured that attempts to rigorously administer ESEA would generate a strong political backlash. Fifth, the politics and implementation of the Act were greatly complicated by the addition of new purposes and programs and increasingly contentious racial politics in the years following 1965.

Relating to McGuinn’s first point, the act’s originally distinct goal to improve academic achievement in order to break the poverty cycle gradually became diffused and vague during the designing of the funds allocation formula. As mentioned above, the federal funds each local school district could receive were calculated based on the number of children both from families earning less than $2,000 and from families on welfare. A district needed a minimum number of one hundred poor children or 3 percent of the total number of children to qualify for aid. As Jeffrey pointed out, because a district needed so few poor children to qualify for funds, most would receive it:
“On the county level 95% of the country’s counties would be eligible for Title I money.” This meant that the aid was tied extremely close to the general aid for helping a wide range of children, rather than the “categorical aid” concentrated on the disadvantaged. A witness pointed out in the 1966 House hearings that; “It seems inconceivable . . . that many (90–95%) districts are seriously affected by poverty.” In fact poor children were clustered in a few areas.56

Relating to the McGuinn’s second, third, and fourth points, Graham pointed out that “the upshot of all this is that when Title I was implemented, it produced not a Title I program, but something more like 30,000 separate and different Title I programs.”57 Indeed, it was widely observed that federal funds were being diverted by state and local education authorities to purposes for which they were not intended. Milbrey McLaughlin, a leading scholar of education, also suggested that “in a federal system of government, and especially in education, the balance of power resides at the bottom, with special interest groups. Accordingly, the implementation of federal initiatives relies in large measure on the incentives and preferences of local authorities; there is little effective muscle at the top.”58 As bitter experience had intensified the distrust of federal government by state and local education authorities, the regulative and supervising functions of federal aid significantly began to increase in the early 1970s.

Finally, relating to the McGuinn’s fifth point, although Title I was coupled with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and expected to encourage desegregation of schools in the South, this did not occur in practice. In the 1967 Senate subcommittee, a case was reported in which the “southern districts used the funds to strengthen segregation. . . . In Lincoln County, Georgia, for instance, Negro schools began to serve pupils free lunches when freedom of choice was initiated. Title I funds paid for the lunches, which served as a bribe for students to stay put.”59

D. Coda

As many sources pointed out, Title I funds could not reach all the needy poor children, but quite a large amount did in fact reach their intended recipients. In comparison to the Japanese Buraku issues, however, it seems odd that in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act only “the poor” were focused on, rather than “racial minorities” or, more explicitly, “blacks.” Here we can discern an implicit but firm dominance of economic thinking over anything else in the act. More accurately, in a bill granting federal aid for education, the economic logic that the bill would provide a
chance to break the poverty cycle was found as the best and only highway to reach the goal of getting it through Congress. In this context, the cornerstone of education was seen to be economic. From a wider viewpoint, however, education was thoroughly contradictory to the logic of economics. It is not surprising that during the legislative process many critics pointed out the lack of a theoretical foundation for education in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The prominence of the economic logic and the subservience of education to it can best be understood in the context of the transformation of the understanding of the racial discrimination problem. In this, the historically deep-rooted problem of racial discrimination was reevaluated in the new context of an “affluent” society with great economic growth as a paradox of poverty. This opened a way for a highly optimistic solution strategy: that of absorbing those in poverty into the mainstream economy by the power of economic growth. Following Harrington, we can name this agenda as “the other version of Americanization.”

III. THE JAPANESE COUNTERPART: THE DOWA PROJECT

The remainder of this article will be devoted to the case in Japan, especially the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965 and the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects of 1969. Before we do so, however, it is necessary to note that, strictly speaking, the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965 is not necessarily a legislative counterpart to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The report was only the forerunner of the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects in 1969. However, the text of the commission’s report is more useful than the law itself for clarifying the way in which education and the poverty problem were combined in minds of those who concerned the policy making of Dowa Projects. Furthermore, we cannot miss the importance of the synchronicity of the year 1965. First, I focus on the Dowa Strategy Commission’s report.

A. Background of the Report, 1958–64

For an overview of the history leading up to the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965, it is helpful to begin with the late 1950s when there was a grassroots struggle for “free compulsory education” led by the Buraku Liberation League. This slogan may sound odd, because many people think that the Constitution of the State of Japan had already secured free compulsory education for all. The claims of the Buraku Liberation League and Bur-
aku people, however, remind us of that the legislative word “free” here only refers to tuition costs and that in reality education does cost families money in Japan, which is especially hard on poor families. In August 1959, the league’s Osaka Prefecture branch demanded that local authorities provide:

- Firm policies for the problem of nonenrollment and nonattendance
- Free school lunches
- Free provision of textbooks and school supplies
- Government aid for school trips
- Installation of swimming pools

The statement said that “there are many children [from Buraku communities] who becomes reluctant to attend school because of the teacher’s pressure they face every day for the payment of school lunches or other school expenses such as costs for school trips.” Despite the demands by the Buraku Liberation League activists and Buraku people there was often reluctance on the part of local governments for making improvements, and those disappointing experiences prompted them to then demand the establishment of a national government comprehensive policy for the Dowa problem.

An episode in the early 1960s of the struggle for and the eventual realization of the free nationwide provision of textbooks is an important event in the development of the Buraku people’s struggle. The demand for free textbooks had already arisen in the late 1950s in many Buraku communities in Osaka, Kyoto, and other prefectures. The significant struggle, however, arose in the Nagahama Buraku community in Kochi Prefecture, and this eventually led to the national government changing its policy.

Nagahama was largely a poor fisherman’s community located near the south coast of Kochi city, the capital city of the prefecture. Most children attended Nagahama elementary school and Nankai junior high school. In February 1961, the parents of Nagahama gathered, aligned with and supported by the Buraku Liberation League and other democratic groups, to demand free provision of textbooks. They complained about the status quo, in which most of the students with the exception of those on welfare had to purchase their textbooks, was unconstitutional according to Article 26 of Japan’s constitution. Their tactics were unique in that they not only petitioned local government but also expanded their wings to include all parents and students in their boycott. Many parents and students who could have afforded the textbooks joined the boycott, and the teachers of Nagahama elementary school and Nankai junior high school also cooperated with them by running their
classes without textbooks. The boycott continued for more than a week, and then the local authorities of Kochi city gave in and decided free provision. Finally Kochi city government complained to the national government about their plight. This episode caused the national government to make available free textbooks throughout Japan starting in 1965. Additionally, this event remained as a constant reminder to the government of the formidable power of grassroots organization by the Buraku community.63


As a result of the Buraku Liberation League’s demands for action from the national government, in 1961 the Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter LDP) government decided to organize the Dowa Policy Council of the prime minister’s cabinet to conduct several social surveys “to provide an accurate picture of the Burakumin [Buraku people] situation.”64 After heated discussions that lasted three years and eight months, the council published a final report in August 1965 that recommended “massive governmental aid to remove the negative environment and life conditions as well as to improve the educational and vocational situation among Burakumin.”65

According to the Introduction portion of the Dowa Strategy Commission’s report:

The Dowa problem means the issue of human equality and freedom within the principle of human universality, and therefore relates directly to the issue of fundamental human rights as guaranteed under the terms of the constitution. It follows, therefore, that the commission is not prepared to allow the problems facing Dowa residents to remain unsolved, and while finding an immediate solution to Dowa problems is the government’s responsibility, at the same time, we have worked extremely hard at finding ways and means of raising people’s awareness that this is also a problem the general population must confront.66

The recognition of poverty in the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965 is well described by the theory of the “discrimination cycle.” On the one hand, it reported, there is psychological discrimination, which is located latently in people’s conception or awareness, expressed in their language and actions. This includes prejudice or misunderstanding toward Buraku people. On the other hand, de facto discrimination includes miserable conditions in housing, less-privileged occupational status, low income, low educational achievement, a high proportion of dependent families, and the like. It is argued that de facto discrimination is caused by psychological discrimination, and then the former is strengthened by de facto discrimination, re-
sulting in a “discrimination cycle.” This cycle is equated with the “cycle of poverty” because in the concept of de facto discrimination poverty is most salient. The most important strategy for breaking the cycle, the report contended, was to secure complete equality of opportunity in employment and education for Buraku people, and to promote upward mobility by incorporating the excessive labor forces piled in the Buraku community into the productive processes of modern industry. It is worth noting that, in the view of the report, the premodern status of industry and low productive economy in the Buraku area were hindrance to Japanese economic growth and progress. The main agenda was therefore the modernization of Buraku socioeconomic structures.

It is easy for us to discern here what we may call the transformation of recognition. Buraku discrimination, a genuinely historically deep-rooted problem in Japan, was completely translated into the “anomalous” situation of poverty in an “affluent” society. The need for improvement in education was, of course, also emphasized in the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965, especially with a focus on low achievement and the low proportion of those reaching higher-level education. This was a necessary part of modernizing the Buraku community. However, education of society as a whole was more seriously taken up as a way to reduce prejudice against Buraku people. Namely, in the report, a smaller emphasis was placed on educating Buraku people toward attaining upward mobility than educating non-Buraku people to correctly understand the past and present of the Buraku people. The report points out the role of education and schools in endeavoring to find the right solution when cases of discrimination occur.

Finally, we should not overlook one of the most important recommendations of the report: the creation of “special measures” legislation. Under pressure from the Buraku Liberation League to comply with this recommendation, in 1969 the Diet passed the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects to implement “a type of affirmative action to gain redress for four centuries of social discrimination against the Burakumin. . . . Between 1969 and 1994 the central and local governments contributed a total of 12,000 billion yen (about 120 billion dollars) to improve Buraku areas throughout Japan.” As a result of the law, schools that children from Buraku communities attended were benefited with additional resources and staff, and scholarships and supplementary payments of school fees were provided. As a result, the discrepancy between Buraku people and non-Buraku people in educational attainment, occupational status, and income decreased, although Buraku people still lag behind the national average.
C. Comparison with the Case of the United States

In comparison with the War on Poverty and the Great Society, Dowa Projects in Japan differs in that in the former education is more loosely linked to antipoverty strategy and as a means to promoting upward mobility. Dowa Projects emphasized more directly the importance of improving economic life through fuller employment. Education was kept relatively separate from economic problems and was more related to such cultural-political issues as reducing prejudice toward Buraku people at first and then for establishing a firm Burakumin identity among students in the later periods. In stark contrast, in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, education was firmly incorporated into the logic of an antipoverty strategy. Education was seen as the answer to breaking the cycle of poverty. In addition, however, as many studies reveal, members of Johnson’s administration were concerned that the act had been much more about legislating federal aid to education than helping poor and disadvantaged children. In the case of the American education act, the truth may be that the linkage with the poverty problem was chosen by the educationalists as the best way to secure passage of a bill for federal aid.

These differences can best be understood in the distinct political context of Japan in the early 1960s. In the late 1950s, the LDP government rapidly enacted major welfare measures under the outstanding leadership of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. These included the New National Health Law of 1958; the National Pension Law of 1959; the Welfare Pensions for the Aged, Mothers and Children; and the Disabled Person Law of 1959. (Nationwide health insurance was finally implemented in 1961.) Thus, the conservative government, faced with the shock of the Security Treaty crisis in 1960 and under threat of revolution, borrowed the policies of the Socialists Party, which had placed considerable emphasis on welfare reform. Interestingly, Kishi declared the Japanese version of a “war on poverty” when he stated his policy at his inauguration to be removing “three evils”: corruption, poverty, and violence. Considering that the Buraku Liberation League was one of the most powerful allies of the Socialists Party, the decision by Kishi’s cabinet to organize the Dowa Policy Council of the Prime Minister’s Cabinet could also be understood as policy borrowing from the Left. On March 11, 1958, Prime Minister Kishi, attending the Diet’s Committee on Social and Labor Policy, answered the questions of Socialist representative Kazuo Yagi and pledged to implement a comprehensive Dowa policy. The question and answer was as follows:
Yagi: I am very happy to hear the declaration of the prime minister. Well, there are a few remaining questions. I will ask one question. The solution of the Buraku problem usually tends to be equated with the improvement of the environment as in constructing new public baths or building a new community hall or repairing bad housing or repairing unpaved roads. Those are very important tasks and should be rapidly implemented. Next to this seems to be the problem of Dowa education. All of these things are important so that the government should take them seriously. But first of all is to provide a foundation for living, and the policy should be directed to this goal. Ultimately, to secure full employment is the supreme agenda. . . . Please let me know your ideas about it.

Kishi: I agree with Mr. Yagi’s point that it is necessary for all sections of the government to cooperate together when we seek the ultimate solution.76

As the citation above indicates, the emphasis on welfare in the policy of Kishi’s cabinet dramatically influenced the direction of the Dowa Strategy Commission’s report, resulting in minimal importance given to education and job training as a way to improve the social conditions of poor people. Thus, education found its best location in the Japanese context not in the sphere of economics but in that of cultural politics. More than eleven years had passed between the time of Kishi’s declaration and the passage of the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects. This occurred under the cabinet of Eisaku Sato, who is the younger brother of Nobusuke Kishi.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that in 1960’s Japan the progressive educational groups such as the Japan Teachers Union, another powerful ally of the Socialist Party, were heavily critical of the overly industry-oriented and meritocratic educational policies of the national government. In criticizing the ideas of Japanese progressive educators in the 1960s, Takehiko Kariya, a leading educational sociologist in Japan, argues:

There has been a long-term desire in Japan to avoid seeing relationship between students’ achievement or ability and their socioeconomic status. . . . Due to this strong aversion to seeing differences, educators and education administrators avoided possible connections between inequality and socioeconomic backgrounds.77

The Buraku Liberation League was firmly affiliated with the Japan Teachers Union since the late 1950s. This is why the creators of the educational vision of the Buraku Liberation League, most of which was reflected in the Dowa Strategy Commission’s report, were reluctant to incorporate education into the logics of economics. Rather, education was treated as a relatively autonomous area that mainly affected human awareness and cultural-
political matters. From this we can see that the strategy of the Japan Teachers Union and other leftist groups to separate education from the economy influenced the Dowa policies established in 1965.

Additionally, it is important to point out that the Dowa Strategy Commission Report of 1965 took a view different from the “culturally deprived” view of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. While the Dowa Strategy Commission highlighted the low achievement of Buraku children and the low educational level of their parents, it also emphasized that most of the parents were highly concerned about the education of their children and appreciated the great legacy of the Buraku Liberation Movement since 1920s, driven by Buraku people, few of whom had achieved higher education.78

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion of this article, I want to begin by calling attention to the great economic growth and widespread affluence in society that provided fertile conditions for the “discovery” of the disadvantaged both in the United States and Japan. We see this when recalling that Harrington, in his The Other America, assumed that poverty was both anomalous and immoral in such an affluent society and that it was fundamentally un-American. Such a view was also shared by the warriors of the War on Poverty in the federal government. Paradoxically, this affluence allowed society to take seriously the matter of poverty. This paradox resulted in reform that took a remedial, rather than revolutionary, approach to poverty. Although quite a few of those who were concerned with issues in the United States national government had a structuralist view, they did not take an approach that would result in the rebuilding of the whole socioeconomic structure, instead emphasizing education and job training as the tools for achieving upward mobility. Likewise, the driving force of the Dowa Projects in Japan was the view that the Buraku discrimination and the accompanying poverty in Buraku communities was such an unwelcome relic of the feudal past that must be removed as soon as possible from a modernizing nation. This was therefore not a radical reform of the social structure but a supplementary remedy for modernization. The importance of such transformations of recognition taken by the national government has been repeatedly highlighted in this article.

It is worth reemphasizing, however, that without the transformation of recognition mentioned above, the governments of both Japan and the United States could never have pushed ahead to improve the historically deep-
rooted problem of minority discrimination. In other words, the great economic growth and widespread affluence of the 1960s enabled those from diverse social backgrounds and political standpoints to join the process of improving the conditions of victims of discrimination. In the United States the problem was translated into the issue of distribution of federal funds to school districts. In contrast, in Japan the problem was translated into a modernist crusade against the vestiges of feudalism.

However, the significance of education in the Dowa Projects in Japan was more ambiguous than in the War on Poverty in the United States. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the conservative LDP government, especially Nobusuke Kishi’s cabinet, borrowed the welfare policies of the Socialist Party for strategic reasons, and this dramatically accelerated the progress in Dowa policies. The understanding of education as a way to improve the social condition of the Buraku people by providing a chance for upward mobility became marginal and gave way to welfare under the policy-borrowing regime. As a result, education found its position not in an economic sphere but in the cultural-political sphere.

The Dowa Projects and the War on Poverty, not only shared a similar social context of great economic growth and the pressure of radical social movements in 1960s, but they were greatly transformed at the opening of the twenty-first century. The Dowa Projects, after several reauthorizations of the Law on Special Measures, was finally dissolved in 2002. Since then, Dowa policies have been placed in the framework of general policies. Dowa education was not the exception in the transformation of policies at this time; the name “Dowa education” was officially replaced by the name “Human rights education.” Financial support for Dowa education from the national government could no longer be depended on as much as in the previous thirty years. In the atmosphere of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in Japan, policies like the Dowa Projects were severely challenged.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the United States also went through a great transformation. As is well known, the War on Poverty was dramatically transformed into the “war on welfare” in the 1980s and 1990s. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, after several stages of reauthorization, also metamorphosed into the “No Child Left Behind” law under the George W. Bush administration; this forces all public schools to implement high-stakes testing and demands that schools be accountable for achievement.

In spite of such backlashes in both the United States and Japan, poverty has recently returned as a new political issue. In 2009 both nations under-
went regime change, and the newly established governments, the Obama administration in the United States and the Democratic Party of Japan’s cabinet, are now taking seriously the issue of poverty and the theme of equity. Although socioeconomic conditions are not similar to those of the great economic growth era, it is now the time to reevaluate the great legacy of 1960s antipoverty and antidiscrimination projects undertaken by the governments of these two nations.

NOTES

1 The Buraku problem concerns a castelike minority group unique to Japanese society. Buraku people are those “whose ancestors were relegated to an outcaste status in the premodern era. Having no distinguishing physical or cultural traits, [they] are distinguished by their addresses in communities called *Buraku* . . . which were segregated in the premodern era, or by their ancestral background.” Yoshiro Nabeshima, “Invisible Racism in Japan: Impact on Academic Achievement of Minority Children,” in *Challenges to Japanese Education: Economics, Reform, and Human Rights*, edited by J. Gordon, H. Fujita, T. Kariya, and G. LeTendre. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 109.

2 James T. Patterson argues that in the early 1960s American society was “in the midst of the most sustained period of economic well-being in national history.” Patterson, *America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 108.


5 Japanese scholars interested in the education of “foreign children,” such as Korean residents in Japan and the “newcomers” (laborers from South America who are second- or third-generation Japanese immigrants to South America, rapidly increasing after 1990), very often refer to innovative education in the United States or Europe such as multicultural education or bilingual education. See Tomoko Nakajima, ed., *Tabunka Kyoiku: Tayouseinotameno Kyoikugaku* [Multicultural education: A pedagogy for diversity] (Tokyo: Akashishoten, 1998); Haruo Ota, *Nyukamanokodomoto Nihonnogakkou* [Children of newcomers and Japanese schools] (Tokyo: Kokusaishoin, 2000).

7 Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 99.

8 Ibid., 99–100.

9 Ibid., 102.

10 Ibid., 121.

11 Ibid., 111.


14 Ibid., 112.


17 Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 116.

18 Harrington, *The Other America*, xxiii.

19 Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 118.


22 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, 34.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 35.


27 Katz, *Undeserving Poor*, 97.

28 Ibid., 95.

29 Ibid.


31 Katz, *Undeserving Poor*, 95.

32 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, xii.

33 Ibid., 4.

34 Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 110.


36 Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 131.

37 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, 59.

38 Ibid., 67.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 69–70.
Ibid., 70.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 73.
45 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, 72–74.
46 Ibid., 76, 77.
47 Ibid., 80.
48 Ibid., 82, 83.
49 Ibid., 85.
50 Ibid., 85, 86.
51 Ibid., 89.
53 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, 87.
54 McGuinn, *No Child Left Behind*, 34–35.
56 Ibid., 102.
57 Graham, *Uncertain Triumph*, 204.
59 Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor*, 110.
64 Gordon, *Japan’s Outcaste Youth*, 23.
65 Ibid., 23.
66 Zenkoku Kaihokyoiku Kenkyukai, *Kaihokyoiku Seiritsuto Tenkai* [The birth and development of the Education for Buraku Liberation], vol. 11 of *Burakukaihokyoiku Shiroyoshusei* [Historical Archives of Education for Buraku Liberation in Japan] (Tokyo: Meiji Toshoshuppan, 1980), 283; See also appendix 3 of Suehiro Kitaguchi, *An Introduction to the Buraku Issue: Questions and Answers*, translated and with an introduction by Alastair McLauchlan (Richmond, UK: Japan Library, 1999).
68 Ibid., 286.
70 Zenkoku Kaihokyoiku Kenkyukai, *Kaihokyoiku Seiritsuto Tenkai*, 293.
71 Ibid., 306.
72 Gordon, *Japan’s Outcaste Youth*, 23–24. The Special Measure Law mainly encouraged
73 Gordon, Japan’s Outcaste Youth, 24.
75 Ibid., 366.
77 Takehiko Kariya, “The End of Egalitarian Education in Japan?” in Challenges to Japanese Education, 56.
78 Zenkoku Kaihokyoiku Kenkyukai, Kaihokyoikuno Seiritsuotenkai, 296–304.
79 Katz, Undeserving Poor, 185–235.
80 McGuinn, No Child Left Behind, 165–95.