Analyzing the Impact of Dowa Education on Discrimination Against the Buraku Community in Japan

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Analyzing the Impact of Dōwa Education on Discrimination against the Buraku Community in Japan

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A Thesis in the Field of History in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Liberal Arts Degree

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Abstract

Burakumin are the largest minority population in Japan. While they are not ethnically nor racially different from the rest of the Japanese population, historical caste discrimination persists today. In 1969, the Buraku Liberation League contributed to the passage of the Law of Special Measures (LSM) that endeavored to address systemic discrimination against the Buraku population. This thesis evaluates the success of one aspect of the LSM called Dōwa Education. The goals of Dōwa Education were to decrease the educational gap between Buraku youth and their mainstream counterparts with an overarching goal to eliminate discrimination. Although Dōwa Education has been hailed as a success, their ambitious goal and variety in implementation obstructed a definitive evaluation of the program. Discrimination against the Buraku population continues to exist, but it remains unclear to what extent Dōwa education made an impact on eliminating or perpetuating that discrimination.
Dedication

To my family.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my thesis advisor, Dr. J. Mark Ramseyer, for challenging me by asking questions to further guide my research.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Don Ostrowski for his help and guidance.
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I.

Introduction

When I first told my parents that I would be conducting my thesis research on burakumin in Japan, my mother lowered her voice and told me that was a bad idea. The burakumin are a group of people who are no different from the mainstream population but are discriminated against for real or imagined historical caste precedence. This definition is convoluted and with good reason. Scholars still grapple with finding a definition of this minority group, debating over the group’s origins and status today. Besides the fact that discrimination against this group has occurred in Japan, they have yet to come to a consensus on what defines and differentiates Burakumin from mainstream society. The persistent, pervasive nature of prejudice against the burakumin among the Japanese majority continues to barely lie beneath the surface, yet the Japanese government pulled back measures initiated in the 1970s to eliminate buraku stigma and improve education.¹ My mother, who has lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, an avid supporter of social justice, felt the need to lower her voice in her own home to talk about the burakumin.

Japan depicts itself as a homogenous society, a misrepresentation that encourages sweeping difference under the rug.² In 1980, Japan stated that its country had no minority


groups at the United Nations. This denial has permeated throughout the world and has been widely accepted, even by much of the population itself. The “Buraku mondai,” or Buraku problem, is often ignored and avoided.

However, this situation is not as clear-cut as it seems. The Burakumin make up the majority of organized crime groups in Japan. While most Burakumin are not members of organized crime, several scholars back up the claim that Burakumin make up a substantial percentage of organized crime groups in Japan. Much of the funds allocated to the burakumin by the 1969 Special Measures Law for Assimilation Projects (LSM) targeted towards buraku housing, education, and discrimination were funneled to these groups. The Buraku Liberation League (BLL) that strongly advocated for the LSM had strong ties to organized crime groups, a fact revealed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They have also

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used violent and humiliating means to advocate for their rights, at times torturing teachers for several days over an extracurricular dispute.  

Nevertheless, their association with violence does not negate the very real discrimination they have faced and continue to face economically, socially, and politically regardless of their association to organized crime. Origins of the Burakumin aside, the reality is that this group of people, however transient, has been discriminated against. This discrimination, over generations, facilitated the further decline of Burakumin who were shut out of social and economic opportunities in Japan.

In that same conversation with my parents, my father told me of his own recollections that he had never mentioned before. My grandmother was a teacher during the midst of pedagogical and curricular changes and struggled with the minefield of teaching a class with both majority students and burakumin students. She had to be careful in her teaching, avoiding the number “4” as it had connotations for Burakumin. My grandfather, a banker, was never authorized to set up bank accounts for or extend loans to burakumin, and consulted the koseki (family registration set up during the Meiji Era) to ensure their family background until legislative changes made it illegal. While the original, jinshin koseki, was available to anyone, some investigators still have been able to access the new koseki that maintains a

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record of familial relationships through dubious means.\textsuperscript{12} Although some deny the existence of burakumin at all, companies still continue to conduct background checks and to track their lineage. My own grandparents conducted a background check on my mother’s family, a common practice heightened by their ownership of a construction company, a field dominated by \textit{yakuza} and saturated by burakumin 2 to 1.\textsuperscript{13} These social and cultural barriers for financial stability and social advancement left a substantial number of burakumin with no choice but to enter criminal careers.

**Buraku and Dōwa Education**

The goal of this paper is not to debate the origins of Burakumin or the integrity of their actions, but to evaluate the Dōwa education system enacted to address the historical underpinnings of discrimination against Burakumin in Japan. While Dōwa Education was funded largely by the federal government with one-third of the costs supplemented by local governments, its implementation was varied.\textsuperscript{14} Local elementary, middle and high schools that chose to designate themselves as Dōwa schools were given autonomy in hiring extra teachers, initiating after school programs, and developing new pedagogical practices. These include but are not limited to after-school clubs exclusively for Buraku students, extra lessons to narrow the achievement gap, funding for textbooks and school supplies,

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\textsuperscript{13} Suehiro Kitaguchi, and Alastair Mclauchlan, \textit{An Introduction to the Buraku Issue: Questions and Answers} (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 18.
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incorporating Buraku history into the curriculum, and exploring best practices to improve student-teacher relationships. Dōwa Education’s objectives were to:

1. Increase Buraku youth’s educational performance in school attendance and level of education,

2. Narrow the achievement gap between Buraku students and their mainstream counterparts,

3. Raise awareness of discrimination against Burakumin through teaching about Buraku history in schools, and

4. Eliminate discrimination against Burakumin.

Dōwa education evolved over the years, and their measure of success evolved in turn. At first, it was assessed through increased school attendance among Buraku students. After attendance rose, the next markers became the level of education Buraku students completed and to what degree the achievement gap between Buraku and non-Buraku students lessened. All culminated to evaluate the level of prejudice against Burakumin still present in Japan.

Limitations of this research include the availability, or lack thereof, of statistics of test scores and other pertinent data in English. Moreover, while the narrowing of the achievement gap between Buraku and non-Buraku students is important, just as important an indicator is whether Buraku youth gained confidence in their self-identity. It is insufficient to measure the success of the program by solely assessing test scores, enrollment rates, and other quantitative data. Part of eliminating discrimination is instilling a sense of pride in Buraku students about their identity and decreasing mainstream prejudice towards Burakumin. These benchmarks are better assessed through qualitative research such as interviews and case
studies. This data includes interviews conducted with Buraku youth, teachers in Dōwa schools, and evaluations of intermarriage.

Nonetheless, this collection of information is still insufficient because change in levels of prejudice cannot be attributed solely to Dōwa Education. It is impossible to state with any certainty the success of the Dōwa Education program. Their ultimate goal was to help eliminate discrimination. Thus, if discrimination continues to exist, technically they have failed. Yet the goal itself was an untenable one due to multiple mitigating factors outside the program’s control. Residential segregation, employment discrimination, and prejudice ingrained in mainstream society all play a role in hindering the program’s success. Separating the impact of Dōwa Education from the rest of the Buraku experience is inconceivable. For example, even if growth in intermarriage rates was incremental, it is difficult to discern if that is a result of a failure of Dōwa Education to educate the population about the detrimental impact of discrimination, a result of a lack of social opportunities involving both groups, or a mix of both.

Dōwa Education might have been successful in helping eliminate discrimination to a certain degree, but there is not enough evidence to definitively state that. Test scores of students in Buraku districts did rise, but comparisons of test scores between Buraku students at Dōwa schools and Buraku students at non-Dōwa schools to measure the impact of the program is unavailable. Even if the data were available, that would not distinguish the benefits of individual pedagogical practices initiated at specific schools. Each school implemented programs to varying degrees and thus the lack of uniformity of the program itself precludes me from making a blanket statement about the Dōwa Education program as a whole. Some policies were decisively unhelpful, such as after school remedial classes that
separated Buraku students from the rest of the student body, reinforcing a sense of “otherness.” Other policies seem uniformly helpful, such as increasing home visits to encourage more Buraku students to come to school consistently. However, other initiatives were dependent on the school, the community, parental buy-in, presence of the liberation movement, teacher investment, among others.

There is evidence that more burakumin are “passing” as mainstream population as posited by J. Mark Ramseyer, a professor of Japanese Legal Studies at Harvard Law School and an expert on burakumin in Japan, based on the gradually decreasing population of burakumin despite higher than average birth rates.\(^\text{15}\) Does this imply that the Dōwa education system was successful, or a failure? Did it help students become academically and socially successful enough to the point that they could shed their buraku identity? Or, did it help students build up their buraku identity as something to be proud of, thus solidifying a separate identity population that was equally successful to the mainstream population economically, socially, and politically? Or did the education system do nothing at all? Or did the education system provide them with the academic tools and the ending of the subsidies enabled them to “pass” more easily into mainstream Japan?

Increases in outmigration of Burakumin from the community also alludes to the idea that the education system equipped them with the requisite skills necessary to compete in mainstream society, lending credence to Dōwa Education’s success. At least, that is, on paper. Although Dōwa education helped narrow the achievement gap between Burakumin and mainstream Japanese students, a gap continues to exist. The Dōwa program’s emphasis

on micro level changes helped to remedy large cases of buraku student absences, but buraku students overall continue to perform at a lower level than their mainstream counterparts.

The plethora of iterations of the Dōwa Education program also makes the results unclear. Some scholars argue that Dōwa Education somewhat improved the quality of education the burakumin received, but the corruption of the BLL and its affiliation with organized crime made it difficult to improve education rates enough to match the national average. However, the education system laid the foundations for pedagogical inquiry into strategies for more Burakumin to attain educational success required to gain socioeconomic success in mainstream Japanese society. The program provided subsidies to help more Buraku students afford to stay in school, diminishing the role of financial constraints in their decisions surrounding school.

Increased rates of outmigration could also indicate that the end of the LSM subsidies and anti-organized crime laws eliminated the incentives for educated burakumin to enter organized crime and instead work in the professional sector as mainstream Japanese. The BLL funneled portions LSM subsidies into the hands of organized crime groups, the majority of which were affiliated with Burakumin.16 While being a member of the Yakuza is not illegal, the 1991 Anti-Yakuza Law as well as a series of other laws such as the Anti-Drug Provision Law, Organized Crime Punishment Law, and the Transfer of Criminal Proceeds Prevention Law suppressed the Yakuza and other organized crime groups to be able to wield as much economic and political power as they had previously.17 Those who received


education during the past several decades were able to pass into mainstream society with the requisite educational requirements for legitimate employment.

These conclusions could also mean that the education program failed in one of its major goals to encourage Burakumin youth to take pride in their identity. The education targeted for Burakumin may have done the opposite by publicly identifying those of the community. This made it harder for them to blend into the society, indirectly increasing the amount of discrimination and ostracization they faced within their school district and elsewhere. On the other hand, it could have helped some Burakumin take pride in their identity, but the pressures of the outside world inhibited them from revealing their identity in a professional setting.

Legal challenges have made it harder for private companies to discriminate against burakumin for employment, yet loopholes continue to pervade the job market. General surveys regarding marriage also show that the majority of the population would not accept marriages in their family with Burakumin.\footnote{Yasumasa Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education: Educational Challenge toward a Discrimination-Free Japan}, ed. Yasumasa Hirasawa and Yoshiro Nabeshima (Osaka, Japan: Kaiho Shuppansha, 1995), 32, accessed February 2, 2020, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/dowaeducation/de_menu.htm.} Although intermarriage is slowly increasing, continued residential segregation and discrimination stunts its growth.\footnote{Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 35.} As a result, many individuals on either side revert to silence as their preferred course of action. These actions, or lack thereof, illuminate the pervasive, enduring nature of discrimination against burakumin despite efforts by the program to educate the population.
While the LSM has been discontinued and Dōwa education as part of the LSM, Dōwa education remains as a part of a larger initiative to advance human rights in general in Japan. New human rights legislation is aimed at not just addressing burakumin but also that of Zainichi (Korean Japanese), immigrants, and indigenous groups like the Ainu. This still significantly diminished the funding and the extent of the services provided to burakumin. Scholarship programs for higher education were cut, special classes, the number of teachers and the government took precautions to ensure that funds were allocated to all minority groups according. Nonetheless, Dōwa Education has not completely disappeared. Though the funding is smaller and burakumin are not the sole focus of the program, Dōwa education continues to attempt to address the history of discrimination and the decrease the gap between minorities and the mainstream population. The end of the LSM and buraku-specific education means that schools teach less about burakumin, if at all. Couching buraku issues under the umbrella of human rights makes it easier to teach the subject without approaching more specific, uncomfortable subjects like Burakumin.

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II. Definition of Terms

*Passing* is defined as a person from a minority group participating in society as part of the mainstream. Thus, it is more about becoming part of the majority. Some argue that this is a denial of identity or an attempt at invisibility.\(^{22}\) In the case of Burakumin, it is easier to do since Burakumin are physically, ethnically, and racially no different from the mainstream Japanese population.

*Yakuza* is a type of organized crime syndicate that originated in Japan. Commonly equated with the mafia, it is a hierarchical organized crime group.\(^{23}\) In Japan, membership in a yakuza is not illegal.


III.

History of Burakumin in Japan

In Japanese textbooks, Burakumin are purported to have descended from a caste of people akin to the untouchables of India during the Tokugawa Era. They held jobs such as butchers, tanners and other jobs that were considered unseemly and dirty. Scholars have long debated the history of Burakumin in Japan. Many English scholars, with the exception of J. Mark Ramseyer, have largely accepted this version of Buraku history, albeit with variations. However, this history is disputable. Outlined below is a summary of the various histories and definitions of Burakumin presented by English-speaking scholars.

Since the BLL was heavily involved in writing and approving the textbook version of Buraku history, scholars such as Ramseyer assert that this claim is based on the burakumin’s own dissemination of information that began during the interwar period and continued in the postwar period. According to his research, the burakumin, in reality, were mostly farmers that were extremely destructive or unlucky that resulted in economic instability. Moreover, most of this population was associated with their residence near the river rather than their association to the leather industry, a correlation that only started at the tail end of the Tokugawa Era. These lands by the river were often the poorest land, which undermined their ability to make a living.

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Many burakumin who were in specialized fields actually thrived during the Meiji Era but as communities began to mix and intermingle through natural and legal circumstances, their differences from mainstream society became more acute.\(^{27}\)

Other scholars such as Yasumasa Hirasawa and Yoshiro Nabeshima, both professors at Osaka University, also address this discrepancy, but they do not completely agree with Ramseyer’s assertions. Instead, they state that many in the Buraku population “came from diverse origins and the stigmatizing functions were imposed upon them after their outcaste status was fixed.”\(^{28}\) While they agree that the idea of a monolithic group all stemming from leather workers and butchers is inaccurate as Ramseyer states, Hirasawa and Nabeshima diverge from Ramseyer by presenting that some were leather workers, some farmers, some from other origins of work, presenting a heterogeneous population that eventually became known as outcastes. This ongoing debate feeds into a larger issue of who qualifies as a burakumin.

Because of the fluid and murky nature of the origins of the burakumin, its definition varies based on the acknowledged historical context as well as the scholar’s perspective of its contemporary reality. Based on Ramseyer’s characterization of the history of burakumin, the idea of buraku as an identity did not arise until the interwar period. He states,

> only partly did Japanese treat burakumin as a loosely inherited status; instead they also used the term to describe a particularly dysfunctional pattern of behavior. Only partly, in other words, did they call someone a burakumin if his parents had been burakumin; in part, they called him a burakumin (regardless of his ancestry) if he exhibited the constellation of characteristics associated with the classic buraku.\(^{29}\)


\(^{28}\) Hirasawa et al., *Dowa Education*, 7.

In short, the term was formerly used as more of a derogatory term for a person exhibiting certain behaviors, not necessarily their lineage. This is also similar to Nabeshima’s and Hirasawa’s argument that the outcaste status was later imposed on groups or individuals over a period of time. However, the timeline of the solidification of their status differs between their argument and that of Ramseyer’s statement. According to Ramseyer, a collective burakumin identity only solidified in the 1920s that resulted in the formation of the *Suiheisha*, a political organization created to advance burakumin rights.\(^3\) George DeVos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, professor of anthropology at UC Berkeley and professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh respectively, also acknowledged in their seminal book on the history of the burakumin, *Japan's Invisible Race*, that some who were later considered burakumin were not necessarily tied to the identity as well as the fact that many were in fact farmers, but they also point to written records and laws from the Tokugawa period that already defined *eta* and *hinin* as outcaste groups, eventually melding into a broader buraku community.\(^3\) Though *hinin* was a more fluid concept than *eta*, both of these categorizations solidified over the course of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Conversely, Kiyoteru Tsutsui, a sociologist studying human rights and the BLL, defines burakumin as anyone who has faced discrimination because of their presumed ancestry from the lower caste groups in the Edo period, demonstrating his acceptance of the conventional history

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\(^3\) Ramseyer, “On the Invention of Identity Politics,” p. 32.

presented in Japanese schools.\textsuperscript{32} However, he also cites Noguchi, another scholar, who defines Burakumin as those “who are seen as Burakumin and face discrimination as a consequence.”\textsuperscript{33} This definition stems from a contemporary context that “discrimination has become the only reliable marker of Burakumin identity,” ignoring all historical underpinnings of Burakumin.\textsuperscript{34} Based on Noguchi’s definition, low-income mainstream Japanese may also pass into Buraku status, but that undermines the decades of caste discrimination endured by the buraku population. Consequently, the lack of historical recognition ignores the socio-cultural and psychological impact of generations of discrimination.

For some portions of the Japanese population, the definition is considered irrelevant because the burakumin no longer exist. Conversely, some do not acknowledge their existence because they have never encountered burakumin before or believe that it is no longer an issue based on the elimination of programs like the LSM. Buraku denial is also perpetuated by many within the buraku population who choose to shed their identity. According to a survey conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, younger populations are significantly less likely than older populations to be aware of the “Dōwa problem.”\textsuperscript{35} 90.9% of men in their fifties knew about the “Dōwa problem” while around 65-71% of men and women in their twenties answered in the

\textsuperscript{32} Kiyoteru Tsutsui, “Burakumin: From a Japanese Minority Group to an International Human Rights Organization” in Rights Make Might, Rights Make Might, Chapter 4 (Oxford University Press, 2018), 155.

\textsuperscript{33} Noguchi as quoted in Tsutsui, “Burakumin,” 154.

\textsuperscript{34} Tsutsui, “Burakumin,” 155.

affirmative.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, only around 22\% of those who claimed they understood the problem learned about it at school.\textsuperscript{37} Especially in areas like Tokyo and eastern regions of Japan where there are comparatively fewer buraku communities, burakumin are spoken of less often.

Whether or not the idea of buraku status was more of a loose status, the solidification of their status over time barred them from gaining full entry into Japanese society. Due to mainstream Japanese families’ reluctance, often outright refusal, to be associated with burakumin, social integration into mainstream society was difficult. Despite the fact that burakumin had no ethnic or racial distinctions, burakumin could not marry mainstream Japanese partners, leading to their further isolation as well as increased cases of inbreeding, leading to even more problems within their community. While some families were still able to become financially comfortable or even successful, a disproportionate amount continued to remain in the lower classes.

The Suiheisha emerged during the interwar years to challenge the social and economic discrimination of the burakumin community. It marked the first significant movement in publicizing the community and advocating for acknowledgement as well as reform. The Suiheisha was also responsible for kickstarting the denunciation movement, a tactic that continued to be used well into the 1980s.\textsuperscript{38} Denunciation, a public and often humiliating process, involved confronting perpetrators of buraku discrimination publicly until they apologized.\textsuperscript{39} This

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\textsuperscript{37}“Report of Results” in Šturdík, "Gradual Disappearance," 700.


\textsuperscript{39}De Vos and Wagatsuma, \textit{Japan’s Invisible Race}, 45.
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controversial strategy also highlighted some of the more “barbaric” and violent stereotypes of the burakumin, reinforcing their “otherness” for many parts of the mainstream population. The Suiheisha was forced to disband during World War II, but the organization and its practices did not disappear.⁴⁰

After World War II, the former Suiheisha evolved into the Buraku Liberation National Committee and eventually renamed themselves the Buraku Liberation League (Kaihō Dōmei).⁴¹ Over the years, the BLL collaborated with the Japanese Socialist Party, Democratic Socialist Party, Japanese Communist Party, the Clean Government Party, among others to advance the buraku agenda.⁴² The BLL achieved a major legislative victory in 1969 with the passage of the Law of Special Measures for Assimilations Projects (Dōwa Taisaku Jigyo Tokubetsu Sochiho).⁴³ The Law of Special Measures (will be referred to as LSM) allocated national and local government funds to the establishment of special programs for buraku advancement. It gave subsidies for housing, education and made it more difficult to discriminate against burakumin for employment or marriage. A political struggle ensued between the BLL and the Japanese Communist Party, one of the parties that aided in the fight for buraku rights, regarding the


⁴³ Kitaguchi and Mclauchlan, An Introduction, 4.
control and oversight of these funds.44 These funds, totaling 15 trillion yen by 2002, were mostly given to the BLL to be allocated accordingly.45

More often than not a portion of these government subsidies ended up in the hands of leaders who were increasingly involved with organized crime groups.46 The BLL’s connection to organized crime groups was widely exposed in the 1980s and 1990s with a crackdown by both the government and the police. The police discovered leaders of the BLL such as Kunihiko Konishi, one of the heads of the BLL’s Osaka chapter, was closely tied to Kaneda-gumi as well as key leaders of Yamaguchi-gumi, both prominent yakuza groups.47 These close ties of the BLL to organized crime syndicates undermined the buraku cause and simultaneously contributed to the end of the LSM.

Nonetheless, the BLL’s embezzlement of government subsidies does not negate the need the subsidies were designed to fulfill. The LSM funds still provided many communities and schools with funding that enabled them to raise awareness of burakumin history, discrimination, etc. Dōwa education was designed to do just that and more. It was created to remedy the economic and social disparities brought on by discrimination and destigmatize discussions surrounding burakumin. By providing better quality education, more Burakumin could be eligible for better, more stable employment. However, the corruption that infested the BLL had unintended consequences for education.


These consequences cannot be understood without fully evaluating Dōwa Education at its height in the 1970s to 1990s nor without understanding the history of Japanese education as it relates to the buraku community. Though changes have been made since then regarding education as a whole in Japan, the historical context for education is fundamental to understanding the program as well as the implications for its termination. The end of the LSM was justified by the government “on the basis that sufficient improvements had been achieved” for buraku communities.\(^4^8\) It is unclear on what grounds this claim was derived. The new legislation passed in place of the LSM recognized not just buraku issues but other minority groups in Japan. With funds significantly diminished and more groups added to the anti-discrimination program.

Martin Šturdik, a professor of Asian studies, claims that conversations and efforts to address buraku issues are disappearing into the bigger umbrella of human rights. By couching it under a bigger issue, people are able to avoid the specifics and minimize discrimination experienced specifically by burakumin.\(^4^9\) However, some blame Buraku activists for this lack of attention to buraku discrimination. Richard Siddle argues that their efforts to suppress negative references in the media and elsewhere have led to an avoidance of the topic altogether.\(^5^0\) The growing lack of awareness could be attributed to lack of media attention brought on by fears of retribution by Buraku activists. Teachers could also be evading the issue to avoid being forced into Denunciation by the Buraku community. Consequently, the lack of discussion surrounding


\(^{5^0}\) Siddle, “Race, Ethnicity, and Minorities in Modern Japan,” 161.
the issue means that younger generations are more likely to learn about Burakumin from more informal channels such as their parents, many of whom are more likely to hold prejudiced views of Burakumin.

Dōwa Education notwithstanding, there are other flaws within the Japanese education system that have long-term consequences. While the Dōwa education program created ways to alleviate some of these problems for Buraku students, the end of its funding also meant that some of the same problems resurfaced or remained. The next chapter provides a background in the history of Japanese education and some of the challenges it has yet to resolve.
IV.

A Background in Japanese Education

Similar to western education systems, a national Japanese education system was established in the midst of the Meiji Restoration and its push towards the creation of an industrial society.\textsuperscript{51} Although this new system created by the 1872 Education Law aimed to have comprehensive, compulsory schooling for the Japanese population, there were several systems of schooling during the Tokugawa Era such as the \textit{terakoya} schools that helped lay the foundations for its success.\textsuperscript{52} However, it was not without flaws. School was compulsory, yet families were expected to pay for their child’s expenses, creating a financial burden on many lower class and rural families. Rural families were particularly burdened as they were limited in numbers and their pool of resources was often inefficient for building schools, paying teachers’ salaries, etc.

Funding to establish schools was entirely dependent on local communities until 1885 and only limited funding was allocated by the government thereafter.\textsuperscript{53} Buraku communities, often among the poorest in Japan, were unable to build and fund schooling based on student tuition and community reserves, contributing to a less consistent educational system in their communities.\textsuperscript{54} To create schools, many communities divided into districts that were oftentimes deliberately defined in ways that would segregate and discriminate against buraku populations.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{52} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 15.

\textsuperscript{53} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 14.

\textsuperscript{54} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 14.

\textsuperscript{55} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 14.
Thus, either by school, class or seating arrangement, many mainstream families insisted on separation from the buraku students. Some buraku communities in various regions such as Nara carried out protests against education discrimination in the 1890s. These issues also contributed to a heightened distrust of schools and education among the community, which added on to the already lower rates of student enrollment among burakumin. Non-enrollment among buraku students were disproportionately higher as demands of separation hurt their pride. Some spurned education as just another way of suppressing the community through the dominant culture.

The government attempted to address these inequities with the idea of Yuwa Education, which touted equal education embedded with imperialist and nationalist agendas. This was spurred on by the idea that in order to have a successful nation, everyone had to feel like a member. Efforts of indoctrination into the nationalist mindset required a sense of equality and confidence that the emperor valued these communities. While the Suiheisha supported and advocated for the program’s premise, which placed an emphasis on everyone receiving the same access to education, they were reluctant to support it. Yuwa Education and the idea of “One Nation” also entailed buraku assimilation into the dominant culture. Thus, Yuwa education was not a celebration of difference but a method of control and homogenization to advance imperialist agendas. Its purpose notwithstanding, the enrollment gap between mainstream and buraku populations remained the same. The school system went through multiple iterations of local control, systemic reforms and infusions of nationalist agendas by the end of World War II.

56 Hirasawa et al., *Dowa Education*, 14.

57 Hirasawa et al., *Dowa Education*, 15.

Japan’s deliberate use of schools as a vehicle for nationalist and imperialist attitudes among the population in the decades leading up to and during World War II signified a need for an overhaul of the education system during the postwar occupation.\textsuperscript{59} The 1947 School Education Law transformed the school system to a single-track progression for students through middle school. Compulsory education was extended to include elementary and lower secondary education, first to ninth grade. While the Constitution and the School Education Law stipulated that all children should have access to education and financial assistance should be given to those who could not afford it, it was not immediately free.\textsuperscript{60} Elementary and lower secondary education costs continued to be the responsibility of the parents, a policy reaffirmed in the National Income Doubling Plan of 1960.\textsuperscript{61} Parents would bear the burden of payment because they would benefit financially when their children successfully completed their education. However, the parents that stood to gain the most from their children’s educational success were also the ones least able to pay for the costs.

Teacher shortages were a problem in postwar Japan and their teacher-to-student ratio continues to be one of the highest among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.\textsuperscript{62} Due to large class sizes and teachers being overworked,

\textsuperscript{59} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 30.


\textsuperscript{61} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 39.

students who were behind academically, usually low-income and minority students did not get
the support needed in order to catch up to the class.

Additionally, the same segregationist practices utilized before the war continued in the
postwar period. Non-Buraku parents living in predominantly Buraku districts sent their children
to schools outside their district. These chosen schools were often better funded with good
reputations and had no buraku enrollment. This practice, called Ekkyo, became part of the larger
political debate in Osaka in the late 1960s. Ekkyo was technically forbidden based on the
national school system rules, so its prevalence brought even more scrutiny on the education
system and its negligence in addressing discriminatory practices.

Due to the significant correlation between educational attainment and economic success,
importance was placed on enrollment beyond compulsory education. By the 1950s there was a
push to open more opportunities for a high school education. In order to do so, there was
pressure to open more schools and increase government assistance for low-income families to
attend high school. According to Kaori Okano and Motonori Tsuchiya, senior lecturer at La
Trobe University and Dean of Faculty of Human Development at Kobe University respectively,
Japan’s outward appearance of an affluent, egalitarian society reinforced myths of an open
society wherein opportunities are equally obtainable among the population. This continues to
present an obstacle in addressing economic inequalities and its correlation to education. They
state,

Japan is now perceived as an open society where free competition amongst individuals
determines what a person deserves to obtain as a reward, and where everyone is assumed

63 Hirasawa et al., *Dowa Education*, 33.

64 Hirasawa et al., *Dowa Education*, 33.

65 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 42.
to be given a chance to succeed. The assumption of the “meritocratic” nature of Japanese schooling as a selective mechanism creates the myth of equal opportunities, and reinforces a view that the result is based on one’s achievement (as opposed to inherited factors).\textsuperscript{66}

This idea of an open society minimizes the impact of poverty on educational attainment as it assumes that each student, regardless of income level, is able to take advantage of education in the same way. Low income students are still less likely to go beyond compulsory education and if they do go to high school, they are more likely to drop out.\textsuperscript{67} Youths who leave education upon completion of compulsory education or those who drop out after middle school often find jobs that they subsequently leave within three months.\textsuperscript{68} Many of these youths who stay in their communities, in turn, often marry young and have children at a younger age, leading to subsequent generations of youths living in financially insecure households.

However, Okano and Tsuchiya also argue that the importance of high school education for low-income youths is not due to the academic attainment itself, but its prevention in the youths gaining insecure employment and getting married prematurely.\textsuperscript{69} While this observation is relevant to all pockets of low-income populations in Japan, this research is important specifically for buraku communities that make up significant portions of the low-income population. Even if performance of low-income students were less than adequate, merely the act of staying in school increased the likelihood of these students exiting the cycle of poverty. Completion of high school enables students to gain more secure employment, one of the main

\textsuperscript{66} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 83.
\textsuperscript{67} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 84.
\textsuperscript{68} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 85.
\textsuperscript{69} Okano and Tsuchiya, \textit{Education in Contemporary Japan}, 90.
reasons that their parents ended up in situations of poverty. Even without discrimination as a barrier to better economic and social standing, graduating high school serves as a significant stepping stone in curbing inter-generational poverty regardless of their actual performance during school.

Expansions of high schools contributed to increased student retention, but the discrepancy between national retention rates and rates among burakumin raised questions about whether the government has the responsibility to address this academic gap. Moreover, Buraku students’ academic performance throughout all levels of education indicated a weakness in the current education system’s capacity to address the disparity. The BLL’s fervent efforts in garnering support for the Law of Special Measures helped usher in a program called Dōwa Education that specifically targeted buraku students to help narrow the achievement gap.

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70 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 90.
V.

Dōwa Education

Dōwa Education, translated as “assimilation education,” was an educational initiative designed to eventually eliminate discrimination against burakumin. Not everyone loved the term Dōwa Education. The Buraku Liberation League preferred to call it Kaihō Education instead, meaning “liberation education.”\(^71\) These complaints have largely subsided over the years. The program attempted to address several issues that were identified by studies such as the 1965 Report of the Deliberative Council on the conditions of burakumin in Japan.\(^72\) In 1963, only 30% of burakumin children attended high school, while 60-70% of children in the general population attended high school.\(^73\) Buraku women were even less likely to finish their education.\(^74\) Illiteracy continued to be a problem among the community and unemployment was disproportionately higher than the mainstream Japanese population.\(^75\)

\(^{71}\) Hawkins, "Educational Demands," 205.


\(^{73}\) Hawkins, “Educational Demands,” 211.

\(^{74}\) Kitaguchi and Mclauchlan, An Introduction, 45.

\(^{75}\) Kitaguchi and Mclauchlan, An Introduction, 14-17.
Burakumin were almost 8 times more likely to be on social welfare than the rest of Japan. In a 1973 study, only .01% of burakumin reached professional employment while 70% were in skilled or semi-skilled labor. In a country where education was and continues to be compulsory for entry into professional employment, education was deemed a vital tenet of the LSM. Thus, the program was designed to increase economic attainment by improving Burakumin’s access to education.

By addressing both Buraku education levels and prohibiting discriminatory employment practices, the LSM could approach their low socio-economic status from two different angles. De Vos and Wagatsuma referred to a 1959 report that showed that among the students in the survey, larger companies offered employment to 15.1% of non-Buraku students as opposed to 1.5% of Buraku students. Though they agree that many Buraku students are in fact unqualified for these jobs based on their academic achievement, their performance is often the result of internalizing discrimination rather than actual capacity. De Vos and Wagatsuma also address differences in IQ scores between Buraku and non-Buraku students. As shown in the De Vos’s and Wagatsuma’s chart below, Buraku children had significantly lower IQ scores than their non-Buraku counterparts:

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76 Kitaguchi and McIauchlan, *An Introduction*, 43.

77 Hawkins, “Educational Demands,” 211.

Nonetheless, they argue that these differences in IQ scores are similar to the disparities found between White and Black students in the United States. They argue, “Racists would argue that this reflects innate differences in ability. We could argue that in both cases...the results, partly at least, reflect early damage to social self-identity and self-respect vis-à-vis cultural expectations held toward a traditionally disparaged group.”

Although the discrepancy should not be solely attributed to trauma through discrimination, it does play a sizeable role. Therefore, improving their self-image was an important element in any effort to facilitate better conditions for the Buraku population.

The Dôwa Education movement was spearheaded by the National Dôwa Educators’ Association, Zendokyo. This group was founded in the postwar period by a collective of teachers who grew increasingly concerned about the educational gap between buraku students and their

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79 George A. De Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, *Japan's Invisible Race*, 262. DeVos and Wagatsuma were not the only ones who drew parallels between racial discrimination in the U.S. and Buraku caste discrimination in Japan. Ikeda, Gordon, and Morgan all made explicit connections between these two groups and the psychological impact of discrimination.
mainstream counterparts, the lack of school attendance, and the general distrust among the buraku community of school teachers.\textsuperscript{80} Some of the initiatives and programs taken on by the Dōwa education program were adopted from the individual actions of teachers in the Zendokyo. Teachers spearheading this organization started by increasing home visits in order to understand the reasoning behind patterns of school absences among buraku students. These led to efforts to help create an environment that would encourage buraku students to stay in school and enact anti-discrimination efforts in the classroom.\textsuperscript{81}

Dōwa Education had a multifaceted approach that addressed pedagogy, precollegiate education, collegiate education and “nonformal” aspects that, according to Hawkins, a professor emeritus of education at UCLA, “provide[d] for a curricular program aimed at improving the self-image of burakumin.”\textsuperscript{82} It put more teachers in dōwa schools, provided them with training, helped offset students’ expenses, and more. It limited the number of students in the classroom to 30 and guaranteed admission of all buraku students to public high schools.\textsuperscript{83} It also called for support for community activities.\textsuperscript{84} New curriculum and textbooks that actually addressed the history of burakumin were created in collaboration with the BLL and put into classrooms.\textsuperscript{85}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Fujisaki, “Zendokyo.”
\item Hawkins, "Educational Demands,” 215.
\item Hawkins, "Educational Demands,” 217.
\item Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 9.
\item Hawkins, “Educational Demands,” 218.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Increasing the number of teachers in Dōwa schools helped alleviate the teacher shortage throughout all Japanese schools mentioned in the previous chapter. These teachers first worked specifically to decrease the amount of Buraku student absences by conducting a series of home visits. As school attendance rose, these teachers often transitioned into the classroom to support Buraku students who were behind academically.

Dōwa Education evolved over several decades as some thresholds were met while others were not. In the 1970s, Dōwa Education initiatives focused on increasing burakumin advancement to and attendance in high schools. In the 1980s there was more of an emphasis on improving home and community education environments.86 Although Dōwa Education was addressed by the Ministry of Education, the program itself was carried out in a multitude of ways depending on the community. It was locally run with a wide berth given to the communities and schools to enact the policy as they saw fit, recognizing the differences in complexity at each location. Therefore, there were many variations to this program, but the funding and questions surrounding funding allocations were largely similar.

86 Hirasawa et al., Dowa Education, 9.
VI.
Dōwa Education Funding

According to the LSM and Dōwa Education policies, communities designated as Dōwa communities received two-thirds of the funding by the federal government and one-third by the local government. Communities were required to declare themselves as Dōwa communities in order to be eligible for funding. One-third of the burden to provide funding fell upon the local government. Due to both financial burdens and fears of discrimination, there are unknown communities that never identified themselves as Dōwa communities.

Student expenses presented a major hurdle addressed by the Dōwa education program. Tuition is covered for public elementary and middle schools, but kindergarten and preschool are not compulsory and therefore not covered. Additionally, school expenses apart from tuition also add a financial burden on families. Based on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology’s Fiscal 2016 Survey on Children’s Educational Expenditures, families spend an average of ¥322,310 for elementary school and ¥478,554 for middle school per year. These expenses stem from specific requirements such as the randoseru backpack (which can cost anywhere from $80 to $600), school uniforms, indoor shoes, sports uniforms, PTA fees, excursion fees, swimwear, commuting costs, tote bag, stationery goods, lunch costs. To offset

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87 “Law No. 60,” Article 7.

some of the cost of school supplies, Buraku families in the Nara prefecture demanded that the
government provide textbooks during the years in which school was compulsory for students.\textsuperscript{89}
In 1962, buraku elementary and secondary students were given free textbooks. Since 1963, all
elementary school and lower-secondary schools students receive textbooks free of charge to
offset these costs, especially for lower-income families.\textsuperscript{90} Some of these expenses have forced
families to get creative on how to stretch their funds. Anne Gordon, a researcher of Dōwa
schools observed that many Dōwa students were distinguishable from their counterparts because
of their uniforms. The Buraku students, often low-income, would have one set of school
uniforms that was supposed to last them for the entirety of their schooling.

Non-compulsory education, such as upper-secondary and high school education, was a
different story. Tuition subsidies for high schools only started in 2010 and even with the subsidy,
households still spent about ¥450,862 per year for high school in 2016.\textsuperscript{91} Prior to this change,
high school tuition cost an average of ¥112,000 according to a 2006 survey conducted by the
Ministry of Education.\textsuperscript{92} The data from a 2004 survey is also shown below in the Ministry of
Education’s 2006 publication of education expenditures. School education expenditures for
individual households for public high schools were ¥342,152 per year. The designation of high
schools as not compulsory and requiring tuition payments from households created a financial

\textsuperscript{89} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 18.

\textsuperscript{90} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 18.

\textsuperscript{91} Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, “Fiscal 2016 Survey.”

\textsuperscript{92} Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan, “Discal
Survey 2006” in Philip Brasor and Masako Tsukubu, “In Japan, you get the education you (the
burden for not just burakumin but for all low-income families. The costs made it harder for low-income families to send their children to school, forcing numerous families to make a choice between furthering their child’s education and remaining financially solvent. While these are 2004 numbers, the ratio of tuition rates to household income provides a good marker for the impact of high school tuition on families’ decision-making process for staying in school.

In addition to high school tuition, many buraku families were unable to afford the textbooks, lunch money, and other supplies that were needed for students to attend school, so it

also created a scholarship system that offset the cost of education.93 Some of these costs such as lunch and textbooks are reduced or free based on the income level of the parents and some goods such as the backpack are one-time purchases. Some elementary schools have more recently eliminated uniforms, but that is not a uniform policy throughout (no pun intended). While these are issues prevalent in the lower-class population as a whole, the burakumin make up a disproportionate part of the lower class that was furthered by the economic and social discrimination they faced. Thus, this funding endeavored to alleviate some of these financial hardships.

The lack of subsidies for preschool and kindergarten is an important factor that undermined educational advancement. Many educational studies in the U.S. show that early and consistent access to books is an important factor in intellectual and educational success. The U.S.'s Head Start program specifically targets underprivileged children as a way to help them catch up to students who have more economic resources and thus start at a higher academic level.94 Started under President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, low-income students would receive extra schooling to enable them to close the achievement gap between them and middle- to high-income students before the start of school. The initiative received bipartisan support and continues to this day. While the Head Start program did not magically close the achievement gap, it helped students start at a higher level closer to that of their wealthier counterparts.95

93 Gordon, “From Liberation to Human Rights,” 188.


95 “Head Start,” House of Representatives, 3.
Although Japan has programs such as state-sponsored day care, its limited capacity and long waiting lists hinder access for many children.\footnote{Kurumi Mori, Emi Nobuhiro and Kae Inoue, “Moms continue to face hurdles returning to work as Abe wavers on day care and women's empowerment goals,” Japan Times, October 4, 2018. \url{https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/10/04/business/moms-continue-face-hurdles-returning-work-abe-wavers-day-care-womens-empowerment-goals/#.XLSGZ5NKifU}} Japan had 22,570 state-run daycare centers at 97.1\% capacity with a 23,000-person waiting list.\footnote{Linda Hasunuma, Political Targets: Womenomics as an Economic and Foreign Relations Strategy, 2017, Policy File, 10.} Due to restrictive immigration laws, affordable nannies and babysitters are rare. In other countries, these positions are largely filled by immigrant women at almost one-third of the cost.\footnote{Mori et al., “Moms continue to face hurdles.”} In addition, the societal expectations for traditional family homes of the husband as the main breadwinner with a stay-at-home mother meant that progress for addressing this issue was and continues to be limited. Buraku students are more likely to be from broken families and single-parent households, meaning that these programs only serve to address some middle-class needs.\footnote{Ramseyer, “On the Invention of Identity Politics,” 24.}

Limitations on childcare and daycare aside, the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Institute also point to the lack of education about burakumin and discrimination from an early age. While Dōwa education and raising awareness is implemented in elementary and middle schools, there are currently no widespread efforts to teach about it at a younger age.\footnote{Hirasawa et al., Dowa Education, 32.} This increases the likelihood of children learning about it from an informal setting through their parents or other relatives, many of whom hold prejudiced views about burakumin.\footnote{Šturdík, "Gradual Disappearance of the Hisabetsu,” 701.}
children are then more likely to internalize these perspectives, continuing the cycle of
discrimination later.

While there was funding available for Dōwa Education, there were several issues that
acted as roadblocks. The scholarship system paid for school goods, but it did not pay for juku,
after school tutoring that is integral to students passing high school and university admissions
exams.\textsuperscript{102} This severely restricted the chances of buraku students to adequately compete against
students from the general population as it created an uneven playing field. According to Leestma,
Becker and Yoo, in the 1990s 50-70\% of 10th grade students in Japan were enrolled in juku with
60\% of public school students.\textsuperscript{103} Roesgaard cited Monbusho’s national survey that recorded a
significant increase in juku attendance. In 1976 only 12\% of elementary school students attended
juku but it has spiked to 36.9\% in 1999.\textsuperscript{104} For public middle school students, attendance rose
from 38\% to 71.8\%.\textsuperscript{105}

Part of this rise in juku attendance is due to an increasing number of entrance
examinations into middle and high schools that included questions beyond national curriculum
guidelines. 11.8\% percent of public middle school entrance examinations exceeded guidelines. In
1992, 57.1\% of public high schools had entrance exams that exceeded guidelines.\textsuperscript{106} This

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item{Gordon, “From Liberation to Human Rights,” 188.}
\item{Delwyn L. Harnisch, “Supplemental Education in Japan: Juku Schooling and Its
Implication,” \textit{Journal of Curriculum Studies} 26, no. 3 (1994): 325.}
\item{Marie H. Roesgaard, \textit{Japanese Education and the Cram School Business: Functions,
Challenges and Perspectives of the Juku}, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series;
No. 105. Copenhagen: NiAS Press, 2006, 9.}
\item{Roesgaard, \textit{Japanese Education and the Cram School Business}, 9.}
\item{Marie H. Roesgaard, \textit{Japanese Education and the Cram School Business}, 8. This
statistic has decreased since 1992. Only 14.3\% had exceeded guidelines in 1993.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
standard practice of providing students with more challenging examinations means that students who only attend school and do not supplement with juku are placed at a disadvantage to those who can afford outside assistance. At the end of the LSM in the 1990s, the entrance examination content reached an all-time high. As the majority of students in Japan attend juku to prepare for entrance examinations, this unwritten expectation presented problems. Debates ensued over whether funding should be provided for buraku students or buraku students should just be held to a different standard than the rest of the population during the admissions process. Oftentimes described as buraku affirmative action, some universities and high schools enacted different policies for addressing this situation. However, most elected not to create special policies for Buraku students.

Despite these debates, Dōwa Education funding abated many of the financial constraints Buraku families faced in paying for their children’s education. While they still faced hurdles, the attitude of these families was no longer based on an assumption of rejection but on a newfound awareness of the availability of funding and programs that could provide financial support if they searched for it.
VII.

Student-Teacher Relationships in Dōwa Education

The question over funding for juku is indicative of the lack of differentiation in general Japanese education programs that has enabled the juku market to grow and thrive. Juku is no longer just about exam preparation. It also reflects the growing issue of the public education system that maintains the idea that all children are the same and can be taught in the same way. Buraku students, especially those who are not enrolled in Dōwa schools, often need extra differentiation and negatively affects their performance when that is not provided.

Alastair McLauchlan and Suehiro Kitaguchi, experts on human rights specializing in the burakumin, argue that equal access to education does not necessarily mean equal outcome. By just addressing the low socioeconomic status by providing funding, they are neglecting other issues such as the family’s need for children to work to sustain an adequate income. Long history of discrimination also leads to lower self-image, resulting in tendencies to underperform and lower their own expectations.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, although many communities were eligible for assistance, some were reluctant to be labeled a “Dōwa district” due to the stigma.¹⁰⁸ This hesitance may have been from their community’s own shame of their identity or the locality’s shame of living near burakumin. These issues of pride or lack thereof in the burakumin identity became hindrances in advancing dōwa education.

¹⁰⁷ Kitaguchi and McLauchlan, An Introduction, 12.

Okano and Tsuchiya also presented academic issues of Buraku students who live in Dōwa communities whose daily interactions consist solely of other burakumin. Many of these students engage directly with dominant Japanese cultures and attitudes for the first time in a school setting. Rather than just witnessing discrimination on television or on other forms of media, these students experience the “othering” of the burakumin on a personal level. Oftentimes the attitudes of teachers and offhand remarks about burakumin and their culture intertwine their feelings about school and discrimination. Thus, many students’ behaviors are defined by their trust in the teachers and their experiences of discrimination within the school.

Furthermore, Okano and Tsuchiya challenge the idea that buraku parents do not buy into education and its potential to provide their children with a better life. They recorded that most parents encourage school attendance and performance but are limited by their own low academic achievement and personal experiences at school. Parents are unable to help their children with their homework and the children struggle as a result. Furthermore, the parents’ own experiences continue to inadvertently instill a distrust of schools and teachers. While the parents work to overcome those feelings, they limit their involvement in parents’ associations, a known factor in children’s performance at school.

Buraku students also have more extreme achievement gaps within the group. Based on grades and testing, Buraku students cluster either around the high achievers or the lowest achievers. Okano and Tsuchiya remarked the strange way that there were seldom buraku students that performed in the mid-range, if any. Researchers in Hana, a buraku community in a rural

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109 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 126.

110 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 123.

111 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 127.
fishing town on Shikoku Island, noticed that the students had separated themselves into these
two groups both socially and academically in the 1980s. While all the students’ parents all
went through similar, poor experiences in school themselves, many of the parents of high-
achieving students were more active in the school community. Many of these parents also did not
work in fishing as the other parents did. The high-achieving students, after primary and middle
school, attended more prestigious high schools rather than the predominantly buraku local high
school. Many of these students did not associate with their low-achieving counterparts socially
and did not engage in the same disruptive behavior. Though parents of both sets of students try to
encourage doing well in school to their children, their degree to which they succeed is based on
their own reinforcement of school as important through their involvement with the school.

However, it is often difficult to reinforce the importance of school when many buraku
students find examples within their own community that school is not the ticket out of poverty.
In the same community, many students see the numerous fisherman who continue to survive
without a high school diploma as well as burakumin who did graduate, went to university only to
come back after they failed to find a job. Thus, many buraku students see school as a waste of
time that will not actually help them in life. Many of these adults that the students see in their
community struggle to make ends meet and must rely on welfare payments, yet the students
understand that this future is their reality, with or without schooling.

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112 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 121.
113 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 127.
114 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 124.
115 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, 122.
Discriminatory employment practices underline these experiences, as qualified burakumin who complete university continue to be less likely to be hired by private companies. While Meiji-style family registers are now gone, secret “Buraku Lists” were brought to the public’s attention in 1975.\textsuperscript{116} These lists revealed locations and sizes of Buraku communities all over Japan. These were secretly sold to private companies that were looking to avoid hiring buraku employees. More than 200 companies bought these lists.\textsuperscript{117} The standard practice of requiring job applicants to state their address also enabled companies to weed out potential burakumin from their pool. Though efforts have been made to eliminate these types of questions on applications, several companies continue to engage in discriminatory practices. While high-achieving burakumin may be qualified for these positions, their identity becomes an obstacle for employment. Cases of high-achieving burakumin coming back to their communities as seen in Hana is not uncommon. Buraku youth witness these experiences, reaffirming their belief that education and high performance in the dominant culture does not necessarily equate to better lifestyles or tickets out of poverty.

In some Buraku communities with larger liberation movements, students engaged with more positive role models actively working towards equality for Burakumin.\textsuperscript{118} These communities are often found in urban areas in the Kansai region where there are bigger pushes to enact change and society is more open about discussing Buraku issues. Though the presence of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 32.
\item Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 32.
\end{enumerate}
role models from within the community is crucial for youth buy-in, teacher-student relationships are still crucial in student achievement.

Some teachers were extremely dedicated to helping burakumin and advance the program, but June A. Gordon, an associate professor of education specializing in minority group education, pointed out teachers at dōwa schools had to balance contradictory national expectations for teachers and expectations specific to dōwa schools. She stated, “they are to respond to the special needs of Buraku youth as dictated by the BLL, but, on the other hand, they are to treat all students equally as suggested by the national mythology that no differences exist among Japanese other than the degree of effort they engage in individually.” Simultaneously, some schools and teachers took advantage of differentiation mandates and used their leeway to tailor educational practices for buraku students, leading to more pedagogically sound practices. Dōwa teachers were also expected to conduct extra home visits to encourage parents to keep their students in schools and to provide greater support. These home visits were extremely important for buraku students, but these tactics did not necessarily solve all the problems.

Other teachers were not as invested and tried to either resist transfer or leave dōwa schools as quickly as possible, with good reason. Multiple examples of intimidation and acts of violence made teachers fearful of teaching at dōwa schools, or even schools with a sizable minority of buraku students. In the 1970s, teachers affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party at Yoka High School were held and beaten for 12 hours by the BLL, leaving at least a dozen teachers hospitalized for several weeks. While not every incident ended this violently, teachers


120 Upham, “Ten Years of Affirmative Action,” 286.

121 Rohlen, "Violence at Yoka High School,“
were still sometimes forced to go to denunciation sessions. At Yata Middle School, two teachers were held for 12 hours by the BLL and the community.\textsuperscript{122} These threats and acts of violence meant that teachers in dōwa communities not only had to contend with the daily challenges of teaching, but also wade through sensitive issues that, if handled poorly, could lead to them to danger. Therefore, it was reasonable for teachers to resist teaching in these schools. However, some thwarted placement in dōwa schools due to their own prejudice against burakumin while others did not want to work at a low performing school.\textsuperscript{123} Whether it was too much pressure, a lack of interest, fear of humiliation or a lack of training, the teacher turnover rate was exceedingly high at dōwa schools, failing to provide consistency.\textsuperscript{124}

Teachers who did work in Dōwa schools also struggled to work with the buraku culture, regarding it instead as the root of the problem. Many teachers rejected burakumins’ dominant speech patterns and their valuation of physical strength over learning.\textsuperscript{125} While some of these cultural values do hinder schooling, often times it was the attitudes of the teachers denigrating these values that alienated the students from schools. Many students were caught between the values taught to them at home and values taught to them at school. Thus, as their academic performance fell, it made more sense to reject school as antithetical than to try to keep up with their studies. Okano and Tsuchiya identified this pattern among students in Hana who rejected school and the dominant culture.\textsuperscript{126} Their ways of validating themselves and improving their

\textsuperscript{122} Upham, “Ten Years of Affirmative Action,” 278.

\textsuperscript{123} Upham, “Ten Years of Affirmative Action,” 286.

\textsuperscript{124} Gordon, “From Liberation to Human Rights,” 198.

\textsuperscript{125} Okano and Tsuchiya, Education in Contemporary Japan, 122.

\textsuperscript{126} Okano and Tsuchiya, Education in Contemporary Japan, 122.
self-esteem after their insecurities at school rested on their reaffirmation of their buraku
subculture. Many of these students acted out behaviorally as a result, disturbing the class
environment on top of refusing to do work.

A teacher interviewed by Gordon also made remarks about “anti-school culture” and
attributed it to the “history of people being rejected in marriage, funerals, meetings, or events, so
they built up their own community.”127 This sentiment is consistent across many teacher
accounts. Another interviewee, Mrs. Maeda, said, “There are some things which are allowed to
be done only in that area and some words which cannot be understood outside of Buraku
society.”128 The idea that non-Buraku teachers are unable to bridge the gap between them and
their Buraku students seems to be a wall that many teachers face, no matter their commitment to
the cause. However, there are some differences in these two remarks. The first teacher, under the
pseudonym “Mr. Sonoda,” attributes Buraku youths’ rejection of school as based in a history of
rejection of Burakumin by the mainstream population. The other interviewee, Mrs. Maeda,
alludes to Buraku culture more as a subculture present since time immemorial that mainstream
Japanese cannot break through. Yet Mr. Sonoda’s historical explanation makes sense. Through
generations of rejection from mainstream society, Burakumin were more willing to reject
mainstream culture to save their self-esteem. This historical context coalesces with some
teachers’ efforts to reject rather than to bridge the divide, leading to their “anti-school culture.”

Furthermore, the importance of school as a place to learn societal expectations is a
common theme throughout multiple studies. Mr. Sonoda discusses the difficulties in teaching the

127 Interview with Mr. Sonoda in June A. Gordon, Japan's Outcaste Youth, 40.
128 Interview with Mrs. Maeda in June A. Gordon, Japan's Outcaste Youth, 42.
students the “rules of society” at school. He remarks, “I am not trying to make them understand what the rules are in school but what the rules are in society.” He explains that school expectations and culture are a reflection of the dominant culture that Buraku students need to internalize. By rejecting school and its culture, students are also refusing to engage with mainstream culture. Moreover, by not learning these expectations, students are less likely to pass into mainstream society and more likely to be rejected from potential employment. This notion of equivalency between school rules and societal expectations reflects the overarching goals of schools in Japan and elsewhere. It also explains some of the Buraku students’ resistance to following said rules that can seem to contradict Buraku cultural norms.

Furthermore, shame and lack of self confidence among buraku youth are definitely factors, though not the only factors, tied to academic success. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, while the basic needs such as adequate food, sleep and clothing are important, psychological needs such as feelings of belonging and self-esteem are the next step in importance for educational success and attainment. Feelings of "shame" and embarrassment of self-identity is a critical factor in underperformance. Many students, especially boys, who don't feel like they belong often act out or pretend they don't care, sabotaging their own academic success regardless of their own abilities. Hiroshi Ikeda, a leading scholar on research on minority education at Osaka University, found that this correlation between self-esteem and low academic performance causes many low-performing students to compensate through “disidentification,” a

129 Interview with Mr. Sonoda in June A. Gordon, Japan’s Outcaste Youth, 40.


Steele observed that black youth in the U.S. attempted to protect their self-identity by “actively disassociating their academic achievement from it.”  

Ikeda observed similar actions taken by buraku students with low academic standing to the point that those with low academic achievement eventually gained more self-esteem. Due to buraku students, like other minorities, being devalued in school by teachers and students lead to the buraku students devaluing working in school.

Furthermore, while some scholars blame the oppositional culture of the general buraku community for buraku youth’s opposition to school authority, Ikeda argues that this opposition stems from students’ individual anxiety and “deep-seated feelings of inferiority.”

Though there was a sense of collective identity and action during elementary school in acting out against the teacher, buraku students dispersed into different groups based on academic achievement by middle school and oppositional action against teachers were not exclusive to burakumin.

Ikeda also identifies the cyclical nature of academic success, stating that “the low school achievement level of Buraku children is considered both the result and the cause of their vulnerability.”

Rather than student opposition being caused by oppositional culture or the idea that LSM subsidies fostered a culture of victimization, student behavioral actions could be attributed to their anxieties over identity and value.

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131 Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 95.


135 Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 83.
Additionally, behavioral patterns among buraku students in schools were not uniform. Ikeda observed four distinct patterns of behavior that varied based on socioeconomic status, achievement levels, and extracurricular activities. These distinctions are more nuanced than the differentiation presented earlier based on high-achieving and low-achieving Buraku students in the Hana community. It is important to note that Ikeda’s research was primarily focused in an urban community in the northern part of Osaka city where the BLL is more publicly active. He identified them as the “delinquent,” “college,” “corner” and “liberatory” boys whose academic and social success differed immensely.\footnote{Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 88.} While the “delinquent” and “college” youths are familiar archetypes, “corner” and “liberatory” youths are newer categorizations of Buraku youth. Ikeda defines “corner” youths as those who have average grades and are discouraged by their parents from engaging with Buraku culture.\footnote{Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 89.} He defines “liberatory” youths as those related to members of the BLL and while he does not always perform well academically, he understands the importance of school. He is also an active member of the Buraku youth community, and his family is better off economically. All four groups of youths identified by Ikeda are defined by the parents’ degree of involvement in their schooling.

Ikeda’s case study on “delinquent” boys had many similarities to the students in Hana who struggled academically and developed an anti-school youth culture. Pseudonymized “Shige,” a participating student in Ikeda’s study, had the lowest socioeconomic status and fell behind in classes during elementary school.\footnote{Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 89.} However, Ikeda also concluded that Shige was intelligent after teaching him in summer school. His parents’ history hindered his growth. As he
fell further behind in class, he became disengaged and eventually gave up. Shige and his friends acted out the most against their teacher who they saw as trying to enforce classroom rules. In turn, more Buraku students were complicit in that behavior because they grew up with Shige and the teacher was more of a stranger. Thus, the “otherness” of the Buraku community also formed a closeness that alienated the teacher rather than the delinquent behavior.

Helping the buraku students catch up also created social problems and stigma surrounding buraku students. In several dōwa schools, Buraku students were required to attend extra lessons once a week after school to help them catch up to the rest of the student population. However, because it conflicted with club time all of the students were more acutely aware of these students’ identity.\(^{139}\) Club time is an integral part of student life in Japan and their absence once a week from these clubs led to many of these students being labeled as different. Christopher Bondy, an associate professor of sociology specializing in burakumin, argues that these programs further contributed to the discrimination of burakumin rather than to its elimination. On the other hand, some buraku students who were heavily involved with the liberation movement liked to publicly attend these classes as a badge of pride.\(^{140}\)

The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRRI) concurred with Bondy’s analysis of buraku student’s feelings surrounding extra classes. Hirasawa and Nabeshima state, “For many children it was a mere extra burden and often resulted in cooling their aspirations.”\(^{141}\) Some schools went back to the drawing board and modified their approach to Harikomi Sokushin, utilizing the extra teachers to support the students who were significantly

\(^{139}\) Bondy, “Centring and Marginalizing,” 101.

\(^{140}\) Hiroshi Ikeda, “Buraku Students and Cultural Identity,” 87.

behind in the classroom. However, this also challenged the collective harmony and identity of a classroom along with the identity of its students. This method was also insufficient to help close the achievement gap of buraku students who were significantly behind. According to Nabeshima, schools as a whole are starting to accept differentiation as the preferred method of teaching, but both schools and teachers underestimate the extent of buraku students’ achievement gap compared to mainstream students.

Many of these efforts were thwarted by students’ feelings of distrust of teachers. Some Dōwa teachers attempted to remedy this through several methods such as a *Seikatsu Noto*, or a diary. These notebooks were utilized to help buraku students talk about their lives and for the teachers to gain insight into the students and to respond thoughtfully. Teachers’ responses, if done well, could gradually open avenues of communication and a path towards mutual trust between the student and the teacher. These notebooks were designed not just for the students, but for the teachers. The teachers were able to learn about the lives of these students and learn to challenge their own prejudices towards the buraku community. While some experiences may reinforce these prejudices, direct contact and learning individual experiences have been proven to undermine preconceived notions about groups of people.

Although distrust of teachers is a prevailing issue, it is unfair to say that all students have had uniformly negative experiences with their teachers or that it is the sole factor in student success. Even students who are seen as “delinquent” boys have had great connections with some of their teachers, a few of whom maintained communication over the years. For example,

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144 Buraku Kaiho Jinken Kenkyusho, “Dōwa Education,” 34.
“Shige” from Ikeda’s study identified several teachers who continued to stay in contact with him after he moved to a new grade and regularly made home visits. Moreover, Ikeda stated that students from his other three categories, “college,” “liberatory,” and “corner,” were all committed to school life. Though teacher-student relations were at times an obstacle among all three groups of students, their understanding of the importance of education to their success and parental motivation facilitated their continued education.

VIII.

Impact of Dōwa Education

Despite several roadblocks to success, there was progress in educational attainment levels and employment among Burakumin. However, they still failed to reach the national average. By 1973, the high school attendance rate rose from 30% to 64%, but the national average was at 95%. In 1986 the unemployment rate for burakumin was three times higher than the national average with the rate in Osaka being 9 times higher than the prefecture’s average. Although they had not reached the national average, they still doubled the attendance rate and increased the literacy rate in the community. These numbers also reflect the limitations of data gathering as it may or may not have accounted for burakumin who were educated but left, leaving them unaccounted for in these statistics. Therefore, education participation rates for burakumin may be underreported since most of those who pass into mainstream society are among the most educated. There is still some disagreement among scholars regarding what actually enabled this growth, the financing, evolving attitudes towards education among burakumin, teacher support, or something outside dōwa education altogether.

In the 1993 governmental survey, high school matriculation rates for Buraku districts were 92.4% and 96.7% nationally. These statistics show a marked increase since 1971, when

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146 John N. Hawkins, "Educational Demands,” 211.


Buraku high school matriculation rates were at 73% versus 85% nationally, indicating both an increase in matriculation as well as a narrowing of the gap between Buraku and non-Buraku populations.\textsuperscript{149} College matriculation increased from 15.8% to 24.3% among Burakumin between 1980 and 1993. However, it remains behind national rates which stayed consistent around 36-37%.\textsuperscript{150}

Some scholars such as Hirasawa and Nabeshima argue that while the enrollment gap between mainstream and buraku populations for high school have narrowed, the actual gap in academic performance has not. Based on their research, they found the high school enrollment gap to have narrowed from 30% in 1960 to around 2-10% nationally in 1975, but buraku students continue to perform nearly one standard deviation lower than that of mainstream students.\textsuperscript{151} They concluded that the education program did not help advance buraku students academically as indicated from the increase in high school enrollment. However, more buraku youth received a high school diploma, often a necessary prerequisite for secure employment.

One factor that stunted the further growth of Buraku youths’ educational levels was the power and wealth of crime syndicates. As the yakuza infiltrated the BLL and diverted massive amounts of funds through bribery, kickbacks, and rigging contracts, it became more financially attractive for buraku youth to join the yakuza than to continue their education.\textsuperscript{152} They could also circumvent the system in order to obtain a government job by gaining a BLL nomination rather

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\textsuperscript{149} Bondy, “Understanding Buraku Inequality,” 103.

\textsuperscript{150} Bondy, “Understanding Buraku Inequality,” 104.

\textsuperscript{151} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 25-26.

\textsuperscript{152} Ramseyer and Rasmusen, “Outcaste Politics,” 219.
than completing a college degree.\textsuperscript{153} Therefore, although the education system for burakumin did indeed improve, the incentives for educational advancement decreased. Moreover, companies were hesitant to hire buraku employees not just because of discrimination but also due to the buraku community’s association with the yakuza.\textsuperscript{154} Even if burakumin earned educational degrees, they were still the last to be hired and the first to be fired, providing further disincentives to continuing their education.

While the numbers show that employment rates for Buraku and non-Buraku men are similar at 71.6\% and 75.4\% respectively, the types of employment available to these groups are vastly different. 24.8\% of Buraku men are involved in construction, whereas only 11.3\% of non-Buraku men work in construction.\textsuperscript{155} Buraku men are more likely to be in blue-collar jobs and non-Buraku men are employed at higher rates in white-collar jobs. Summarily, though the numbers look promising at a macro level, they should not be taken at face value. Educational attainment and employment gaps have decreased significantly, yet the variations within of type and quality have not yet reached optimum levels.

Despite these disincentives, d\text{"ow}a education contributed to more burakumin with higher levels of education. Yet Nobuo Shimahara questions whether it was a result of the program itself or some other circumstance. Rather, it could be a result of a better economy and more economic opportunities, or a change in attitudes towards education as a means for social mobility.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{154} Ramseyer and Rasmusen, “Outcaste Politics,” 207.
\textsuperscript{155} Bondy, “Understanding Buraku Inequality,” 104.
Christopher Bondy goes further, stating that the intentionally vague wording of the LSM regarding dōwa education created disparate policies in local communities, leading to a “marginalization of the burakumin.”¹⁵⁷ In the same paper, however, Bondy refers to schools that successfully empowered buraku students through effective programs using the same subsidies. Hawkins makes the opposite conclusion to Bondy, stating that better academic performance rates were a result of program effectiveness.¹⁵⁸ Gordon acknowledges both the effectiveness of the program as well as the growing lack of uniformity.¹⁵⁹

Another unintended consequence may be the benefits of the LSM and Dōwa education on non-Buraku populations. Funding through the LSM for Dōwa education was provided only to communities that identified themselves as Dōwa areas, regardless of the number or percentage of burakumin living in these areas.¹⁶⁰ Many of these communities have other marginalized groups such as Zainichi Korean-Japanese, immigrants and other low-income groups residing in these areas.¹⁶¹ While specific aspects of Dōwa education such as the special after school remedial tutoring programs were only provided to Buraku students, the additional funding provided to schools in general provided for extra teachers, resources that benefited other low income groups residing in the community with targeted instruction.

However, proponents of Dōwa Education admit that there were several shortcomings of the program. Hirasawa of the BLHRRRI identified three issues with the original model. One was

¹⁵⁷ Bondy, “Centring and Marginalizing,” 94.


¹⁶⁰ Gordon, Japan’s Outcaste Youth, 24.

¹⁶¹ Gordon, Japan’s Outcaste Youth, 25.
overuse of Buraku experiences to convey the realities of discrimination that tended to equate Burakumin with sadness. It also meant that instead of a multi-subject approach to addressing discrimination, most of the learning was carried out by history teachers.\textsuperscript{162} Global educational research in diversity, equity and inclusion actively encourages addressing these issues pedagogically in all subject areas. Secondly, Dōwa education emphasized the role of teachers in addressing Buraku discrimination but neglected to educate parents and communities. Lastly, Dōwa education failed to intentionally focus on and collaborate with other minority groups that struggled in similar ways. Though some minority students may have accidentally benefited from Dōwa education, deliberate partnership was lacking.

Dōwa Education’s impact in dispelling prejudice against Burakumin is also ambiguous. There continues to be a lack of open integration between Buraku and mainstream populations, but the program’s influence on that endeavor cannot be discerned due to the prevalence of other external factors. Increased intermarriage is an indicator of growing acceptance, yet intermarriage rates’ rise has been nominal. Furthermore, Charlie V. Morgan, a professor of sociology at the University of California-Irvine, states that marriage discrimination and opposition from relatives remains.\textsuperscript{163} He furthers this claim by stating that as intermarriage rates increased among younger populations, marriage discrimination and opposition increased as well.\textsuperscript{164} In national polling, intermarriage opposition may be decreasing from 64.3\% in 1985 to 56\% in 1993, but Morgan warns against taking this at face value.\textsuperscript{165} Many Japanese people opt to give politically correct

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\textsuperscript{162} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 45.
\textsuperscript{163} Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 37.
\textsuperscript{164} Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 37.
\textsuperscript{165} Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 39.
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responses. While around 18% of intermarried couples above 60 reported experiencing discrimination, around 30% of couples below 39 reported experiencing discrimination. This does not include all of those who were in relationships between a Buraku and non-Buraku. 42% of Burakumin having been in this kind of relationship pointed to Buraku issues as a source of their breakup.¹⁶⁶

However, he predicts that this may be due to more Buraku partners revealing their identities to their non-Buraku partners than in years past. Morgan argues that in Osaka, “The philosophy of keeping quiet in the hopes that discrimination would disappear has been replaced by a determination to stand up for one’s rights.”¹⁶⁷ In certain parts of Japan where the liberation movement is strong, there are more Burakumin who refuse to pass into mainstream society. This rejection of passing may show the impact of Dōwa Education as instilling a sense of pride in Buraku identity, but Morgan attributes it more to the broader liberation movement itself. It is also important to note that his research is in Osaka, a region known for its larger concentration of Burakumin with a more vocal liberation movement.

Morgan goes further to state that while this attitude is present among younger Burakumin, intermarriage rates remain limited to residential segregation. A majority of intermarried couples met in the neighborhood or in an adjacent neighborhood. Many of these intermarriages are the result of non-Buraku living in a Buraku community or having lived in one previously.¹⁶⁸ Unlike in American intermarriage cases, schools were not the primary location for meeting potential spouses. Though Buraku neighborhoods have not been solely occupied by

¹⁶⁶ Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 40.
¹⁶⁷ Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 38.
¹⁶⁸ Morgan, “A Case Study of Buraku and Non-Buraku Couples,” 49.
Burakumin, many mainstream Japanese continue to avoid living there today. Thus, residential segregation and subsequent school segregation remains a significant factor in limiting intermarriage and further integration of Burakumin into mainstream society. Dōwa education cannot make as big of a difference if residential segregation limits school enrollment and student integration.
IX.

Post-LSM Dōwa Education

In 1997, the Buraku Liberation League chose not to seek an extension on the Law of Special Measures, allowing funding and programs allotted for burakumin to end.\(^{169}\) Although it was replaced with human rights legislation, the BLL supported, even encouraged, this decision. By their inaction, some scholars suggest they essentially stated that discrimination against burakumin was over and the LSM successful. Simultaneously with the phasing out of the LSM, the legislature passed a series of laws that enabled them to crack down on organized crime groups and prevent any more corruption and extortion.\(^{170}\) According to Ramseyer and Rasmusen, the crackdown completely undermined the power of the BLL. While yakuza membership is not illegal in Japan, the BLL’s collaboration with organized crime further lowered burakumin reputation among mainstream society. BLL membership plummeted to the point where “the only ones left are the old folks and the people who work in the government bureaucracy.”\(^{171}\) It also greatly diminished the power of organized crime in politics as even a whiff of association to the yakuza could mean scandal.\(^{172}\)


\(^{172}\) Rankin, “21st-Century Yakuza,” 8.
Ramseyer and Rasmusen also predicted that the end of the subsidies would increase outmigration and the evidence supports that hypothesis, but they did not necessarily address how a greater portion of the population was able to do so. They stated that historically, burakumin who were able to migrate outside the community were either middle class or younger sons of the buraku elite. Without the requisite educational levels or social skills, many burakumin were unable to pass into the mainstream.\textsuperscript{173} While the increase in outmigration during the post-subsidy era make sense from a political perspective, the prerequisites required to pass into mainstream society has not changed. It could be true that it was still mostly middle class and elite younger sons, but it could also indicate that higher levels of educational attainment among the buraku community supported through Dōwa education funding helped to facilitate outmigration after the end of the subsidies.

However, the significant achievement gap identified by Okano and Tsuchiya among buraku students also point to increased outmigration of high-achieving students while those who remain in the Dōwa districts are the ones who were unable or unwilling to perform in school. These trends raise questions about the extent to which the remaining buraku populations will be able to perform academically and climb out of situations of poverty. The next generation are more likely to have parents who are the products of generations of negative school experiences. Even if students show potential, it is unlikely that these parents will be involved in school activities or have the requisite skills to help their children at home. Communities in urban areas may benefit from the local government taking more initiative, but towns like Hana will most likely continue to struggle in helping buraku students perform academically. Thus, while outmigration may increase in the immediate future, it may eventually slow.

\textsuperscript{173} Ramseyer and Rasmusen, “Outcaste Politics,” 196.
Since the implementation of high school tuition subsidies, the average expenditure of households for public schools have decreased to an average ¥242,692 according to the Ministry of Education’s 2016 publication of their 2014 survey. While these tuition subsidies are no longer allocated specifically for burakumin, low-income households as a whole have gained access to these resources. Any family paying less than ¥304,200 in annual taxes qualifies for these subsidies. Buraku families who meet these criteria still have access to these subsidies, but financial aid is open to all.

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The LSM’s Dōwa Education was replaced in 2000 by the “Law on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising.”\textsuperscript{176} It defines an education program that holds both the national and local governments responsible for implementing strategies to raise awareness of human rights. Hirasawa, while supportive of the measure as a whole, argues that it does not address some of the weaknesses he outlined in Dōwa Education. He criticizes the narrow scope of human rights education; the bill limits it to history rather than utilizing all subjects in addressing human rights.\textsuperscript{177} Nevertheless, he contends that this is the most comprehensive piece of human rights legislation passed in Japan so far.

The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center note that the legislation faces several obstacles for success. Teachers in Japan continue to be overworked, limiting their efforts to implement human rights education. Furthermore, there is a growing backlash among a select group of politicians and journalists who want to prioritize “moral education” instead.\textsuperscript{178} Even without the new pedagogical demands, teachers struggle with large class sizes.\textsuperscript{179} Teachers cannot give individualized attention, more home visits, and differentiated instruction in this environment. Helping minority students bridge the achievement gap through the building of teacher-student relations seems unfeasible in these working conditions.

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{176} “Law on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising” in Buraku Kaiho Jinken Kenkyusho, “Dōwa Education,” 55. \\
\textsuperscript{177} Hirasawa et al., \textit{Dowa Education}, 56. \\
\textsuperscript{179} Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, “References,” 73.\end{flushleft}
X.

Conclusion

While Dōwa Education was beneficial in helping a specific portion of Buraku students perform academically, it failed in accomplishing its main goal of addressing the systemic prejudice and discrimination experienced by the Buraku community. However, the goal itself was too ambitious a benchmark. Large portions of the population continue to be reluctant about engaging in discussions about the “Buraku problem.” A majority of the mainstream population remain opposed to marriages between burakumin and non-burakumin. Many urban areas in the Kansai region that have historically had larger Buraku population have spearheaded anti-discrimination efforts, but discussions in the Kanto region are definitely limited. All the evidence above may indicate the failures of Dōwa Education, but it could also indicate that other prevailing systems of discrimination thwarted an otherwise successful program’s efforts to break down discriminatory barriers.

It is unclear from any of the studies conducted by scholars and organizations, whether the program was successful in creating trust between teachers and their Buraku students. The creation of that bond seemed to be pivotal to the success of the program, yet most studies presented the obstacle without addressing the extent to which teachers were able to foster trust. While the program explored different ways to engineer trust to eliminate anti-school youth culture among Burakumin, it only seemed successful if the parents were motivated to get involved. The idea of low-achieving Buraku students engaging in anti-school youth culture permeated in both rural and urban communities studied by scholars. Urban communities in the
Kansai region had better means and motivation to encourage students to stay in school, yet they still had mixed results based on factors outside the teacher’s control. These efforts, nevertheless, raised pedagogical inquiries about best practices to help minority students and their relationships with their teachers. Although teachers and program leaders ultimately continue to struggle to find a good answer to this query, it created opportunities and funding for Dōwa teachers to experiment. There is probably no perfect formula for teachers to create bonds with minority students, but it helped identify some of the larger fences between buraku students and their teachers.

Dōwa Education was successful in improving Buraku student attendance through home visits and extra teachers. Attendance and extra teachers help to explain the narrowing of the achievement and retention gap between Buraku and mainstream students. Nonetheless, Hirsawa’s and Nabeshima’s findings on behalf of the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute indicate that there is still a significant disparity in their performance. Their own conclusions reflect the growing acknowledgement that Dōwa Education did not have as significant of an impact as was previously stated. It aided a portion of the Buraku students who performed above average, but the students who were significantly behind continued to struggle in schools.

However, funding for Dōwa education aided in helping more Buraku students enter high school and beyond by offering easier access to funds. It decreased the financial obstacles for Burakumin in obtaining educational success. These conclusions indicate that the impact of BLL relations with organized crime was significant in eliminating funding earmarked for Dōwa Education. Negative associations of Burakumin to organized crime could have also played a role
in the proliferation of human rights terminology, illustrating a reversal of trends to discuss discrimination against Burakumin.

Nevertheless, the results of Dōwa Education and implications of its elimination are unclear. More information is needed to make any definitive claims about its impact on prejudice and discrimination against Burakumin. Some aspects such as increasing access to funding for education were beneficial, but the localized nature of Dōwa Education prevents any blanket statements about its success. Potential next steps in research are outlined in the next section.
Further Research and Limitations

Though I am fluent in spoken Japanese, it is a considerable challenge for me to translate Japanese texts. Thus, I relied more heavily on translations of primary sources. In addition, I was unable to travel to Japan, thus limiting the extent to which I can explore their national archives. Moreover, due to the very nature of the topic, Japanese publishing companies are reluctant to publish works exposing the state’s deep relationship with the yakuza, a point addressed by several historians and journalists cited in this thesis.¹⁸⁰

Studying the burakumin and their educational success also presents major challenges in research. Due to trends of outmigration and passing, those with higher rates of educational attainment are those more likely to leave the community, thus lowering official statistics for population and educational attainment. There are some who “pass” only for work and continue to reside in buraku communities, but many attempt to completely pass, shedding their identity and avoiding discovery. There is a high probability that educational attainment rates are actually higher than reported. However, because those who leave mainstream society are less apt to admit to their buraku identity and would not be included in these statistics.

Furthermore, due to past discriminatory practices carried out through governmental statistics and records, population censuses and other records often avoid making distinctions.

between Buraku and non-Buraku people. Therefore, even current population estimates of Burakumin are based on predictions extrapolated from historical records. I have done my best by addressing both ends of the spectrum, but that continues to create limits on my level of accuracy.

If these limitations were eliminated, I would first compare various quantitative data to assess the degree to which Buraku students performed compared to their non-Buraku counterparts. One, I would compare all test scores and grades of Buraku students in Dōwa districts at each grade level to Buraku students non-Dōwa districts in similar, adjacent districts and to non-Buraku students. These comparisons would be from the same region with data divided by household income and level of parental education. I would evaluate the median test score and grade at each income and parental education level as well as its distribution. This would allow for analysis in terms of performance as well as identifying any clusters of performance among each individual group. However, test scores and grades are also limited as neither fully reflect the ability level of individuals, a longstanding problem that many countries have been unable to rectify.

Another underlying issue is that many Buraku students in non-Dōwa districts do not self-identify as Buraku. Thus, the obstacle of evaluating the success of Dōwa education remains. Another avenue of evaluation would be to compare educational attainment levels of Buraku from Dōwa schools, Buraku from non-Dōwa schools, and non-Buraku youth, controlling for the same factors. The same issue arises here as well. If these issues were also resolved, an evaluation of educational attainment levels would only be supplementary in evaluating Dōwa Education. Since the goal of Dōwa Education encompasses another larger agenda, an assessment of qualitative data would add, not eliminate the need for qualitative data.
Furthermore, an underlying issue with analyzing Dōwa Education is its lack of uniformity. Due to local autonomy in its implementation, Dōwa Education was carried out differently at each school. Thus, while it may have been a success at one school, it may not have been at another. To completely evaluate the success of Dōwa Education, it would be prudent to look at each school’s program and look at each individual school’s performance rates in order to investigate the success of each program. Then, a visit to each individual school and interviews with teachers and students would be integral to appraise students’ levels of confidence, self-identity, as well as teachers’ pedagogical efforts to support Buraku students. This would be a massive undertaking requiring financial support and time that is not possible at the moment.
XI.

Bibliography

Works Cited


