

## SCHOOL CULTURE IN JAPAN (PART 2)

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### *Introduction*

In a previous paper (Tomari, F. and Kudomi, Y. 2007), we discussed the construction of the concept of 'school culture' and recent culture at the level of junior secondary school in Japan. In this paper, we will inquire into its historical change in Japan after the Second World War with its relation to some characteristics of junior secondary school as the part of the whole school system in Japan. Here, we will focus on two such characteristics as issues: competitive education and school absenteeism. In order to address the historical transition of the characteristics of these two issues together with the nature of school culture in Japan after World War II, we arrange four periods, each of about fifteen years, and describe the contexts of the relationships between the two issues and the nature of school culture in Japan, especially at junior secondary school.

Thus, the problems of the recent school culture will be based on the phases of historical change.

### *I. School Culture and the Competitive Character of Education in Japan*

The competitive nature of education in the modern school system, which Foucault described as 'discipline' (Foucault, M. 1995), is a necessary mechanism of the system. Therefore, any modern school system is more or less competitive. But it does not mean that in any case the level of the keenness of the competition is the same. And differentiation of the level is rather wide between several societies or several ages in the same society.

Differentiation is important in addressing school culture, because the level of competitiveness of the school system strongly affects 'the culture of the school institution', which is 'the core of school culture and gives it its fundamental frame' both explicitly and implicitly (Tomari and Kudomi 2007, p.4). In fact, the level of competitiveness affects the explicit order of school knowledge and the implicit orders of time, space, and human relations at school, and these orders regulate school sub-cultures, the culture of teachers, the culture of students, and the culture of school ethos.

Firstly, the level of intensity of competition in education will be described using the historical transition of the ratio of students who go on to a higher level of education beyond compulsory education. And secondly, the change in the nature of school culture will be

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described in relation to the level of competitiveness in education during the four periods as four phases.

### **(1) The transition to a higher level of education in Japan: 1950-2007**

Fourteen years ago, one of us wrote a paper that followed the trend in the ratio of students' going on to a higher level of education in Japan from 1950 to 1993 (Kudomi 1994 b). We expand this period fourteen years after that time and also expand three phases to four phases in the history of the intensity of competitiveness in education.

Figure 1 shows the transition of the ratio of entrants both to senior secondary school and to college of about sixty years from 1950 to 2007. Figure 1 indicates several historical tendencies as follows:

- 1) Before 1960, the ratio of college entrants was about 10% and that of senior secondary school was around 50%.
- 2) From 1960 to the middle of the 1970s, both ratios rapidly increased (one beyond 35% and the other beyond 90%).
- 3) From the middle of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s, both ratios stopped and increasing reached a standstill (one below 40% and the other below 95%).
- 4) From around the middle of the 1990s to today, both ratios resumed increase but at this time, those increasing tendencies are not rapid but rather gentle.

These four tendencies can be easily found and four periods can also be clearly identified over about sixty years after World War II. Table 1 shows these tendencies as four phases and also shows the intensity of competitiveness in education in each phase.

The nature of competition in education can be described as follows:

- 1) In the first phase, competition in going on to a higher level of education was restricted among some social classes.
- 2) In the second phase, competition was opened to many social classes.
- 3) In the third phase, competition was closed suddenly because expansion of the number of university places was depressed by the higher education policy, and the level of intensity of competitiveness became extremely high.
- 4) In the fourth phase, the ratio of college entrants has been increasing slowly. But it is not caused by the expansion of places, but by decreasing of children in a low-birth-rate society. Intensified competition in education centres on the privileged element, and in large part, competitiveness of the educational system is being lost.

These changes in the ratio of entrants and the nature of competition are caused partly by the economic situation and partly by the automatic mechanism of the educational system.

### **(2) The change in the nature of school culture during four phases**

Age, economic, and social situation, the ratio of entrants, and especially the nature of competition in the school system strongly affect the character of school culture. And also, transition from school to work might also affect school culture directly or through the nature of competition.

Table 2 shows several matters affecting school culture and three factors of school culture by division into four periods. What meaning parents and local community give to the school

FIG. 1. THE RATIO OF STUDENTS WHO GO ON TO A HIGHER LEVEL OF EDUCATION  
IN JAPAN: 1950-2007

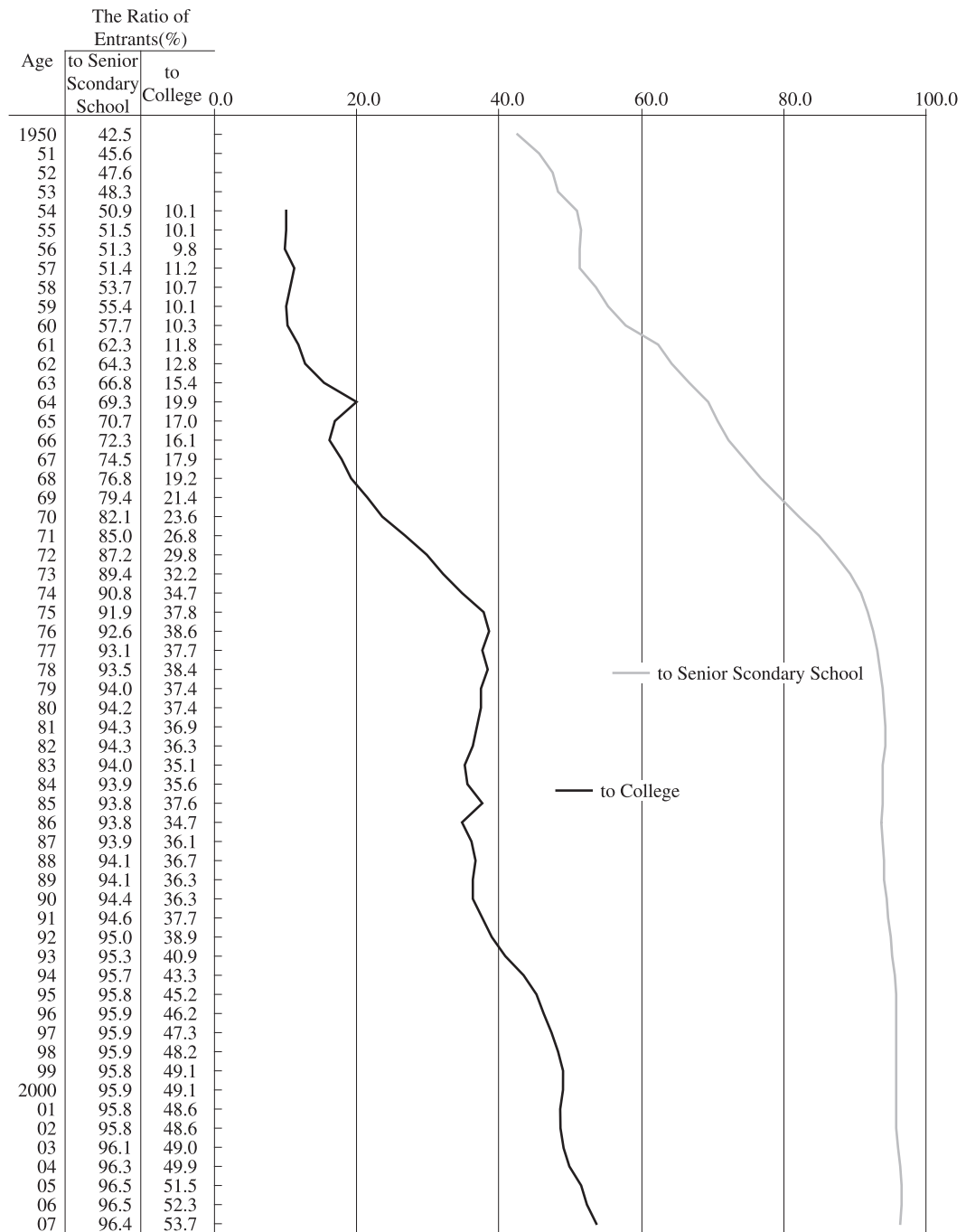


TABLE 1. THE FOUR PHASES OF THE CHANGING RATIO OF STUDENTS' GOING ON TO A HIGHER LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND THE HISTORY OF INTENSITY OF COMPETITIVE EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Period	I	II	III	IV
Age	1947~ late 1950s	around 1960s~ middle 1970s	middle 1970s~ early 1990s	middle 1990s ~ today
Ratio of college entrants	around 10%	10%→38%	35~39%	40→53%
	stable	rapid increase	halt of increase	slow increase
Ratio of senior secondary school entrants	40%→55%	55%→91%	91~94%	95→98%
	gradual increase	rapid increase	halt of increase	slow increase
The situation of the education system	Reorganizing the structure after WW.II	Rapid expansion of educational opportunities	High frequency of school problems (disruption, bullying, etc.)	Disruption in primary school and difficulty of transition to work
The nature of competition in school	Restricted competition	Open competition	Closed competition	Competition among each social stratification
Age and economic & social situation	Revival after the war / Gap of 'dual structure' / Separated type of occupational life	High economic growth / Correcting of gap / Rising type of occupational life	Post high growth / Continuous economic growth / Competitive order type of occupational life	Collapse of bubble economy / Economic depression / Stratified type of occupational life

system is an important factor of school culture. The specific climate of school is also a symbolic representation of school culture. And the cultural power that school institution displays by giving specific meaning to school knowledge is the core of school culture (Tomari and Kudomi 2007). Table 2 addresses these three factors as follows:

- 1) In the first phase, school is a progressive existence in the local community and among parents. School and teachers had the reputation of being highly trusted by society, even if this were not true in all cases. The time and space of school was one of release for pupils from child labour at home and the community. But for some social classes, most school knowledge was not familiar and not important in order to live and work.
- 2) In the second phase, the aspiration to rise in social status by going on to higher school spread to almost all social classes. Openness and hope was felt at school. At that stage, gaining school knowledge successfully was the way to some modern occupations of high status.
- 3) In the third phase, aspiration and competition became keen and the time and space of school also became oppressive. School knowledge, losing its substantial meaning, was seen as only a means to compete.
- 4) In the fourth phase, secondary school students are losing interest in school knowledge not only substantially but also as a means for competition. There are so many difficulties in the transition from school to work that the atmosphere is hopeless, with low trust of society in school becoming apparent.

The change in school culture has been very large and dynamic during these sixty years.

TABLE 2. THE FOUR PHASES OF THE HISTORY OF THE INTENSITY OF COMPETITIVE EDUCATION AND THE CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF SCHOOL CULTURE DURING THESE PERIODS IN JAPAN

Period	I	II	III	IV
Age	1947~ late 1950s	around 1960s~ middle 1970s	middle 1970s~ early 1990s	middle 1990s~ today
Age and economic & social situation	Revival after the war / Gap of 'dual structure' / Separated type of occupational life	High economic growth / Correcting of gap / Rising type of occupational life	Post high growth / Continuous economic growth / Competitive order type of occupational life	Collapse of bubble economy / Economic depression / Stratified type of occupational life
Ratio of college entrants	around 10%	10%→38%	35~39%	40→54%
Ratio of senior secondary school entrants	40%→55%	55%→91%	91~94%	95→97%
The nature of competition in school	Restricted competition	Open competition	Closed competition	Competition among each social stratification
The transition from school to work	The existence of the route to occupation not through school	The monopolizing of school on the route to occupation / Raising occupational status through school	Smoothly transition from school to work / The route stratified by the level on school system	Some difficulties of transition from school to work / The rapid expansion of non-regular employment
The relation between school and parents or local community	Progressiveness of school toward family or community / High trust of society in teachers and school	Giving special meaning to school and entrants to higher level of school system	Intensification of competition to gain a higher level of schooling	Partial competition among school system / Explicit low trust of society in teachers school
The specific climate of school	Cheerful and calm atmosphere at school	Open and hopeful atmosphere	Closed and oppressive atmosphere	Lost and hopeless atmosphere
The specific meaning to school knowledge which school culture gives	Entirely different acceptance of school knowledge according to social class	School knowledge for the way to modern society	School knowledge as a tool to compete / Losing the substantial meaning of school knowledge	Losing interest in school knowledge among secondary school students

## II. *School Culture and School Absenteeism*

School absenteeism means a pupil does not attend school a whole day. The phenomenon appeared at the same time as the school system commenced. School absenteeism was then defined and interpreted by different people such as teachers and other educational employees. The definitions and interpretations have been different in their respective ages. From the very beginning, the phenomenon of school absenteeism has been associated with school itself and people who have something to do with school. In other words, school culture, which has a system of meaning among people at school, has influenced the phenomenon of school absenteeism. If the phenomenon of school absenteeism could be considered a sort of realisation of school culture, a change of school culture would affect the phenomenon of school absenteeism.

Through a brief literature review of school absenteeism research, it will be firstly shown that school culture and the phenomenon of school absenteeism are related. Then, the remainder of this section will examine the hypothesis that school culture has changed from Period I to Period IV since post-World War II in Japan, focusing on how school culture in Period I-IV correlates with the phenomenon of school absenteeism in Japanese lower secondary schools.

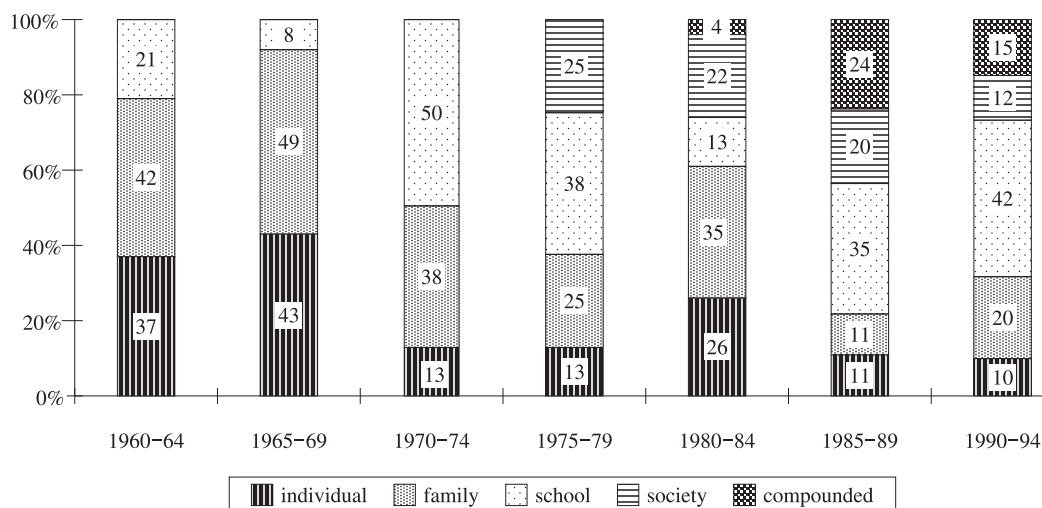
### (1) Evolution of school absenteeism research

As time passes, the research of school absenteeism is growing in many academic fields in Japan. While some work has focused on the causes of absenteeism at school, other research has sought to show how absenteeism has become problematic. The main difference is that the former work takes the existence of this phenomenon for granted and the latter regards that the phenomenon of school absenteeism is structured as an issue. Therefore, research on school absenteeism can be divided into two studies: one that focuses on the cause of this issue and one that focuses on the process of its becoming an issue.

When a new school system was introduced after World War II, there was a great number of pupils who were absent from school for a long time. The existence of those children became the catalyst for researchers of the sociology of education to study the reasons that they did not go to school (Tomita 1951; Satou 1957). In what was called 'persistent absenteeism' research, the reasons were mainly considered to be poverty and parents' lack of understanding about education. However, as H. Fukushima (1998) suggested, school absenteeism may be the result of not only poverty but also the cultural gap between school and family. For example, as Table 2 shows, there was different acceptance of school knowledge according to a fraction of the diverse social groups. Therefore, it is important to focus on school culture while enquiring into school absenteeism.

In the late 1950s, clinical doctors and psychiatrists discovered a few children who refused to go to school or could not go to school even though they wanted to. To their surprise, there was neither poverty nor a cultural gap between family and school among those children (Satou 1959; Washimi et al. 1960). The specialists were greatly shocked by these pupils who were totally different from truants, and they searched for what prevented them from attending school. In particular, they paid attention to their suffering intense psychological conflicts and

FIG. 2. REASONS FOR 'SCHOOL NON-ATTENDANCE' RESEARCH



Note: In reference to M. Hanatani and T. Takahashi (2004).

regarded school absenteeism as a disease or a 'school phobia'. The family environment, especially the relationship between the children and their mothers, was also singled out as a major cause of school absenteeism. Absentees themselves were too much the focus as therapeutic clients, and social problems around them were ignored in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, since the 1980s, the causes of school absenteeism in many research areas have gradually diversified (see Figure 2). Some counterarguments against past research appeared in the 1960s and 1970s that focused on the individual and the family. School and society came to be noticed as one of the causes of school absenteeism by researchers. For example, T. Takeuchi (1987) suggested that difficulty in acquiring one's own identity by oneself through peer relationships caused refusal to attend school. T. Watanabe (1983), who was a paediatric doctor, remarked that society's obsessive belief that children must go to school underlay school absenteeism. Moreover, it came to be considered that there was not one cause but multiple causes compounded related to school absenteeism (see Figure 2).

In the 1980s, an increasing number of researchers in different academic fields become concerned with school absenteeism. Academic fields such as sociology (Morita et al. 1989), psychology (Yokoyu 1985), and pedagogy (Takeuchi 1987) in addition to medicine became involved in school absenteeism research. Not only experts but also interested parties such as absentees and their parents participated in school absenteeism discourses and insisted that 'school refusal' should not be regarded as a disease (Okuchi 1989). Meanwhile, the number of people who used the term 'school refusal' rather than 'school phobia' was increasing. As people with different backgrounds have developed different discourses since the 1980s, the causes of school absenteeism came to be considered complicated and obscure. School absenteeism research gradually ceased to focus on the causes of school absenteeism. At the same time, school, where attendance and non-attendance were generated, became unquestioned as a cause of school absenteeism.

In the 1990s, the term 'school non-attendance' came to be diffused because the ambiguity of the causes of school absenteeism was widely recognised and the neutral term, which did not seem to examine the causes, was accepted. Instead of cause-investigating work, constructionist work that clarified the process and system of how 'school non-attendance' has been socially constructed as a disease, educational problem, or social problem has grown mainly in the sociology of education since the second half of the 1990s. For example, K. Asakura (1995) analysed discourses about school absenteeism in the mass media such as newspaper and magazine articles, and suggested that its definition changed from the 1960s to the 1990s. T. Seto (2001) showed how people constructed narratives of it and D. Hida (1997) depicted a map of different claims to it by authorities. These studies have ignored the causes of the phenomenon and only focused on the process.

Although research on school absenteeism can be clearly distinguished between constructionist work and cause-investigating work, these two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is important to study school absenteeism through both of these approaches. If only the causes are sought, as Y. Yamamoto (1991: 95) comments, it may be possible that 'the educational system underlying the definition of non-attendance as an educational disease is neglected, self-evidenced, and strengthened'. Therefore, a perspective of seeing how the problem of school absenteeism has been constructed is also necessary. However, from only the viewpoint of the constructionists, the simple question of why some children refuse to go to school while others go may not be solved. Taking account of the assumption that school absenteeism has been constructed, the cause of it should be the target of research.

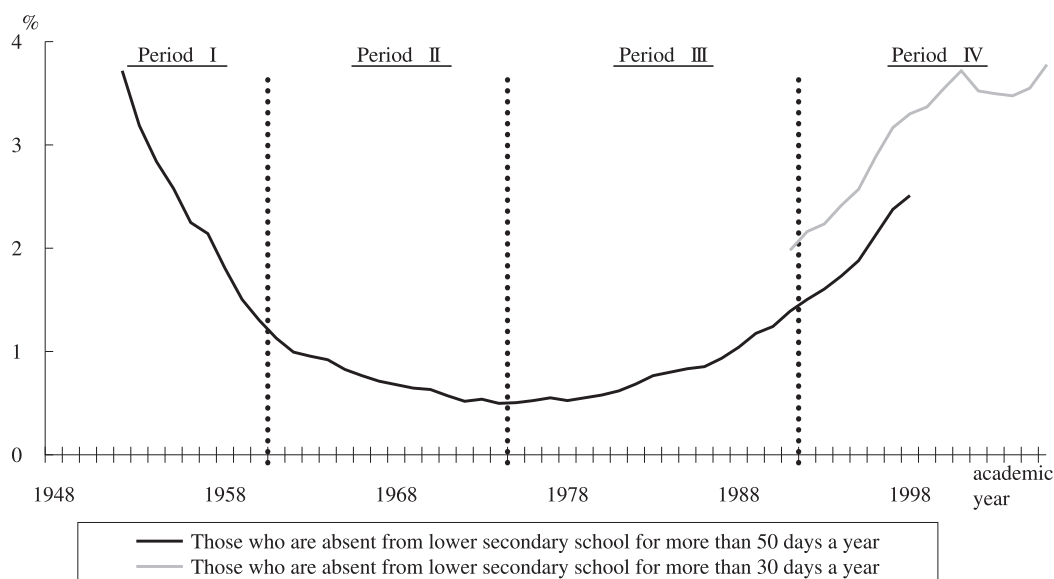
On the other hand, although 'persistent absenteeism' problems were recognised by only a few people and it was considered that they existed only in limited areas such as coal-mining towns and among the *buraku*, they still existed in the 1960s and 1970s, too (Kobayashi 2004). Nowadays, the cultural gap between family and school becomes obvious as the 'persistent absenteeism' problem of newcomer children from abroad (Ota 2000). The cultural gap between family and school has probably lasted until now, even though its existence may be limited to a few areas, a few ethnic groups, or a part of a social class.

Therefore, it is necessary that school culture is focused upon as the cause of school absenteeism. The effect of school culture should be considered in exploring 'persistent absenteeism' problems because the cultural gap between family and school is an issue. In addition, a sequence of school absenteeism research, which developed from 'school phobia' to 'school refusal' and then to 'school non-attendance' research, also claims that school is a place producing school absenteeism and defining it. It is proved that school culture eventually plays an important role in this regard (Galloway 1985; Hosaka 2000).

Of course, there are other causes such as abuse and illness that influence school absenteeism. However, it is very meaningful that the correlation between the phenomenon of school absenteeism and school culture is illustrated in explaining why school absenteeism has been produced by the school and how it has been constructed as a problem. As indicated above, the gap between school culture and the family environment is also one of the causes. Family is a private issue and thus it is difficult to change. However, school is of public interest and people who are concerned with school can empower school culture to improve. In the next section, it will be shown that school culture and the phenomenon of school absenteeism correlate significantly with the four periods (Period I-IV) after World War II in Japan.



FIG. 3. PERCENTAGE OF 'LONG-TERM' ABSENTEES



Note: Adapted from the *Report on 'Long-term' Absentees Investigation at State Primary School and Lower Secondary School (1953-59)* and *Annual Report on School Investigation (1960-2007)*.

## (2) Four periods of post-World War II

The percentage of 'long-term' absentees in Japanese lower secondary schools has been changing as Figure 3 indicates. The curving line can be divided into four periods that correspond to Period I-IV of school culture in the post-World War II era in Japan (see Figure 3). The percentage of pupils who were absent from lower secondary school for a total of fifty days or more in an academic year rapidly decreases during Period I and slowly decreases during Period II. Then, it reaches a turning point in the middle of the 1970s and slowly increases during Period III. During Period IV, the percentage of 'long-term' absentees absent from lower secondary school for more than thirty days in an academic year is also increasing at a more rapid pace than before.

School absenteeism research can also be historically divided into these four periods. At first, during Period I, lower secondary school pupils who were absent from school for a long time were subjects of 'persistent absenteeism' research. Secondly, 'school phobia' researchers emphasised the psychological reasons that some children do not go to school during Period II. Then, not only the personalities and family background of absentees but also problems of school and society were examined in the 1980s and the term 'school refusal' came to be widely used instead of 'school phobia'. Finally, research not seeking its causes but illustrating the process by which 'school non-attendance' came to be regarded as a problem appeared in the middle of the 1990s.

Past studies about school absenteeism dealt with the phenomenon of school absenteeism

as a contemporary issue. The phenomenon of school absenteeism was meant by 'persistent absenteeism', 'school phobia', 'school refusal', and 'school non-attendance' in the respective periods. There is no research analysing the phenomenon of school absenteeism chronologically and interpreting it in the same context. However, school absenteeism research includes 'persistent absenteeism', 'school phobia', 'school refusal', and 'school non-attendance' research all together because all of them have relevance to school culture. The whole of school absenteeism research is on the same straight line and it can be examined on the same axis of time.

There is school culture that is perceived by people in that the existence of school has great significance to people. School absenteeism expresses one aspect of perceived school culture, which describes peoples' views or images of school (Prosser 1999) and reflects 'a system of symbolic power that gives an individual specific meaning to each thing' (Tomari & Kudomi 2007: 2) at school. The school image based on the relation between school and parents or local community in Table 2 and the cultural values about going to school as described later are one of the factors of school culture.

After the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law were enacted in 1947, a new lower secondary school system became part of compulsory education. All children were expected to complete education at lower secondary school for the first time in Japanese history. However, the cultural values that children basically go to lower secondary school every day and should not be absent from school without 'legitimate' reason did not pervade at once. Accordingly, as Figure 3 indicates, there were a number of 'long-term' absentees in the 1950s and there was considered to be a cultural gap between school and their families.

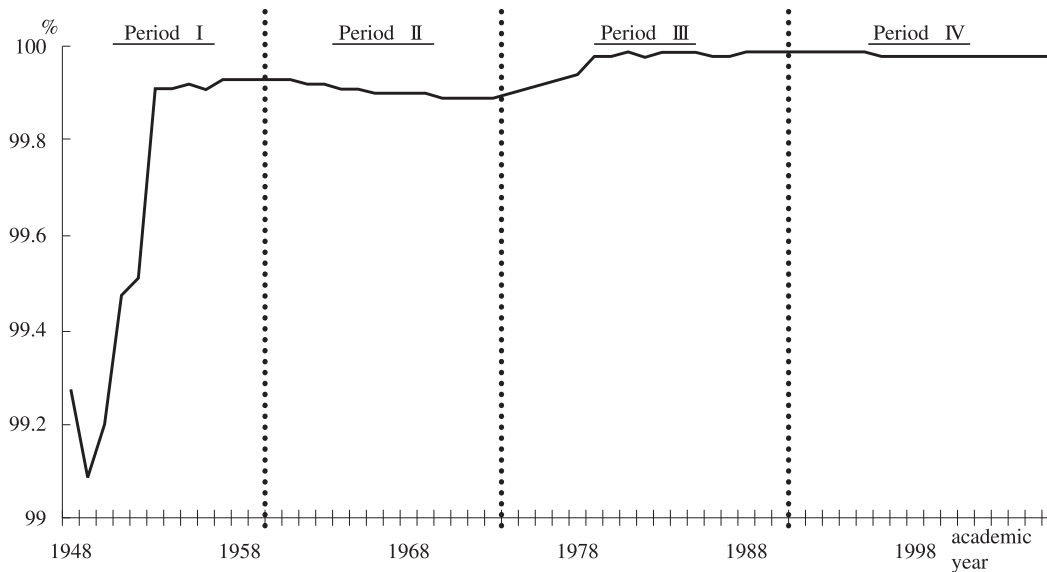
As such, school culture and the phenomenon of school absenteeism correlate in the respective periods. From the past literature of school absenteeism and Figure 3, the phenomenon of school absenteeism has changed in accordance with Period I-IV of school culture in post-World War II Japan. The next section will depict how the change of school culture affected the phenomenon of school absenteeism during these four periods (Period I-IV).

### **(3) Four periods of post-World War II**

Who are 'long-term' absentees?

The existence of persistent absentees was widely known and it was a subject of discussion in the 1950s (Tomita 1951). However, it was not until the commencement of an investigation into 'long-term' absentees by the Ministry of Education that persistent absentees were defined as 'long-term' by the government. 'Long-term' absentees absent from school for a total of fifty days or more in an academic year first appeared at the beginning of the investigation into 'long-term' absentees in 1952. Then, the Ministry of Education changed the definition of 'long-term' absentees in 1991. In this political context, 'school refusal' researchers who mainly consisted of doctors and psychiatrists insisted that there should be more accurate statistics and criticised the current investigation by the Ministry of Education in that it was not close to the actual condition of 'school refusal' (Asakura 1995: 54). From then on, pupils who are absent from school for more than thirty days in an academic year become 'long-term' absentees. The government broke the ambiguous concept of persistent absentees and made a distinction between 'long-term' absentees and 'non-long-term' absentees in 1952. Moreover, the govern-

FIG. 4. ENROLLMENT RATE AT LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL



Note: Adapted from the *Annual Report on School Investigation*.

ment changed the distinction and widened the scope of 'long-term' absentees by defining 'long-term' absentees as pupils absent from school for a total of thirty days or more in an academic year. In short, the definition of 'long-term' absentees has been strengthened in an explicit way.

Meanwhile, not only was the net covering 'long-term' absentees widened, the size of the target group entrapped also expanded. As Figure 4 indicates, the enrollment rate at lower secondary school has been rising, which means that the number of children permitted exemption from and postponement of lower secondary school attendance has been decreasing. The total number of children permitted exemption from and postponement of lower secondary school attendance changed from triple digits to quadruple digits in the 1980s.

Against this background, exceptional children allowed not to go to school could gradually attend school. For example, children who worked during the day could go to night school in the 1950s. After the establishment of special education schools was made compulsory, an increasing number of disabled children could go to school in the 1980s. Although children at 'support facilities for the development of self-sustaining capacity' (formerly 'homes for the training and education of juvenile delinquents') were not permitted exemption from and postponement of school attendance, they could complete compulsory education after the Child Welfare Law was revised in 1998. It was considered that more and more children must complete compulsory education. This may be because the need to guarantee the right to education was growing. In any case, it is certain that the government attempted to reduce the number of children permitted exemption from and postponement of school attendance and widen the scope of pupils expected to complete compulsory education.

### What is the cause of persistent absenteeism?

As indicated in the brief literature review of school absenteeism above, varying reasons for 'long-term' absenteeism are generated by different people concerned. Differing causes and exemplifications of school absenteeism are represented in different discourses. However, in the 1980s, the number of categories advanced for the causes of persistent absenteeism was increasing and those concerned no longer adhered to single causes. As Figure 2 indicates, many causes come to be represented in one research area. In this sense, the border between categories of the causes of school absenteeism has been weakened and become invisible. At the same time, the number of those participating in the discourse of persistent absenteeism has been also increasing and how they should be classified has become obscure.

The distinction between children who are likely to become persistent absentees and children who are not has also gradually become unclear. In the 1950s, persistent absentees were considered to be from poor families, the members of which did not recognize the importance or necessity of education (Tomita 1951). In the 1960s, persistent absentees were considered to be liable to suffer from 'school phobia'. However, as simply stated in the Report on the Issue of 'School Refusal' ('School Non-Attendance') by the Ministry of Education that 'school refusal' could happen to every child, all children came to be considered potential persistent absentees after the 1990s. It cannot be clearly stated that persistent absentees are like this any longer and the border between persistent absentees and non-persistent absentees seems to be set.

The categories of discourses and the agents of them have diversified and combined, and the border between categories has thus become ill defined. As a consequence, the number of specific causes of school absenteeism has decreased and the causes have become more diverse and ambiguous. Furthermore, the phenomenon of school absenteeism itself has been unable to be explicitly visible. Therefore, the individuals who are absent from school for a long time, instead of the phenomenon of school absenteeism as a whole, are becoming a stronger focus. As Beck (1986) emphasises, school absenteeism changed to an individual-level problem from a social problem. Persistent absenteeism becomes a failure of the individual and it is claimed that individuals should recover from the failure by themselves.

The government is taking measures one after another, instead of studying the complicated causes of persistent absenteeism. It is possible to reduce the number of 'long-term' absentees without knowing the reasons that they do not attend school. For example, 'long-term' absentees can be encouraged to attend at adjustment guidance classes instead of going to school. It is certain that the government has managed to increase the number of 'long-term' absentees by definition. However, it is also true that there are many measures to reduce the number of 'long-term' absentees. These two movements are not contradictory. The government always attempts to lessen the number of 'long-term' absentees by strengthening the surveillance net to monitor 'long-term' absentees and by taking measures adapted to each pupil entangled in the fine-mesh net at the same time (see Table 3).

The legitimate image that all children naturally go to school every day has been getting stronger during Period I-IV. As a consequence, persistent absentees who do not fit this image are considered to be unsuccessful in attending school on an individual level. To make matters worse, pupils are exposed to difficulty in getting along with other pupils in pupil culture at school (Tomari and Kudomi 2007). Thus, alienated pupils find it more difficult to go to school

TABLE 3. PERIOD I-IV: THE PHENOMENON OF SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM  
AT LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Period	I	II	III	IV
Age	1947~ late 1950s	around 1960s~ middle 1970s	middle 1970s~ early 1990s	middle 1990s~ today
Percentage of 'long-term' absentees	3.8%→1.3% sharp decrease	1.3%→0.5% slow decrease	0.5%→1.2% slow increase	2%→3.8% rapid increase
Well-practiced research	'persistent absenteeism' research	'school phobia' research	'school refusal' research	'school non-attendance' research
Definition of 'long-term' absentees	no definition→ absent for 50 days or more	absent for 50 days or more	absent for 50 days or more	absent for 30 days or more
Rate of enrollment	99.3%→99.9% sharp increase	99.9% stable	99.95→100% slow increase	100% stable
Causes of school absenteeism in main discourses	poverty, parents' non-appreciation of education	mother-child separation anxiety, etc.	school disaffection, bullying, etc.	combined factors
Agents of discourses	researchers of sociology of education	doctors, psychiatrists, psychotherapists	mass media, educators, parents, etc.	sociologists, absentees, the government, etc.
Prone to be absentees in main discourse	children in fishing villages or poor families	children with unique tendencies, e.g., spoilt children	susceptible children	potentially everybody
Measures for coping with 'long-term' absentees	extend economic assistance	investigate 'school disaffection'	establish adjustment guidance classes	employ school counselors

and have no choice to resolve the individualised difficulty alone, falling in a vicious circle.

### Conclusion

School culture is an entity of much complexity. Our papers (part 1 and part 2) describe only some aspects of school culture in Japan, especially at junior secondary level. Nevertheless, the attempt to partition into four periods during these sixty years after the Second World War and to address the four phases of the relations between school culture and competitiveness in school or school absenteeism is an important perspective in addressing school culture in Japan in other aspects or at other levels.

If the theory of educational expansion of M. Archer (1982) is introduced here, our third and fourth phases are 'Phase III' of Archer's stages, as the ratio of those going on to senior secondary school reached over 90% by the middle of the 1970s. Archer insisted that in 'Phase III', students become negative about studying at school. Thus, the third phase of this paper is

very interesting and puzzling. In that phase, most students in Japan did not have a negative attitude to acquiring school knowledge, but rather competed to gain it. The context of Archer's 'Phase III' appears in our fourth phase after around the middle of the 1990s. But when we look at the situation of school absenteeism, the characteristics of Archer's 'Phase III' clearly appear from the middle of the 1970s, our third and fourth phases.

Thus, the two aspects of this paper do not coincide but cross delicately. This phenomenon might be due to the exceptionally good performance of Japanese economy from middle of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s and also to the completion of competitive education during the 1980s.

Now, in the fourth phase, it is indicated that school education and school culture in Japan is in the aftermath of the puzzling third phase.

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