

Inclusion and Wholeness: Rethinking Boundaries between the Formal and the Non-Formal in Japanese Public Education

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This paper reconsiders the concept of “inclusion” by examining conceptions of “totality/wholeness,” while exploring conflicts and dilemmas among various actors across the boundaries between the formal and non-formal in the Japanese public education system. Referencing the process surrounding the enactment of the new law on securing educational opportunities, the notion of “diversity” is examined as it pertains to the conflict between “publicness” in formal schools, which includes ideas related to diversity and heterogeneity (otherness), and “freedom to educate” in non-formal education. Analysis suggests that it is undesirable to establish a definitive boundary between the two; instead, maintaining a form of tentative, intersectional, and responsive boundary would result in more effective understanding of the diverse needs of people who feel marginalized. Based on this, the author explores a theoretical model which withstands such questions of inclusion. From the perspective of the “included party,” which has its own heterogeneous values in relation to mainstream value systems, the author proposes a “responsive wholeness” model in contrast to a “concentric totality” model in order to reexamine the idea of inclusion. Finally, the paper outlines suggestions for reexamining “inclusion” grounded in this model.

Keywords: Freedom to Educate / Publicness / Diversity and Otherness / Inclusion / Responsive Wholeness

Introduction

This paper reconsiders the concept of “inclusion” by examining the concept of “totality/wholeness,” while exploring the conflicts and dilemmas among various actors over the boundary between the formal and the non-formal¹ in the Japanese public education system.

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In Japan's public education system, the scope of entities that can provide compulsory general education has been limited to schools as stipulated in Article 1 of the School Education Act (hereafter, "formal schools"). In recent years, however, this boundary has been shaken, and the principles it rests on questioned (e.g., Kimura, 2020).

This paper does not discuss where the boundaries should be delineated or the shaky status quo resolved. Rather, it takes a positive view on this ambiguous boundaries, and aims to further the debate.

First, the paper reviews the discussions during the enactment of the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities Equivalent to Ordinary Education at the Stage of Compulsory Education (hereafter, "the Act 2016")², which attempted to redefine the boundaries of the public education system. It summarizes the multiple relevant implications of the concepts of "diversity" and "freedom in education" and the key dilemma between "publicness" and "freedom."

Next, after noting that the core of publicness lies in the inclusion of "diversity and heterogeneity (otherness)," the paper questions the nature of "inclusion" in Japanese schools from the perspective of those who leave formal schooling because of their own heterogeneity. It reconsiders the ideas of "inclusion" and "wholeness" that are often taken for granted when including the "diversity and heterogeneity (otherness)" of the non-formal sector in the public education system. With reference to Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995) and Martin Buber (1878-1965), the paper proposes a "concentric totality" model and a "responsive wholeness" model in order to understand "inclusion."

Finally, based on these models, the paper considers the above discussion of "diversity" and "publicness" and offers a suggestion for the nature of the space in the boundary area between the formal and the non-formal.

1. Conflict over Setting the "Boundaries" of the Public Education System

1-1. Conflict over the Meaning of "Diverse" in the Act 2016 Debate

During the development of the Act 2016, there were conflicts and complications over the first "chairperson's draft," whose title included the word "diverse." After much debate, that word was removed from the title and the text, and the draft was approved (see e.g. Yoshida 2020, 2022).

This controversy effectively mirrors the debate on the current state of public education in Japan. Because there have already been many previous studies, here we will summarize the intersections over the meaning of the word "diverse."

The following section analyzes and organizes the multidimensional implications of "diversity" into four dimensions. Basically, those who view diversity as (1), (2) or (3) are the proponents, while those who view it as (4)-B are the opponents. The discussion became convoluted given that each dimension included divergent views, here labeled (A) and (B).

(1) Diversity of learners' needs

The framework of the bill proposed by the citizens' group that aimed to enact the "Diverse Learning Guarantee Act" states the purpose of authorizing diverse learning opportunities that meet the needs of children with diverse characteristics and backgrounds in order to guarantee their right to learn. Among the proponents of the Act 2016, there were divergent

views on these needs.

(A) *The dire needs of those with difficulties:*

The citizens'-side proponents of free schools, etc., and night junior high schools were focused on the dire needs of learners with difficulties who were not attending school or were unable to receive adequate, regular education.

(B) *Need for excellence and skill development:*

On the other hand, the Education Rebuilding Action Council and the governing political parties focused on the need for learners to be able to develop outstanding abilities for enhanced competitiveness under globalization.

(2) *Diversified values and needs of parents*

The orientation of parents, whose values and needs are diversifying in today's society, can be divided into two main categories.

(A) *Educational entities with alternative values:*

These are the needs of parents who want to educate their children under alternative values, different from the dominant social values. Alternative schools such as home schools and Steiner schools, as well as parents of children with foreign roots, are more inclined to create their own educational opportunities based on their own values.

(B) *Consumers who choose educational services:*

In contrast, some parents want to choose educational services that help secure and improve their status in society. For a long time, the policy of deregulation of schools has been to "provide a wide variety of educational services that can meet the diverse values and needs of consumers."

(3) *Diversification of education providers*

This refers to the supply of education by multiple entities outside the existing system in order to meet needs that cannot be met by the "one best system" (Sadahiro 2018).

(A) *Voluntary creation in the citizen sector:*

In the position of (1)-A) and (2)-A), schools such as free schools created by citizens, parents, and NPOs have already become the entities responsible for learning at the compulsory education stage. In spite of this, there are discrepancies with the compulsory enrollment system: for instance, students who attend free schools need to be registered as attending public school. This group calls for legislation that recognizes this reality and makes public support possible.

(B) *Entry into the market of education in the private sector:*

From the standpoint of (1)-B) and (2)-B), the government seeks to promote the entry of various educational service providers through deregulation, and to improve quality through individual optimization, including the introduction of IT, and a competitive environment.

(4) *Diversity included by public education*

Multifaceted objections to the draft public education reform bill, which included a revision of the compulsory enrollment system for the formal schools, were voiced. In relation to the concept of "diversity," the following discussion is important.

(A) *Diversity that extends beyond formal schools:*

As mentioned above, if we endorse a variety of learning spaces and educational entities

outside of the formal schools, the diversity of the public education system as a whole will increase.

(B) *Diversity within formal schools:*

Important for “publicness,” this can be retained by including all learners in the same school. The public benefit of learning from “diversity and heterogeneity (otherness)” shrinks if educational entities outside the school are diversified and learners leave the school easily.

The mediation of these two standpoints (“diversity within schools” and “diversity out of schools,”) which tend to be treated as a zero-sum game, is one of the main focuses of this paper.³

Thus, this debate over “diversity” is connected to fundamental issues about public education, such as the liberalization of education, parental freedom to educate, the private and public nature of education, and exclusion and inclusion. The next section and beyond discuss issues such as freedom and publicness in education and how to view inclusion, with a particular focus on the tension between the two positions in the (4) dimension.

1-2. Dilemmas Between Publicness and Freedom in Education: Multiple Competing Freedoms

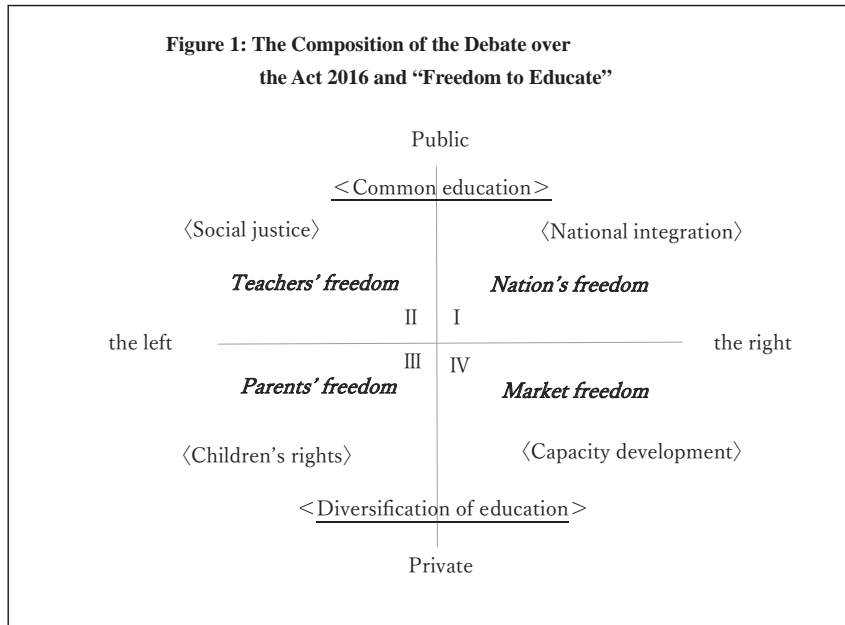
Diet members from both sides of the aisle came together around the concepts of “diverse learning” and “diversifying education” and formed a bipartisan Diet members’ caucus to legislate the Act 2016. The conflict was not the traditional right vs. left, but rather a split within each of the two factions.

There is excellent prior research on the composition of this conflict (Yamamoto 2016, Yokoi 2018). Reference thereto enables the composition of “publicness” and “freedom to educate” as they compete. Figure 1 below illustrates this configuration. The point of this oppositional composition is to grasp that reality has a twisted and intersecting complexity that cannot be captured by a simple oppositional axis.

Underlying this four-quadrant figure are the four types (conservative, neoliberal, liberal, and radical) that have been theorized in political sociology. None of them is absolutely superior to the others, nor is there a superior position that can govern all four (Yamamoto 2016). The political left and right are on the horizontal axis, and their public/private nature on the vertical. The public formal education sector, which sought to maintain “common education,” was opposed to the more private non-formal education sector’s goal of “educational diversification.” For a detailed examination of the characteristics within the brackets assigned to the four quadrants, see Yokoi’s study (2018) of the controversial texts.⁴

The main focus of this diagram is to visualize the struggle between the public and private sectors for the four freedoms by overlaying the “freedom to educate” on these four quadrants. Post-World War II Japan involved a context of opposition over social ideals under the Cold War system, with a clear axis of confrontation over the right and freedom of education. That is, the conflict was between the “educational rights (freedom) of the people (teachers)” (quadrant II) against the “educational rights (freedom) of the nation (quadrant I).” Hirota (2009), however, states that with the end of the Cold War and the increasing social mobility of globalization and individualization, this situation has shifted to a multi-level struggle among diverse actors for the “freedom to educate.” During the same period, with a rapid increase in the number of students not attending school and the impact of Illich and Foucault, criticism of control-oriented schools increased, and the “rights of the child” and the

Figure 1



freedom of citizens and parents to create schools on a voluntary basis (Quadrant III) were advocated. However, this insistence on civil freedom by liberal civic groups resonated with the neoliberalist policy of “capacity building” through “liberalization of education” and “diversification of educational subjects” (Quadrant IV).

Hirota says that the challenge is to recognize the justification for each of the freedoms of these various actors, and to find compromises with them in order to design a better system. Giving ultimate authority to any one of these freedoms will end conflicts over freedom, but it will also lead to tyranny by that actor. Hence, it is desirable to “tentatively fix the boundaries that have been left undecided over ‘freedom’” (Hirota 2009). Let us note the assertion that the line should be drawn flexibly, on a case-by-case basis through open discussion, rather than aiming for the final determination of the boundaries.

Regarding the resonance between alternative learning spaces in Quadrant III and neoliberalism in Quadrant IV, and the perception that public education would be undermined thereby, Nihei (2019) points out that this was once a tendency in the sociology of education. However, he acknowledges that “denying the option of a place outside of school is not only unrealistic but also leads to stripping the circuit of inclusion and recognition of children with diverse needs.” He then asks “how to avoid connecting the institutional and financial guarantees of ‘places’ with growing inequality, how to align that framework with public education, and what the conditions of freedom from/to ‘education’ in such places are” (Nihei 2019). Thus, the “freedom to/from education” in limbo and the boundaries of guarantees and publicness are linked.

From the perspective of “freedom, guarantees, and responsibilities,” Omomo & Seto (2020) address the issue of reconciling the demand for “diversification of education” with the principle of guaranteeing “universal and common education.” The expansion of freedom from state regulation “should be examined in relation to the freedom that public education has

been responsible for, that is, the development of autonomous citizens through state-supported public education”; the “demand to guarantee education for all children in schools staffed with educational specialists” is emphasized, even if this sometimes restricts the educational freedom of parents (Quadrant II). On the other hand, considering the publicness of public education as both “official” and “common” as well as “open,” they ask “whether restricting the establishment entity will not conversely narrow the publicness of school education” (Omomo & Seto 2020).

In this way, the debate is moving toward reexamining the boundaries of public education, taking on the ambivalence and dilemma of each position (each Quadrant in Figure 1). Sadahiro (2018) states, “If this law is substantiated in the future, it may be an opportunity to bring about a shift from a public in national education based on commonality to a public that includes a certain level of diversity.”

If so, the next question is how to achieve “inclusion” in this “public that includes a certain level of diversity.”

1-3 Including “diversity and heterogeneity (otherness)” within/outside public schools

Publicness is not the integration and reconciliation of heterogeneity and diversity (as common education aims for), but rather “a mechanism for the creation and manifestation of heterogeneity and diversity” and “a concept that refers to relationships among heterogeneous others who do not share an identity,” as Kodama (1999) has long argued, relying on Arendt.

Goto (2020) goes further, recognizing “learning from diversity and heterogeneity” as the core of publicness. He makes the important point that the need for diverse learning spaces should be differentiated into “earnest (must-see) demand” (corresponding to (1)-A) and “preference satisfaction (to choose a better one) demand” (corresponding to (3)-B); in response to the former, he discusses the significance of making diverse learning a public responsibility: “By extending the logic of guaranteeing ‘diversity and heterogeneity’, which is the premise of the formal schools, it relativizes the tendency toward homogeneity and oppression that is latent in the Japanese-style public education system, and furthermore, it also encourages us to explore alternative public education systems.” From this perspective, “we cannot force those who are unable to learn adequately and are suffering in the formal schools to learn there because of problems in their family environment or *their own heterogeneity and diversity*” (Goto 2020, emphasis in original).

Important here is that the “earnest demand” to “leave” formal schools and seek a place of learning outside because of heterogeneity is approved by the extension of the logic of publicness that guarantees “heterogeneity and diversity.” This opens the way to view the choice between “diversity within schools” and “diversity out of schools” as above as complementary rather than conflicting. It also puts the perspective of the “exiting” side into the debate over “exclusion and inclusion,” to be thematized below.

In light of this perspective, let us also examine cases in which “earnest demand” that is not “preference fulfillment” is being pursued by parents/family members. These cases include homeschooling, non-profit alternative schools created by parents and citizens themselves,⁵ and heritage language and culture transmission by families with foreign roots.

Removing children from school for their education requires a reason good enough to justify the suspicion of violating school attendance requirements and the abandonment of the privilege of free education. For families with values and beliefs different from the dominant

values of today's society, the enforced school-based value system and education represent a serious conflict. Therefore, in accordance with their own religious beliefs and freedom of thought and conscience, they conscientiously refuse schooling (as in "conscientiously refusing military service") and create a place to raise their children on their own. Nishihara (2006) discusses the interpretation of the superiority of parents' educational rights (freedom) from the juristic viewpoint of Article 19 of the Constitution, "freedom of thought and conscience."

Homeschooling in the U.S. has been legalized in all 50 states through judicial decisions, and the number of home schools has been increasing. Miyadera (2014), referring to studies thereon, examines the difficulty of criticizing the privatization of education. It is a common theory that education, which concerns the inner aspects of personality, such as identity, values, beliefs, and religion, belongs to the private sphere, and that parents have the preferential right to education. Conversely, instruction, which is common education in knowledge and skills for social life and citizenship, has been allocated to the public domain. Homeschool parents, however, critically transcend the boundaries of this dichotomy. They believe that the education of the child as a "whole person" cannot be divided into internal values and intellect.⁶ "It is one-sided to view the privatization of education as *an erosion of the public by the private*, caused by neoliberalism. Rather, the privatization of education is a counter-movement that has arisen because the public cannot provide a framework that meets the pluralistic demands of the private" (Miyadera 2014, emphasis added).

Miyadera confirms that "publicity" originally meant "openness" and has been distinguished from "communality" because of this attribute. The entrance to public schools at the compulsory education stage is open to all, but "since they operate in the name of publicity, *for the same reason*, the exit must also be open to those who wish to leave schooling" (Miyadera 2014, emphasis added). Nevertheless, Miyadera does not tacitly approve of withdrawal from education in the public domain; rather, "it is important to cross over the divisions between the two domains and to mutually get on board" (Miyadera 2014).

So how can we envision a space (topos) that can cross over the boundaries of public/private and formal/non-formal and help them interoperate with each other? As indicated above, the struggle over the multiple "freedoms to educate" makes it difficult to make a final determination as to which is superior. While the problems with over-privileging the freedom of parents to educate their children have been discussed from many angles in previous research, there is a certain justification for parents who have heterogeneous and alternative values against the dominant value system.

When the publicness of public education is based on the principle of openness and inclusion of "diversity and heterogeneity" as well as commonality and integration, it is in conflict with this principle to define the boundaries of formal schools in terms of exclusive fixity. The dilemma-filled boundaries should be conceived not as a fixed set of borders, but as something fluid that can be tentatively redrawn at any time, and as a topos that is capable of intersection and exchange within a boundary area of a certain width.

The next section presents a conceptual reflection on "inclusion" and "wholeness" with "diversity and heterogeneity/otherness" in mind, in order to envision this topos.

2. Reconsidering the Concepts of “Inclusion” and “Totality/Wholeness”

2-1. Inclusion by “Concentric Totalization”: Questioning from the Perspective of the “Included Party”

This section examines the principle of “wholeness” that includes diversity and heterogeneity/otherness in order to explore alternative forms of “inclusion.”⁷

“Inclusion” in inclusive education is indeed intended for the coexistence of diversity and heterogeneity, never the return to sameness. With the inclusion of heterogeneity, the entire interior of the school should increase in diversity. Instead of being assimilated to the dominant qualities of the inclusive, the heterogeneous qualities of the included should be respected. By welcoming and coexisting with otherness, a transformation will occur on the part of the majority, and new relationships will emerge. Theoretically, this is what inclusive education aims to do, and the practice of trying to realize this idea is being earnestly undertaken. There is no question about the importance of this.

Contrarily, let us take a look at the ongoing reality of the included agents. In terms of the actors we have seen surrounding the Act 2016, let us consider non-attending students who do not/will not go to school because they do not fit in with their current schools, and the parents who try to create and educate in their own home school or alternative school with their own beliefs that differ from the dominant values of the schools. For such entities, there is hesitation and resistance to being included in the current school, if the public school in question at that moment is unfortunately a homogeneous space without sufficient consideration for heterogeneity. The growth of the child in front of us cannot wait and cannot be redone. They do not want to be forced into inclusion in that school, but want to explore alternative ways. They seek recognition of the right to remain in the gaps on the periphery of the boundary, neither to be excluded nor to be included.

Here, it is important to distinguish between the perspectives of “the includer” and “the included.” Generally, the motto “No one will be left behind” is spoken from the perspective of the includer. It implies that those within a circle, a desirable state, will allow those who are left out of that circle into their circle. In this way, the circle is expanded, and the desirable state is considered to be inclusion of everyone within the circle. This paper calls this state of inclusion “concentric totalization.”

In his exploration of the exclusion/inclusion meta-theory, Kuraishi (2021) carefully examines the problems faced by the “concentric circle model” of inclusion. He shares Bista’s critique that inclusion, which brings more people into the existing order, is something done to others, a process that originates at the center and spreads to the periphery. He then explores the nature of “emergent inclusion,” which originates with the included, rather than the includer. Although it is not possible to elaborate on his work here, the following discussion is inspired by Kuraishi’s work.

How is the totality conceived in inclusion through concentric totalization? To rethink this question and seek an alternative model of thinking, this paper relies on the ideas of Emmanuel Lévinas and Martin Buber, two thinkers with Jewish origins who were subjected to exclusion/inclusion for a long time.

2-2. “Totality” and “Infinity”: Overflowing Externally Beyond Boundaries.

In the preface to *Totality and Infinity (Totalité et infini)* (1961=1969), Lévinas finds the

root cause of the wars and holocausts of totalitarian states not merely in the political totalitarianism of Nazism, but in “the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy.” He then “distinguishes between the idea of totality and the idea of infinity, and affirms the philosophical primacy of the idea of infinity.”

What, then, is “totality,” and what is “infinity”? This paper summarizes Lévinas’ explanations to the extent necessary.

What is “totality”?

- i) Totality absorbs its exteriority and others while identifying with them.
- ii) It extends and encloses the boundaries of its own territory one after another.
- iii) It does not recognize the existence of an overflowing exterior or surplus.
- iv) It is self-contained, fixing its boundaries and not interacting with the outside.

Lévinas explains the idea of “infinity” as opposed to “totality” as follows.

- i) Infinity is the absolutely other. It does not identify with the otherness of the other. It is infinitely removed from its idea, that is, exterior, because it is infinite.
- ii) The other as infinity cannot be objectified or thematized and understood in their own cognitive frame. The only thing possible is “hospitality” to welcome the incomprehensible other as it is.
- iii) It “overflows” beyond its boundaries. It is always in open relation to the external surplus. Infinity does not exist somewhere in advance and then reveal itself. It always “arises.”
- iv) The dimension of infinity opens from the “face” of the other, which is different from the self. In a face to face relationship with the other, we hear the infinite speak. When we respond to it, we see the radiance of infinity on the face of the other.

Thus, Lévinas located the problem of totalitarianism in the perspective of “totality.” A concentrically totalizing movement identifies with others and integrally encompasses the exteriority while expanding its own territory. Totality is self-contained and closed, assimilating and absorbing everything. The opposing concept is “infinite openness,” which constantly overflows and emerges from the boundaries, and can never be integrated into its own territory. It continues to emerge when face to face with the incomprehensible other. Therein lies the possibility of an “ethics” that transcends private desire.

This responsive relationship with the other is also a theme in Buber’s philosophy of dialogue. We may conceptualize this responsive and generative “infinite openness” of Lévinas as “wholeness,” distinguished from “totality,” in light of Buber’s thought as follows.

2-3. “Responsive Wholeness”: Emerging in the Encounter with “Otherness” of the Other

Martin Buber, another Jew who engaged in spiritual resistance during the era of Nazism, also sees “wholeness” in responsive relationships with others, with a similar awareness to Lévinas of overcoming totalitarian “totality.”⁸

Yoshida (2007) clarified the dialogical view of wholeness in Buber’s thought as follows.

In contrast to “totality,” Buber spoke of “wholeness” in a lecture entitled “Human Development and Worldview” in 1935, at a time of deepening division due to clashes between totalitarian groups. When a community, whether a nation or a state, seeks to incorporate the outside world and expand by integrating and assimilating people into its worldview, it is creating totality. “Totality is what makes it up, but wholeness is essentially what results and

grows up.” It is not deliberately and systematically constructed or organized, but arises naturally in the call and response with others that one faces at any given time. It is the wholeness that emerges in the course of responsive relationships with others, but it cannot be objectified or grasped on its own.

In Buber the “other” has heterogeneity/otherness, as compared to the concept of the “I-thou” relationship of the early 1920s, which he came to explicitly emphasize later, after experiencing Naziism. For example, in his article “Distance and Relation” (1950), Buber emphasizes that one can only enter into relations through the mediation of “the rigor and depth of human individuation, the fundamental otherness of the other,” while in his article “Following the Collective” (1956), Buber reiterates that “community” formation through “identification” is in danger of turning into totality.

Let us note here that *heterogeneity* in “diversity and heterogeneity,” which has been a key term in this paper, is described in a fundamentally strong sense as the “*otherness of the other*.” When a community tries to integrate others by sharing commonality and identity with others, it tends to turn into totality. This does not mean that individualism or privatization is acceptable but what, then, is the basis for “the communal” that includes otherness and diversity, or, in the definition used in the previous section, “publicity” that is distinct from “communality”? Buber (like Lévinas) says that it is to face the fundamental otherness of the other and to affirm it as heterogeneous rather than to assimilate it.

The wholeness that arises in this way is infinitely open, but because it is bound together by each response to the other, its diversity is not diffused discretely. The tension between the “centrifugal force to differentiate” and the “centripetal force to identify,” so to speak, continues to be sustained by the call and response through otherness.

Buber’s key concept of “encounter” is that the self is transformed by stepping out of the community, encountering the alien other outside of it, and accepting the otherness. The other key concept in Buber, “dialogue,” is to call, and to respond when called upon by the other, to fulfill one’s responsibility to respond. In Buber, in this kind of encounter and dialogue in response to the heterogeneous other, a third path of “responsive wholeness” through dialogism emerges between the privatized individualism in the absence of the other and the totalitarianism that identifies others with totality.

This section grasps the aspect of “responsive wholeness” that opposes “totality” by overlaying Buber’s thought with that of Lévinas, who saw infinite openness in the face of the other.

3. Rethinking the Boundaries of Public Education to Be Inclusive of Diversity

This paper raises the issues of “inclusion” in the boundary area of public education in Japan, i.e., diversity that is inclusive inside formal schools or diversity that is open outside formal schools (Section 1), and proposes an alternative model for thinking about these issues by rethinking the concepts of “inclusion” and “wholeness” (Section 2). The alternative model will allow us to think about how to draw an intersectional and responsive line between boundary areas that do not fall into the “inward/outward” dichotomy of public education as a whole. Below, this section discusses the boundary of that inclusion, summarizing our arguments to this point.

Section 1 first raised the issue of the conflict/dilemma between the view that diversity and heterogeneity can only be guaranteed to all students if they are included in formal schools (i.e., diversity included in formal schools) and the view that formal schools should have boundary areas open to the outside world where diversity and heterogeneity can be ensured, because homogenization pressure is unavoidable within formal schools where standardization and formality are inevitable (i.e., diversity that extends outside formal schools).

Next, political theory was employed to understand the problem, identifying the tension and conflict between the policy position of including all educational opportunities in formal schools and the policy position of allowing them to develop outside formal schools as a struggle over the multiple freedoms to educate. The paper argued that it is undesirable to grant ultimate authority to any one of these freedoms, and that ensuring the reconciliation of “inclusion” and “openness” is a difficult challenge.

Further, the same issue is discussed with reference to the debate on the public nature of education. Publicness, as distinguished from communality, can be seen as both “official” and “common” as well as “open.” When “publicness” is viewed not as the integration or reconciliation of heterogeneity and diversity, but as a mechanism for the creation and manifestation of heterogeneity and diversity itself, it is argued that minorities, who have different values from the dominant values of formal schools, can be allowed to exit it and create their own unique educational opportunities by extending the logic of publicness, that is “guaranteeing heterogeneity and diversity.” The question is how “inclusion” can be open to the outside without creating closed boundaries.

Based on the above discussion in section 1, section 2 proposed a thinking model of “responsive wholeness” that is not “concentric totalization,” referring to the ideas of Lévinas and Buber in order to understand “inclusion” that is open to the outside. Using this model, then, how can we rethink the boundary area of public education?

As a premise, since formal schools in the public education system are responsible for enhancing social integration by guaranteeing equal opportunities for common education, they should be conscious of avoiding the pitfall of inclusiveness in the “concentric totality” model, in which all members of the system are included and made identical. Indeed, being conscious of this, the public education sector has been striving to emphasize the inclusion of “diversity and heterogeneity” as a principle of publicness. However, based on the “responsive wholeness” model, we should not only consider this diversity as diversity held within formal schools, but also emphasize the otherness and heterogeneity of others who appear outside formal schools. It is something that can never be assimilated into our commonness, something outside of our concentrically totalizing common world. And as long as there is a responsive relationship with the external yet heterogeneous other, it is included in an open wholeness, a publicity open to diversity.

In order for this responsive relationship to be established, it is important to note that the “included” side, that is, the side with its own heterogeneity, is not passive but active (emergent) agency. The dominant majority side that seeks to include other entities should start by listening to and responding to the voice of the “questioning” other. The key here is the relationship with others, with faces and voices that are not subject to the system. There, a space (topos) is required that can hold the relationships responding to this questioning. This topos has no fixed boundary separating the inside from the outside, but “arises” each time a responsive relationship is established.

Therefore, the boundaries of public education should be tentative, intersectional, and responsive, which can be done by redefining the concept of inclusion through a “responsive wholeness” model. How can we institutionalize such an asylum-like topos in the boundary area where the formal and the informal intersect in public education?⁹ We must envision this topos while considering what is to be gained and what is to be lost by its institutionalization. The specifics of this study will be the subject of future work, beyond the scope of this paper.

Notes

- 1 I use “non-formal” to distinguish it from “informal,” as per Maruyama and Ota (2013). This study was inspired by Maruyama et al. (2016) on the formal/non-formal boundary.
- 2 The law allows for the legal recognition and support of learning activities that are not authorized as formal schools at the compulsory education level, such as free schools attended by non-attending students and night junior high schools, as diverse and appropriate educational opportunities. For more information, see Kato (2021).
- 3 This paper is positioned as a further development of the study in which Yoshida (2022) discussed it in terms of the three implications of the concept of “alternative: “diversity”, “counteroffer” and “otherness.”
- 4 As Yokoi’s analysis shows, Quadrants II and III share the value of “children’s rights” (See also Kita 2020). I place “social justice” in Quadrant II, with reference to Minamide (2016) ’s research on the conflict and possible solidarity between the educational movements in both quadrants.
- 5 A case study on the potential connection of NPO schooling to civic publicity is Nishimura & Yoshida (2008), a joint study on publicness in the Alternative Education Study Group headed by Kikuchi (2008).
- 6 This point is similar to the feelings of parents who create Steiner schools and send their children to them. See Yoshida (2009) for a discussion of this point and their development from the private to the public.
- 7 The following discussion is inspired by the symposium of the Philosophy of Education Society, which discussed alternatives to education in terms of transcendence, particularly Okabe (2016).
- 8 As Lévinas also points out, Buber’s “I and Thou” in the earlier period did not emphasize the otherness (heterogeneity) of the other, but Buber in the later period after experiencing Naziism is closer to Lévinas’ theory of the other. See Yoshida (2007 Chap. 4) for details.
- 9 In order to avoid problems caused by rigid total institutionalization, for example, a series of suggestions by Nagata (2007, 2019) on this point, such as “the strangeness of ten percent,” “the stipulation of the non-prescriptive,” and “porosity” are helpful.

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