

Japanese Elementary Education Policies in the 1900's: Movements in the Localities and the Ministry of Education Concerning the Development of the Third Elementary School Order

Atsushi KASHIWAGI*

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Explanatory Note

The 1900's (1900-1909), the subject of this paper, was an "adjustment period" thirty years after the establishment of the Modern Educational System in Japan. With the establishment of the Elementary School Order in 1900, tuition became free in principle and compulsory education became standardized at four years. Furthermore, the Law for Subsidizing City, Town, and Village Elementary School Expenses from the National Treasury, issued the same year, realized a state subsidy system for mandatory education that led to the development of the compulsory education system.

Historical assessment of elementary education policies during this period, especially the increase in school attendance, has centered on two research fields. The first is assessment in the field of policy history while the second is that in the field of local education history. Both fields investigate the various matters related to the increase in school attendance and share the view that there was an "adjustment period" that came with the establishment of the 1900 Elementary School Order. But the definitive difference between the two fields lies in the evaluation of the "adjustment period," and whether it came as the result of a fundamental conversion from the 1890's or whether it was a continuous trend that had accumulated since the 1890's.

The field of policy history emphasizes the groundbreaking effect of the 1900 Elementary School Order, including the very first realization of free tuition at ordinary elementary schools in Japan, and considers the elementary school system in the 1900's to have fundamentally changed from the 1890's. On the other hand, because the field of local education history tends to focus on the efforts of local governments to advance school attendance, it considers policies encouraging school attendance, which were already in effect in the localities from the late 1890's, to have led to the encouragement of school attendance after the 1900 Elementary School Order. What should be noted here is that, in both perspectives, there is no sufficient explanation of the interaction between the institutions/policies and local policy development. Based on such precedent research trends, this paper attempts a comprehensive outlook on the turning point in policies encouraging school attendance by the Ministry of Education as well as the continuity in local awareness towards encouraging school attendance.

This paper is outlined as follows. First, in order to investigate the abovementioned issue, the need to verify the existence of a disparity in stances on school attendance between the Ministry of Education, the prefecture, and local administrative units, such as *gun* (sub-prefecture districts) and cities, is explained (Section II). Then, based on the investigation of documents from the Miyagi Prefectural Archives, it is clarified that, while the prefecture, *gun*/city and Ministry of Education each considered the prospect of increasing school attendance, there was a different form of interest in its realization and there was not necessarily a uniform intent to actively increase school attendance; the process and background of the 1899 "turning point" in the Ministry of Education's stance on increasing school attendance is examined through the investigation of the Ministry of Education's statements in chronological order (Section III). In regards to what kind of interaction this had with the localities, the fact that the Ministry of Education's views after June of 1900 had changed from 1898 is clarified through a series of notices related to the "easing" of enrollment requirements after June of 1899, as well as discussions during the process of establishing the 1900 Elementary School Order (Section IV). This paper concludes that, through these series of events, it was with the elementary education policies after 1900 that the Ministry of Education and the local government finally began to venture hand in hand towards the goal of increasing school attendance.

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* Ph.D., Professor, Department of Education, Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University.
3-3-138 Sugimoto, Sumiyoshi-ku, Osaka-shi, 558-8585 Japan
kashiwagi@lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the continuity/discontinuity in elementary education policies developed after 1900 (Meiji 33, or the 33rd year of the Meiji era from 1869 to 1912) — considered the “adjustment period” of elementary education policies in Japan — as compared to the 1890’s, focusing mainly on the policies’ development processes.

The relatively sizable accumulation of precedent studies related to this period culminates in roughly two forms. The first form evaluates the Third Elementary School Order¹ as a groundbreaking policy, focusing on its completeness as an elementary education law as well as its perfection as a “compulsory education system” (Kokuritsu Kyōiku Kenkyūjo 1974²; Hanai 1974; Hisaki 1975). While finer differences exist in the points emphasized by each of the studies in this category, this body of research commonly evaluates the elementary education policies in the 1900’s to have expanded largely both in quality and quantity based on the Third Elementary School Order (and the laws enforced thereof).³

The second form focuses on children’s school attendance as a token of the “establishment” and “development” of the elementary education system in the localities starting from the late 1890’s, depicting the continuity from the 1890’s to the 1900’s based on an investigation of attendance encouragement policies and the development of an administrative system for elementary education (Hijikata 1994; Mihara 1981, 1984, 1985, 1987a, 1987b). In this kind of research, attendance encouragement is considered to have advanced from the late 1890’s in the localities; and the 1900 revisions to the Elementary School Order as well as the enactment of its enforcement regulations simply worked to support this trend (Hijikata 1994: 61-69).⁴

A simple glance shows that the former studies can be classified in the research field of so-called policy history, whereas the latter research results lie in the field of local education history.⁵ These two research fields suggest completely different views and understandings of elementary education policies from the same period. In other words, the former research considers the establishment of the Third Elementary School Order in 1900 and its enforcement regulations to have been institutionally groundbreaking and understands the elementary education policies in the 1900’s to have largely advanced from prior education policies. On the other hand, the latter focuses on local educational administrations, in which policies encouraging school attendance (as established in the 1900’s) had already begun developing from the late 1890’s. In this sense, continuity can be observed in elementary education policies from the late 1890’s to the 1900’s.

While differences exist between the two types of precedent research, what lies in common between them is that elementary education policies reached a breakthrough after 1900 – or, more specifically, after the Third Elementary

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1. The Third Elementary School Order was issued in August 1900. Although Elementary School Orders were issued and enacted in 1896 and 1890, the basic structure of the elementary school system in Japan is said to have been established with the Elementary School Order in 1900. After this, the elementary school system based on this Elementary School Order was maintained until the establishment of the National School Order in 1941. (translation note)
 2. The section written by Hideo Satō.
 3. However, even under such a current, Makoto Hanai has stepped in further from the same perspective to elicit a focus on “segregated” children, such as children in poverty, children with disabilities and working children.
 4. Yoshikazu Mihara’s studies are also written from this stance. While Hijikata seems to evaluate the Third Educational Order and its enforcement regulations as having had “ground-breaking meaning” in some sections of the book (Hijikata 1994: 66), the meaning of this statement is, as stated in this paper, that the attendance encouragement policies already in advance in the localities were simply further developed legally.
 5. However, in the field of local education history, there is not as much research that comprehensively covers elementary education policies around the 1900’s as in the field of policy history. Research on local education history evaluating elementary school attendance almost always focuses on periods up to the early 1890’s, and those that step into the 1900’s are considered part of a different field of research. Although this paper will not go in depth on this point, Masato Ogawa’s research on Ainu education history clearly detaches itself from such research trends in regards to methods for periodization and subject-period setting (see Ogawa 1997).

School Order – and elementary education policies entered a period of adjustment thereafter, both in terms of its institutional system as well as its administration. This fact highlights the importance of clarifying the foundations of elementary education policies in the 1900's, currently understood as an “adjustment period” in elementary education policy history, by investigating the interaction between the Ministry of Education and local educational affairs offices. This paper takes this topic and evaluates the abovementioned issues through the following processes:

- i) Investigating the Ministry of Education and local educational affairs offices' problem awareness in the late 1890's,
- ii) Understanding the various phases related to the turning point from the 1890's stance to the 1900's stance on expanding elementary education,⁶ and
- iii) In order to clarify ii), explaining the gap between local school attendance encouragement policies and approaches towards expanding elementary education found in the enactment process of the Third Elementary School Order.

Gaps left by precedent research must be filled in through an investigation of these three points concerning why elementary education system reforms (Kokuritsu Kyōiku Kenkyūjo 1974: 857-858, 920 note 1) in the late 1890's, which originally stemmed from the textbook issue,⁷ developed into the “20th Century-type Elementary School Plan,”⁸ which included even the abolition of tuition and the strengthened urging of school attendance (up to the draft stage). The period between 1890 to the early 1900's, the subject of this paper, is commonly known as a time in which relationships between the teacher training system, middle level education system, and the organic management of elementary school children were advancing. At the same time, it was also a period in which local school inspectors were being established in the localities and the Ministry of Education school inspectors were being re-established as well, spurring the development of the educational administration's jurisdiction from the central government out to the localities.⁹ Additionally, in 1900, the Imperial Order Concerning the Foundations of the Education System was appended to the imperially sanctioned report concerning issues to be submitted to the Privy Council, thereby classifying the issue as “one of the most important items.”¹⁰ This period was thus a time in which breakthroughs were reached not only on the level of elementary education but also in terms of all aspects of the modern Japanese educational system. Regarding the turning point¹¹ in elementary education development in Japan — which, in a commonly held comprehensive historical understanding, is said to have almost inevitably come with the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars — the aim of the present paper is to provide a concrete and comprehensive understanding of Japan's elementary education system which, as can be understood from the above background and conclusions of precedent research, was about to truly enter a “period of adjustment.”

6. While the “1890's stance on expanding elementary education” and the “1900's stance on expanding elementary education” are not well-established terms, the former is an understanding that school attendance conditions for boys will rise naturally, placing overwhelming emphasis on the increase/expansion of school attendance for girls. On the other hand, the latter does not consider the 90% or so school attendance rate for boys to be sufficient, and strives for 100% school attendance for both girls and boys in the elementary school curriculum to “complete” school attendance in elementary education. However, even the latter overlooks children with disabilities or Ainu children, who fall outside these bounds.
7. The textbook issue was an educational policy debate regarding the selection of textbooks in elementary schools, which took full hold in the 1890's. It was spurred by the need to respond to the excessive competition and unfair practices of textbook manufacturers that ensued with the textbook screening system. (translation note)
8. Since the start of the modern educational system in Japan in 1872, Japanese elementary schools were 19th Century type schools, or multiple class-based schools that collected tuition, in which both the educational content and system were insufficient. Compared to such schools, elementary schools after the 1900 Elementary School Order overcame the insufficiencies of the 19th Century type schools. By aiming towards the practicalization of compulsory education, it strove towards a new kind of elementary school system different from the 19th Century type school. For this reason, the goal striven towards by the Elementary School Order system from 1900 to the National School Order in 1941 was called the “20th Century-type Elementary School Plan.” (translation note)
9. Regarding relations with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the formation of the network of jurisdiction, which included the Ministry of Education school inspectors, see Oe (1974: 64-67).
10. As Yoshizō Kubo also mentions, the Second Elementary School Order and the Private School Order (1899), for instance, also were items for inquiry to the Privy Council even before this “imperial order.” See Kubo (1979: 3).
11. In Tsujimoto and Okinta (2002: 290-296), Terumichi Morikawa points out that the 1900 Elementary School Order Reform (the Third Elementary School Order) is said to have been decreed in a context in which the usefulness and ideology of succeeding in life, which took hold in between the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, was being established and, in terms of policy, a “reform that would establish the basic structure of the pre-war compulsory education system” for national education was in demand.

II. The Development of School Attendance Encouragement Policies in the Localities in the Late 1890's: The Ministry of Education and Local Administrations' Problem Awareness

After the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), "postwar education policies" were debated and school attendance encouragement policies entered a period of development throughout Japan. The tasks at hand for local administrative agencies focused on "securing more elementary school teachers," "increasing student attendance," and "establishing a basic elementary school fund" (Mihara 1981: 261).

Under such conditions, Miyagi Prefecture embarked upon the reform of Regulations Concerning School Attendance and Home Education for School-Age Children in 1898 (Meiji 31) hoping to "perfect ordinary cultural training in national education" in the future and aiming to "simplify/convenience" and "strictly enforce" procedures related to school attendance and "organize" regulatory legislations. The following article was incorporated in the draft stage of the above regulation reform:

Article 9. A fine of over 10 *sen*¹² and under 1 yen 50 *sen* will be imposed on parents/guardians of school-age children who:

Apply to Article 1¹³ but do not respond to summons from the head of the municipality without justifiable grounds;

Apply to Article 3¹⁴ but, without justifiable grounds, do not [make their children] attend school even after two demands are sent from the school headmaster in one week.

From the "explanation" attached to this draft, the following principle can be observed.

Regarding educational affairs in ordinary elementary schools: on the one hand, management methods can be simplified as in this case or, on the other hand, preparations on the school side and enforcement methods can be organized. Those who are fortunately subject to school attendance must attend school [the school specified by the education affairs procedures] and must be of the mindset to fulfill their compulsory education as established by the regulations. As *gun*¹⁵ currently have *gun* school inspectors, prefectures have local school inspectors and the system for overseeing educational affairs is fully complete, inspection and supervision for urging school attendance is to become even stricter. This is the reason why a clause for imposing a fine was established in Article 9.¹⁶

This draft was deliberated by the cities and *gun* within the prefecture. One city and thirteen *gun* provided replies (three *gun* offered no replies). Opinions especially concentrated on Article 9, with eight opinions to delete the article and three to revise it. In other words, close to 80% of the cities and *gun* in the prefecture were opposed to the article or saw revisions as necessary. The following notes some of the opinions contributed by the cities and *gun* (all emphases in italics hereafter have been added by the author):

12. 1 *sen* = one tenth of a yen. (translation note)

13. Article 1 refers to asking the parents/guardians of school-aged children what school they will send their children to and, if they wish to postpone school attendance or request exemption, to report this request. A "summons" is understood as a call from the head of the municipality to parents/guardians concerning such procedures. (translation note)

14. Article 3 refers to a rule stipulating that parents/guardians, who have completed procedures regarding school attendance and have received attendance notifications, must make their children attend elementary school until graduation.

15. *Gun* (sub-prefecture districts) were public organizations (autonomous municipalities) that were established by the *gunsei* (county system) promulgated in 1890. A (government-appointed) *gun* head, *gun* government office, *gun* council and *gun* assembly were established with supervisory rights. (translation note)

16. *Meiji 32-nen gakkō chōson-ritsu gakkō, goshinei, secchi haishi, kasetsu kamoku, shūgaku jidō*. Miyagi Prefectural Archives, Miyagi, Japan. (In Japanese)

Tamatsukuri-gun

Laws accompanied by punishment do not suit advanced, civilized and enlightened present-day conditions and we cannot help but say that they are cruel laws/legislative systems. Because the purpose of making children attend school is to give them an understanding of the essence of moral obligations, making them attend school based on laws accompanied by punishment cannot be considered in accord with reason.

Oshika-gun

We request that this method of encouraging attendance be in adherence to current regulations for the time being. *While the number of students may rise temporarily with the implementation of such sanctions, not only is it realistically difficult to force [towns and villages with] the provision of school facilities [able to accommodate the increased number of students] under the economic conditions of the towns and villages but, because there will be a lack of teachers [in response to the increase in students], the assignment of teachers will become even more difficult.*

Natori-gun

Coercive sanctions arouse aversions to school from parents/guardians as well as students, and can give rise to various evils.

Watari-gun

Sanctions are not appropriate to the current conditions of towns and villages. Rather, if they are implemented, they will be just pie in the sky. In other words, even if the laws are implemented, there is a possibility that they will not actually function.

Igu-gun

While establishing sanctions for those who do not attend school is of course necessary for urging school attendance, in reality, there is not only a need to provide school buildings for accommodating students in response to town/village conditions but teachers must also be employed to respond to the increase in students in order to realize perfect school attendance. *If this happens under present conditions, in which there is not even a sufficient number of teachers in response to the current number of students, stronger attendance enforcement (for those who do not attend school) will bring about a lack in teaching staff, and it will not be possible to continue smoothly enrolling children in school under the towns/villages' finances.* Under the current conditions of the people (and their living standards), it is unfortunately much too early to begin applying punishment to those who do not attend school by implementing laws accompanied by sanctions. It is simply too difficult to implement smoothly for some time.

While an enforcement system was being developed, financial assurances and *cultural standards* made it clear that agreement could not be reached regarding attendance enforcement accompanied by a fine. As a result, Article 9 was revised to read, "This penalty must be requested from the mayor to the local government officer, and from the town/village head to the head of the *gun*."

As a side note, procedures related to the revision of Regulations Concerning School Attendance and Home Education for School-Age Children were advanced not only in Miyagi Prefecture but were also deliberated by the Ministry of Education. So how did the Ministry of Education respond? The following is an opinion on Article 9, believed to be by Seiichi Nojiri, a Ministry of Education school inspector.

While I respectfully believe that the sanctions [to be imposed on those who do not attend school] defined by Article 9 are necessary in regions where people evade [the responsibility of] school attendance even though fully equipped elementary schools are provided, when one prefectural officer asked the opinion of the [Ministry of Education's] Common Education Affairs Bureau Director Sadatake Koba the same thing [regarding the establishment of sanctions for those who do not attend school] upon arriving at the Ministry of Education, Koba's opinion was to simply give the answer that, even if there were no other means of encouraging attendance under present day conditions, it is not

appropriate to establish this kind of sanction in a single prefecture. While conditions today differ from those times, because of this precedent, even if the setting of a sanction were to be submitted to the Ministry of Education, it is unclear how discussions would evolve within the Ministry of Education. However, I personally acknowledge the need for setting such sanctions.¹⁷

Nojiri's response should be noted for its confirmation of the fact that the Ministry of Education still maintained a passive attitude towards imposing a fine in order to encourage school attendance.¹⁸ From this response, it is apparent that, while awareness and attention were gathering on the administrative level regarding school education after the Sino-Japanese War, in actuality, cultural standards were not in any condition to follow. It may be said that the dilemmas faced at each level regarding the expansion of elementary education were all brought to the forefront. While the Ministry of Education, the prefecture, and the city/*gun* all had their own prospects regarding the expansion of school attendance, there was a slight difference of interest regarding what kind of perspective should be maintained for its realization.

III. The Change in Elementary Education Policies in the Ministry of Education in 1899 (Meiji 32)

1. The Change from Elementary Education Expansion Policies in the 1890's to the 1900's

On April 22, 1899, Sukenori Kabayama, who had assumed the post of Minister of Education in November the previous year, gave some instructions at a local government officer conference. In precedent research, these instructions were simply quoted from reprints in journals, and its documentary value was not clarified. However, it must be noted that these instructions were distributed to each of the localities as a letterpress book from the Ministry of Education with the passage of Document¹⁹ No. 1007 on June 2, 1899.²⁰ In other words, until June that year, the Ministry of Education had assumed Kabayama's policy as depicted in these instructions as its own policies and had taken to the path of gradually enforcing it throughout the country.

Let us investigate the contents of the instructions and evaluate the significance of this historical document. The instructions included five items: "No.1: Items Concerning the Increase of Education Institutes in the Localities," "No.2: Items Concerning Elementary Schools" (including "Appendix: Items Concerning Preschools"), "No.3: Items Concerning Middle Schools," "No.4: Items Concerning Girl's High Schools," and "No.5: Items Concerning Practical Education." Here let us focus on "No.3: Items Concerning Elementary Schools." This item was composed of eight paragraphs (not including "Appendix: Items Concerning Preschools"). Yoshikazu Mihara, for example, quoted the following from these instructions in support of his argument: "The Ministry of Education set out on a full-fledged encouragement of school attendance" (Mihara 1984: 107, 1985: 41). However, there is some room for investigation regarding this evaluation. The reason for this is that, while the first three paragraphs of the "Items Concerning Elementary Schools" mentioned matters related to elementary school facilities, no change can be seen in its emphasis as compared to the Minister of Education's private instructions "on the matter of strictly enforcing

17. Key points related to your plan [Kian ni taisuru fusen yōshi]. In *Meiji 32-nen gakkō chōson-ritsu gakkō, goshinei, secchi haishi, kasetsu kamoku, shūgaku jidō. monbushō keishi* (In Japanese). The same book contains the seal, "Nojiri."

18. Regarding this point, I was advised by Yoshikazu Mihara to "consider the prospect that, because some students would transfer their register to another prefecture in order to evade the responsibility of school attendance, there is almost no merit in strengthening demands in just one prefecture" at the Japan Society for Historical Studies of Education conference in September 2003. I had been completely oblivious to this point before this presentation.

19. In Japanese, the document type reads "亥普甲." The first letter "亥" stands for the year the document was published, the year of the boar. The second letter "普" stands for the ordinary education affairs department, and the third letter "甲" stands for the document type. As the use of this character differed based on prefecture, the meaning here is uncertain. However in most cases the letter was used to mean "instructions from the central government." (translation note)

20. *The Minister of Education's private instructions given at the provincial governors' conference [Chihō chōkan shōshū ni saishi monbudaijin kunrei]* and *Third division document school affairs miscellaneous matters [Dai 3-ka bunsho gakumu zakken]*. Tokyo Metropolitan Archives, Tokyo, Japan. (In Japanese).

orders and regulations concerning education” sent to each of the provincial governors on January 18, 1895 (Meiji 28), as will be described later.

While school attendance is finally mentioned in the fourth paragraph, boys’ school attendance is noted to have “reached 80.67 percent, and a gradual increase is expected to be realized as long as supervisory responsibilities are not neglected, together with the future completion of elementary school facilities.” As can be seen, the statement simply stresses the issue of providing elementary school facilities, which had already been noted previously. Instead, it is girls’ education, for which school attendance was a mere “50.86 percent,” that required “the establishment of what suitable methods are possible as well as attention in supervisory responsibilities.” As is commonly known, low school attendance rates for girls had been pointed out as an issue in need of improvement since Kowashi Inoue²¹ was in charge of national education.²² In other words, in terms of content, the Ministry of Education’s policy as presented here simply lay along the lines of elementary education policies from the 1890’s, and no clear change could be observed from the perspective taken by Inoue.²³

Additionally, the private instructions “on the matter of strictly enforcing orders and regulations concerning education,” noted earlier, were as follows:

Because systems related to education aim to enrich people’s lifestyles, there are times when policies must be established in advance of current conditions, and there are no other means of realization but to assume the possibility of their gradual progress. It is simply inevitable that Elementary School Order Articles 20, 25, and 54 have not yet been fully implemented. Looking back, it is due to inevitable reasons that there are those who do not strictly adhere to education regulations and take to convenient measures, either with permission from conventional supervisory authorities or upon their own responsibilities, without permission. However, if this is not corrected now, there is a possibility that this evil may become unrectifiable, so we must take care to implement the regulations in orders as strictly as possible from hereon after. (The Ministry of Education Bureau for Common Educational Affairs 1896: 250)

Elementary School Order Articles 20, 25, and 54 contained in these private instructions are regulations stipulating the responsibility of parents/guardians to send their children to school, the establishment of elementary schools capable of accommodating children in each city, town, and village, and the need for elementary school staff to obtain teacher’s licenses. While these private instructions provided some tension to local educational affairs offices, it did not bring about an actual increase in school attendance.²⁴ Kabayama’s instructions in 1899 started with three paragraphs stating that “in each city, town, and village, ordinary schools should be established as necessary for school-age children in that city, town or village to attend school,” followed by (just) a single paragraph concerning school attendance, in which the focus was increasing girls’ school attendance rates, followed by a paragraph on the “organization of a register of school-age children” for strictly enforcing supervisory responsibilities regarding school attendance. The remaining three paragraphs then noted the issue of resolving the lack of teachers and raising teachers’ salaries. Regarding the setup of the “school attendance expansion” issue in these instructions, not much difference can be observed from the private instructions “on the matter of strictly enforcing orders and regulations concerning education.” In short, the focus was more on the “complete execution” of the system as opposed to actual “complete (perfect) school attendance.” As can be seen, the Ministry of Education’s stance on increasing school attendance as of June 1899 could not break free from the 1890’s stance on increasing school attendance.

21. Kowashi Inoue was a bureaucrat from the Meiji era who worked on drafting the Meiji constitution and the imperial rescript on education. He assumed the post of Minister of Education from March 1893 to August 1894. (translation note)

22. In Kowashi Inoue’s elementary education policies, the enrichment of local government finances (the establishment of school buildings, facilities, and staff), reduction and exemption of school tuition, increase in school attendance for girls, protection for the poor, control of extravagance/luxury and reduction in textbook prices were additionally considered issues of concern. See the part written by Hideo Satō in Kaigo (1968: 97-119).

23. It should be noted that, just before this, Sukenori Kabayama’s “recklessness” was “set back” during the establishment of the Private School Order. See Hisaki (1973).

24. On this point, refer to Yoshikazu Mihara’s works concerning the situation in the localities as cited in this paper.

Just before Kabayama's instructions were given, the topics "advantages and disadvantages of encouraging elementary school students to save money" and "measures for increasing school attendance rates for girls" were submitted for deliberation by the Ministry of Education at the second conference of the National Alliance of Educational Societies (Zenkoku Rengō Kyōikukai) held from April 15 to 17, 1899.²⁵ It is evident that Kabayama's instructions assumed the stance taken by the Ministry of Education at this time and that this stance was maintained as the Ministry of Education's policy until June of that year. The focus of Kabayama's instructions on the issue of school attendance concentrated on girls — whose school attendance was lower than the boys — and did not extend its outlook any further. This corroborates the attendance encouragement policies of the Ministry of Education.

2. Specification of a Numerical Goal: "A School Attendance Rate of 85% by Meiji 40"

This attitude towards increasing school attendance in the 1890's hit a turning point a few months later. In the Eight Years Plan,²⁶ speculated to have been submitted at a Cabinet meeting in July 1899, the Ministry of Education noted the following about the expansion of elementary education: "It is believed inevitable that the current system be maintained at least until Meiji 40 [...] By Meiji 40, at least 85 out of 100 students will attend school and the promotion of ordinary elementary school graduates to higher elementary schools will be encouraged as much as possible. And this will lay the groundwork for gradually lengthening the period of compulsory education."²⁷ The Eight Years Plan described school attendance for boys as well as girls and assumed a continuous, long-term view of school attendance that would help persuade the later extension of the compulsory education term. On this point, it can be said to separate itself clearly from prior attendance expansion policies by the Ministry of Education.²⁸

At a local school inspector conference held from July 13 to 16, 1899, Sukenori Kabayama expressed his policy to "at least plan to increase school attendance to over 85 out of 100 [students] by Meiji 40 and further increase the number of teaching staff along with it."²⁹ Although this statement looked seven years ahead in time, it can only be called a policy change from the tone assumed in June. And this change was characterized by the proposal of such a concrete numerical goal as a school attendance rate of "over 85 [percent]" by "Meiji 40." Furthermore, the policy presented here was not temporary. Kabayama repeated the same statement even in the enactment process for the Elementary School Order a year later: "While [the elementary school term] is set at four years, this is actually still insufficient. I believe it appropriate to impose six compulsory years [of education on the people]. However, this [six year compulsory education term] is not something that can possibly be implemented just now. [If we are to make compulsory education a six-year term] It would be best to at least achieve a school attendance rate of 85 out of 100 school-age children throughout the country first. The government is also of the mind to focus its attention on this and apply sufficient encouragement."³⁰

This statement shows that only the extension of the compulsory education term was newly incorporated in the Third Elementary School Order, with no fundamental change in directionality from the previous year. In other

25. Report on the inquiries submitted at the second conference of the National Alliance of Educational Societies [Dai-2 kai Zenkoku Rengō Kyōikukai shimon-an tōshin] (1899) *Kyōiku kōhō* 223: 1. (In Japanese)

26. Regarding "The Eight Years Plan," see Mihara (2002) for details. In his analysis of "The Eight Years Plan investigation report," Mihara evaluates the numerical goal as having been established due to the plan's submission at the Cabinet meeting.

27. *The Eight Years Plan investigation report [Hachinen Keikaku chōsasho]*. Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (In Japanese). Compulsory education at the time included four years of ordinary elementary school. The subsequent higher elementary school course was two to four years long. The Elementary School Order was revised in Meiji 40 (1907) to make ordinary elementary schools a six-year course. (translation note)

28. Furthermore, as will be noted later, the Ministry of Education allowed the introduction of sanctions for enforcing school attendance in its reply to Nara Prefecture's inquiry in June 1899. Mihara (1984: 110) hypothesizes that this change in policy was based on the promulgation of the "Law concerning Special Accounts for the Educational Fund" (March 22, 1899, Law No. 80). However, judging from the directionality of Kabayama's private instruction and the inquiries at the National Alliance of Educational Societies conference, there remains doubt as to whether this law could have been a factor that would fundamentally change the Ministry of Education's policies.

29. Conference of local school inspectors [Chihō shigakkan kaigi] (July 25, 1899). *Kyōiku jiron* 514: 19. (In Japanese)

30. *Written records of the Elementary School Order Meiji 33, August 8 & 9 [Shōgakkō-rei kaigi hikki Meiji 33 8-gatsu 8-ka 9-ka]*. National Archives of Japan. (In Japanese)

words, the realization of an extended compulsory education term, with the feature of increased school attendance rates, became a common stance after July 1899.³¹

What instigated this change of course in Kabayama (and the Kabayama *bunsei*³²) between June and July? While sufficiently persuasive documents cannot be found at present, I would like to focus on the decision reached at the aforementioned National Alliance of Educational Societies conference. In response to the Ministry of Education's inquiry regarding "measures for increasing school attendance rates for girls," the Alliance decided "No.1: to strictly enforce attendance regulations," "No.2: to complete the development of school facilities," "No.3: to provide female teaching staff," and "No.4: to select appropriate textbooks for girls and require their addition to the curriculum." The cause for this was first that "there was the mistaken outlook of parents/guardians thinking less of education for girls than boys" and second that "parents/guardians made girls look after their children, as a helping hand for their own work." And, as the final third reason:

The third cause for the nonattendance of children (*and this applies not only to girls*) is because no sanctions are imposed on parents/guardians who do not enroll their children in school. Thus, in order to work towards the strict enforcement of attendance regulations, systems like fines or petty fines must be imposed.³³

The Alliance emphasized the adoption of "sanctions" or "systems like fines or petty fines" on the parents/guardians of students who did not attend school, in the form of applying it "not only to girls," thereby stepping even further to the core of the issue than the Ministry of Education.³⁴ While Kabayama's speech was attached as a letterpress print on the one hand, the Alliance had thrust an even more in-depth demand at the Ministry of Education regarding elementary education policies. It is worth noting that this opinion was communicated to the Ministry of Education at a period when the Elementary School Order revisions, spurred by the textbook issue, were being prepared. Similarly, it must be noted that the clause "in the case that the parents/guardians of school-age children do not respond to school attendance demands without appropriate reason and do not fulfill their responsibilities, a fine shall be imposed" was incorporated in the items for deliberation concerning the Elementary School Order revisions at the fourth higher education assembly held in November 1899 (Kōtō Kyōiku Kaigi undated: 174).

The following is apparent from the above observations. Until June 1899, the stance taken by the Ministry of Education was to wait for the "completion" of school facilities before "complete school attendance" could be expected for boys; the "1890's stance" on expanding elementary education stopped at increasing school attendance for girls, an idea that had been around since Kowashi Inoue was Minister of Education. However, after July 1899, a completely different perspective on school attendance expansion was presented. The following section will delve a bit more in-depth into the Ministry of Education's policies and the trends in the localities around this time.

IV. Establishment of a Policy Development System in 1899 (Meiji 32): Strengthening Attendance Enforcement and Setting Special Provisions

1. The Ministry of Education's Policies after May 1899 (Meiji 32)

Just prior to the aforementioned change of course, the Ministry of Education underwent a number of important exchanges with some localities. Of these, this paper focuses on the following five exchanges (see Table 1). What must be noted here is that these policies resulted in mitigating requirements related to school attendance, thereby

31. This "change of course" by Sukenori Kabayama (or the Kabayama *bunsei*) is not too strange considering the fact that a "simple" "ideology of national education rights" lay at the basis of his ideological tendencies. The simultaneously advanced Private School Order would also change course with the breakdown of "The Eight Years Plan investigation report" (Hisaki 1973: 14, 20).

32. *Bunsei* refers to the educational policies and administration of the Minister of Education at the time. There is a "*bunsei*" for each Minister of Education, and their *bunsei* period refers to that minister's administration period. (translation note)

33. Note 25.

34. This response to the inquiry was given by the Imperial Educational Society to Gijin Okuda, the Vice-Minister of Education on April 22 (Note 25).

increasing the number of students counted as “school attendees.”

Table 1. The Ministry of Education’s Statutes and Changes in Regulations Concerning School Attendance in 1899 (Meiji 32)

No.	Title	Date Issued	Response Date	Content
1	Procedures for establishing special classes for school-age children who cannot attend school for reasons such as caring for other children	April 21, 1899: Document 新潟学 No. 64 Inquiry from Niigata Prefecture	May 6	Approval was given for specially establishing classes with five or six year education periods for children with babysitting responsibilities who could not attend school at normal school hours.
2	Procedures for establishing official regulations regarding special classes at ordinary elementary schools	May 2, 1899, Document 甲 3 発 No.29, submitted by Nagano Prefecture	June 24	This allowed older children and those taking care of other children to attend school. Their names could be recorded as school attendees on the register of school-age children, thereby increasing the number of registered schoolgirls in Nagano prefecture in 1900 by 10,000 from the previous year.
3	Procedures concerning the management of school attendance for school-age children in remote, mountainous areas of towns and villages	June 9, 1899, Document 甲 三収 No. 1093, Inquiry from Nagano Prefecture	June 24	For children who could formerly “not go to school,” if the child were educated by inviting a “teacher with appropriate qualifications,” the child could be “deemed a school attendee” upon the approval of the head of the town or village.
4	Procedures for attaching sanctions to regulations concerning school attendance and home education for school-age children	June 9, 1899: Document 坤 3 第 No. 509 4, Inquiry from Nara Prefecture	July 10	It became possible to impose a fine of “over 5 <i>sen</i> and under 1 yen 50 <i>sen</i> ” to “those who did not enroll in or attend school without appropriate grounds.”
5	Doubts concerning the order prohibiting educational practices based on religion, as found in the Private School Order, the Private School Order enforcement regulations, and municipal public schools	1899 (Meiji 32) Document 普通 丙 No. 86, Notice sent to both professional and ordinary school education affairs departments in each of the local prefectural governments	October 12	This made it possible for students who were enrolled in each of the various schools but had not completed “compulsory education” to be “counted as school attendees.” With this, the students enrolled in the various schools were deemed “special cases” in the implementation of school attendance duties.

While there was over a month-long interval between the issuance dates of Exchanges 1 and 3 in Table 1, it is important to note that the response dates for both are June 24. From this, it can be speculated that the responses to both were derived from a single line of logic. Both can be evaluated as mitigation policies for realizing a quantitative increase in the number of school attendees. In fact, the measure in Exchange 2 brought about an increase of 10,000 schoolgirls in Nagano Prefecture in 1900 as compared to the previous year (Nagano-ken Kyōiku-shi Kankōkai 1981: 347-348). This fact also confirms that the Ministry of Education began its full-fledged efforts towards the quantitative increase of school attendees. At the stage of Niigata Prefecture’s inquiry in May, the decision to count children subject to special classes as “school attendees” had not yet been reached. However, the two notices answered on June 24 expressed the opinion that children who had formerly not been considered “school attendees”

should henceforth be counted in the number of “school attendees.”

At the same time, a look at Exchange 4 shows the approval of a fine to be imposed on those who did not respond to school attendance demands. This point marks a change from Nojiri’s abovementioned opinion, and it is apparent that the Ministry of Education’s perception on expanding elementary education in the 1890’s changed in the 1900’s.

In December 1899, a local government officer from Nagano noted the following at the prefectural school inspector conference: “Raising the attendance rate of school-age children throughout the country to over 85 percent by Meiji 40 was an order by the Minister of Education at the school inspector conference in July this year. Because it is an attempt to add about 20 percentage points to the national school attendance rate in eight years, considering this rate, our prefecture would have to increase its school attendance rate to over 95 percent in average between boys and girls in a period of eight years.”³⁵ In the localities as well, this was not only a form of pressure concerning attendance encouragement but was also one that came with a time limit of “Meiji 40” and “in eight years” as declared by Kabayama in July 1899.

2. Discussions during the Enactment Process of the Third Elementary School Order

The proposal to reform the Elementary School Order (later to become the Third Elementary School Order) was submitted before the Cabinet on January 15, 1900. In the process of its deliberation, the article that approved police intervention in the process of enforcing attendance was deleted along with sanctions imposed upon those who failed to fulfill the school attendance requirement.³⁶ Regarding the reason for this, only the Ministry of Home Affairs’ opinion that “it cannot be implemented judging from current conditions in the localities” can be found among the historical documents collected in the *Kōbun Ruishu*.³⁷ However, the Privy Council’s examination report states a slightly more in-depth reason: “Making police officers demand school attendance from school-age children would result in allowing the application of the Law of Administrative Execution (*Gyōsei Shikkōhō*). As this is not desirable under the current conditions of our country, this regulation has been deleted. Each article under Article 66 was moved up with the deletion of Article 65.”³⁸

What were the “current conditions of our country” as specified here? Concerns were shared among local government officers regarding the possible sudden rise in school attendance. In April 1900 (Meiji 33), local government officers passed a proposal related to textbook selection methods and a proposal opposing fines on those who did not attend school, and submitted these to the Minister of Education as well as the Minister of Home Affairs.³⁹ The latter proposal stated the following:

The Elementary School Order reform bill contains a demand for school attendance and, in the rare case that there are those who do not let their children attend school upon no justifiable grounds, it also contains a regulation for fining them. While this is only natural in enforcing national education, considering the current conditions of cities, towns,

35. Gun school inspectors conference [Gun shigakkai]. (December 25, 1899). *Shinano kyoikukai zasshi* 159: 35. (In Japanese)

36. In regards to the reason why the police intervention clause was deleted, hypotheses include Hideo Satō’s “mercy theory” and Makoto Hanai’s “theory of avoiding an impression of force.” However, the theory suggested by Shinobu Ōe (1994) supports both. Furthermore, it must also be noted that the various points raised during the “reform” of the Elementary School Order formed the “20th Century-type Elementary School Plan,” which completely differed from the past and were “even quite shocking” to those who had been accustomed to the previous image of elementary schools (Hisaki 1975: 6-9).

37. The 24th book of *Collection of official documents [Kōbun ruishu]*. Meiji 33 (1900), Vol. 23, Education Affairs Section (in Japanese). The *Kōbun ruishu* is a record edited and stored by the Cabinet Records Office. It is composed of originals of official documents and includes mainly the originals and drafts of orders. (translation note)

38. *Meiji 33 & 34 privy council examination report [Meiji 33-nen 34-nen sūmitsu-in shinsa hōkokusho]*. National Archives of Japan (In Japanese). The submission date for this examination report is noted “August 3 of Meiji 33,” and the examination committee members included Magojirō Sugi, Ryūichi Kuki, Junjirō Hosokawa, Fujimaro Tanaka and Takachika Fukuoka.

39. *Meiji 33-nen 4-gatsu chihō-kan kaigi shorui* [April Meiji 33 regional conference documents]. Tokyo Metropolitan Archives (in Japanese). Regarding the influence of these two proposals in the establishment of the Third Elementary School Order, see the part written by Hideo Satō in *Kokuritsu Kyōiku Kenkyūjo* (1974: 861-862). Regarding textbook selection methods, Masafumi Kajiyama (Kajiyama 1988:162-163) has made a complete reprint of the proposal concerning the selection of textbooks based on the documents owned by the Gifu Prefectural Archives.

and villages in Japan, most school facilities are not yet fully equipped and, because of the lack of school buildings and insufficient classroom sizes, there are oftentimes cases where it is not possible to accommodate all of the school-age children in the city, town or village. In extreme instances, student enrollment is temporarily declined. Should school attendance be immediately demanded, as stipulated in this reform bill, and fines be imposed upon those who do not let their children attend school, the number of school attendees would drastically increase. School sites and buildings would instantly become insufficient. Not only would there be a lack of school equipment, desks, and chairs, but an even greater lack of teaching staff than is experienced now. Teachers' salaries would consequently rise, and it is highly feared that most of the cities, towns, and villages would not be able to bear such an increase in expenditures.

For these reasons, a request was made to the Minister of Home Affairs (this decision was not addressed to the Minister of Education) that “this regulation imposing such fines be enacted after the various conditions [such as the town/village funds, school equipment, teaching staff, etc.] are more or less met.” It should be noted that, even after the issuance of the Law concerning Special Accounts for the Educational Fund (March 22, 1899, Law No.80) and the Education Fund Order (November 22, 1899, Imperial Order No. 435), concerns about rising costs in the localities were maintained among the local government officers.⁴⁰

Specifically how was school attendance enforced at this time? A small glimpse of this can be seen from the following report (the inspection at the basis of this report was made from May to June 1900):

Asking about the methods used in enforcing school attendance [upon an inspection], [it was reported that] the head of the towns and villages are summoned for instructions and explanations on rules for executing attendance enforcement; and, because valid demands cannot be made to enforce school attendance on school-age children demanded to attend school in each town/village by the *gun* [district] school inspector without verification of the school-age children survey register and family register, a proper verification is conducted by the town/village head and, if necessary, an in-person inspection is made by dispatching a *gun* [district] officer; an adjustment sheet is also submitted to the *gun* office at the end of each month and, *should there be any difference between the [number of] enrolled students and school attendees, the head of the village is ordered to make the child attend school. If the request is not met, the task of supervising the parents/guardians is transferred to the police office and a fine is imposed.* While the number of those summoned by the *gun* office rose above 30 this year and the number of those fined rose above ten, all children were, as a result, enrolled in school. Due to this, the school attendance rate rose significantly and, because there was a lack of school buildings accompanying this increase in school attendees, desks and chairs were first rebuilt, and some makeshift solutions were implemented, including the creation of temporary places of education in temples and houses using unused tables and chairs (Chiba Prefecture Katori-gun government office 1901: 39-40).

Even though local government officers had evaded clear definitions in the Third Elementary School Order, it can be understood that it was already a relatively common *procedure* to involve police officers in the enforcement of school attendance and to impose fines on those who did not respond to the demand. The fact that the Privy Council called this “undesirable” regardless of this popularization illuminates the fact that there was a significant gap in stances on the topic of increasing school attendance between local education affairs offices as opposed to the Privy Council and local government officials.

3. Acceptance and Interpretation in the Localities

The rules for enforcing attendance, formerly enacted by prefectural governors with the required approval of the Minister of Education, was revised in the Regulations for Enforcement (Articles 89 through 94) accompanying the Third Elementary School Order, and the roles of the principal, city/town/village head, *gun* head, and local govern-

40. On this point, Hideo Satō (Kokuritsu Kyōiku Kenkyūjo 1974: 872) proves the following hypothesis: “It can easily be surmised that there was ‘realistic’ opposition from officials in the Ministry of Education stating that a ‘strict enforcement of school attendance’ across the board should not be administered without the establishment of a sufficient system for accommodating it under the current conditions of the city, town, and village funds.”

ment officer were clarified.

What kinds of systems for enforcing school attendance were adopted in the localities under such a context? As one example, let us refer to the abstract of resolutions drafted at the first local school inspector conference held on September 14 and 15, 1900, two weeks after the implementation of the Third Elementary School Order (September 1), and the abstract of resolutions from the *gun* school inspector council held in Niigata Prefecture just before it (from September 10 to 13).⁴¹

Of the 65 items in the resolution drafted at the first local school inspector conference (some were unresolved), in response to the issue concerning “what should be done regarding sanctions on those who do not respond to school attendance demands,” it was resolved that the issue should “be disposed through the Law of Administrative Execution or the law for *ikeizai* (police offenses)⁴² in the applicable prefecture.” At the Niigata Prefecture school inspector council prior to it, in regards to “whether regulations for enforcing attendance from students enrolled in school is necessary,” enforcement is prescribed as the “work of the *gun* head” and that “1: the *gun* head [...] must talk directly to or order the parent/guardian of the child to send their child to school,” “2: in regards to enforcing school attendance, the *gun* head must, if need be, request police officers to execute the demand” or “3: the Law of Administrative Execution must be sought.”

Enforcing school attendance based on the Law of Administrative Execution can be observed as the *official* opinion the Ministry of Education from the inquiry made by Nagano Prefecture on February 8, 1901 (Meiji 34) (answered February 28).⁴³ On the other hand, as seen above, the decision of the Privy Council during the enactment of the Third Elementary School Order assumed a more passive stance, in which the application of the Law of Administrative Execution and the enforcement of school attendance itself were considered “undesirable under the current conditions of our country.” These two stances on school attendance enforcement contradict one another. And from this, we can understand that the localities’ needs (in this case, at the *gun* level), in other words the pressures from the school attendance enforcement system, prompted the adoption of the Law of Administrative Execution and other enforcement methods that exceeded the intentions of local government officials.

V. Conclusion

While the strengthening of elementary education affairs was launched from the localities in the late 1890’s as shown in Section II of this paper, these elementary education policies developed under a multi-layered understanding of elementary education expansion, with various differences still remaining at the Ministry of Education, prefecture, and city/*gun* levels.

The Ministry of Education, which, from a “realistic” perspective, had adopted gradual policies regarding school attendance expansion until the 1890’s, changed its course in 1899 to strive towards a comprehensive increase in school attendance by setting the limits of 1907 and a school attendance rate of over 85%. For this reason, not only were the aforementioned “development/establishment” policies enacted, but “requirements were also mitigated” to guarantee an increase in the number of school attendees. The realization of the free tuition system with the Third Elementary School Order can be considered the peak of such deregulation policies. What must be noted here is that the Ministry of Education did not lead this policy change arbitrarily, but rather implemented it as a ratification of attendance expansion policies that were already in demand in the localities.

41. *Meiji 33-nen bun gun shigaku gakumu-iin tōkei nenkō kahō onkyū kikin*. Gunma Prefectural Archives, the Gunma Prefectural Governor’s Secretariat, Department of Educational Affairs (In Japanese). Records of this decision can also be seen in *Meiji 33-nen bun gun shigaku gakumu-iin tōkei nenkō kahō onkyū kikin*. Gunma Prefectural Archives, the Gunma Prefectural Governor’s Secretariat, Department of Educational Affairs (In Japanese).

42. *Ikeizai* (police offenses) were “crimes that should be sentenced to a fine of over 5 *sen* or under 1 yen 95 *sen* or 1 day to 10 days in custody.” And “in *ikeizai*, there are criminal acts that go against the law and criminal acts that go against commands” (Egi 1900). *Ikeizai* had a character different from general *keibatsu* (punishment) and was often adopted in “cases for punishing those for errors and negligence, whether or not there were any ill intentions.” (Egi 1900: 274).

43. On the forced punishment of parents/guardians of school age children through the law of administrative execution [Gakurei jidō hogosha wo gyōsei shikkōhō ni yori kyōsei shobun hō]. (1924). In *Monbushō reiki ruisan* 3: 335. (In Japanese)

Naturally, the differences in interests at each level were not completely resolved at this stage. The stance on increasing school attendance assumed at the city and *gun* levels in the late 1890's involved the local government officials "first inspecting the number of children that should attend school, then determining the number of elementary schools necessary for accommodating these children, adding the necessary school buildings, providing equipment and teaching material corresponding to the number of students, further taking care to install teaching staff in the localities, then setting a regulation for fining those who did not attend school once all the above requirements were met, thereby strictly enforcing school attendance" in the process of enacting the Third Elementary School Order. As opposed to this, the change in the Ministry of Education's attendance expansion policies in 1899 actually forced the adoption of enforcement policies that surpassed the intentions of local government officials and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

As a result, the development of elementary education policies after the Third Elementary School Order assumed the form of subsequently approving the items first denied during the Third Elementary School Order enactment process, such as the application of the Law of Administrative Execution and the use of police intervention upon request by the localities. In other words, even though the foundations for establishing the Third Elementary School Order were set as responses to the localities' requests, the outcome lay along the lines of trends already visible in the localities in the late 1890's. The mutual interaction between the localities and the Ministry of Education can be considered to have prepared the grounds for the multi-layered realization of the elementary education system that came with the Third Elementary School Order. In this sense, the measures in 1899 formed the foundations of elementary education policies in the early 1900's.

After these foundations were set, the Ministry of Education and local education affairs offices stepped forward hand-in-hand to increase school attendance. However, the elementary school policies based on the 1900's stance on increasing school attendance came from the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and local education affairs offices aiming towards "complete school attendance" for both boys and girls. The discontinuity in the Ministry of Education's path from the 1890's to the 1900's was thus supported by the continuity in the localities.

However, children who did not or could not attend school were underscored even further under such a system, and it must not be overlooked that this fact would start their marginalization as subjects of "exclusion" from elementary education in later years.⁴⁴

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44. As an example, the First Regional *Gun* School Inspectors Conference (Note 41) noted, with regards to those who were exempt from or granted a deferral for school attendance, that "excluding the insane or mentally disabled, school attendance for others are to be fundamentally kept at deferrals."

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