‘Yogo-type School Refusal’ and Educational Deprivation Experienced by Children from Disadvantaged Families
— Need for Compensatory Education Systems and Collaboration with Families —

Naoyuki NISHIHARA
Chikushi Jogakuen University

Abstract

This study looks at students attending a free school in the Chikuho District of Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan. The paper examines the situation of Yogo-type school refusal which results from economical disadvantage and suggests strategies to support these children. In this district, the ratio of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipients exceeds the national average by ten times, and more than 50% of the children going to the free school live in households on welfare. Moreover, approximately 70% of these children are at such low academic attainment levels that they face numerous obstacles even if returned to mainstream school. In addition, many of them live in single-parent families (39%), and in families with mentally or intellectually handicapped parents (22%). The study finds that the educational deprivation is considered to be the main problem for these children from disadvantaged families, and suggests a framework for setting up comprehensive compensatory education systems. The methods of collaboration with parents are also discussed.

Key words
School Refusal, Household on Welfare, Compensatory Education, Educational Deprivation, Free School

I. Introduction

In 2007, there were approximately 129,000 children of compulsory school education age in Japan who did not or cannot go to school. There are many reasons for school refusal, and various supports are offered to these children according to their characteristics. In a review of research on this topic conducted in Japan and beyond, Inamura (1994) introduced many studies of school refusal. But causes of school refusal and techniques of support indicated in these studies are almost described from psychological and psychiatric points of view. If the ultimate objective of support to school refusal is to ‘bring the child back to school’, it is natural to advocate the approach whereby a support person will attempt to facilitate the child’s returning to school, focusing on the psychological and interpersonal conflicts of the child, while collaborating with parents and school. It is also understandable that, in this case, detailed consideration of an individual’s inner world and psychotherapeutic approach would be important for methodologies for this kind of support.

However, there is a group of school refusal which needs assessment and support within an extended framework that includes the economic, educational and home environments in addition to the abovementioned approach. The author has been regularly supervising staff at a privately-run free school (hereafter referred to as B School) in a town called ‘A’ in Chikuho region, Fukuoka prefecture. As it will be explained later, the region used to be prosperous from coal mining, but experienced a rapid decline after the closure of the pits, and high unemployment still persists today. Even in the present day, many families face economic hardship, with the number of ‘Seikatsu-hogo’ benefit recipient households more than ten times the national average. More than half of the children who attend B school...
come from such families and most of these children are seriously underperforming academically. The author categorizes these children with school refusal who do not go to mainstream state schools as a result of economic and academic disadvantage as Yogo-type school refusal and attempts to place educational deprivation as the core issue. A particular downward spiral can be pointed out: firstly, a child is excluded from mainstream education because the family suffering stress from long term economic hardship cannot function as the caregiver to the child; then the child falls behind in the class, fails to adapt to normal school life and ultimately begins to drop out of school.

In this paper, the characteristics of the Chikuho region, where B school is located, will be explained within the context of the history of the region. Then the situation of the children coming to B school will be described, focusing on their academic standard and family environment in order to elucidate the issues facing them. Next, a compensatory education model will be discussed as an option for effective support for Yogo-type school refusal, using the examples of B school, and pointing out that collaboration with the families is essential if the compensatory education model is to be effective.

II. Overview of B school

1. Historical issues of Chikuho region: focusing on town ‘A’

The fact that the term ‘Chikuho studies’ exists among social welfare professionals is witness to various surveys and studies conducted on this region by many academics who specialize in poverty and public assistance. Most of them attempt to elucidate the ‘pit closure after-effect’ (Taura, 1998) which still dominates the region after 40 years, explaining it from a historical perspective: a region which was once very prosperous rapidly declined after the pit closures resulting from the changes in energy policy after the Second World War, suddenly producing a mass of unemployed and welfare-dependent people. Here, the ‘pit closure after-effect’ in town ‘A’ is shown using the numbers of households receiving the Seikatsu-hogo benefit.

Figure 1 shows the shift of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipient ratios from 1955 to 2007. During this period, the number of benefit recipient households in Fukuoka prefecture is consistently higher than the national average, while the number in the Chikuho region, especially town ‘A’ is consistently much higher than Fukuoka prefecture.

![Figure 1 Shift of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipients ratio](image)

However, it had not always been this way. In ‘The History of Town A’ (2001), Hosoi writes: ‘From the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, the coal-producing Chikuho region recorded the lowest benefit recipient ratio nationally. The region absorbed a large number of unemployed migrant workers and the population grew rapidly’ (underlined by the author). The population of town ‘A’ peaked in 1958 at 40,000, twice in the total population of 2008. However, the miners started to lose jobs when the pits began to close from 1955 onward.
The ratio of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipients stood at 258% (per thousand in the population) in 1963 and it has not gone below the 200% line in the last 27 years. As stated in 'The History of Town A'; 'There must be a strong correlation between the fact that the town had been heavily dependent on coal mining and the high number of injured and sick people in the population. After the pit closures, the younger people left the area while the injured and the sick middle-aged and older people remained, pushing and keeping the ratio continuously high'. In other words, those who were young and healthy could move out of the town looking for work, while others, who stayed behind, could not move on to new jobs, needing the support of the Seikatsu-hogo benefit, a situation that continues till this day. This is why the state, which led the energy change-over policy without preparing systems for employment and social security, is considered to be the principal culprit in the creation of this problem.

The ratio went down to the 100% level in the bubble economy of the Heisei era (1989-). But the ratio that dropped as far as 114% in 1997 subsequently started to climb again, and reached 159% in September 2007 (Fukuoka Prefecture Tagawa Health, Welfare and Environment Office, 2007).

The breakdown of these Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipient households in Chikuho region in 2005 was as follows: 40.2% elderly, 11.2% single mothers, 5.7% disabled, 24.7% injured or sick and 18.1% other. The ratios of ‘single mother households’ and ‘other’ are higher than other regions (Fukuoka Prefecture Health and Welfare Audit Office, 2007 a). Another characteristic of the region is the high number of benefit recipients of working age (20-59 years old) (Tagawa District Social Welfare Study Group, 1996).

2. Administration of B school

In 1997, in order to encourage a healthy environment for children, a facility named ‘Children’s Support Center’ was established in the preexisting Children’s Center building, which is situated in the neighborhood of the former miners’ housing. The facility is operated by a local social welfare corporation which also runs a nursery school. B school is the core activity of this center. The center also operates Katei-juku which gives supplemental after-school classes for local children led by student volunteers as well as consulting services for local people regarding parental care and education.

The staff of B school consists of a social worker and three teachers. It operates on a small public grant and a nominal school fee (1,000 yen per month) for each user child. The school opens four days a week and offers approximately five hours of lessons and recreational activities for children who do not attend mainstream schools. With the view that parental support is essential for support to school refusal, it also organizes a parents meeting once a month, as well as being actively involved in home visits. Other characteristics which distinguish B school from other ‘publicly funded satellite classes for school refusal children’ are a school bus service for those students who cannot come by themselves or whose parents cannot bring them to school, as well as a lunch service (200 yen per meal) for those children who cannot bring their own lunch.

3. Characteristics of children in B school

During the ten years since its establishment in 1997 to 2006, the school dealt with more than 100 children with school refusal, including cases where children stayed in the school only for a short period and those needing only consultations. In this study, the academic attainment and home environment of 69 children who remained in the school for a significant period of time will be analyzed and discussed.

1) Gender and age

It is generally assumed that there is no gender difference in school refusal. However, in the case of B school, the number of girls is 47 (68%), more than double that of boys at 22 (32%). There are as many boys with school refusal as girls in the Chikuho region, so the low ratio of boys in B school might be because these boys are likely to become delinquent, and not adapted to group activity in the school.

The ages of the students when they are admitted to B school range from the first grade of elementary school to the third grade of junior high school. 54 of them (78%) are of junior high school ages and this is
the same tendency as in other free schools nationwide. The largest age group of 22 children consists of those who started coming to B school at third grade in mainstream junior high school. This does not mean that these children suddenly stopped going to mainstream schools at that age and then came to B school. Rather, lots of these children who had been absent from school for some time, decided to come to B school, because the children, their parents and teacher also needed to break the status quo during the last year of compulsory schooling, and prepare for the children’s future.

2) Academic attainment

The academic attainment level of the students was categorized according to the criteria shown in Table1, using classroom achievement assessment data collected by staff with teaching experience in mainstream school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Academic attainment assessment criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Above standard</td>
<td>Would be in upper echelon of the peers in mainstream school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Within the standard range</td>
<td>Having the same level or should be able to catch up with the peers in mainstream school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Below standard</td>
<td>Academic attainment is below standard and would be unable to catch up with the peers in mainstream school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Significantly below standard</td>
<td>Academic attainment is significantly below the standard range and some of them are suspected of intellectual disorders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 2, only two children were in category A which is above the standard level of academic attainment of peers in mainstream schools. Twenty children (29%) were in category B. Though the children in this category are underperforming academically, they should be able to catch up in mainstream school, especially if they were to be provided with extra classes or tutoring. The academic attainment level of the rest, almost 70%, of the children is well below the level of their contemporaries in mainstream schools, and these children will not be able to understand the classes even if they go back to school. Among them, 19 children (28%) were categorized as D. Those are the ones who cannot perform single-digit multiplication or who write only simple sentences using only hiragana characters despite their junior high school age. Among the children in the D category, five were assessed by the Child Guidance Center with resulting diagnoses of intellectual disorders. The number would be likely to rise if the remaining 14 children were to undergo the same assessment.

![Figure 2](image-url)
3) Home environment

As far as family environment is concerned, in terms of household composition (Figure 3), the number of single parent households is 27 families (39%). According to the estimate of 2006, there were 14,826,000 'two parents families' and 3,002,000 'single parent families' in Japan (The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2008). That means the ratio of single parent households with unmarried offspring is 20% nationally, highlighting the very high number (39%) of single parent households among the children at B school. At B school, there are also temporary single parent households, such as a mother in long-term hospitalization or a father in prison, which are officially categorized as 'two parent' families. Taking these realities into consideration, almost half of the children in B school come from single parent households. Single parenthood per se should not be considered a problem; however it should be pointed out that it is not easy for a single parent in poverty to manage income generation and household management without help from their relatives (Iwata, 2001).

![Figure 3 Household composition (n=69)](image)

Another characteristic of the families of the children in B school is the high proportion of parents with mental problems: 9 cases (13%). Information collected at the supervision sessions revealed that most of the cases are of the types that need long-term treatment, such as schizophrenia, mood disorders (depression), and personality disorders. These disorders can cause huge stress on a family. It is no wonder that a child exposed to such situations as 'came running into B school for protection from a knife-wielding mother with positive symptoms of schizophrenia' or 'witnessed the father who were using physical violence to control the schizophrenic mother acting violently' should suffer emotional trauma, with a big damage to the child's future. A neglected home environment with overall lack of house management and basic childcare was also apparent in households with parents having mood disorders and in chronic phases of schizophrenia. These families, as well as the families with intellectually disadvantaged parents (6 cases) in B school, probably leave their children neglected for a long time, and have a bad influence on them (Nishizawa 2002; Ito 2003). The school also encountered five obvious cases with physical or sexual abuse.

4) Economic circumstances

In this section, pictures of the househol econo my of the children in B School are drawn from interviews with their parents, as well as descriptions by the children themselves. As shown in Figure 4, there are 40 households (58%) living solely on the Seikatsu-hogo benefit. Nationally, this figure is one in 100, and even in town 'A' overall the rate is 15 in 100; however, in B school, more than half the children come from such families. The life of Seikatsu-hogo recipients is very limited; in principle, they cannot own a car to take...
children out and are not even allowed to save money in order to support the child into higher education. If 'families of very low income' such as those where parents are day laborers or pensioners are included, two thirds of the children in B school live in poverty.

It is worth noting that 21 out of 25 single mother families (84%) and 11 out of 15 families (73%) with parents with mental or intellectual disorder can not help leading a low life on welfare. It is easily assumed that in addition to economic hardship, other negative factors are putting these families and their children into an even more stressful environment.

III. A hypothesis on economic hardship and children’s education

Under the Japanese constitution, all Japanese nationals have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and civilized living. The Seikatsu-hogo benefit is there to safeguard the minimum standards of wholesome and civilized living. However this benefit only applies when the ‘minimum standard’ is threatened, which means the would-be recipient has to use up all his/her assets before applying, and the benefit only pays for the minimum standard of living. Thus, it is easily assumed that the households on the Seikatsu-hogo benefit are generally in poverty, facing serious economic hardship.

So how does economic hardship affect children? Kuraishi (1992) categorized the characteristics of children affected by poverty into four groups. The first one is related to achievement; low academic attainment, low academic qualifications, frequent changes of job, low self-respect and lack of future vision. The second one is related to social position; internalization of social norms, failed friendships, drug addictions and early parenthood with immature child-rearing. The third is related to basic life skills, such as the lack of skill in general household management and the lack of planning capability in home economics. And the fourth is related to personality, such as a lack of common sense and uncontrollable impulses. Summarizing these, it can easily be assumed that poverty causes intellectual, educational, social and emotional deprivation. Although there is no empirical evidence, these common factors are generally associated with poverty.

Table 2 shows the comparison between children in B school with Seikatsu-hogo benefit and those without. The children from the benefit recipient families show significantly lower levels of academic attainment, which backs up the known tendency that economic hardship forces children into educational deprivation.
Table 2  Correlation between Seikatsu-hogo benefit and academic attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Within standard (categories A&amp;B)</th>
<th>Below standard (categories C&amp;D)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit recipient family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non benefit recipient family</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.001 (Fisher’s exact test by SPSS)

The theory that economic hardship tends to be transmitted from generation to generation has been prevalent for some time and is known as the cycle of poverty. Simply put; 'poor parents' tend to provide 'insufficient parenting' which tends to produce 'emotionally, socially and intellectually deprived children' who tend to 'fail at school' which leads to 'unstable jobs or unemployment' which further leads to 'unstable marriage and family life' and ultimately they become 'poor parents' themselves (Aoki, 1997). The description of the process is similar to what Hotai (2000) pointed out as the problems surrounding the second and third generations of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipients. Other studies have revealed that not only poor families, but also families at any income level tend to produce offsprings with a similar income level as their parents attained through education as the vehicle. Aoki (1993) studied more than 2,000 households regarding the link between family income and the child’s academic attainment or the parental attitude towards education. He showed that the lower the income of the family, the greater the likelihood of having a child who is ‘absent from school’, ‘a low academic achiever’ and ‘one whose parents are not interested in schooling’, while the higher the income of the family, the greater the likelihood of ‘a child having his/her own room’, the parents are more likely to ‘limit child’s access to television and family computer games’, ‘give the child sports and other lessons’ and ‘make sure to give supplemental lessons in the form of juku cramming school classes or a private tutor’, showing the correlations between parental income and child’s academic attainment and his/her educational environment. Using further detailed samples, Kariya (2001) demonstrated clearly the process by which the disparity in income and education interactively makes social classes more fixed. These empirical studies focused on the social structure in which income and education form a set that is passed on to the next generation. They provide a convincing antithesis to society’s norm that ‘if you try hard, you can be anything in future’.

These studies back up the hypothesis that there is a link between poverty and child’s academic attainment and that this negative link does not break over generations but becomes ever more entrenched. Therefore, it is necessary to widen the scope beyond macro-based policies which aim to improve the physical environment (Sugimura, 1993), to include direct person-to-person support in order to help the children with Yogo-type school refusal experiencing economic hardship. Based on the author’s experience as supervisor at B school, this paper focuses on the expansion of compensatory education and the methodology to intervene in families, which the author thinks are the priorities.

IV. Support for Yogo-type school refusal

1. Establishing a compensatory education system

One interpretation of school refusal is as follows; ‘From the social work point of view, a child who does not go to school, whether the cause be sickness or economic circumstances, is deprived of the right and the opportunity to receive an equal education, and this is a form of social injustice’ (Kadota, 2002). In this point of view, society is responsible for offering a compensatory educational support system in which any kind of child with school refusal is entitled to receive an education. This study highlights the importance of forms of compensatory education that can be a part of the wider education support system. Most of the children with Yogo-type school refusal do not go to mainstream school by choice. They have been gradually pushed into the situation where they cannot go to school because
of very unstable family financial circumstances. As described in the hypothesis, it is highly likely that these children, without the minimum competence required for a working life, will be trapped in poverty in adulthood. In this sense, compensatory education does not just complement the mainstream education system, it also has a social welfare significance, mitigating the troubled family life cycle which reproduces economic disadvantage.

For example, even a part-time waiting job in a restaurant these days requires the proper way of using a respect language, understanding of a cash register, writing customers’ names on receipts etc. It is almost impossible to earn a living without basic literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In this modern environment, there are children, such as those in B school, who cannot acquire that minimum level of education. And there are many more children who cannot even go to free schools such as B school, and are losing valuable time. In addition, it is assumed that there is a body of children in mainstream schools who are academically well behind their contemporaries. There are limitations in the extent to which a single compensatory education system can provide proper education services to every child in all of their diverse situations. A multi-layered compensatory education system is required according to different age groups, academic attainment levels and family situations. Based on the author’s experience supporting B school, four compensatory and supplementary education models which the author believes to be feasible are presented below.

1) Compensatory education as an alternative to mainstream school education

The first model is compensatory education for children who do not go to mainstream schools. It will take the place of the mainstream schools, such as free school explained in this study. There used to be the criticism that these alternative schools were stopping children from returning to the mainstream schools. However, considering the increase of ‘publicly funded satellite classes for school refusal children’, a consensus regarding the significance of such compensatory education appears to be forming. Further improvement can be made to this model if it provides functions, and serves not only as a bridge for returning to mainstream schools but also as a place where severe under-performers, whose needs cannot be met by mainstream standardized education, are accepted.

2) Community based compensatory education

The second model is a compensatory education service offered at low cost to children in local communities, such as the one offered by Katei-juku in the above mentioned Children’s Support Center. This kind of compensatory education facility can offer services to those families who are motivated to encourage children to do better but cannot bear the cost of juku cramming schools or private tutors. This model, where student volunteers and local residents work together, is not only effective but also provides more opportunity for the local residents to be involved with children even outside the classrooms, helping to build social support networks for children. There are several cases in B school in which the children returned and managed to maintain their place at mainstream schools, thanks to the support of the Katei-juku.

3) Compensatory education for pre-school age children

The third model is for pre-school age children. Many of the children in B school who were assessed as being in C and D attainment levels did not score this low because they stopped learning while being absent from school, but rather, they were not ready when they started the elementary schools. As the grades progress and the knowledge gap widens, they increasingly find it difficult to be in school and ultimately cease to attend. Even those who were assessed as having intellectual disorders by the Child Guidance Center scored relatively well on performance tests despite low scores of verbal and abstract manipulation’. These children may well have been deprived of proper verbal stimulus and a caring environment when they were very small, and these environmental factors might be having an influence. Whatever the cause, these children are already behind their peers when they start in the education system, in a contemporary society where
most pre-school children can write their name in kanji characters and do simple sums, and some have even started English lessons. Therefore, in order to prevent this gap at the starting-line, preventive compensatory education for preschool age children is very important as a means of minimizing Yogo-type school refusal. Recognizing the importance of early education, the Katei-juku, which originally targeted only the junior high school age group, has expanded its service to elementary school age children. And, the Katei-juku is now seeking a compensatory education model for preschool age children.

4) Compensatory education in mainstream schools

The fourth model is that of compensatory education in mainstream school. Though this is an issue within the mainstream school system, it is thought to be highly effective, especially for the Yogo-type school refusal. The academic attainment level of children such as those in B school is significantly behind that of their peers, and merely returning to mainstream schools does not solve the problems concerning school refusal. Even if students return to normal classes, sitting through a totally incomprehensible lesson can damage self-confidence, alienating them even more. Efforts by the school such as securing places and teaching staff for these needy children are essential, apart from the usual steps taken by mainstream schools, such as ‘first come to the school nurse’s room’, and ‘move onto normal classes for short periods’, then ‘ultimately attend full classes’.

2. Collaborating with the families

Families play a big role in dealing with any problems regarding children. Therefore, it is very important to build a working relationship with the family when offering compensatory educational service to the children with Yogo-type school refusal. In B school, the staff spend a significant amount of time outside the classroom, collaborating with families, mainstream schools and other related organizations. In this sense, the staff at B school are social workers as well as teachers. Close collaboration with families is essential, especially at the following three stages; the initial stage of building a relationship with the family prior to enrollment, the second stage of supporting the family in sustaining the child’s attendance, and finally seeking a career path at the end of compulsory school age. The following sections summarize the support offered by B school at each stage, including examples of cases that B school has dealt with in the past.

1) Pre-enrollment approach to the family

There is no point in creating a compensatory education system if the target families do not use the service it offers. It is thus very important for the support service to connect to the families in need. The technique used is called ‘reaching out’, where ‘social workers reach out to potential service users who have needs but are reluctant to seek help, build up the confidence and motivation of the users and finally link them to the services’ (Barker 2003 : 360). An active approach to the family in order to find common ground, while being careful not to push the service, is especially important for cases of Yogo-type school refusal.

Case 1 : A boy, ‘C’, had ceased going to school in the second grade of junior high school after some trouble at school, and retreated to the house where he and his mother lived alone on the Seikatsu-hogo benefit. The mother refused contact with the school. The Child Guidance Center which had received notice of child abuse, even considered securing a court order to enter the house in order to confirm the boy’s security. But in the last case conference, it was decided that another house visit will be tried, and a staff member at B school volunteered in the role. Using the information that the boy was once enthusiastic about model cars as a lead, the staff left a broken model car, which had been left at B school, at the boy’s front door with a letter asking for it to be repaired. On confirming that the model car had been left, repaired, at the door the next day, the staff left a second letter asking him to come to B school where there were other model cars to be repaired. A few days later, boy C accompanied by his mother came to the school at his own accord. He continued to attend B school and despite a delayed attainment level, managed to move on to evening classes in high school.
2) Family support to sustain attendance

Once enrolled, flexibility of response is required for a child to sustain attendance. Free schools as well as mainstream schools offer education in a group setting and interpersonal problems with other children can easily become a reason not to come to school. Problems between the family and the compensatory education provider can also influence the child’s attendance. It is therefore necessary to build a trusting relationship in which the parent and the organization work together. In B school, we listen to parents’ worries and expectations through regular parents’ group meetings as well as individual interviews to help the child sustain attendance and eventually move on to mainstream school in a stable framework.

Case 2: A boy, ‘D’, of junior high school age living with his single mother also stopped going to school after some trouble at school. He started coming to B school following an introduction from an acquaintance but was underperforming and even showing psychosomatic physical symptoms. The mother, who had a history of conflict with many agencies including the Child Guidance Center or school, was very demanding, troubling the staff with apparent mistrust and aggression when her demands were not met. However, her aggressive criticism began to subside after she started to attend the parents’ group meetings. By making friends with other single mothers in the group who were experiencing a similar situation, the mother seemed to become more stabilized. In parallel, her trust towards the staff was gradually built up accordingly as her son’s health improved. This boy who could not even manage multi-digit multiplication at the time of enrollment, sustained attendance at B school for a long time and eventually matriculated to high school. The mother continues to attend the parents’ meetings as an observer.

3) Collaboration with the family at the end of compulsory school age

The role of a compensatory school such as B school ends when a child returns to a mainstream school or reaches the age at which compulsory schooling ends. In the case of Yogo-type school refusal, it is often difficult to expect parental leadership in this phase. The parents are often not interested in this whole change over process and there are instances where important meetings, to decide the child’s next step, cannot be arranged. In contemporary Japan, it is almost impossible to expect a young person who has just left compulsory education to secure an independent livelihood without arrangements for either matriculating to high school or securing a job. This is especially true for children who have neither sufficient academic qualifications nor financial support from their parents. B school often takes a leadership role when seeking the way forward after compulsory school age. In order to do so, a management skill is needed in order for B school to collaborate not only with the mainstream school and the family but also with other organizations and agencies.

Case 3: A girl ‘E’ lived with her grandparents, both pensioners, because of the physical abuse from her stepfather. Having stopped going to mainstream school during the second grade of junior high school owing to academic underperforming and trouble with friends, she started coming to B school. On the day of her junior high school graduation, i.e., the end of compulsory schooling, her focus turned to leaving the grandparents’ house, and insisting that she would live independently and go to high school. And if that was not possible, she would work to support herself independently. However, both these options turned out not to be feasible. The staff at B school continued meeting with E, her grandparents and the junior high school where she was originally registered, as well as asking for cooperation from the mother who had fallen out of touch with E and now lived far away. Despite these efforts, however, E did not change her mind about leaving the grandparents. The staff, then, organized a meeting with E, her family and the Child Guidance Center in which the social worker suggested the possibility of attending a high school from a children’s home. After visiting and checking the facility herself, she decided to take that option.
V. Conclusion

The phenomena of a child’s non-attendance at school continues to be dominated by two perspectives: the psychological point of view of the child or the problems of the modern day school education system (Takigawa, 1994). In both lines of discussion, little consideration is given to the Yogo-type school refusal, such as those who come to B school, whose core issue is social welfare needs. This paper has highlighted one case of a community with a large concentration of dysfunctional families with economic disadvantage. However, these kinds of needy families are everywhere, though the density in any given population may not be this high. In this respect, it is necessary to interpret school refusal as educational deprivation and to work towards constructing an alternative education system. Probably, it offers children the minimum level of education if a child does not receive this in the mainstream school system, so that the child can lead life without being excluded from society again in the future. The Yogo-type school refusal existed before the term ‘school refusal’ came into popular use, but it needs to be pointed out that this problem is not disappearing but overlooked.

Notes
1 The term Chikuho region loosely covers four cities and 21 towns and villages which are situated along the Onga river and its tributary. However, in this paper, in order to extract figures such as the number of Seikatsu-hogo benefit recipients, it refers to nine towns and villages in the Tagawagun area which come under the jurisdiction of the Fukuoka Prefecture Tagawa Health, Welfare and Environment Office.
2 In this paper, the term ‘educational deprivation’ is defined as ‘a condition where a child is academically underperforming owing to isolation based on culture and/or language in the community and special educational support is required in order to bring the child up to the standard attainment level’ (Barker 2003 : 138).
4 ‘Poverty’ not only means financial hardship but is a wider concept including physical and psychological deterioration as well as social exclusion deriving from financial hardship. Terms such as ‘economic hardship’ in this paper should be interpreted in this wider concept.
5 Figure 1 was created from data collected and compiled by the Tagawa District Social Welfare Study Group (1996), the Fukuoka Prefecture Health and Welfare Audit Office (2007a,b), the Fukuoka Prefecture Tagawa Health, Welfare and Environment Office (2004), the Seikatsu-hogo Benefit Study Group (2007), etc.
6 In 2004 after ten years of proceedings, The Supreme Court of Japan at last delivered the judgment that it was permissible to save a part of the Seikatsu-hogo benefit in preparation for the benefit recipients’ children to go to high school. Though the state is losing benefit-related court cases, the belt-tightening direction of the benefits policy has not changed.
7 Performance intelligence is related to the visual-kinetic system and is said to be less influenced by environmental and cultural factors compared with verbal intelligence (Kaufman 1979).
8 This paper was written with the permission of B school. And alteration in describing individual cases was taken in order to protect the privacy of the students of B school.
9 It is unusual for reference information, but for reasons of the protection of privacy, the name of the town is given only as town ‘A’.

References


