

Why does the Hokkaido Popular Education Research Movement Really Matter?¹

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Introduction

The Popular Education Research Movement (*Minkan Kyōiku Kenkyū Undō*), PERM, is the collective name given to groups of schoolteachers and academics who have challenged official education policy in Japan over the past century.

In the 1930s Hokkaido became the cradle of essay writing education (*Hokkaidō tsuzurikata kyōiku*) in Japan. As a pedagogical activity essay writing education offered an alternative teaching method to connect formal learning with the real life experiences of children and represented one of the most important activities of the pre-war PERM. Although inactive during the Second World War, the PERM reappeared after the Japanese defeat as part of teacher opposition to American proposals for education reform. Teachers continued their battle against the exclusion of local knowledge from the school curriculum as the Ministry of Education chose instead to emphasise the creation of an “education myth” responsible for the Japanese economic “miracle” of the 1960s and 1970s. Following the establishment in 1961 of the Hokkaido Popular Education Research Association (Hokkaido Association) teachers’ efforts to resist the centre and

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develop education based on local knowledge were gradually overtaken by the power of the State. As such, teacher resistance effectively became a de facto form of compliance which contributed to the incorporation of Hokkaido into the Japanese national discourse. An analysis of the philosophy and activities of the Hokkaido PERM suggest that the most realistic outcome of such struggles is not necessarily major reform, but often the simple ability to continue the struggle and to construct an environment which makes such struggle possible.

This paper/article offers some explanation as to why the Hokkaido PERM represented and continues to represent an important element in the history of Japanese education.

We tend to think of “resistance” in terms of public confrontations and large-scale actions where opposing parties clearly distinguish themselves from each other, formulating their views in a well-defined manner and often in relatively large (and coherent) texts or expanded projects. However, as Michel Foucault and James Scott suggested, resistance more frequently takes place through considerably smaller actions.² Often resistance manifests itself in unglamorous and simple forms on the difficult terrain of everyday life where the agents of resistance struggle within boundaries set up by official discourses. Teachers and academics involved in the Hokkaido PERM found themselves precisely in such an awkward situation because, as educationalists, they represented an integral part of the official education system itself: they taught at schools and/or universities at the same time as they engaged in a range of resistance actions designed to alter the activities and ideology of those very educational institutions from within. The teachers’ commitment to both doing their jobs well and changing the education system within which they worked suggested the existence of a multiplicity of identities. They expressed their devotion to teaching through their desire to become excellent teachers and be respected by pupils, parents and other teachers, although not necessarily by the school administration. Often teachers viewed achieving professional excellence as a major opportunity to expand their influence over other teachers, the general public and last, but not least, the education authorities. Yet these teachers came to be seen by school administrations as a disruptive element within the reigning education system, one which interfered with the dominant education discourse and ideology. Government responses to such discursive resistance by teachers varied according to the conditions of each historical period.

Under war conditions, in 1941, government authorities arrested some 300 of the pre-war Hokkaido PERM’s most active participants in a series of so-called “incidents”. In doing so, they

² Foucault M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.109-133; Scott J. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

successfully prevented the PERM activists from conducting any further disruptive activities. In peacetime, the overt repression of opposition teacher activities was replaced with less visible forms of control. While there were no more cases of teacher imprisonment as in 1941, teachers did suffer harassment and sometimes even dismissal because of their participation in unauthorised activities such as the Hokkaido Association's annual conferences or publishing critical articles in *Minkyō*, the main publication of the Hokkaido Association.³ Over the last four decades career progression, including appointment to head teacher or school principal positions, has been very restricted for active members of teacher groups affiliated with the Hokkaido Association. Such evidence suggests that the education authorities generally viewed the Hokkaido Association and PERM as a threat. These were dangerous anti-government organisations whose members required continuous surveillance and control.

What made the Hokkaido PERM a form of discursive resistance to official education policy? I argue in this article that there was a combination of at least three elements which distinguished teachers' actions as discursive resistance. The first lay in the fact teachers felt themselves to be powerless within the Japanese school environment. Although the status of teachers and their exercise of power as State agents is highly respected in Japanese society, i.e. teachers do have power working within the school environment of Hokkaido (or anywhere else in Japan), although many teachers nevertheless felt disempowered by the education system itself. All decisions regarding the curriculum, textbooks, educational methods, school rules, reappointments to new schools and career progression were and are made by school administrations and local education authorities with little consultation and usually by means of invisible observation and control. Such powerlessness among teachers, which prevented them from taking control over their own destinies, provoked resistance against the centralising power of the State. This resistance was initially expressed through various tactics conducted at the local school level. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that systems of domination and regulation never work perfectly and that people are capable of opposing the techniques of social control and can refuse to accept these uncritically.⁴ In accordance with this Foucauldian discourse such a dialectic between power and powerlessness exercised by Hokkaido teachers produced resistance as an attempt to empower themselves through the construction of local knowledges. Hence the

³ To cite but a single example, Hayakawa Norihiro, one of the most active members in the Hokkaido Association, was dismissed from his teaching position at a primary school in Kita-Hiroshima, a township near Sapporo, which led to his "voluntary" retirement six years earlier than the usual retirement age. Hayakawa explained that the local school administration was simply not prepared to accept his strong criticism of their failure to improve the situation in local schools where children resisted the difficult curriculum and examination pressure by refusing to attend school and bullying other kids.

⁴ Foucault M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books. pp.273-275.

dominant power of the Japanese State exercised at the local level in Hokkaido schools represented the main target for teachers' resistance.

The second element supporting the idea that Hokkaido PERM teachers were obstructionists, fighting against the education system which they also represented, is their rejection of the education environment as natural and their pointed criticisms of it. As a form of resistance teacher criticisms suggested they understood the education environment as historically and ideologically constructed and thus subject to challenge and change. In spite of the fact that ever since the Meiji era Japanese officials have endeavoured to separate scholarship (*gakumon*), for training the elite, from education (*kyōiku*), for training the masses - the main task of Hokkaido schoolteachers - teachers from the Hokkaido PERM demonstrated a rather sophisticated understanding of their educational and historical environment. These teachers contentiously balanced their actions between the two tasks of improving their work environment through criticism of the official education policy and performing their teaching functions in the most effective ways possible.

The conscious political commitment to the Hokkaido PERM by teachers represents the third element of their discourse of resistance. In many cases teachers and academics demonstrated a lifetime commitment to the Hokkaido PERM. All nine of the people I interviewed for this research joined the Hokkaido PERM at a very young age whilst in their initial years as schoolteachers or university lecturers and they continued to participate in PERM-related groups and organisations throughout their lives. Odagiri Tadashi, a retired school teachers and historian of the Hokkaido PERM, commented on his lifetime commitment to the Hokkaido Association in the following manner:

You have to be really patient in Japan to achieve any results. It seems to me that the long battle of the Hokkaido Association against education policy has only started to produce clear results in the last few years. The MOE now pays more attention to local characteristics and this is what the Hokkaido PERM always advocated: the inclusion of local knowledge in the school curriculum and respect for Hokkaido difference.

Participation in the Hokkaido Association helps people become better teachers. It helps teachers see things more clearly. Before you change things you need to understand what to change, don't you? This is what the Hokkaido Association does. As a member of the Hokkaido Association I feel that we have made some changes to the education environment. This is the most satisfying aspect for me.⁵

Yamada Sadaichi, who became the president of the Hokkaido Association in 1998, answered my question about whether he had ever considered terminating his participation in the PERM that, first of all, as a university lecturer he never felt the same pressure from government authorities to

⁵ Odagiri Tadashi, Interview, January 1999.

withdraw from his activities as some schoolteachers did, and secondly, because there were still so many unresolved problems with education in Hokkaido he did not feel that he could ever withdraw.⁶ If we refer back to the history of the Hokkaido PERM, the same teachers who formed the inter-war Essay Writing Education Movement were also behind the post-war Hokkaido PERM. I believe this supports my argument about the political commitment of the participants within the movement.

The teachers who participated in the Hokkaido PERM often expressed their position against the MOE's policy on education in one word, *tatakai*, which means fight, battle or conflict. Their ongoing battle with the official education discourse took various forms, depending upon the historical period and the socio-economic and political conditions surrounding teachers. These forms of resistance varied from strong criticisms of official education policies to a much more accommodating discussion of such policies and ways of effectively implementing them in pedagogical practice. The Hokkaido PERM responded to the MOE's education discourse with considerable nuances which could hardly be recognised by officials or the general public as forms of resistance. Yet in the end what counted was often not so much the actual results of teachers' resistance as the simple opportunity to continue their movement, to express their views, and to have their political commitment to the PERM recognised as an important achievement.

Forms of teacher resistance

The development of the PERM in pre-war Hokkaido and the formation of the Hokkaido Federation of Essay Writing Education in 1935 emerged out of teacher discourses on the local identity of Hokkaido. During the inter-war years the concept of capitalist exploitation of the periphery by the more industrialised and economically advanced centre leading to Marxist class struggle as a form of resistance became very popular within certain circles of Hokkaido primary teachers. Hence they took ideas based on Hokkaido's backwardness, hardship, poor economic conditions, and the capitalist exploitation of Hokkaido by the central government, to construct a Hokkaido identity and contrast this identity with the centralist discourse of the Japanese State.⁷ The intention to construct a "unique" Hokkaido identity was so strong among Hokkaido Federation members that they even contrasted Hokkaido with the northern Tohoku district emphasising that hardship in Tohoku was due to its feudal backwardness, while Hokkaido was

⁶ Yamada Sadaichi, Interview, January 1999.

⁷ "Tsuzurukata seikatsudai toshitenō Hokkaidōsei." (Hokkaido Character based on Life Essay Writing) (1935) *Tsuzurikata Rin*, October, No. 1.

truly a new settlement and symbol of Japan's modernisation.⁸ In such circumstances the creation of a peculiar local character was an inevitable exercise for the new Hokkaido settlers. This newly constructed image of Hokkaido made use of the glamour and romanticism associated with the development and conquering of territories elsewhere. However, there was no place in the concept of the Hokkaido identity for the Ainu people or ethnic Koreans with their cultural and linguistic differences, both of which indicated a degree of acceptance by Hokkaido Federation teachers of the prevailing assimilationist ideology towards the non-Japanese population. The character constructed by the Hokkaido Association as a hybridised form of local identity not only emphasised the importance of local characteristics in developing resistance to the concept of homogenisation of the Japanese nation, but simultaneously supported homogenisation by excluding ethnic Koreans and the Ainu people.

As the analysis of the Hokkaido character demonstrates, the teachers' resistance did not necessarily deny the authorised discourse produced by the State, but instead disrupted it through supplementation. To clarify this idea I referred to the conceptual approach of Michel De Certeau, who in a similar vein to Foucault and Scott, interprets resistance as not necessarily confrontational and direct but as more creative in the multiple ways in which subordinated peoples express their disagreements.⁹ De Certeau talks about off-kilter, tangential resistance which appears through practices that productively circumvent power rather than oppose it.¹⁰ Foucault likewise emphasises these symbiotic relations between power and resistance when he writes that power relations are not a "binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'the dominated' on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies."¹¹ The incorporation of official education policies was an important element of the discursive resistance produced by the Hokkaido PERM. The teachers' critical views on Hokkaido's backwardness and the exclusion of local people from political participation sat side-by-side other tactics which the teachers seemed often to use quite unintentionally in discussing ways of adapting to official education policies. Such a combination of more confrontational, open forms of resistance with methods and tactics of off-kilter resistance has remained a strong characteristic of the Hokkaido PERM throughout its history.

⁸ Odagiri T. (1993) "*Tsuzurikata Kyōiku Renmei to kodomo, kyōshi.*" (Federation of Essay Writing Education, Children and Teachers.) *Minkyō*, March, No. 94, p.59

⁹ De Certeau M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Tr. Rendell S. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹¹ Foucault M. (1980) *op.cit.*, p.142.

Hokkaido teachers did not have much space outside of their work environment, school or village to launch their oppositional views against those who dominated and oppressed them: the State, the MOE and local education authorities. As such, they had to find ways within their own environment to manifest their views and to produce change wherever possible. The essay writing education which appeared in northern Japan in the inter-war years became one such form of discursive resistance to the official discourse on education.

Essay writing was an integral part of the school curriculum and from this point of view teachers were not proposing anything radically new or different. Yet the resistential element associated with essay writing education lay in the teachers' attempt to utilise students' essays as a form of oppositional knowledge to the school curriculum. The essays were filled with examples of the hardship and poverty experienced by their young authors in everyday Hokkaido life. What follows is a selection of student poems and essays collected by their teachers in school anthologies.

Father (Otōsan)

By Iwabuchi Koko, April 1936

When Spring begins
 My Dad will come back home.
 And we all will live together again.
 At present the mornings are very cold.
 It seems like Spring will never come, but Winter came again.
 Whatever happens I will be waiting for Spring to come.
 I feel sad that my Dad has not returned home yet.
 It is nice that Spring is on its way.¹²

The following poem and two essays were written by three different pupils from the fishing village of Zenigamesawa, located four kilometres from Hakodate (this village has now become part of Hakodate).

Poem

By Yamata Seikichi, February 1933

There was much rain in the last few days.
 We could not leave home.
 But today we have to go collect seaweed (*konbu*).
 I thought it would be nice if the weather improves.¹³

Evening

By Tadamura Masao, 6th grade, February 1933

¹² Odagiri T. (1994a) “*Tsuzurikata Kyōiku Renmei to kodomo, kyōshi.*” (Federation of Essay Writing Education, Children and Teachers.) *Minkyō*, March, No. 97, p.97.

¹³ Odagiri T. (1994b) “*Tsuzurikata Kyōiku Renmei to kodomo, kyōshi.*” (Federation of Essay Writing Education, Children and Teachers.) *Minkyō*, July, No. 98, p.88.

I finished cutting grass and sat down to have a rest when Mum asked me: “Can you take some grass to the shed?” I replied: “Sure, I can go now.”

I collected the grass and when I was ready to leave home my little brother also decided to join me. As we came out on the street a strong wind started to blow. Instinctively, we both tried to hide our heads in our shoulders: it was so cold. We could only hear the roaring sound of the waves. While we were crossing the bridge my little brother suddenly said: “It’s so sad.” I followed my brother quickly.

The story continues with the two boys reaching a shed on the seashore and looking for their father and his horse. They could not see their father at first but found a horse. They left the grass beside the horse and walked along the seashore looking for their father. They saw him rolling the boat with other fishermen. The essay continues:

We screamed as loudly as we could: “Dad, we left some grass under our carriage besides the horse!” He replied: “The wind is getting stronger. Go home quickly!” My little brother and I left the seashore and walked back home. As we walked I remembered my brother’s words: “It’s so sad.”¹⁴

***In memory of my Grandfather* Iguchi Nobu, 6th grade, December 1933**

My mother died when I was very little. My grandfather and grandmother looked after me and my brothers and sister. They played with me a lot. My dad was always at work. I don’t remember him very well. Then my grandmother died. It was very sad.

Iguchi continues his writing by sharing his feelings after the deaths of his grandparents, which left his father alone to bring up four children. He tells the story of how elderly people die, expresses his feelings of love for his grandparents and comes to terms with the inevitability of death.¹⁵

These essays, poems and diaries reflected the “darker side of life” as opposed to the “brighter side of life”, something many people associated with the danger of introducing Marxist ideology based on class struggle.¹⁶ Although most teachers carefully avoided the notion of class struggle in their own writings, due to the danger of being associated with outlawed Marxist ideas during the 1930s, the left-wing leanings of Hokkaido Federation teachers were nevertheless implicitly present in their discourse about local community life and attempts to “classify” members of Hokkaido society according to production mechanisms.¹⁷ Without officially confronting the education authorities, teachers found ways through their everyday work to express their disagreements with official education policy. This was especially evidenced in their encouragement of their students to write and analyse essays and poems which reflected the realities of the hard life experienced in Hokkaido rather than a strict focus on delivering the

¹⁴ Odagiri T. (1994b), op.cit., pp.88-89.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.88.

¹⁶ Odagiri T. (1994a), op, cit., p.101

¹⁷ Odagiri T. (1993), op.cit., p.62

school curriculum and instilling in them patriotic sentiments and the virtues of becoming good citizens.

For government officials it was not always easy to recognise the existence of this sort of off-kilter resistance because the teachers involved with essay writing education tried to avoid strongly-voiced statements and open arguments with the education authorities. Similarly, the efforts by teachers to help their pupils adapt to the tough local environment through notions of self-sufficiency and self-help also made their activities more acceptable to government officials. This suggests teachers made use of various strategies and tactics to express their oppositional views and disagreement with the official education discourse which were not always recognisably confrontational. James Scott has pointed out on numerous occasions that such varied tactics and strategies represent a clear characteristic of everyday resistance.¹⁸

However, the question which still remains is what such forms of off-kilter resistance actually achieve? In the words of David Butz and Michael Ripmeester “off-kilter resistance aims less at inverting or antagonizing existing domains of power than it does at hybridizing them”.¹⁹ The creation of a new form of discourse based on the hybridisation of dominant views and discursive resistance is the main achievement of off-kilter resistance. Teachers were not only absorbed by the official education system but the teachers’ views also influenced the official discourse on education and forced it to change. This made the teachers’ resistance effective and successful. Homi Bhabha has suggested that the process of cultural hybridity produces a new (and usually unrecognisable) outcome that is based on the negotiation of meaning and representation.²⁰ Adopting such an understanding enables us to move beyond the categories of success and failure in our assessment of the Hokkaido PERM and its affiliated organisations because it obliges us to look at the PERM not only as resistance to the State but also as accommodation with the State due to the production of a new hybridised discourse.

In a way, it is very difficult to find any evidence of direct influence by the inter-war Hokkaido Essay Writing Movement on the MOE or even on local education authorities. Yet, by influencing pupils, parents, other teachers and through them local communities, and particularly by introducing the idea of the importance of local differences with regard to the national discourse on Japan, the Hokkaido Federation constructed a new culture distinct from official

¹⁸ See Scott J.C. (1986) “Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13:5-35; Scott J.C. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁹ Butz D. and Ripmeester M. (1999) “Finding Space for Resistant Subcultures.” In: *Invisible Culture. An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies*. At: http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue2/butz.htm (21 May 2004), p.6.

²⁰ Bhabha H.K. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, pp.112-116.

narratives with their guiding homogeneity. The continuation of the Essay Writing Movement in Hokkaido through until 1941 provided an opportunity for teachers to express their disagreement with the official education direction and occasionally even with the national ideology vis-à-vis various off-kilter resistance tactics. The preparation of school and class anthologies of student essays and poems, where local life was portrayed as full of poverty and despair, was a key method through which the Hokkaido character was interpreted. This created a danger for the State that a new generation of Hokkaido people might challenge the national order if they perceived it as responsible for their desperate situation.

After the “quiet” period between 1941 and 1945, immediately after Japan’s defeat some Hokkaido teachers began to consolidate their efforts in different discussion groups which dealt with the issues of war, war responsibility, everyday life and their implications for education. During the Allied occupation of Japan, which followed the defeat, the moral education subject (*shūshin*) was removed from the school curriculum, the Imperial Rescript on Education was eventually abolished, school textbooks promoting militarism and supporting war mobilisation were removed and many other changes towards democratisation, decentralisation and demilitarisation of the Japanese education system were undertaken. In post-war Hokkaido the groups and organisations affiliated with the PERM did not so much reject the new official education discourse, but rather disrupted it through strong criticisms of the proposed education reforms and the advocacy of alternatives to them.

The case of the core curriculum method introduced by the Americans as part of the post-war education reforms offers one such example. Here, teachers formed the Core Curriculum Federation at the national level in order to study the core curriculum and to implement it in schools. However, soon after the end of the Allied occupation in 1952, the core curriculum was replaced by more familiar teaching methods. This was followed by the replacement in 1953 of the Core Curriculum Federation with the National Federation of Life Education with its focus on more familiar for the Japanese teachers teaching methods.²¹ Another example of teacher discursive resistance was the contentious promotion in post-war Hokkaido of essay writing education by the “old” members of the Hokkaido Federation as a “truly” democratic alternative to the new “foreign” teaching methods, which included the core curriculum.

However, the main cause of teacher resistance was not the American involvement in the post-war education reforms but instead the continuity of strong State control over the education system. The fundamental principle of Japanese education based on the promotion of a national ideology expressed in the form of “official” knowledge and manifested in the national curriculum

²¹ *Kyōiku kōjiten* (The Concise Education Dictionary.) (1990) Tokyo: Iwanami Shōten, p.100

remained very much untouched after the war. The national prioritisation of economic recovery in the immediate post-war era was gradually replaced by the 1960s with a new national ideology based on the concept of economic nationalism whereby education was considered the main mechanism for mobilising the Japanese public towards future economic success.

One of the side effects of this mobilisation of national education was a widening gap between “official” knowledge and local “relevant” knowledge. With the development of *gakureki shakai* in the 1950s, which emphasised the importance of academic qualifications for a successful career, and by extension a happy life, the homogenisation of education became especially strong. As *gakureki shakai*’s main pillar, the examination system contributed towards the appearance of a unified, standardised and neutral school curriculum based on “official” knowledge. The tradition of separating knowledge (*gakumon*) and education (*kyōiku*) continued in post-war Japan and reminded teachers of their powerlessness in spite of their official role and status as public servants. Hence the dissatisfaction of Hokkaido teachers with the “new” national education discourse and new “official” knowledge, which began during the years of the American occupation and has continued through until the present day, was caused by the problem that education remained irrelevant to the everyday lives of local people. Teachers had and have trouble teaching and students likewise had and have similar difficulties in understanding what was and is being taught. The preparation for endless tests and exams became the main purpose of school education. In their search for possible alternatives, Hokkaido teachers sought avenues in which they could express their criticisms of the official education discourse and hopefully change the situation in their schools.

In the 1950s, after the Allied occupation had ended, the MOE took an especially active role in promoting in-service training for teachers as part of its endeavour to establish full control over teachers’ research activities. In Hokkaido there were approximately 60 teacher groups and organisations involved with the in-service training of teachers who were at the same time affiliated with the PERM.²² The diversity of these 60 groups was reflected in the attitude of their members to the official education discourse which ranged from acceptance to open confrontation. This reinforces the argument that resistance is not necessarily a struggle against something, that it can also be a struggle for something when oppressed individuals seek ways to overcome their oppression. In this sense, the multiplicity of teachers’ views and actions contributed towards a strengthening of their resistance. In the words of James Scott: “just as millions of anthozoan

²² “*Minkan Kyōiku Kenkyū Dantai no sōshiki to kastudō.*” (Formation of the Popular Education Research Association and its Function.) (1961) *Hokkai Kyōiku Hyōron*, July, Volume 14, No. 12, p.8.

polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own.”²³

While it may not be entirely appropriate to compare the teachers and academics affiliated with the Hokkaido PERM with either a coral reef or peasants, the idea put forward by Scott, that acts of subversion as forms of resistance become a substantial force on their own, is particularly useful for our assessment of the PERM’s resistance. The effectiveness of teacher resistance could be found in the enthusiasm expressed by education authorities who were actively promoting official in-service training for teachers during the 1950s and in so doing trying to take the initiative away from the PERM’s activities. The in-service training organised by the education officials was easily accessible to all teachers: they received time off work during the week and their travel expenses were paid for by their schools. In contrast, the research activities organised by the PERM were much harder for teachers to attend because they could only be organised on Sundays or public holidays and no financial support was ever provided for teachers to participate. Yet, government officials were unsuccessful in their bid to overcome the PERM and in 1961 a large number of Hokkaido PERM-affiliated groups and organisations were consolidated into the Hokkaido Popular Education Research Association (Hokkaido Association).

The aim of the Hokkaido Association was to consolidate the forces of all local teacher groups and enable them to construct a single united position towards Hokkaido education. The Association’s ultimate goal was to protect the independence of education research undertaken by schoolteachers from government interference.

However, right from the very beginning such consolidation was not accepted by all the groups operating under the Hokkaido PERM umbrella. For example, the Kushiro *Kyōkaken*, one of the most well-established and oldest participant organisations, which had been around since before the war, decided not to join the new Hokkaido Association, although its members formally expressed their full support for the Association’s formation. There were also individual teachers who expressed their regret at “the loss of individual voices” in the interests of the larger Hokkaido Association. The conventional structure of the Hokkaido Association, in terms both of hierarchy and status, demonstrated that Association members, although sometimes unintentionally, identified themselves with the State.

The formation of the Hokkaido Association resulted in the partial loss of the grass-roots characteristics of the PERM, a factor that had aided its effectiveness as a form of local teacher resistance. The Hokkaido Association set its sights on establishing larger projects, such as the *Minkyō* university in the 1970s and the Hokkaido Popular Education Research Institute

²³ Scott J. (1985) op.cit., p.xvii.

(*Hokkaidō Minkan Kyōiku Kenkyūjo*) in the 1980s. Both of these projects can be regarded as long-term failures. The Hokkaido Association never achieved its goal of attracting over 10,000 people to an annual conference. Likewise, the number of subscriptions for *Minkyō* has never exceeded 3,000 - another of the Association's goals. Nor did the Association ever achieve the goal of becoming a mass organisation which brought the majority of Hokkaido teachers together. In the 1980s some local teachers even began losing interest in the Association due to their belief that it could not adequately represent their local interests, the very feature which had initially attracted them to the PERM in the first place. Although the Hokkaido Association continued to criticise official education discourses, the sharpness of its radicalism and aggressiveness, which had so disturbed government officials and made the PERM a successful form of teacher resistance, had been considerably blunted.

The ideological proximity of the Hokkaido Association to Marxism, which was present in the Hokkaido PERM's discourse from the movement's beginnings in the late 1920s, began to fade in the 1970s and became even less visible during the 1980s. The Marxist explanation of Hokkaido backwardness as the result of capitalist exploitation was overshadowed by a new discourse of nostalgia. The discourse of nostalgia often resulted in the development of certain images of what "might have been" but for the destructive power of modernisation. In presenting the "Hokkaido which might have been", one imagines a future (and often a past and present) entirely different from that of reality. The teachers who belonged to the Hokkaido Association introduced nostalgia into education and blended the humanitarian aspect into the official pedagogical discourse.

As Dipesh Chakrabarty has observed:

Nostalgia is located in an experience of loss and calls for a politics of recovery and recuperation, and for a political agency adequate to that task. That agency could be the state. It could also be the individual. The political task of nostalgic memory, whether individual or collective, is to recover and preserve, make the past a part of the present.²⁴

Hokkaido Association teachers appealed to nostalgic images of Hokkaido because they saw one of the main reasons for student misbehaviour, which took all Japanese schools in the late 1970s and 1980s by storm, in the destruction of the traditional Hokkaido economy and lifestyle caused by the modernisation of Japan. The old images of a patriarchal life in local villages may not look much like an effective form of resistance, however by referring to the past, teachers were able to express their critical views about the Hokkaido of the present.

²⁴ Chakrabarty D. (1998) "Afterward: Revisiting the Tradition / Modernity Binary." In: Vlastos S. (ed.) *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.290-291.

During the 1980s and 1990s the Hokkaido Association became more tolerant of the official education direction. Teachers belonging to the Association asked themselves the pragmatic question “how can we make the school curriculum more comprehensible for pupils?”, instead of trying to change the examination system that made learning so difficult for the majority of students. As a consequence education officials likewise became more accommodating of the Hokkaido Association. Association members explained that this process of “climate warming” resulted from their own activities, whereby members of the public, first of all parents, began to realise that Hokkaido Association teachers were excellent practitioners who worked very hard to help their students understand the school curriculum.²⁵ However, the main reason for the switch to such an “accommodating” stance lay in the fact that the grass-roots resistance of Hokkaido teachers was progressively being converted into a discourse aligned with national policy. The very formation of the Hokkaido Association made it easier for the State to control and influence teachers through the Association’s conventional structure and tactics. This resulted in a real risk that teachers’ discursive resistance would become absorbed into the official education discourse based on State power and State knowledge. However, the new hybridised form of knowledge which emerged out of the symbiotic relations between power and resistance generated the possibility of changing the education system.

Why did teachers and academics participate in the PERM?

The final question in my research is why teachers and academics who belonged to the PERM maintained their resistance so long, irrespective of the historical environment or repression from the authorities, especially when often their resistance produced either no visible results or results that differed greatly from their intended goals? As the analysis of the forms of resistance adopted by the PERM suggests, the participants in the movement made use of almost every opportunity to draw the attention of other teachers and community members to their discourse. They held regular conferences and meetings, tried to set up their own university, published school anthologies and the *Minkyō* journal, and so on and so forth. Their methods of resistance ranged from frontal opposition and criticism of the national education discourse to off-kilter tactics. Members of the PERM never sought to free themselves completely from the national education discourse or from the MOE-created education environment. However, through the use of different tactics of resistance they created the opportunity for further forms of

²⁵ In my interviews with them, N. Hayakawa, S. Yamada, T. Odagiri and S. Irie all talked about the positive image of Hokkaido Association teachers as one of the main reasons behind the Association’s acceptance by education officials.

resistance. I argue that the creation of ongoing opportunities for future teacher resistance represents an important outcome of the teachers' activities, and possibly an even more important one than any of the Hokkaido PERM's recognised achievements. To this extent, Michel Foucault emphasises how often the realistic objective of struggle is not some final freedom or liberty, but significantly the ongoing ability to maintain that struggle and to reproduce the conditions that make struggle possible. In Foucault's words:

Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is.²⁶

The political commitment of Hokkaido Association members supports this notion of continuity of resistance and the success of the PERM. In the 1990s when the Hokkaido Association lost much of its appeal among many Hokkaido teachers, some Hokkaido Association participants involved themselves in the realisation of their own "individual" projects as witnessed by the example of Suzuki Shuichi, who was engaged in establishing "free school" in Yubari for students who refuse to go to school. Such "individual" projects also demonstrate the characteristics of off-kilter resistance through the formation of a new hybridised discourse that brings both sides, the official discourse and the discourse on resistance, closer together.

By locating the resistance expressed by the Hokkaido PERM within the boundaries of the everyday lives of teachers I have also tried to avoid any glamorisation of its participants. Analyses of resistance frequently tend to present their participants as heroes. However, by locating the teachers' resistance within the normal process of institutional and educational activity, I have tried to demonstrate that the members of the PERM were ordinary teachers and scholars who simply were not prepared to follow official education discourse uncritically. Yet, gazing back towards these people I cannot deny my own sympathy for them and view of them as very admirable people. They represent the extraordinary exception within the everyday practices of Japanese education. They are people who still make mistakes and who don't always appear to have achieved much through their activities. Yet, more importantly, they are people who preferred not to wait for the Japanese education system to be reformed from the top down. At the end of the day the members of the PERM stand out because they decided to act and pressure the government to make changes.

²⁶ Michel Foucault quoted in: Thiele L.P. (1990) "The Agony of Politics: The Nietzschean Roots of Foucault's Thought." *The American Political Science Review*, 84(3):917.