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Rise of public *juku* in Japan: A possible new role of supplementary tutoring

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Introduction

Education in Japan has developed based on the reciprocity between the public and private sectors. Compared to other countries, Japan has a high percentage of children who attend private schools, especially for pre-school and higher education. In addition to private schools, Japan has the most highly developed supplementary education market (Aurini et al., 2013). Nowadays, more than half of junior high school[1] students attend private supplementary tutoring schools, or "*juku*" in Japanese (Kimura, 2018).

The *juku* industry has drawn international attention, because of not only its high enrolment numbers but also its impact on Japanese society. Rohlen (1980) states that, although similar institutions to *juku* can be found in many countries, particularly in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Japanese *juku* are distinguished by their broad popularity and the pedagogical gap between the idealism of public education and the pragmatism that dominates the *juku* approach. Rohlen (1980) describes the relationship between *juku* and schools by using the terms "*honne*" (personal opinions and feelings held in private) and "*tatemae*" (behaviour and opinions one displays in public), concepts that are specific to Japanese culture. He points out that *juku* respond to the *honne* needs of students and parents who want them to pass the entrance examination for a prestigious school/university or who cannot comprehend school

lessons. *Juku* exist in the shadows of schools providing education under the *tatemae* of egalitarianism. Rohlen's discussion implies a conflict between private *juku* and public education. Indeed, *juku* have been perceived negatively by actors in the public education sector. One reason for this is that the *juku* industry has intentionally inflamed parents' anxieties about their children's learning and provides "some assurance to parents that their children are receiving the best opportunities available" (Dierkes, 2013).

However, the relationship between *juku* and public education has evolved from antagonism to co-operation because of a series of neoliberal policies, and new types of *juku*, such as *kounai-juku* (*juku* in a school), *Chiiki Mirai Juku* (Community *juku* for the Future), and *kouei-juku* (public *juku*), have arisen. *Kounai-juku* offer private supplementary tutoring in a school, although traditionally, *juku* were located outside of schools and organized entirely independently of them. *Kounai-juku* were started by some private schools in the Tokyo region to make themselves more attractive compared to other schools (Dierkes, 2013). *Chiiki Mirai Juku* were established to extend opportunities for free tutoring to children from low-income families. Costs are jointly covered by central and local governments. Yamato and Zhang (2017) describe *Chiiki Mirai Juku* as a new type of *juku* that functions as a safety net for children in poverty.

Public *juku*, the focus of this paper, were spontaneously initiated by municipalities and

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launched as educational institutions. They appeared on the scene in 1993 and proliferated in the 2010s. They are a new form of supplementary tutoring with both public (operated by public authorities) and private features (supplementary tutoring outside the public school system and sometimes incurring extra fees), thus presenting an opportunity to redefine the relationship and distinction of roles between public and private education. This paper aims to describe this recent phenomenon and reflect on the issues it presents.

There is no list of public *juku* across Japan, in contrast to private *juku* on which several surveys have been conducted (MoE, 1977, 1985, 1993; MEXT, 2008, 2020b; Benesse Educational Research & Development Institute, 2009, 2013). This is because public *juku* are started spontaneously by local municipalities without control by central authorities, unlike *Chiiki Mirai juku*, which were initiated by the central government to encourage collaboration between schools and the community.

Research on public *juku* is limited. Suetomi (2007) critically considers the initial form of public *juku*, or "public learning supports out of school", from the perspective of education costs. She argues that, by definition, public education is open to everyone, whereas *juku* are only for those who wish to attend. Hida and Hida (2018) describe the struggle of a *Miryokuka project* (make-it-attractive project) in Ama Town, in which the town launched initiatives to make the local high school[2] more attractive, including the establishment of a public *juku*. They describe five unique features that make the school more attractive: 1) supporting and promoting entrepreneurs and small companies in the community, 2) encouraging students to recognize local issues as their own challenges, 3) recognizing the importance of outsiders in the community, 4) creating social capital in the community, and 5) arranging education with local advantages and encouraging students to

come back to the local community after their study or work (Hida & Hida, 2018).

Sakuma et al. (2020) showed that 16 small-island municipalities provided learning support outside of schools. Small islands have scarce access to learning support outside of schools. The researchers concluded that public learning support is valuable for redressing the inequality of educational opportunities across Japan and describe the case of the first public *juku*, Nakayoshi-*juku*, in Okinawa. At the same time, they point out that public *juku* often rely on public subsidies which results in economic fragility. The research sums up by posing five challenges for public *juku*: securing financial resources, securing human resources (teachers), evaluation, relationship between the *juku* and the school, and creating an environment for children's learning. Although they focus their study on *juku* on small islands, these challenges are relevant to other public *juku*.

Materials and methods

To clarify the characteristics and actual status of public *juku*, we gathered information from the Internet and conducted interviews in one municipality (town Z). There is no comprehensive list of all public *juku* across Japan; therefore, a search was conducted using the "name of the prefecture" and "public *juku*" as well as the "name of the prefecture" and "*Miryokuka project* (make-it-attractive project)" for all 47 prefectures in Japan. *Miryokuka project* refers to projects that aim to enhance the attractiveness of a local public high school in order to increase applicants and prevent the school from being closed. Since there are some well-known public *juku* attached to these make-it-attractive projects, this search word was selected. To complement the prefecture-based list, websites of public *juku* management corporations were checked

for the *juku* they operate. The search was conducted mainly in June 2019 and then in September 2020.

Information was drawn from research and media articles and websites of the public *juku* and local authorities. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted in town Z, where three actors related to public *juku* were interviewed in a semi-structured format: a municipal administrator in charge of public *juku*, a high school teacher, and a staff member at the public *juku*. Town Z is a small town with less than 20,000 inhabitants, and the public *juku* is associated with a make-it-attractive project for the only high school in town.

Two similar projects were discovered during the search: "*Chiiki Mirai Juku*" (equivalent to *"Mirai-juku"* in Yamato & Zhang, 2017) and study support initiatives in which municipalities bear the cost of attending existing private *juku*. *Chiiki Mirai Juku* means Community Tutoring School for the Future, and they are promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to provide support to mainly lower secondary students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, within a framework of collaboration between schools and communities. There were 2,000 such *juku* in 2015 (Niitsu, 2016) and 2,995 in 2019 (MEXT, 2020a). *Chiiki Mirai Juku* are run by schools or municipalities in collaboration with people in the community, former teachers, university students, and non-profits. Study support initiatives are also seen in several municipalities, sometimes called "*free juku*" or an "out-of-school education voucher", where students can go to private *juku* for free[3].

Chiiki Mirai Juku and *free juku* could both be described as types of public *juku*, in that public authorities such as the national government or municipalities provide budgets for students' learning outside regular school. However, this study distinguishes them from public *juku* and excludes

such instances from the list. Public *juku* in this study are defined as supplementary tutoring institutions initiated spontaneously by the municipality. This definition enables us to illustrate the rise of this new phenomena with different motivations and features on the Japanese educational scene.

The characteristics of public *juku*, in many aspects, contrast with those of traditional, private *juku*. In the following section, we illustrate the history of *juku* to provide some background to the discussion of current, public *juku*.

History of juku leading to public juku

Private tutoring centres or *juku* in Japan were already established by the nineteenth century. From the mid-1800s, various "*Shijuku*" (private academy) were established as venues for learning the knowledge and philosophies necessary to build a new society (Rubinger, 1982). Rubinger studied the details of *Shijuku* in the nineteenth century and argued that they played an essential role in Japanese modernization. Since then, *juku* acknowledge that they are out of the educational mainstream but play an important role in society. That being said, historically *juku* did not have a notable social presence, since their numbers were limited, and the enrolment rate was low.

During the 1960s, when the first baby boomers faced entrance examinations for upper secondary schools, the demand for supplementary *juku* rose in response to increased competition. This was partly because of the widespread aspiration for high educational attainment driven by the academic wage gap. The enrolment rate for upper secondary schools rose from 51% in 1955 to 57% in 1960 and 82% in 1970. This created keen competition when taking the universities' entrance exams. At the same time, an increasing number of parents were able to afford additional educational expenses for their children owing to Japan's rapid economic growth. Therefore, new types of *juku* were created, such as "mammoth

juku", which instructed students en masse, and "preparatory *juku*", which specifically taught for entrance exams. Such *juku* were criticized for being profit-driven rather than altruistically educating the young. *Juku*, thus, were seen as a social problem in the 1970s.

The 1970s is referred to as "the era of *juku* proliferation". The rate of enrolment in upper secondary school exceeded 90% in 1974; hence, more *juku* with a focus on advancement to upper secondary schools were required. Even some learning material developers and department stores started up *juku*. The number of comprehensive *juku* that offered both preparatory and supplementary lessons increased. The dissemination of *juku* occurred against a backdrop of increasingly competitive entrance exams. At the same time, *juku* were strongly condemned as they were deemed to be fuelling such competition. *Juku* enrolment was perceived as a social issue, as it imposed additional heavy studying on children and affected their physical and mental health. Furthermore, some children prioritised study in *juku* and neglected their school lessons.

This severe criticism of *juku* gradually decreased along with reduced entrance exam competition. During the Council of Lifelong Learning held in 1999 by the Ministry of Education (MoE), the public education sector reversed its critical stance toward *juku* and officially acknowledged them as private education institutions overseen by the Lifelong Learning Bureau under the MoE. In 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT: the MoE before the reorganization of the central government in 2001) requested *juku* operators to provide students with opportunities to engage in activities that are difficult to find in school. From around this time, public schools and the *juku* industry started collaborating in various ways, as described by

Kuroishi and Takahashi (2009):

(1) Some elementary and secondary schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area provided lessons to students by despatching *juku* teachers to schools after school hours on weekdays, Saturdays, and during long vacations. In 2005, Minato Ward in Tokyo started providing free supplementary classes on Saturdays given by teachers from Waseda Academy, a major *juku*, at all its public lower secondary schools. In 2008, Wada Junior High School in Suginami Ward, Tokyo, started offering special lessons on weeknights and Saturdays for a fee.

(2) *Juku* help schools organize school briefing sessions for potential students and their parents and to recruit students specifically for private schools.

(3) *Juku* provide professional training and seminars for schoolteachers. There are also cases where *juku* companies despatch employees to private schools as part-time teachers.

(4) *Juku* provide tests and assessment materials.

(5) Schools use teaching materials developed by *juku* that supplement school textbooks and textbooks focussed on entrance examinations. Such materials are used mainly in private schools.

(6) *Juku* provide school management consultation and tangible services such as building network environments, providing school supplies, and developing school pamphlets and websites.

Because of such collaboration between public and private education, the *juku* industry has expanded and developed into new types, such as the *Chiiki Mirai Juku* and public *juku*. Iwase (2006) argues that, triggered by the launch of the five-days-a-week system in schools in 2002, public *juku* were established with the aim of providing places for children to study on Saturdays, and local

governments were expected to play an active role.

Characteristics of public *juku*

Target students

Overall, 82 public *juku* were identified through an Internet search, including four that were planned or under consideration. Their target group consisted of elementary, junior high, or high school students, with one exception that was also open to adults. We classified *juku* into two categories: those mainly targeting high school students and those mainly targeting elementary/junior high school students. High school and elementary/junior high schools are different in terms of educational administration, the former being under the jurisdiction of the prefecture and the latter under the municipality.

There was a total of 51 public *juku* targeting high school students from a certain public high school in their area, with three exceptions that did not mention any specific high school. Some of these *juku* also take in students from junior high schools, and two of them take in students from elementary schools

Table 1. Target students and the number of public *juku*

Target students	Number of public *juku*
High school students	41
Junior high/high school students	8
Elementary/junior high/high school students	2
Subtotal: mainly high school students (1)	**51**
Junior high school students	12
Elementary/junior high school students	13
Elementary school students	4
Subtotal: mainly other than high school students (2)	**29**
Elementary/junior high /high school students/adults	1
n.d.	1
Subtotal: other (3)	**2**
Total (1)(2)(3)	**82**

in their areas. The remaining 29 public *juku* target elementary school students, junior high school students, or both. As mentioned above, one public *juku,* Isen-terakoya*,* in Kagoshima prefecture, is currently open to adults. Originally, its target students were elementary, junior high, and high school students, but from 2019, it has also allowed adults to participate in seminars given by guest lecturers. No information was available on the target students for one of the public *juku.*

Years of establishment

Most public *juku* were established after 2012, and more public *juku* have been established every year since then. Until 2012, public *juku* were established only once every few years.

The oldest public *juku*[4] is the Nakayoshi-*juku* in Kita-daito village in Okinawa prefecture, established

Table 2. Number of Public *juku* according to Year of establishment and the main students

Year of establishment	Main students of the *juku*		Total
	High school students	Other	
1993		1	**1**
2002		1	**1**
2005		1	**1**
2007		1	**1**
2010	2		**2**
2012		2	**2**
2013	1	1	**2**
2014	1	4	**5**
2015	8	3	**11**
2016※	5	5	**11**
2017	7	2	**9**
2018	10	6	**16**
2019	6	1	**7**
2020	2		**2**
2020 (planned)	2		**2**
under consideration	2		**2**
n.d.	5	2	**7**
Total	**51**	**31**	**82**

※The total number in 2016 includes one public *juku* that doesn't indicate target students.

in 1993 and proclaimed as the first village-run public *juku* in Japan. This *juku* was established for elementary and junior high school students to foster a positive attitude towards study after school. Kita-daito Island lies 360 km from the main island of Okinawa in the Pacific Ocean and has no high school.

The Okinokuni Learning Center in Ama Town, Shimane prefecture, could be described as the first public *juku* aimed specifically at high school students[5]. The Oki Islands are 60 km away from the coast of the mainland with one public high school, Shimane prefectural Oki Dozen High School. The islands face the problem of a rapidly ageing population, and young people are leaving the islands, which has resulted in a decrease in the number of students applying to the high school. This situation led to the possibility of the high school being closed down, which in turn would accelerate the youth outflow. In 2010, Ama Town started a make-it-attractive project in Oki Dozen as a key to the survival of the local community. Among several measures, the project launched the Okinokuni Learning Center, a public *juku*.

The practice and success of the Ama Town case has been widely reported in the media, and since then, several make-it-attractive projects have been launched for high schools across Japan. Since 2015, when the book *Mirai wo kaeta shima no gakkou* (A school in the island that changed the future), which told the success story of the project in Ama Town, was published, several public *juku* have been launched for high school students every year (Yamamoto et al., 2015).

Locations of public juku

Most of the public *juku* are established by towns (54 out of 82) or villages (18 out of 82), apart from ten public *juku* launched by cities. Municipalities in Japan are categorized as towns, villages, and cities, based on various criteria such as population. The population is typically larger in cities than in towns and villages, which means that most of the public *juku* are in municipalities with smaller populations.

The population size of the municipalities where public *juku* are located ranges from 572 inhabitants in Kita-daito village in Okinawa to 117,666 inhabitants in Hatsukaichi city in Hiroshima (as of 2018). However, approximately 90% of public *juku* are in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, in a country where 46% of the municipalities have a population of less than 20,000 (Table 3).

The prefectures that have the most public *juku* are Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Hiroshima, with 14, 10, and 7 public *juku,* respectively. Hokkaido is the northernmost prefecture in Japan with the largest geographical area. Okinawa is the southernmost prefecture with 160 islands (of which 49 islands are inhabited), and most public *juku* are on the remote islands.

Small population areas are challenged more acutely than other areas in Japan by the problem of ageing populations, combined with the diminishing number of children. The municipalities with public *juku* often have only one high school or none, which causes young people to move away early in their lives for further education.

Table 3. Population of the municipalities where public *juku* are located

Inhabitants	Number of municipalities with public *juku*	Perce-ntage
Under 5,000	25	30%
5,000 to 9,999	29	35%
10,000 to 14,999	12	15%
15,000 to 19,999	9	11%
Over 20,000	7	9%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2018). [Total] 2018 basic resident register, the number of population/households, and 2017 population movements (by municipality)

Actors of the public juku

As discussed earlier, the founder and owner of the *juku* are local municipalities, but there are differences in the ways that local government sectors and divisions administer them. Some public *juku* are under the administration of the local board of education, while others are under a department for the enhancement of the community or promotion of local industry in the municipality.

Staff at *juku* are former teachers, university or college students, municipality officers, international students, and lecturers from private *juku*. One should note that approximately one-third of *public juku* hire community building supporters (*Chiikiokoshi-kyouryokutai*). Community building supporters are people from urban areas who move to rural areas, committing themselves to activities that raise the presence and attractiveness of the community and preferably settling in the community after a maximum three-year contract. The community building supporter initiative was proposed as a major initiative for the Plan to Create Vibrant Regions in 2008, and it was launched by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC) in 2009. The MIC compensates the municipalities for the salary and activity costs of these staff members (MIC, n.d.).

In some cases, the management and operation of public *juku* are entrusted to an organization other than the public authority. Some are entrusted to private *juku* or private companies and others to non-profit organizations. In some *juku*, lessons and teaching materials are provided by such organizations. Prima Pinguino Co., Ltd. and Birth47 Co., Ltd. are the two organizations that manage most public *juku*. The former oversees 20 public *juku* targeting mainly high school students and within the make-it-attractive project initiative, including two that were planned to open in 2020. Birth47 Co., Ltd. operates eight public *juku* targeting high school students and junior high school students. Another company, FioreConnection Co., Ltd., provides a package of online lessons to at least eight public *juku*.

Motivation for establishment

Many of the *juku* websites and media articles refer to the lack or insufficiency of educational opportunities in the area to explain the establishment of public *juku*. Some directly point out that there are no private *juku* in the area.

The motivation of public *juku* targeting high school students resembles that of public *juku* in Ama Town. The Okinokuni Learning Center was established to help students enhance their achievements and support them to gain entry to the university of their choice or pursue a career. Before the launch of the public *juku*, entering Oki Dozen High School was regarded as disadvantageous if one wanted to go to university because the learning environment made it difficult for students to prepare for university entrance exams, compared to high schools outside of the island. Not all students at Oki Dozen High School aimed to go to university, and there were no opportunities for studying after school*, such as private *juku* (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2014).

In town Z, the municipal administrator in charge also mentioned that the first purpose of establishing a public *juku* was to raise students' achievements and help them enter university[6]. This aim clearly reflect many students' and parents' hope to entering a good university. To enter a good university, students choose high schools with higher percentage of students proceeding to notable universities. Since most students attend high school (98.8% in 2019 (MEXT, 2020b)), high schools are clearly differentiated in terms of student achievement and performance. For high school teachers, sending their students to high-prestige universities is one of the keys to attracting junior high school students to apply to their school.

In addition to this academic achievement goal, public *juku* also have the goal of fostering students' attachment to the local community and encouraging them to live and work there. The town Z administrator said,

> It (public *juku*) is the same (as private *juku*) in terms of teaching students. We would not have launched it if there had been a private *juku* in our community. But, somewhere in my mind, I was thinking that we must foster children's attachment to our community. I became aware of it after a while. At first, I thought that we only had to improve students' achievements. But gradually I thought achievement is not enough. In my mind, this (public *juku*) is where we foster children who will carry the future of town Z.[7]

The public *juku* in town Z conducts a special session in the form of a problem-based workshop four times a year, where students meet people from the local community and learn about the local issues and industries. Apart from subject study support, Okinokuni Learning Center also provides a workshop called the "Dream seminar", where students plan their future careers (Oki Learning Center, n.d.). There are other public *juku* that also provide such seminars.

In public *juku* that target mainly elementary and junior high school students, the motivation seems to be different. There are *juku* that clearly state that their aim is toward high school entrance examinations, but other *juku* aim to improve students' learning motivation habits as well. Some *juku* state their purpose as narrowing the gap in student achievement between urban and the local areas. There are also *juku* that only provide English language learning. In contrast to public *juku* targeting high school students,

few in this group referred to student development for the local community. Only one public *juku* referred to human resource development for the future of the village, and one referred to human resource development in general.

Summary

From the above survey, four characteristics of public *juku* can be identified. First, public *juku* emerged against a backdrop of population decline, in contrast to private *juku* that evolved in the age of baby boomers and economic growth in society. Second, public *juku* are mostly located in small municipalities, such as remote islands, suffering from population decline and distance from urban areas. This can be seen as complementing private *juku*, which are usually in urban areas. Third, public *juku* targeting high school students tend to aim for human resource development for the local community as well as study support for exam preparation. Fourth, there are new actors appearing on the educational scene such as community building supporters hired as staff for public *juku* and public *juku* management companies.

Discussion

Three controversial issues were highlighted by the survey: allocation of roles between *juku* and schools, the "educationalisation" of social problems, and the quality and sustainability of public *juku*.

Boundaries between juku and school

The relationship between *juku* and schools has been controversial. The birth and existence of private *juku* from the 1960s onward can be understood as the antithesis of public education. Many initiators of private *juku* had a different philosophy of education than public school educators. *Juku* could directly respond to the needs of the learners and their parents, and these were not always covered by public schools

with national common regulations and a *tatemae* of egalitarianism. Public *juku* inherited the stance of private *juku*, that of responding to the needs of *honne*. However, this does not provoke hostility towards public schools, partly because of the publicness of public *juku*. This raises two questions.

First, why did the public sector not respond to the challenge within the framework of public schools, that is, develop supplementary tutoring in public schools themselves, but rather established *juku* outside the school? Public supplementary tutoring could be carried out within a public school without efforts to launch and maintain a new tutoring institution.

This can be discussed in relation to the issue of work hours and burdens imposed on Japanese teachers, who have very long working hours compared to teachers in other countries (OECD, 2019). Teachers at public schools tend to work until late in the evening and on weekends, committing to students' sports and cultural activities and supporting their study in relation to examination preparation or supplementary lessons. Public *juku*, working with students after school and on weekends, can be seen as releasing teachers from overwork, which is otherwise a difficult issue to resolve in Japanese culture, where the demand on teachers is for more work and dedication. In this regard, public *juku* benefit teachers as well as students, as they support public schools in a collaborative manner.

Administrative issues were also implied by the survey. All public *juku* are established by municipalities; however, most public high schools are under the jurisdiction of the prefecture, which is a level higher in the administration than the municipality. Although both are public, the owner is clearly different. For municipal authorities, starting a *juku* is much handier than intervening in educational practises in high schools.

In addition, public *juku* may sound more distinguished and attractive to students than additional tutoring by schoolteachers. Many public *juku* are located in small municipalities with few private *juku*, where the curiosity of students and parents leads to them accepting the *juku*. There is still debate regarding the merits of *juku*, but voices of dissent are appeased by the fact that *juku* are public.

Another question is whether the relationship between public *juku* and public schools in the respective areas is indeed collaborative, as one might expect. Public *juku* do not have to compete with schools, nor do they need to compete for profit with other *juku* because usually there is no other *juku* in the area. However, reality is more complicated, as seen from both the perspective of the local authority and the school.

The relationship is complicated, especially in the case where the aim of public *juku* is to raise students' achievement at a local high school. As mentioned earlier, most public high schools are under the jurisdiction of the prefecture, and in contrast, the founder of a public *juku* is usually the municipality, because it is the local municipality that faces the crisis of underpopulation. From the perspective of the prefecture, small or disfavoured high schools are often subject to integration or abolition due to a decline in applicants. Nevertheless, the local municipality wants to maintain the high school in their area, since the loss of a high school means fewer young people, less economic activity, and hence the risk of devastation of the local community.

From the perspective of the teachers at the local school, public *juku* can inherently pose a challenge to their roles, in the same way as private *juku*. A teacher at a local high school in town Z, who served as the contact person for the public *juku* in that area, reported that the relationship between high school teachers and the staff at the public *juku* was initially fraught with problems[8]. He said that some teachers got angry with the *juku* staff, who provided guidance

and strategy to students for the university entrance examination that was different from what the schoolteachers were telling them. The teaching profession is historically seen as having a strong individualistic culture (Lortie, 1975; Hargreaves, 1994). If such culture persists among schoolteachers, they may build psychological barriers towards staff at public *juku* who act as teachers outside the school.

Public *juku* seem to be aware of the situation, as illustrated by the "boundary work" they undertake to make their role and existence clear. Boundary work consists of the strategies, principles, and practices used to create, maintain, and modify cultural categories (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

One illustration is the case of the public *juku* in town Z, which did not use students' entrance examination results as an advertisement for the success of the *juku*. Usually, Japanese private *juku* advertise themselves by publicising the number of successful entrance examinations and the universities that their students are going to attend, posting the list on the window of the *juku's* building and on their website. However, the administrator at town Z told us that they were not using such advertisements, as this might be seen as a disrespectful act in the eyes of the local high school[9].

The other illustration is that many of the public *juku*, especially those aimed at high school students, provide workshop-style seminars for students in addition to subject studies. These seminars aim to provide career education, where students learn about the local community, meet people with a variety of careers, and engage in discussion and dialogue with their peers. This might be seen as something that a high school cannot provide because of time and resource limitations, but it is an advantage of public *juku* and makes their purpose different from that of public schools.

Educationalization of social problems

Depaepe and Smeyers (2008) state that we are now witnessing an increasing tendency to "educationalize" social problems. Educationalization is the push towards schools to take on "social" responsibilities such as solving social inequalities, reducing obesity, and enhancing economic productivity and citizenship, and this has been going on for some time. The fact that most public *juku* were established against the backdrop of population decline in their local areas, along with quite a few of those targeting high school students aiming to foster citizenship or human resources for their community, can be seen as the educationalization of social problems. Japan is currently confronted with the issues of an ageing society and population decline, and public *juku* can be described as educational institutions established to help solve these problems.

Public *juku* and high school reform are among the numerous policies and measures to address the decrease in population. However, it should be noted that the educationalization of social problems has negative connotations, such as increased dependency and infantilization (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008). Educationalization is rather similar to "medicalization", where a greater medical intervention does not necessarily lead to a healthier society, and further, it can significantly increase the consumption of and dependence on health care. In this respect, public *juku* promote increased consumption and dependence on educational services and open a new market for education. New actors are coming onto the educational scene, including companies and organizations operating public *juku*, some of which are for-profit companies.

Quality and sustainability of public juku

Public *juku* should be considered in terms of the quality of education and sustainability of institutions as a learning place for students. Here, two issues need

to be addressed.

The first is the characteristics of staff at public *juku*. In many recruitment advertisements for public *juku*, a teaching licence or teaching experience is not necessarily required, although these are welcomed; some staff are former teachers, former private *juku* lecturers, or have other teaching experience.

In at least 27 *juku*, community building supporters work as staff. They are hired for a maximum of three years, which means that *juku* staff can change on a cycle of less than three years. A staff member at the public *juku* in town Z, who also recruits community building supporters, said that what they can achieve in the *juku* greatly depends on who comes to work there. Some staff members only sit beside the students while they study on their own, while others offer more active intervention with student learning[10].

The second is the teaching/learning content. Many public *juku* targeting high school students offer workshop-style seminars for career education and to learn about their own communities. These would be difficult for high school teachers to manage because of limited time, knowledge, and resources. Public *juku* are one way to promote such education.

Conclusion

This research showed the current characteristics of public *juku* and examined the issues public *juku* pose. Although public *juku* offer supplementary tutoring after school in the same way as private *juku*, they differ from private *juku* in terms of motivation, location, staff, and their relationships with public schools.

Public *juku* try to offer additional educational value in local areas, with careful boundary work with public schools. As the history of private *juku* shows, the relationship changes over time and might yield innovation in educational content and methods on both sides.

Notably, seen from the other side, public *juku* pose a question as to what public schools in rural areas should do when the society around them has a declining population. This is not an issue for individual teachers or schools but rather a challenge for current regulation and administration, allocation of budgets and professionals, and curricula in public schools. In this regard, more in-depth research is required on the continuous process of boundary work in public *juku* and public schools from these perspectives.

Whether and how public *juku* will solve the problem of population decline should be further researched, as well as other consequences of the educationalization of social problems.

While the survey in this study has been the first attempt to list all the public *juku* in Japan systematically, the methodology also poses limitations in terms of the amount and comprehensiveness of information. To conduct an in-depth analysis, more detailed and comprehensive data gathering is needed, along with case studies.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

[1] A junior high school is equivalent to a lower secondary school and ISCED 2.

[2] A high school is equivalent to an upper secondary school and ISCED 3.

[3] For example, the case of free *juku* initiative in Okinawa prefecture (Retrieved on October 8, 2020 from https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kodomo/ kodomomirai/2020koukou_charenzi/2020koukou_ bosyu.html), or the case of Osaka City (Retrieved on October 8, 2020 from https://cfc.or.jp/activity/ local-government/).

[4] There is a public educational centre called "Kakuzan *juku*" in Tsuyama city, Okayama prefecture, which was established in 1984. Although its name contains *juku*, it is an educational consultation centre, targeting students who cannot go to schools, providing a place to stay, and offering consultation/counselling, rather than providing supplementary tutoring. (Asahi Shinbun, 1985 "Tsuyama-shi-ritsu 'Kakuzan *juku*' (Tensei jingo) [daily column: Kakuzan juku established by Tsuyama city]"; Website of Kakuzan *juku*, retrieved on October 8, 2020 from http://www3.tvt.ne.jp/~ka93juku/)

[5] "21 Seiki Mirai" in Ginoza village, Okinawa, was also established in 2010, but it targets both junior high school and high school students. It originated as a learning centre to support students entering high school, which indicates that the original main target was junior high school students (Ryukyushimpo, 2015, retrieved on October 8, 2020 from https://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/prentry-247359.html).

[6] Interview conducted on May 31, 2019.

[7] Interview conducted on May 31, 2019. Translated from Japanese into English by the authors.

[8] Interview conducted on May 31, 2019.

[9] Interview conducted on May 31, 2019.

[10] Interview conducted on May 31, 2019.