Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

Functions, Challenges and Perspectives of the Juku

Marie Hejlund Roesgaard

Cram schools (in Japanese called juku) are often mentioned in passing as a phenomenon functioning mainly to exacerbate competition and pressure on children, but a thorough study of their function and a proper typology for understanding them has not previously been available in English. It is the author’s intention to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this feature of education, which is not only important in Japan but increasingly so in other parts of the world as well. Her major conclusion is that a clear distinction between different types of juku is necessary so that their function as well as merits and demerits can be properly assessed. Although juku have often been decried as enhancing competition in the Japanese system of schooling, this study also provides evidence that without them, the regular system of schooling would not be able to function. In the modern polarized society that is Japan, juku are taking on a variety of new functions that this study aims to uncover.

‘It is a scholarly piece of work which will be of interest to those in Japanese studies and comparative education ... There is nothing else that covers exactly the same ground and there is clearly a need for such a book on reading lists.’ (external reviewer)
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JAPANESE EDUCATION AND THE CRAM SCHOOL BUSINESS

Functions, Challenges and Perspectives of the Juku

MARIE HØJLUND ROESGAARD
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Finally, a word of thanks to my long-time friend Ms Kubo Kaoru for always being there to organize things for me, for her inspiring conversation and for letting me become part of her life and her family.
# Glossary of Most Frequently Used Japanese Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doriru juku</td>
<td>Cram school of the drill type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gakureki shakai</td>
<td>Credentialist society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gôkaku</td>
<td>Succeed at an examination, get admitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gôkakuristu</td>
<td>Rate of admission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosanke</td>
<td>‘Honoured three’, the three most prestigious middle schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hensachi</td>
<td>Score on general test taken at a cram school. The score is compared with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>huge database and calculations establish a relative standing in a nationwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hierarchy. Used to project chances of admission to certain schools and to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>indicate the level needed to get admitted to a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoshû juku</td>
<td>Cram schools offering remedial and special teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyôsai juku</td>
<td>Cram schools, sometimes called ‘free schools’, offering remedial and special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teaching, sometimes an alternative to a regular school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monbushô</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001 known as Monbukagakushô, MEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naishinshô</td>
<td>Internal report card used in schools to evaluate conduct, effort, motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>etc. Basis for admission without examination to certain middle and high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>schools. Not accessible to parents and children concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ochikobore</td>
<td>The ‘laggards’, those who cannot keep up with the pace in a class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingaku juku</td>
<td>Cram schools offering exam preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 0.1. Organization of the school system in Japan
(Source: www.mext.go.jp)
The Japanese educational system is well known for its high demands on the students. In Western media accounts of the evils caused by the system abound, but it is also widely respected for the remarkable results it has achieved in the fields of mathematics and the natural sciences in particular, and for the high average level of education in the population in general (US Department of Education 1987).

Criticism of Japanese education has concentrated not only on the way one learns and on the contents of the teaching, but also on the academic pressure it puts on children. The method of learning is often described as of excessive cramming of facts, i.e. rote learning; and the contents are described as standardized, not least because of official textbook censorship and strict curriculum guidelines. Similarly, language education has been attacked for being too focused on grammar and reading to the extent that communicative abilities virtually do not exist even after learning English in middle as well as in high school. The tendency for cramming facts is spurred on by a proliferation of decisive examinations along the road towards university. These examinations have so far tended to concentrate on testing factual knowledge rather than analytic abilities. The ease with which one can determine whether or not an answer is correct for the factual questions contributes to making the process appear straightforward and honest. Hence this type of examination is less vulnerable to charges of injustice than examinations involving analytic exercises or essays and grading based on less tangible criteria.
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There are entrance examinations for private schools, high school and the university. Cramming for such examinations in and out of school is time-consuming and is often accused of leading to loss of freedom, individuality and creativity. The alleged lack of these features is frequently employed to explain all sorts of problems in the Japanese educational system (not to mention in society at large!), such as lack of original research leading to Nobel Prizes, the standardization prevailing in Japanese education and problems in the schools with bullying, violence, truancy and adolescent suicide. However, one should be wary of assuming a direct causal relationship between educational problems and all these ills. For example, Zeng and LeTendre (1998) have found that there is little or no evidence for the assumed correlation between academic pressure and adolescent suicide in Japan. Despite mounting academic competition, they have found no evidence of similar growth in school-related suicides. What they did find was that media and a culturally based tendency for the Japanese to focus on suicide have helped sustain the belief that a connection exists, though statistics have suggested the contrary. Similarly, many of the other problems with juveniles may on closer inspection turn out to be related to a number of other factors, and not just school and academic competition.

THE SETTING

The Japanese system of schooling consists of six years of elementary school, three years of middle school and an optional three years of high school. The last has, however, since the middle of the 1970s, been attended by over 90 per cent of an age cohort, so for all practical purposes it may be said to be compulsory. The entrance examinations for high school and university are regarded as the most excruciating experiences in the whole system of schooling and the knowledge they test affects the contents of teaching on lower levels enormously. That the bulk of these examinations test factual knowledge, memorization rather than analytical abilities, naturally influences the contents and methods of teaching to the extent that much time is spent on cramming facts. In fact, the ‘examination competition problem’ (juken kyōsō no mondai) is widely recognized,
Introduction

right from the publications and statements made by the Ministry of Education (hereafter Monbushô) down to the public debates taking place in, for example, readers’ letters to newspapers. Some observers have even dubbed this type of examination ‘memory contests’, equating the test with a game of Trivial Pursuit® (Yanaka 1995: 124).

Apart from the formal educational system there is in Japan an informal, private system of cram schools, juku and yobikô. Both of these institutions are usually criticized for contributing to the inhuman suffering Japanese children undergo in their quest for education. The cram schools are usually described in the media as institutions concerned only with fact-cramming for examinations. For example, this Australian mother of a child attending a Japanese elementary school said: ‘the cram school system was introduced, and with its advent came the competition which was lacking in the elementary school itself, along with the rigid and stressful life that idealists abhor’ (Conduit 1996: 92). The mother names cram schools as the direct cause of competition in elementary school. One is left to wonder how the cram schools managed to manipulate the regular system of schooling so successfully! Indeed, this interpretation of the causal relationship is highly suspect. More likely, the increased emphasis on meritocracy bears the larger part of the responsibility as shown by Kangmin Zeng, who in his comparative study of competitive examinations in Japan, Korea and Taiwan concludes his chapter on cram schools by saying: ‘exams are the only cause and raison d’être of the vast cram industry’ (Zeng 1999: 202).

Mostly, cram schools are associated with the exacerbation of problems of stress and cramming in Japanese schooling, and their activities are described as aimed solely at preparation for entrance examinations at prestigious educational institutions. Weisman observes that ‘the very success of juku [cram schools] in training youngsters to pass exams has made the competition worse: juku help more students pass exams, so the exams have to be made more difficult’ (Weisman 1992). It should be noted, that this was written before the full impact of declining birth rates (shôshika) was really felt. The advent of shôshika has changed the picture somewhat as far as admission to high school and university is concerned. In fact a high school teacher I talked to told me that in
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his opinion, the gravest challenge facing Japanese education at the moment is not combating excessive competition, but the declining birth rates (Interview with Satô 2003).

This phenomenon of a private educational system ‘shadowing’ the public system is far from unique to Japan. For example Baker et al. (2001) argue that shadow education is prevalent worldwide although with considerable cross-national variation; Zeng (1999) describes private cram schools in Japan, Korea and Taiwan; AERA has carried articles on the activities of Japanese cram schools in countries such as Germany and China, and reports on similar systems in, for example, Greece have been reported in the press (Conrad and Jensen 2001: 25). The understanding of the Japanese cram school thus has implications for our thinking about private teaching, extra tutoring and cramming all over the world.

For reasons I shall go further into later, there has, since the 1960s in particular, been a growing demand for remedial and supplementary education for children to help them advance in the regular school system and pass examinations. This has had the result that cram schools are becoming quite as demanding as regular schools, in some cases, as we shall see, even more so. As Rohlen comments: ‘juku provides a remarkable portrait of Japan as a nation going to great lengths to supplement an already quite intense public education. It is a portrait for which parents, not school officials, are directly responsible’ (Rohlen 1980: 212). Unlike Conduit, Rohlen places responsibility for intensified cramming not on cram schools, nor on examinations or the impersonal ‘system’, but on the parents.

Some cram schools are so intense that they require attendance of more than 20 hours a week, plus most vacation time. Top cram schools, i.e. those with the best record of clients admitted to elite schools or universities, themselves have entrance examinations and are rumoured to be even more crucial to success than regular school. Popular interest is high and parents may find it very difficult to ignore the cram schools, for it could mean the difference between success or failure in securing a desirable employment position for their children (Rohlen 1983: 106).

Some of the more famous cram schools have developed systems like the following for preparation for entrance examinations to private or national middle schools:‘ in the fourth grade of elementary school
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A test is taken to gain admittance to the cram school. Then there is a test every Sunday for the last two years of elementary school to place the students in a hierarchy of test scores. The scores are used as indicators of the entrance examination the student is likely to be able to pass. Three to four times a week the students attend classes at the cram school; they take a mock test on Saturday in preparation for the Sunday test and they attend a summer course lasting 33 days from 8 am to 7 or 8 pm. The cost of such a course in 1985 was a staggering 1 million yen (Hisatomi 1987: 43–45). A manual on choosing juku in 2003 presented a model example using one of the larger juku. Here the cost for one year of exam preparation for a sixth grader was similar: 1 million 24,000 yen all inclusive (Gakken 2003: 36). An example from my own research is SAPIX\(^8\) in 2001, where a sixth grader would attend cram school three times per week. This will cost 45,000 yen per month. Additionally, there was a 20-day summer course, six and a half hours per day, costing 152,000 yen and a six-day course, eight hours per day, tailored specifically for a specific type of school. This cost 58,000 yen, so in SAPIX’s case the expense for one sixth grader’s exam preparation would have amounted to something just under 700,000 yen (SAPIX 2001).\(^9\)

In 1999 Monbushô conducted a national survey (Kodomo no gakushûhi chôsa, published in 2001) which found average expenses for elementary school children for cram school\(^10\) to be 47,714 yen yearly, a growth of 8.9 per cent compared to 1997 figures (see Table 0.1.).\(^11\) The most significant growth has taken place in fifth grade, an indication that there is a tendency for cram school attendance to start earlier than before. For public middle schools the yearly expense is 147,174 yen, a growth of 4.3 per cent, and for private middle schools the expense is 108,681 yen yearly, a significant growth of 12.3 per cent since 1997 (Monbushô 2001:19). Spending on education has doubled its share of the average household budget over the 30 years between 1969 and 1999, from accounting for 5.8 per cent in 1969 to 12.6 per cent in 1999 (Shimizu et al. 2002: 118). This growth in spending on extra tutoring for children in private middle schools may indicate reduced faith in the ability of such schools alone to prepare pupils properly for high school entrance examinations.
Table 0.1. (below) shows that expenses for cram school are highest in the sixth grade in elementary school, but judging from the growth rate in fifth grade (33.5 per cent), there will probably be further developments at lower levels of elementary school. The perception of a need for extra tutoring is clearly drifting down in the public system from being a traditional sixth grade phenomenon to fifth grade especially. Another significant development is the growth in spending on cram school by private middle school pupils. Though not yet quite on the level of public middle school, particularly if we look at the third year, the growth rate for expenses is still quite high for cram school in private middle schools. In fact, such spending is slightly higher in the first year than that found in public middle schools. This picture may change however, with the implementation of the new curriculum guidelines from April 2002, where worries are expressed in many quarters that the level in public schooling will go down. I shall elaborate on this subject later.

Table 0.1. Parental spending on juku, 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>19,902</td>
<td>23,024</td>
<td>30,928</td>
<td>45,392</td>
<td>56,267</td>
<td>104,619</td>
<td>47,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% up</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public – yen</td>
<td>106,973</td>
<td>138,911</td>
<td>194,372</td>
<td>147,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public – % up</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private – yen</td>
<td>109,973</td>
<td>107,719</td>
<td>108,240</td>
<td>108,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private – % up</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures cover only gakushū juku. Private teachers, or other expenses related to learning in the home, are not included.

Source: Monbushō 2001: 19
BACKGROUND AND CLIENTS

The focus of this work is the informal structure of cram schools and in particular those cram school targeting elementary and middle school students known in Japanese as juku, the term I shall henceforth be using. School dropouts and children who for various reasons are not attending regular schools at all are not dealt with here.

Until now the key role of juku has been perceived as that of offering preparation for high school entrance examinations, and indeed the middle school level is where we find the highest percentages of juku attendance. A large number of juku have specialized in this age segment and have traditionally offered teaching for middle-school-aged children and onwards. However, changes are underway. An increasing number of children sit for entrance examinations at private middle schools, revealing an increased interest in private middle school education owing to several changes taking place in the public school system. These are related to the implementation of the five-day school week and the ensuing reduced curriculum effective from April 2002. Since rising interest in private middle schools is treated in more detail in Part III, I shall just point out here, that I am concentrating in this work on the middle school entrance examination as this is the area where major changes appear to be taking place, many more people are interested and this examination is an excellent testing ground and illustration of how certain juku work to expand or consolidate their business. Middle school entrance examinations are still taken by a much smaller number of students than the high school entrance examinations, but hitherto they have not attracted so much attention. I would argue that we should direct more attention to them now, as they are increasing in number and very likely will continue to do so, and because the potential impact of this development on Japanese schooling is huge, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

It has been argued, for example, by Komiyama Hirohito,\textsuperscript{12} that the middle school entrance examination is the most difficult of them all. As these examinations are placement and admittance tests, their aim is selection rather than assessment of ability. As Komiyama puts it, the Japanese entrance examinations are \textit{kyōsō-shiken} (competition exams), not \textit{shikaku-shiken} (qualification exams) (Komiyama 1995: 202). The material used for these tests more often than not goes
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beyond the regular curriculum in elementary school, so attending elementary school alone does not provide adequate preparation, and unless one is attending a private elementary school there will be no guidance to support the choice of middle school (Komiyama 1993: 92–93; 1995: 12–14, 27). Komiyama suggests that what has gone wrong is not really that examinations have become more difficult, but that textbooks have become too easy (20 to 30 per cent easier, he claims) and so no longer contain the kind of material tested by the examinations at private middle schools (Komiyama 1995: 14, 29, 154). Extra tutoring is therefore usually a prerequisite for passing the private middle school examination. Zeng calculates a similar result based on Monbushô figures (see Table 0.2.).

Table 0.2. Schools whose entrance examination exceeds the scope of the official curriculum guidelines, 1994 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This problem is expected by many observers to become worse with the new curriculum guidelines (effective from April 2002), where there is common agreement that the overall amount of learning will decrease by one third (Asahi 2002; Hamada 2001: 10; Kawai Juku 2001; Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 6, 85). According to a Monbushô survey quoted by Mori Sadataka, then director of the National Juku Association, children today spend half the time they did a generation ago on learning (gakushû jikan). They study less and instead watch TV or play computer games. As a result they exhibit symptoms such as temporary myopia (kasei kinshî) and their powers
of thinking (*shikô ryoku*) drop significantly (Mori in Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 109). Gakken’s manual for choosing a juku quotes mothers of children in the second grade for complaining that: ‘There is no homework, no drills for maths. My child claims to have no homework and therefore only plays games after returning from school. Will it continue like this?’ Or another: ‘The maths textbook is a lot thinner than that of her elder brother. Is this really going to be OK?’ (Gakken 2003: 44)

The commonly acknowledged correct age for a child to enter juku has been steadily dropping. In 1976 12 per cent of all elementary school pupils went to juku. In 1993 the percentage had risen to 23.6 per cent (Shimizu 1997: 108). In comparison Monbushô figures include any type of juku attendance costing the client 1 yen or more in a year, which is probably the cause of the rather significant jump the figures show for 1995 at 40.6 per cent (See Table 0.3). Figures for 1997 show a slight rise for elementary school pupils’ juku attendance, reaching 41.3 per cent, only to decline to 36.9 per cent in 1999. The same tendency toward decline can be seen in Monbushô’s figures on juku attendance in middle school. It may be an indication that the total juku attendance had peaked, but as the conditions in general for education in Japan change, this picture will likely change as well.

**Table 0.3. Juku attendance among elementary and middle school children (%)**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/level</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Publ. middle school</th>
<th>Priv. middle school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

Looking at elementary school specifically, it becomes clear that the tendency is for the rate of juku attendance to rise according to the grade in elementary school. Nihon PTA Zenkoku Kyôgikai in 1997 found that for sixth graders in elementary school, 43.2 per cent were attending juku, 12.1 per cent had done so previously and 42.1 per cent had never attended. Benesse Kyôiku Kenkyûjo found, also in 1997, that 33 per cent of the fifth graders were in juku, a difference of 10 per cent fewer as compared to sixth grade, where preparation for the next level of schooling is often heating up. The Benesse survey has a breakdown of the figure 33 per cent in types of juku, finding that 8.5 per cent of the fifth graders were in exam preparing shingaku juku, while 18.2 per cent were in hoshû juku, which tend to focus more on homework and exercises (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 68).

Table 0.4. Juku attendance in fifth grade according to regions, 1997 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gakushû juku</th>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>Hoshû* juku</th>
<th>Private tutors</th>
<th>Corr. courses</th>
<th>Mail courses</th>
<th>Self study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (2,665)</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo area (769)</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefectural cities (708)</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counties (1,188)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Hoshû juku offer help with homework and the like, more on this in Chapter 1.
1. Counties are surveyed in Tôhoku, prefectural cities in Shikoku and the metropolitan area covers the 25 ku of Tokyo.
2. Numbers in brackets indicate size of sample.
Source: Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 68.

Regional variations in juku attendance are quite strong as found by Benesse (see Table 0.4.). In metropolitan Tokyo, the ratio of juku users is as high as 47.5 per cent in fifth grade, with 25.6 per cent going to shingaku juku, where strict exam preparation is the goal.
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(shingaku and hoshū juku will be explained in Chapter 1). The rate for juku attendance gets progressively lower as we look at smaller units of population: the lowest rate is found in counties (the survey was made in Tōhoku), where it is 23.2 per cent. Only 0.8 per cent of the juku users in this area go to exam preparing shingaku juku.

Not all elementary school children going to juku will be aiming at a private middle school. In 2003 a total of 6.2 per cent of the middle school age population went to a private middle school (calculated on the basis of Monbushō statistics from the Monbushō homepage). This is a slight increase from 2000 where the percentage was 5.7. In a normal class in a public school, children headed for a private middle school will without doubt be a minority (in many cases there will be none as regional variation is high), and hence teaching in class is not geared toward entrance examinations as it is in public middle schools where all students will be expected to take some kind of high school entrance examination. This means that the child studying for a middle school examination will have to spend time after school for this preparation and will suffer socially because he or she is not able to participate as much as other classmates do in club activities or other social events in school. Since time spent on extra tutoring will also be taken from the time children spend with other children, the implications for the social literacy of such children are huge and can reasonably be claimed to be more severe and far-reaching than those for the high school entrance examination, an additional reason for us to direct more attention to this examination in the coming years. This problem for middle school examination prospects is treated by Komiyama as being connected with a general decline in social contacts and a change in the patterns of children’s play in Japan:

Children no longer roam about and play in large groups but tend to play in pairs, often one will play a computer game and the other will watch. This is how children play today. The social reason for the existence of such isolated children is the division of labour in society and the ensuing isolation among parents. This clearly affects child rearing. There is a loss of contact with the extended family (Komiyama 1995: 144–145).
This in turn makes parents look to neighbours and compare the results of their own children with other people’s children in a competitive race for status and recognition through the act of childrearing rather than in an atmosphere of mutual support in the undertaking: ‘They are not raising children according to their own ideals, but thinking more about other children. It seems to me that lately we see a lot of this type of child rearing. From my view point – based in the juku – it seems that we encounter more and more parents who in this sense are egocentric’ (Komiyama 1995: 146).

**Table 0.5. Why send children to juku? (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child wants to go</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child doesn’t study when alone</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents not able to help with home work</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is more interesting in juku</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With school alone the child will not advance to the desired school</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching more directed toward individual needs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends are going</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot keep up with class</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheaper than private tutoring</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No special reason</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended by teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monbushô 1989: 39

Because of this focus on how the child reflects on the status of the parent, it becomes important that the child performs and gains admittance to prestigious institutions and, as noted earlier, entrance to such schools requires extra tutoring. There are, however, reasons other than status for sending a child to juku. Table 0.5. quotes a Monbushô survey on the reasons why children are going to juku, and clearly, they are diverse but can be seen to cluster around six common
Introduction

factors (those that were indicated by more than one-fifth of the respondents). Those reasons are (with perhaps a surprising topper): that the child wants to go, that the child will not study on its own, that parents feel unable to help, that juku lessons are more interesting than those in school, that there is a particular school for which entrance is sought and, finally, that teaching in juku is more individualized.

The percentage of parents listing exam preparation as the reason for sending the child to cram school roughly coincides with the examination-related tutoring in cram school, namely around one-third (see Table 0.6.), leading to the conclusion that probably only about one third of the juku clients are using juku explicitly and solely for the purpose of preparation for examinations. This means we must revise the popular picture of juku as exam-cramming institutions only. At the same time, it is also evident that there is concern about the way teaching is conducted, i.e. pedagogical concerns, something that is absent from the popular image of the parent who sends a child to juku. ‘More interesting teaching’ was listed by 29 per cent and 23 per cent the individualized teaching as reasons for sending their children to juku. So, a sizable group was concerned with pedagogy and teaching methods, though this does not imply that they did not have other reasons for sending their children to juku. Probably the most interesting, and perhaps the most surprising, discovery – at least to those familiar only with the popularized media picture of juku – is that slightly over half of the respondents said that the main reason for sending the child to juku was that the child itself wanted to go. This choice of what is presumably a heavier workload by children may seem strange, but is possibly explained by a combination of the child’s awareness of parental hopes and expectations and the fact that many of their friends will also be going. Indeed, the figures in Table 0.5. show that 16 per cent of the respondents listed ‘friends are going’ as a reason for their juku attendance.

The reason for parents wanting to spend amounts of up to 1 million yen on extra tutoring in elementary school and for deciding to put their young children through such an ordeal is to a large extent the prospect of entering one of the famous escalator schools. By entering such a school further advancement to higher levels is made much easier
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than via the public system. Further, there is also a small number of private middle and high schools famed for sending a disproportionately large number of students to high prestige universities such as Tokyo University. Behind this is an assumption of social realities described in the following manner by Rohlen: ‘The facts of life are that competition decides success and that all Japanese want educational success because it leads to better employment, higher status and more power. Society is seen as ‘naturally’ hierarchical, but the top is open to those who through special effort struggle upward’ (Rohlen 1980: 235).

Another reason for parents of today to choose to send their children to juku may very well be the power of their own experience:

While juku is construed by Monbushô and the mass media as the result of entrance examinations and a necessary evil, recently, with declining birth rates and rapidly developing entrance examinations, the rate of juku attendance has risen remarkably. The children that once went to juku have now become parents and are sending their own children to juku (Mori in Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 107).

In essence, Mori interprets this phenomenon as the result of the power of experience coupled with lack of confidence in the public system.

Parents seem to exhibit a certain ambiguity in their attitude toward the juku phenomenon. In Hisatomi’s analysis this is caused by the ambiguity in the hidden curriculum of the system of schooling. On the one hand there is the assumption that success in school is a highly individual matter and that test scores rather than ambition or motivation are to be decisive for the individual’s goals in life, on the other there is quite a different assumption that sees schools as indiscriminately accepting everybody from the school district and as being committed to the transmission of at least a minimum level of knowledge to every child regardless of intellect or background (Hisatomi 1985). The ambiguity is expressed by a father whose oldest child had just passed an entrance exam for a private middle school:

I cannot say that I support middle school entrance exams. I think the ideal situation was when almost all elementary school chil-
dren without further ado went on to a public middle school. Good teachers, a school with specific characteristics, interesting lessons. If I look at public education from these points, I cannot avoid the feeling that the more I look, the less I can find those good things (Quoted in Hamada 2001: 11).

Another ambiguity relating to public education is reflected in a survey in which Hisatomi partook in 1981, where it turned out that although 80–90 per cent of the parents were against streaming, they were for extra tutoring for slow learners (ochikobore). Evidently, they were anxious to avoid discrimination while equally keen on securing the level of learning. Further, the same parents would accept streaming in juku. It would seem that the roles of school and juku are differentiated in the following manner: schools are to provide basic learning, making sure everyone achieves that, while juku and extra tutoring in the home can be used as supplements (Hisatomi 1983: 47–48). Or, as Zeng puts it: ‘While the ‘crude’ form of knowledge comes from regular education, schools like Kawai juku16 extract, refine and process it’ (Zeng 1999: 198).

The juku business attracts large sections of all school-age cohorts and is a phenomenon that can by no means be overlooked when discussing the situation of Japanese education. This will naturally affect teaching in school, children’s response to this teaching and children’s social lives in general. As a result of recent changes in Japanese public education and increasing attendance at private middle schools the situation for this particular age segment is of great concern and exhibits more significant changes than the older age segments.

As can be seen in Table 0.3, about one-third of all elementary school children (and about two-thirds of all middle school children) receive training and instruction outside the public system of schooling. Further, a situation like this must inevitably influence or challenge Monbushô’s established ideology of equal access and opportunity in education. The emphasis placed by Monbushô on equal opportunity in education stems from the Fundamental Law of Education.17 Particularly of interest here is § 3 on equality of access to education (Kyôiku no kikai kintô) (Kyôiku Roppô 1990: 24). Hitherto this equality has mainly been maintained by providing similar facilities for each school throughout the country, by issuing
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national curriculum guidelines and allowing only a select number of textbooks for use in public schools. The curriculum guidelines have been so detailed that it has jokingly been said that if you move between two classrooms at each end of the country, you would find they are working on exactly the same page. The type of equality of access found here is principally equality of access to material and facilities that are offered to the individual, but there seems to be less concern as to whether or not the individuals are equally able to take advantage of what is offered. ‘Access’ in physical terms seems to be the key word here. Though this approach to equality can be criticized from a number of angles, we must not overlook that this standardization is in a sense equality, as regional variations necessarily are small, and most students will have very similar school experiences.

This ideology of equality in access, at least at the compulsory level of education, is challenged by the existence of the private education business. We have the juku aimed at children of school age and in some cases pre-school age; they provide, as we shall see, an array of education services. The juku and more precisely juku aimed at elementary school children are the focus of this work. This leaves out juku specializing in preparing clients for high school entrance examinations and the yobikô, which are supplementary educational institutions for high school graduates preparing to take or retake college entrance examinations. Yobikô activity usually entails at least a year of extra preparation and the yobikô clients are commonly known as rônin, ‘masterless samurai’ (Tsukada 1991: 1).18 Classified as service businesses, they administratively belong under the Ministry of Economy and Industry, Keizai Sangyôshô.19 Since the service they offer is teaching, however, they are often dealt with in Monbushô reports, a late example of which is the report issued by the Council on Life Long Learning under Monbushô in 1999, ‘Seikatsu taiken, shizen taiken ga Nihon no kodomo no kokoro o hagukumu’.
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school children, juku can probably more reasonably be claimed to be merely answering to consumer needs created by already existing competition. The latter may be a result of the social competition and alienation mentioned by Komiyama, parents’ ambition as indicated by Rohlen, or it may be that the most simple and accurate explanation is the competition for entrance examinations mentioned by Zeng. Usually, as shown earlier, juku are popularly associated with exacerbating the already existing problems of stress and cramming in Japanese schooling that can also be seen in concerns that children’s health deteriorates because of lack of time to relax and lack of sleep (Yanaka 1995: 2; Chônabayashi 1997). Sending children to juku from an early age and emphasizing good performance in school are sometimes regarded as detrimental to children’s emotional development (Chônabayashi 1998). Juku activities are thus mainly depicted as aimed at preparation for entrance examinations at prestigious educational institutions; and by their very success they consolidate their role in the entrance examination structure.

Like most popularized images, this emphasis on training for examinations as the sole purpose of juku is lopsided. Official statistics alone confirm that over 50 per cent of juku clients state that they are there for remedial tutoring or help with homework (Table 0.6.). Only a third list exam preparation as their main reason for attendance. Zeng and LeTendre in their study of Japanese adolescent suicides note that despite the increase in the number of juku, there has been no corresponding increase in adolescent suicides, and they go on to point out an important fact that is too often omitted in popular accounts of the subject:

Cram schools also vary in size and quality. Some have classes of five or so and are conducted in the family room of a local housewife who has some proficiency in English, and others are part of ‘chains’ with branches in nearly every major urban centre and whose instructors are better paid than public-school teachers. Thus, few cram school students actually study intensely, and some adolescents regard them as places to socialize (Zeng & LeTendre 1998: 519).

As Table 0.6 (below) shows, the users do not view juku and the products they offer only in terms of exam preparation. Juku are also a necessary means for keeping up with the pace in school. More
than half of the clients in juku characterize their attendance at juku as motivated by needs for ‘remedial’ (hoshû) teaching or ‘help with homework’ (fukushû or yoshû).

**Table 0.6. Content of juku training, 1993 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Remedial Education</th>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>Exam prep.</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The rate of exam preparation tutoring has been on the rise in recent years, jumping by almost 10 per cent from 29.3 per cent in 1985 to 39.1 per cent in 1993, so there certainly is a clear tendency toward more focus on this aspect of juku activity. The ambiguous entry ‘other’ in Table 0.6 consists of an array of activities involving the practice of good study habits and the abacus. It accounts for the biggest decline since 1985, from 26.6 to 17.6 per cent. ‘Homework’ and ‘remedial education’ attract virtually unchanged numbers of clients (1985 figures from Hisatomi 1987: 40). In sum, the main function of the average juku would thus be remedial teaching with exam preparation in a strong second position. It should be noted, however, that very often these functions will be taken care of by different institutions, so that an ‘average’ institution exhibiting this particular division of functions is probably impossible to find. As also indicated by Zeng and Le Tendre, juku cannot be seen as just one homogeneous entity. Juku offer very different types of courses, and it is necessary to distinguish, not least because many of the attacks on juku seem aimed mostly at one type, the shingaku juku. It is at the shingaku juku that cramming of facts for examinations takes place. Teaching at such juku has been characterized as focused only on gaining as many points as possible on the entrance examination with no interest in making children understand basics (Komiyama 1993: 84; Komiyama 1995: 46, 95); as lacking in pedagogical outlook and too obsessed with the economy of the institution (Komiyama 1995: 112, 158–160); as pressuring children for the sole purpose
of enhancing their profit through better admittance records at prestigious institutions (Komiyama 1993: 98; Komiyama 1995: 116; Yanaka 1995: 36). Yanaka relates how there is even emerging a system of brokers who will try to persuade particularly gifted students to switch juku, thus hopefully enhancing the receiving juku’s success rate (Yanaka 1995: 68–69).

These shingaku juku owe their existence to the fact that the competition for entrance at prestigious institutions starts at very early levels, in some cases as early as kindergarten. In the words of the Council on Lifelong Learning commissioned by Monbushô, it has to do with the way admission to educational institutions is determined (nyûgakusha sembatsu no arikata) (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 79). This links to the strong hierarchical structure of Japanese secondary and higher education and the renowned gakureki shakai. Though there may be enough openings in the system to accommodate every applicant for higher education, or there will be very soon because of the effect of lower birth rates, the hierarchy between particularly institutions of higher education means that no two institutions are ranked the same and that top-prestige institutions attract a disproportionately large number of applicants. Competition to enter these institutions has created a market for extra, privately sponsored tutoring that seriously challenges the ideology of equal opportunity and access at any level. Many attempts are made to secure access to certain desirable institutions (and in the case of universities, many of them are in fact public) by investing in extra tutoring. Judging from the continued existence of these private institutions of education, enough people believe in their importance for success for them to make a living. Institutions that answer to this need are the shingaku juku.

It is still possible to imagine and probably even to find examples of people who get admitted to a prestigious school or university without going to particularly prestigious educational institutions or juku first, but parents have come to see such institutions as some sort of insurance of future success. To support parents and children faced with the task of planning an educational strategy, there is a wide variety of magazines and bulletins describing the qualities of certain middle schools as well as the juku that can supplement education. The magazines provide detailed descriptions of edu-
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cational institutions and curricula, evaluations as well as general advice for parents and reports about special activities such as sports activities, festivals, Christmas events and the like taking place at the target institutions. Some also include sections showing the uniforms used at the various schools.

Whereas shingaku juku may be said to be the result of the Japanese gakureki shakai or ‘credentialism’, the juku that offer remedial education, hoshū juku, are less entangled in this. The latter can be seen more as reflecting the shortcomings of the system of schooling today. They usually do not contribute directly to competition, but ensure that children are offered a chance to ‘hang on’ in school. While the shingaku juku quite obviously thrive on unequal access to education, the hoshū juku despite their more compensatory function are also a source of inequality. Whereas the Japanese Constitution ensures the right of the people to receive education in accordance with their abilities (§26), the fact that schools do not regularly offer remedial teaching has made room for a system in which one has to buy the necessary supplementary education. Since buying extra tutoring requires financial means to a certain degree, it follows that not all families can buy an equal level of such teaching. Even without considering social, geographic or gender variables and looking at economy alone, it is evident that it is an illusion to believe that there is equal access to education, or that all people can get education in accordance with their abilities in the present Japanese system.

Statistics on the family background of Tokyo University students send a clear message: 75 per cent of the parents of those students are in the bureaucracy or in highly specialized positions (Murakami 1996: 34). No matter how one chooses to evaluate the status of this type of jobs or the university itself, it is a clear indicator that access to what is commonly recognized as the elite institution of Japanese education is highly biased toward a specific family background.

The question then arises: what are these juku really like? Clearly, they contribute to increasing inequality in the educational system by the financial burden they place on their users, but in addition some have levelling effects as far as basic educational competencies are concerned. An interesting recent development in the official stance on the phenomenon of juku, and something that makes knowledge of them all the more important, is Monbushō’s publicized intention...
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to ‘acknowledge/tolerate’ (yônin suru) juku. This statement occurred after an interim report by the Council on Lifelong Learning which recommended that educational institutions other than the schools be recognized and the role division between schools and juku be discussed (See for example Sankei Shimbun 1999: 26).

On 3 February 2002, Monbushô invited representatives from about 200 juku to a meeting to discuss how juku could help provide greater educational opportunities for children outside traditional classrooms. The five-day school week was due to become effective from April 2002, and in order to avoid juku just filling up Saturdays with exam preparation, officials from Monbushô warned that the ‘five-day school week is designed to nurture children’s ability through experiences at home and in the community’. Activities that might be difficult for the regular schools to arrange, such as science and personal computer classes, sports events and nature outings were among the suggestions for Saturday activities that could be offered by juku (Asahi 2002).

In the early 1990s, as it became clear that declining birth rates would at some time in the first decade of the 21st century mean that there would be as many university places as there would be applicants, it was foreseen that competition for entry into educational institutions would decrease. This in turn would imply reduced business for the juku. However, today in 2005 it is obvious that the juku are very much alive and competition is still rampant. Granted, some juku have gone bankrupt, but it is still a thriving and ever-developing business with new establishments joining the ranks and with increased rates of attendance. Several factors have played a part in this: reductions in the school curricula mean that juku still have an important supplementary function; middle class families remain concerned over which university their children enter and use juku in an attempt to help along entrance into better schools in preparation for the university; and finally, juku themselves (those that have survived!) have been very effective at diversifying and seeking new markets to cover and new services to offer.

21
THE SCOPE OF THIS RESEARCH

A central aim of this research is to describe the relation between juku, regular schools and Monbushô. As juku are the point of departure in this triangular relationship, it is necessary to map out the typology of the juku in order to be able to say anything general about this very varied market. The juku I have visited will be put into categories that can be useful in a further discussion of the role of juku in relation to schools, children’s education and Monbushô’s policies. The categories have been condensed out of an already existing, wide selection. The final selection has been based on what I found in my empirical data. Descriptions of individual juku that exemplify each category will be used to enable the reader to visualize the categories and give an idea of the practical realities behind each.

My collection of data has concentrated on the micro-level, on particular institutions of juku. I have spent time visiting them and collecting self-characterizations and self-evaluations given by their representatives during semi-structured interviews. In order to bring this micro-level study up to macro-level, thereby enabling me to establish more general hypotheses, I use much the same approach as outlined by Zeng (1999), namely a series of three simple questions. The first is, what does the institution in question look like? To answer this I have processed the data I have collected from the institutions that form part of my empirical basis. The second is: how typical is this ‘reality’? The answer to this is found in the huge amount of Japanese literature on juku produced by users as well as by suppliers, where similar institutions or branches of the same institutions are described. Statistical material is also used. The third question is: what is the point? To answer this, I hypothesize and relate my findings to ongoing discourses on Japanese education, particularly to the discourse concerning the role of juku in relation to the regular schools and Monbushô policies.

My data have been collected in the Tokyo metropolitan area. This is the area where juku attendance is likely to be the highest in the country and where there is the largest concentration of prestigious educational institutions. Hence, a larger percentage of the student population than the national average is likely to be involved in exam preparation. My data therefore cannot reveal regional variations
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though such variations are most certainly to be found. My general statements on juku will consequently primarily be valid for greater metropolitan areas, although it is my sincere hope at certain aspects, my typology for example, will prove to be useful for studies of juku in other regions as well.

My material is not suited for saying much in depth about reasons for parents and children to choosing to go to juku, choosing to go to particular juku or the teaching approach in juku. To answer these properly, one must collect empirical data of a different kind, but it is my sincere hope that this task will be undertaken by someone in the future, as an understanding of the motivations of the users and juku’s pedagogical approaches will cast much light on the function and the future of the juku business.

ORGANIZATION

The work consists of three parts. Part I sets the scene, dealing with juku in general as institutions and with what they look like. Based on my own observations as well as on previous research and popular Japanese works, I identify the main categories that are necessary for dealing properly with juku. The typology thereby identified is then described in detail. Part II contains descriptions of the actors on the scene, the different institutions, their presentation material and their outlook, as gleaned from written material and from the interviews I have conducted. Part III deals with the whys, the hows and future perspectives, relating the data to larger issues in the debate on Japanese education such as economic factors, possible gains from the existence of juku, negative effects and their relationship with schools. The influence of various political measures and reforms is examined as well. Finally, demographic and social changes are looked into in order to cast light on the development of juku businesses in recent years and to venture a prediction about the future of the genre. In the appendices I have included a list of website addresses for the juku I have visited, a graphic presentation of the Japanese educational system and a glossary of the Japanese terms I use most in this book.

Japanese names are written the Japanese way, i.e., with the last name first, Japanese words are written in italics, but Japanese
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titles and names are not. Long vowels are marked with ^, except in certain names, where another mode of spelling is commonly in use, as in Tokyo. The names and locations in Chapter 3 on the small hoshû juku and of teachers who talked to me have been changed, but real names are given for representatives of larger institutions (typically public relations representatives) and researchers with whom I have communicated.

NOTES


2 See for example Lynn, Richard (1988) Educational Achievement in Japan. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press. It must be noted, however, that there has been some criticism of the Japanese data Lynn uses, because there is apparently no consideration for the socio-economic status of the children in the samples (Stevenson 1990: 87).

3 The example of Ienaga Saburô’s textbook trial may serve as an illustration of this. See Horio (1988) for details on this court case about what should be included in a high school history textbook. The issue of textbook censorship in general in Japan is treated in numerous works. See, for example, Dore, R.P. (1998) ‘Textbook censorship in Japan: the Ienaga case’ in Beauchamp, E.R. (Ed.), Education and Schooling in Japan since 1945, New York: Garland Publishing Inc., pp. 56–64; Beal, Nozaki and Young (2001) ‘Ghosts of the past: the Japanese history textbook controversy’. New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies, December, pp. 177–188. Lately there has also been considerable controversy over the history textbook Atarashii Rekishi for the middle school produced by Kyôkasho o tsukuru kai, a group that has been accused of nationalism and chauvinism in its treatment particularly of the Pacific war and Japan’s Asian neighbours. Fierce criticism has been voiced by China and Korea in particular.

4 See Amano Ikuo’s excellent study on the development of the examination system in Japan for further explanations. Amano, Ikuo (1990) Education and Examination in Modern Japan, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

5 The Ministry of Education. Science, Sports and Culture (Monbushô) in 2001 changed its name to Monbukagakushô as technology was added to its responsibilities. To keep it simple, however, I shall use the term ‘Monbushô’ for the ministry regardless of the period concerned.
Introduction


7 Private or national because public middle schools do not have entrance examinations as yet.

8 See Chapter 2 for a description of the cram school SAPIX.

9 More figures on the costs of juku in the 1990s will be given later in relation to descriptions of specific cram schools.

10 The ‘cram school’ here is equivalent to the term ‘gakushū juku’ used by Monbushō. In these figures we find only juku institutions. Private teachers (katei kyōshi) and costs for learning in the home (kateinai gakushū) are listed separately.

11 The survey covered 950 institutions from kindergarten to high school, both private and public. Of particular relevance are the 150 public elementary schools (7,200 pupils), 150 public middle schools (3,600 pupils) and 50 private middle schools (1,200 pupils) included in the survey. These schools represent all prefectures in Japan; only the private middle schools are concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Tokyo and Osaka (Monbushō 2001: 1, 5).

12 Komiyama was in 1995 director of the Bell Gakuin Juku and also consultant for Jukenbenkyōshidō Juku Atene. For years he has been engaged in the debate on elementary and middle school education and is arguing for more emphasis on wakaru (understanding) at the expense of the present focus on dekiru (can do).

13 This took place while the total number of elementary school students declined (Monbushō 2000: 343), so it did not necessarily mean more clients in actual numbers using juku.

14 We cannot, however, add any of the figures to each other since the respondents have marked more than one answer each. It is probable that similar answers have been chosen by roughly the same group of people.

15 See Rohlen’s description of the Nada school in Kobe. He found Nada graduates had a statistical chance of entering Tokyo University of almost 1 in 2, whereas the average high school graduates’ chances were 1 in 440 (Rohlen 1983: 19).

16 See Chapter 2 for a description of this shingaku juku.

17 Promulgated in 1948.

18 See Tsukada (1991) for a detailed exploration of yobikō and their function in the legitimization of social stratification.

19 Until 2001 known as the Ministry for International Trade and Industry, Tsūsanshō
20 The report warns against excessive use of juku and tries to visualize a future role for the private education business in balance with school, family and local community (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 64–88).

21 Gakureki shakai or ‘credentialism’ is a term used to describe the phenomenon of hiring on the basis of graduation from specific institutions or the determination of social status according to the prestige of one’s alma mater. For further descriptions of this, see Amano, Ikuo (1990) ‘The Dilemma of Japanese Education Today’ in Shields, J.J (1990) [1989], pp. 111–123, and Cummings, W. K. (1980) Education and Equality in Japan, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

22 Examples of such magazines: Shingaku Bukku, Gakushûjuku Zenran, Gôkaku Reedaa, Shingaku Tsûshin, all available from book shops.

23 See the section on hoshû juku in Chapter 1 for further information on this issue.

PART I

THE SCENE

Part one will open with a chapter on how I have typologized juku and relate this to other such attempts, primarily in literature in Japanese. It will provide the characteristics of the different juku on a general level. There will be a section on the personnel running the juku, the juku teachers and a section on how to categorize the juku.
Chapter 1

The Typology of Juku

In the following I shall try to develop the necessary typology for analysing the diverse juku market. Unless a typology is clearly defined, there is the danger of imprecise use of categories or lumping together too much, thus sacrificing complexity and cutting oneself off from having a meaningful and productive discussion of the variations in the studied area. I have narrowed the subject area by not dealing with yobikô (for high school graduates) and juku concerned solely with middle or high school students. Even so, as will be plain from the different categories described, there is still clearly a need for distinguishing among the varying institutions aimed at elementary school pupils in order to focus on their role and to direct criticism, and praise as required. This study is partly qualitative in that it uses interviews with juku representatives and juku promotion material as raw data in order to describe particular institutions. To relate this to a macro-level and to enable generalizations about juku’s role in relation to schools, a typology has been identified based on my own empirical data as well as general works by scholars and educators in the field. To indicate the typicality of the reality presented by the raw data and to support the development of a typology statistical data and general descriptions produced by juku directors, teachers or users are used.

My sources for establishing the categories of juku represent several different backgrounds and media. Some examples: Shimura et al. and Komiyama are important primary sources as they are directly involved in the business as teachers or juku directors. NIRA stands for National Institute for Research Advancement, a body of educators and researchers taking an academic approach to the subject, Yanaka and Noguchi are journalists representing the interpretations of the mass media. Sugiyama is a parent turned
juku expert, compiling manuals for parents to assist them when choosing a juku.

I have conducted several interviews with juku representatives. They were asked among other things to categorize their institutions, describe their activities and aims, comment on their relation with schools, describe their clients and the motivations of their clients for attending juku and to describe what their policy in relation to their teachers.¹ The terms I have chosen for the categories are already in use in my background material as well as in the public debate and thus were readily used by the interviewees themselves. However, many of these had misgivings about these terms, as they appeared to them to be imprecise or as having shifting meanings according to who used them. To make my own use of those terms clearer, I have defined them according to eight different variables (students, focus, relation to school, text material, size, admission, advertising and atmosphere). Using these, I then categorize the juku in order to pinpoint the differences between them. There may be other terms in use for these institutions, and other distinctions could surely have been chosen, but as far as my findings indicate, the distinctions I use in the following should be suitably accurate for my purposes.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

‘For Japanese children of today going to juku seems to have become a natural thing. ... And isn’t it also so, that you parents have come to see juku as safe places almost like care centres (Kitaoka 1998: 2)?’ Thus writes Kitaoka Miwa, a freelance writer who authored a book on the choice of juku in the Kansai area. In the following I will present a very general picture of the institutions for elementary school pupils known as juku, or gakushû juku (academic juku) in situations where it is necessary to distinguish them from places teaching the piano and the like.

A juku is attended by children who usually also go to school and they attend for at least three different reasons. The first is to prepare for an entrance examination, the second is to get better grades in school or just to keep up with the pace in class and finally the juku may serve as a place to stay and meet friends (NIRA 1996: 74). A survey on what was judged by users to be the effects of juku
The Typology of *Juku*

was conducted by the Benesse Education Research Center in 1996 among 2,000 elementary school children in Tokyo, Chiba and Gifu; 49.9 per cent of the 2,000 surveyed children went to juku, 38.7 per cent had never done so. The respondents were asked to judge the effect of their own juku attendance on four issues concerning their school performance and daily life. The survey came up with the results shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1. Perceived effect of juku attendance, 1995 (%).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very high effect</th>
<th>High effect</th>
<th>Not much effect</th>
<th>No effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Better studying techniques</strong></td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More friends</strong></td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More interested in studying</strong></td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Better grades in school</strong></td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Not surprisingly, the item ‘better studying techniques’ comes in first with 78.8 per cent of the respondents indicating that juku had a high or very high effect on their studying techniques. The issue of better studying techniques in all literature on juku is always a central point in particular with juku dealing with elementary school children. What is interesting about the survey results is the rather high evaluation of juku’s function as a place to make friends: 68.4 per cent of the respondents answered that juku had a high or very high effect in this area. Clearly, a number of the juku schedules must, perhaps inadvertently, be leaving time for socializing; they are not merely cramming institutions. The other two issues represented in Table 1.1, where juku was perceived to have high or very high effect by more than 60 per cent of the respondents was in increased interest in studying, i.e. motivation, and in bettering an individual’s performance in school in the form of better grades. This last
item is one where the pay-offs of juku attendance are very easily
determined, and therefore an area given much attention by most
juku in their daily activities, self-assessment and self promotion as
well as by the users.

The juku can offer remedial teaching (hoshū) as well as supplementary
(fukushū) or preparatory (yoshū) teaching. Additionally, one can find
particular ability-based courses for exam preparation (shingaku), often
with specified prestigious schools as their goal. Some juku will cover
both of these functions, that is, supplementary teaching as well as exam
preparation; others have specialized in one or the other. As Rohlen notes,
juku are often distinguished in popular speech as shingaku juku (juku for
advancement) for better students, and hoshū juku (juku for remedial
teaching) where catching-up is the main objective (Rohlen 1980:
210). This is consistent with what I found in my interviews, though
most of the representatives also tried to define the term further, an
effort that may be taken to indicate their feeling that popular usage
did not adequately describe their particular institution.

In addition to shingaku and hoshū juku, there is the kyōsai juku
(Tanaka 1997: 197), which can be likened to a free school and the
doriru (drill) juku, which is a juku relying on drills and repetitive
exercises, often in the form of correspondence courses. Some
operate under the category deai no ba or idokoro (a place to be and
meet with friends) or even takujijo (care centre). However, rather
than an identifiable structural category, the last appears to be a
functional category, i.e., it is based not on course structure, the
nature of the juku, the stated aims of the juku or any of the variables
I use (with the exception perhaps, of ‘atmosphere’), but on what
the individual user states as the objective of his or her attendance.
I have not included the care aspect as a category in itself for the
structural description of the juku market in this study, but since for
some individuals it is an important motivation for choosing to go
to juku, it is described in terms of function here. My material does
not allow for a deep analysis of users’ motivations or interpretations
of their juku activity, so the description of this function is based on
second-hand material only and will be kept short. Similarly, my
material mainly covers the three larger categories of shingaku juku,
hoshū juku and doriru juku, so my case studies will relate only to
those; no cases will be provided for kyōsai juku. The three types
The Typology of Juku

have been chosen because they are the most numerous or those that accommodate most students in Japan.

The eight variables used in this study have been identified on the basis of other works on juku typology such as Rohlen (1980), Komiyama (1993, 1995), Shimura et al. (1995), Yanaka (1995), NIRA (1996) and Zeng (1999) as well as on what was said by the juku representatives I interviewed. Those were from: Kumon Kyôshitsu, Kawai Juku, SAPIX, Benesse, Tanaka Eisû Juku, Nichinôken, Sundai, NPS Gakuin and Yotsuya Ôtsuka.

The variables and their nature according to the different types of juku are presented in Table 1.2. for all the four types of juku used in this work.

VARIABLES

Atmosphere: How is the institution described in terms of what it is like to be there? Choices range from competitive/stimulating to overly relaxed, from supportive to nurturing.

Focus of courses: Does the course orientate itself toward the regular system of schooling or toward entrance examinations?

Relation to school: Is the institution or the course concerned with the activities in the regular schools, or not? Does it support learning as it is conducted in class, or is it following its own goals?

Students: The clientele of the different categories of institutions will vary significantly in terms of their academic performance. The highest performing are most likely to be attending shingaku juku while the poorest are likely to be found in kyôsai, with hoshû placed somewhere in between.

Teaching material: A variety of options are available here. Some use school textbooks, others use homemade material, still others use centrally produced commercial textbooks and some a combination of the above.

Size: Number of clients in the institution, whether or not it is a chain of institutions.

Admission: Are clients screened with admission examinations, or are they just accepted as long as the institution can physically accommodate them?
**Advertising:** This concerns what kinds of media are used for promoting the institution, divided mainly into commercial advertising and word of mouth, and the type of sales arguments, mainly either pedagogy or success in entrance exams (known as *gōkakuritsu* in Japanese).

**Table 1.2. Variables for typologizing juku**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>Hoshū juku</th>
<th>Kyōsai juku</th>
<th>Doriru juku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atmosphere</strong></td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating</td>
<td>Relaxing/supportive</td>
<td>Nurturing/supportive</td>
<td>Relaxing (often home study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of course</strong></td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
<td>Catching up and school tests</td>
<td>Basic learning</td>
<td>Basic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation to school</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Follow pace of classes, relations often close</td>
<td>Very little or none</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>High performers</td>
<td>Average performers</td>
<td>Poor performers</td>
<td>All levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching material</strong></td>
<td>Own texts</td>
<td>Homemade, commercial or school texts</td>
<td>Homemade, commercial or school texts</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>&gt; 200 students, some franchise</td>
<td>&lt; 200 students</td>
<td>&lt; 100 students</td>
<td>Thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission</strong></td>
<td>Entrance exam or test</td>
<td>Physical limits only</td>
<td>Physical limits only</td>
<td>No limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
<td>Commercial, <em>gōkakuritsu</em></td>
<td>Word of mouth, pedagogy</td>
<td>Word of mouth, pedagogy</td>
<td>Commercial, in some cases pedagogy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the material describing and analyzing juku, the following four types seem to be the most important and useful for a typology. My own interviews with juku staff have also supported this distinction. The four are: *shingaku*, *hoshū*, *kyōsai* and *doriru* juku. The variables are applicable to all four types of institution. What will distinguish them is that *shingaku* juku will have high levels in most variables: highly performing students, their own text material, admission exams, budgets for advertising and large in size. They score low on interest in relations with schools and the work in schools. Conversely, this is
where the *hoshū* juku score higher, while they are lower than *shingaku* juku for the other variables. *Kyōsai* juku exhibit much the same features as *hoshū* juku, but with a tendency to focus less on schools and what is done in class-rooms. *Doriiru* juku focus on drills in the basics, tend to use their own material and are often quite large in terms of enrolment.

**SHINGAKU JUKU**

In *shingaku* juku students mainly belong to the highest performing quarter or fifth of a normal class. Teaching at *shingaku* courses is intended to prepare clients for entrance examinations, is ahead of teaching in schools and the pace will be quite rapid. Usually there will be no consideration for what is being taught at the same time in schools. Even so, some surveys have found examples of students who initially attended a *shingaku* course for *hoshū* (remedial) purposes, but later switched to exam preparation proper (NIRA 1996: 164, 196).

In the different guides intended for those about to choose a juku, it is usually recommended that children with good grades in school and disciplined study habits should enrol in *shingaku* courses. Such children often find teaching in school unsatisfactory or even tedious, and attending a *shingaku* course where all the other students are also bright and hard-working will be a stimulating change for them, it is maintained (Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyūkai 1995: 75). The National Institute for Research Advancement, in their 1996 report on Japanese education seen from the view point of juku, mentions the same phenomenon of high achievers being ‘let loose’ in juku, but also notes that the very fact that they are allowed to get so much ahead probably contributes to their boredom with ordinary school lessons that will be repetitions of material they have already been through in juku (NIRA 1996: 161).

Almost all of the juku offering courses like this for obvious reasons use their own teaching material, which tends to be on a rather high level. Big juku produce their own materials; smaller juku will use the material publishers have produced for *shingaku* training (Komiyama 1993: 83). Teaching material published by Yotsuya Ōtsuka or Sundai, for example, is very popular and can be bought in ordinary book shops all over Japan.
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

Since a high level of ability will be necessary to get admitted to a prestigious middle or high school, shingaku juku themselves generally use entrance examinations to screen their clients, and the teaching will be carried out in classes divided according to entrance test scores and weekly tests, as well as according to the school aimed at.

Shingaku courses will rarely be promoted in terms of pedagogy but rather in terms of how many of last year’s clients gained admittance to prestigious educational institutions. Gokakuritsu (rate of successful applicants) is the buzz word and this rate of admission will be proudly presented in the juku’s promotion material and posted in prominent places around the juku’s buildings, sometimes even including the names and addresses of the successful students. Teachers are usually presented with their photo and the name of their alma mater. The phenomenon of ‘star teachers’ is also often exploited in advertising and such teachers usually receive very high salaries. The main business concern is to produce successful graduates and thereby achieve a high gokakuritsu and a good record of clients entering the institution they are aiming at. This reinforces a tendency for learning to be pursued for the sake of examinations and nothing else. Many of the books and manuals counselling parents in their choice of juku advice caution. One should choose a juku that states not only the number of successful candidates, i.e. the number of gokakusha, but also the total number of students from the juku attempting to take the examinations, so the numbers are put in their proper proportions (see for example Kitaoka 1998: 26).

The Director of Kawai Juku, Matsui Etsuo, made the following comment in relation to this:

I was at a meeting and being rather proud that our institution was able to place 70 per cent of our clients in the school they hoped for. But an old friend said to me, ‘that’s not very good, you know, 30 per cent will have failed. You cannot say you have been successful until your rate is 100 per cent!’ In a sense I suppose he is right (Interview with Matsui 2003).

Shingaku juku constitute about one-fifth of the total number of juku enrolling 10 to 20 per cent of the children going to juku. They are mostly quite large, with more than a thousand students (Komiyama 1993: 83–84). Classes tend to be large, 40–50 students, but lately
some juku have discovered that offering small classes make a good sales argument. Some shingaku juku have franchise systems of different sorts. For example, it is not uncommon to see juku advertise that they use the ‘Yotsuya Ôtsuka material and approach’.

Classes and sometimes also seating is ability-based and competition can reach such proportions that children prefer not to have to compete with their friends in such courses. Accordingly, they will hesitate to choose the same juku for shingaku courses as any close friend (Yanaka 1995: 33; Komiyama 1995: 68, 82). The atmosphere is thus seen as being competitive, sometimes to the degree that it jeopardizes friendships. Further, for families where both parents work, there may be serious practical problems involved in relation to preparing lunch boxes, picking up the child after class in juku, parent participation and the like.

HOSHÛ JUKU

These juku offer remedial teaching as a supplement to teaching in the schools. Until 1966 schools themselves offered remedial teaching, but stopped doing so routinely due to a new agreement between the teachers’ organization Nikkyôso and Monbushô, this task has passed on to the juku (NIRA 1996: 63, 75).

One major reason for this change was that schools had begun to demand a fee for extra remedial teaching. Remedial teaching requires a lot of time for preparing materials and it requires that teachers put in extra time, or perhaps even the hiring of an extra teacher for this specific purpose. Since the official wage system provided no compensation for this extra work, schools had started charging fees to cover their expenses. Of course this was in conflict with the Fundamental Law on Education § 3, where it is said that there must be no discrimination based on means in people’s access to education. In addition to the legal problem, it also had the potential of increasing the workload on teachers interminably. So Nikkyôso as well as Monbushô were dissatisfied with this method for providing remedial education. Further, it was argued that schools should not contribute to competition by offering extra teaching, but instead revise the system that created ochikobore (students who are unable to follow the pace in class) in the first place.
words, schooling should be reformed so that nobody would require extra tutoring. As Professor Fujita Hidenori, formerly of Tokyo University, has pointed out, these noble intentions disregarded the immediate problems faced by ochikobore, and reforms to ease the problems have failed to materialize so far (Fujita 1997, personal communication).

That the problem of ochikobore is indeed serious is reflected in a survey made by the teacher organization Zen Nippon Kyōshokuin Kumiai Kyōgikai (Zenkyō) in 1990 in a school in Tokyo. It indicated that in the fourth grade of elementary school 16 per cent of the children felt they understood what was going on in class well, while 13 per cent did not understand much and 5 per cent understood nothing. For sixth graders the figures were 0 per cent understanding well, 21 per cent not understanding much and 11 per cent understanding nothing at all. These figures may be a bit biased as the organization at the time was arguing against what they saw as an overly crammed curriculum, but it gives a general impression that the problem is not only known but also of some dimension. Representatives from some of the juku I talked to would say, concerning this problem of children lagging behind, that: ‘School alone is not enough. There is not enough support or challenge for the children’ (Interview with Suzuki (Kumon) 1996), and ‘Our juku tries to help ochikobore, to give them a real chance in the suisen system’ (Interview with Usui (Tanaka Eisū juku) 1997).

Many hoshū courses which now take care of remedial teaching use homemade material to support the textbooks used at the local public school (Yanaka 1995: 45). Hoshū courses will prepare the students for upcoming lessons at school and do exercises on past lessons. The goal is higher grades, and as a result, hopefully a better naishinshō report.

Most effort in hoshū juku is directed at mid-term and final tests in schools. The relation to schools thus is quite close, as much of the effort concentrates on helping the children cope with the material at hand in class. In other respects the relation may also be quite close because the juku teachers get to know the local public school and its style and traditions quite well as they will usually be present in the same local area for a number of years. There are even a few examples of school teachers co-operating with the juku
on a child’s training. This will be elaborated on later, particularly in the description of NPS Gakuin. Co-operation between schools and juku is likely to increase, especially now that Monbushô has softened its hitherto condemnatory stance with regard to juku and is contemplating a certain degree of acknowledgement. Another example of possible new paths of co-operation was provided by a high school teacher who told me that he was planning to extend relations with juku accommodating middle school students, so that the juku would recommend his school to their clients. This would be a necessary step for the school’s survival, he felt (Interview with Satô 2003).

Juku offering hoshû courses are usually small with fewer than 200 students and sometimes with as little as 10–20 students. Most such juku rest on some sort of pedagogical idea conceived by the founder, who will be teaching alone or along with one or a few employees. Often these juku are chosen because of a particular teacher (Komiyama 1993: 85). In such cases word of mouth is the most important means of advertising. Admission is usually limited only by the capacity of the juku’s physical conditions. This does in fact often present a significant obstacle and many local hoshû juku have waiting lists.

The students are generally but by no means always average performers or a little below average. Focus is on what is taught in school and on deepening the students’ understanding of this teaching. The emphasis is on basic understanding. Elementary school students who are not intending to take a middle school entrance examination are usually advised to choose a hoshû course. This will give them the basic knowledge which would be difficult to catch up with if left unattended until middle school. They can learn good study habits and the joy of learning in a hoshû course and then switch to a shingaku course in middle school in preparation for high school entrance examinations if so desired.

Depending on the school one aspired to, a hoshû course might be enough revision in preparation for the entrance examination for the desired institution, so functionally it can become equivalent to a shingaku course for some individuals.

Juku professionals like Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyûkai evaluate these hoshû courses quite highly. For an otherwise motivated child who has some problems in school, hoshû courses and a supportive home can
make all the difference. The child will gain a deeper understanding of what he or she learns, and gradually his or her grades will improve, it is maintained (Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyûkai 1995: 72). Takashima and Ozasa, who are also experienced juku professionals, also think highly of such courses, particularly the qualifications of the teachers: ‘Even where a teacher is doing everything alone, his or her understanding of the subjects in elementary and middle school is deep. Otherwise, no students would show up’ (Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 153).

Often hoshû courses are described as having a more relaxed atmosphere than shingaku juku or regular schools for that matter, and children will often go with their friends to such courses, since there is no competition that could cause problems for their friendship. (See Table 2. for a recapitulation of the features of the hoshû juku according to my variables).

**DORIRU JUKU**

The doriru juku functionally looks much like the hoshû juku but there are differences large enough to warrant a separate category for this type of institution, as will be clear when we go through the variables. The doriru juku is mostly concerned with practising basic skills or skills that can become practically automatic when practised intensively. Maths is a very popular subject for this type of course, but other subjects are also taught and as long as the entrance examinations were mainly concerned with testing facts, this method was very useful in many subjects. However, as more and more private middle school entrance exams have come to include an essay, there are areas where the doriru juku is no longer adequate. Nowadays it is primarily seen as a supplement, either to school, or to another juku or maybe as a preparation for later juku attendance.

Activities in doriru juku may be streamed according to class level, but often are not. Rather, the individual receives exercise sheets and assignments on the basis of a test at admission; after that allocation of exercises is based on personal performance. The material is mostly produced by the doriru juku itself. It may even be the very basis for the existence of the juku, as is the case with Kumon Kyôshitsu. Book shops all over Japan carry a variety of
exercise books for elementary school pupils produced by Kumon. There is usually no relation with schools or with what is done in the classroom at any given time. The child will work at its own pace and as far as it can get within the time it spends on the juku work.

*Doriru* juku are often large corporations enrolling children by the thousands or millions. Examples are Kumon Kyôshitsu, Gakken and Benesse. Students are on all levels but tend toward the average as gifted students are usually counselled to go to a *shingaku* juku. However, as a supplement, *doriru* juku may be very useful for gifted students as well. Admission is often based on a fee but with no other restrictions; for advertising these institutions often have very big budgets indeed. Some have a wide variety of other activities within their corporation that may be mutually supporting. Benesse in particular is known for having a diverse selection of activities other than juku.

The ‘atmosphere’ variable is less important where correspondence courses are concerned of course, though obviously the potential for a very relaxed atmosphere is certainly there. As for institutions like Kumon where there are proper classrooms, the atmosphere may be said to be relaxed, since each child is working at its own pace and coming and going as it pleases (or as the parents decide). Since there is no classroom teaching as such, the atmosphere may seem a little impersonal and not quite as supportive and nurturing as in *hoshû* or *kyôsai* juku. This will, however, depend to a large extent on the person in charge of the classroom in question or the instructor in charge of the client. There will often be some competition as drill sheets are readily comparable, but since there is no definite goal, no named school one is aimed at, this competition tends to be less damaging for friendships than that found in *shingaku* juku.

**KYÔSAI JUKU**

This category is not used very much in the more popular analyses, perhaps because it tends to be included in the *hoshû* category. There is a clear difference however. Like the *hoshû* course the *kyôsai* courses offer teaching for children who cannot keep up with the pace in school (*ochikobore*), but the *kyôsai* clients tend to be poorer performers than the average *hoshû* student and the *kyôsai* course also admits
children with very serious behavioural or other problems like school phobia (tôkkökyôhi or futôkô). These juku specialize in identifying the source of an individual’s problem and recapitulating teaching from the point where the student got lost, often with individual teaching based on material chosen for the particular child or produced by the teacher for a particular case (Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyûkai 1995: 74). A kyôsai course is not trying to follow the pace in any class, but aims at providing the very basics of learning at a pace that suits the child. Often, children attending a kyôsai course are not going to regular school for various reasons, so close relations with local schools are rare. The last feature distinguishes them most from hoshû juku.

Manuals counsel that a kyôsai juku should be chosen for children who have lost the joy of learning and who are poor performers. A kyôsai course places huge demands on the teacher, so guides instruct parents to be very careful to choose a juku with a good atmosphere which offers proper guidance. The child must regain its self-confidence and acquire a joy of learning. Parents are told that scolding will only aggravate the problem (Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyûkai 1995: 78–9).

The kyôsai juku will receive any child which in one way or the other has dropped out of ordinary school education or which faces severe problems hanging on to this education. They will work on establishing bonds of trust. Often there is a charismatic principal who is a visible participant in these efforts. They will thus endeavour to rekindle the child’s interest in learning. Compared to the hoshû juku, this type of juku is much more thorough and can cater for children with more serious problems than juku offering hoshû courses.

Juku offering kyôsai courses tend to be small, with no more than a hundred students, often many fewer; and the main means of advertising is word of mouth. Both of these features are shared with the hoshû juku. As Komiyama remarks, what really makes a study of hoshû and kyôsai juku interesting is their potential for casting light on many of the problems in the present system of schooling (Komiyama 1993: 86). The kyôsai juku will attract the very serious problem cases, while the hoshû juku care for lighter, more amenable ones, cases that perhaps require only a little effort on the part of the public system to be resolved. (See Table 1.2. for a recapitulation of the features of the kyôsai juku).
A few sources mention juku as also having the function of *idokoro*, a place to be, *deai no ba*, a place to meet or *takujijo*, a care centre. Monbushô in a large survey on juku in 1993 found that many parents said that they sent their children to juku because the children themselves wanted to go, and that children in juku often mentioned the joy of making new friends when asked about juku (see Table 0.5. and Table 1.1.). This observation has prompted the idea that some juku serve as much as supervised places for children to spend time as they do as places of learning. In a sense, Komiyama observes, such juku have taken over some of the functions formerly taken care of by the family and the community (Komiyama 1993: 137-8).

Societal development has meant that the local community in many cases can no longer play an active role in children’s lives since people tend to have their workplace away from the local community where they live. Further, more and more families have two working parents, so it will increasingly be the situation that there are no adults in the home until the evening. In this situation the juku becomes an alternative to letting children be alone in the home (NIRA 1996: 76).

In February 2004 Monbushô launched a new plan for creating physical space and activities for children (*Kodomo no Ibashozukuri Shin Puran*). Saying ‘Let’s come together as a society to educate children by creating places to be (*ibasho*) where a diverse range of activities are possible for the children and where we enlist the strength of the adults in the community’, Monbushô announced that from 2004 it would activate a plan for engaging adults in the community in children’s activities after school and during holidays. They specified sports and cultural activities and expected families, local community groups and schools to participate as ‘one body’ (*ittai ni natte*). The plan was to run over three years and was expected to result in the creation of secure spaces for children to engage in the stated activities, which would ultimately be very important to the children’s development.

Children’s empathy, ability to take action, to co-operate and be positive – such richness of the heart is not learnt in school alone. We are of the opinion that these are things one learns while interacting with one’s family and with the varied people in one’s community.
The ‘Enterprise to Promote a Community Children’s Classroom’ (Chiiki Kodomo Kyôshitsu Suishin Jigyô) has as its goal to make such a social environment commonplace uniting schools, families and communities in the education of children (Monbushô 2004).

Evidently, even on an official level, it is recognized that there are problems with what children do when not in school. Before plans like this families tried to solve such problems in various ways. Juku, as mentioned, has been an option, and not only the local hoshû juku. Even a large juku like Nichinôken, which is known as the provider of very serious shingaku courses, recognizes this objective among its clients. Information section chief at Nichinôken, Segawa Shinichi, describes the parents sending their children to Nichinôken as divided into three different groups. First, there are those who aim at entrance at Tokyo University or similarly prestigious institutions, second those who worry about school environment and therefore prefer their children to go to a private middle school rather than a ‘ruined’ (areta) public school and, finally, those who see the juku as a caretaker (takujijo) (quoted in Noguchi 1997: 23).

There is no doubt, then, that this is still a function the juku have today, but it is very difficult to make any guesses about the extent of this kind of usage, and it is probably to be found in all the four types of juku dealt with in this study. As far as Monbushô’s statistics go, the percentages suggesting that a child is attending juku because it wants to cannot be taken to equal usage as a caretaker. There are numerous examples especially from middle school that children themselves choose to go to juku for academic reasons (NIRA 1996: 170, 198). It is conceivable that for many users the juku course as academic assistance and as entertainment or caretaker are two sides of the same coin.

**JUKU TEACHERS**

A short note on the teachers in the juku is due here. As already mentioned, some, like Takashima and Ozasa quoted earlier, are very impressed by the skills of the juku teachers and the phenomenon of ‘star teachers’ of course is not entirely unjustified. Many juku teachers are in fact very gifted educators, but the differences between teacher qualifications are huge.
Juku teachers have very diverse qualifications ranging from virtually none to university education. A Monbushô survey provides the figures given in Table 1.3. for juku teachers’ backgrounds in 1985 and 1993. Clearly people with no educational background in teaching were the majority. They would primarily offer remedial teaching and help with homework in a hoshû juku or a kyôsai juku (for example one like Kumon), while the examination-related extra teaching would often be undertaken by people with university education in a shingaku juku.

The figures in Table 1.3. show us that an increasing number of staff in juku are university graduates. This increase in educational level also partially explains why in 1993 the category with a background as a school teacher is zero. Increasing numbers of elementary school teachers now have a university education. In fact by now only a very few new teachers come with anything else, so schoolteachers are now subsumed within the category ‘university education’, and are no longer clearly visible in this type of statistic.

Table 1.3. Educational background of juku teachers, 1985 and 1993 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University education</th>
<th>School-teachers</th>
<th>Previous experience</th>
<th>No experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


I have met a number of people trained as schoolteachers who now work as juku teachers. One should not imagine that there is no movement between the two categories, but I have not been able to find any reliable statistics on this topic. Table 1.3. also has the categories ‘previous experience’ and ‘no experience’. The former indicates persons who prior to their present employment had teaching experience but no formal training as such, while those with no formal background for teaching compose the last category. Since 1993, with increased competition for a market wherein quality is an important parameter, it must be assumed that the category ‘no
experience’ is dwindling and that the increase in educational level already visible between 1985 and 1993 will have become greater.

An aspect of commercialization and the ever-present pressure on juku teachers to attract students is the aforementioned phenomenon of ‘star’-teachers. Such teachers are required to be great entertainers in order to keep students on their toes for the two hours a juku lesson usually runs, and they must of course be able to educate students so they will get admitted to prestigious schools. It is important that all students in a class can follow suit because it keeps parents happy and attendance rates high. A juku teacher must teach the students to work effectively. There are examples of highly regarded teachers who in their 30s can earn a yearly income of ten million yen, whereas, a regular elementary school teacher of similar age in the middle of the 1990s would have had a yearly income of about 2.6 million yen (Monbushô 1994: 89). There are also examples of students following a teacher if he or she moves to another juku. Thus the advertising will sometimes include information on teachers’ experiences at other juku (Komiyama 1995: 54–56).

For those who have been in touch with Japanese university students, it will come as no surprise that many students work as juku teachers or private tutors during their studies. This has become very common, but some juku, in an attempt to enhance their image as a quality juku, have started advertising that they use only graduates, not students. The practice of hiring students is still sufficiently common, however, for a visitor to be able to expect to find a number of university students among the teaching staff at a juku, as I myself did in a Yoyogi Shingaku Seminaaru on the outskirts of Tokyo.

Some juku, particularly those I have categorized as doriru juku, have ‘instructors’, i.e. people trained in giving guidance in relation to the particular exercise sheets used by the institutions, but not necessarily having a formal background in teaching. Such persons may be found in the ‘experience’ as well as in the ‘no experience’ category in the Monbushô survey depending on when they were surveyed.

Clearly, the term ‘juku teacher’ covers a wide variety of qualifications, in a few cases perhaps even lack of such. However, the competition between juku at the moment is severe, and more and
more juku are profiling themselves with the quality of their teaching, among other things as documented by the academic diplomas of their staff. Hence, it is most likely we will witness an increasing standardization of the required qualifications for a mainstream juku teacher.

**HOW TO CATEGORIZE JUKU**

Placing actual juku establishments in definite categories poses some problems. Since they are an expanding business, their characteristics are subject to changes all the time. The two-category typology described by Rohlen (shingaku and hoshû) is simple enough, but even this was reduced by Hisatomi Yoshiyuki, when in an article in 1985 he called both Rohlen’s types of juku ‘shingaku juku’. He characterized juku as supportive facilities out of school, aimed at exam preparation in elementary and middle school, adding that more and more students receive instruction in order to catch up and keep up with the pace of learning in class (Hisatomi 1985: 44).

This lumping together of the juku, however, does not help much with distinguishing between the juku that provide the bare necessities for a child to keep up in class and the juku that will go beyond the needs of elementary school in order to prepare the child for entrance examinations at a prestigious school. It also ignores the fact that these juku have very different bases and motivations for their existence. One is part of the examination race, the other is a supplement to regular schooling. Further, such lumping together makes it very difficult to understand Monbushô’s recent move to recognize juku in terms other than a desire to increase competition and pressure on children with elitist aims, the one feature of juku in general that is most widely known. A more nuanced picture of the juku market will reveal that Monbushô’s proposal, intentionally or unintentionally, carries with it a huge potential for improvements in the public system of schooling although in the process the system may become less public. In order to identify the institutions or structures with this potential, we need a more detailed taxonomy for understanding juku activity.

A further modification of Rohlen’s typology is the category described by, for example, Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyûkai, the
sōgō juku. These so called sōgō juku are described as offering both preparatory and remedial teaching and so have the characteristics of both shingaku and hoshū juku. Their strength is their all-embracing character, and lately this kind of juku appears to have thrived particularly or, perhaps more precisely, the shingaku juku in particular have begun to enlarge their market by doing more hoshū-like courses. There seems to be a tendency for juku in their struggle for survival (brought on especially by smaller age cohorts) to develop the characteristics of what one could call a sōgō juku, but if we use this as a category we may well end up using only this one and again become unable to make any real distinctions.

Another method from a handbook of education-related terms uses an approach more orientated toward outcome, stating that shingaku juku are for students aiming at national or private middle schools or at national, private or prefectural high schools. Hoshū juku are regional, admitting children from the same school and conducting remedial teaching and exercises at a pace that matches particular schools. The sōgō juku is presented as a mixture of the two. Finally, the kyōsai juku is presented as something like a free school for school dropouts and students who are hopelessly behind the rest of the class (Tanaka 1997: 197).

Sugiyama Yumiko in her guide to the choice of juku for elementary school children operates with four categories: namely sōgō juku, shingaku juku, hoshū juku and the so-called doriru (drill) juku, which primarily hints at Gakken and Kumon Kyōshitsu where endless rows of exercise sheets are a major characteristic. However, Sugiyama does not go further into the characteristics of her categories but goes on to explain about her main concern, the shingaku juku (Sugiyama 1996: 37).

Science journalist Yanaka Hiroshi primarily distinguishes between shingaku juku and hoshū juku and states that in shingaku juku all or more than half of the students are aiming at entrance examinations at elite middle schools. In hoshū juku on the other hand, the students are average or below average performers and go to juku in order to keep up with the class in school. Yanaka then proceeds to state that it is impossible, even nonsensical, to try to place any juku unequivocally in either category, especially since the number of juku sporting both characteristics is increasing (Yanaka 1995: 30).
The Typology of Juku

Gakken’s manual on the choice of juku distinguishes between no less than seven types of juku. Some have appeared already in other material: the shingaku juku, the hoshū juku, the sōgō juku, and the kyōsai juku. The last three used by Gakken are the mugakunen juku, a juku where children are not divided according to class or the material they work on, everyone stays together; the kobetsushidō juku, a juku offering individual lessons; and the maruchimedia juku, a juku that uses computers, software, fax, satellite broadcasting and the like for educational purposes (Gakken 2003: 6).

Official material concerning juku is not very helpful regarding the question of categorization since it often employs the rather neutral and all-inclusive term ‘gakushū juku’ to cover all academically related juku activity, thus distinguishing only between academic juku and juku teaching the abacus, offering piano or swimming classes and the like. Some distinction is definitely desirable in this area since argumentation pro and con the juku phenomenon, as well as a further understanding of juku’s nature will focus on what a juku is offering and how it affects children’s lives. Depending on the perspective, some courses will seem more desirable or legitimate than others, and so a device for distinguishing among the different functions of juku is necessary to ensure a nuanced and productive discussion. As Yanaka Hiroshi makes clear there is certainly one vital difference between the types of juku: ‘There are those who say that one can go to juku with a playful mind, but they are talking about hoshū juku as this could never be said of shingaku juku’ (Yanaka 1995: 31).

One of the problems with the attempts at categorization seems to have been the focus on a single variable rather than a selection of them. Yanaka focuses on the intended goals of the clients and ends up unable to categorize; others, like Sugiyama, look only at the contents of the teaching at juku and end up with a few dimly outlined categories. There have been too few variables to make categorization useful and the placement of juku in categories meaningful. I have increased the number of variables and argue that provided the ‘instrument’ for placing juku, i.e. the variables, is relevant and one can determine the presence of the variables, it is indeed possible to reach a level of categorization necessary to make the understanding of juku more nuanced.
The issue of determining a typology for juku is ridden not only with the problems mentioned above. More mundane factors, such as publicity, also share blame for the confusion. A phenomenon described by Komiyama Hirohito is an example of this. He claims that the term ‘hoshû’ has a bad image (imeeji no warui hoshû koosu), since it signals that its clients are among the less able half of a class. Therefore juku often change the names of their courses, so that the so-called entrance exam course (juken koosu) is really a shingaku course and the course called ‘shingaku’ will actually cover much of the material formerly known as hoshû material – although these courses may also include material that is slightly more difficult than that used in class in order to prepare, not for a middle school examination but for the more distant high school examination. In Komiyama’s analysis it is clear that the reason for renaming the course is purely commercial, the sole concern being to attract clients for the juku (Komiyama 1995: 125–126). Here the effect of increasing the number of variables becomes clearly demonstrable. Looking past the naming, which could be interpreted as one variable, and introducing some of the variables I have chosen, juku offering such courses can in fact be categorized. That this kind of ‘shingaku’ course is paying attention to the school curriculum justifies placing it in the hoshû category according to my variables. Of course more variables should be added to make the categorization more certain: this is just an example. Incidentally, users of the kind of renamed ‘shingaku’ courses described here by Komiyama will often describe their reason for attendance as for remedial purposes, i.e., hoshû. In this way they may actually be contributing to the number of students detected by NIRA as apparently using so-called shingaku courses for hoshû purposes, though in reality in this example it is not so.

It is well known that in any typology of aspects of human behaviour precise placement in one category is often difficult. Instead one is forced to place the subject on a continuum between ideal types. What I would like to suggest is that, rather than lumping all juku together in one all-embracing category, one should look at the categories as ideal types and place actual examples of juku on a line between these types if they do not fit the category exactly. As evolving and developing institutions juku must be placed on a continuum, with ideal types as the extremes or as stations on the
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road between extremes, and we must keep in mind that they may well move about on this continuum over time.

CONCLUSION

As shown, an unequivocal categorization of juku can be complicated and further, juku are evolving all the time. Graphically my conception of the juku continuum can be illustrated like this (see also Table 1.2.):

While kyōsai juku, hoshū juku and shingaku juku can be placed neatly on a straight line, I have placed doriru juku on a different level but in more or less the same location as hoshū juku. Doriru juku display features from hoshū juku in the variables atmosphere, focus and admission, but have features from the shingaku category in relation to school, teaching material, size and advertising. Since doriru juku will take all levels of students and focus on basic skills, they are placed on the same location on the continuum as the hoshū juku, but on a different level because of the features mainly caused by their size.

Using this type of representation one can depict a juku’s development and changes. The users may define their use of the juku differently from each other and the juku itself may change its focus to place it closer to one ideal type than the other. The sōgō (comprehensive) juku would typically be placed between hoshū and shingaku juku, but individual sōgō juku may differ considerably so that some would be very close to being shingaku juku and others will almost be hoshū juku. In this work however, I will not be using the term ‘sōgō juku’, as I find it causes more confusion than enlightenment with its lumping together of almost every imaginable feature of juku. Using my eight variables, categorizing without resorting to an all-embracing category like ‘sōgō juku’ has proved possible.

A central question in relation to juku is the evaluation or recognition of juku (juku no ichizuke) – Monbushō’s move to recognize
juku and its attempt at preventing juku from taking over the newly freed time on Saturdays. This move is the result of earlier efforts, dating back at least to Prime Minister Nakasone’s attempts at educational reform in the 1980s. In the work of the National Council on Educational Reform, a council established by Nakasone, the role of juku vis-à-vis regular schools was placed on the agenda. Starting in 1987 with a reference in the council’s third report on the role of juku in the diversification of education in the 21st century, it has cropped up from time to time. In the late 1990s the question again surfaced. As can be seen in the work of the Council on Lifelong Learning, the hoshū juku can easily, on a bureaucratic level at least, be related very directly to the daily activities of the schools. Not only can approaches and ideas from the hoshū juku be used in the schools, it is also possible to imagine close, daily contacts between the two institutions. In 1999 Monbushō was quoted several times in the press as intending to ‘tolerate/acknowledge’ juku (the word used was yônin). This was after an interim report by the Council on Life-long Learning in which it was recommended that the existence of educational institutions outside the school be recognized and specific roles for both juku and schools be discussed (See for example 1999: 26).

On an institutional level it is obvious that the shingaku juku and the hoshū juku will have very different attitudes towards schools and will see their relationship in very different terms. One of the hoshū juku I visited, NPS Gakuin, was quite positive and hoped for the development of triangular relations between juku, school and parents, with the juku mediating between school and parents as well as receiving feedback from the school on the child’s progress or problems, or developing plans for the child in unison with the school. Shingaku juku such as SAPIX, Yotsuya Ôtsuka and Sundai, on the other hand, made it quite clear that they did not expect recognition to have any serious effect on them. They thought the term ‘juku’ as used by Monbushō and the Council on Lifelong Learning included all kinds of institutions with after-school activities and thus very unclear. More than one of them suspected that what would be recognized was abacus (soroban) juku and piano lessons – in other words, not any of the types of academically orientated (gakushū) juku. These comments did, however, overlook the explicit usage of the term ‘gakushū juku’ in the press as well as in the official
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material, a term that effectively excludes piano lessons and abacus juku. *Shingaku* juku personnel correctly pointed out that what a school did really had not much bearing on their activities, because they were orientated toward the private middle school’s entrance examinations. Further more, they pointed out that since they were under the auspices of the ministry then known as Tsūsanshō (Ministry of Transport and Industry, today Keizaisangyōshō, Ministry of Economy and Industry), whatever Monbushō had to say was of little consequence to them. There appeared to be as much animosity toward Monbushō activities from the *shingaku* juku as is evidently, or at least has until recently, been the case the other way round.3

It is important to recognize at least two different reasons for juku’s continued existence. The *shingaku* juku and juku with related activities are the result of the *gakureki shakai* (credentialism), feeding on people’s desire for education and the hoped for gains resulting from it in the areas of social status, job security and the like. The other major reason for the existence of juku is the need for remedial tutoring. This type of juku is the *hoshū* and *kyōsai* juku and their existence is a sign of the shortcomings of the existing educational system.

Given this major difference, it is obvious that juku cannot be evaluated or criticized as one body, but will have to be distinguished as taking up at the very least two different roles. While *shingaku* juku can indeed be criticized for exacerbating the problems of credentialism and stressful schooling in Japan, the *hoshū* and *kyōsai* juku must also be applauded for catering for an actual need. They owe their existence to the shortcomings of schools, and it can be argued that without them the Japanese system of schooling would not be able to function in its present manner. Further, modern society with its developments in the job market leading to absent parents as well as absent grandparents has necessitated the services some juku can offer as caretakers. Again, this is a result of the lack of or insufficiency of other (public) facilities in this area. It is not only a question of having someone to look after the children, it is also a matter of having a place for them to meet and play.

The typology of juku that I am suggesting focuses on the self-stated aims of juku, their size and structure and their relation to
regular schooling. Focus on exam preparation, and the *gakureki shakai* implied by the focus of the courses, is a central variable for determining the category. Other important variables are the relation to the teaching in school, the students, teaching material, admission procedures, advertising, atmosphere at the institution and size. The level on which any one variable is present in a juku helps in its placement along a continuum among my four categories.

Actual categorization consists of placing the juku in question along the lines between ideal types or in some cases within the ideal types. With such a typology a juku can be placed quite accurately in relation to types using their self-categorization, self presentation and what can be deduced by the use of secondary material. A further dimension can be added by distinguishing the types as being based either on demands inherent in the structure of the present Japanese educational system (*gakureki shakai*) or on the shortcomings of the educational system as it has evolved. In this manner, placement of individual juku in relation to the various debates involving juku is possible. Such placement may promote the kind of understanding and insight necessary to evaluate juku for their merits as well as for their problems and perhaps possible lessons to learn from juku will also stand out more clearly.

It is my hope that in time the innovations in pedagogical approach and the range of topics and methods that can be found in many juku can be of use to and inspiration for the regular system of schooling in its efforts to cope with problems not only to be found in modern Japanese education but in educational systems in other societies as well, where this kind of private shadow education is a component of the educational setup.

NOTES

1 The interviews were loosely structured dialogues and an interview guide was posted to the interviewee in advance. All interviews were recorded and in most cases those present were only the juku representative and myself; in a few cases the person who had helped me establish contact (in all cases someone not connected to or known to the business) was also present.

2 There is an anomaly, however, as noted by Yanaka. In suburban Tokyo there have been many examples of children with mediocre grades in elementary school gaining admittance to prestigious middle schools. This
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The phenomenon he explains by the fact that such children go to *shingaku* juku and learn examination techniques, i.e., they learn formulas by which to produce the desired answers and mostly do not know anything about basics or backgrounds. Since they are ahead of lessons in school, they scorn school tests and accordingly get low grades in school but excellent grades in juku. The method of testing in juku and schools may also be different. Schools may be less reliant on questions requiring examination techniques (Yanaka 1995: 151–154).

3 Kitaoka (1998), Sugiyama (1996), Shimura and Shijuku Kenkyūkai (1995) and Komiyama (1995) are examples of such guides or aides in the choice of juku along with the magazines mentioned in the Introduction in Note 22.

4 I was shown material like this at Kawai Juku, Nichinôken and Kumon Kyôshitsu.

5 Extra tutoring, however, is not an entirely unknown phenomenon in public elementary schools anymore. Behind expressions like *inokori* (stay behind) and *noko-ben* ('stay-behind' studies), we find teachers providing extra tutoring after hours. This was reported to me by a public elementary school teacher, who estimated that about 50 per cent of the children in her second grade class were attending juku in spite of her efforts with *noko-ben* (Nakayama 2003, personal communication).

6 See Chapter 6, Table 6.1. for a more detailed rendition of Zenkyô’s results, and Table 6.2. and the related text for a further discussion of this phenomenon.

7 Two terms, *suisen* and *suishin*, are used to describe this system. It is a system by which a student can get recommended for admission to the next level of schooling (high school or university), thereby avoiding gruelling entrance examinations. The recommendation is made by teachers based on grades and assessment of behaviour.

8 *Naishinshô* is a personal report card in which not only grades but also manners, conduct and dedication are evaluated. The report is not accessible to students or parents, and it is used as a basis for *suisen*, entrance to higher level schools by recommendation, in which case admission to the desired institution is made much easier than for those without *suisen*. *Naishinshô* is becoming increasingly important for *suisen* decisions as can be illustrated by the following from a mother in Meguro, Tokyo, who is about to choose a middle school for her son: ‘I am worried about what will be in the *naishinshô*. He always does very well in tests, but when it comes to evaluations of remembering to hand in homework, and of his attitude, his levels drop … I have to have my antennas out concerning high school and university’ (Sai 2003: 74). In other words, she is not confident he will get a *naishinshô* that will promote him in the recommendation system, so she is looking for other options. See Horio (1988) for further descriptions of the *naishinshô* and Komiyama (1995: 24) for the relation to *suisen*. A comprehensive description and analysis of the *naishinshô*
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can be found in Imahashi, Morikatsu (1993), *Naishinshô no Kaishin to Kôkônyûshiki no Kairi* Tokyo: Meiji Tosho Shuppan.

9 The two terms cover slightly different phenomena. *Futôkô* is when a child for psychological, emotional, physical or social reasons, i.e. reasons out of their control, cannot go to school even if they want to. *Futôkô* is thus an unconscious reaction outside the control of the individual, a real phobia one might say, whereas *tôkôkyôhi* is a conscious decision. Even though the child may in principle want to go to school it chooses out of its own volition not to and will often be able to give exact reasons why not (*AERA Mook* 1996:173).

10 There are some public day care centres catering for *yôchien* (kindergarten) and elementary school children, but their numbers are scarce and co-ordination has been difficult since they belong under *Shakai Kyôiku Ka* (Social Education Division) in Monbushô’s Bureau for Lifelong Learning and not the Bureau for Elementary and Secondary Education where the Kindergarten Division is located (Fujita 1997, personal communication; Monbushô 1994: 30–31).

11 While I agree about the difficulty of placing juku unequivocally in one category, I think it is possible to place juku in relation to, if not within, categories and in relation to one another. I suspect that one of the reasons for Yanaka’s difficulties with categorizing juku is that the categories have been defined very vaguely, a problem I hope to contribute towards alleviating with this study.


13 In support of the criticism voiced by the *shingaku* juku is the following curious proposal from the Council on Lifelong Learning. It seems to indicate the council’s inability to see the juku for what they are – private businesses. The council suggests that PTA-like structures are created for juku in order to secure parental feedback on contents, course lengths and times, and users’ needs in general (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 85). Since we are dealing with businesses that are utterly dependent on their ability to make themselves attractive to customers by appearing to fulfil their needs, such tools are already in use. For example Nichinokë has regular meetings for parents (*Kyôshitsu Fubokai*), so the suggestion seems quite redundant. PTA-like activities, or in any case detailed exchanges with clients on their levels of satisfaction, were much in evidence at all of the juku I visited.
PART II

THE ACTORS

In this part I will describe some of the juku with which I have had direct contact. The examples I cite have been divided into the three main categories of shingaku juku, hoshū juku and doriru juku. I will also discuss their function as deai no ba, a place to meet, or idokoro, a place to be, a function that seems to be increasingly important. The descriptions will be based on interviews and written first- and second-hand material, and first-hand material from the Internet. The variables identified earlier will be used to explain the placement of the individual juku within the respective categories. I have not visited any kyōsai juku, although this type of juku is placed at one end of my continuum of juku types. I omitted them because most kyōsai juku are not part-time but tend to be the only schooling a child receives, and because they are often described more as ‘free schools’ than juku. However, they are an extremely interesting area for future research as they are directly involved with alleviating some of the very problematic cases of failure in the Japanese educational system.

In the case descriptions I rely a lot on interviews. The persons involved are presented in the beginning, but not mentioned as references where the source is obvious. Where the interviewee is not in an officially representative position (a public relations person for example), the name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual. Other material employed in the case descriptions is referenced normally.
Chapter 2

Shingaku Juku

What can be seen as structural corruption of the regular system of schooling and of the underlying official ideology of equal opportunity and access to education (kyōiku kikai kintō) is the activities going on chiefly in the shingaku juku, the juku that primarily offer preparation for entrance examinations. Because of them, it can be claimed that competition is on even less equal terms that it would have been without them and though an examination in itself may be considered unbiased and just, the difference in opportunities for preparation can hardly be conceived as just or based on principles of equality.

The shingaku juku featured here mostly offer courses especially tailored to assist pupils for entrance examinations for middle school, often with courses directly aimed at one specific school, the shibōkō (‘hoped-for school’ or target school). In 2003 6.2 per cent of middle school pupils were in private middle schools (calculated from statistics on the Monbushō Internet homepage). The shingaku juku activities can be roughly divided into two; namely review of material in preparation for tests (fukushū), found mostly at institutions such as SAPIX, and preparation activities aimed at enhancing the pupil’s general academic performance based on their own step-wise training (yoshū), for which for example Yotsuya Ōtsuka is famous (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 50).

The activities of the juku and their successes have meant that more and more students can pass entrance examinations. As the examinations are not so much assessment examinations as they are selection devices, they accordingly have to be made more difficult in order for the receiving institution to narrow down the number of students passing them. A vicious circle is started.
Discussions involving shingaku juku, however, are not necessarily concentrated around claims that educational demands on children are too high. On the contrary, it is not uncommon to find commentaries about declining academic performance, gakuryoku teika as it is termed in Japanese, especially as a result of the curriculum guidelines enforced beginning in April 1990 in kindergarten, April 1992 in elementary school, April 1993 in middle school and finally from April 1994 in high school.¹ The representative from the shingaku juku SAPIX, Takahashi Tôru, in June 2000 told me that he was quite worried about Japan’s future because of declining academic performances.²

In 1995 Komiyama Hirohito, a prolific writer and speaker on education and at the time head of the Bell Gakuin Juku, argued along the same lines when he said that the problem was not really that examinations had become more difficult but that textbooks had become too easy (20 to 30 per cent easier, he claimed) and so no longer containing the kind of material tested at the examinations for private middle schools (Komiyama 1995: 14, 29, 154).

The problem, by all accounts, has been exacerbated by the new curriculum guidelines enforced in 2002 (Hamada 2001: 10; Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 6). Monbushô in its White Book from the year 2000 comments on this issue in a section on the projected 2002 changes to the curriculum guidelines:

The normal amount of learning will decrease, but the children will have more space [yutori] and time for working with the material, so they will get a firm grasp of the basics and enhance the ability to learn by themselves and to find their own way of learning. Additionally, the complete curriculum, including high school, remains unchanged, so by the time of high school graduation, there should be no decrease in level (Monbushô 2000: 26).

With this newest round of revision of the curriculum guidelines, instruction in particular items that had been considered difficult were moved from elementary and middle school to high school or from younger classes to older. As a result the amount of learning for each school year in middle and elementary school has decreased by 30 per cent (kyôiku no naiyô o 3 wari teido herashiteimasu) (Monbushô 2000: 26). While Monbushô maintains that the overall level will not decline, this shifting of instruction in certain topics creates several
problems and questions. First, the inclusion of high school in the overall picture is probably an indication of Monbushô’s wish to go ahead with the comprehensive secondary school (Chûkô ikkan kyôiku), but it certainly makes a resolution of the high school’s status in relation to compulsory education all the more pressing. Second, the moving about creates problems in relation to entrance examinations for private middle schools, where experience has shown that tested material is unlikely to follow changes in public education. It will certainly create more business for the shingaku juku. (I will go a bit further into recent political reform efforts in Chapter 6.)

While the pace, high demands and the quality of teaching in schools may be criticized from different angles, it is also increasingly common to find criticisms pertaining to a decline in the level of learning. The presence of such contradictory assertions would seem to indicate a significant polarization of school performance. Several surveys have been conducted to keep track of children’s self-assessed levels of understanding of what is going on at school. In 1995 Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa found that at fifth and sixth grades, the average level of understanding was as follows: 13.12 per cent claimed that they understood all of what was going on during lessons, 44.3 per cent that they understood most of it, 30.9 per cent in several instances did not understand, 10 per cent did not understand much and 1.75 per cent understood nothing at all (Fukaya et al. 1995: 13). More statistics on this subject can be found in Chapter 6. These figures are from a report on gakushû juku published by Benesse. While there is no obvious political bias, the figures were produced as part of educational research sponsored by an institution with education as its business. However, there is no other obvious reason to cast doubt on the figures, and the set of figures does indicate the existence of problems with keeping up with the pace at school, (at least in the 1990s). Hence the existence of a certain need for extra training, even if the cited numbers may not be the most conservative.

A further aspect of business for juku relates to the fact that it is generally considered impossible to pass entrance examinations at the more prestigious private middle schools without juku attendance. A director of a Yotsuya Ôtsuka³ classroom, Kawato Yoshitake has said: ‘In reality, to answer the entrance examination
questions of the prestigious middle schools will be very difficult with
the curriculum and the guidance provided by public elementary
schools’ (Takashima and Ozasa 2000: 87).

Since material used for these entrance examinations usually goes
beyond the regular curriculum in elementary school, elementary
school alone is not adequate preparation for these examinations.
Unless one is attending a private elementary school, there will be no
guidance to support the choice of middle school (Komiyama 1995:
12–14, 27; 1993: 92–93). What was known as hensachi education
was banned from public schools in 1991 when the new curriculum
guidelines gave a higher priority than had been customary to ‘interest,
volition and attitude’ (kanshin, iyoku and taido) when determining a
student’s grades (Shimizu 1997: 121). Now the only way to determine
someone’s place in a national hierarchy of test results (in order to
ascertain the chances of admission to certain schools) is attendance
at a shingaku juku where hensachi tests are conducted and hensachi
figures and prognoses are routinely calculated. Alternatively one
can subscribe to various online services on hensachi offered by the
shingaku juku.

The importance of gaining admittance to one of the prestigious
middle schools is tied up with the educational hierarchy especially
among the higher institutions of education. The hierarchy, as
mentioned earlier, is clear to everyone, and parents with children
in the educational system are prone to be especially conscious of
this. The manual Kampeki Chûgaku Juken (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003)
is designed for parents striving to get their children into a private middle
school. The rewards for doing so are made quite clear. The manual
contains general information on when the schools hold information
briefings, practical data on their location, facilities, size and price. It
also indicates which of the juku are most effective in placing clients
at certain schools and how the graduates of the middle schools dealt
with in the manual fare when reaching university level. Among
middle schools there is also a hierarchy, based on their effectiveness
in placing graduates at prestigious institutions of further learning.
The particularly effective middle schools are known as the gosanke,
i.e. the ‘honoured three’ and in the Tokyo area for boys they are
Azabu Chûgakkô in Minato-ku, Musashi Chûgakkô in Nerima-
ku and Kaisei Chûgakkô in Arakawa-ku. For girls in the Tokyo
area the gosanke are Joshi Gakuin Chûgakkô in Chiyoda-ku, Futaba Chûgakkô also in Chiyoda-ku and Ôin Chûgakkô in Bunkyô-ku.

Taking a closer look at the entry requirements at for example Azabu, there are figures showing the hensachi-score needed for entry as calculated by two different private suppliers of hensachi prognoses (one of them is Yotsuya Ôtsuka). In Azabu’s case a hensachi around 70 will give you an about 80 per cent certainty of entry (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 58). Many of the other private middle schools have hensachi-scores around 40 or 50, a few even less, so this is rather high. For the other gosanke the needed scores are also around 70, though slightly lower for Musashi and Futaba.

Returning to Azabu, as briefly mentioned, a very important piece of information offered is how the graduates have fared after graduation. Azabu is a middle school with 900 students and presumably one third will graduate each year. By the time the graduates reach university level the majority go to Tokyo, Keiô or Waseda University. In 2003 the figures were 63 entries at Tokyo University, 53 at Keiô and 38 at Waseda. Kaisei, with a total of 909 students enrolled, did even better with 125 at Tokyo University, 82 at Keiô and 60 at Waseda (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 58, 74). The girls tend more toward Waseda and Keiô than boys. Thus of the Ôin graduates (718 students enrolled in total) 72 ended up at Tokyo University, while 114 went to Waseda and 72 to Keiô. From Joshi Gakuin (a total of 691 enrolled students) only 19 went to Tokyo University, while 96 went to Waseda, 55 to Keiô and 46 to Jôchi (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 65, 129). This clearly shows the difference between desired educational career paths for girls and boys, however this topic, while interesting, is outside the scope of the present research.

In addition to the problems the shingaku juku create for the principle of equality of opportunity and access to education, the Council on Lifelong Learning commissioned by the Minister of Education in June 1997 enumerates some other problems that combine to undermine the overall effect of schooling and the important aim of creating of a well-rounded personality in a healthy body: shingaku juku take up time, hence children have less time to develop their social skills and family life, stress and irregular hours ruin the life rhythm with late meals and too little sleep. In the end
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it ruins the health of the child as late classes and much homework in juku make children tired and less up to participating in school activities or sports. Finally, many children create cliques including only their juku friends and ridiculing other lesser performers, in this way ruining the social climate in class (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 75–77). Thus in the eyes of official Japan as represented by the Council on Lifelong Learning an important facet of shingaku juku is that it poses a threat not only to legal principles of equality of opportunity and access but also to daily routines in school, interaction in class and physical health as well as the social well-being of the children and their families.

It should be pointed out here, however, that there are several reservations to be made concerning the report from this council. First of all, most of its figures lump shingaku juku and hoshû juku together, while clearly most of the comments on academic pacing, late classes and time consuming aspects are concerned mainly with only one type, the shingaku juku. Second, the report tends to focus on the negative effects of shingaku juku and deals very scantily with the positive effects they do acknowledge that hoshû juku often have. Third, many of the problem areas mentioned in the previous paragraph are identified on the basis of the report’s qualitative data in the form of comments made at the council’s public hearings. These data are not qualified or supported by quantitative material, making it hard to generalize. We have no idea how many of the people they talked to actually came up with these misgivings, nor do we know who those persons are. It is not too difficult, though, to find other sources more or less supportive of the council’s understanding of juku. For example, Sukusuku Shôgakusei, published by Benesse Corporation, in their June 1996 issue has a feature on gakushû juku, where the pros and cons are enumerated and, on the whole, it comes up with misgivings similar to those mentioned above: juku takes up time that is better used otherwise and big juku push children too hard (Sukusuku Shôgakusei 1996: 5).

For working mothers there seems to be particular problems involved in a child’s juku attendance. Producing appetizing lunch boxes appears very high on the list of problems (and this relates to school as well as juku), an issue where it is felt that the working mother can never match the full-time housewife (sengyô shufû) whose
Shingaku Juku

presence in the families is often assumed by schools and juku alike. Also, there are the practicalities of picking up the children from juku and overseeing their homework. One mother, quoted by Hamada in an article in the weekly AERA, claimed: ‘Entrance examinations are impossible for working mothers’ (Hamada 2001: 8). Even so, an increasing number of families where both parents are working send their children to juku. Among the reasons given for doing so are bad reputations of public schools having much violence and bullying, concerns for dropping levels of learning in the public system or perceptions that some of the private schools (entrance at which is the ultimate goal of much of the shingaku activity at middle school level) are better at keeping even the busy working mothers informed. Finally there is also the use of juku – even shingaku juku – as ‘a place to be’ (ibasho). A couple with two children in elementary school says: ‘In the end juku is the only secure place to be for the children [after school]. But now there are almost none of the hoshû juku left that will teach things in a relaxed and fun manner, so in reality what we can choose is a shingaku juku, the aim of which is exam preparation’ (Hamada 2001: 11).

In the course of my work with juku, I have visited shingaku juku like Sundai, Kawai Juku, Nichinôken, Yotsuya Ōtsuka, Yoyogi Shingaku Seminaaru and SAPIX. The fees at these institutions are often quite high. Representatives from both SAPIX and Yotsuya Ōtsuka stated that their clients would have to be ‘relatively well off’ to attend, not only because of their own fees, but also because they would eventually have to pay for the private middle school they were aiming at (interview with Nomura 2000, interview with Takahashi 2000). One of the numerous manuals produced for choosing the right juku in order to secure admission to the desired middle school has calculated that the average yearly expense for sending a sixth grader to one of the juku they recommend (among them are Yotsuya Ōtsuka, Nichinôken and SAPIX) would be 1 million 24,000 yen (Gakken 2003: 36). Tuition fees at private middle schools are no little expense either. Sending your child to Azabu, for example, will involve an expense the first year of 1 million 959,360 yen all inclusive. The yearly tuition fee is 422,400 yen. At Ôin, the first year will cost 1 million 830,700 yen all inclusive and the yearly tuition fee is 436,500 yen. For schools with lower hensachi expenses may
be slightly lower, but none of the private middle schools treated in
the manual Kampeki Chūgaku Juken cost under a million yen the first
year. Tuition fees range between 250,000 and just under 900,000
yen per year, with most clustering around 300,000–400,000 yen
(Asahi Shimbunsha 2003). This very clearly illustrates the economy-
based inequality existing in the system, an inequality exacerbated
by the existence of possibilities for extra preparation for those with
the means and by the hierarchy between educational institutions.
Finally it does indeed make a difference for future social status and
career which university is attended.

The effectiveness of shingaku juku in assisting their clients’ efforts
to gain admittance at the desired middle school is revealed in
figures like the ones found in the manual Kampeki Chūgaku Juken by
Asahi Shimbunsha, Gōkaku wa Jukuerabi de Kimaru! by Gakken or on the
Internet homepages of the juku. Here the successes of the individual
juku in placing clients are enumerated. For the gosanke schools it
becomes clear, that the juku to consult are Nichinōken, SAPIX
and Yotsuya Ōtsuka. The Gakken manual even calls Nichinōken,
Yotsuya Ōtsuka and SAPIX ‘the BIG 3’ when it comes to placing
clients at prestigious middle schools, ‘BIG 3’ being a playful pun on
the gosanke status of the schools generally considered to be at the top
of the middle school pyramid. Successful applicants for the boys’
gosanke in 2004 were 280 from Nichinōken, 277 from SAPIX and
144 from Yotsuya Ōtsuka. For girls’ gosanke in 2004 Nichinōken had
267 successful applicants, SAPIX had 239 and Yotsuya Ōtsuka had
199 (Internet homepages of the juku, March 2004). While Yotsuya
Ōtsuka has less than half of Nichinōken’s student population, it has
in several cases still managed to compete numerically when it comes
to numbers of clients placed at prestigious schools: for example at
Musashi in 2003, when Yotsuya Ōtsuka placed 45 entrants against
Nichinōken’s 46; or in the case of the relatively well evaluated Keiō
Middle School when in 2003 Yotsuya Ōtsuka placed 66 against
Nichinōken’s 61. SAPIX in 2003 also did well at Keiō Middle
School, coming in second just after Yotsuya Ōtsuka with 65 clients

Despite differences in size, the three juku tend to place very
similar numbers of clients at gosanke schools. According to the
admission figures for private middle schools in 2004 as presented
on the Internet homepages of the juku, SAPIX, despite the fact that it is smaller than Yotsuya Ôtsuka and about one-fourth the size of Nichinôken, is right up there with the two large juku when it comes to placing graduates at prestigious middle schools. For example, if we look at the three top schools for boys in 2004: SAPIX placed 117 graduates at Kaisei, Nichinôken 136 and Yostuya Ôtsuka 59; SAPIX placed 102 graduates at Azabu, Nichinôken 101 and Yotsuya Ôtsuka 60; SAPIX placed 58 graduates at Musashi, Nichinôken 43 and Yotsuya Ôtsuka 25. The admission numbers from 2003 and 2004 (in bold) are shown in Table 2.1. with the figures from the closest competitors included for comparison. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find the admission figures for 2004 for Waseda Academy and Eikô Seminar. For the boys’ gosanke the major changes are at Kaisei, where both SAPIX and particularly Yotsuya Ôtsuka have had declines in successful clients entering and at Musashi, where Yotsuya Ôtsuka in 2004 had close to only half the entrants it had had in 2003. Compared to figures on admission from 2000, Yotsuya Ôtsuka really seems to be in a period of decline. In 2000 the figures for Yotsuya Ôtsuka were 86 at Azabu (60 in 2004), 106 at Kaisei (59 in 2004) and 56 at Musashi (25 in 2004) (Gakken 2001: 52–56). Although still included in ‘the BIG 3’, Yotsuya Ôtsuka was outperformed by SAPIX as well as Nichinôken in those years in the boys’ gosanke schools. SAPIX in particular is consistently having growing numbers of successful clients at the boys’ gosanke.

Table 2.1. Entry of juku clients at boys’ gosanke in 2003 and 2004 (2003/2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azabu Chûgakkô</th>
<th>Kaisei Chûgakkô</th>
<th>Musashi Chûgakkô</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nichinôken 127/101</td>
<td>SAPIX 131/117</td>
<td>Nichinôken 46/43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAPIX 98/102</td>
<td>Nichinôken 129/136</td>
<td>Yotsuya Ôtsuka 45/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yotsuya Ôtsuka 69/60</td>
<td>Yotsuya Ôtsuka 90/59</td>
<td>SAPIX 44/58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waseda Academy 18/NA</td>
<td>Waseda Academy N16/NA</td>
<td>Shidô Kai 23/NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eikô Seminar 11/NA</td>
<td>Eikô Seminar 14/NA</td>
<td>Waseda Academy 21/NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 50–52 and the juku’s own Internet Homepages.
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The figures for top three girls’ schools show a slightly higher performance for female Yotsuya Ōtsuka graduates than was the case for the males and indeed this juku has traditionally been considered more suitable for girls, a feature that was also pointed out by the Yotsuya Ōtsuka representative I interviewed, Mr Nomura. It does not, however, change the overall picture of a remarkable success for SAPIX considering its size. Looking at entrance of juku clients to Ōin (see Table 2.2.), the two juku topping the list placed almost the same number of clients there in 2004, namely SAPIX 86 and Nichinōken 85; Yotsuya Ōtsuka comes in third with 66. At Joshi Gakuin, Nichinōken tops the list with 130 clients, SAPIX is second with 119 and Yotsuya Ōtsuka third with 98. For Futaba, Nichinōken again tops the list with 52 clients placed there; Yotsuya Ōtsuka placed 35 and SAPIX 34.

Table 2.2. Entry of juku clients at girls’ gosanke in 2003 and 2004 (2003/2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ōin Chūgakkō</th>
<th>Joshi Gakuin Chūgakkō</th>
<th>Futaba Chūgakkō</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAPIX</td>
<td>82/86</td>
<td>Nichinōken 91/130</td>
<td>Nichinōken 50/52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichinōken</td>
<td>81/85</td>
<td>Yotsuya Ōtsuka 65/98</td>
<td>Yotsuya Ōtsuka 31/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yotsuya Ōtsuka</td>
<td>59/66</td>
<td>SAPIX 46/119</td>
<td>SAPIX 16/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waseda Academy</td>
<td>14/NA</td>
<td>Waseda Academy 25/NA</td>
<td>Eikō Seminar 8/NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keimeisha</td>
<td>10/NA</td>
<td>Eikō + Shidō Kai 7+7/NA</td>
<td>Waseda Academy 7/NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 50–52 and the juku’s own Internet Homepages.

At all girls’ gosanke schools ‘the BIG 3’ increased their numbers of successful entrants in 2004 as compared to 2003. In comparison to the other two, Yotsuya Ōtsuka appears to be doing better here, but it slipped to a third position at Joshi Gakuin and there is a negligible difference between Yotsuya Ōtsuka and SAPIX at Futaba. At Ōin Yotsuya Ōtsuka is also third and had an increase from 2003 to 2004, but compared to 2000 there is actually a decrease, since in 2000 76 Yotsuya Ōtsuka clients were admitted to Ōin against 66 in 2004. For the two other schools there have been slight increases since 2000, 90
at Joshi Gakuin compared to 98 in 2004 and 32 at Futaba compared to 35 in 2004 (Gakken 2001: 52–56). In essence even at the girls’ gosanke schools there is some evidence that Yotsuya Ōtsuka is the ‘weakest’ of ‘the BIG 3’.

Good student material certainly plays a part in those juku’s success in placing clients at gosanke schools. Since those juku are recognized as effective partners in the race for entry into prestigious educational institutions, they will naturally attract the more ambitious and most likely the more gifted students, thus giving the juku very good material to work with from the start.

It should be noted, that academic reputation and the ability to place students at desirable educational institutions are not the only sales criteria for private middle schools. Kampeki Chūgaku Juken carries a section on ‘Hot Uniforms’ (Akogare no Seifuku), showing pictures of the most popular uniforms of private middle schools. Those schools are not the gosanke – in fact a number of them are not very conspicuous academically judging from the hensachi score necessary to get admitted – so they find other means of attracting students. Their uniforms are considered smart and fashionable, so even schools with no particular academic standing to recommend them may be chosen for that reason (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 16–32). Sai tells the story of a mother who is uncomfortable with her eldest daughter’s school and therefore plans to choose another school for her second daughter: ‘One of the other mothers from the second daughter’s class visited a school about 30 minutes’ walk away. She reported that the principal was very serious and energetic. The daughter was excited, light-heartedly commenting that the uniform of this school was a blazer and very stylish’ (Sai 2003: 73).7

Appearances thus may also be a parameter for choice, as may location or the number of celebrities graduating from a particular school. In such cases instances of juku attendance is liable to be founded on considerations other than hensachi or the hunt for points on an entrance examination.

Following, I will present five cases of shingaku juku. All except SAPIX are rather large and all are well known to the public. SAPIX is included because it was started by discontented juku teachers and is evaluated in the manuals as operating at an unusually high level and a very good shingaku juku. As the data in Tables 2.1. and 2.2.
show, three of the juku I examine (Nichinôken, Yotsuya Ôtsuka and SAPIX) are the ‘BIG 3’ as designated by Gakken’s manual, another important reason for including them.

The shingaku juku described here all have websites. See Bibliography for a list.

KAWAI JUKU

This juku’s activities were originally aimed at middle school students preparing for high school entrance examinations, but now they also target elementary school pupils requiring assistance with preparation for entry into private six-year secondary schools. The hunt for an opening at a prestigious university has pushed the age limit for when a student should enter cram school steadily downwards. In 1976 12 per cent of all elementary school students went to cram school. In 1993 the percentage had risen to 23.6 per cent (Shimizu 1997: 109). This trend has also been observed by the Central Council on Education, Chûôkyôiku Shingikai, a deliberative body under Monbushô. In their second report in June 1997, they stated that: ‘the increase in juku attendance and shifting of examination competition to lower age groups are emblematic of an examination competition for university and upper secondary schools’ (Chûkyôshin 1997: cpt. 2 sect. 1). Business has indeed increased for juku.

On 27 July 1996 I spoke to Kondô Masayoshi, a juku teacher with Kawai Juku’s middle school section in the Tokyo area; I interviewed the director of the Kawai Juku Head Quarters for School Advancement (Shingakujigyô Honbu) Matsui Etsuo on 23 October 2003. Kawai Juku originated in the Nagoya area and is now encroaching on the Kantô area, where the other juku I visited have hitherto reigned supreme. So far Kawai Juku offers mainly middle school courses in the Kantô area, but it also has the so-called Doruton Sukuuru8 Tokyo, which offers courses for children from one year of age until the end of elementary school. These courses are aimed at teaching the children how to learn by themselves and make the most of their personalities and abilities. ‘Freedom’ and ‘co-operation’ are quoted as basic principles; the joy of learning rather than one-way teaching is emphasized. The advertisements for Doruton Sukuuru boast low student–teacher ratios (two instructors
Shingaku Juku

for every 8 children), specialized instructional material and an attractive environment as particular features. Another type of course offered in the Ikiru kara Kôbô (Life Skills Studio) classrooms here children in third to sixth grades of elementary school are encouraged to find their own topics, devise their own course plans and take charge of their own learning (See Kawai Juku’s Internet Homepage).

Kawai Juku was founded in 1933 in Nagoya by Kawai Itsuji, an English-language professor, and offers, as it says on its Homepage, educational facilities suitable for all age groups from children to adults, always striving to put the individual at the centre. Though mainly focused on middle and high school students, Kawai Juku has a variety of courses for anyone from toddlers to people seeking vocational training or foreigners in need of Japanese language training.

In a flyer included in the 2001 information material on elementary school courses Kawai Juku explains its current role:

With the curriculum revisions effective from Heisei 14 [2002] the contents of your children’s school education will change. According to some newspapers the number of classroom hours will decline by 20 per cent and the contents by 30 per cent [...]. Lately, we have also read that the level of learning among university students has declined. [...] If the precious class hours in elementary school, where one is to grasp the basics of learning, are cut, it is only natural to become worried. Even for the bright kids, there will not be enough teaching to assist them in their attempts to advance (Kawai Juku 2001).

According to calculations presented in the same material, with the new curriculum the total number of class hours in the six years of elementary school in kokugo (Japanese) would drop from 1,601 hours to 1,377; in maths the reduction would be from 1,011 hours to 869. Calculations like these must surely have been a source of concern for parents. This is where Kawai Juku comes in, with its courses offering to secure a well-rounded curriculum in the interest of the children’s future.

Placement in classes of 20–25 at Kawai Juku is allocated according to test scores and target schools. The courses available...
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and the number of days per week to attend are adjusted accordingly. In sixth grade attendance is usually two or three times a week, one of those being a Saturday/Sunday test, but special arrangements can also be devised for those having particular challenges either in the form of tests or requiring much ‘catch-up work’. The entrance fee in 2001 was 20,000 yen and monthly course fees will be between 7,500 yen and 25,900 yen (Kawai Juku 2001). Additionally are expenses for books and other materials. Kawai Juku produces its own textbooks because to a great extent their teaching is aimed at that which is not taught in school, but is nevertheless tested in the entrance examinations. Mr Kondô, the teacher from Kawai Juku said: ‘We can under no circumstances use ordinary textbooks. We produce material that is geared to the demands of the school the pupil is aiming at. Our textbooks are not at all like those in school (Interview with Kondô, 1996).’

After referring to the discussion between Monbushô and academics on the problem of declining levels of learning (gakuryoku teika), Kawai Juku presents material on their ‘Green Course’ (Guriin Koosu), aimed at entrance into private middle schools:

It seems like there are at least two definitions of gakuryoku. One is the basic ability to identify and deal with problems. Another is the ability to use basic knowledge and through that to grasp what is in textbooks. Both are probably necessary for living in this ever-changing society. At Kawai Juku we have created a curriculum that contains both aspects. However, everything depends on how these are taught. You need teachers who will make you realize how interesting the facts in the textbook are; teachers who will make you feel that if you work with them, you can do your utmost; teachers who will answer any question as well as they possibly can. Such teachers are waiting for you here! (Kawai Juku 2001)

Mr Matsui gave several examples of declining scholastic performance. For example, Kawai Juku has been conducting the same test in kokugo (Japanese) and maths at 10 year intervals. The test showed there was only a small decline in performance in maths, but there was a significant drop in kokugo. Literacy had become poorer and the children were no longer able to easily read novels, he explained. Related to this is another survey by Kawai Juku on how much time
is spent on preparing for school. This particular survey involved 16–17-year-olds. The tendency was for the elite performers to have unchanged levels of preparation (2½–3 hours), while those spending 1–1½ hours were declining steeply in numbers and 30 per cent did not prepare at all (Interview with Matsui 2003).

Clients at Kawai Juku come from middle class families or ‘salaryman families’ as Mr Kondô called them, indicating that it does take a certain amount of financial means to pay the fees at Kawai Juku, though they are not among the most exorbitant.

Kawai Juku’s elementary school division is concentrated in the Kansai and Chûbu area and their main target schools are also in that area. Therefore the prestigious schools where they place graduates differ from those I will treat later, and Kawai Juku is not on the lists of the most successful juku in placing clients at gosanke schools as shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Consequently I will not go into detail as to which schools Kawai Juku places clients, but only note that gôkakuritsu and the number of successful applicants is indeed important in their advertising. Successful applicants are presented in the traditional manner, i.e., how many to which school, and one of the entry pamphlets has a section with pictures, names and short messages from some of the successful students. When I visited the Kawai Juku in Sendagaya in October 2003 the number of successful applicants at selected prestigious schools was presented on posters placed beside the entrance.

Presentation does not rely solely on hard data like gôkakuritsu and curriculum details. Kawai Juku also tries to create a distinctive self-image, presenting itself as more concerned with individuality (kosei) than most other shingaku juku. Indeed the Doruton Sukuuru presentation overflows with positive terms about individuality and descriptions of the Guriin Koosu similarly focus on individuality stating that the aim is to ‘develop individual abilities to the full potential’ (Kawai Juku’s Internet homepage). Individuality has been on the general agenda of educational reform since the National Council on Educational Reform’s reports published during the 1980s. Juku – and especially those concerned with exam preparation – have often been accused of merely being factories producing faceless experts in entrance examinations, children whose creativity and individuality is numbed by excessive cramming. This makes the
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

goal of respecting individuality and catering for individual needs particularly important elements in Kawai Juku’s legitimization in relation to education in general. The inclusion of the issue in the presentation material shows Kawai Juku’s concern with how the general educational debate is treating issues like individuality and juku. It can also obviously be seen as a device to set Kawai Juku apart from other juku – a ‘they may be like that – we are not’ device to enhance Kawai Juku’s image.

Mr Matsui described activities other than shingaku courses that Kawai Juku has been engaging in. One is the Cosmo classroom, designed for students who have not completed high school, providing clients with what he called ‘social education’ (shakai kyōiku). According to the Kawai Juku Homepage, Cosmo offers courses for those seeking to obtain qualifications to acquire eligibility for entrance examinations to universities or junior colleges, or for studying abroad, for acquiring professional certificates or for getting jobs. The programme strives to accommodate the varying backgrounds of clients and offers a range of electives to that end. Enrolment can begin at any time, regardless of age or educational background. Cosmo is currently operating with a deficit, but Matsui saw it as an experiment with teaching and course structure as well as a necessary move to provide broader services for future survival. Here the concern is not gōkaku, entrance to some prestigious school, but to give ‘educational service’ (kyōiku sabisu) which in essence was also what Mr Matsui felt best described Kawai Juku’s activities in general. Other recent projects that set Kawai Juku a bit apart from the traditional picture of the shingaku juku are its activities in Cambodia. In 1997 it started out with Kawai Juku teachers collecting money from clients for a reforestation project in Cambodia. By 2003 this had developed into projects where, for example, students from Cambodia were invited to Japan for studies, or surplus classroom furniture was recycled to Cambodia at the juku’s expense. Mr Matsui said: ‘This was not something we planned. It just grew naturally from the initiatives of individuals’ (Interview with Matsui 2003).

Last but not least, Kawai Juku has considered the possibility of offering scholarships (shōgakkin) (starting in 2004) to lessen the effect of a family’s economic means on a child’s educational prospects. As
Matsui said: ‘We try to take care of as many persons as possible. We do not have to make much money, just to make ends meet. We really want to leave our mark for the future!’ (Interview with Matsui 2003)

According to the variables for shingaku juku, Kawai Juku can be categorized as such (see Table 2.3.). The atmosphere is naturally competitive because classes are assigned according to test scores and target schools, and different courses are offered for children with different hensachi or test scores. However, as Kawai Juku also has a lot of courses aimed at stepping up the performances of underachievers and with the advances in other directions such as the Doruton Sukuuru, Cosmo and scholarship plans, it is not quite the stereotypical shingaku juku.

Table 2.3. Kawai Juku according to the variables for shingaku juku

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>Kawai Juku</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of course</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to school</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>High performers</td>
<td>High to average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>&gt; 200 students, some franchise</td>
<td>5,100, elementary and middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Entrance exam or test</td>
<td>Placement test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Commercial, gôkakuritsu</td>
<td>Commercial, gôkakuritsu</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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At most other [shingaku] juku children are put under more pressure. Juku make their living improving children’s test scores. That goes for us, too, but in comparison with other juku, I think we appear pretty soft. So we get a lot of clients where the parents are interested in the learning but try to avoid the pressure. Those who want their child to enter a prestigious institution at any cost will not come to us (Interview with Kondō 1996).

Kawai Juku does not relate itself to the pace in normal classroom teaching or to what local schools are aiming at other than the previously stated desire to fill in the gaps that will be left by school teaching as the new curriculum guidelines came into effect. Clients at Kawai Juku are average to high performers and the juku uses its own teaching material. It is a rather large juku with many branches and many activities within the company. The whole Kawai establishment has around 85,000 persons using it, 5,100 of whom are in elementary or middle school (interview with Oda 2003). Upon admission one takes a placement test and Kawai Juku has a solid budget for advertising and the production of pamphlets and informative material. All of these factors place Kawai Juku in the shingaku category, but because of the other activities like the Doruton Sukuuru, Cosmo and the like, it will have to be placed a little to the left of the typical shingaku juku, nearer to the more supportive hoshū juku.

NICHINÔKEN

I visited a branch of Nichinôken on 28 June 1996 in Hiyoshi, Yokohama-shi. It is a building located 5 minutes’ walk from the railway station. En route we passed many fast food restaurants and small food shops and I was told that the local McDonald’s would deliver lunch to the juku when the children ordered it on their way there. The building is multi-storied and purpose-built, with large classrooms seating up to 40 students, and with offices and drinks vending machines on almost every floor. During breaks and actually during class as well, the place was quite noisy with bustling children happily chatting and shouting.
Nichinôken was established in 1973 and has as its expressed aim to offer ‘assistance for passing entrance examinations for national or private middle schools’. It offers classroom teaching, counselling on study habits and examinations and kyōshitsu fubokai, i.e., organized meetings for students’ parents. Additionally, there are of course tests, information and seminars on entrance examinations, as well as correspondence courses (see the Nichinôken Internet homepage). The Gôkaku wa jukuerabi de kimaru publication by Gakken (2003) describes Nichinôken as: ‘A juku specialized in middle school examinations, whose strong point is the large amount of information based on data on the most famous schools from the last five years. They provide individualized guidance on advancement in the school system’ (Gakken 2003: 20). It is emphasized in Gakken’s publication that students should have the strength and self-discipline to compete on academic achievements alone if attending this juku, but that in return it will take care of everything else. In 2002 37,700 students attended Nichinôken classrooms. The entrance fee is 10,000 yen and monthly charges range from 9,500 to 25,200 yen (Gakken 2003: 20). Since shingaku juku students mostly belong to the highest scoring 20–25 per cent of a normal class, we should expect to find that teaching at Nichinôken is ahead of teaching in school and the pace quite rapid.

Nichinôken is characterized by Sugiyama Yumiko, a concerned parent and analyst of the juku market, as the ‘juku that has made middle school entrance examinations accessible for everybody’ (shominteki na mono ni shita) (Sugiyama 1996: 85). Whether Sugiyama really means ‘everybody’, i.e. children of any academic ability, is unclear. However, it is evident, regardless of her praise for Nichinôken, that not every child can handle Nichinôken teaching and middle school entrance examinations, but Sugiyama’s observation is correct to the extent that many more children can now compete for access to private middle schools. Nichinôken explicitly states that standards are set on the basis of entrance examinations to private middle schools and that they prepare their own texts in order to supply the children with the knowledge they will need for the examinations. Nichinôken’s regular texts are not publicly available, but revised versions can be bought in bookshops (Sugiyama 1996: 86). The representative I met from Nichinôken,
Public Relations Manager Higo Tsunehisa commented on the relation between Nichinôken texts and middle school examinations as compared to public schools: ‘Our goals are different. Schools are subjected to Ministry of Education guidelines. We, the juku, have a curriculum that is determined by entrance examinations for private schools, but that does not mean one is better than the other’ (Interview with Higo 1996).

Nichinôken does not emphasize remedial education in particular, and is entirely focused on middle school examinations. However that does not preclude clients from using the courses for remedial purposes. Some surveys have found examples of juku clients who initially attended a shingaku course for hoshû purposes but later switched to exam preparation proper (NIRA 1996: 164, 196). Nichinôken does recognize different kinds of usage of the juku among its clients. In terms of approach, Nichinôken says that rather than cramming facts, emphasis is placed on deepening an understanding of what is taught. Accordingly, the pupils do not have ‘homework’ but ‘exercises’ or ‘review’ (fukushû) to do by themselves. Understanding is to be achieved during lessons, and exercises are to be used in the home to support the process. The goal, and indeed one of the slogans of Nichinôken is Shikakui atama o maruku suru, ‘we make square heads round’, is an indication of the perfect state the pupil will reach once difficult material is mastered. This distinction between ‘homework’ and ‘exercises’ does however seem to be merely a question of wording and not content. Sugiyama comments on the teaching style at Nichinôken; she is not particularly concerned with the interpretation of the term fukushû, but she points out that this system depends heavily on centrally produced texts and demands that all classes advance at the same pace. It is a systematic curriculum aimed at gôkaku (passing entrance examinations) with no allowances for individual differences in children’s development and with no chance for the teachers’ personalities to influence the teaching she claims (Sugiyama 1996: 86, 89–90).

Nichinôken and Yotsuya Ôtsuka are among the largest shingaku juku aimed at middle school examinations and while Nichinôken had for some years lagged behind, it now seems to have gained the upper hand in size as well as success in placing clients. Yotsuya Ôtsuka is even claimed by Sugiyama to have become more and
more like Nichinôken in their style. Nichinôken started out with classrooms in Shin-Yokohama in Kanagawa Prefecture and in 1996 it had 72 schools with 12,000 students, mainly in the Kantô area (Sugiyama 1996: 85, 87). By 2002 the number of students according to Gakken had grown to 37,700. A Nichinôken class normally has 30 students and classes are assigned according to test scores. The teaching is categorized by Gakken as high level, but since in third and fourth grade much care is taken with guidance, it is claimed that there is no pressure (Gakken 2001: 17; Gakken 2003: 20). Presumably then, those not able to cope with the high level of teaching in Nichinôken will drop out in third or fourth grade, if an absence of pressure to keep up can be taken at face value.

Concerning the student intake at Nichinôken, Higo elaborated on the many problems he felt stemmed from difficulties with determining what ‘average’ should be aimed at in elementary school. As he said, teaching that targets the middle of the class not only creates ochikobore (drop-outs), but also fukikobore (spill over from top): i.e. the bright students are neglected and not challenged in school. Juku like Nichinôken can provide whatever extra tutoring is wanted or needed. Nichinôken’s policy is that a unified secondary school (middle and high school in one) would be in the best educational interest of everyone and indeed this is often the structure in private schools. In accordance with this credo, Nichinôken does not offer courses for middle or high school students, but only for elementary school students preparing for entrance examinations at such unified secondary schools (ikkan gakkô).

In order to admit to the juku those students that have the best potential for passing a middle school entrance examination, Nichinôken has entrance tests which they claim are not so difficult for third and fourth graders because for that age group they want to be unlike school and take their time with the children; for new admissions at fifth or sixth grade level course demands are higher. As Higo says: ‘to some extent we guarantee success and have a responsibility’, so they have to screen clients. That Nichinôken is rather successful doing this is evident from the number of Nichinôken clients admitted to prestigious middle schools (see Tables 2.1. and 2.2, pp. 65–66).
The gôkakuritsu buzzword in advertising shingaku juku is highly visible in Nichinôken’s presentation material. In their newsletter (Newsletter) of March 1996 Nichinôken quoted figures illustrating that increasing numbers Nichinôken clients successfully entered one of ten prestigious private middle schools in the period 1993–96 (Nichinôken 1996: 1–2). Manuals for choosing juku or manuals on entrance to private middle schools also testify to Nichinôken’s success (Gakken 2001: 52–60; Gakken 2003: 58–70), and in the Asahi Shimbunsha manual on middle school entrance examinations Nichinôken topped the list at 26 middle schools out of 32 listed in 2003 (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 50). Part of this success of course also relates to the large number of graduates produced by Nichinôken; nevertheless it makes Nichinôken very attractive as a shingaku juku for students with ambition.

It is beyond any doubt, that – regardless of other uses the clients may have for them – shingaku juku like Nichinôken are catering for the need for exam preparation and are thus an integral part of the gakureki shakai and the ensuing well publicized ‘examination hell’ in Japanese education.

Table 2.4. Nichinôken according to the variables for shingaku juku

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According to the variables found for shingaku juku, Nichinôken can definitely be categorized as such (Table 2.4.). The atmosphere is competitive because classes are determined according to test scores, but appears not to be overly pressurizing for those attending third or fourth grade courses due to a well-structured system of counselling and a carefully planned course progression. Nichinôken has nothing to do at all with regular schools; its clients tend to be high performers and the juku uses its own teaching material. It is a very big juku with many branches and many activities within the Nichinôken Corporation. Admission is based on an entrance test and there is a solid budget for advertising and for the production of pamphlets and informative material. Of all the juku I have visited, Nichinôken comes closest to being the typical shingaku juku and accordingly is placed right in the centre of the category.

YOTSUYA ÔTSUKA

Yotsuya Ôtsuka is one of the large chains of shingaku juku and is also famous for selling their texts for use in franchise juku or the smaller independent kojin juku.10 I interviewed the Public Relations Manager Nomura Kôji from the Yotsuya Ôtsuka classroom in Nakano, Tokyo, on 7 July 2000.

As is common for many shingaku juku, the building I visited was close to a railway station and easily accessible with well-marked signs leading you on the way. Entering the building one encounters a lobby with a large reception office staffed by a handful of primarily female clerks and with a lot of pamphlets displayed in racks. Nomura and I had our meeting in a small conference room on the ground floor.

Yotsuya Ôtsuka was founded in 1954. It is a family business in so far as it was the present president’s father who founded it, original-
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ly rather like a *kojin* juku assembling a few children from the neighbourhood. The special feature of this juku as compared others is that it was among the first to offer structured entrance examination guidance (Andô 2000: introduction). As interest in entrance examinations increased and people became more interested in private middle schools, the business grew to 13,000 persons enrolled in 2002 (Gakken 2003: 21). All the students attending classes here are heading for private middle schools, and children who need help in keeping up at school or needing assistance with homework are not especially targeted in Yotsuya Ôtsuka course plans. However, Yotsuya Ôtsuka is not adverse to the idea that a child might need some remedial training in some areas. In a book, released yearly, on the Yotsuya Ôtsuka system, it is said: ‘This [institution] is not the same as school, it is not an institution that can replace school. Our goal is to support school education, to take the teaching of some of the subjects to high levels, thereby making the child grow, training it’ (Andô 2000: introduction).

Gakken’s manual describes Yotsuya Ôtsuka as an orthodox juku relying on its exercise texts for its teaching content and guidance. There seems to be quite a jump in the level between fourth and fifth grades (as was the case in Nichinôken), for as the manual says: ‘children who could just about manage the work until fourth grade may have trouble keeping up after that’ (Gakken 2001: 18). Yotsuya Ôtsuka operates with a perception of children’s development that maintains that until fourth grade the central elements should be basic social skills, development of powers of concentration, self-control and cognitive development; from fourth to sixth grade the child is most receptive to learning (gakuryoku) and after that the child will begin to mature as a person (Andô 2000: 53).

This juku is commended by the Gakken manual for its experienced teachers and its highly developed counselling system for entrance examinations, which is made all the more comprehensive by the widespread use of Yotsuya Ôtsuka’s tests through the Ytnet, where not only Yotsuya Ôtsuka’s own clients but also those of other juku take the tests. The test results constitute the basis for calculating data on chances of entrance (the *hensachi* score) and the the data, the more precise will be the calculation. Yotsuya Ôtsuka thus has a very good basis for its *hensachi* calculations, which are very highly
regarded by Gakken for their precision. The entrance fee in 2003 was 10,000 – 20,000 yen and monthly charges are between 30,600 and 59,800 yen. The manual recommends Yotsuya Ôtsuka for children who are firmly set on doing the middle school entrance examination and who have parents who are equally committed to the cause (Gakken 2003: 2).

Features common to shingaku juku are the lack of contact between the juku and schools and the fact that they use their own text material, which is also evident in Yotsuya Ôtsuka. Classes are divided into three levels for fourth and fifth grade. By sixth grade it should have become clear which private school the child is aiming at (and which would be realistic based on the hensachi), so classes are divided in a more detailed fashion, taking into account not only the child’s scholastic level, but also the school he or she is heading for. Texts are constructed so that the entire curriculum is well covered and progress is ‘spiralling’, meaning that the things taught are taken up again and again, every time increasing the level a little. This actually appears to be a mixture of the typical approaches for shingaku juku – the ‘review’ (fukushû) and the ‘preparation’ (yoshû). Nomura did not perceive their system as overly pushy; he saw their particular merit as being a step-by-step progress. The texts are available in normal book shops and Nomura said: ‘Our texts – well, maybe this will sound a bit exaggerated – but some people see them as the “bible” of entrance examinations.’

Nomura thus is indicating that the texts set a standard for exam preparation, a statement that is supported by their widespread use, as reported by Sugiyama (1996). Teachers are hired on one-year contracts (‘like baseball players’, Nomura joked). They have a contract specifying their salary for one year and the teaching they are supposed to provide. For every week there will be a fixed amount of material to be gone through, but Yotsuya Ôtsuka does not give direct instructions as to how teaching should be conducted. Regulations with respect to the teachers are apparently more lax than for schoolteachers, as Mr Nomura explained:

Schoolteachers need a licence to teach, but we are not so formal and have no demands that your diploma should be from a specific faculty. We have teachers trying out a lot of different approaches
here and if they have good results and the student evaluations are good, we have no problem.

While this appears to be freer than in ordinary schools, it also underscores the primary target of the activities at Yotsuya Ōtsuka: as long as the customers are satisfied and the money keeps coming, there is no problem.

Yotsuya Ōtsuka does some general surveys on their clients. Nomura was very careful to emphasize that they in no way would encroach on people’s by privacy asking about religious background or the names of employers of the parents and the like. Rather, they ask general questions like the type of job of the father or number of siblings. People mostly use Yotsuya Ōtsuka because they want to send their children to private middle schools, so what they have in common is a high rate of commitment to education and a sufficient amount of money to spend on it: ‘Well, sending your child to a private rather than a public school does require more money, so another common feature of our clients quite naturally is that they are families with a certain financial surplus, relatively well-off families’ (Interview with Nomura, 2000).

There is an entrance test for Yotsuya Ōtsuka (nyūshi tesuto). Previously some applicants could not pass this test and were thus politely rejected, but now, with declining birth rates, the test has changed into a placement test rather than a selection test with the result that most children pass it today. Only regular class hours are offered, nothing like the ‘cram-camps’ that some shingaku juku are notorious for:

Some juku have a kind of ‘camp’ in the summer or around New Year. In the summer they would go somewhere cool for three or four days of intense study. It is my impression some juku do that.... I suppose that as a juku our image is rather soft (sofuto), we do not assemble the children for other than class teaching, we have practically nothing except class. (Interview with Nomura, 2000)

This ‘softer’ image and approach may also account for Yotsuya Ōtsuka’s slowly declining success in placing clients at the gosanke schools. Although it is still among the top three juku sending clients to boys’ and girls’ gosanke schools, Yotsuya Ōtsuka has over the last
five years been outperformed by SAPIX and Nichinôken, the other two juku in ‘the Big 3’ group. The elite performers may thus become more and more attracted to those two and Yotsuya Ôtsuka may over time end up with a slightly different clientele going to them for increasingly diverse purposes.

Class size at Yotsuya Ôtsuka is up to 35, but as Nomura confessed, it does depend a lot on number of applicants. If only 20 turn up, they will naturally be taught anyway. In regular public schools in some areas there are at the moment 20–25 children in one class, so many will find that classes in juku are larger, but Nomura did not see that as necessarily being a problem:

A lot of smaller juku try to attract people by advertising small classes, like five students per teacher and saying things like ‘we are good at taking care of each child’ (mendô-mi ga ii), but – to be honest, and this is my personal opinion – this five-person limit is not based on any educational goal. It is simply an indication that they cannot attract more people. ... Teaching is not necessarily better in smaller units. Where they have the very small classes, the teachers are often university students on part-time. If you compare the teaching in such small classes with our contract teachers, I think you will see a difference in quality very easily.¹²

Yotsuya Ôtsuka has a rather high output of students and is well represented in different manuals’ surveys on successful entries into private middle schools. As mentioned earlier, despite being less than half the size of Nichinôken, Yotsuya Ôtsuka manages to compete quite well, placing a relatively large number of clients at prestigious middle schools. See Tables 2.1. and 2.2. on pp. 65–66.

According to the variables found for shingaku juku, Yotsuya Ôtsuka must be categorized as such (see Table 2.5.). The atmosphere is competitive because classes are assigned according to test scores but the juku is also rumoured to have a ‘soft’ approach that is suitable for girls. Yotsuya Ôtsuka has nothing to do at all with regular schools, its clients tend to be high to average performers and it uses its own teaching material. In the Kantô area it has 14 classrooms, and with its 13,000 clients it is one of the larger shingaku juku for elementary school. Yotsuya Ôtsuka, apart from the publishing of textbooks for consumption by other institutions,
also has the so called Ytnet juku (ytnet.co.jp) on the internet, which is used by other juku and it is also used much like correspondence courses. Admission has become more or less unrestricted over the past years, with the admission test becoming more of a placement test than an admission test. However, income is a variable, not just because of the costs involved in taking Yotsuya Ōtsuka’s own courses, but also because eventually parents will have to pay the fees of a private middle school. Like the other large juku, they have a solid budget for advertising, for the production of pamphlets and for informative material. Due to Yotsuya Ōtsuka’s ‘soft’ approach and nuances appearing in the variables student material and admission, I have placed Yotsuya Ōtsuka between the two other examples we have had: closer to the typical shingaku juku than Kawai Juku as there is no reference to any kind of remedial teaching, additional activities seem limited and because of the much larger work load in sixth grade, but further away from the typical shingaku juku than Nichinôken because of the more relaxed approach, the soft image and the placement character of the entrance test.

Table 2.5. Yotsuya Ōtsuka according to the variables for shingaku juku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>Yotsuya Ōtsuka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating</td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating, ‘soft’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of course</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to school</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student material</td>
<td>High performers</td>
<td>High to average, income a variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>&gt; 200 students, some franchise</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Entrance exam or test</td>
<td>Placement test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Commercial, gôkakuritsu</td>
<td>Commercial, gôkakuritsu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUNDAI RINDENSKUURO

On 3 July 2000, I visited Sundai in Kanda and talked to Tamura Akihiro from the Public Relations Section. This was at the headquarters of the Sundai Education Group and the whole area was marked by the presence of this large enterprise. Most notably, it was teeming with students coming to or leaving classes. Sundai is most successful at entrance examinations for high school, but it does also have an elementary school section. As Tamura remarked, if you take in only middle school and high school levels, your rooms will be empty for many hours every day during normal classes. The buildings in this area are owned by the Sundai Yobigakkô and let to the middle school and elementary school sections of Sundai during the day. Thus the costs for those sections could be kept low and the owner’s loss due to unused rooms minimized.

Founded in 1927, Sundai is the oldest of the juku described here. It was originally a juku for practicing spoken English. The founder, Yamazaki Hisaharu, had been to Yale University and on his return had found abilities in English sadly deficient in Japan. As was the case with the founding of Yotsuya Ôtsuka, Yamazaki started out as a kojin juku but gradually the juku grew. After a short closure during the latter years of World War II, Sundai grew into what is today, the Sundai Education Group, encompassing activities in the juku business, publishing, educational software and research. Sundai also runs a university (Surugadai University) and a special college (senmon gakkô) mainly dealing with electronics, foreign languages and tourism (see Sundai’s Internet homepage).
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

In the Sundai juku system emphasis is placed on what they call ‘true knowledge and understanding’ rather than just examination techniques. Tamura explained that it is a Sundai ideal that the child is to be met on its own level and surrounded with loving understanding. Though no juku I visited would characterize itself as aimed just at memorizing facts and examination techniques (hardly surprising!), Tamura did spend considerable time elaborating on the point of meeting the children on their own terms, making Sundai appear somewhat more concerned with the child’s personality and general upbringing than some of the other shingaku juku and certainly more so than the general perception of such institutions. Of course this is also part of Tamura’s advertising effort.

Sundai is primarily a shingaku juku, but since courses are streamed not only according to target school but also according to ability, Tamura felt that remedial objectives, such as would normally be found in hoshū juku, were also very common. However certain other features place Sundai squarely in the shingaku category. They produce their own teaching material and proceed at their own speed, i.e., not in accordance with progress in school. Further, the ultimate goal and the manner of advertising at Sundai are clearly focused on entrance examinations and gōkakuritsu (rates of admission). Tamura told me that since many students take more than one entrance exam, and given the importance of the gōkakuritsu for advertising, any juku a successful student was ever in contact with, even if he or she did just a mock test there, will count this student among their successful candidates, thus:

If you add up all the successful applicants [the juku list in their advertising material] the number would exceed the number actually accepted. Keiō [University] would become twice as big! They accept 3,000 students, we have 1,400 successful applicants, Yoyogi Seminaaru has 1,300, Kawai Juku about 1,200 – now how can this be? (Interview with Tamura, 2000)

He also noted, that some juku, though not Sundai, let high performers attend class for free, a kind of scholarship. The money is made from the ordinary students who have been attracted by a high success rate, a rate that is greatly assisted by such practices as giving free classes to high performers. As far as advertising is concerned,
Tamura thought that the most important factor was word of mouth. Though Sundai has a big budget for advertising, word of mouth is still the single most important factor when the actual choice is to be made.

The elementary school division at Sundai is Sundai Rindensukuuru (Linden School). Here about 5,000 pupils are enrolled. The cost of a preparatory course for middle school examination at Sundai Rindensukuuru is around 700,000 yen (2003 prices) for a sixth grader taking four subjects (Japanese, maths, science and social studies). This also includes special summer and winter courses (Interview with Fukasawa 2003).

Sundai’s reputation is especially good where it comes to entrance at university level. Apparently there is a saying, that if you can get into Sundai, you can get into university. Many elementary school students will thus go to Sundai, not to prepare for middle school examinations but for the ultimate goal of passing a university entrance examination. This perhaps explains why Sundai can afford a rather child-centred and soft approach at elementary school level. Sundai has what is called a ‘gakuryoku shudan tesuto’, a test to assess the level of learning which also functions as a placement test. For high school graduates they use the scores on high school graduation exams to determine admission and placement.

On the issue of the declining birth rate, Tamura was not overly concerned and pointed out that the rate of juku attendance was high (and still is, it has been increasing over the last years, see Table 0.3.), so many parents will probably feel insecure not sending their children to juku. Some may use juku to avoid the kind of trouble Japanese education became infamous for in the 1990s in particular. Mr Tamura described it as follows:

1992 was a terribly tough year as far as entrance exams are concerned [because of a large age cohort]. A lot of people failed. This led people to think that entrance examinations were so difficult that the earlier you started in juku the better … And you always want the best for your children. So, to spare them the sacrifices involved in sitting for entrance examinations, many cast their eyes on the ‘escalator schools’13. There you could make do with one exam at middle or high school level... And then there was this boom in violence and bullying in the schools, so many parents got scared
of public schools and chose the private schools to avoid trouble. It was thought that higher academic standards would preclude such problems. Part of the role of juku became tied up with all this.

If we look at it along those lines and also include the expected effect of the 2002 curricular reforms, it would appear that business prospects for juku have become even better than when Tamura gave his opinion.

According to the variables found for shingaku juku, Sundai can be categorized as such (see Table 2.6.). The atmosphere is competitive because classes are allocated according to test scores, but the juku tries to create ‘loving’ surroundings for learning at elementary school level. The overall approach at this level naturally becomes less ‘pushy’ as the clients are more likely to be there for future university entrance examinations than for middle school entrance exams. Sundai itself hints that a number of their clients use them for remedial purposes. Sundai produces its own teaching material and progress in class is unrelated to what goes on in regular schools. Its clients tend to be high-to-average performers. It is a very big juku with many branches and many activities within the Sundai Education Group. They use admission tests that also function as placement tests. Like the other large juku, they have a solid budget for advertising and the production of pamphlets and informative material, but they are also very keen on the importance of a good reputation, i.e., advertising by ‘word of mouth’. Sundai’s ‘loving’ atmosphere, evident from the variable ‘students’ as well as from their advertising, means I place it further away from the typical shingaku juku than Nichinôken, giving it about the same placing as Yotsuya Ôtsuka.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Sundai} & \quad \text{Yotsuya} \\
\text{Kawai} & \quad \text{Nichinoken}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Hoshû juku} & \quad \text{Kyôsai juku} & \quad \text{Shingaku juku} & \quad \text{Doriru juku}
\end{align*}\]

Figure 2.4. Sundai on the continuum
Table 2.6. Sundai according to the variables for *shingaku juku*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>Sundai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘loving’ at elementary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of course</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to school</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>High performers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>&gt; 200 students, some franchise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Entrance exam or test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Commercial, gōkakuritsu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAPIX

I visited a division of SAPIX in Nihonbashi on 30 June 2000. The representative I met with was Takahashi Tōru, one of the founding fathers of SAPIX. Our meeting was held in the lobby, where apart from a counter manned by two receptionists there were lots of green plants and cozy booths with tables and soft chairs that were obviously used for small meetings and counseling sessions. In fact when I arrived, Mr Takahashi was having one such meeting with a girl and her mother.

SAPIX is, as Takahashi said, ‘quite clearly a *shingaku juku*’. About the children attending SAPIX, he said: ‘Most of the children coming here – well, maybe it is a bit problematic to be using expressions like ‘high level’, but it certainly is children that are highly motivated and very interested in education.’

SAPIX was founded in 1989, so as an institution it is relatively new, but the founding fathers all had previous experience in the business, most starting out in the juku TAP. Uncomfortable with the division between teaching and administration in TAP and the
way things were working overall, Takahashi and a number of other teachers decided to start their own juku. In order not to duplicate the system that had caused them problems, they now have a structure where each section is its own company: i.e. the elementary school division is one company and the middle school division another. For high school there is yet another company, but all belong to the Sapiens Corporation. Takahashi is senior managing director in the middle school division and explained that he works with teaching and administration as well as admission and counselling. In fact he made a point of his greater efficiency as a counsellor because of his familiarity with the children’s personalities, whereas normally a councillor will have to rely only on test scores and information transmitted to him by the teaching personnel.

The SAPIX elementary school division has 16 classrooms spread out over the Tokyo metropolitan area and 10,000 students attending. Gakken’s manual on middle school entrance examinations characterizes SAPIX as one of the top juku for those targeting gosanke, i.e., one of the aforementioned three most prestigious middle schools. It commends SAPIX for the high quality of its materials and the pains it takes to explain everything so that it becomes easy to understand. SAPIX is recommended for children and parents who really want to give themselves over to the entrance examination project. High commitment is required from children as well as parents, it is pointed out. The entrance fee was 30,000 yen and monthly expenses 15,000–45,000 yen depending on the course selection (Gakken 2003: 19).

Whereas Takahashi could boast that SAPIX had the best record in terms of per cent for admission for high school entrance exams, he mentioned Yotsuya Ótsuka and Nichinôken as the keenest competitors for middle school examinations. This is also apparent when looking at Tables 2.1 and 2.2. It is evident that SAPIX graduates do overwhelmingly well. A gôkakuritsu like that of SAPIX is a very effective sales argument. It will in all probability attract ever larger numbers of high performers, boosting SAPIX’s success even further. Indeed, SAPIX is in a growth period. The number of clients in 2000 was about 6,000, increasing in 2002 to about 10,000, clear evidence of the attractiveness of this juku (Gakken 2001: 17; Gakken 2003: 19).
What really sets SAPIX apart from the other shingaku juku is that the teaching personnel is involved in every aspect of the juku. Where in other juku I would often be introduced to a representative from the administration with varying degrees of teaching experience (Kawai Juku was an exception), here all teaching personnel would also be responsible for some administrative duties. Also, the fact that the elementary school division and the middle school division were different companies with different approaches was something Takahashi felt contributed to the success of his juku, although this is not so different from Kawai Juku or Sundai.

As a shingaku juku, SAPIX mainly uses its own texts, though sometimes also uses commercial texts from other companies for homework. There is an entrance examination where 10 years ago half the applicants would fail, but by 2000 it was only one in 20 or 30. It was Takahashi’s impression that people choose SAPIX because of the juku’s gôkakuritsu and this appears also to be considered an important item in their advertising. As we have seen, their gôkakuritsu is truly remarkable.

Classes at SAPIX are determined according to the school aimed at as well as based on test scores. Class size can be down to five or six per elementary class because of the course division method, but up to as many as 30. Depending on their age, children will come to SAPIX two or three times a week – four times at the most. The elementary school division also offers summer camps in order to give the children direct experience with nature.

If teaching is not perceived to have effect, the child will stop coming, especially as there is considerable expense involved in taking SAPIX courses. Therefore there are ongoing internal evaluations in order to create the best possible courses, those that will to the highest extent correspond to consumer needs. As Takahashi remarked, if teachers in the public system did not have to undertake so many tasks besides teaching (the so-called gyôji), they too might be able to upgrade their teaching with procedures like those at SAPIX.

SAPIX does not have anything to do directly with local elementary schools, but naturally they follow with avid interest what is going on in the public debates on the public educational system. Concerning the comprehensive secondary school, unlike most of
the other shingaku juku staff I talked to, Takahashi expressed some apprehension:

Well, almost everyone goes to high school – yes, they actually do – and so there is this proposal for a unified secondary school, but there are lots of problems involved in that. It will be OK for the bright students, but a real problem for those who cannot keep up with the class, who don’t get their homework done, who drop out of school. This aspect has not been taken into account.

Though by now there are few who will stop their education after middle school, of course Mr Takahashi’s observation is correct: with a unified secondary school, the middle school graduation diploma may disappear and leave low achievers worse off than presently.

Like Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku, Mr Takahashi also had experience with the general decline in children’s achievements. He said they had become ‘frighteningly poor’ and very different from the children coming to SAPIX 10 years ago. Though this presents SAPIX with a new range of problems he maintained: ‘We adapt to the situation, we get them through it, we contemplate how best to teach them ... it is a fact that learning has to be fun. Going to juku must be a pleasure. It is no good if it feels like a strain. I actually think our children enjoy coming here – otherwise they would stop coming.’

Takahashi seems here to disregard possible parental pressure or indeed the pressure a child may exercise upon itself, something that will easily come about given their upbringing in a society with a well-known record for emphasizing school certificates. Though what he says about the necessity of having fun in order to continue attendance may be true for a large number of his clients most of the time, surely there can be no denying that sometimes attendance will be a result of parents’ insistence or the child’s notion of obligation rather than a wish to ‘have fun’.

SAPIX advertises itself with advertisements in newspapers, with flyers and pamphlets and by word of mouth. Takahashi pointed to word of mouth and people’s previous experiences with a particular juku as very effective advertising tools and gave the example of five siblings all attending SAPIX as evidence.
Despite declining birth rates, SAPIX is growing. Probably this has to do with its reputation as a juku for the bright children as well as its good record in gôkakuritsu. However, as Takahashi remarked, this may be an aspect of the SAPIX image that needs some working on in the future:

It is true that our target group is children with special abilities (aru tokushû). But in times like these, there is also a wish for more ordinary children to be able to attend. However, our image is quite clear, so some may feel discouraged from even applying to SAPIX... If you are really a poor performer (dekinai ko) then the price alone is usually enough to keep you away, but at times like this it is no good to just keep a stiff upper lip, so we are trying to change our image a bit. On the other hand, it is also important to have specific characteristics. It shouldn't be like anyone could enter; then we would lose our distinctive character and we do want to be able to provide good teaching.

According to the variables used for shingaku juku, SAPIX can be categorized as such (see Table 2.7, p. 96). The atmosphere is highly competitive, it is known for its speed and quality but also stresses that learning should be ‘fun’. SAPIX has nothing at all to do with regular schools, its clients tend to be high performers and they use their own teaching material. There is an admission test and income seems to be a variable as well, not just because of the costs involved in taking SAPIX courses but also because eventually parents will have to pay for a private middle school. Like the other shingaku juku, they have a budget for advertising and the production of pamphlets and informative material, but also rely at lot on ‘word of mouth’. Gôkakuritsu is the most important determinant in its reputation. SAPIX gives the impression of being the shingaku juku par excellence. Due to its highly flexible text system where a lot of custom-made prints are employed, the extremely detailed divisions of classes, the expressed emphasis on gôkakuritsu and the very thorough counselling practices, I have placed it to the right of Nichinôken in order to signify that here is a juku with all the traditional shingaku features but which also targets high performers almost exclusively. The hoshû aspect is absent, and though it is perceived that other types of students may be necessary to continue business, it is also considered important to maintain the present profile as a juku for high achievers.
### Table 2.7. SAPIX according to the variables for *shingaku* juku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shingaku juku</th>
<th>SAPIX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atmosphere</strong></td>
<td>Competitive/stimulating</td>
<td>Highly Competitive/stimulating, ‘fun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of course</strong></td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
<td>Entrance exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation to school</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>High performers</td>
<td>High, income a variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching material</strong></td>
<td>Own texts</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>&gt; 200 students, some franchise</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission</strong></td>
<td>Entrance exam or test</td>
<td>Admission test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
<td>Commercial, <em>gôkakuritsu</em></td>
<td>Commercial, <em>gôkakuritsu</em> and word of mouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SHINGAKU JUKU

As is clear from the continuum all the *shingaku* juku treated in this chapter can be placed according to their variables so that they cluster around the *shingaku* category, but due to their different characteristics, they move slightly toward the *hoshû* category or even further away from the *hoshû* category as is the case with SAPIX. The most typical *shingaku* juku of those surveyed here is Nichinôken.
Yotsuya Ôtsuka and Sundai for their variations in ‘atmosphere’ – albeit self-assessed – have been placed slightly to the side of the typical shingaku juku, while Kawai juku, with its concern for hoshû-like courses and its new approaches with an emphasis on children’s own mastery of their learning processes and plans for scholarships and aid activities in Asia, is placed quite on the edge of the category – as far as the elementary school division is concerned, in any case. Kawai juku’s range of courses, its lack of relations with schools, student intake and advertising does, however, place it firmly in the shingaku category.

The question of scholarships will be interesting to follow in future developments of the juku. Kawai Juku is working on it as a measure to increase equal access to education, it is claimed, but the realization of this scholarship plan will be interesting. Will they, for example, be allocated on the basis of a test, perhaps in combination with certain limitations on family income? It can very easily end up as another means for ensuring that the brightest heads cluster around the juku, as Mr Tamura from Sundai was saying in relation to free lessons for bright students. Offering a kind of scholarship to bright students through free lessons means that ‘ordinary students’ are paying in effect for them. The plans presented by Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku were clearly aimed at clients who had the ambition but not the means to attend juku. Parameters for allocating such scholarships will in all probability be academic performance as well as economic means. It has the potential for coming dangerously close to the kind of practice mentioned by Mr Tamura, so if Kawai Juku is attempting to use the scholarship issue as a means to promote itself as a more all-encompassing shingaku juku than the others, and this was very clearly how Mr Matsui was presenting it, much care will have to be taken with formulating the conditions for those scholarships.

As far as angling for a top position on a list of successful entries at the gosanke, particularly the rivalry between Nichinôken, Yotsuya Ôtsuka and SAPIX, all three have the same undisputable image of effective shingaku juku, but size may be seen to give Nichinôken an advantage. Nichinôken can send larger numbers of candidates to entrance exams, thus potentially having larger numbers of successful entrants. Second, Nichinôken’s size means it has many...
more classrooms than Yotsuya Ôtsuka or SAPIX: thus one of its premises may be a lot closer to a client’s home and the investment of time in transportation to and from juku will therefore often be smaller and thereby offer an extra inducement to clients.

The cost of juku attendance is a factor contributing to income-based unequal opportunities in education and ensures a certain degree of income-based streaming of the clientele of shingaku juku. The juku treated here have yearly fees for regular courses and for admission ranging from just over 300,000 yen to about 700,000 yen just for the basics. In addition, a family seriously preparing for an entrance examination will invest in special courses and there will typically also be a fee for taking tests. Gakken calculates an average cost of between two and three million yen for three years of preparation (fourth – sixth grade) at one of the big juku (Gakken 2003: 36).

On top of this a family aiming at placing a child in a private middle school must also be able to shoulder that school’s tuition fees, which tend to be no less than one million yen for the first year, or even more, as at Azabu or Ôin middle schools, where as mentioned in Chapter 2, the expense for the first year will be just short of two million.

We have here a cluster of businesses thriving mainly on the gakureki shakai. Their existence is based on the credentialism still prevalent in many walks of Japanese life. The motivation for people to invest time and money is the prospect of better chances in the race for entry at a prestigious university. In conclusion, shingaku juku owe their existence to gakureki shakai, their business is to offer exam preparation in more or less competitive atmospheres, they have a high percentage of high performers and their clientele tends towards the relatively well-off. The shingaku juku tend to be rather large and hence are able to publish their own texts, they may screen their clients to ensure better records on entry to prestigious schools, they are able to advertise commercially as well as make use of word of mouth and they do not relate to what is taught in regular school. The shingaku juku, for all their individual traits, are based on the gakureki shakai and are key fixtures in the notorious ‘examination hell’. Having said this, one should also not forget that they are striving to assert their individual characteristics and include more activities in
their programmes to enhance their viability and business prospects. For example those juku originally orientated towards middle or high schools are increasingly developing elementary-school-level programmes. They can also be seen to be addressing global issues as demonstrated by Kawai Juku’s projects in Cambodia. The shingaku juku appear to be testing out new ground, and it will be interesting to follow them in the future.

NOTES

1 This round of new curricula is not to be confused with the latest round initiated in 2002.

2 See a description of the shingaku juku SAPIX later this chapter.

3 See a description of the shingaku juku, Yotsuya Ôtsuka later in this chapter.

4 Hensachi is a placement tool for putting an individual in a hierarchy of relative standing based on scores at tests and examinations. By averaging the scores, a prognosis can be calculated for the chances of entry at particular educational institutions based on the scores necessary for entry in previous years (Shimizu 1997: 121).

5 Gosanke was originally a term used for the ‘three successor houses’, the most honoured family houses, which had branched out from the ruling Tokugawa-family (17th–19th century). The gosanke were the feudal noble families of Mito, Owari and Kii.

6 For SAPIX the admission figures for the three in 2001 were: Kaisei 136, Azabu 94, Musashi 46, i.e., no major changes for the boys’ gosanke schools. Similarly, intake of SAPIX graduates at girls’ gosanke schools was generally stable with 65 at Ôin, 47 at Joshi Gakuin and 16 at Futaba in 2001; in 2003, 46 at Joshi Gakuin, 16 at Futaba, but with a significant jump for Ôin which were 82 in 2003. The other major change has been in the admission to co-educational Keiô Middle School, where in 2000 146 were admitted. In 2001 this jumped to 173 and in 2003 we see a significant drop to 65 SAPIX clients at this school (SAPIX 2001: 3; Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 50–52).


8 The original Dalton School was founded in New York in 1919. It is known for its emphasis on individuality and for taking particular care to develop an individual's special gifts. It is also known as the ‘children’s university’. The first Dalton programme in Japan were established by Kawai Juku in cooperation with the New York Dalton School in 1976.
Asahi Shimbun ran an article on their Internet site listing the difference in classroom hours for one class level, namely fourth grade, which supports the Kawai numbers. For example, in *kokugo* it goes from 280 hours to 235; in mathss from 175 to 150 (Asahi Shimbun 2003 3 April).

*Kōjin juku*, literally ‘individual juku’ are usually very small in scale, one to four persons may be involved in the teaching. They are classified in this work as *hoshū juku*.

Ytnet is Yostuya Ōtsuka’s Internet-based teaching system.

One juku advertising small classes is TAP, where class size is 10–15 pupils. TAP representative Mr Watanabe told the journalist from *Kampeki Chūgaku Juken* that ‘we have group lessons, but with something close to individual (one-to-one) guidance’ (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 53).

Escalator schools are private systems of education where in the same group you may have all levels from kindergarten to university. Often, famous universities have affiliated schools (in such cases they will have names like, for example, Keiō Gijuku Chūtōbu) and admission to higher levels can be automatic or at least significantly easier because of *suisen* systems (advancement in the educational system by recommendation) and because the lower levels of the system target the higher levels especially in their teaching. However, some ‘related schools’ (fuzoku gakkô) do not necessarily facilitate admission to ‘their’ university.

SAPIX stands for: S- science, A- art, P- philosophy, I- identity and X- the x-factor, the unknown potential the child should realize (SAPIX, 2001).
Chapter 3

Hoshû Juku

The hoshû juku mainly offer remedial teaching and help with homework, drills and supplementary teaching. Normally they will use texts more or less the same as those in schools or they may use the actual school texts. When needed, additional commercial exercise books and texts may be used, or they may make their drills and exercises to suit special cases. The programme of teaching will roughly follow that of schools, allowing for drills and exercises on the day’s material. Often there will be special preparatory exercises for school tests. Such juku offer extra teaching within the school curriculum. The reason they exist is to be found in shortcomings in school or for individual needs that are not catered for in the public system. Ms Usui from the small Tanaka Eisû Juku said: 'We exist because of the school. We help with catching up on what has not been done in school' (Interview with Usui 1997).

Although the Council on Lifelong Learning in its 1999 report is mainly concerned with shingaku juku and their ill effects, it does acknowledge the efforts of the hoshû juku saying that: ‘The so-called hoshû juku are valued for the teaching they give that enable children to ‘understand lessons in school’ and ‘enhance their interest and motivation for studying’ (quotations from a hearing conducted by the council) (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 78).

Based on a survey conducted by Nihon PTA Zenkoku Kyôgikai in 1997, the Council on Lifelong Learning identified three major areas where schools could make more effort. The areas were identified primarily as a result of the recommendations made by parents on the basis of their experience with juku; in other words, the experiences parents had with juku were used as inspiration suggesting changes for schools to carry out. The survey found that 57.3 per cent of the parents felt that lessons in schools should be
made easier and more effort should be put into making sure that all the children were grasping the basics: a clear signal of parental worries over basic skills and an indication that school lessons are not perceived as well balanced according to the children’s abilities, although this is a stated goal for public education. School life should be more relaxed according to 49.9 per cent of the respondents, respecting the individuality of the child in order to nurture a rich personality, again apparently a call for more emphasis on and attention given to the individual. Finally 26.4 per cent called for better qualified teachers in order to improve the quality of teaching and the teaching contents (figures quoted in Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 80).

The survey clearly shows that the experiences parents had with juku provided examples and possible sources of inspiration for, or challenges to, the regular system of schooling, but those experiences apparently did not prompt parents to ask of school things that were not already on the agenda or within the framework of laws and regulations on public education. In any case, if such suggestions were made, they were not quoted by the Council on Lifelong Learning.

The responses generated by surveys like this have been and still are being taken seriously, as is evident when one takes a look at the different reform proposals contained, for example, in the reports made by Central Council on Education, a body under Monbushô. Here attention to individual differences in ability and development of teacher quality are invariably important themes (See for example the reports from 20 March or from 7 October, both 2003, available on the Homepage of Monbushô, www.mext.go.jp).

As the hoshû juku are very often founded or run by charismatic individuals with their own pedagogical ideas or approaches and who have to deal with children who more often than not have had experiences of failure or of being mediocre performers, the demand on their pedagogical as well as their nurturing skills is often very high indeed. Of course a service like this does have its price. Although the hoshû juku do tend to be reasonably priced, the very fact that this kind of remedial teaching requires extra funding from the families naturally undermines the ideal of equal access to education.
Among the *hoshû* juku the bulk are the so-called *kojin* juku, usually with 1–3 teachers attached. There are also larger enterprises and some children may, as mentioned previously, use certain elementary courses at *shingaku* juku like Kawai Juku or Nichinôken for remedial purposes.

In the following I will present two cases as examples of the main category of *hoshû* juku, both *kojin* juku. As *hoshû* juku are local and tend to be very small indeed, I have no secondary evaluations by expert users, manuals for choosing them or self-produced pamphlets. The descriptions are based entirely on the interviews I conducted with the owners and the notes I made on surroundings and the like.

**NATSUME PRIVATE SCHOOL, NPS GAKUIN**

On 13 July 2000 I visited Natsume Private School, also known as NPS Gakuin, in Edogawa-ku. It is a typical example of a *kojin* juku run by a single individual, firmly based in the local area and covering everything from regular teaching, help with homework, socialization and the teaching of proper manners to children.

The heart of NPS Gakuin is Natsume Akie, a lively, single woman. She was educated as a schoolteacher in the mid-1980s but had already started teaching local children for *hoshû* purposes while she was a student. After graduation she felt that public schools did not really suit her. This was because the large number of pupils in one class (45 at the time) did not really leave room for proper attention to the individual and because she felt that too much time in schools was taken up by activities not related to teaching (the so called *gyôji*). This problem is actually also mentioned by the Central Council on Education (in Chûkyôshin 2003c Shiryô 2–1, Cpt. 2 (2), 7 August), so it appears to have found its way onto the official agenda as well. At the time Ms Natsume started her own Gakuin, there were very few juku in the area, but now she is surrounded by new, large juku such as Alfa and Ichishin. A *kojin* juku like her own is becoming increasingly rare in the Tokyo-area according to a salesman from a textbook publisher she had regular visits from. He told her that in, for example, Ibaraki prefecture about 400 couples were running *kojin* juku, while in Tokyo the market was thoroughly dominated by the large juku.
NPS Gakuin is located in a residential area and is actually Natsume Akie’s own house. The ground floor, where we did our interview, is occupied by a large room which at one end has a kitchen. The rest was furnished with two large tables that obviously functioned as the children’s working places. While I was there, five elementary school pupils were working on their books. The second floor was also a large room used as a classroom or by students for working, relaxing or watching TV.

About 80 children from kindergarten to high school came to NPS Gakuin on a regular basis. All were from the local area as Ms Natsume did not advertise, a feature she has in common with other kojin juku and most of the smaller hoshû juku. She relies on word of mouth and often has all the children from one family coming to her juku. Her dependence on having a good reputation is reflected in the following story:

I had a call from a parent just the other day. She told me that my juku was being criticized because some of my students had been seen smoking... that is not really my responsibility, it is for the family to deal with. However, since they [the parents] seem to think it is indeed my responsibility, I informed them that actually I do tell the kids to stop... Since I don’t advertise, I have to be concerned with my reputation, even when I think I am already doing my best.

The primary evaluation of the benefits of this juku, as of most others, is assessed by parents and children on the basis of whether or not grades go up. If there is no improvement, the juku is not deemed successful, a very direct and perhaps not altogether justified manner of evaluation that Ms Natsume noted adds to the pressure of her profession. With a smile she remarked that similar direct evaluations might be the medicine public schools need to revitalize. It should be noted, however, that since in this juku there was also a very strong element of deai no ba (a place to meet) or takujijo (care taking place), it would not automatically follow that a child would stop attending just because grades did not go up. There might be very real needs for nurturing to be considered as well.

Ms Natsume described her teaching as extremely individualized. Some students came for hoshû purposes, some for shingaku. She would
buy texts that suited individual needs and would start teaching at any level appropriate for the child. Kindergarten children were fed sweets and taught how to hold a pencil properly and they acquire the habit of going to juku (kayou koto ni shûkan o tsukeru). Others would come in middle school and still not know the Latin alphabet, so she would start from there. Yet others would prepare in earnest for entrance examinations at the best local private middle school.

Her knowledge of the local public elementary and middle school was detailed, but relations seemed to be a bit strained in some aspects. She talked about how the public school teachers, rather than appreciating that pupils lagging behind sought extra tutoring, scolded them for going to juku, saying that if they were more diligent in school, they would not need juku, a kind of reasoning rather common among public school teachers I have found. The result is that most children do not talk about the fact that they go to juku. This in turn makes it more difficult for the teachers to assess the children’s general situation and needs. Ms Natsume’s ideal vision for the future was of a triangular co-operation between juku, school and parents to create the best possible educational and social environment for the child, but with many public school teachers being so critical and condemning of juku this seems unlikely to happen, at least in the near future. She did have one good example of her co-operation with a private middle school, which by the way she also apparently considered a better school than the public middle school: ‘I had a girl here that went to this middle school, she was really easy to teach! And her teacher at the school gave her a message for me, saying that I should give her more difficult material. When we co-operate like that, the child will also benefit more.’

As for what she saw as the regrettable state of denial on the part of the public schools, she commented wryly that in practice schools are covertly acknowledging juku, since it would be impossible for them to teach as they do, if juku did not exist.

Ms Natsume was in general very critical of public school teachers. She felt that they were not really interested in the children and, though they may spot the slow learners, it was her impression that they would never make any demands on them, leaving them alone and turning them down in a way the juku could never do because of
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

the contractual relationship there. Letting slow learners sleep during class, for example, makes it easier for the teacher as questions will be fewer and the slow learners will not be noisy in class. She saw part of the cause of the problem as the fast pace of learning enforced by the curriculum guidelines. Having to get through a number of pages by certain inflexible deadlines was something she felt should be abandoned because students had problems remembering from one lesson to the next what had been taught.

This situation surely must have been alleviated somewhat with the realization of the latest round of new curriculum guidelines (2002 onwards) with a 30 per cent reduction of the material to be taught in elementary school as described in Chapter 2. On the other hand, some of Ms Natsume’s students had very basic problems, so the learning problems of her clients may very well still remain. (See Chapter 6 for the latest on the new curriculum guidelines.)

Meanwhile, at the time our interview took place, there was no doubt in Ms Natsume’s mind that there was much too little time for thorough explanations and for the students to really internalize the knowledge of the textbooks. Apparently, not much homework was given to compensate for this – at least, that was Ms Natsume’s impression of the situation. This was where the juku came in, with exercises and lots of homework. Two middle school students who came to the juku while I was there (to have a look at the foreigner no doubt!) inadvertently illustrated this situation. Ms Natsume remarked: ‘I don’t suppose you thought of bringing your books?’ Apparently they had been given a lot of homework, but they assured her that they had already finished it. They did it during jishū (free studies) in school. Paradoxically, school hours were used for juku work designed to catch up with school!

Ms Natsume clearly has a very important function as a nurturer. As family patterns are changing, she also sees changes in the needs of her clients. If the child is in juku, it leaves the parent extra time for work, and Ms Natsume takes her role as a supervisor very seriously, more so, she stated, than most of the larger juku. If the child is 30 minutes late or more she would call the parent. She would discuss behaviour and personal development as well as academic development with the parents and engage in many ways in the children’s lives. For each child she kept a notebook
accessible to both child and parents. In it she wrote things the child should be thinking about, things to work on, what was assigned for homework, incidents that took place and so on. As another example of her involvement in family life, one of the middle school students was told to call his mother to tell her he had arrived at the juku. He had a previous record of sneaking out to go fishing. Coming home very late he would claim he had been at the juku, had been delayed by traffic and the like. When the truth was discovered, Ms Natsume and his mother, who is a single parent, decided that he should call his mother when he arrived at the juku and again when he left. As Ms Natsume remarked:

He must learn. He might as well just have told the truth, that is, that he wanted to go fishing. But the problem is, they have no jikaku (self-consciousness or self-realization), we have to re-educate them. They need to be conscious about learning, not just potter about singing karaoke or getting into fights. They need to do hansei (self-reflection).

Since the children are often at Ms Natsume’s juku two or three times a week for five or six years, in some cases more, it naturally follows that she has much influence on and is important to the children. This is illustrated by the fact that many will come back after finishing their studies at her juku to help her out with practical things, to bring her cakes and sweets, to try to make the other children behave. Sometimes they will even sleep over. Her function as an extra mother is also clear in the little tasks she gives the children. They are instructed in how to place their shoes neatly in the entrance (genkan), to put their bicycles where they are not a nuisance to neighbours, to clean up the rooms after use. The younger ones walk her dogs. As they gradually start to remember these things, Ms Natsume rewards them with sweets or sometimes with an outing to sing karaoke. In this manner she is trying to react to the problems she sees in modern families, not only the divorces that leave the child with only one parent but also what she calls ‘deficit families’, i.e., families in need of somebody outside the family to be involved with their children for things to work out. This kind of involvement seems to be rarely found among public school teachers, at least in this area, and parents complain to Ms Natsume that teachers are getting to be too much
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like public servants (kómuinka): i.e. they are perceived to be doing only what they absolutely have to and to be treating the general public with disdain.

Ms Natsume sees a further problem in modern families, namely the tendency for parents to be ‘friends’ with their children. It inhibits them from having the authority necessary for the family to function: the children do not see any boundaries or any consistency in their lives, no strict upbringing but also no responsibility and there is likely to be nobody always there and prepared take over if necessary. Many of the mothers had probably, according to her analysis, themselves been brought up in this ‘soft’ (amai) fashion, so they lacked a proper role model. Ms Natsume tries to be this role model, laughingly explaining:

I shout and scold. Some of my middle school girls said to their parents that ‘Natsume-sensei is really something (sugoi). The teachers in school never say a word when you smoke, but she does!’ Bad behaviour by the few reflects badly on all of us, so stop it, I say. I tell them they can stop smoking or leave my juku – I would get in a tight spot if they really did leave one day!

NPS Gakuin’s fees are affordable and certainly in an altogether different league than the shingaku juku. They have stayed the same for the last 10 years. In 2000 they were 16,000 yen per month for four subjects in sixth grade, 25,000 for five subjects in middle school. Discounts are given for siblings, single-parent families or families in various financial difficulties. Summer courses are free and there is no entrance fee. By all appearances NPS Gakuin is an example of a successful attempt to provide the kind of individual teaching and attention requested by, for example, the parents surveyed by the PTA and quoted in the Council for Lifelong Learning’s 1999 report. This issue is also given prominent treatment in most of the recent reports by the Central Council on Education. Further, Ms Natsume clearly sees the establishment of her hoshū juku as a direct result of shortcomings in the public system of schooling. Indeed, she commented that schools would not be able to function as they do right now were it not for the hoshū activities going on in juku. Clearly this juku has no relation whatsoever to gakureki shakai, the basis for business in shingaku juku. It is all about making sure as
many as possible will manage or perhaps even do well within the framework of what is demanded by the public school curriculum.

According to the variables I have identified, NPS Gakuin rather squarely places itself within the category of *hoshû juku* (see Table 3.1.). The atmosphere is extremely supportive, even nurturing and homely and tending a bit towards the *kyôsai juku*, but the focus of the teaching clearly is the school work and the primary goal is the repetition of school work and exercises and preparation for tests in school. The students attending NPS Gakuin are mostly average-to-poor performers, with some exceptions who will use the juku for exam preparation, but judging from Ms Natsume’s comments, the bulk of her work is related to catching up. As for teaching material Ms Natsume uses texts she can buy either at bookstores or from sales representatives that will occasionally visit her juku. She takes great care to select what suits the individual child best and in this respect again tends a little toward the *kyôsai juku*. Admission is free and she does not conduct placement tests as such. Rather, she watches work in progress and school work and adjusts her training accordingly. As she herself made plain, her mode of advertising is word of mouth, a powerful tool indeed, of which she was most careful.

NPS Gakuin thus exhibits most features that fall into the *hoshû* category and hence has been placed there. It does also have some features, especially expressed by the variable ‘atmosphere’ and in the extremely detailed attention to the individual students and their families, that tend to be more like to *kyôsai juku*. On a continuum line it will be slightly closer to the *kyôsai juku* than the typical *hoshû juku*.

![Figure 3.1. NPS on the continuum](image)
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

Table 3.1. NPS Gakuin according to the variables for hoshû juku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hoshû juku</th>
<th>NPS Gakuin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Relaxing/Supportive</td>
<td>Very supportive, extra home,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relaxed homely atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of course</td>
<td>Catch up &amp; school tests</td>
<td>Help with homework and test preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to school</td>
<td>Follow pace in class, knowledge</td>
<td>Follows pace in class mostly, good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of local schools</td>
<td>rel. esp. with one school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Average performers</td>
<td>Average to poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material</td>
<td>Homemade, commercial or</td>
<td>Commercial or school texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>&lt; 200 students</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Free, physical limits only</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TANAKA EISÛ JUKU

On 20 November 1997 I visited Tanaka Eisû Juku, a kojin juku located on the outskirts of Tokyo. It is a hoshû juku run by Mr and Ms Usui and the juku was originally founded by Ms Usui’s father, Mr Tanaka. I visited the juku on a rainy November day and spent three hours with the Usuis before their teaching started.

Tanaka Eisû Juku has about a hundred students who are taught by the Usuis who cover the subjects of not only English and Maths as was the case in the beginning but also social sciences, kokugo (Japanese) and physics. The juku is located in a residential area some 10 minutes’ walk from the nearest railway station in an ordinary one-family house. There are two classrooms, each seating about 10 persons in two rows at long narrow desks. There is a blackboard at one end and the whole setting looks very much like a school.

The main objective for Tanaka Eisû Juku is help with homework and preparation for school lessons and tests for pupils from two local middle schools. In response to parental requests they have
Hoshû Juku

now started to take in sixth graders also and these children were the focus of my questions. They use school textbooks and because of regular contact with the local schools through years of teaching their students and checking out the tests prepared by the schools, Tanaka Eisû Juku is also able, to some extent, to foresee questions on tests and the like because they have become familiar with the style of the teachers and school policies (Interview with Usui 1997).

A change in approach at Tanaka Eisû Juku occurred in the beginning of the 1990s. Up till then the wife and her parents had been in charge and had apparently thought of quality in education mostly in terms of points scored on examinations, i.e., the classic mode of evaluation – do grades in school go up or not. In 1993 the parents retired and the husband gave up his job in a trading company to teach at the juku. Apart from an interest in education, he also wanted to spend more time with his family, as his job had kept him away frequently. His ideas on the nature of learning meant that Tanaka Eisû Juku changed its emphasis somewhat and is now not only interested in bettering the children’s grades in school but also very concerned with arousing a general interest in learning and interest in the world we live in. The policy change also involved giving priority to understanding what was taught rather than rote learning. Mr Usui commented on the change: ‘As far as cramming facts into the heads of the kids goes, I suppose we may seem to be taking it very lightly, but that is how I think it should be – only the families do not always understand!’

They argue that this approach is also better suited to certain new developments in middle school entrance examinations where gradually more emphasis is put on essays and the students’ abilities of self-expression. This is inculcated by Mr Usui through discussions in class.

It is my opinion that the most important thing is to make the children interested. Then they become very good at learning by themselves, so much so that I some times feel ashamed of getting paid for their learning. It is almost as if they are coming to juku just for fun ... and I don’t talk about things they can get points for at school tests either.
Ms Usui added: ‘He speaks about life and the future! Some times he gets so carried away that he cannot stop even when class hours are over and then I have to stand in the doorway and point at my watch!’

Teaching is mainly conducted in classes of 9–10 students, but for those with special problems, individual tutoring is also an option. Otherwise, there is the risk that the child would once again experience the inadequacy that made it seek out a juku in the first place. At sixth grade level, the main objective is to create an even level in the class so that teaching at secondary level becomes smoother. Another important object is learning good study habits. The Usuis agreed that they did not want younger children in their juku because: ‘In second or third grade the children don’t really choose freely of their own volition, do they?’

Clearly, word of mouth has been the most important means of advertising for Tanaka Eisû Juku. They told me they were very popular in the local area and that their clients were often coming because siblings or acquaintances had had favourable experiences there. Tanaka Eisû Juku has been so popular that it has a list of people waiting to get admitted and students should sign up at the very latest by the time of entry to fifth grade to be sure to be admitted by sixth grade. There is no entrance examination but an interview with parents and children: ‘We do not accept children whose mother is trying to force them. We speak to the children alone to make sure they really want to go to juku. We make sure of this because we want them to like being here. It doesn’t matter if they are not bright.’

At Tanaka Eisû Juku emphasis for the sixth graders is competence in basics. In public middle school children are ranked according to performance, and Tanaka Eisû Juku’s students steadily advance so that more and more of them come to be among the 10 best performers in a class. For Tanaka Eisû Juku this naturally adds to their reputation as a good juku and increasingly children who do not really have problems in school are seeking them. With regard to evaluation, Mr Usui, like Ms Natsume, stated that the prime medium was grades, and a good juku was one that would make your grades in school go up. Though he was very much against ranking systems, pressure from the children themselves had resulted in a
Hoshû Juku

ranking system reflected in the way they were seated during class at Tanaka Eisû Juku. Struggling with his disbelief in such practices, Mr Usui decided to introduce points to be given or taken for other things in addition to the usual performance on tests:

Here on the blackboard I have an array of lists where points are deducted from those who forget to do their homework or those who forget their books. Then you can get points for making clever comments, for participating in discussions ... or for reading books on your own initiative.

The desire to compete and compare was explained by the Usuis by the absence of such opportunities in the public elementary school. Some public school teachers did not grade the children’s work and the children apparently felt uncomfortable not knowing their ranking in class. Hence the request for ranking in the juku. Mr Usui, however, expressed deep apprehension that ranking alone might become the stimulus for learning:

If you need that kind of stimulus to learn, the sudden joy when something dawns upon you will disappear. I want to promote learning based on deep understanding rather than sad rote learning. You should use your own standards as the measure of success, not those of other people; you should learn in order to know, not just to beat the others in some competition.

He proceeded to talk about the aim of the teaching at Tanaka Eisû Juku, stating that it takes care of the ochikobore (those who struggle to keep up), especially, so that they may also have a chance in the suisen system (advancement by recommendation) that is increasingly employed in schools. Although Tanaka Eisû Juku would duly teach the children what they needed in order to do well at school, Mr Usui made a clear point of it not just being test-taking techniques and tricks but real understanding. The main task for the Usuis was to balance their ideas on the proper nature of education with what their clients saw as their needs – quite a delicate balance it would seem, judging from some of Mr Usui’s remarks.

Here we see quite a typical example of the pedagogical ideas often found in the hoshû juku as well as the catching up on school
work and the close relations to local schools. Attention to the learning process of the individual is high, the involvement in family affairs and general upbringing is, however, visibly lower than at NPS Gakuin. Tanaka Eisū Juku is indeed a juku, not a family, albeit a hoshū juku consciously working towards establishing joy of learning as the driving force of the children’s learning habits.

Table 3.2. Tanaka Eisū Juku according to the variables for hoshū juku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hoshū juku</th>
<th>Tanaka Eisū juku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atmosphere</strong></td>
<td>Relaxing/Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive, relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of course</strong></td>
<td>Catch up and school tests</td>
<td>Help with homework and test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preparation, practice in free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>essays and discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation to school</strong></td>
<td>Follow pace in class, knowledge</td>
<td>Follows pace in class mostly,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of local schools</td>
<td>knows local middle and high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>schools well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Average performers</td>
<td>Average, tending toward all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching material</strong></td>
<td>Homemade, commercial or</td>
<td>Commercial or school texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>&lt; 200 students</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission</strong></td>
<td>Free, physical limits only</td>
<td>Free, has waiting list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tanaka Eisù Juku places itself more squarely in the hoshû category as a typical hoshû juku than NPS Gakuin (see Table 3.2). Its atmosphere is friendly and relaxed but still definitely like a school. The focus of the courses is what is done at school, catching up and care for ochikobore among the main tasks and they are quite concerned and knowledgeable about what goes on in the local schools. It is within the size limit of the hoshû category and caters for average-to-poor performers but has also recently, successfully been building a reputation which attracts the better performers in a class. Admission is based on who gets there first and the juku has a waiting list. There is no admission fee, they do not advertise and they get their clients because of their firm local base and the reputation they have earned there. As Tanaka Eisù Juku so convincingly exhibits the features of the typical hoshû juku, it is easy to place it right in the centre of the continuum line:

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON HOSHÛ JUKU
While both juku described in this chapter are hoshû juku, their differences give a small snapshot of the diversity of this type of juku. In reality, they can be doing just about anything that is requested by their customers and related to the children. This is very clear from the way Ms Natsume is handling her business: even problems she feels she should not rightly be responsible for, she tries to handle. Her level of engagement in the daily life of the families she is in touch with is high, higher even than it is in the other hoshû juku I have visited, and she seems to take charge of the entire family, not just the child in her juku. Perhaps this is the ultimate source of her popularity in the local area?

Tanaka Eisù Juku is more focused on the educational aspect of their activities. They have a clear pedagogical line, i.e., to make joy of learning the basis for school work. They are conscious of their identity as part of the local business community since they partake in the activities of the local association of shops.

Firmly based as hoshû juku are in local areas, and with their close and personal contacts with parents and the community, we may in the future see developments where a hoshû juku will become even more integrated in a family’s daily life. It may be only a matter of time before we will see some hoshû juku offering laundry and food
or lunch box (obentô) services as well as teaching and caretaking. A juku like NPS Gakuin seems not far removed from offering such services, although its size may rule out their realization. Tanaka Eisû Juku, on the other hand, seems on its way to establishing itself firmly as an academic hoshû juku rather than a mixture of home and school, its atmosphere perhaps a bit less familial and it does not concern itself much with the general behaviour, manners and upbringing of the children. However, it is also firmly embedded in the local business community, so the lines of communication necessary for establishing such additional services are certainly there.

What does firmly place both of these two juku in the hoshû category, however, is the focus of their courses (catching up and preparation for tests) and their orientation toward what is done in school. Also, as hoshû juku they are by nature small institutions with no advertising budgets to speak of. The atmosphere, the small size and firm local base are other features characteristic of hoshû juku.

An important feature of the hoshû juku is its relation to public schooling and the teaching conducted there. As Ms Natsume’s comments made abundantly clear, it can certainly be argued that schools would have a much harder time functioning were it not for the hoshû juku. In fact it is entirely plausible that the system of public schooling would have been even harder pressed to reform, and at an earlier point, had this business not been there to help tend to those who do not do well in the public system and who can afford the fees of a hoshû juku.

NOTES

1 National Assembly for Parent-Teacher Associations in Japan.

2 The Chûô Kyôiku Shingikai or Central Council on Education is a body under the Minister of Education. It deliberates on and researches educational issues and problems as requested by the Minister. The present Council is a result of a restructuring in January 2001 where the functions of seven previous councils under the Monbushô were integrated in the Central Council’s function. It has about 30 members representing different interests or specialties such as university administration, university researchers, industry, business, the media, schools and PTA. Three of the 30 were directly related to either middle or high schools (Monbushô homepage, updated January 2004).
Remarks like this were made by many of the juku representatives I talked to. Evidently, there was widespread agreement among juku-affiliated people that lack of competition for the market and lack of evaluative tools for parents and children in relation to public schools were features detrimental to the quality of public education.

This also happens in schools, where cleaning is usually part of the children’s duties.

This is still evident in the juku’s name, ‘Ei’ meaning ‘eigo’ (English) and ‘sû’ meaning sûgaku (maths).

Though far from realized at this stage, it is not quite unimaginable that cooperative efforts in the local area between for example a hoshû juku, laundries, convenience stores and the like would be an option for busy families in the future, reducing the places one would have to visit just to the juku. It would, of course, mean a change in the juku’s self-perception as a place of learning, but there is evidence for such developments in another juku category, as the *doriru* juku Benesse is already offering home delivery services.

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3 Hoshû Juku

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Chapter 4

**Doriru Juku**

*Doriru* juku are not the kind of institution that will first spring to mind when the word ‘juku’ is uttered, indeed Ms Suzuki from Kumon Kyôshitsu said: ‘We are not a real juku, we are Kumon (Interview with Suzuki 1996)!’ The *doriru* juku has features in common with *hoshû* juku as well as *shingaku* juku. Like in *hoshû* juku the atmosphere tends to be relaxed, there is more self-study than in *hoshû* juku, but there is also much focus on the individual client’s stage of learning. The main target of *doriru* juku is usually basic skills, but of course more advanced material is available when needed in the *doriru* juku as well as in the *hoshû* juku. The *doriru* juku does not have its own curriculum, again a feature it has in common with the *hoshû* juku. The last variables shared by *doriru* juku and *hoshû* juku is the price, affordable to most people, and admission, which tends to be free. As for the students *doriru* juku claims to be able to accommodate all levels, but students are generally counselled by manuals and experts not to choose a *doriru* juku for entrance exam preparation. The *doriru* juku is good for stabilizing basic computation skills and can also in some cases take a person to high levels in certain subjects, but as the *doriru* juku is usually national in scale and has a rather loose structure, it will normally not have very specific knowledge about the entrance examinations for particular private middle schools. However, a *doriru* juku like Gakken publishes manuals for choosing middle schools and does have some specific knowledge of certain schools. Again, staff in charge of local classrooms at, for example, Kumon may have specific knowledge of entrance exams at certain local middle schools, but this is not one of the features that characterizes Kumon to the extent that it can be used in advertising and the local *shingaku* juku will be better equipped for this task as will many *hoshû* juku.
Doriru Juku

Since there is little or no direct teaching, the doriru juku will also tend to leave more up to the pupil in terms of motivation and when to work and for how long, so the doriru juku is definitely not an optimal choice for exam preparation. The most reasonable conclusion to draw is that the students attracted by the doriru juku would potentially be all from levels but strongly tending toward average or poor performer. The rest of the variables are shared with shingaku juku, i.e., little or no relation to school, use of own text material, a large size and a big budget for advertising. Since doriru juku usually focus their efforts on computation skills that are easily practised on paper, maths and kokugo (Japanese) are prime subjects, but, as we shall see, English and social sciences are also included in the subjects offered by the two doriru juku I will be examining here.

KUMON KYÔSHITSU

On 1 August 1996 I visited a Kumon Kyôshitsu [classroom] in central Tokyo. The person in charge, Ms Suzuki, was there to meet me along with the assistant section manager Katsumata Masaki. This particular classroom was located on the second floor of a building next to Ms Suzuki’s residence. The room was spacious, furnished with long rows of tables and chairs and with desks at one side for the Kumon instructor and her assistants. On the day I visited we first spent some time in the classroom watching the children and parents coming and going, getting an impression of how the work in such a classroom proceeds. After a while Ms Suzuki left her assistant in charge. Most of the interview took place in the classroom. Later we went to her house to finish the interview. Ms Suzuki is a woman in her late 50s who has more than 20 years of experience with the Kumon method.

The development of the Kumon method started in 1954 when Kumon Tôru, maths teacher and the father of eight-year-old Takeshi, undertook supporting his son who was doing badly in maths. Prodded by Takeshi’s mother, Kumon senior crafted a home study programme of worksheets with minutely sequenced computation problems Takeshi’s grades improved, but only as long as they held to the strict regimen of worksheets every single day (Ukai 1994: 87; Kumon Homepage 2003). This became the Kumon principle, and in 1958 Kumon Kyôshitsu was founded.
The Kumon principle involves worksheets that gradually increase in difficulty while relentlessly repeating known material until the process of finding solutions is virtually automatic. The method has been especially successful in mathematics but it is also used in language instruction.

The founder has described his philosophy as follows:

I believe that any child who is presented with materials that precisely match his or her level of ability will enjoy learning and come to know the joy of developing his or her own capabilities. I believe that children are often unable to find any joy in learning because they are confronted with materials that are not suited to their abilities (Kumon 1995: 13).

The idea of the Kumon system is that children’s joy of learning should be maintained because this rigorous training ensures that they will be able to move upwards between levels and having mastered one level, should be able to solve the problems on the next level with relative ease. As also indicated by the founder, the Kumon philosophy is to cater for a child on its own terms, so it will provide remedial or preparatory tutoring as necessary. However, it does not really seem that the institution itself emphasizes a role as a provider of shingaku courses. The instructor in the classroom I visited said that when the children reached the sixth grade, she would usually recommend that they did one year in a real shingaku juku if they were aiming at a private middle school (Interview with Suzuki 1996). Kumon presents its mission on its Internet Homepage in the following manner: ‘By discovering the potential of each individual and developing his or her ability to the maximum, we aim to foster sound, capable people and thus contribute to the global community.’

The most effective method for children to learn by is, according to the Kumon principles, by applying themselves to practical tasks. Concepts and theories should be presented after the child has attained a complete grasp of the mechanics. This is why the sequenced exercises are used and why ‘demanding but realistic’ standards for speed and accuracy in the process of filling out the worksheets are set. With the basic skills in place, the expectation is that children will study willingly on their own, and that they will gain more self-confidence,
Doriru Juku

a greater desire to learn and that their ability to concentrate will increase (Kumon 1995: 1; Kumon Homepage 2003).

Attendance in the classroom is at the clients’ own convenience and guidance is personal, i.e., there is no classroom teaching. The classroom is normally open twice a week from 1 pm until 8 or 9 pm and the students do three to 10 worksheets in each session. When the day’s work has been done without any mistakes (this may involve doing certain worksheets over and over again), they take home three to five sheets for homework. The children punch in and out of the classroom and put a sticker on an attendance board on the wall to mark their attendance. While I was there everyone was working in a concentrated manner and all was calm. Ms Suzuki had three assistants helping her mark the worksheets, a huge task as every single worksheet is marked separately and work with a particular sheet is not complete until it can be marked with a red circle [まる] indicating no mistakes. New students will initially take a diagnostic test and are then placed at the appropriate level, where they can comfortably do all exercises correctly. After this initial success, they will then advance at their own pace. The system thus can accommodate slow as well as fast learners. Students are not placed in groups or classes and accordingly should feel free to proceed at their own pace. They are not compelled to keep up with any classmates or friends, but of course two friends attending Kumon together may easily do the work as a competition, since the material is readily comparable.

The Kumon system has 23 levels, each with 200 work sheets. For each set of 10 worksheets there is a specified time limit for completion. When the students are able to finish 10 worksheets with no mistakes within the time limit, they are considered ready to advance to the next level (Kumon 1995: 4, 11). The Kumon system works on the assumption that new material should be presented in a challenging way, while mastery of already acquired skills is reaffirmed. Accordingly, Kumon worksheets are based on repeated training of items introduced at school. So, while there is special Kumon teaching material, there is no separate Kumon curriculum (Kumon 1995; Interview with Katsumata and Suzuki 1996).

Seventy per cent of Kumon’s clients are in elementary school, but the classroom is open to everybody and in the classroom I
visited the age span was considerable: the youngest client was 1½ years old and the oldest was over 60. The younger children are accompanied by their mothers who will read the tasks aloud to them and otherwise assist in the day’s work. The material used in a Kumon Kyōshitsu includes, apart from the worksheets, jigsaw puzzles and other kinds of puzzle-solving games which Kumon produces in a series that gradually increases in difficulty.

In light of the changes in curriculum issued by Monbushō, Kumon, while citing the ideas behind new reforms aimed at creating more space for a child to work on its own and become more self confident [yutori kyōiku and ikiru chikara], points out that rather than discussing the problematic situation created by fewer teaching hours concerned parents and teachers ought to be discussing the quality of education, i.e. what should be learned and how. Further, Kumon quotes an earlier Monbushō survey on how much children understood during school lessons, stating that one-third of the elementary school pupils, half of those in middle school and two-thirds of high school students do not understand much of what is going on in class. In this, Kumon suggests, may lie one of the reasons for problems with truancy, bullying and violent behaviour (Kumon Homepage 2003). Thus Kumon is voicing one of the more popular analyses of the reasons for problems in the schools: namely, that children misbehave due to failure to fulfil the demands in school.

At Kumon, worksheets in maths, kokugo and English are offered. In maths and kokugo the contents are much influenced by what is required in high school. In English the emphasis is on conversational skills. This work is carried out with the aid of a CD for listening practice, reading aloud and exercises enhancing the vocabulary and exercises in grammar. Every year the worksheets are updated and revised.

The Kumon method is most widely used by elementary school children according to a Mainichi Shimbun poll in 1985 parents of children enrolled in a Kumon classroom. They said that they valued the good study habits that the method instils (45 per cent), that they thought it would help their children learn how to think and concentrate (28 per cent) and, finally, that they had chosen the programme because it was liked by children (40 per cent) (Ukai
1994). Apparently, Kumon was not primarily chosen because it was better at transmitting knowledge as compared to other juku. Rather, it was chosen for features that were an investment in the process of study, for example good study habits and the ability to concentrate. The survey referred to here is a bit dated, but my findings have not given me reason to suspect that there have been significant changes in the manner parents assess the value of Kumon until at least the late 1990s.

As for the function as a place to be or a place to meet, the limited time frame (twice per week) and the rather free coming and going renders Kumon less attractive as a caretaker and therefore an unlikely choice for parents in need of after school caretaking, but certainly it would be a good place for children to meet and be with friends.

Kumon advertises its system with slogans like ‘bring out the potential of each individual’, or it uses English slogans like ‘it all adds up to excellence’ or ‘COME ON! KUMON’, emphasizing the developmental character of the Kumon system. Further, ex-Beatle Paul McCartney was used in the mid-1990s to attract attention on posters and pamphlets. The international image in Kumon’s campaign is important. McCartney opened a music school in Liverpool allegedly founded on much the same principles as Kumon. For this reason he approached Kumon and offered his help in advertising (Interview with Katsumata and Suzuki 1996). There were still traces of McCartney’s special relationship with Kumon in 2003, when the Beatles’ song ‘Hello, hello’ was used in a TV ad for Kumon.

Kumon has branches in a number of Western countries, doing very well in, for example, the United States (See the Kumon Internet Homepage). Internationalization is important in relation to the general public debate, where internationalization, not only in education but in a number of fields, is being discussed and usually found miserably lacking. Kumon’s international activities and their manner of advertising give the Kumon system an air of glamour and progressive vision in spite of the rather traditional rote-based manner of learning promoted by the system.

Kumon is a typical example of the kind of establishment sought by customers in need of remedial teaching and to a lesser extent help with homework. Of course, the working habits it hopes to instil and the skills acquired in the subjects studied may be of great use.
in relation to examinations, but the main raison d’être for Kumon Kyōshitsu in their own interpretation, as well as in what becomes evident when looking at Kumon through my variables, is remedial tutoring and definitely not training for entrance examinations. Kumon appears to a large extent to be used as a supplement either to school lessons or even to another juku. Students at Kumon may come from all levels, but typically the more gifted would go to other kinds of institution as their aim would be entrance at a private school. As a supplement, however, Kumon would be useful to clients at all levels.

As is common in doriru juku Kumon has no entrance examination and the atmosphere in the classroom I visited was very relaxed. There are no ‘lessons’ as such in this system, the children come and go as they or their parents see fit. While in the classroom they sit quietly doing their worksheets, going to the instructor’s desk to have them checked as they work their way through them.

In the Kumon system instructors are chosen for their personality and love of children, the classes are small and usually conducted in the instructor’s home. Instructors are mainly women and they are called shidōsha [instructor] rather than the traditional sensei [teacher] which implies more authority. The Kumon formula is highly structured instruction with low-keyed authority in homely surroundings to give children a relatively unthreatening first experience of juku. The basic idea guiding the Kumon system is karada de oboeru [memorizing through the body], as reflected in the ceaseless repetition designed to create automatic problem solving (Ukai 1994). The Kumon instructors are therefore not ‘teaching’; they give no lessons and rarely spend much time explaining anything. If a child makes mistakes, it will be given some of the earlier worksheets for repetition rather than being instructed directly. In this manner one can say that the child itself is in charge of the learning process, which is also the professed philosophy of Kumon.

However, the instructors are able to explain most points in the material when needed. To be allowed to take up a Kumon franchise one must have graduated at least from a junior college [tanki daigaku], followed by one year of training and an exam before licensed as Kumon Shidōsha. The instructors in charge of a classroom are quite free to run the classroom as they see fit, arranging outings or other
events in addition to the ordinary classroom activities. For example, the classroom I visited and the neighbouring Kumon classroom have come together to issue the newsletter ‘Midori’ [Green], which gives tips for enhancing study habits, schedules for the classrooms, information on other activities and the like. The August 1996 issue, for example, has a calendar marking the days the classrooms will be open, a short paragraph exhorting the children to have ‘Kumon time’ (doing worksheets, that is) every day and to make sure they get out and experience nature every day. Further, some advice for the summer period is given: the children should always remember to bring handkerchiefs, make sure they do not leave umbrellas, pencil cases and the like in the classroom, not eat while in class and always wash hands after having been outside or after using the lavatory. The last was especially emphasized in the summer of 1996, when some particularly vicious cases of food poisoning occurred due to the 0-157 bacteria. Parents were asked to help their children get through all the worksheets they brought home, particularly those given more than usual because they would be going away on holiday (Kumon 1996). Material like this newsletter clearly reveals that local Kumon instructors work on instilling good study habits as well as general behavioural habits, such as always carrying a handkerchief or taking daily exercise (‘going out into nature’). Seen from this angle, Kumon has features in common with a hoshū juku like NPS Gakuin, though by no means going to the lengths NPS Gakuin does to train and educate the clients.

The fact that most of my interview with the Kumon representatives took place in the classroom while the children were working is evidence of the relaxed atmosphere, and I could see for myself how children came and went, some of the younger ones with their mothers, who would patiently sit by their child while it worked on the sheets.

As a true doriru juku Kumon’s activities have no close relation to what is taught in school. Kumon uses its own materials, not school textbooks, and the children work at their own pace, not that of the curriculum in school. The price in 2003 was 6,300 yen per subject per month for children up to sixth grade, 7,350 yen per subject per month for middle school and 8,400 for high school. For an elementary school student doing the three subjects Kumon offers,
it would amount to a yearly expense of 226,800 yen. As far as size is concerned Kumon with its franchise structure is rather large, with more than 1.7 million clients in Japan in more than 18,500 classrooms and an overseas enrolment of over 1.2 million in 2000. Its advertising activities with huge campaigns and flashy pamphlets reflect the size of its purse.

Table 4.1. Kumon Kyôshitsu according to the variables for doriru juku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Doriru juku</th>
<th>Kumon Kyôshitsu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Relaxing, often home study</td>
<td>Relaxing, home study included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of course</td>
<td>Basic skills</td>
<td>Drills according to child’s level, mainly basic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to school</td>
<td>No relation</td>
<td>No relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Average to poor</td>
<td>Average to poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material</td>
<td>Own texts</td>
<td>Kumon texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Thousands</td>
<td>About 1.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Big budget advertising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Doriru Juku

Kumon is a *doriru* juku, exhibiting all of the variables appropriate for this type of juku (see Table 4.1.). It is the *doriru* juku *par excellence* with a relaxed atmosphere, a focus on basic skills, a lack of relationships with schools, its large size and budget and the ability to accommodate any client.

**BENESSE**

I visited the Benesse Corporation’s Tokyo office in Tama City on 25 June 1996. The general manager of the Educational Research Centre, Shimauchi Yukio, gave me a lengthy interview and showed me around the building, which includes research facilities, a library and a planetarium.

The Benesse Corporation is a huge undertaking with a variety of education-related activities. The bulk of their clients are in elementary school and middle school, but there are also clients in high school and they have a wide selection of material for pre-school pupils. Shimauchi’s estimate of their number in 1996 was 3.7 million, with one in five middle school pupils and one in seven or eight elementary school pupils using Benesse courses. Benesse is mainly based on correspondence courses and Shimauchi explained that the objective of their activities is to support teaching in the schools, so we concentrate on what the textbooks teach; we do not have our own curriculum. We try to make the material more accessible, we use illustrations and cartoons to explain things, tapes and videos, but it is not a special curriculum. Our editors make exercise books based on the textbook material for different levels in school.

In this, Benesse is very much like Kumon Kyōshitsu. Shimauchi further explained what else clients use Benesse for: ‘What is special about us is that pupils in elementary school and middle school use us to enhance their understanding of what is going on in school, to get better grades, thereby entering a better school – that is what they use us for.’

Again Benesse is much like Kumon; their role is to supplement regular schooling and perhaps in some cases even supplement what
is going on in other juku. The origins of Benesse go back to the 1950s, around the same time as Kumon was founded. Today’s Benesse has developed from the efforts of the Fukutake dynasty. In 1955 Fukutake Tetsuhiko, a former teacher, established Fukutake Publishing Co. in Okayama, producing material for correspondence courses and mock examinations. In 1962 Kansai Simulated Exams (later Shinken Simulated Exams) was initiated and in 1969 correspondence courses for high school were initiated. From then the company has developed to target other levels of schooling and make forays into broader cultural and educational fields. In 1986 the founder died and was succeeded by his son, the present president, Fukutake Sōichirō. In 1993 Berlitz International Inc. was acquired, and in 1995 the company changed its name to Benesse.

The educational material produced by Benesse to a large extent consists of series of exercise books designed for specific subjects and levels. There is a series for babies and toddlers, ‘Children’s Challenge’ [Kodomo Charenji] comprising of games, puzzles, simple exercise books, advice on physical exercises, videos and advice for parents. The tiger Shimajirō is the central character who leads the children through the material. The major exercise book series for pre-school through high school level is the Shinkenzemi series of courses in maths, kokugo (Japanese), social sciences, natural sciences and English. For example, for an elementary school first grader we have ‘1.Graders’ Challenge’ [Charenji Ichinensei], where the goal is to teach a child that studying is fun and to teach it good study habits and basic skills. Videos, exercise books and various tools are used through out elementary school. For a sixth grader the course costs 4,383 yen per month when pre-paid for one year at a time – in all a yearly expense of 52,596 yen which is certainly at the affordable end of the scale for juku charges and cheaper than, for example, Kumon Kyōshitsu (Benesse Homepage 2003).

The single feature that sets Benesse apart from other suppliers in the market is the range of materials produced, not only for educational purposes related to schooling, but also for other types of training, other types of instructional or guidance material as well as products relating to culture and daily life. Benesse publishes magazines on family and childcare, dictionaries, novels, correspondence courses for learners of all ages, multimedia learning software and care for
the elderly to name but some of the wide selection available. Benesse also runs various online communities and networks: for example Benesse Women’s Park, an online community for Japanese women to exchange all kinds of news and information on their interests and concerns as well as shopping information. The membership soared to 100,000 within its first year of existence, making it one of the largest portals for women in Japan in 2003 (See Benesse Homepage, www.benesse.co.jp). Further, Benesse has strengthened its efforts in language and translation by the acquisition of Simul International, one of the top Japanese translation and interpretation companies, and has ventured into telemarketing through Telemarketing Japan.

A very useful resource supplied by Benesse is the ‘child research net’, a site which provides facilities and a forum for research on children (see www.crn.or.jp). The child research net runs many research groups, discussion forums and the like, and the online library contains full-text versions of the reports sponsored and published by Benesse on a wide variety of subjects related to children and schools. The reports are arranged according to level of schooling, for example for elementary school there is ‘Monogurafu Shôgakusei Nau’, for middle school the series is called ‘Monogurafu Chûgakusei no Sekai’ and for high school ‘Monogurafu Kôkôsei’. The reports cover all kinds of topics, such as bullying, leisure time activities or the effects of the implementation of the five-day school week. The monographs tend to contain a lot of statistics and are produced by researchers from different universities.

Benesse also has what they call ‘Benesse Island’, Naoshima in Seto Inland Sea. Here they have built the Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum. They also engage in restoration work on local houses and temples or shrines. This, along with the publishing of novels, is possibly the single most tangible expression of Benesse’s concern with culture and daily life.

The last thing I will mention here is the planetarium, the Benesse Star Dome, located on the top floor of the Benesse headquarters in Tama City. The Star Dome is naturally used for watching stars, explaining to audiences or special groups from schools or institutions (if you are a group of at least 20 persons, you can ask for special shows) about the night skies. As is common in other planetariums, the Star Dome also shows movies. In October 2003 they were on the phenomenon of aurora.
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

On the homepage the Benesse president states that the aim of Benesse is to support people’s ‘good life’ from the youngest to the oldest; hence they offer services for the individual as well as for the family. As Benesse sees it,

[...] the 21st century will be a time when people shift from seeking a fulfilling life by economic means to seeking it through inner satisfaction… A person will study, not just to get into a prestigious university in order to get a high prestige job and social status, but to fulfil one’s personal life ambition (Benesse homepage 2003).

In other words, Benesse envisages a shift in peoples’ behaviour regarding education, a change from seeking education in order to attain certain jobs and a certain status in society to a situation where education is sought for personal satisfaction and for personal reasons. This analysis, it is claimed, forms the very basis on which Benesse has been founded:

In a well-off and ageing society services that can fulfil diverse needs in welfare, such as childcare [hoiku] and care for the elderly [kaigo] will most probably be in demand. The 21st century will become a time which places the individual at the centre [ningen chūshin] rather than economy [keizai chūshin]… This is the basis upon which Benesse is founded (ibid.).

Here it is very clear that Benesse sees its business operations as very wide indeed. On their Homepage they state that their main business areas are: education, language education, daily life [seikatsu] and welfare. As an effect of the 2002 revisions of the curriculum, education has been anticipated to undergo major changes, and Benesse on their Homepage foresee that this will mean a strengthening of their identity as a provider of education [kyōiku no Benesse] (ibid.).

As for the aspect of Benesse most related to the rest of the juku treated here, namely the course material and instruction, the procedures are as follows: children work with exercise material at home, then send it to their Benesse instructor who marks it and gives comments. The instructors are not employed directly by Benesse but have passed a test to be accepted by Benesse via a franchise system. They are mostly people with higher education, typically home-makers, and after passing the test, Benesse will instruct them
how to mark and comment on the work of their clients. Exercise books, videos and CDs are based on what is taught in school at different class levels, illustrations are plentiful and instructors are shown in detail how to correct errors, explain things and make the pupils reflect over the material.

Here is an example of Benesse instructional material, an exercise in social studies for fourth grade, which concerns traffic accidents. The pupil answers questions about what to do, what telephone number to call for help and what happens when he or she witnesses an accident. Under the heading *kangaekata* (how to reflect/think) the message of the exercise is highlighted: the pupil must realize that one should call 110 immediately when coming upon an accident, that from then on the police will go through certain routines and see to further necessary communication, that the number of accidents is increasing and, finally, the pupil is asked to reflect on why accidents are especially likely to occur at intersections (Benesse 1996: 25). Instruction here is quite detailed. An example like this also illustrates that Benesse courses are not only concerned with the easy to measure maths or quickly corrected *kokugo*, but are also concerned with practical advice like the above. Further, they venture into social studies, where values and opinions may become more of an issue.

Benesse is a very big corporation, counting clients in education-related activities in millions. To this one can add people who get into contact with Benesse through various endeavours in art, social services and culture. Advertising is naturally a major undertaking for Benesse, and their logo with three little stylized human figures is quite well known. Their magazines, such as *Tamago* and *Hyoko Kurabu* and the newcomer *Kokko Kurabu* all together are published monthly in 780,000 copies, *Hiyoko Kurabu* being the largest with a circulation of 320,000. The magazine *Thank You!* aimed at homemakers, prints 430,000 copies per month (figures from March 2002, www.benesse.co.jp). A browse through the long list of Benesse companies (available on its Homepage) testifies to the extreme variety of Benesse activities. There is even a hint of the kind of service I suggested might be provided in the future at some *hoshû juku* (in Chapter 3): namely, the possibility of offering laundry or meal services. Benesse established the company Benesse en-Famille Inc. in October 2001. It is a food home delivery service
Japanese Education and the Cram School Business

based in Kanda, Chiyoda-ku, clearly a service intended to aid busy families in making their schedules come together. All of this adds to the fame of Benesse in conjunction with their aforementioned activities. We are dealing here with a huge corporation with a great number of varied fields of interest.

![Figure 4.2. Benesse on the continuum](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sundai</th>
<th>Yotsuya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>Tanaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawai</td>
<td>Nichinoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hoshû juku

Kyôsai juku ↔ Shingaku juku

Doriru juku

Kumon

Benesse

**Figure 4.2. Benesse on the continuum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2. Benesse according to the variables for <em>doriru</em> juku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doriru juku</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atmosphere</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation to school</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching material</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Admission</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As far as the variables for juku go, Benesse is without question to be categorized as a *doriru* juku (Table 4.2.). However, it is not as exemplary an example of *doriru* juku as Kumon, because of its
**Doriru Juku**

many other ventures in cultural activities, publishing and so on. On a continuum, however, it would be placed in the same position as Kumon because of its degree of accordance with the variables used here. Benesse may be seen as an enterprise taking education-related services as its point of departure, but whose activities are diversified, and increasingly so, toward an array of activities more or less related to its original starting point.

**CONCLUSIONS**

*Doriru* juku have as their primary function the role supplementing schools, individual studies or other juku. Kumon Kyōshitsu is the primary example of this type of institution, its activities concentrating on traditional *doriru* juku functions. Benesse works within the same sets of activities as Kumon, but, in addition, Benesse has a huge range of other activities related to education, training, guidance or culture. This makes Benesse able to compete in many different fields and the company is less vulnerable to fluctuations in the juku market. It may also, because of its diverse activities, run the risk of being seen as less of an ‘expert’ since its efforts are spread out over a range of activities.

*Doriru* juku are truly supplementary in nature and do not appear to have the potential for becoming a real threat or challenge, to the activities in regular schools. To determine whether they can be said to be based on *gakureki shakai* like the *shingaku* juku, or on shortcomings in regular schools like *hoshû* juku, is a bit difficult and perhaps beside the point in this particular case. The *doriru* juku may be supplementary even to other juku, and thus be seen as resulting from the activities in other juku as well. However, given the content of their courses and the general level of their student intake, it makes most sense to see them as feeding mainly off shortcomings of regular schooling.

A *doriru* juku is not the obvious choice for someone trying to increase his or her chances in credentialist society. *Doriru* juku may be seen as an easily accessible and not so demanding type of juku and hence may be chosen by parents who feel something ought to be done for their children regarding juku attendance or performance in school, but who also want to keep the experience...
as undemanding (and perhaps cheap?) as possible. The *doriru* juku may be seen as the juku that is not quite a juku, i.e. less pressure is associated with it, yet it will still provide the users with some training and the feeling that ‘something is being done’. As such it can be an attractive choice for parents uncomfortable with doing nothing (‘I am uncomfortable with not sending him’ as one mother told me), but who are equally uncomfortable with being associated with institutions notorious for excessive cramming. Individual control of the learning circumstances is obviously higher in the *doriru* juku than in other juku, another factor that may also be important.

**NOTES**

1 Incidentally, there was some disappointment in this particular campaign. The representative I talked to complained that the young mothers, who are the principal target of such campaigns, nowadays no longer know ‘Pooru’ as he was affectionately called, so the campaign lost much of the hoped for impetus.

2 The name ‘Benesse’ is constructed from the two Latin words ‘bene’ and ‘esse’ and is explained by the corporation thus: ‘Benesse, the very name of our company means to live well.’ (See the Benesse Internet Homepage)

3 Well-known examples are *Tamago Kurabu* (about pregnancies) and *Hiyoko Kurabu* (about babies) and the newest addition, *Tamahiyo Kokko Kurabu* (about toddlers). Further examples of Benesse publications are *Thank You!*, which provides practical advice and support for homemakers, *bon merci!*, which provides recipes for healthy meals for children aged 3-6, *Aile for You* is tailored for women in their 50s seeking a new life style.

4 For example they have published young newcomers on the literary scene such as Yoshimoto Banana and Ogino Anna.

5 The nearest larger town on Honshû is Okayama.

6 More information about the museum as well as the other activities undertaken by Benesse on Naoshima is available on its Homepage, including descriptions and pictures of their permanent collection of modern Japanese artists.
Chapter 5

Summary of Case Studies

All the juku I have visited have now been placed on a continuum between shingaku juku and kyōsai juku according to the variables I have determined. This leaves three definite categories with each of their characteristics exemplified by actual examples of what these characteristics may look like in reality.

The shingaku juku category covers most of the institutions I have visited. There is some variety within the category, and it is clear that the variables can be present in different degrees and manners within the same general category. Known for their focus on examinations and the enhancement of an individual’s performance, the shingaku juku are indeed related to gakureki shakai (credentialist society). Their entire purpose rests on the demand for exam preparation and calculations of chances of admittance as done in the hensachi system. The shingaku juku should not be regarded as the reason for the existence of gakureki shakai, but they certainly reinforce and perpetuate it through their activities.

The most obvious representative in my material of the gakureki shakai-enhancing shingaku juku is SAPIX, which is quite elitist and thus naturally values gakureki (academic credentials) and high performance (as well as the high performers themselves, of course, as they are the potential clients). Institutions serving a wider range of performers such as Kawai Juku, Sundai or Yotsuya Ōtsuka also contribute to the reinforcement of gakureki shakai, because a substantial number of their clients may be attending in order to hold on to an impossible dream, namely entrance into a particularly prestigious school. Clients at shingaku juku will be attending an institution where almost everyone will have as their ultimate goal admission to certain prestigious schools, which are limited in number. In this competitive environment, many will
find that the desired goal may be within sight, especially perhaps for their comrades, but sadly out of reach. They may very well have to change initial choices of a target school as a result of their calculated chances of passing the entrance examination (the *hensachi* calculation) and the counselling the juku will provide based on the *hensachi* score on tests or examinations in the juku. Naturally, the juku will want as many as possible to enter the most prestigious schools, but will also be concerned that not too many of their clients fail the exams they sit for and thus hurt the juku’s success rates. Hence a lot of effort is put into matching schools and individuals so that students will only sit for exams they have a real chance of passing. There is therefore a very real risk that a number of *shingaku* juku clients will come out of the experience reinforced in their belief in the transcendence of *gakureki shakai* and its inevitability, but with a keen understanding that they are not star players in this society. Even *shingaku* juku are not aiming at the elite alone. In fact, they would not be able to survive on the elite alone, so the reality is that many average performers can be found in *shingaku* juku, potentially inviting the kind of experiences of failure as described above.

Another factor complicating things for families trying to ensure future careers and the best possible social status for their young – and a factor that renders the reinforcement of the belief in *gakureki shakai* increasingly problematic – is that the relation between a prestigious education and a prestigious and secure job that in the past seemed so stable, no longer appears to be so and has perhaps even lost some of its lustre for young people. In any case several juku I talked to were offering services that were aimed at young people who felt uncomfortable with the hierarchical race for exams, such as, for example, the Cosmo programme at Kawai Juku. This is probably the same phenomenon that Okano and Tsuchiya describe as ‘support schools’ offered by some juku: ‘By imposing few rules …, starting lessons late in the morning, and providing a flexible environment, these ‘support schools’ create an alternative learning space’ (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999: 100).

Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku actually criticized Monbushô quite fiercely for having ‘given up’ on the weaker performers in school and for tending only to the elite, thus leaving it up to private institutions for education like the juku to take care of those not fit
for elite education. He saw this tendency first of all in statements by the Central Council on Education on the status of the curriculum guidelines as minimum requirements [hadome], to be built upon rather than absolute directions on what should be learnt. A ‘policy miss’, he called it, and said that Monbushō on this issue had let go of the reins. In his analysis what had happened was that the elite does not change, so it is the easy segment of the population to educate. Monbushō had not noticed, he claimed, that the weak are getting weaker, that young people today lack proper role models. Instead, the ministry, in his opinion, is sending the message that the weak do not count. He said:

Manual work to a great extent is not longer done in Japan. The work that remains is the work of the brain, so Monbushō concentrates on the elite, not the masses. It does not solve the problem, it just lets go. Private institutions then take over. We care for the weak, we fill in the holes left by the public system – in the end this could be a strength for us (Interview with Matsui 2003).

It would seem that what Mr Matsui is describing is a shingaku juku moving very close to the hoshû juku, when he talks of filling in holes and caring for the weak, although it also seems clear that the ‘weak’ here are those who have failed in the gakureki shakai in the first place, not necessarily those who have failed at school. Further, the practices he proceeded to describe indicate that we are still dealing with a shingaku juku based on gakureki shakai. Describing Kawai Juku’s business, he explained that as universities diversified their entrance examinations, demands on juku also became diversified, that high schools would approach shingaku juku inviting them to conduct courses during school vacations. In fact Kawai Juku already used its expertise on entrance examinations to actually author the examinations at several universities (about 30, he said). This is also the case at other shingaku juku. Although a connection to entrance examinations rather than school curricula is still strong, as a result of such increased direct contact with schools, we may also expect this focus to become somewhat modified in the future.

While at some shingaku juku there is apparently increasingly a tendency to target the weaker performers, it also remains clear that the expertise those juku have is with regard to entrance examin-
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ations even now producing them. Thus the shingaku juku, even if we accept the analysis that Monbushô has left the weak to fend for themselves or go to the juku, are still firmly embedded in the gakureki shakai. While there can be no doubt, that the shingaku juku will be on the lookout for ways to increase business now that the age cohorts are steadily getting smaller and probably therefore will increasingly pay attention to the poorer performers, the ultimate goal, the most desirable outcome of attendance at these institutions appears unchanged so far. The aim is still admission to some school rather than ensuring a certain level of learning for the individual. This emphasis may change for many of the shingaku juku in the future since a number are likely to begin to pursue other sources of business. In as much as juku are still counting success in numbers of entries to prestigious institutions, the public will probably find it hard to imagine success in other terms, as this criterion is trumpeted not only by the juku themselves but also in the press whenever the shingaku juku are mentioned.

The hoshû juku clearly are an entirely different story. Their raison d’être obviously relates to the shortcomings in the regular school system and to some extent in the nature of social structures in present day Japan. The work undertaken by hoshû juku is very much based on what is needed to succeed or just to follow the lessons in the local public schools, i.e. they offer the special or remedial education needed by particular individuals, they offer help with homework, exercises and may also provide training in more general social skills, such as basic good manners and behaviour (like NPS Gakuin) or a general interest in society and life circumstances as well as the ability to discuss these issues (like Tanaka Eisû Juku). Due to their small size the hoshû juku can be very flexible and be able to accommodate individual needs in a very detailed manner. The hoshû juku are not in the business of producing elite students fit for competition for the most prestigious slots in the elite layer of society. They are working on securing the stability of the educational level of middle or low performers mostly destined for the middle layer of society; they teach the basic skills and competencies needed to make everyday society work.

The function of hoshû juku is closely related to the schools, when schools change, so do the hoshû juku. Even if the relation is not
Summary of Case Studies

friendly, the *hoshû* juku without doubt are very dependent on how schools work. If the public schools for some reason suddenly were able to supply all the extra tutoring, day care, and general looking after the children, which is at present provided by the *hoshû* juku, their business would certainly be in danger. On the other hand, this is not a very likely scenario and one can easily imagine the benefits to be gained by co-operative efforts between schools and *hoshû* juku, a common effort that could certainly benefit those who use both institutions. An important feature of the *hoshû* juku is the local base: the involvement in local activities, local business communities, local community activities or contact with parents or neighbours in the vicinity. This places *hoshû* juku in an excellent position to take up the challenge of reinvigorating the educative role of the local community, an issue often elaborated upon in official reports on education and training.1 Because of their relation to local schools and their contacts in local communities *hoshû* juku have the potential to become very important agents in the efforts concerning community activities centring on children and youth.

The *doriru* juku seem to be mainly involved with extra tutoring, i.e. with compensating for shortcomings in the present system of schooling or alleviating problems experienced by an individual in particular school subjects. They are supplementary to school or to other juku and they do not offer help with homework and rarely engage directly in inculcating social behaviour, though some aspects of exercises, like the one described earlier from Benesse’s social sciences lesson on traffic, may be said to contain aspects of this. On the other hand, this type of juku is less ‘meddlesome’ in an individual’s life; someone using a *doriru* juku will have more control over the way his or her time is spent than they can with other types of juku. *Doriru* juku are easier to incorporate into a busy life. However, the *doriru* juku cannot be entirely separated from *gakureki shakai*, as it is entirely possible – though the numbers may be small – that their material will be used by some to get an edge in a race for admission where one point in a test score may make all the difference between success and failure.

The *doriru* juku is by nature a large undertaking, typically based on franchise. It is difficult to say much about their sense of ‘social responsibility’, that is, their level of engagement in the
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clients’ lives. This kind of engagement may occur as a result of a franchise-taker’s particular efforts, or it may not occur. The Kumon Kyôshitsu representatives were not particularly occupied with this aspect during my interview with them, but the local newssheet *Midori* did contain some attempts at offering advice on behaviour and the Kumon campaign employing a ‘thinking face’, stating that Kumon wants to become the local ‘education station’, is certainly trying to place it more firmly within the local community. Benesse instructors, where we are dealing with a correspondence course in contrast to Kumon, do not have direct face-to-face interaction with their clients, but may by way of the correspondence engage in the clients’ lives to a small extent. Certainly, Benesse as a company is concerned with many aspects of the individual’s life as is evident in the array of counselling magazines they publish, services such as home delivery of foodstuffs, and cultural activities such as the Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum.

As mentioned earlier there is an element of usage as a care centre or meeting place in normal everyday use of various juku. For families with two working parents or for single-parent families, this may be a very important aspect of a juku function. In NPS Gakuin such usage was quite evident and the owner was acutely aware of her role as a caretaker or sometimes even as an extra parent. Much of the otherwise surprising use of *shingaku* juku as safe places for the children to await the homecoming of their parents can be explained by a dearth of local *hoshû* juku like NPS Gakuin or Tanaka Eisû Juku. Many will have chosen a *shingaku* juku because of the unavailability of a local *hoshû* juku. This is often a question of size, i.e. a lack of ability to accommodate on the part of *hoshû* juku: for example Tanaka Eisû Juku had a waiting list and was not able to serve all prospective users.

Whereas one can easily imagine that a major important factor for sending a child to NPS Gakuin would be the care aspect, with the learning aspect in a strong but second position, it is a bit more mixed for Tanaka Eisû Juku, Kumon Kyôshitsu and quite a lot more mixed for the *shingaku* juku. At Tanaka Eisû Juku a child would meet other children from the neighbourhood, so it would be a natural meeting place, but this juku apparently did not have the daily nurturing found at NPS. There did not seem to be rooms where
Summary of Case Studies

the children could relax, watch TV, do homework on their own or the like. Tanaka Eisû Juku offers classes and types of teaching and guidance not found in school, or perhaps in short supply in school. It provides surroundings conducive to learning and opportunities for meeting other children, so clearly this *hoshû* juku would also function as a meeting place, and for many families it would also be a secure place for children to stay at until there would be someone at home, but it cannot be said to have a role as active in caretaking as that of NPS Gakuin.

Much the same as has been said about Tanaka Eisû Juku can be said about Kumon, even though here interaction between child and instructor does not really take place in teaching situations. It usually occurs while the instructor is correcting the child’s worksheets, but of course the relaxed atmosphere and the non-teacher status of the instructors may make it easier for a child – or the parents for that matter – to confide in them. Again, Kumon is a good meeting place, but due to the lack of classes and fixed class hours the child must attend, it may not be regarded as a reliable caretaker because the child may leave when it has finished its work regardless of the time.

Kumon and Tanaka Eisû Juku may function as meeting places and to some extent as caretakers, mostly due to the limits they set to the time the child will be unsupervised, but this is not likely to be a major factor in choosing to send a child there, although it may happen by default. For caretaking, places like NPS would be much more reliable. Still, Tanaka Eisû Juku would be more reliable as a caretaker than Kumon, since its does have fixed classes and thus would be able to notify parents should a child fail to turn up. This would be much more difficult for a Kumon instructor, because coming and going is fixed within a time frame only, and the instructor usually does not know when a child will come or indeed if it will come every time the class is open.

As for the *shingaku* juku they naturally can be used as caretakers because they will keep the child busy for a set amount of time, but since they tend to be large, attention to an individual child in matters other than the course-related issues may well be scanty. The fee demanded by many *shingaku* juku may in itself be enough for the choosing one of them to be determined not by concerns about how the child spends its time, but by how and how much it
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will learn. As we have seen, some parents when unable to find a suitable hoshû juku, have had to put their children in a shingaku juku, thus by default engaging them in exam preparation.

The various uses of juku described here lead me to the following dilemma. No matter how one chooses to praise or criticize the institutions dealt with here, they all cost money, not to speak of time. Not all families can afford juku. Although many hoshû juku tend to be quite inexpensive, not all families can afford even that, and some may not be able to find a local hoshû juku. If Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku is right and Monbushô has indeed left the tending of the weak to private business, this has far-reaching consequences indeed for equal access to education. I shall elaborate on this issue in Chapter 6.

By now, the different characters of the juku and their different functions should be clear. Let us now take a look at how institutions in the three categories exemplified here interact with the politically determined circumstances of schooling and education in Japan and the changes in those circumstances that have occurred lately.

NOTE

1 See for example Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999 or Chûkyôshin 2003a. There is further discussion of the point in Chapter 6.
PART III

THE WHYS, THE HOWS AND THE FUTURE
Chapter 6

THE JUKU AND POLITICAL MEASURES

As private businesses, juku come under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy and Industry [Keizai Sangyôshô]. However, their activities are clearly linked to the area for which Monbushô is responsible, so it is via Monbushô that the bulk of the political measures relating to juku activities are instigated. Many concerns and issues can be raised. For example during the debate in a working group (the Shoto Kyôiku Kyôiku Katei Bunka Shingikai, 1998) under the Curriculum Council [Kyôiku Katei Shingikai] on pre-school and elementary education, the issue of juku attendance was brought up as something that entailed the risk of making children too tired to attend school properly. Juku also seemed to be needed to help children keep up with a fast pace in class, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this section I shall discuss three central elements regarding the relationship between the political establishment and juku: ideas for devising a role for juku in more general policy moves such as lifelong learning and community building; the implementation of the five-day school week and the question of securing as equal access to education as possible. Curricular revisions will be treated only very briefly here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF JUKU, LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

As briefly mentioned earlier, in 1999 Monbushô for the first time clearly stated that it would work towards a recognition of juku. The occasion was an interim report by the Council on Lifelong Learning released on 1 June 1999. The Sankei Shimbun (1999) had the following description of the presentation:
The deliberative body under the minister of education, which has been in charge of investigating the role of juku and other private education businesses, the First Sub-Committee under the Council on Lifelong Learning, on June 1 recommended that instead of the traditional evaluation of juku, which focused only on negative effects like ‘excessive competition for entrance examinations’, one should follow a policy where the existence of juku is tolerated and they are accepted as private educational suppliers who can assist in an array of educational activities outside school.

The sub-committee did not advocate wholesale acceptance. There was a certain apprehension about the effect juku attendance from an early age would have. Among the suggestions were that the desirability of juku attendance after 7 pm and the manner in which entrance examinations were conducted in private middle schools should be re-examined. The goal would be to use the juku in supportive functions to complement schools, and it was recommended that new programmes for the support of learning be developed based on a new viewpoint on education, namely ‘respect for children’s abilities to think’ (Sankei Shimbun 1999).

Against this background, let me now return to the question of which kinds of juku could be appropriate partners in the efforts towards strengthening lifelong learning and assisting in community building. Depending on what kind of juku Monbushō decides to support most by recognition, or whether it decides to indiscriminately accept the lot, the outcome will naturally be very different.

At first glance the hoshū juku present themselves as the institutions best suited for Monbushō recognition and for playing a role in community building. Their appropriateness for lifelong learning may be a bit less obvious, so for this aspect shingaku juku may come in. I shall return to this later. At this stage it is still inconceivable that they would be accepted on par with regular schools, and the prudence of such a move is in any case doubtful. The feature making hoshū juku an attractive partner is that they already have a supportive function in relation to schoolwork, so they can easily realize their potential as partners in a triangular co-operation (school – family – juku) for the enhancement of a child’s learning and training as a citizen. This is the kind of co-operation which Ms Natsume of NPS Gakuin also presented as an ideal. In view of
The role people like Ms Natsume are already playing in the local community, their potential in community building is easy to spot.

The doriru juku may also be suitable players for such a role, but perhaps to a lesser extent, as they tend to concentrate on drills and exercises and less on the day-to-day care of a child. They often lack a local base that would make them useful in community building, although Kumon is clearly striving to establish some sort of role in the local community with their plans to become local ‘education stations’.

In the shingaku juku category some may be quite viable candidates for ministerial recognition; certainly many of them have very clear-cut ideas about what should be learned, how and when, but their lack of relation to regular schools makes the implementation of acknowledgement more difficult and it certainly will involve negotiating and compromises on both sides. However, shingaku juku like Kawai Juku, Sundai or Yotsuya Ōtsuka may not have too hard a time adjusting their programmes to make them more suitable to the public system as they are already receiving clients other than the top performers and seem not adverse to broadening their efforts to become closer to the hoshū juku category. For lifelong learning shingaku juku may certainly be able to offer relevant training; the Cosmo-programme at Kawai Juku and the ‘support schools’ described by Okano and Tsuchiya (1999: 100) are definitely viable options that with few alterations could function in lifelong learning. Some shingaku juku may also play a role in community building, but due to their limited contact with local schools, such moves will probably require more of the shingaku juku than of the hoshū juku.

There is evidence that the hoshū juku are usually considered when there is talk in ministerial circles of juku recognition and new functions for them. In the 1999 report by the Council on Lifelong Learning, this council indicated that hoshū juku may be seen not only as ‘laboratories of pedagogy’ but also as components in community building. Indeed, my research has found that in the hoshū juku individualized teaching is conducted, personal coaching is carried out to an extent unseen in schools and relations with families may be very close. These institutions tend to become an integral part of children’s lives as well as the local community in which they are situated. In many cases the teacher of the hoshū juku
bears a large part of the responsibility for the upbringing of the child. Ms Natsume Akie from NPS Gakuin explained how she would discuss a child’s upbringing, general manners and education with mothers in particular (interview with Natsume 2000). While I was at her juku, which was the same as her private home, it was clear that the children used her house quite freely, not just as a place to study but also as a place to spend leisure time, watch TV and be with friends. Because of a flexible structure and smaller numbers most of the hoshū juku can offer more individualized teaching approaches and more diverse teaching methods than regular schools, thus presenting themselves as an ideal supplement if schools are to live up to political expectations of diversified and individualized teaching. In addition to this some may even offer a place to spend leisure time.

The suggestions made by the Council on Lifelong Learning, particularly with respect to changing the manner of teaching in school, link up with what is found in the hoshū juku, thus indicating their usefulness as ‘laboratories’ to use the council’s own words. The Council on Lifelong Learning recommends that in order to create a school that inspires the trust of both children and the local community, lessons should be made easy to understand, one should make sure that basic learning is mastered through individual or small-group teaching, exercises and drills suited to the individual should be employed and the children should have the experience of developing together and to the full (Shōgaigakushū Shingikai 1999: 8–82).

The term ‘community’ [chiiki] recurs in the official discourse and the juku are exhorted to fulfil a role within the local community as well as in relation to schools. On this point the council makes a recommendation that potentially gives space in the co-operative model for lifelong learning and community building to the shingaku juku. They suggest a role division between school and juku, with the juku doing the ‘fun stuff’, while schools toil on with the routine teaching, i.e. more advanced experimental teaching is proposed for the shingaku juku, while schools would be confined to teaching basics for the masses. The ideal is that there should be a balance between school, juku and community and this balance should be obtained, the council advises, by letting the school provide basic learning. Juku and other private educational institutions would then build
The Juku and Political Measures

on that base in various ways, for example by developing learning programmes that could be used by a wider selection of age groups (Shôgaigakushû Shingikai 1999: 64–66).

This view of the role division between school and juku is very similar to the views cited by Hisatomi which are that in most parents’ view schools should provide basic learning and juku should offer supplements (Hisatomi 1985: 47–48) or by Zeng, that the basic form of learning comes from regular education but juku should refine and process it (Zeng 1999: 198). Politically much attention is paid to the standard of basic education in the Japanese schools, as is evident in the report issued on 20 March 2003 by the Central Council on Education, where it is said over and over again that schools must improve basic learning, but a new phrase is introduced: ‘real competence’ [[tashika na gakuryoku]], to signify what in the council’s opinion has been requested by children and parents and required by future society (Chûkyôshin 2003a). This 2003 report does not, however, deal directly with the function of juku. What it does do is to elaborate at length on another triangular co-operation between school, family and community:

The family is the basis of education, all education takes its starting point there. While emphasizing the importance of education in the family and making its role clear, we also underline the point that children’s education should be based on the close co-operation and united efforts of the three agents, school, family and local community. (Chûkyôshin 2003a: 12)

On numerous occasions this relation is invoked as a tool to develop schooling, common knowledge of Japanese culture, strengthening and maintaining health and providing people with direct experiences with nature, work and the like. Clearly on the political level there are high expectations concerning the viability of this threesome, and it has also found its way into debates on legal revisions. For some time now there have been some rather controversial discussions on revising the Fundamental Law on Education from 1948. The 2003 report by the Central Council has carefully described the legal changes the council would suggest, including a new section in the Fundamental Law on Education on this particular triangular relation and a section on the educative function of the family [[katei kyôiku]], where, it is suggested,
the prime responsibility for education is placed within the family and that this family in turn then must be supported by national and local authorities (Chûkyôshin 2003a: 12, 16–17).

The institutions one should focus on when it comes to discussions like the previous as elaborated on by the Council on Lifelong Learning on the role of the family in education and the involvement of local communities is without a doubt the *hoshû juku*. In fact it may be in the *hoshû juku* tending toward *kyôsai juku* like NPS Gakuin that we may find the greatest potential for the balance between school, family, community and/or juku that the council is talking about. However, this does not at all exclude *doriru juku* or *shingaku juku*. As mentioned, Kumon is looking to establish itself as a local ‘education station’, presumably the kind of place solicited by the Council, where all age groups can receive training. Efforts like the *Doruton Sukuru* (Dalton School) of Kawai Juku, which uses a special approach known from abroad, or their Cosmo programme, which offers a number of courses for those seeking to obtain qualifications to acquire eligibility status to apply for entrance examinations, studying abroad, acquiring professional certificates or getting jobs, may also be well within the range of what the council had in mind. Further, the idea of letting juku develop learning programmes that build on the basic learning obtained in school certainly has potential for letting *shingaku juku* develop special programmes for the more gifted.

**THE FIVE-DAY SCHOOL WEEK**

In April 2002 the five-day school week was implemented throughout Japanese public compulsory education. While the five-day week has been growing in the employment market for some years, the schools followed at a slow pace. Naturally, parents were pleased that they could have more time off with their children, but apprehension was voiced from many sides that the ensuing diminishing of the curriculum would have a strong negative effect on society in general and children in particular. There was concern that for many it would not mean time off, just time spent in another institution, a juku. A professor in Japanese education at Chuô University said: ‘With the five-day school week, the juku have been aided from an unexpected side, the Monbushô’ (Personal communication, Morimo 2003).
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Indeed, this is how many feel and there is no doubt that the juku business has harvested many clients due to fears about lowered standards in education \[gakuryoku teika\]. On the other hand, Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku noted that the juku were well aware from the start of the \textit{yutori} efforts, i.e. efforts at creating more elbowroom in education and the implementation of the five-day school week, that there would be increased business for them. As things turned out, this business increase was far smaller than their expectations. Most high schools continued to have lessons on Saturdays, he claimed, so the juku have ended up still competing with regular schools for time on Saturdays (Interview with Matsui 2003). Indeed at a vocational high school I visited, they offered extra lessons on Saturdays to make sure everyone had grasped the basics and this high school was not in the top rank of the educational hierarchy; it was not really aiming at sending more than a very limited number of graduates to universities at the time (Interview with Satô 2003).

Before going further into the five-day school week, it will be illuminating to review the statistics on how much children understand of what is going on in regular classrooms. Since statistical material quoted here has been collected by three different bodies, hence there will be very different political aims for their use. Even so, it does look as if one can identify an effect of the reduced curriculum, especially in the last set of figures from Monbushô.

The first set of figures (Table 6.1.) is from Zen-Nippon Kyôshokuin Kumiai (All Japan Teachers’ Organization, Zenkyô in short), one of the teacher organizations in Japan.

### Table 6.1. Level of understanding of schoolwork, 1990 (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understands well</th>
<th>Understands most</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Not much</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth grade</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Survey conducted in an unspecified school in Tokyo.

Five years later Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa found quite different figures for their survey of fifth and sixth grades. Their statistics were added together for the two class levels and divided according to subject (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. Level of understanding of schoolwork, 1995 (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Understands all</th>
<th>Understands most</th>
<th>Sometimes does not understand</th>
<th>Not much understand</th>
<th>Nothing understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kokugo</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural science</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Survey of 1,813 fifth and sixth graders in Tokyo, Chiba and Gifu
Source: Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa 1995: 13

If we add up the two categories of ‘understanding not much’ and ‘nothing’ in Table 6.2, we end up with an overall 11.75 per cent having severe problems in 1995 according to Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa, a picture very different from the one drawn from the Zenkyō statistics five years earlier, where a total of no less than 26.5 per cent are reported to understand little or none of what is going on in class. It is doubtful that all of this change can be explained by the new curriculum guidelines issued in the first half of the 1990s. On the contrary, those very guidelines were the ones Zenkyō was warring against with their statistics. They were anticipating that the curriculum would become even more crammed than before, supposedly leading to higher numbers of children unable to follow the pace in class. According to the evidence found by Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa however, it did not turn out like that. Various other factors may be behind this discrepancy. For example, Zenkyō’s figures come from one school only, and this school may not have been typical. Second, it suggests a particular focus of attention and political standpoint. Zenkyō as a teacher organization is primarily concerned with low performers and has a general interest in ‘the
people’ or the weak in society, and the statistics were produced as a countermeasure to Monbushô’s round of curricular reform in the 1990s, which Zenkyô judged would be cramming too much material into heads that were too young for it. I have found no indication of how the questions were put or how the survey was introduced to the pupils, but it would certainly have been possible to influence the answers in a specific direction. Fukaya, Tsuchihashi and Saigusa’s figures originate from a report on juku (Gakushûjuku) published by Benesse. While there is no obvious political standpoint, the statistics were produced as part of educational research sponsored by an institution making education its business, so there may very well have been some interest in demonstrating a need for extra tutoring. However, there is no other obvious reason to cast doubt on Fukaya et al.’s figures. At any rate, both sets of figures do indicate the existence of problems with keeping up with the pace in school (at least in the 1980s and 90s), and hence a need for extra training for at least a tenth of the pupils in the first half of the 1990s.

Table 6.3. Level of understanding of schoolwork, 2003/1998 (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understands all</th>
<th>Understands most</th>
<th>Sometimes does not understand</th>
<th>Not much understand</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elem. third</td>
<td>25/22.1</td>
<td>44.7/48.3</td>
<td>22.8/25.9</td>
<td>4/2.4</td>
<td>1.3/1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elem. fifth</td>
<td>20.7/17.7</td>
<td>48.8/48.1</td>
<td>24.5/29.5</td>
<td>3.9/4.2</td>
<td>1.2/0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle second</td>
<td>7.8/4.7</td>
<td>44/39.5</td>
<td>35/35.4</td>
<td>9.8/16.2</td>
<td>2.7/4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Survey conducted at 100 elementary and 70 middle schools involving 4,771 elementary school pupils and 2,290 from middle school in 2003, 4,639 from elementary school and 1,992 from middle school in 1998. The figures in bold are the figures from 2003.

Source: Chûkyôshin 2003b: statistics section

The last set of figures I am including here is from Monbushô itself. These were included in the October 2003 report from the Central Council on Education (Table 6.3.). They measure the level of self-assessed understanding of third and fifth graders in elementary school as well as those in the second grade of middle school. They
are from 1998 and 2003 and should therefore give a small indication of whether the curricular changes introduced in 2002 are beginning to have an effect. Those are the guidelines that have been described as covering 30 per cent less material than previously. Middle school figures have been included for general reference.

Clearly the rate of those confident enough to assess themselves as ‘understanding all’ of what is going on has risen at all levels. We may count this as a distinct success. Those ‘understanding nothing’ or ‘not much’ have, on the other hand, increased slightly as well from 1.9 for elementary school alone in 1998 (6 per cent if we include middle school) to 2.5 per cent in 2003 (5.2 per cent including middle school).

Compared to the earlier statistics of Zenkyô and Fukaya et al. a significant change appears to have taken place. It does seem that fewer children by the late 1990s, and certainly by the early 2000s, have problems following the pace in school. However, the precise extent of this change is very difficult to estimate precisely, since the figures were collected by different bodies with different agenda and in different ways. Had Monbushô, for example, collected the older figures I have used, there might not have been as high rates of not understanding as Fukaya et al., while Fukaya et al. might find other results were they to conduct their survey today. Clearly it must be in Monbushô’s interest generally to downplay the number of problems in the system.

If we look at Monbushô’s figures only, where statistics have been collected for two different years, there does seem to be a certain successful development regarding the segment ‘understanding all’ of what is going on, as it has risen for all categories. However, there are also small signs that the gap between those who can and those who cannot is growing. In other words, the middle section, the ‘understands most’ and the ‘sometimes does not understand’ categories, is slowly thinning out. For third grade in elementary school, the middle section has decreased from 74.2 per cent in 1998 to 67.5 per cent in 2003 (‘understands most’ and ‘sometimes does not understand’) and the section ‘understanding little’ or ‘nothing’ has seen an increase from 3.7 per cent in 1998 to 5.3 in 2003. For fifth grade the change is slightly smaller, the middle section has decreased from 77.6 per cent to 73.3 per cent and the lower section
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has increased from 4.8 per cent to 5.1 per cent. The tendency is the same but less pronounced. The new curriculum guidelines had been in effect for only one year when the survey was made, but it seems that the significant reductions of the curriculum in elementary school were until then only benefiting average to high performers, if anyone. Apparently, the reductions have not been a benefit for all and we can conclude that some further success for the more gifted may be in sight, but the problem with those not following the pace has not yet halted its acceleration.

The five-day school week is one of the significant features of the latest round of curricular reform and one of the most important reasons for the reduced curriculum. So far, it does not seem that significant numbers of families are reacting to this by flocking in massive numbers to juku for extra teaching or for lessons that will provide what has been removed from the school curriculum. Surveys indicate that the message from Monbushô, that Saturdays should be spent doing things other than schoolwork, preferably with the family, has been understood and is respected. Benesse published two reports in 2003 on the implementation of the five-day school week. One investigated elementary school children and one had middle school children as its focus. The reports are written by university professors and the material is based on surveys covering 1,721 middle school students from six schools in Tokyo, Chiba and Saitama and 889 elementary school pupils and 825 parents from fourth, fifth, and sixth grades at schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area. These are all areas where juku attendance is likely to be the highest on a national average because of locations in or close to metropolitan areas.

The middle school students were asked whether they thought free Saturdays was a good idea (See Table 6.4.). 39.5 per cent agreed that it was, while 27.8 per cent thought it was not and 32.7 per cent did not know what to think. Asked directly, 24.8 per cent thought it better to maintain classes on Saturdays (Fukaya 2003: 3). Parents of elementary school children were also asked about the wisdom of the implementation of the five-day school week: 49 per cent agreed it was a good idea, 51 per cent thought it was not (Fukaya and Fukaya 2003: 5). Clearly opinions are divided on the wisdom of this move, perhaps not surprisingly, as it is a novelty that
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takes some time getting used to. However, it may also be read as a powerful signal that although many think more free time is good, there is also widespread apprehension lest the reform will mean lower performances academically. Further, for parents who do not have Saturday off, and for those who are not adept at finding other suitable things for utilising the spare time, a free Saturday may well be a nuisance.

Table 6.4. Is the five-day school week a good idea? (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Fukaya 2003 and Fukaya and Fukaya 2003

Table 6.5. What do you do on weekends? (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Middle school</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juku</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV or video</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to family</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in family</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons, light reading</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play w. friends</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping at home</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep late</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play alone</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Based on Kashu 2003; Nemasu and Tagami 2003; Fukaya 2003; Fukaya and Fukaya 2003
Both Benesse reports found that about a quarter of the children go to juku on Saturdays, 28.5 per cent of the elementary school children (of those 17.8 per cent indicated they went every Saturday, the rest more irregularly) and 23.8 per cent of the middle school children (see Table 6.5; Kashu 2003: 10; Nemasu and Tagami 2003: 21).

A quarter in juku is still a sizable share; on the other hand three-fourths are doing other things. The middle school students were asked why they thought Saturdays had been made free (more than one choice was allowed): 72 per cent were sure or inclined to think it was in order for them to have more time with their families and friends; 68.8 per cent were sure or inclined to think that it was intended to give them time to study things that were not taught in school and 55.4 per cent were sure or inclined to think the purpose was to let them relax (yukkuri saseru) (Morinaga 2003: 27).

The answers are remarkably close to the aims Monbushô had announced with this reform: namely, that ‘the five-day school week is designed to nurture children’s abilities through experiences at home and in the community’ (See for example Asahi Shimbun 2003); to provide time for other types of studies, in particular experimental work; to give more room for learning within the family and local community; to lend a hand to the families so they can strengthen their influence on values, morality and manners and to give the children more room to ‘be children’.

Asked what they did on Saturdays the middle school students said they did things like watch TV or video (90.2 per cent), chatted with the family (66.3 per cent), did homework (59.2 per cent), read comic books and the like (57.3 per cent), engaged in a hobby (52.2 per cent) (see Table 6.5.). The rest of the answers received less than 40 per cent (Fukaya 2003: 4). Elementary school children indicated slightly different answers concerning their activities on Saturdays. The top scorer was ‘playing with friends’ with 77.8 per cent, then came TV and video with 73.3 per cent, helping out at home with 59.5 per cent, doing homework with 56.2 per cent, reading comic books and the like was at 53.4 per cent, sleeping late was at 52.7 per cent, playing games alone was at 51 per cent and finally 47.8 per cent received help with homework or explanations about things that interested them from a person in the family (Fukaya and Fukaya 2003: 3).
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It would thus seem that some of the goals of the Monbushô have been realized with this reform. The children do indeed spend time with their families and relax on Saturdays. However, many also attend juku, and the question is how the situation will develop from now on. Many private schools still have classes on Saturdays and even before the implementation of the five-day school week it was necessary for entrance into a private middle school to attend juku, since the curriculum taught in elementary school provided inadequate preparation for the exam. This situation will be reinforced, making the juku even more necessary for entrance into private middle schools. The probable scenario is that a two-tiered system will develop, with private middle schools educating the cream of the middle school pupils and the public system left responsible for the less gifted pupils. Since many private middle schools are part of larger private systems – indeed many of them are comprehensive middle and high schools [ikkankô] – there will be a tendency for the pupils, once admitted, to stay in that system and thus be lost to public education. If public education is to remain attractive academically and not just become a cheaper option and institutions for the intellectually weak or financially poorer, and if public education is to have a say in the education of the elite, this situation must be avoided. Indeed, the Central Council on Education has already been saying that the new curriculum guidelines are to be thought of as minimum requirements or minimum standards. In other words, once the minimum requirements of the curriculum guidelines have been met, it is up to local elementary or middle schools to decide what kind of teaching to develop the children’s abilities further. In this process it is envisaged, and indeed encouraged, that differences in education based on variations in local circumstances will arise, i.e. differences in locality or student intake should have an obvious effect on the kind of extra material the school offers (Chûkyôshin 2003b: Chapter 2).

Seen in this light, it is conceivable that the hitherto rather standardized school experience in Japan will become more diversified. Before, schools had to work hard to meet the rather demanding standards of the national curriculum. Now the idea is to ensure a basic common minimum and the hard work for many will be put into creating distinctive extra curricula for individual
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schools. Certainly this also creates possibilities for increased cooperation between juku and schools. It will be interesting to see if future developments will bring the two types of institution closer together in education-related projects, or whether they will alienate them further in stiff competition. Further, it will be interesting to follow the extent to which they will have a general impact on the educational profiles of the users and whether this in turn will serve to change entrance examinations, because applicants’ backgrounds will become more diverse, or conversely whether the entrance examinations will force schools to strive to live up to certain national standards, an effect many claim these examinations already have today.

EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The Japanese Constitution ensures the people’s right to receive education in accordance with their abilities (§ 26) and the Fundamental Law on Education ensures the people’s right of equal access to education (§ 3). Both issues are therefore of major importance to the Monbushô. Of particular interest here is the matter of equal access since the existence of juku as well as other private institutions for education are complicating factors in ensuring equality of access to education for the population. In its proposal for revisions of the Fundamental Law on Education, the Central Council on Education proposed to maintain the clause on equal access (Chûkyôshin 2003a: 6), so it will still be central to Monbushô’s activities. In all probability, it would have been impossible to get away with removing this clause, but the Central Council on Education did introduce some novel thinking when it specified how the clause should be interpreted: ‘Equality of access does not just mean standardization, there must also be room for respect for the individual, special support for those with handicaps; in general it is important that education is more concerned with the individual’ (Chûkyôshin 2003a: 17).¹

The fact that about one-third of the entire elementary school population attends a juku (see Table 0.3) remains a serious challenge to the idea of equal access, however we decide to look at it. Through this system, some persons are able to secure for themselves a better-than-average chance of entering a prestigious institution and
the basis for this inequality is money. For those who can afford it, this extra opportunity is available. To maintain the idea of equal access, it is then perhaps necessary to think in terms not of standardized equal access for all to all institutions (provided their intellect can take them there), but in terms of access to some place of future education. This may be the reason for the specification by the Central Council on Education on the interpretation of the clause on equal access to education, but in doing so, it runs the risk of sanctioning the existence of a system of elite and ordinary education. Quite apart from whether this is intentional or whether it is a desirable outcome, it certainly gives backing to accusations that Monbushō is endorsing salami tactics, i.e., that by letting the Council reformulate the interpretation one is gradually changing the understanding of the law away from its original intent.

The joint issues of juku attendance and equal access to education also challenge those in charge of the public system to decide whether or not the public system should and can be the supplier of elite educational institutions, or whether it should concentrate on basics. The suggested reinterpretation opens up a kind of market liberalism that has hitherto not gone down well with the Monbushō because it has the potential of reducing central control of education. The question is whether Monbushō is willing to stretch itself to ‘solve’ problems of equal access (or rather one should say ‘making the problems less visible’) by using such redefinitions of the clause with all their potential for more private education and the ensuing difficulties in controlling the area.

Other threats to equal access to education than differences in financial means and the juku can be identified. Those are, for example, the Monbushō and the political system itself. Academic groups critical of Monbushō and its policies, like the Japan Educational Laws Association, would certainly hold this view, claiming that there is a hidden agenda of re-establishing a pre-war type of elite education for the few, but among the juku side this viewpoint can also be found. Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku in the interview I conducted on 23 October 2003 severely attacked Monbushō on several fronts. First of all he declared the death of *yutori kyōiku* [elbow room in education]:

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Yutori kyōiku is dead; it has not and cannot be realized. We [the juku] knew from the start it was a contradiction. Monbushō was privatizing the universities, both universities and high schools have to compete for their survival and the whole system hinges on the entrance examinations of the universities. Yutori lowers the academic levels, that is why it has disappeared. Universities do not lower their standards, so most prestigious high schools use lots of extra material – or juku will fill out the gaps. Already when yutori kyōiku was proposed two years ago, we knew we would be given a business opportunity (Interview with Matsui 2003).

Monbushō has made serious attempts to curb the activities of juku as far as Saturdays are concerned, holding meetings with juku representatives and suggesting what they should offer for Saturday classes. Among the suggestions were trips to experience nature, conducting experiments and a variety of other things centring on the individual’s physical or practical experiences. These attempts were some of the first examples of direct meetings between juku representatives and Monbushō, and hence were extensively covered by the press, but the actual outcome, as described earlier, has been that juku has increased its business anyway. Not only has juku thrived in the wake of the curricular reforms, the gap between the curricula in private and public schools in particular has also grown, as many private schools maintain teaching on Saturdays, something that is apparently not even especially resented by the users judging from the surveys by Fukaya (2003) and Fukaya and Fukaya (2003) quoted above in Tables 6.4 and 6.5.

Matsui further attacked Monbushō for having given up on the weak and concerning itself only with the elite:

National policy should take care of all the problems we have. Thirty per cent of the 16–17-year-olds do not do any homework. The figure for those that do 2½ to 3 hours is stable, for those doing 1 to 1½ hours it is declining. Again we see a separation in two, the elite does not change. Monbushō has not realized that the weak are getting weaker. There is a lack of ideals, a lack of inspiration. Monbushō sends the message that the weak are of no importance … we no longer need manual labour, only brain work. They emphasize the elite, not the weak. They do not solve the problem, they give up. So, the private system takes over the weak – we sup-
Matsui’s claims are substantiated to some extent by the Monbushô figures quoted in Table 6.3. Here a tendency is revealed for the middle segment of performers to be reduced, but the elite group and the poorly performing group to be increasing. This will in all probability prompt elementary schools, which are still overwhelmingly public, to offer more ‘catch-up’ classes. There are signs already that this is happening. For example one may find teachers offering *noko-ben*, ‘staying behind for studying’, as mentioned previously. Most likely, there will also, as Mr Matsui was saying, be a development towards poor performers to become increasingly dependent on private alternatives for extra tutoring. Not all high schools may be as accommodating as the vocational school I visited. It may be that high schools will ask a juku to provide the extra tutoring, an option not available to the financially strained vocational high school. If so, financial capabilities will once again become a decisive factor in the individual’s access to education.

While this presentation of three selected, politically challenging areas has for obvious reasons concentrated on juku, it seems appropriate here to also take the problem of the position of private schools into account. As early as 1999 the sub-committee of the Lifelong Learning Council was calling attention to the need for a review of the entrance examinations in private middle schools. In addition, with regard to the five-day school week as well as equality of access to education the private schools may have potentially disruptive effects on the Monbushô policies. Most of them are in fact not adjusting to the five-day school week and many are sufficiently expensive to make the financial means of a family a real issue in relation to educational choice. As mentioned, there is potential for a structure evolving where the gifted and the financially well endowed will have the choice of elite private institutions, while the rest can use only public education, which may focus only on basics. A scenario like this would severely hamper Monbushô’s ability to ensure equal access to education at a level suitable for an individual, as is presently stipulated in the Constitution and the Fundamental Law on Education. The gap between curricula...
in private and public schools can easily come to mean that the intellectual elite of the future will in the main have been educated in a private system of education unless local public schools can and will exercise their right to make their own additions to the official minimum curriculum. There is potential for a very strong private sector in Japanese education growing out of this kind of reinterpretation of the legal basis for education. However, there is also potential for local schools to profile themselves as worthy educational institutions of a high quality. The future will show us which way the development turns.

NOTES

1 Kumon was described in Chapter 4.

2 They are for elementary school ‘Kanzen gakkô itsukasei to Shôgakusei’, vol. 23 – 1 in the series Monogurafu Shôgakusei Nau, editors Fukuya Masashi and Fukaya Kazuko, and for middle school ‘Kanzen gakkô itsukasei to chûgakusei – nonbiri to asane ga dekiru doyôbi’, vol. 74 in the series Monogurafu Chûgakusei no Sekai, editor Fukaya Masashi.

3 I have not been able to locate figures for juku attendance on Saturdays before the implementation of the five-day school week.

4 In the autumn 2003 due to the Lower House elections the issue of revision of the Fundamental Law on Education was prominent in the media, though as of yet, nothing is definite on its future shape. Several groups are moving to keep the law in more or less its present shape, notably those groups critical of Monbushô policies, who fear that items such as patriotism will be given too much space in a revised law. One such group is the Japan Educational Laws Association (Nihon Kyôiku Hô Gakkai), whose president is Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University, Horio Teruhisa, known for his lifelong engagement with issues concerning children’s human rights and laws on education.
Chapter 7

Benefits and Costs: What is There to Win and What is There to Lose?

Chapter 6 dealt with three politically important issues relating to juku. The possible effects, benefits and costs involved in these issues were discussed. In the following there will be a short summary of the findings on juku in terms of what can be gained by the individual or the family by juku attendance and what expenses of different kinds are involved. This assessment will be very general, and individual examples may well show deviations. Thus the picture presented here is fairly general and based on the analysis and presentation in the previous chapters.

Expenses and Losses

On the individual level there is no doubt that the traditional form of ‘expense’, financial expense, looms large for users of the shingaku juku, and less so for users of the hoshû or doriru juku. Nevertheless, a family will obviously have to have some money to spare to send a child to any type of juku. That being said, only the shingaku juku is likely to be a real financial strain for the average family. The expense for sending a sixth grader to a full exam preparation course at a shingaku juku like the ones described in this work is likely to be over one million yen, everything included. In addition, any family deciding that a private middle school is desirable, and who therefore spends this kind of money on preparation for the entrance examination, will also have to be able to shoulder the burden of substantial tuition fees once having successfully entered a private middle school.
Another issue is that the ideology of equal access is difficult to maintain in this situation and is likely to increasingly become so. Money is a factor for access to some institutions of education, and this applies not only to the private institutions. Access to prestigious public universities like Tokyo or Kyoto University is greatly eased by attendance at private educational institutions for lower levels of education, as documented in previous chapters (see for example Chapter 2). As in many other countries all over the world, it is the case in Japan that a strong family economy will offer wider options in education. It will enable the inclusion of the option of a private middle school, famed for their effectiveness in placing graduates at prestigious high schools and universities. Further, the type and amount of extra tuition suited particularly for specific abilities and goals may be purchased. The attempts to reinterpret the legal clause on equal access no doubt are based on a recognition of the problem of cost as well as hierarchy in education and the difficulty of solving these problems within the present framework of Japanese education and society.

There is widespread public appreciation of the idea that a future career will be extremely dependent on the rank of the university entered. Therefore, competition for entry at prestigious institutions of education remains fierce and the hierarchy among the institutions is maintained. There is also a hierarchy among private middle schools as is clear from the previously cited expression ‘gosanke middle schools’ (‘honoured three’). As long as hierarchies among institutions of education are in operation, it is most probable that the ideal of equal access will continue to be challenged and debated. Future job prospects are affected by admission to particular institutions of higher education. Hence the possibility exists for certain segments of society to secure an advantage in the race for a future career for their offspring. Financial status is detrimental to the principle of equality in access to education. Even at elementary school level it has been demonstrated that money can provide an educational advantage because extra tutoring for remedial or exam preparation purposes may be needed. Because of the dearth of remedial classes and training in public education, the hoshū juku often become necessary for a proportion of a normal elementary school intake to master what is required of them in the ordinary
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curriculum. Though *hoshū* juku are generally cheaper than *shingaku* juku, they still cost money and hence cannot be available to each and every individual in need of remedial instruction. In addition to the problem of financing, such attendance may also depend on whether the desired *hoshū* juku is able to accommodate the person in question. The problem of finding a *hoshū* juku, that was not already full to the brim, has been cited by some parents.

The question of finance is thus tied up with issues of equal access and social stratification. Added to this are the more personal consequences for the individuals enrolled in juku. For many, especially in the *shingaku* juku, it is time consuming. Attendance patterns of two to four weekday afternoons or evenings and perhaps one or both days of the weekend, as well as the possibility of summer courses or extra courses during holidays in conjunction with daily homework, will mean a tightly packed schedule, sometimes even for children as young as elementary school age. This means less time to relax and be with friends. Although an attendance pattern like this is demonstrably the exception among juku clients, it remains a reality for some children and therefore should not be ignored as an expense in relation to *shingaku* juku in particular, and as something which also concerns some *hoshū* juku as well. But not only juku takes up time in a child’s life in Japan. School activities make up for much of the time in a Japanese child’s life, so that in fact only a little is left for after-school activities.²

Even with the not so strenuous attendance patterns I have described for the particular *shingaku* juku in my cases, children will still have to invest a substantial amount of their already sparse free time in the project. In the worst cases one may worry about such children being less able to develop their social capabilities than others, or that education becomes the centre of their existence to the extent that their whole identity depends on success in this field and that neuroses or social handicaps may develop because of this pressure or as a result of failure to perform as intended. The phenomenon of *hikikomori*³ so visible in the press at present has frequently been related to overemphasis on school performance and great parental (as well as perhaps individual?) expectations for performance in the educational field as well as in the job market. Frequently we also see references to this pressure as explanations for
cases of bullying. The issue of children’s play in groups out of school has also been raised by Komiyama (1995: 144–145), who regrets that children no longer get this kind of experience, and by Morita and Kiyonagi (1994), who also relate this to increasing problems with bullying. On the other hand we should remind ourselves of the major part school itself plays in imparting social skills, so it may be argued that as long as children do go to school they will acquire a fair number of basic social skills through that channel regardless of whether they have time to play with friends after school.

While expenses and negative effects like those mentioned here are indeed serious, one should not forget that these are mostly extreme examples. Children leading lives packed with school, juku and the pressure to succeed most certainly exist and they do run the risk of having social and personal problems in the future. However, since there is no absolute relation between social handicaps and juku attendance, it is perfectly possible to become a socially literate individual and live happily even with a certain amount of juku attendance. As for financial constraints, Japanese society on the whole is still affluent enough for most families to be able to create some kind of budget for extra tutoring should the need arise.

Perhaps the most serious and generally applicable negative effect of the juku system is where it relates to the gakureki shakai (credentialist society) and where the consequence is that lower social strata are less likely to succeed in the educational hierarchy than the higher strata. In essence the issue here is the part the shingaku juku play in increasing the challenge to the ideal of equality in access to education. Sugimoto Yoshio states the publicly known truth:

About half of the students at this [Tokyo] university come from the top twenty high schools, eighteen of which are private high schools connected with their own middle schools; … With regard to parental occupation, income and school background, there is little doubt that the children of those who occupy the higher echelons of the social hierarchy and possess greater economic and cultural resources comprise an overwhelming majority of the student population of Japan’s most prestigious university (Sugimoto 1997: 119–120).
The *shingaku* juku cannot but reinforce this tendency, as they support both the competition for openings at prestigious universities and claim fees that effectively shut out lower echelons of the social strata.

Apart from being a significant player in the actual gaining of access to prestigious institutions of education, it also seems clear that the juku, especially the *shingaku* juku, help compound the general pressure on children to see themselves as somehow part of the race for entry at those institutions, even if their role is only as those who will not succeed. One should not commit the fallacy of imagining that all Japanese children earnestly participate in the so-called examination hell, as Okano and Tsuchiya (1999, for example 62–74) also point out, but most are well aware of its existence and of the price to be paid by those not participating.

**GAINS AND POSITIVE EFFECTS OF JUKU**

For the individual having problems keeping up with the pace of normal class teaching, or not fitting well in with the format of such teaching, there is certainly much to gain by attending a good *hoshû* juku or perhaps a *doriru* juku. The *hoshû* juku will provide the extra teaching necessary to keep abreast of the class and it will provide the pupil with surroundings wherein he or she can have more individualized teaching and more attention. In this aspect they are supporting normal school teaching and judging from the extent of juku attendance for *hoshû* purposes (see Table 0.6.), this support has dimensions that makes it relevant to ask the whether regular schools would be able to function in the present manner were it not for the remedial teaching offered by institutions like the *hoshû* juku. Certainly it can be argued that were the *hoshû* juku not there, schools would have to have much more elaborate programmes for remedial teaching than is the case now. As described in the sections on Kawai Juku, some *shingaku* juku also argue that they have a function of ‘filling in the holes’ in what the individual learns, holes left by what Mr Matsui called an increasingly elitist public system of education steered by the *gakureki shakai*. This was definitely stated as a criticism of Monbushô policies, but at the same time it was made clear that here lay future prospects for business as well.
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The more exercise-focused doriru juku may certainly also have positive effects on pupils’ performances, first by reinforcing certain skills, second by affording an experience of being successful as the work with the administered worksheets progresses. The doriru juku however, is less effective than the hoshû juku when it comes to individual attention and building self-esteem. An advantage offered by the doriru juku and in short supply in the other types of juku, save perhaps in the most flexible of hoshû juku (NPS Gakuin, for example), is that the user to a great extent retains control over his or her own time. At Kumon for example, one can turn up at one’s own convenience within certain brackets of time; with Benesse it is up to self-planning as to when to do the work. The individual thus remains in control of the organization of the time to be spent on juku work to quite a large extent in doriru juku, a factor which must be counted as an advantage, since it will be easier for the individual to negotiate a time schedule which can include activities other than school and juku work.

Evidence that shingaku juku can present of their success in assisting clients in their quest for entrance at prestigious educational institutions is impressive. As described in Chapter 2, manuals on the choice of juku and/or middle schools and juku’s own advertising material and their Homepages inform prospective clients of how many juku graduates have entered which schools. The relation between juku and middle school (and the role of the reduced curriculum in this relation) is clearly reflected in the following. A mother of an 11-year-old referred to the declining standards in public schools as her reason for wanting to send her son to a private middle school: ‘I decided on a private middle school, so I sent my eldest son to juku, but the teaching contents there were so much ahead of what was taught in his school that I had to teach him at home as well’ (Mukai 2003: 68). As a result the mother is now studying intensely with her younger son to prepare him better for juku and ultimately for the private middle school.

As the middle school is not an end but a means, it is also important what happens to people later in the system. Such information is also available in the manuals in the form of lists of where the graduates obtained their final education and how many graduates from the recorded middle schools end up at which institutions of tertiary education. Thus it is obvious to all who study such material that
if you want your son to enter Tokyo, Waseda or Keio University, his chances will be high if he graduates from one of the boys’ middle schools Azabu or Kaisei, as over half of their graduates are eventually admitted to one of the three universities (Asahi Shimbunsha 2003: 58, 74; Oda K 2003: 30).

The pinnacle of the private middle schools most successful in placing clients at prestigious institutions of higher education, the gosanke or ‘honoured three’, are mirrored in the juku world where we find ‘the BIG 3’, the juku most effective in placing clients at the gosanke middle schools. Nichinoken, Yotsuya Otsuka and SAPIX are training a significant number of the successful entrants at the boys’ gosanke (Azabu, Kaisei and Musashi Middle School) as well as the girls’ gosanke (Oin, Futaba and Joshi Gakuin Middle School). As a consequence, those juku will have a very good idea what works with these schools, much like the understanding many of the more local shingaku juku and particularly hoshû juku have of local middle schools.

Further, a set route for enhancing chances of entry at prestigious middle schools is established, a route which requires attendance at one of the rather expensive shingaku juku included in ‘the BIG 3’.

Apart from the academic success the individual can achieve assisted by the shingaku juku and the supportive, remedial functions offered by doriru juku and hoshû juku, it is certain that the type of supportive assistance for the families in general as found in NPS Gakuin is also an important positive factor for the users. Ms Natsume from NPS Gakuin functioned as a councillor, friend, an extra mother as well as a teacher and instructor for both children and their parents. Clearly there was a very important socially and pedagogically supportive function involved here in addition to the education-related activities. In the particular case of NPS Gakuin the two functions appeared equally important and this is likely to be the situation in a number of hoshû juku, depending of course chiefly on the personality and merits of the person in charge. Likewise, it will certainly also be the case that a large number of hoshû juku, like Tanaka Eisu Juku, work mostly with the education-related side of hoshû activities.

During my research I have found some indications that the teaching in many juku, particularly the hoshû juku, is quite highly regarded. We are quite clearly not dealing only with senseless rote learning designed for examinations or tedious repetitions of school material. Although preparation for examinations is of primary
importance for the *shingaku* juku in particular, such institutions also displayed examples of teaching topics that would not often be found in school. A representative I talked to from a section of Yoyogi Seminaaru primarily catering for middle and high school students explained:

The teaching is rather free, not so bound by Monbushô guidelines. I have taught lessons where we used the NIE-system, ‘Newspaper in Education’. It is American and quite in the vogue these days. We use newspapers as a basis for analysis and discussion to deepen understanding. For example we would take up topics like the emperor system, nuclear bombs and so on and question the interpretation of those topics. This is possible at our institution; it would be impossible at schools run by Monbushô through school boards (Interview with Kitagaki, 1996).

Further, in *hoshû* juku many efforts are made to create a climate and a pedagogical approach conducive to learning for those who are not at ease with common classroom teaching. This was exemplified in particular by NPS Gakuin, with its highly individualized teaching and all-encompassing attention to the clients. At Tanaka Eisû Juku the physical arrangements were clearly mimicking school, but the teaching contents and the items used as a base for allotting points to the children were certainly of another nature than what is commonly found in Monbushô-regulated schools. The debating style of teaching as conducted by Mr Usui in Tanaka Eisû Juku would be rare if not impossible in a regular school and his elaborate system for giving points to encourage pupils to hone more general analytical capabilities and familiarity with things outside the regular school curriculum is a very personal elaboration of the usual point systems known in many schools.

As juku are not bound by Monbushô’s curriculum guidelines, they do have the freedom to devise their own policies for what should be taught and how, which in some of the cases I have encountered has resulted in teaching and teaching content that would not otherwise be available. The Council on Lifelong Learning was in all probability referring to this when it stated that juku had the potential for becoming ‘pedagogical laboratories’ and recommended increased interaction between schools and juku.
An aspect of juku activity steadily gaining in importance is what one might call ‘upholding standards of learning’. In light of the latest revisions entailing a reduction of the curriculum for compulsory education of 30 per cent, apprehension has been voiced from many sides (see for example Chapter 2 on SAPIX, Mukai 2003 or Oda K 2003, 2004) that the general level of learning in Japan might decline to the extent that Japan would lose out in international competition. For reassurance one might look to juku, and also to private schools, to uphold former standards of learning, as the earlier reference to the mother who is studying with her two sons indicated (Mukai 2003: 68). In this respect the shingaku juku can contribute to alleviating the discomfort over declining standards of learning in the public system.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As pointed out by the Council on Lifelong Learning as well as by parents in various surveys, there are lessons to be learnt from juku for the public system of schooling. These lessons appear to centre particularly on pedagogical approaches, attention to the individual and individualized teaching. It is a question of if, and how, the knowledge and skill available in juku can be communicated to and be activated in public schools. Monbushô’s bid for toleration is certainly an important step away from total denial, which has been the policy hitherto in Monbushô as well as among schoolteachers. Ms Natsume from NPS Gakuin was hoping for triangular co-operation between schools, families and juku, a solution that appears to fall much in line with declarations by the Council on Lifelong Learning that one should establish a role division between juku and school.

Other means of learning from each other can be imagined, although they are perhaps not very realistic at this stage. In a future where perhaps Monbushô’s toleration policy has tempered the mutual distrust between juku and school (and juku and Monbushô in particular!), one could imagine measures such as increased integration of activities by schools and the juku, not only by the kind of co-operation suggested by role division or when schools ask juku to provide crash courses, but by devising individual programmes for each pupil combining school and juku teaching. This certainly
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would entail problems, as part of such a system would require a fee from the user, but there would also be pedagogical benefits to be had. Of course, integration bears several risks for the juku as well as the schools. A juku might be swallowed up by a public school entirely; they might have to succumb to Monbushô legal guidelines to fit in with school life and in the end lose their economic freedom. Schools and the entire system of public education would have to discuss the issue of paid tuition becoming virtually compulsory. All in all a very difficult exercise at the present time. Another device perhaps available in the future would be teacher mobility between the two types of institution, or even exchange programmes. Again, the prerequisite for this would be a distinct trust developing between the two types of institution and that status differences – and to some extent wage differences – would be levelled out.

As discussed, the existence of juku challenges the ideal of equality in access to education. While it would be folly to imagine that absolute equality is attainable, the legal foundation for Japanese education and the realities of education and the educational hierarchy as they are now make it more and more pressing that this question is addressed, as is evident in the political debates on the issue.

In general, public discussions on problem behaviour and socially unacceptable behaviour have often used juku, in particular the more demanding shingaku juku, and credentialist society and the pressure both phenomena place on the young as part of the explanation for otherwise incomprehensible or deviant behaviour like bullying, hikikomori, school phobia, violence in schools or juvenile delinquency. For some individuals the pressure is no doubt too much and for others the amount of time invested in juku cannot but have consequences for their social literacy. These are problems that should be addressed seriously. However, it is doubtful that they are problems created by the juku per se or by the exam preparing shingaku juku alone. Rather, they seem to be general social problems generated by the particular social climate in which young people grow up in Japan today. Hence remedies for such problems need to be devised on a larger scale, not just by prohibiting or limiting juku activities, an exercise that in any case would be futile given the hierarchical and competitive structures in education.
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The differences between the shingaku juku, hoshû juku and doriru juku uncovered in the previous chapters as well as in the present one underscore the necessity for making distinctions between them for any meaningful discussion of the juku and schooling to be conducted. The types of juku appear, to this author in any case, to be so different that it is highly questionable whether it makes any sense to still speak of them as just one category, the ‘juku’.

NOTES

1 Other factors such as family background or the educational level of parents of course also strongly influence the school performance of an individual, but those are outside the scope of this work.

2 This factor has actually been cited by some researchers to explain low rates of juvenile delinquency and other kinds of problem behaviour among the young. There is simply too little time for children and the young to get into trouble on the level seen in other industrialized countries, it is argued. See for example Miller and Kanazawa 2000: 31.

3 Hikikomori, someone who ‘draws back into himself’, usually an adolescent or young man, who holes up in a room refusing to interact with people and doing nothing but sleeping, eating what the desperate family manages to get into the room, spending time on computer games, television and the like.


6 The numbers in 2003 were 159 Azabu graduates to the three universities and 267 Kaisei graduates. For both schools, the number constitutes roughly half of the yearly output of graduates, which is around 300 for Azabu and 400 for Kaisei. A significant number of rônin (applicants who have studied for some time after high school graduation to prepare for the university entrance examinations) coming from the two middle schools are also admitted every year. As their number tends to be even higher than the number for those admitted straight from high school, their inclusion will boost the success rate significantly. In 2003 195 rônin from Azabu and 258 rônin from Kaisei were admitted to Tokyo, Keiô or Waseda University (Asahi Simbunsha 2003: 58, 74).
Chapter 8

Final Conclusions

Shingaku juku, hoshû juku and doriru juku are too diverse in their make-up and strategies to be lumped together in one category, as I believe I have demonstrated. We must make a distinction in order for us to react meaningfully to issues like increasing rates of children going to juku and the very existence of this phenomenon of ‘double schooling’ or ‘shadow education’.

We must understand the different nature of the needs prompting juku attendance. One is the need for extra training and preparation for entrance examinations caused by the gakureki shakai, the other is the day-to-day need for remedial and special training caused by shortcomings in school teaching as far as availability of special teaching and individual attention is concerned. The reaction to problems and issues involving juku must surely be different according to the different reasons for attending juku in the first place. Any attempt to curb or regulate juku activity must also take into account the different causes of their existence if it is to be successful. The distinction based on the raison d’être for shingaku juku (the gakureki shakai) and hoshû juku (shortcomings in the present system of public schooling) is of prime importance when discussing anything to do with juku. This explanation of the reasons for attending ‘shadow education’ would naturally also be necessary for an understanding of the same phenomenon in other countries.

The criticisms one can find of juku activity, statements saying that it takes up too much time, that it is harmful to children’s joy of learning, that it endangers children’s social literacy and the development of children’s personality and so on, are mainly directed at the kinds of activities we find in shingaku juku. Indeed, in the report from the meeting of a working group of the Curriculum Council on 27 January 1998, section chief of the survey and research division
in the National Association for Elementary School Headmasters, Mr Horiuchi in answer to a question concerning whether it would have been better had juku not existed at all, made the following comment:

You are saying ‘juku’, but there are many types of juku. Judging from what you have just said, I assume you are talking about shin-gaku juku, but I don’t think I can just say they should or shouldn’t exist. Only this: in the present society or in school education – well calling it ‘juku’s role’ sounds a bit like an overstatement – but I think parents and even the children are thinking carefully about this role (Shoto Kyôiku Kyôiku Katei Bunka Shingikai 1998).

While he avoided making any clear statements about the desirability of juku, it is worth noticing that he pointed out the need for getting a category straight in answer to a question indicating only a very general understanding of what juku is. His comments that parents and children are considering the role of juku shows confidence in the users’ abilities to make suitable decisions, a very interesting viewpoint with implications for the kinds of regulations one should try to create for the area, but as he did not elaborate on this it remains unclear in what sense he felt the role was under consideration.

Most of the juku I have dealt with fall within the category of shingaku juku. Nichinôken is the most classic example of a shingaku juku trying to accommodate a general market for shingaku courses at middle school level. SAPIX is somewhat more exclusive and Kawai Juku, Yotsuya Ôtsuka and Sundai have already begun to look for wider markets by introducing a variety of activities not directed solely at shingaku courses. It follows then, that not all clients in a shingaku juku will be high performers. It has been discussed in Chapter 5 that people may easily come to see themselves as failures. This is one of the consequences of the general appreciation of the educational hierarchy and the common knowledge that some institutions are more prestigious and some careers more desirable, coupled perhaps with a tendency for regarding education as something one obtains in one’s youth (that is, you shouldn’t have to make amends later, come back and start anew on education and a career if you are to be considered a success). Though the people in question may actually have entered a university, they may not
have been able to enter one of the more prestigious ones, either because they failed at the entrance examination or because they did not even sit for them because their scores in *hensachi* indicated they would not pass anyway. The juku counselling the individual in this matter will find it very important to ‘pair’ their clients with the institutions that they are most likely to successfully enter, both to avoid failure and to maintain good overall statistics for clients entering the university they have as their target.

When everyone is aware which universities are the more desirable, many are bound to feel losers even if they come in second best, much like silver medallists apparently often feel they come so close, but ultimately did not get the gold. Conversely, graduates from prestigious universities can often enjoy a lot of respect solely on the account of their alma mater regardless of personal merit. Schomburg and Teichler compared responses from university graduates in Japan and a number of European countries in 1999 and found that the importance of the reputation of the institution of higher education as a recruitment criterion was perceived to be high by 41 per cent of the Japanese respondents, 23 per cent of the British respondents and 16 per cent of the German respondents (Schomburg and Teichler 2002: 98–99). The mere fact that graduates from prestigious universities have been able to pass the entrance examination at the institution appears in itself to be a feat widely admired. Further, those for whom entrance examinations were never an issue may still find it difficult to hold their heads high in a society where so much importance is placed on academic performance and in any case, academic records still do tend to be very important as an expression of social status. Amano Ikuo (1983) pointed out that educational credentials in Japan should be seen increasingly as having ‘status expressing function’ rather than ‘status generating function’ as a result mainly of the equalization of educational opportunity in Japan (Amano 1983: 47). While these people may not in terms of occupation or income appear to be failures, they may still feel so due to the ‘status-expressing’ effect of certain academic certificates.

A pertinent question raised by Mr Matsui of Kawai Juku was: who is caring for the weak? In his opinion, Monbushô had failed the weak performers, largely leaving them to their own devices or
to juku, where they can afford it. As he saw it, an increasing number of people would be caught off balance, as the labour market would increasingly require ‘workers of the mind’ since manual work continues to be exported to areas where salaries are cheaper.

Not only those not fit for ‘work of the mind’ are facing changes. Those fit for it also appear to be living in a time of change. What is considered a desirable job seems to be changing nowadays. Not everyone in Japan wants to become a white-collar worker in a large company, one of the career patterns hitherto considered ideal for a graduate from a prestigious university. A recent survey by Macromill quoted in AERA revealed that out of about 300 university students 37 per cent did not want to seek employment in a large company, 33 per cent did and 30 per cent did not know.3 Asked what they valued more, an inspiring job or a high salary, 60 per cent choose the inspiring job, 10 per cent the high salary and 30 per cent felt unable to choose (Umemura 2004: 64–65). Such answers certainly indicate that a shift in young university graduates’ future aspirations is underway. Large companies are no longer their dream destination. Nor are they necessarily comfortable with the fruits of their education. In 1999 the survey ‘Careers after Higher Education: A European Research Survey’ (Schomburg and Teichler 2002) found that compared to German graduates Japanese graduates had few expectations that their knowledge and skills would be useful in their employment (22 per cent against the German 43 per cent) and only 43 per cent of the Japanese graduates expected their employment status and level to be appropriate to their level of education, while 61 per cent of the German respondents were confident there would be a suitable match (Schomburg and Teichler 2002: 102–103). In other words, it would appear that changes in job expectations, job hierarchy and established routes to stable careers could be taking place, a factor that has the potential to seriously influence the present structure of the gakureki shakai.

Ironically, empirical studies carried out by Ishida (1993) showed that in reality the occupational status benefit of a Japanese bachelor degree is half and the income benefit a third of that of the United States (Ishida 1993: 247). The competition for credentials, and the widespread belief in the prevalence of credentials as generating
social status in Japan in particular, has not been backed by Ishida’s empirical findings. The occupational and economic returns of an academic degree in Japan appear low relative to, for example, the United States or Great Britain. That the pursuit of credentials is nevertheless going on at the rate we see in Japan, despite scanty evidence of socio-economic benefits, Ishida suggests rests on popular misconception of the facts as well as the aforementioned factor of credentials as status expressions rather than status generators, pace Amano (Ishida 1993: 249–250).

The juku are private businesses and though often founded by idealistic individuals, their survival basically depends on their ability to attract customers. They naturally strive to create sound businesses and this will also include attempts at opening new markets for themselves, but first and foremost, they depend for their existence on a demand. To accuse them of being the cause of this demand, as some of the sources I have come across do, is, I believe, wrong. Very few businesses are able to create a demand that is not already there in some form. If anything, what they can do is to stimulate existing tendencies for particular demands or be quick to identify new markets. In this case, the base of the issue seems to be the tradition for a strong hierarchy in the educational system as well as the employment system, coupled with some structural factors, such as insufficient remedial education in schools, changing curricula, entrance examinations and the existence of a competing private system of schooling. The juku, not even the shingaku juku, are not the reason for the existence of the ‘examination hell’ or for the tradition for cramming for examinations for that matter, but they most certainly through their business strategies and market developments work to reinforce the influence of such phenomena and keep them alive.

The popular image of juku as we most often encounter it in the media is of the shingaku juku filled with children poring over books, cramming facts from early morning till late night under inhumanly stressing conditions in preparation for strenuous entrance examinations. Clearly, it is wrong to present this as the general image of the juku experience. It does not even qualify as an average image; it is extreme. I have found that for at least 50 per cent of the children in juku the objective is different: namely,
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remedial education, help with homework, having a place to stay after school, meeting with friends and so on (as described for example in Table 0.6.). Even in many of the shingaku juku I have visited, this popular image is hard to recognize. As far as the juku treated in this work are concerned, shingaku juku like Nichinôken and SAPIX because of their structure and course plans may be said to be the ones coming closest to exhibiting traits recognizable from the popular image, although they at no point suggested they were doing anything like what might be expected according to this image (cram camps, week-end sleep-overs at the juku and the like). Nor have I found evidence of these in their presentation material, but they are the examples from my cases that come closest to the lopsided popular image. The rest of the shingaku juku I have visited and categorized were a far cry from such Spartan practices.

This is not to say that Spartan shingaku juku do not exist at all. Particular examples have been followed by the media, and documentaries on them have been broadcast all over the world, but as far as I have been able to document, such institutions are the exception rather than the rule and such practices by extension can be expected to be the reality for only a small minority of the juku clients. Judging from the fact that such juku are not among the ‘BIG 3’ that I have dealt with indicates that shingaku juku with such Spartan practices are not among the most effective. Further research into the individual juku experiences of children and parents will be necessary to adequately document this issue, but my guess would be that experiences with the Spartan shingaku juku are limited in number.

Instead of the Spartan exercises of the popular image of juku, what I have found is a very diverse reality. The fact remains that surveys have found that many children go to juku because they want to (see Table 0.5.). Various reasons may be given, but some are that teaching is more interesting and fun in juku, that friends go and that the children can to some extent use the juku to socialize, that being in juku is better than spending the time alone at home, or that the child wants to enhance its performance in school.

Another prominent image in popular imagination concerning Japanese education is the menacing figure of the ‘education mama’ (kyôiku mama). This work has not been concerned with whether or
not such a personage exists in the context of juku, but if she were
to exist as a reality anywhere one would with good reason expect
to find her here. The ‘education mama’ is probably involved in a
good deal of juku attendance, particularly in the more demanding
shingaku juku like SAPIX and Nichinôken. Here she would be
fulfilling her role as the responsible mother looking out for the
child’s (and the family’s!) best interests by creating circumstances
conducive to studying. Although the image of the kyôiku mama is
usually presented as quite menacing, we would do well to take
into account that for a long time performance in the academic
hierarchy did appear to be an insurance of future status. Hence the
kyôiku mama from a certain viewpoint has indeed been working in
her child’s best interest. Schomburg and Teichler as well as Ishida’s
data have shown us that this conception of social reality has lost its
actuality. Whether the kyôiku mama will disappear as a result will be
interesting to follow.

In fact it is not difficult to find statements by parents to the effect
that in an ideal world they would rather not send their children to
juku, but that they still feel uncomfortable not doing so, perhaps
because they themselves have had juku as a part of their education,
or because they feel the public schools are becoming too ridden
with bullying, violence and the like. Hence they have an image of
education as ‘collapsed’ or ‘ruined’ (areta kyôiku and gakkyû hôkai).
They may also be worried about the declining standards in public
schools due to curriculum reductions and thus try to reduce the risk
of later problems by sending their child to juku. Although we can
find many distancing themselves from the notorious kyôiku mama,
shingaku juku of all sorts will in all probability still be chosen as a
useful tool in the child’s education for some time to come. Finally,
it is more than possible that many kyôiku mamas have not so much
chosen to be one as they have become one because they dare not
jeopardize their children’s futures in the educational system. In
other words, familial expectations and social convention may well
pressure them into acting as a kyôiku mama regardless of their own
attitudes and wishes. (See also quotation by Mukai below)

The issue of curricular standards in the public system is
pivotal in any discussion of the function of juku. Several times I
have mentioned parental as well as professional apprehension that
the general level of learning will be insufficient because of the recent reductions in the official curriculum. This concern about insufficiency is not only on a general level, i.e. apprehension as to whether society as a whole will suffer because the population’s level of learning may decline. It is also on a more personal level, where it has been common knowledge for some time that with the curriculum of the public elementary school alone, you cannot pass the entrance examination for a private middle school, a problem that will only increase with the new reduced curriculum. For those eager to have their children admitted to private middle schools juku are the obvious choice, often in combination with (mainly) maternal assistance at home.

With growing worries over the level of learning in the public system, attendance rates at private middle schools are likely to rise. At the moment about 6 per cent of the middle school pupils are in a private middle school. The number has increased very slowly over the last few years, and my prediction is that it will continue to increase, perhaps even at a faster rate. In the wake of this we are likely to see more and more debate on whether elitist education is desirable and on the role public institutions of education can and should play in this. One-third of the children in elementary school go to a juku, for various reasons as the statistical material documents, but according to Table 0.6. just over 25 per cent do so in preparation for an entrance examination. Certainly there is potential for more of those directing their interest at a private middle school, especially as we also see an increase in the number of combined middle and high schools, rather than at a high school as is at present often the case. There is also evidence that the age considered proper for starting juku is being steadily pushed downwards, again an indication of increasing interest in the middle school entrance examination.

A further issue which might in the future create growth in juku attendance among elementary school children is the increasing free choice of middle schools within certain districts. An article featuring the responses of mothers of elementary school children in Arakawa-ku in Tokyo, who have been given a free choice of middle schools, explains that though the interviewees may not exactly have middle school examinations or private middle schools in mind, the fact...
that there is now a choice among a number of public middle schools has meant that they spend a lot of time collecting information and brooding over the right choice of middle school for their child.\textsuperscript{5} The implementation of the system apparently has meant that local schools in Arakawa-ku have worked on and improved their teaching programmes and thereby attracting more children than before (Sai 2003: 73).

This indicates that we may not necessarily see a very large growth in attendance at private middle schools as public middle schools may enhance their reputations. However, it does not affect the potential for juku attendance. Juku attendance will probably increase as people try to enhance chances of admission to the desired middle school regardless of whether it is public or private. At the moment the report card (naishinshô) and grades are the major determinants to admission at the public middle school of one’s choice. Getting better grades or just improving one’s naishinshô may be sufficient inspiration for seeking out the services of a juku. Further, depending on how the system is organized in the future, particular public middle schools may become so popular that they need a screening device, perhaps a sort of entrance examination, a feature that will most certainly increase juku attendance and make the entrance examination to middle school a much more prominent feature in the average schooling experience in Japan than it is today.

Monbushô has been announcing its readiness to discuss some kind of acknowledgement of juku and it has also made efforts to make juku move in certain directions or to put them to use as supplements to regular schools as far as their Saturday teaching goes. The Council on Lifelong Learning has gone even further, suggesting the discussion of a conscious role division between school and juku, where schools would be mainly responsible for teaching the basics and juku would refine and process this learning. It would seem that what the council primarily has in mind in this instance would be the shingaku juku, as the objectives of most hoshû juku are catch-up and special education. However, in other sections the council is clearly also talking about hoshû juku, especially when focussing on ‘laboratories of pedagogy’ or juku as agents in community building, so they are by no means excluded from the
deliberations in any matter relating to the general issue of creating ties between juku, schools and community.

The merits of the hoshū juku have been described elsewhere. They obviously present themselves as suppliers of supplementary and special training that could develop into a closer and more carefully monitored co-operative venture involving educational plans for individuals. To some extent doriru juku can be used in the same way, although of course most of the personal nurturing would still rest with the schoolteacher. In many cases this may not be an adequate solution as personal attention seems to be one of the services very much in demand in cases where catching up and special training are important. Kumon with its ‘educational stations’ could be bidding for filling out such a role in school – juku co-operation. Monbushô’s policy is still in its infancy, indeed it is still hard to predict its ability to survive, so whether there will be any significant effects and in what shape co-operation might materialize is very difficult to predict at this stage. As the contents and possible range of co-operative activities will change dramatically according to the type of juku involved however, it is imperative that we are able to distinguish the different types of juku since they will be offering very different products and playing different roles in any kind of cooperative effort.

With regard to the hoshū juku, based on the information I have come across, I would go so far as to say that the public schools would not be able to function in their present manner without the hoshū juku and their efforts in remedial education. Many families may also find it significantly more difficult to function without the assistance of a capable hoshū juku teacher, as such teachers may offer counselling and other supportive functions for the entire family.

The Council of Lifelong Learning has recommended that juku be used as part of the activation of the educative effect of the local community. I have argued that the hoshū juku are better equipped to play this part. They deal with basic learning and sometimes general upbringing, thus helping to ensure basic levels of learning and training. They tend to have strong ties locally – to clients, their families, neighbours and often also to the local business community. Thus they are already part of local communities and may become further integrated in efforts related to activating the educational effect of the entire community. There is certainly also a potential
for involving them as part of more general day care systems, or attempts to create *idokoro* in accordance with the new plan launched by Monbushô in February 2004, where it is stated that ‘for children, the sense of fulfilment is higher the more they get to interact with people in the community’ (Monbushô 2004). As integrated parts of the community and considering the functions many *hoshû* juku have already, they seem obvious partners in this work. Other functions may be taken up by *hoshû* juku which are already undertaken by a *doriru* juku such as Benesse, where, for example, home delivery of foodstuffs is offered as one of many services not directly related to education. A local *hoshû* juku may develop into a service centre offering not only education and nurturing, but also serving as pick-up point for laundry services, delivery services and the like.

A *hoshû* juku like NPS Gakuin seems well suited to play a role in establishing a balance between school and family, as the Council on Lifelong Learning has recommended, and in helping to strengthen co-operation between school, family and community as elaborated on by the Central Council on Education (Chûkyôshin 2003a: 12). Institutions like Kumon with their ‘education stations’ or Kawai Juku with their Cosmo programme and *Doruton Sukuru* may very well find new roles in such a set-up should it materialize. Whether it will do so still remains to be seen, but certainly at the council level plans are rife, and the efforts of juku like Kawai Juku, Benesse and Kumon indicate that they are indeed taking an interest in broadening the scope of their businesses in that direction.

The five-day school week has in a number of ways helped juku business to grow. Though attendance rates have not soared quite as high as some had anticipated (or hoped!), they have shown some increase and it is likely this will continue as the use of entrance criteria and examinations for middle schools develops. An important issue in relation to the five-day school week is the reduction of the curriculum and the ensuing debate on lowered academic standards (*gakuryoku teika*). The whole exercise from Monbushô’s side has been linked to creating elbowroom in education (*yutori kyôiku*), but to many this expression has become at best meaningless (like Mr Matsui from Kawai Juku, who proclaimed *yutori kyôiku* ‘dead’ – see Chapter 6) or at worst, synonymous with problems, as evident in Mukai’s quote from a mother:
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I know it is important to have a zest for living (ikiru chikara), but as a parent I am more immediately concerned with the level of learning. I am very uneasy, is it ok to leave it to the school? It sounds a little like the ‘education mama’ (kyōiku mama), but I think I have to see what extra I can do at home.’ Since yutori kyōiku has begun, it seems that such parental uneasiness about education has increased. (Mukai 2003: 68)

Many react like this mother and feel the need for some kind of extra tutoring very keenly. In Chapter 6 I have provided statistics on levels of understanding schoolwork among elementary school children and I found that, exactly as Mr Matsui of Kawai Juku has claimed, there has been a tendency towards increased polarization, so that the percentage of those who do well, as well as those who do not do so well, increases, while the middle group of average performers is shrinking. If this is a tendency that continues even after the full implementation of the new curriculum guidelines, something will have to be done, either by having schools offer more remedial teaching or by using hoshū juku.

A little more than a fourth (28.5 per cent, see Table 6.5) of the elementary school pupils in 2003 went to juku on Saturdays. This means that three-quarters are more or less spending the day on activities unrelated to juku. A little over half (56.2 per cent) do homework on Saturdays. The plan to let children have more time to do other things than schoolwork may be accorded a certain success, but for over half of the children, it does not mean a day free of school related activity. Be that as it may, the quarter going to juku as of 2003 may well increase in the coming years when some will try to ensure academic standards by courting private middle schools while others will want to have higher gradings on the naishinshô report card and better performance on school tests in order to increase their chances of getting admitted to the public middle school of their choice.

The free choice of middle schools, slowly spreading from central Tokyo, the idea of using the new curriculum guidelines as minimum standards for local schools to build their own additional programmes on and the possibility of local cooperative structures between schools and various types of juku all suggest that in the future the Japanese school experience may become a lot less standardized.
than hitherto. The entrance examinations for high schools and universities will of course continue to have a standardizing effect on the entire educational system, but the space, as regulated by the Monbushô, within which public schools can act and develop their own characteristics, has not been so wide for a long time.

Costs are a factor that cannot be ignored in relation to juku, particularly as concerns the *shingaku* juku. Since the whole point of the juku business is to make a profit, so clients have to pay. Juku come at all prices, but none are free, so a certain surplus in the family budget is a prerequisite for any kind of juku attendance. Through *shingaku* juku attendance especially students can obtain training in things not taught in the public schools, things that are useful in entrance examinations at different levels. Passing such examinations will increase the chances of landing a prestigious job and securing or increasing social status. Surveys have shown that 75 per cent of the entrants at Tokyo University come from families with high social status (Murakami 1996: 34; see also Sugimoto 1997: 119–120).

What is at stake is, in other words, the ideal of equal access to education. While factors that are very difficult to control or change on an official level, such as gender, supportive surroundings and family ambition among others, definitely influence how an individual will fare in any educational system, the economic factor – which should be much easier to control or at least to remedy to some extent – remains a major factor in Japanese education. It would be folly, to imagine that totally equal access to education is at all possible, but surely a system in which a family’s means has less influence on an individual’s prospects must be realizable in an educational system that, at least for the time being, is based on the principle of equal access. Kawai Juku appears to be keeping such arguments in mind with its plans to offer scholarships to make sure all worthy students can attempt the entrance examinations. It was put forward during a discussion about who was caring for the weak, the academically weak as well as the financially weak, and will certainly have the potential to mitigate the effects of individual financial circumstances, if only in a very limited number of cases. It may also become a good opportunity for Kawai Juku to increase its standing in the *gôkaku* records (rates of admission) as they may award these scholarships using test performances as their basis.
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Discussions on reform of the Fundamental Law on Education also deal with the issue of equal access, but it is difficult to project what the end result will be. Will separate tracks for elite and ordinary education be sanctioned? Will it be openly accepted that the public system will provide the basics and the private system (juku or private schools) the specialized education? Many will say both are already de facto the case, and while I think my findings to a large extent support such a view, I also think it prudent to emphasize that there is a difference between a practice existing and a situation in which the schools, the political and bureaucratic system and the general public accept it as something to be sanctioned and institutionalized.

The juku market is not a static entity. As private businesses they have to keep in touch with their customers and many strive to extend their activities into new areas of business. Apart from the extended activities already mentioned, Sundai’s *Rinden Sukuuru* has been targeting age groups originally not within the scope of this juku. Most *shingaku* juku and *doriru* juku too, appear to be broadening their scope to include clients both younger and older than previously in their attempt at business consolidation at a time where smaller age cohorts present a potential threat to their survival. The system of preparation for exams and extra educational services is already fully developed at the high school level. The next growth area will probably be middle school entrance. Innovations such as the free choice of public middle schools, the five-day school week, the reduced public curriculum and the comprehensive secondary school are certainly helping this development along. So while some broaden their scope and open up new markets, others like SAPIX opt for an image of exclusivity and quality. As a result this juku will probably have fewer clients, even if included in the ‘BIG 3’ because of its *gôkakuritsu* (entrance rates). There thus appears to be two tendencies or two strategies for survival. Either you seek to grow really big and offer as much as you can to as many as you can, a sort of ‘Benessefication’, or you specialize and try to be unique in what you offer, as SAPIX or most local *hoshû* juku, a ‘Sapixation’ one may call it.

Benessification, which I am naming after Benesse because this institution has already spread itself out over a remarkable range of activities – from *doriru* juku to publisher of a vast array of magazines.
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to artistic and cultural activities, to home delivery of foodstuffs – requires a certain size of institution. Large shingaku juku chains like Kawai Juku, Sundai and Yotsuya Ôtsuka have the size; they already publish their own textbooks, some publicly available, and they are spreading out their activities to include more age groups. The potential for these juku to further broaden their scope in the coming years is certainly there, they all appear to be moving in the direction of ‘Benessefication’.

I have omitted Nichinôken from the above list. Nichinôken seems not quite so obviously to be following the path of ‘Benessefication’. It does not as a rule make the textbooks it uses in its courses available in bookshops (those available are usually revised editions); it has not tried to broaden its scope age-wise, nor has it added other novel activities. I will therefore argue that Nichinôken is not going for ‘Benessification’ like the other shingaku juku I have treated here, but rather for ‘Sapixation’, i.e., it is attempting to maintain uniqueness in its focus on middle school entrance exams (which we can expect to be an expanding market) and on having extremely good records as far as gôkakuritsu in this field goes.

‘Sapixation’ I am thus using to signify institutions that aim not at getting as many clients as possible by offering a very wide selection of services, but at being unique and particularly successful at their chosen task, be it placing clients at prestigious educational institutions or offering remedial and special education, perhaps in combination with counselling, nurturing and other services rooted in a local area. SAPIX of course is the foremost representative of this strategy, but Nichinôken appears to be following the same strategy and many hoshû juku can likewise be said to be opting for it, although for most it may be more correct to see this as a result of the practical realities of their small size rather than a conscious choice. On the other hand, a hoshû juku broadening its scope of activities, may well be interpreted as employing ‘Benessefication’ for its survival.

Juku are both businesses and educational institutions. They are sources of conflict and of anxiety but also of new ideas and inspiration, as pointed out by the Council on Lifelong Learning in particular. This is not only true for Japan but applies to any country experiencing the development of systems similar to juku.
Judging from what has happened in Japan, ‘shadow education’ all over the world is facing a future where it will not remain remedial for long. Although not all shadow systems will necessarily evolve in a similar manner, the Japanese experience is certainly worth attention from educators dealing with shadow education all over the world. The relation between juku, school and Monbushô has never been easy, but it has until now been stable, perhaps as a result of the remoteness of the government bureau. Monbushô and schools in particular have to a large extent been able to pretend that institutions such as juku did not exist and were, in any event, of no consequence to their own activities. Since Monbushô is now trying to promote certain policies elbowroom in education, a less packed curriculum, lifelong learning and reactivation of the educative functions of local communities – juku have suddenly become more interesting as possible partners in such efforts with their potential for either assisting the reform efforts or corrupting them. To be able to discern which institutions can do what, it is imperative to make the distinctions I have outlined in this work.

NOTES


2 This is not to blame schoolteachers in particular; I merely want to point out that attention to the individual is easier to provide in the small classes usually found in hoshû juku than it is in a school class with up to 40 pupils.

3 55 male university students and 56 female university students participated in the survey.

4 The issues concerning the comprehensive secondary school are treated, for example, in AERA in a series of articles by Oda Kumiko published between December 2003 and late January 2004.

5 According to Sai, Arakawa-ku is at the forefront of the implementation of the reforms of school districts. On a national scale, Tokyo-to, of which Arakawa-ku is a part, is the forerunner. This reform was initiated in April 2001 in Shinagawa-ku and in April 2004 it was expected to cover 18 ku (wards) and 5 shi (cities) in metropolitan Tokyo (Sai 2003: 73).
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