

## Can the Japanese Educational System Design the Future?

### The Historical Experience of Universalization in Upper Secondary Education

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper illustrates the historical process of the prevalence of upper secondary education in Japan focusing on the public and private relationships. After reviewing high school policy at the central administration, actual high school supply at local government levels is examined and the harmonious relationship between public and private sectors is introduced. Japanese private schools must fulfill the same standards of school facilities, teachers' licenses, and curriculum as those of public schools, under the control of school education laws with a few exceptions. The universal upper secondary education in Japan has been managed with diversities between local prefectures. Japanese education succeeded in the wave of industrialization and*

#### **Article Info**

##### **Article History:**

**Received**

*February 1, 2017*

**Revision received**

*December 1, 2017*

**Accepted**

*December 15, 2017*

##### **Keywords:**

*Japan*

*High School*

*Public-Private*

*Historical process*

*Industrialization*

*constructed a cooperation between public and private high schools. This educational system has supported Japanese development to achieve competent human resources. However, Japan is now facing a new difficulty of determining what further steps to take in the pursuit of top school education in a post-industrialized global world.*

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**Cite as:**

Kagawa, M., Aizawa, S. & Kodama, H. (2017). Can the Japanese educational system design the future? The historical experience of universalization in upper secondary education. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 2 (2), 219-249.

**Introduction**

Japan was a leading country in the economic success of East Asia, and the Japanese economy has remained stable over the past twenty-five years. The rate of the global economy has been dramatically shrinking, from 17.6% in 1995 to 5.8% in 2014. However, this does not suggest that there is nothing new to be learned from the Japanese experience and its contemporary situation. In addition to its economy, Japan's education and culture have maintained sufficient performance. For instance, both the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have achieved very good results (see Figure 1). according to the PISA. Particularly, this success is based upon the fact that Japanese society has achieved the provision of a high level of education for all. The PIAAC clearly illustrates this characteristic as it involves a much smaller variance among Japanese academic achievement compared to other countries. In fact, there are smaller variances even among generations within Japan. The Japanese educational system has been established in the modernization and industrialization process, and its influence is more effective in assisting people to learn basic literacy and skills. Naturally, some individuals criticize such a tendency wherein Asian countries receive higher scores than

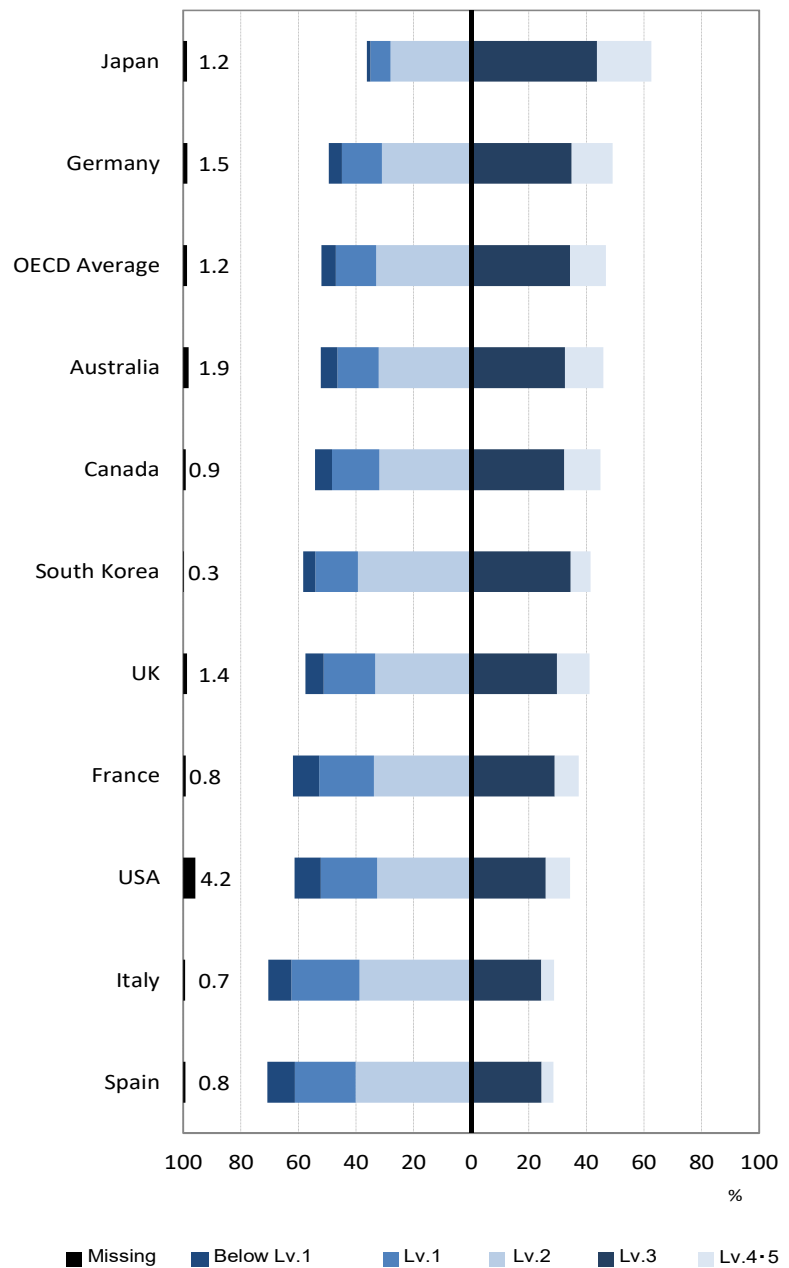


European countries, but such criticism is nonsense according to Dore's (1976) discussion. However, a recent study by Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) entitled *The Knowledge Capital of Nations* concluded the definitive relationship between quality education and economic growth. They found a direct correlation between a nations' wealth and the labor skills of its population. Based on their analysis and regarding future development, there are apparently more Asian experiences amongst developing countries when compared to developed European countries' examples. From this point of view, this paper seeks to address how Japanese society established such a highly achieved educational system.

This paper first examines literature that includes findings from developmental studies to shed light on the public-private partnership in the school education sector. Refining discussion through literature works, this paper focuses on the historical process of the prevalence of upper secondary education from the supply side at the central administration and local government levels. Then, another typical phenomenon, the harmonious relationship between public schools and private schools in Japan, is introduced. In addition, some voices from the contemporary business world are illustrated through the results of an interview survey. After such analyses, Japan's experience and future will be discussed with a particular focus on what other countries may benefit from its example.

Figure 1  
2015 PISA (left) and 2013 PIAAC (right) Results

Science	
Mean	
OECD average	493
Singapore	556
Japan	538
Estonia	534
Chinese Taipei	532
Finland	531
Macao(China)	529
Canada	528
Viet Nam	525
Hong Kong(China)	523
B-S-J-G(China)	518
Reading	
Mean	
OECD average	493
Singapore	535
Macao(China)	527
Canada	527
Finland	526
Ireland	521
Estonia	519
Korea	517
Japan	516
Norway	513
New Zealand	509
Germany	509
Mathematics	
Mean	
OECD average	490
Singapore	564
Hong Kong(China)	548
Macao(China)	544
Chinese Taipei	542
Japan	532
B-S-J-G(China)	531
Korea	524
Switzerland	521
Estonia	520
Canada	516





## Literature Review

### **The Public-Private Relationship in Education and the East Asian Social Development Model**

Development studies, especially those conducted in East Asia, have emphasized the concept of the “developmental state” (Greene, 2008; Johnson, 1995; Pirie, 2008; Woo-Cumings, 1999) in late development (Dore, 1976). This developmental state may have justified developmental dictatorship academically. However, other examples illustrate that other developing countries failed to develop with dictatorship (Otsuka, 2014). Otsuka emphasized the maximum utilization of the innate industry for social development. According to his argument, the East Asian case is a successful one in that it took advantage of the innate manufacturing industrial heritage of this region (Otsuka, 2014). This also suggests that the government or public sector must not prevent or inhibit the various developmental activities for social development.

From this perspective, developmental studies and social policy studies in developing countries often focus on the public-private relation (Fosu, 2013b; Kamimura, 2015). Fosu and co-authors explained the successful development from European case studies, including that of Japan (Fosu, 2013a). Fosu divided his findings on successful development into 11 themes. Though not all of these are reiterated or discussed, the following six elements should be particularly focused upon as they relate to the current discussion: (1) market and public-provision harmony; (2) public financing; (3) social-risk minimization under egalitarianism; (4) social and political harmony; (5) complementary human capital; (6) industrial structure. Fosu (2013b) indicated very important points, especially in regards to the relation between the public and private sectors. From this point of view, East Asian development is characterized not only by these macro-perspective views but also by other social components. This study emphasized the importance of a harmonious relationship between the market and the public, or between public and private

entities. Otsuka's argument regarding social development helps to synthesize the relation between social development and education from the viewpoint of public/private relations (Otsuka, 2014).

Apart from these studies and concentrating on educational studies, it is difficult to say that scholars observe these viewpoints. There are, however, studies that distinguish two types of private schools. The first type mainly comes from Anglo-Saxon countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. These works insist that private schools are overwhelmed in the achievement compared to public schools because private schools have held prestigious traditions compared to local public schools (Aldrich, 1996; Chubb and Moe, 1988). Some contemporary scholars insist that the more modern a society is, the more people go to private schools, and this is called "privatization" (Walford, 1990; Whitty et al. 1998). This discussion refers to Hirschman's exit model and offers a clear explanation of private schools (Hirschman, 1970). On the other hand, another study such as that of Srivastava and Walford (2007) may be well-known for readers in developing countries. They have provided other examples of private schools wherein "low-fee" private schools are inevitable for the less economically developed countries to realize education for all. A classical report by Tan and Mingat on Asian educational development is available to provide a view of plural public-private relations and financing, but these reports were not developed to establish a new model for development (Tan and Mingat, 1992).

One of the considerable works on public-private partnerships in East Asian education that included Japan was written by William Cummings (Cummings, 1997). He attempted to depict the characteristics of private education in East Asia with an emphasis on the fact that central government plays a pivotal role in providing education, but "within the framework of this centrally controlled system, there is a vigorous private sector, whose share has, if anything, expanded in recent decades" (Cummings, 1997, p. 135). The prevalence of private education complementing strong public



education is a phenomenon that can be observed in various countries in East Asia, including Japan. Public high schools in Japan are regarded as elite schools in general<sup>1</sup>, and going to a private high school is the second preferred choice for most children. Cummings also focused on the cultural aspects that affect the provision of private schools. According to his perspective, institutional traditions such as indigenous institutional heritage, indigenous entrepreneurs, mission schools, foreign colonial policy, and foreign influences “have had a differential impact on particular East Asian countries” (Cummings, 1997, p. 143). Moreover, Cummings noted, when describing the private education empire, it is natural for private institutions to find their niche wherein the provisions of public schools are limited, and “to take advantage of economies of scale they engage in massive horizontal expansion” as these institutions offer “educational products crafted to the particularities of evolving local needs” (Cummings, 1997, p. 146).

### **The School System, High Schools, and Private High Schools in Japan**

To briefly introduce Japan’s school system, its formal schooling system was initially established in 1872. During the nineteenth century, primary education was nominally universalized and was universalized in real number around the 1910s (Hijikata, 1994). This universalized education expanded to the post-primary stage prior to WWII (Kimura, 2015). After WWII, the Japanese school system was reformed and democratized under the influence of US occupation. The Japanese school system continues on in this same form (6-year primary, 3-year lower secondary, 3-year upper secondary, and 2- or 4-year tertiary). These reforms changed the examination system and affected the social stratification and social mobility in Japanese

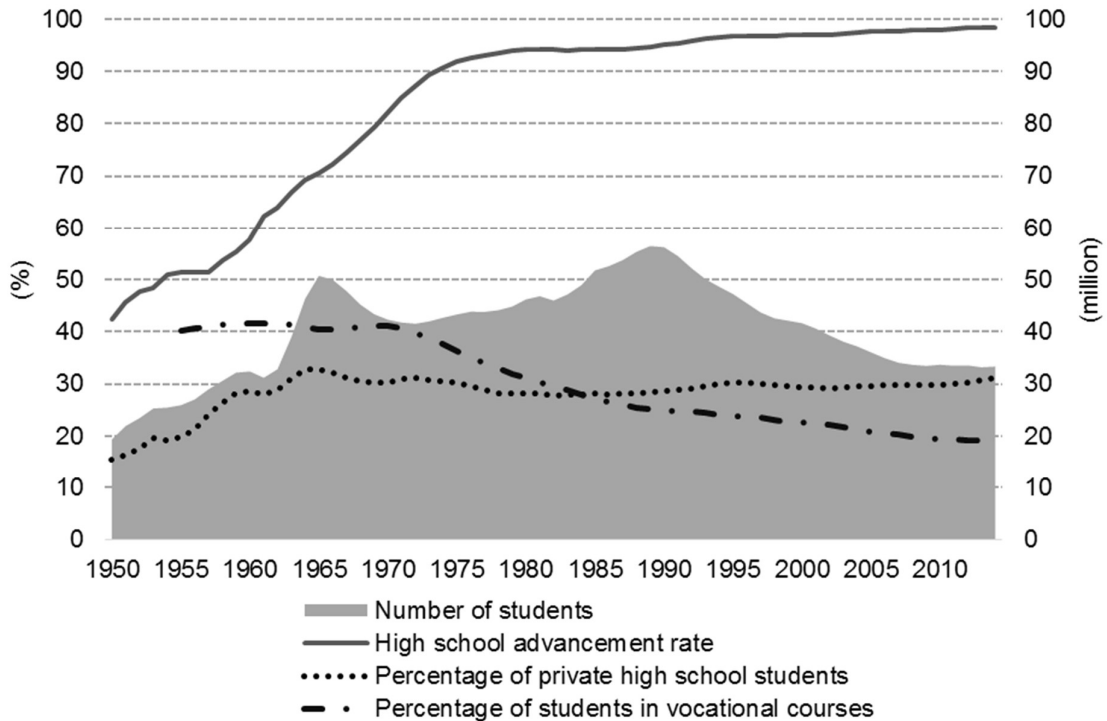
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<sup>1</sup> There are some elite private high schools in Japan especially in urban area. However, in most prefectures, the top-ranked high schools are generally long-established public schools, most of which were junior high schools in the old system.

society. The most important reform was the abolition of the tracking system at the lower secondary level. Kikuchi comprehensively researched the opportunity of secondary education in modern Japan (Kikuchi, 1967), and his analysis showed that the enrollment rate for lower secondary school was around 20% even in 1936, though 60% of other students went to other post primary schools. There were severe divisions between lower secondary schools in examination and other post primary schools in the social class, so that the lowest quantile in the point of economic capital was excluded from the opportunity to receive secondary education throughout the whole society (Kikuchi, 1967). This severe division was removed after WWII. One of the most significant changes of that time was the extension of compulsory education from six years to nine years. This change meant that lower secondary education became compulsory. Naturally, the GHQ SCAP (General Headquarters of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) also reformed on the level of upper secondary education (i.e., high school), attempting to invent a public school system similar to that of the US. The GHQ started to change the high school system according to the following three basic principles: gender equality (non-gender divided schools), non-entrance examination, and comprehensive schools. However, this reform has not been perfectly fulfilled compared to primary education and lower secondary education because upper secondary education was reformed using old secondary schools as a model, and this reform was left to the responsibility of local districts and local prefectures. Gender equality is one of the most fulfilled reforms, but some prefectures remain as gender-divided public high schools. Comprehensive education in high school is the least fulfilled reform because this reform is up to local schools, despite the fact that comprehensive schools require greater budgets. Consequently, Japanese high schools have remained as school tracking systems between schools and thus require entrance examinations, though high school is equalized on the point of gender.



Figure 2  
*High School Expansion in Japan.*



Source: The Ministry of Education "School Basic Survey"

After years of confusion, the structure of advancement to upper secondary education had been constructed from the late 1950s to early 1970s in each prefecture. The Japanese advancement rate to upper secondary education, which was around 50% in 1950, reached over 90% in 1972 as Figure 1 illustrates (Aizawa, 2016; Kagawa et al., 2014; Kariya, 1995). This study regards this system to distribute universal upper secondary educational opportunities as the social fundamental institution with higher academic achievement and basic skills in Japanese society. In line with this stance, three points on the

expansion of upper secondary education should be emphasized. First, it is important to point out that private high schools contributed to the expansion as the current study theoretically reviewed. The percentage of private high school students grew along with the expansion, nearly doubling from 1950 to 1965, indicating that it was impossible for high schools to expand if public schools offered only educational opportunities. Private high school students comprise about 30% of all students, and this figure is slightly higher than that of the Western countries<sup>2</sup>. Second, the percentage of students in vocational courses remained at around 40% in the early 1960s, but declined thereafter as people preferred general education to vocational education. High schools in Japan offer both academic/general and vocational/specialized programs; the ratio of students enrolled in academic programs continues to rise, accounting for more than 70% in 2010. Third, there were considerable regional variations in the provision for high school education regarding the first two points previously mentioned. To explain these regional variations, James and Benjamin (1988) point out that prefectural administrations were responsible for determining the structure of high school education, that is, the number and type of school places that can be made available in a particular region. Students do not usually choose to study in a high school outside of a given prefecture.

Referring to this basic information, the following section analyzes the historical experience of Japanese upper secondary education in the post-war era. First, this section focuses on the central administration in the expansion era. Results of analysis showed that central governmental administration fell short of fulfilling its demands. Therefore, the local government with local private schools is focused upon. Supplying huge opportunities by local government and private schools, they faced great difficulties after expansion. An institution that maintains a public-private partnership is then introduced, followed by an illustration of some voices from the

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<sup>2</sup> Source: OECD. StatExtracts

business that reveal how many consider Japanese upper secondary education.

### Analysis

#### Expansion Era from the View of Central Administration

Table 1

*Quantitative Measures in Basic Policy for Meeting High School Demands (in Thousands)*

Year of estimate	Base year	Increase in number of students	Measures						Allocation between public and private	
			By newly built schools		By extending buildings		By increasing class size		public	private
			public	private	public	private	public	private		
1960	1961?	100	15	---	25	---	25	---	65	35
1961	1959	112	15	9	27	18	27	16	67	43
1962	1960	123	20	4	40	26	20	13	80	43

Note: --- not stated.

Sources: 1960 estimate, “Basic Policy for High School Preparation” (draft) (高校対策基本方針案 1960.7.12.). 1961 estimate, “Overall Planning of Measures for Upsurge in High Schooling (Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau)” (急増対策の全体計画 文部省初等中等教育局 1961). 1962 estimate, “Measures and Explanation on Upsurge in Public High School Students” (公立高校生徒急増対策及び解

In 1962, when the first set of baby-boomers came of high school age, a movement known as “High Schooling for All Who Desire It” was organized by parents and union teachers. They held a national conference (高校全員入学問題全国協議会 全入協) and made demands for the creation of new public high schools. Tackling the increasing demand for schools due to the first set of baby-boomers was also a serious social problem. The Ministry of Education (MOE) announced basic policies for meeting the demand for more high schools every year between 1960 and 1962<sup>3</sup>. Table 1 shows the quantitative measures adopted. These numbers were calculated in the

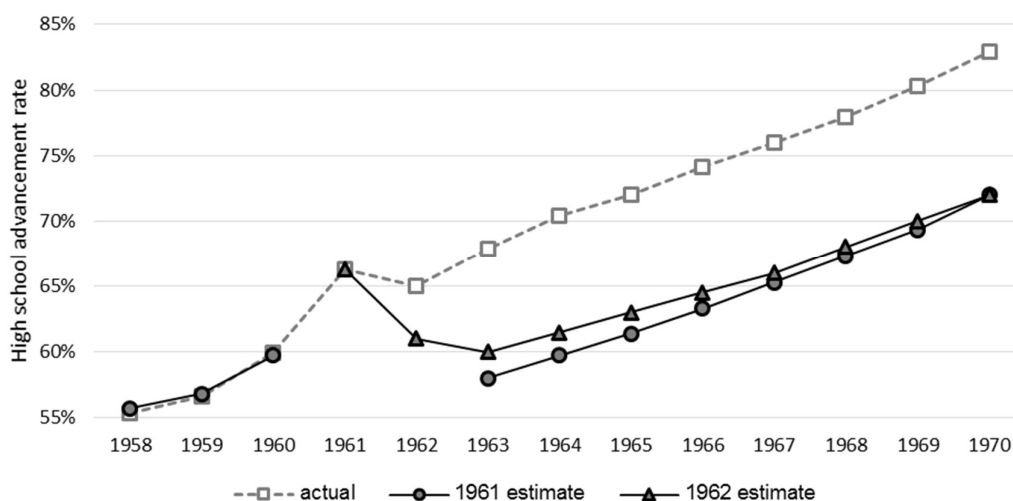
<sup>3</sup> “Basic Policy for High School Preparation” (draft) (高校対策基本方針案 1960.7.12.), “Overall Planning of Measures for Upsurge in High Schooling (Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau)” (急増対策の全体計画 文部省初等中等教育局 1961), “Measures and Explanation on Upsurge in Public High School Students” (公立高校生徒急増対策及び解説 1962.1.26).

following manner: first, an estimate of the increase in the number of students from the base year was calculated; then, this number was apportioned between public and private sectors and also between different methods used for expansion (i.e., by building new schools, extending school buildings, or increasing class sizes). For example, in the 1961 estimate, there would be an additional 1,120 thousand students; 670 thousand of them were accepted by public high schools, and 430 thousand by private schools. Of the 670 thousand students allocated to public schools, 150 thousand were to be accommodated in newly built schools, 270 thousand by increasing the number of classrooms (that is to say, by extending buildings), and 270 thousand by increasing class sizes. Table 1 shows that the estimated increments in each year (which refers to the number of high school entrants) grew to be more than the expected intake, even before the first set of baby-boomers reached high school. As a consequence, the estimations needed an upward adjustment. By comparing the three measures adopted, it is evident that the MOE was hesitant to build new schools, and moreover that the number of students who could be accommodated by the other two measures was much higher. It was also planned that private schools would accommodate the estimated increase in the number of students between 1960 and 1961, and public schools would do so between 1961 and 1962.

What was the MOE's forecast for the rise in advancement rate within this period? In 1961, the advancement rate in 1963 was calculated as 58%, which is equal to 1,540 thousand entrants. This figure was calculated by adding 1% to the advancement rate in 1958 (57%). The MOE planned to accommodate the surging demand by admitting 1,450 thousand entrants every year until 1970. By doing so, it aimed to realize an increase in the advancement rate (Sato, 1961). However, this estimate was far from accurate. The non-negligible disparity already shown in the year of 1963 kept increasing, and this gap was not resolved through the 1960s (Figure 3). The MOE's expected advancement rate was 72.0% in 1970, which in reality was surpassed in 1965. The actual advancement rate in 1970 was 82.9%,

which was more than 10% of the initial estimate. Shimizu Yoshihiro, a prominent sociologist who was a member of the technical subcommittee of the Economic Council at the time of the National Income Doubling Plan by the Prime Minister of the time, Hayato Ikeda, later revealed the reason for this discrepancy.

Figure 3  
*The MOE Estimates and Actual High School Advancement Rate*



Sources: 1961 estimate, "Overall Planning of Measures for Upsurge in High Schooling (Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau)" (急増対策の全体計画 文部省初等中等教育局 1961). 1962 estimate, "Measures for Upsurge in High Schools and Pros and Cons of 'High School for All Who Desire It' Movement" (高等学校生徒急増対策と"全入運動"の可否 1962.1.26).

There was a thrust on forecasting the advancement rate among the Economic Planning Agency, the MOE, the Ministry of Labor, and the business world. The Economic Planning Agency estimated the advancement rate to be 84% or 85% in 1970. However, the MOE recognized that it would cause difficulties if the rate had risen to

those figures, which were impossible to accommodate and forecast the rate to be 66% in 1970. Moreover, the Ministry of Labor and the industry were reluctant to expand the number of high schools because they needed young students, especially junior high school graduates, to be part of the workforce<sup>4</sup>. After long negotiations, the rate of increase was settled at 72% (Shimizu, 1977). The MOE's negative attitude was also pronounced in its response to the "High Schooling for All Who Desire It" movement. The MOE distributed a brochure in 1962 entitled "Measures for Upsurge in High Schools and Pros and Cons of 'High School for All Who Desire It' Movement," criticizing the movement harshly and denying admission for all those who wanted to go to high schools.

Therefore, in sum, it has been revealed that the national policy for high school expansion was too slow to keep up with the actual increase, and the MOE's calculation was far from accurate. The MOE did take some measures to meet the growing demand, but they were not sufficient. It is also possible that the real objective of the MOE was to constrain high school growth.

There was, however, one exception wherein the MOE stepped in to meet the necessary demands. This realm was particularly in the fields of science and technical education. Under the manpower policy, the number of technical high school students went up from 306 thousand in 1959 to 624 thousand in 1965, more than doubling over the course of six years. The number of students admitted to the technical courses was 207 thousand in 1965, 104 thousand greater than the number recorded in 1959. Looking at the absolute increase in numbers, it appeared as if things were going according to plan. However, upon observing the ratios, a different picture emerges. Although the ratio of academic/general courses to vocational courses should be ameliorated to 5:5 by the National Income Doubling Plan,

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<sup>4</sup> Since wages for young junior high school graduates were low, they needed to retain the cheap labor force. It is said that the strongest opposition for increasing opportunities for higher education came from the business circle.



this ratio remained at 6:4 because students who took up academic/general courses also increased in number at the same pace.

Hence, the national high school policy did not match the actual circumstances according to qualitative growth or in promoting science and technical education. Why were the national high school policies unable to meet the actual circumstances of expansion? Since the actual numbers and rates exceeded the initial national plan, some other entities had to supply the high school education. In other words, the question of who filled the gap between supply and demand remains unanswered. Therefore, to fully understand the process of high school expansion in Japan, one must look at the supply side. A clue to this puzzle may be the fact that the MOE or the Japanese government did not directly build high schools. One should then look at the regional variations in high school expansion that occurred during this period.

The situation faced by each prefecture was quite different before the 1960s. In 1958, enrollment in Tokyo was 70%, twice the rate of Miyazaki (35%). These disparities were eliminated in the process of high school saturation. How did each prefecture play a role in providing high school education? As previously noted, the two main providers of high school education were the municipal government and private institutions. Each prefecture had a choice as to how to combine these two sources of providers, and also as to what particular courses were to be offered in high school education.

### **Expansion Era from the View of Local Prefectures and Private Schools**

This study analyzed and classified results of the analysis of the “School Basic Survey” (学校基本調査) conducted by the MOE each year in all schools. The current study obtained the following three indices of each prefecture<sup>5</sup>: (1) The high school enrollment ratio in

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<sup>5</sup> There are 47 prefectures in Japan, but Okinawa is excluded as the authors were unable to obtain the first two indices.

1955; (2) The percentage of entrants in private high schools in 1958; (3) The change in percentage of private high school entrants between 1958 and 1997.

This process has already been written in detail in other previous works (Kagawa, 2016; Kagawa et al., 2014) so the current research concentrates on the classified situation. The clusters are referred to specifically as the “Average” cluster, “Public expanded” cluster, “Private expanded” cluster, and “Urban” cluster (the definitions of which will be explored in further detail later in this paper). The prefectures in each cluster are shown in Table 2, while Figure 4 shows the positions of the prefectures.

Table 2  
*Names of Prefectures in Each of the Four Clusters*

Cluster	Names of prefectures
<b>Average</b> 16 prefectures	Hokkaido, Aomori, Miyagi, Chiba, Shizuoka, Hyogo, Nara, Okayama, Yamaguchi, Kagawa, Ehime, Kochi, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, Oita, Kagoshima
<b>Public expanded</b> 6 prefectures	Iwate, Ishikawa, Aichi, Shiga, Tokushima, Nagasaki
<b>Private expanded</b> 19 prefectures	Akita, Yamagata, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Niigata, Toyama, Fukui, Yamanashi, Nagano, Gifu, Mie, Wakayama, Tottori, Shimane, Saga, Miyazaki
<b>Urban</b> 5 prefectures	Tokyo, Kanagawa, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima

### Characteristics of The Four Clusters

*“Average” prefectures.* This cluster comprises 16 prefectures and is the second-largest of all four prefectures. The average high school advancement rate in this cluster was 52% in 1955, the share of private high school entrants was 22%, and the average increase in private share during the high school expansion was around 10 percent. All these figures are more or less similar to the national averages. Since all three indices have medium values, it can be interpreted that the percentage of students in these prefectures who went to high school





corresponded with the national average, while the non-negligible percentages were private high school students in the initial years. The additional intake in private institutions remained moderate during the process of expansion.

In the vocational/specialized program, the cluster average increased by 4% during the 1950s and the 1970s, and then decreased by 12% over the next 20 years (from 1970 to 1990).

*“Public expanded” prefectures.* This cluster was characterized by the relatively small role played by private institutions during the expansion. The initial private advancement rate was 21% on average, but this figure gradually decreased during educational expansion. The peak in private advancement rate was 25% in 1962, which was prior to the full-scale expansion. The rate of this cluster hit its lowest point in 1982 (17%). Since the initial average advancement rate was 45% (below the national average), an active and positive enlargement of supply was imperative for this cluster. The relative absence of private institutions in these prefectures indicates that public institutions were the main providers of high school education. The average student share in vocational/specialized programs increased by about 3% in the period between 1955 and 1970. Over the next 20 years, it decreased by 13 percent. According to the current research’s field survey conducted in these prefectures, some disbelief was discovered among local educational government to private schools in this cluster (Kagawa et al., 2014).

*“Private expanded” prefectures.* In contrast to the previous cluster, the main characteristic of this cluster was the positive contribution of private schools. Similar to the “public expanded” cluster, the average initial advancement rate was low at just over 45 percent. The initial percentage of private entrants was around 10%, the lowest of the four. Thus, high school education was mainly supplied by public high schools before the expansion; however, this situation changed drastically over the course of expansion. Private high schools gained in share not only in the 1960s, when the number of students

burgeoned, but also in the 1980s to 23 percent. Thus, a gradual increase in their share during the expansion may be observed.

This cluster is the extreme opposite of the “public expanded” cluster. Although the initial conditions were alike, the role played by private institutions between the two clusters has been completely different. Prefectures in this cluster owed much to private institutions for ensuring an adequate supply of educational opportunities. Since this is the largest cluster among the four, it represents another “standard” of educational expansion in Japan.

Unlike the previous two clusters, the share of students in the vocational/specialized program decreased slightly between 1955 and 1970. As previously stated, the contribution of private institutions was greater in this cluster. Moreover, in Japan, most private schools offer general education rather than vocational/specialized programs. These two factors were possible causes of their decline. In addition, after 1970, this rate continued to decline until the 1990s. According to the current study’s field survey conducted in these prefectures, some advanced movements to invite private schools by local government were found in this cluster (Kagawa et al., 2014).

**“Urban” prefectures.** Five prefectures belong to this cluster, and they are all located in relatively large urban areas in Japan. The initial advancement rates and private advancement rates were both remarkably high in these prefectures when compared to the other clusters. The initial average advancement rate was more than 60%, and the initial average private advancement rate was a little less than 50 percent. This suggests that the supply of high school education depended to a great degree on private institutions in the early stage. The private rate peaked in the early 1960s, and then showed a gradual decrease as the overall advancement rate exceeded 90 percent.

Prefectures in this cluster played a central role in the regional and national economies. Population growth did not stop after the first set of baby-boomers due to migration and natural growth. This was



especially prevalent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the second set of baby-boomers became high school students. Additional providers of high school education were mainly public schools. This resulted in a diminution of the share of private schools. Consequently, high school educational expansion had been fulfilled by these varied forms of public-private cooperation. Japanese upper secondary education is supplied not only by the local governmental provision, but also by private schools under the central regulation on curriculum.

### **The Public-Private Cooperation Council after Expansion**

From the current study's international comparative surveys, some countries have been found to have faced problems on the point of public-private cooperation in schools, especially after the expansion era (Aizawa, 2016). On the contrary, Japanese local government has maintained this cooperation even after expansion. The public-private cooperation council (公私立高等学校協議会) has a role to maintain in many prefectures. An official Japanese historical description in "The 120-year history of the school system (学制 120 年史)" referred to the role of a public-private high school cooperation council (公私立高等学校協議会) in order to solve the second arrival of baby-boomers in the 1980s cooperatively.

The MOE issued two notifications regarding the public-private cooperation council in 1975 and 1982. In the 1975 notification, the ministry indicated the problem of surging demands following the second wave of baby boomers and the need to build new high schools. The notification claimed that both the public and private high schools needed to be cooperative in enhancing high school education. In particular, it was necessary to discuss future public and private school arrangement plans and requested the establishment of the council. In the 1982 notification, the ministry indicated the need for adequate measures considering the fluctuating student number following the second wave of baby boomers. It urged the council to

fully discuss the following from the stance of public and private cooperation: trends in future high school enrollment, appropriate allocation of roles between public and private schools, public and private school arrangement planning, and issues on enrollment limits.

In principle, public and private cooperation means that both sectors help each other in student admission for harmonious development while maintaining their uniqueness. However, in reality, the main agenda of the councils have been the allocation of students permitted in each sector. Setting up and maintaining a public and private student ratio was a specific measure in many prefectures (Takagi, 1986). It is true that the public and private cooperation was a “public restraining/private protecting” (公立抑制/私立保護) measure in the following perspectives. Firstly, private high schools aided the public schools during a period of rapidly increasing students by increasing the number of students admitted. Therefore, the public sector could save on expenditure. Secondly, in return, private high schools received subsidies for the construction and renovation of their buildings, benefits for interest on borrowings, and operational costs. Thirdly, private high schools also received assurance that they would keep a certain quota in the coming age when student numbers would decline sharply (Takagi, 1986).

As Takagi (1986) discussed, these councils are problematic in that they treat private high schools with favoritism. However, it is also true that the pre-determination of entrants mitigated the drastic quantitative change, and not only the public and private schools but also the children who wished to go to high schools benefitted from this. Thus, the ratio itself was determined in advance by the council, which explains the invariance of the private high school ratio.

Three changes can be identified on the change in the public and private balance during these 25 years that saw a sharp decline in student numbers. First, the number of public high schools has declined in almost every prefecture except for Okinawa and Shiga.



Second, on the contrary, the number of private high schools is unchanged or slightly increased in most prefectures. Third, the school size decreased, and the change is more significant in private high schools. Thus, these changes indicate that the function of the public-private cooperation council may have changed during this period.

One of the authors conducted a survey on the “Recent Change in High School Education” from November to December 2014. Prefectural education boards were asked to answer a questionnaire on the existence and functions of the public-private council, and 46 out of 47 prefectures responded. Almost 90% (41 prefectures) of the prefectures affirmed the establishment of a public-private cooperation council. Only five prefectures are without a council. Furthermore, there are no common characteristics such as private ratios among these five prefectures. Among the prefectures with a council, many were established during the two notification periods from the MOE. This possibly promoted “public-private cooperation” when the second set of baby boomers went to high school. Therefore, public-private cooperation councils are prevalent in Japanese society as a whole.

However, when asked to respond to the methods of entrant allocation, 43% (17 prefectures) indicated that they allocate students based on the ratio, and 7% (3 prefectures) responded that they allocate students based on the absolute number. This means that half of the prefectures conduct neither of these allocation methods. Therefore, what Takagi mentioned was partly true: the meaning of “public-private cooperation” should be the allocation of entrants by quota. However, half of the prefectures declared that they use other methods, which in turn leads to the question of the alternative methods that they claimed to employ. Among questionnaire respondents, many sentiments were expressed such as, “Public high schools and private high schools set the number of admitting students separately,” “Public and private high schools share information on high school entrants and changes in the junior high school graduates,” “Set the enrollment capacity only for public

schools, not for private schools,” and “We quit allocating methods from this year and focus on discussing common educational issues.” Most of these “other” methods do not determine the concrete number or quota in advance, and thus do not settle matters through negotiation.

In short, regarding the period when the number of students declined, firstly, public school spaces decreased (dramatically in some prefectures), but not those of private schools. Secondly, both public and private schools diminished in size. Thirdly, the public-private cooperation council did exist in most prefectures. Nevertheless, the function of the council might have changed from the allocation of students between public and private. This might be due to a decline in the absolute number of students; the size has decreased significantly, and by allocating based on the ratio, private schools in particular could not maintain the cost of school administration.

In the notifications by the MOE as mentioned earlier, it was requested to discuss the sharing of roles between public and private high schools in the council. However, as previously discussed, the main function of the council was student allocation. Therefore, the question of “sharing roles” was left undefined for this timeframe. Moreover, Japanese high school reforms sought to diversify their curriculum after the achievement of universal attendance (Shimahara, 1997). This led to the diversification of the educational content offered by (public) high schools.

### **Voices from the Contemporary Business World**

The following shall observe two contemporary interview scripts that were provided by two leading Japanese company leaders in food and electronics, with a central office in Tokyo<sup>6</sup>. This interview survey was executed by another project that one the author joined from 2011

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<sup>6</sup> This entire interview survey will be published in another book. One of the authors has already presented this paper and wrote a paper in Japanese (Aizawa, 2014).



to 2013. Each interview was executed in a semi-structural form and lasted for at least one hour. These parties have also held roles in economic lobbying organizations in Japan and have experience participating in government policy as members of an advisory board. As they requested anonymity, however, this paper shall refer only to Mitsudo Urano (the former president of NICHIREI) and Takashi Kawamura (the former president of HITACHI). Though they have some differences in opinion, some commonalities will be observed to understand the discourse of Japanese education. They communicated that they were confident that the Japanese education system would meet their standards.

*We would like for high levels of average school achievement to be maintained among the Japanese middle class. This is a strong point of Japan in comparison with other countries. In foreign countries, we can easily find very low-skilled people but we relatively don't have these people. The Japanese achievement gap is smaller than that in other countries. We must maintain this high average and narrow gap. (Kawamura, July 5, 2013)*

Both leaders admit this direction, particularly regarding basic education. Urano also said that we should memorize a great amount of knowledge up until junior high school (grade 9 in compulsory education, note from the author). He raised the example of memorizing a multiplication table and basic knowledge of the social and natural sciences (Urano, June 10, 2013). Generally, all respondents were satisfied with Japanese skills. In addition, they voiced some opinions for steps toward a better future. These steps were categorized into two groups: middle-class people and Japanese leaders who held the potential to become a global leader. Firstly, Urano discussed innovation among the middle class, as follows:

*I believe that ordinary people are exclusively representative of national power. The tallest point in the statistical normal distribution in ability should make an innovation. A strong country is one in which people of average ability can innovate.*

*Consequently, I always say to employees that innovation is not difficult. Although more brilliant people made an innovation in the past, they can*

*innovate from integrating their own ideas. (...) I believe that people on average can make some innovations in their lifetime. I believe that such a country is wonderful. (Urano, June 10, 2013)*

Kawamura touched on this point related to globalization, and he voiced the need for more enterprise and challenges as innovation is necessary to achieve globalization (Kawamura, July 5, 2013). Their claims are related to the Japanese examination system and school curriculum. In addition, Kawamura particularly insisted on the importance of upper-class individuals who show the potential to become a leader.

*I'm just saying, we have quite a scarce number of leading people. We have a small number of leading people who have strong ambition and a strong and sufficient persuasiveness in politics, business management, and universities. We don't have such an education for top leaders in Japan. This has damaged Japan. (Kawamura, July 5, 2013)*

According to these opinions, respondents are quite satisfied with the standard Japanese education. However, they claim that changing the method of teaching relies on the process of knowledge memorization.

### Discussion and Conclusion

As was observed in the previous section, Japanese upper secondary education has expanded and maintained a universal level through public-private partnership. Public-private partnerships led to a new cooperative policy in school education when public subsidies for private schools were introduced in the 1970s (Konyuba, 2013). The Japanese government has subsidized around 100 billion yen (equal to approximately 1 billion US dollars) to private high schools across the country. Compensating for these subsidies, Japanese private schools must be managed under the control of school education laws, and they must fulfill the same standards of school facilities, teachers' licenses, and curriculum as those of public schools, with a few exceptions. The universal upper secondary





education in Japan has been managed with diversities between local prefectures under the general national regulation.

As Kariya and Rosenbaum's research in the 1980s and the 1990s illustrated, Japanese junior high school and high school graduates were tracked by the principle of meritocracy (Kariya and Rosenbaum, 1987; Rosenbaum and Kariya, 1989). After the late 1990s, the situation of transitioning from school to work dramatically changed, and graduates could not manage according to the principle of meritocracy alone (Honda, 2005); Oguro (2014) focused on the transformation of this depopulating era. In sum, the Japanese upper secondary school system had been well-adjusted for a manufacturing society (Brown et al., 2001). Japan's highest peak in the ratio of manufacturing in GDP was around 1990. The Japanese upper secondary education system had been facilitated well to develop into a manufacturing economy, creating mass skilled labor forces until the early 1990s. This has been the institutional necessity to enable the Japanese population to achieve high levels of school accomplishments. However, this system has faced some difficulties, as Sassen's discussion revealed the case of contemporary Japan, and these issues have raised new interest in research on the transition from school to work in Japan (e.g., see Honda, 2005).

On the other hand, the Japanese education system faces yet another difficulty in the post-manufacturing society. As those in the business world reported, human resources showing leadership abilities are scarce. Further, urban elite private high schools and local elitist public high schools developed a measurement of leadership, and the MOE has assisted this wave like as Super Science High schools(SSHs) and Super Global High schools(SGHs). However, this support is completely insufficient on the point of budget and scale compared to other East Asian countries that have invented more elitist education systems.

Japanese education succeeded in the wave of industrialization, and has constructed a harmonious public-private partnership in

school education, at least in the upper secondary level. This educational system has supported Japanese development to achieve good human resources. However, Japan cannot determine what further steps to take in the pursuit of top school education in a post-industrialized global world.

The Japanese educational bureaucracy, both at the central and local level, has managed to provide opportunities from primary school to upper secondary school better than in other stages as they have established a harmonious relationship between state sectors and private sectors. However, this administrative style has limits as, first of all, it is suitable only for legitimized school systems. For example, Japanese preschool education is very stagnated as there is a long-divided tradition between kindergarten by the MOE and nursing schools by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Their interested groups are also divided and have not been able to make new public-private partnerships at this level, despite the rising importance of preschool education, as pointed out by Heckman (2011). The Japanese educational system and public-private partnership could reach success in the era of industrialization. However, we are only now beginning to address the difficulties in designing a new future following a post-manufacturing society.

### **Acknowledgement**

This work was supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, KAKENHI, grant numbers JP25780516, JP25705014, JP23530690. The authors are grateful to the Chukyo University Research Fund for financial assistance with this research.



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