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## **A comparison of the afterschool programs of Korea and Japan. From the institutional and ecological perspectives**

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## International Journal for Research on Extended Education

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# A Comparison of the Afterschool Programs of Korea and Japan: From the Institutional and Ecological Perspectives

*Sang Hoon Bae & Fuyuko Kanefuji*

**Abstract:** The present study compared Korea and Japan in terms of each country's afterschool program system. First, the historical and social backgrounds that have influenced the development of afterschool programs in the two countries were compared. Second, the current status of afterschool programs was described. Third, comparisons were made based on the kinds of policies that have been developed and implemented to promote the programs. The study also examined problems and issues that the two countries face in this regard. Finally, similarities and differences between the two afterschool program systems were suggested. It has been speculated that the two countries' afterschool systems have become similar due to their geographical proximity and ongoing social and cultural interactions. However, it is argued that differences in the social contexts of the two countries have contributed to the development of distinct characteristics for each of the afterschool programs.

**Keywords:** Afterschool programs, Comparison, Korea and Japan, Institutional theory, Ecological perspective

## Introduction

Afterschool programs are thriving in nations across the world. With the ever-growing and diversified educational needs of children and youth, to which regular classes might not be able to quickly and effectively respond, these student-oriented programs are rapidly gaining popularity. Although such programs have distinct names and conceptions of activities in different nations, such as the all day schools of Germany, the leisure-time activities of Sweden, and out of school time activities of the US, and they are now widely accepted as an increasingly important part of the educational systems in many countries (Ecarius, Klieme, Stecher & Woods 2013). In recent years, from a research perspective, the umbrella term 'extended education' has become more common as it incorporates all of these types of educational arrangements, including the afterschool programs of Korea and Japan (Bae, 2014).

With the worldwide growth and development of extended education, an increasing number of studies have been conducted that investigate this area. Some researchers have examined the effect of participation in extended education on various student outcomes, whereas others have attempted to investigate its institutional features and functions, either

within the education system or in society as a whole. Despite the growing amount of research over the past few decades, the scope of studies has generally tended to be limited to the extended education of one particular country. Unlike other fields of education research, few studies have been conducted that investigate or compare multiple factors and cases from various countries. An exception may be found in the study of private supplementary tutoring, otherwise known as. 'Shadow Education', which is growing increasingly prevalent worldwide and is now considered institutionalized (for more information see Bray, 2013; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Mori & Baker, 2010). Examples include the recent work by Zhang and Yamato (2018) that suggests the evolving aspect of shadow education in East Asian countries and the extraordinary book edited by Bray, Kwo and Jokic (2015), that addresses methodological issues in examining private supplementary tutoring among diverse cultures. Despite such efforts, few international comparative studies have been performed to investigate other areas of extended education such as afterschool programs and related public policies. Given the considerable benefits of comparative studies in the development of theories and practices, the lack of research in the field of extended education is problematic.

In this context, this study compared Korea and Japan in terms of important aspects of their afterschool programs, particularly in reference to government policies and related issues. The two countries are geographically located in East Asia and share a common Eastern culture and values, which may affect the structure and functionality of their education systems. First, the study examined the historical and social backgrounds that have influenced the development of afterschool programs in both countries. Second, the research investigated the current status of afterschool programs, including the number of programs and institutions and the types of programs and governmental supports. Third, given the strong influence of the government and its policies, comparisons were made with regard to the types of policies that have been developed and implemented to promote afterschool programs. The study also examined the problems and issues that emerge during the development and implementation of afterschool programs in each country. In doing so, special attention was paid to similarities and differences in afterschool policies and practices between the two countries. Additionally, factors that have contributed to the emergence of similarities or dissimilarities in the afterschool program systems in the two countries were discussed. Based on the study results, practical and policy implications are suggested.

## Theoretical perspectives

The main purpose of this study is twofold. First, the study aimed to compare Korea and Japan in terms of the important features of their afterschool program systems as educational institutions. Special attention was given to the government policies and related issues. In particular, the study sought to find similarities and differences of the afterschool program systems of the two countries. Based on the study results, the study discussed the causes of similarities or differences between the afterschool systems of the two countries. Second, this study explored whether seemingly prevalent afterschool programs in both countries have become or are expected to become a type of legitimate education institution that is taken for granted by students and their parents. In other words, the study examined the in-

stitutional features of afterschool programs as newly emerging educational arrangements and explored public expectations related to their primary roles, which in turn affect the extent and methods of government support. In doing so, this study employed ecological and institutional theory perspectives as its theoretical background.

From the institutional theory point of view, the study sets out to examine the general perceptions and expectations of the public and the government related to afterschool programs and their institutional roles. By doing so, the study investigated whether afterschool programs in Korea and Japan have gained institutional legitimacy as a type of important educational arrangement leading to the government's support of afterschool programs. Institutions in this study refer to a social order or pattern that has attained a certain status or property. It is widely agreed that institutions are socially constructed, routinely reproduced programs or rule systems. Institutionalization represents the process of attainment of these characteristics. This study assumes that policies and practices related to afterschool programs have been created along with the highly institutionalized contexts that may be shared by Korea and Japan.

From an ecological perspective, which suggests that the education system is closely interrelated with social, political, and economic systems, the study posits that the similarities or differences between the two afterschool systems may be related to the social, cultural, and political contexts of two countries. Special attention was given to the influence of Eastern philosophies, values, and ethics such as Confucianism<sup>1</sup>, along with the geographical proximity and the wide-ranging social and cultural interactions between Korea and Japan. In particular, by employing the concept of 'institutional isomorphism' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), the current study intended to explain why the structure and functionality of the two afterschool systems are becoming more similar. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organizations that are surrounded by a common institutional environment resemble each other as they react to the similar regulatory and normative pressures that the environment provides. They argue that institutional environments are characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy. Many scholars maintain that a major component of institutional environments could be 'Culture'. Culture refers to the means by which people select both institutionalized ends and the strategies for their pursuit (Swidler, 1986). One key source of isomorphic change assumed by this study includes a) a common Eastern culture and values that encourage the desire to learn and achieve and b) the general expectation of the public regarding the government's active involvement in their social lives. We believe that cultural frames establish the approved means and define the desired outcomes, leading bureaucrats to seek budgetary growth. Finally, we hope to broaden the horizon of the new institutionalism to the study of extended education. It is believed that the application of institutional isomorphism could provide important implications for the development of theory and social policies in the field of extended education.

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1 Confucianism, originally devised by the Chinese scholar Kung Fu in sixth century BC, is understood as a system of social philosophy and ethics. In most Asian countries, it has influenced and established social values and norms that determine individual behaviours as well as the relationships among people. The salient features in relation to this study include respect for learning, emphasis on education, and support for the role of the government in building an ideal and perfect society.

## Definition and Features of Afterschool Programs

Among researchers, many attempts have been made to create an adequate definition of ‘afterschool programs’ or ‘extended education.’ However, due to the wide range of goals, scopes of content, structures of learning and development, and type of providers, uniformly defining newly emerging educational arrangements and movements (i.e., extended education) is challenging. Besides, no matter what definition is proposed, researchers and practitioners will still have a difficult time coming to an agreement.

Nonetheless, to compare Korea and Japan on aspects and phenomena of afterschool programs, determining the elements to be compared is necessary. Thus, when the current study uses the term ‘afterschool programs,’ it refers to a set of student-centred programs and activities for learning and development that are purposefully structured and implemented based on pedagogical and developmental perspectives. These programs are not part of the regular curriculum and are typically offered after school and at locations outside of the school site. Generally, the goals are to promote the academic, social, emotional, and physical growth of children and youth and to aid in their development. Participants’ ages typically range from six to seventeen and include elementary to high school students. However, there is also an increasing number of child-care programs attended by preschool-aged children. Although these educational arrangements are known by different names across various nations, some common elements include:

- Intentionally organized learning and developmental activities
- Incorporation of teaching and learning and/or developmental processes that typically occur between adult professionals and young participants
- Implementation outside of the allotted school time, including before school, after school, and during summer/winter
- Implementation in the school context (though some programs take place at locations outside of the school site)
- Participation is typically on a voluntary basis

## Comparisons of the Afterschool Program Systems of Korea and Japan

### Historical backgrounds and social contexts

#### Korea

The origin of afterschool programs can be traced back to the well-known government report, the 5.31 Education Reform, which was proposed in 1995 by the Presidential Committee on Education Reform (PCER) (Bae & Jeon, 2013). In the report, education experts and policy makers pointed out that, at the time, the regular curriculum mandated by the national curriculum framework was largely dominated by knowledge-oriented and teacher-driven academic classes (Bae, Oh, Kim, Lee, & Oh, 2010). The regular curriculum was also argued to have provided limited space for diverse enrichment programs and hands-on experi-



ential activities. As a result, the committee agreed that conventional schooling failed to provide a student-oriented, inclusive education and needed to be reformed so it could actively reflect the educational needs and interests of students. As critical views on public schooling continued to rise, afterschool programs were officially proposed as a means of enhancing more holistic education by offering a variety of enrichment programs and cultural activities. In recent years, the afterschool program movement has been further highlighted in conjunction with the introduction of the 'exam-free semester' in middle schools, which attempts to provide more time and opportunities for students to discover their interests and talents and to explore future careers while being free from the heavy burden of school examinations.

From a public policy perspective, another important driving force for the promotion of afterschool programs is prevailing private supplementary tutoring, otherwise known as 'shadow education' (for more information see Bray, 2013), which is intimately associated with the ever-increasing competition for college admission. The nature of private tutoring is such that wealthier students are more likely to benefit from it, as they attend programs that are high-priced and taught by well-trained instructors, which are supposedly effective in helping the students raise their test scores. As a result, the Korean government has made many efforts to develop and implement policy measurements that decrease the reliance on private tutoring (Bae et al., 2010). In line with these efforts, afterschool programs in high schools have been dominated by academic programs designed to help students, particularly those who are low-income and/or low-performing, improve their academic performance and prepare for college entrance examinations. Many previous studies (Bae et al., 2010) have made claims that, albeit unsubstantiated, assert that low cost, high quality afterschool academic programs provided by school teachers could contribute to reducing achievement gaps among students of different socioeconomic statuses (SES) while also decreasing expenses for private tutoring. Meanwhile, public concerns over low birth rates and females' low rates of participation in the labour force have also influenced the growth of childcare programs, both within and outside of schools.

To summarize, afterschool programs in Korea have been developed in order to pursue a wide range of educational goals and social needs. These measures were originally introduced to provide enrichment, cultural programs, and activities for youth. With a growing emphasis on the educational accountability of schools regarding student learning outcomes, the purpose of afterschool programs has expanded to include improving the academic performance of students. From a public policy perspective, more attention has been given to students from low-income and local areas. Afterschool program goals officially suggested by the Ministry of Education (MOE) include: "a) strengthen public schools by providing diverse and creative enrichment programs and academic programs that may not be offered by regular curriculum, b) Reducing private tutoring expenses for parents by implementing high quality child care, enrichment, and academic programs across the day in response to students' interests and needs, c) Supporting education welfare by increasing financial supports for disadvantaged children and youth to participate in afterschool programs, and d) building partnership between schools and local community by implementing programs for local residents and employing local resources for students' learning" (Bae, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2009, p. 74).

## Japan

The initial afterschool programs for children in Japan were implemented at the end of World War II. The Afterschool Children's Clubs Project (AS Clubs Project), which is designed to provide care for children of working parents, is currently being expanded across the country by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW<sup>2</sup>). The main purpose of the project is to provide safety for children. As the AS Clubs project is under the jurisdiction of MHLW, it is intended to be offered only for elementary students whose parents both work full time. In other words, this project does not cover middle and high school students or students of any age who have only one parent who is working. These restrictions show that many limitations exist that hamper the ability to provide support to children and youth during the hours after school. A new strategy is needed to support children and youth.

During the 1990s in Japan, various social issues related to education became prevalent. This period saw an increase in the number of incidents caused by serious behavioural problems, such as juvenile delinquency (MEXT 1989), and violent offenses, such as robbery, blackmail, abuse of stimulant drugs, and misdemeanours. In fact, the number of cases of violent acts and bullying in schools and the number of students refusing to attend school continue to rise (MEXT 2016a).

On the other hand, the transformation of families and communities and the impact these changes are having on children and youth are considered to be some of the most serious social issues affecting young people today (Cabinet Office 2008). Along with the continued dilution of local residents' commitment to solidarity and the increase in nuclear families, the educational functions of the community and family have also been declining (NIER 2001). Such difficult conditions were explicitly mentioned in reports produced by concerned ministries and the Cabinet Office, which indicate that regional educational capabilities are diminishing due to the weakening of relationships and mutual support within local communities (Cabinet Office 2008; MEXT 2005). Additionally, the reports indicated that home-based education requires improvement (MEXT 2001).

Concurrently, the population of Japan is changing; the average age of the population is rising rapidly, mainly as a result of the country's declining birth rate (Cabinet Office 2015, 2016). Furthermore, a recent survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented the shocking result that the relative poverty rate of children in Japan now exceeds 15% (UNICEF 2016; MHLW 2015). The Japanese government must address such worrisome trends. However, the issues above are closely intertwined with other social issues that include welfare, disaster prevention, and medical treatment. Therefore, it is not easy to find a simple solution to these complicated social problems. The issues pose an even greater challenge if the application of administrative measures alone is relied upon. Alongside these issues and concerns, a growing need exists for raising happy and strong children within society as a whole. The Afterschool Plans for Children was established in order to respond to this multitude of social goals.

Consequently, an urgent need exists for schools, community residents, and parents or guardians to join forces and for society as a whole to collaborate in order to create a system

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2 In 2001, Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) was merged with the Ministry of Labor and became the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW)

that supports children's learning and growth. In an attempt to begin addressing the serious social issues mentioned above, the Basic Education Law was amended in 2006; further, Article 13 of the new Basic Education Law added the recommendation that 'collaboration and cooperation among school, families, local residents, etc.' should be pursued. Due to this amendment, education in Japan is now expected to involve cooperation between schools and families, and each citizen is given the role and responsibility of ensuring the provision of appropriate education.

## The current status

### Korea

A wide variety of afterschool programs have been offered, primarily within schools, meaning that 'school-based' afterschool programs are flourishing in Korea. However, an increasing number of programs are also provided by many other educational and social institutions such as colleges and universities, arts institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), art professionals, and local municipalities. The goals and types of programs vary by grade and school. Nonetheless, most programs fall into three categories: a) childcare programs, typically for first through third graders in elementary schools; b) enrichment and cultural programs that help students develop interests and talents in the fields of art, music, sports, dance, and science; and c) academic programs for students intended to improve academic performance and prepare them for college entrance examinations.

According to government statistics (MOE, 2016a), as of 2016, afterschool programs were adopted in almost all schools; 99.7% of all schools have implemented at least one afterschool program and 68.7% of all Korean students participate in at least one afterschool program. A total of 156,151 programs are offered either within or outside of schools. In terms of the types of programs, 52.7% are related to academic lessons and tutoring, whereas 47.3% are enrichment and cultural programs. While 73.4% of elementary programs are for students' enrichment activities, 87.1% of high school programs are subject-related academic programs.

The government has played a significant part in developing and maintaining afterschool programs in Korea. In terms of the ecology of afterschool program arrangements, the majority of the programs are supported and supervised by MOE and the Provincial Office of Education (POE). MOE establishes the annual Afterschool Program Guideline and provides the government grants for POE. With the guidelines and grants from MOE, POE directly regulates and offers financial support to the afterschool programs run by local schools. This shows that afterschool programs are generally considered to be legitimate educational arrangements. Thus, public schools will play a key role in ensuring that the programs are provided. Recently, however, the growing number of afterschool programs and activities have been provided and subsidized by other ministerial agencies. For instance, as of 2018, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) (2018) runs a total of 4,113 Community Children Centers across the nation, which offer afterschool care services, such as homework supervision and academic tutoring. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) (2018) also supports 264 Local Youth Centers in many areas and implements the

After-Class Academy for Youth program at these centres. Thus, it should be highlighted that, despite the increasing number of afterschool programs offered by private institutions, the majority of programs are supported or directly provided by public institutions, such as public schools, ministries, and governmental agencies. In this sense, the argument could be made that afterschool programs are considered one of the top priorities among public policies in Korea. Additionally, this government-driven movement is generally thought to have contributed to the sustainable development of afterschool programs while also increasing access to the programs. However, the coordination of policies and programs run by different ministries is important, and the problem of ‘resource dilution,’ which is related to persistent departmentalism among ministries, remains unsolved.

The prevalence of private tutoring is another factor that promotes the government’s need to support afterschool programs. Korean parents’ famous ‘education fever’ and the continuing competitiveness to attend prestigious universities have also led to chronic supplementary private tutoring. National statistics (MOE, 2018) show that as of 2017, about 70.5% of Korean students attended private institutions (i.e., cram schools) and spent an average of 6.1 hours per week in private tutoring. Because low-income students cannot afford expensive private tutoring, providing less expensive but high-quality academic programs after school has been an important government agenda item. In this context, it can be argued that the regular curriculum, afterschool programs, and supplementary private tutoring comprise the three main pillars of the Korean education system. Moreover, researchers (Bae & Jeon, 2013) insist that afterschool programs and private tutoring are becoming institutionalized while also competing for students.

## Japan

The General After-School Children Plan is a current national project aimed at providing afterschool programs for children. This project was originally proposed in May 2006 by the Minister of State for Measure for Declining Birthrate set forth by the Cabinet Office. Through the agreement, the After-School Classes for Children Project (AS Classes Project), supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the AS Clubs Project, supported by MHLW, were both integrated into the plan. However, substantial collaboration between the MEXT project and the MHLW project, in terms of its contributions to users, has not been sufficiently implemented. AS Clubs primarily aim to provide children with food and safe places where they can stay and play until their parents come to pick them up. It is a program for which parents pay depending on their income level. AS Clubs are run either by full- or part-time staff who generally have some education-related qualifications, such as elementary school and nursery teachers. Conversely, the AS Classes are gratuitous programs. All children and youth can attend the programs regardless of parents’ employment status. The programs provide children with safe and secure places as well as various opportunities for learning, cultural activities, and sports. The programs related to AS Classes are implemented by volunteers, such as college students and local residents, who are given small rewards for their assistance.

The General After-School Children Plan has three aims: a) promotion of the thorough use of school premises; b) integrated implementation of the AS Clubs Project and the AS Classes Project; and c) collaborative implementation of the AS Clubs Project and the AS

Classes Project in facilities other than schools. The government has three specific, relevant goals for the end of the 2019 financial year: a) provision of new spaces for 300,000 children in AS Clubs Project programs; b) integrated or collaborative implementation of the AS Clubs Project and AS Classes Project in all elementary school districts, with a target of achieving integrated delivery in 10,000 districts; and c) implementation of approximately 80% of newly established AS Clubs Project programs on elementary school premises.

At present, the first goal is expected to be accomplished by the 2019 fiscal year. However, it is uncertain when the second and third goals will be achieved. The integrated or collaborative implementation of two projects has currently only taken place in approximately 600 elementary school districts. The implementation rate of AS Clubs in elementary school premises is only 50%.

According to 2017 statistics, the number of programs affiliated with the AS Clubs Project was 23,619, and the number of municipalities implementing this project was 1,586. This means that 91.1% of all municipalities in Japan were implementing the AS Clubs Project. In the 2016 fiscal year, the number of municipalities in the country involved in the AS Classes Project was 1,097, and the number of AS classes was 16,027; this means that the average implementation rate in municipalities nationwide was approximately 63%. Additionally, the level of government subsidy was approximately 6.5 billion yen (approximately USD 72 million). The implementation rate has clearly increased significantly; however, the percentage has not yet risen enough, despite operating for approximately 10 years under the MEXT policy.

When the budget's scale for the two projects is compared with the number of days that they operate, it becomes clear that the budget and implementation level of the AS Classes Project are more limited than those of the AS Clubs Project. In broad terms, the scale of the AS Classes Project budget is approximately one-seventh that of the AS Clubs Project (approximately USD 530 million). In terms of the average number of days of operation per year, the AS Classes Project (111 days on average) operates for fewer than half the number of days the AS Clubs Project is in operation (at least 250 days or more). The government regulation requires that AS Clubs must be implemented for more than 250 days per year. However, AS Classes have no regulations related to the number of days they are provided.

## Policy emphasis and issues

### Korea

#### Redefining values of afterschool programs

Afterschool programs were originally introduced in 1995 as a vehicle for reforming public education and promoting student-centred education (Bae et al., 2010). The emphasis was on students' needs and interests, which had not received due attention under traditional, teacher-driven schooling. Today, afterschool programs are utilized as a means of solving social problems, such as low birth rates and females' low rates of participation in the labour force. Childcare programs are becoming increasingly more and more important for addressing

such problems and have drawn keen interest from policymakers. Additionally, this point of view reflects the idea that the regular school curriculum may not be effective in addressing the rising social issues with timeliness.

Recently, however, educators and researchers have learned that afterschool programs are becoming legitimate educational arrangements and should have their own values. In this context, afterschool programs are becoming widely accepted, not as mere 'extra-curricular activities' but as significant 'co-curricular activities' that have a considerable impact on students' growth and development. Educators have come to believe that, in some respects, carefully designed afterschool programs have competitive advantages over regular, formal schooling. For example, schools have recently been encouraged to offer afterschool programs and activities that promote 'socio-emotional skills' and 'problem-solving skills' for students, which regular, subject-oriented classes are likely to overlook (MOE, 2016b).

The first issue here is determining the best means of empirically measuring the outcomes of afterschool participation. To do so, the development of validated measurements is necessary. Establishing a longitudinal database is recommended to examine the relationships between afterschool participation and a wide range of educational outcomes. The second issue might be related to the role of afterschool programs in relation to the regular curriculum of the school. From an ecological perspective, the two education systems are interdependent within the whole education system. In this context, the two systems should be in a mutually beneficial relationship rather than one that is antagonistic.

### Quality improvement movement

One major characteristic of Korea's afterschool system is its considerable support from the government. A typical way the government has been determining the success of afterschool policies is by assessing quantitative and inputs-related indicators, such as the number of programs, the afterschool budget, and participation rates. However, policy emphasis has gradually changed from growth in quantity to improvement in quality of the programs. For instance, the Plan for Afterschool Development, which was proposed by MOE in 2016, (MOE, 2016b) declared that the key policy agenda in this capacity is providing quality afterschool programs tailored to students' needs. The plan recommends a variety of ways to enhance the quality of afterschool programs. Among the many approaches included are the following: a) an 'education demand survey' needs to be conducted before establishing the yearly afterschool implementation plan for each school; b) the programs should be developed so that they can deal with the emerging needs and interests of students; c) a range of financial support is imperative for helping schools provide 'small-sized' arts programs, to which students may not have sufficient access during regular classes; d) satisfaction of students and parents regarding the quality of the programs should be assessed and made known to the public; e) more opportunities and support for the professional development of lecturers need to be offered, and on line learning courses are recommended; and f) the roles of the School Council<sup>3</sup> should be strengthened by selecting and approving the programs to be implemented in each school (MOE, 2016b).

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3 In Korea, each school has its own School Council, which is constituted by representatives of teachers, parents, and local residents and has the authority to review overall aspects of school management, including

The issue is the extent to which the market-oriented system, which centres on the mechanism of ‘competition and choice,’ is allowed to be included in the field of afterschool programs. Some experts argue that the inclusion of market systems would lead to high quality but low costs in any area, even in public education (Chubb & Moe, 1990). However, as shown in many previous studies, although market-based approaches appear to be effective in holding schools accountable for student outcomes, they have been assessed as inappropriate for fixing fundamental problems of the public education system (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Therefore, future research conducted within the context of Korea’s afterschool programs is necessary to determine contributing factors that enhance the quality of afterschool programs. Finally, a high number of afterschool instructors are not teachers who graduated from a teacher’s college with a teaching license and, as a result, many parents are suspicious of the quality and capacity of afterschool instructors. As in other countries (Schüpbach, 2016), the professionalization of afterschool professionals is becoming more important.

### Cooperation between schools and local communities

A widely held notion exists that schools are specially secured and sacred places for children and education. This traditional belief, albeit unsubstantiated, has kept schools from interacting with institutions and people outside the schools that are considered harmful and dangerous. Regarding the school–community relationship, schools maintain the institutions passively, receiving resources from the local community. In fact, the community school movement took place in the 1950s, which emphasized and promoted public schools’ function of educating local residents, solved community problems, and improved the quality of life in the area. However, this idea, arguably considered the root of the current afterschool movement, waned rapidly before it became fully established.

With increasing governmental support promoting school–community cooperation, a growing number of schools have begun opening their doors to the outside world and now operate education programs with NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), professional groups, and, in many cases, municipalities. One example of this is the village-based/area-based afterschool program, which has recently gained popularity. In this village-based afterschool model, the school’s roles change, actively transforming the areas in which the schools belong. In other words, afterschool programs function as a vehicle not only for bridging the school and the community but also for revitalizing local areas. Schools that actively participate in the community cooperation are, in turn, becoming more open-minded and tend to extend their institutional function to become the educational and social centres of the area. It is believed that these efforts will eventually contribute to rebuilding the trust of the general public in public schools. This trend is summarized below. Afterschool providers include a variety of institutions. The most noticeable organizations are local universities and colleges. Afterschool programs are implemented not only in the schools but also in other contexts. In addition to school teachers, a diverse population of educational professionals have been becoming involved in afterschool programs, including university stu-

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making decisions related to yearly school budgets, establishing rules and regulations, implementing afterschool programs, among other aspects of school administration.

dents, local residents, and arts experts in the community. The issue lies in how to promote and maintain cooperation between two groups of people: school-affiliated staff and community-based education activists and professionals. The first group has had many experiences in a traditional, formal education setting (public school) that has long been established and institutionalized, whereas the second group has largely acted in relatively *laissez-faire* environments where the romantic perspective on education prevails. Considering the contrasting historical and cultural backgrounds of the two groups, significant effort should be made to help these two groups work together. One example of this cooperation is the establishment of the Regional Afterschool Support Center, the function of which is almost identical to that of the Community Cooperation Network for Learning and Education (CCNLE) in Japan, which will be explained in greater detail later.

*Table 1.* Transition of Afterschool Program Systems in Korea

Category	From	To
Provider	Only school	School, universities and colleges, non-profit organizations
Instructor	School teachers	Experts, university students, local residents, instructors
Clients	Students in school	Students of neighbouring schools and local residents
Place	School site	School site, local facilities (gyms, art galleries, museums, etc.)

## Afterschool programs and education welfare

Governmental involvement in afterschool programs has been justified by public perception related to the role of afterschool programs in promoting the equality of education and strengthening education welfare to reduce social and economic inequalities. During the past two decades, afterschool classes in Korea have been identified as a remedy for reducing academic gaps across social classes and regions. More specifically, these programs have been expected to offer a wide range of learning and development opportunities, particularly to students from socio-economically disadvantaged families and/or underdeveloped areas, who otherwise might have limited access to quality education. In recent years, the function of afterschool programs has extended to include helping multicultural students learn the Korean language and become assimilated into Korean culture.

Low-income students are provided with vouchers that are used to attend afterschool programs and buy the associated books and learning materials. Financial assistance is also given to schools in disadvantaged regions, such as agricultural areas and regions where low-income and multicultural students are overrepresented. Additionally, cooperation is encouraged among neighbouring schools, which have limited capabilities to offer a wide range of programs on their own. Finally, Smart afterschool, which uses information and communications technology (ICT), is currently being considered for use in schools in local areas (MOE, 2016b).

The quality of the programs that disadvantaged students may experience is the issue here. Since they are typically low-priced and taught by instructors who do not have legitimate teaching certificates, people tend to doubt the quality of these programs. From a cul-



tural capital theory perspective, experiencing diverse cultural activities is significant in determining many aspects of students' development. To provide cultural programs, however, ample resources, including quality instructors and materials, are required. Local schools and communities consistently face problems when recruiting cultural resources for use by students.

## Japan

### Cooperation between schools, families, and communities

Japan's educational policy on afterschool program systems is advancing, along with educational reforms that involve diverse and comprehensive content. The advancement of education, aided by cooperation between schools, families, and communities, is considered one of the most important matters in current educational reform. Therefore, in the following section, we will focus on relevant policies concerning cooperation and collaboration between schools, families, and communities.

The plan for creating the Next Generation Schools and Communities was designed based on three reports commissioned by the Central Education Council in December of 2015 (The Central Educational Council 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). This is a new plan and is being carried out in parallel with the aforementioned The General After-School Children Plan. The plan aims to promote education by encouraging cooperation between schools, families, and communities, both in regular classes and in extended education. These three reports correspond to the three pillars of the new educational policy. The educational policy based on this plan is set to be implemented over five years, beginning in the 2016 financial year and extending until the 2020 financial year. This policy consists of three pillars: a) reform school organization management; b) improve quality through teacher training, recruitment, and on-the-job-training; and c) promote cooperation and collaboration between schools and communities. This educational reform is greatly expected to have a strong impact on school education in its entirety and will create a major shift in education methods in Japan. As part of the plan, the following projects have already been initiated (MEXT 2016 b).

### Nationwide establishment of community schools

Community schools are schools that have adopted the School Management Council system. Council members are local residents and parents/guardians. Specifically, the duties of the council include: a) approving basic principles of school management; b) giving opinions on school management; c) giving opinions on teacher appointments; and d) promoting collaboration/cooperation between schools and communities.

### Community cooperation network for learning and education (CCNLE) and Securing human resources

A voluntary system exists for building 'flexible networks' that involve community residents, parents, and organizations. The government aims to establish this system in all elementary and junior high school districts. The CCNLE is a renewal mechanism for the

School-Support Regional Headquarters (SSRH) which was introduced in 2007 as one part of the projects comprising the After-School Child Plan. Collaborations and cooperation between schools and communities that have been fostered by the CCNLE are understood to be more interactive than those created through the SSRH.

A community coordinator is a person in charge of liaising for the community. He or she coordinates school support and extracurricular activities, secures volunteers, and is affiliated with the CCNLE. Community liaison school staff members represent a general window into schools. In many cases, the staff members are in charge of certain teachers and perform roles such as allocating teacher duties. The staff assist with coordinating the management and operations activities undertaken by school management councils. They also assist with the planning and coordination of regional collaboration related to school support provided by local residents.

However, problems lie in securing human resources, such as coordinators, staff development programs, and training. Staff members, such as coordinators, are elected from among the local talent. Thus, the sustainability of securing human resources is a major issue. The difficulty of securing personnel, such as coordinators and educational-activity promoters, was the most frequently noted reason (63.3%) raised by municipalities as to why they have chosen not to implement the AS Classes Project (MEXT 2017b).

Looking ahead, in order to improve the quality and volume of afterschool support provided on school premises, excellent personnel must be secured to direct the activities. It goes without saying that all members of the staff should be offered multiple opportunities for training in order to improve their specialist knowledge and skills related to the management of afterschool activities. Further, consideration of the practicalities of collaboration and cooperation between employees, both full- and part-time, and volunteers is also assuredly an important issue when planning the personnel structure of the staff.

## Revisions of laws on education and budget allocation

Legal revisions are being made to the School Education Act, Act on the Organization and Operation of Local Educational Administration, Social Education Act, and Education Personnel Certification Act, among others. All of these legal amendments aim to build a new education system by strengthening the cooperation between schools, families, and communities. It is noteworthy that such efforts are being presented as attempts to revitalize communities themselves, as well as to foster the next generation.

Sufficient funding is another issue that must be resolved. For example, if those functioning afterschool programs are to hire paid staff to conduct activities, and if a variety of high-quality programs that work to challenge the schoolchildren are to be implemented, appropriate funding must be secured. The government or local public authorities must share the cost of implementing these programs. A survey conducted by MEXT in 2007 shows that challenges related to budget are the primary reasons that certain municipalities have not implemented the AS Classes Project and AS Clubs Project.

## Lack of places for afterschool programs

Turning to physical issues, a need exists for facilities that can be used more flexibly than school facilities as well as regulations regarding their use. Currently, some afterschool programs that are conducted on school premises only have access to a limited number of classrooms or to the sports grounds or gymnasium. Furthermore, many programs within the AS Clubs Project conduct their activities in a confined space, some of which take place in schools and some of which do not. Another related issue is that regional disparities exist concerning the implementation rate of the AS Classes Project by prefecture.

## Quality of afterschool programs

A point of importance lies in the fact that the AS Classes Project provides the opportunity to host high-quality experiential activities, learning, and interactions that are meaningful for schoolchildren by a) respecting the wishes of parents and schoolchildren; and b) encouraging participation from the planning stage. The reason is that high-quality afterschool programs are considered to represent an effective strategy for alleviating various disparities between pupils, such as their finances, education, and experience. Offering different learning opportunities to schoolchildren who are unable to enjoy a wide variety of activities after school or during long holidays due to their parents' income transcends the simple function of providing care during afterschool hours. Thus, further progress should be made in creating an environment and establishing systems that will allow all children who are interested to gain learning opportunities that are provided on school premises before and after school and during long holidays.

## Commonalities and Differences

### Commonalities

Considering the geographical adjacency, the wide-ranging influence of Eastern values and ethics in both cultures, and the long tradition of interactions in various sectors between the two countries, the expectation that many similarities and consistencies can be found in the afterschool systems of both countries is reasonable. The many distinguishable commonalities are as follows.

First, in both Korea and Japan, afterschool programs are considered to be an effective means of dealing with social problems that conventional regular classes may not be capable of addressing in a timely manner. Although participation in programs after school is on a voluntary basis and the market-oriented 'competition and choice' rule has been applied to afterschool program systems, such programs are still thought to exist in public policy territory, which justifies government interventions. For instance, declining birth rates, one of the biggest challenges both countries are facing, have contributed to the ongoing expansion of afterschool childcare services. The same holds true for afterschool classes for local residents, which aim to solve problems such as the declining population and weakening relationships within the communities. These classes also attempt to respond to the lifelong learning needs of the Learning Society.

Second, another important similarity is the active involvement of the government in afterschool program implementation. National plans or guidelines for afterschool classes with which schools and related institutions align have been established in the two countries. Budgetary assistance is another preferred means of supporting afterschool programs, particularly for disadvantaged students and regions. Legal basis has been emphasized as a foundation enabling government intervention to promote afterschool programs in both countries.

Third, public schools in Korea and Japan remain the main locations in which afterschool programs are developed and provided. Korean and Japanese parents and students maintain the long-held belief that school buildings and cites are the best and safest places for educational programs and care services. School teachers are collectively expected and encouraged to become involved in afterschool programs. However, too much reliance on schools as places for afterschool programs has also generated problems. Specifically, the burden of schools and teachers continues to be aggravated. Additionally, a lack of space in the schools is becoming a concern for people who want to use school buildings for afterschool programs and care. Meanwhile, the increasing participation of the private sector in this area, not only in Korea but also in Japan, is notable. Namely, the afterschool market is growing. This, in turn, leads to issues related to quality assurance and the professionalization of afterschool professionals. Additionally, cooperation between regular staff, mostly teachers, and afterschool professionals is essential in improving the quality of afterschool programs. Determining the best means of striking a balance between traditional schools and new, increasingly influential afterschool vendors in this field will be an important issue.

Lastly, the most salient feature of the current afterschool systems in both countries may be the cooperative movement between local schools and communities. In both countries, a wide range of support for bridging schools and communities is currently being facilitated by the nations' governments. Examples include the establishment of offices that support cooperation, the appointment of liaison staff members, and the implementation of budget support from municipalities. These policies will continue for the time being.

## Differences

Although Korea and Japan have a great deal in common in terms of afterschool program systems, some differences also exist when it comes to the origins, officially announced goals, and the means of promoting cooperation between schools and communities. From an ecological perspective, these differences are related to the social, cultural, and political backgrounds of the two countries.

In terms of origin, Korea's afterschool system places more emphasis on its role of reforming public schools that are allegedly subject-oriented and less responsive to students' needs. In this sense, the diversity and flexibility of the programs have continually been emphasized in conjunction with the concept of student choice. Accordingly, afterschool programs in Korea are understood as a means of correcting deficiencies in public schooling (Bae et al., 2010). Furthermore, Korean education professionals and policy makers began to emphasize the unique and educational values of afterschool programs as legitimate educational institutions. Compared to the Korean system, Japanese afterschool programs are expected to play a role in solving problems that the Japanese society faces. The programs

were mainly introduced to address problems such as securing the safety of children after school and the prevention of juvenile behaviours in children and youth. Recently, afterschool programs have been employed as a vehicle for promoting cooperation and collaboration among schools, families, and communities, while also solving the problems of local Japanese communities (Kanefuji, 2017).

While offering more educational opportunities to underprivileged students through the implementation of afterschool programs, the Korean government highlights the goal of reducing the achievement gap among different socio-economic groups, thereby enhancing the equality of education. One example of this is the afterschool vouchers that are provided to low-income students who want to attend afterschool programs. In the Japanese afterschool system, however, less attention is given to the role of enhancing educational equality. This difference may be explained by differing social contexts in terms of the degree of social inequality. According to the Gini's indicator, a widely used measure of national income inequality generated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Income Distribution Database 2017, Japanese society is more equal compared to Korean society. Korean people are also thought to be particularly sensitive to issues of equality, especially with regard to education. Arguably, these distinct social contexts may lead to different emphases on the roles of afterschool systems in the two countries.

Koreans have maintained that prevailing private tutoring is weakening the public education system and will hinder educational equality. This, in turn, led to the government's engagement with afterschool programs at the national level. Among Korean educators and policymakers, the belief is widely held that inexpensive but quality afterschool programs can act as a substitute for expensive private tutoring that only wealthy students can afford (Bae et al., 2010; Bae & Jeon, 2013). With Japanese afterschool programs, however, afterschool communities do not often directly mention the goals of afterschool programs in relation to the reduction of private tutoring. Many explanations for this difference are possible, including the distinct political systems of the two countries. That is, the Japanese parliamentary system, as compared to Korea's presidential system, could be more vulnerable and sensitive to political pressure from interest groups. One cannot deny that for-profit private tutoring institutions and vendors increasingly continue to form strong interest groups and may have some influence on policymakers. In this sense, afterschool programs certainly evolve while interacting with other social systems.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, as social institutions in both countries, afterschool programs play significant roles in promoting the school–community relationship. The approaches employed, however, are somewhat different between the two countries. In the case of Korea, it seems that a decentralized, bottom-up approach is pursued when linking schools to communities, leading to collaborations among local players, including schools, municipalities, local NGOs, and education professionals. In contrast, the Japanese government has made many efforts to establish viable and thoroughly-considered systems at the national level that directly support cooperation and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Additionally, unlike the Korean government, the Japanese government officially announced 'families' as a partner in building local education communities. One reason is related to the Japanese people's experiences during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The experience of the enormous natural disaster demonstrated to the public

that social problems cannot be solved solely through administrative power and may be effectively resolved through consistent cooperation with local communities.

## Discussion

Findings of this comparative study provide important theoretical and practical implications for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners. First, in reviewing what has happened in the area of afterschool programs in both countries over the past few decades, the study found that afterschool programs are becoming an increasingly important component of public education systems. This is evinced by the fact that afterschool programs have grown steadily in terms of programs, participants, lecturers, and providers and have maintained their institutional roles and popularity in both Korea and Japan. Based on the East Asian culture and values that give a special attention and meaning to the actions of the government, the public authority, continued government intervention and support for afterschool programs reveal that the public's focus on these programs has special significance. In addition to legitimacy as an important aspect of the public education systems, the alleged institutional usefulness of afterschool programs in responding to emerging social needs and educational demands has paved the way for 'institutionalization' of these programs in both cultures. Increasing government involvement and ongoing public support for these programs in the two countries implies the phenomenon of 'path dependence,' which in turn demonstrates the institutionalized aspect of afterschool programs. As found in the case of shadow education (Bray, 2009), becoming institutionalized is significant for policy makers and practitioners; as a legitimate education system, afterschool programs will be more likely to succeed in avoiding institutional turbulence and maintain the success and survival of the systems.

Second, this study found that Korea and Japan share considerable similarities in their afterschool programs, as explained earlier. The question remains as to why Korea and Japan have such noticeably similar features. The first possible explanation might be the geographical proximity and the wide range of social and cultural interactions between Korea and Japan which may have paved the way for the two sides to learn education systems and practices from each other. Second, from the institutional theory perspective, this study employs the concept of 'institutional isomorphism' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to explain the reasons the two afterschool systems are becoming more similar. According to the theory of institutional isomorphism, organizations in the same environment resemble each other when they react to the common regulatory and normative pressures provided by the environment. In other words, institutional environments either implicitly or explicitly provide normative rules and regulations to which each individual organization must conform if they are to obtain support and legitimacy. In this context, one major component of institutional environments that influences afterschool program systems is the culture and its values, for instance, that which is emphasised by Confucianism. As Swidler (1986) explains, culture functions as the means by which people select both institutionalized ends and the strategies for their pursuit. In this study, the Eastern culture and values play a significant role as a common environment which values education, even after school, and considers schools to be im-

portant places for learning and development (For more information, see Shin, 2014). Another institutional environment is the government system that leads to isomorphic change in afterschool policies in the two countries. As is already known, Korea and Japan have developed centralized government systems. Accordingly, people in both countries may have positive expectations about the active role of the government, particularly in the field of education and afterschool programs are situated in this context.

Meanwhile, institutional theorists (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) suggest three distinctive mechanisms which lead to institutional isomorphic change: a) 'coercive isomorphism,' which comes from political influence and/or the government mandate, b) 'mimetic isomorphism,' which stems from standard responses to uncertainty, and c) 'normative isomorphism,' which is usually related to professionalization. In the case of afterschool programs in Korea and Japan, both the concepts of mimetic and normative isomorphism are effective in explaining why the two afterschool systems have become similar. In relation to mimetic isomorphism, it may be argued that Korea and Japan tend to copy forms and structures employed by the other under conditions of uncertainty. In the case of normative isomorphism, the roles of researchers and professional networks who produced theoretical and conceptual base of afterschool programs are of great importance. Considerable similarities may be explained from an ecological perspective. The ecological viewpoint insists that the education system is closely interrelated with social, political, and economic systems. Given the similar social situations and contexts of the two countries, for example, the low birth rate, the increasing rates of nuclear families, the decreasing rates of population in local areas, and diversifying educational needs, it seems natural that the evolutionary trajectories of the two countries' afterschool programs would have similar characteristics.

Finally, it is important to note that differences are also found between the two systems. This reflects the idea that afterschool systems have become intertwined with their respective social contexts. The findings of this study recommend that comparisons of afterschool programs be extended across regions, for example, by conducting comparisons of afterschool programs between Asian and European countries.

## Conclusion

Both Korea and Japan have achieved considerably high rankings in international comparative academic ability tests such as PISA and TIMSS. The school education in both countries has been quite successful in terms of establishing the academic achievement of students. However, in both countries, the emotional and social development aspects, such as interest, motivation and self-esteem of children and youth are relatively lower than those of western countries. The school-based afterschool programs are considered to be one effective methods of fostering the emotional and social development of students that cannot be achieved by reforming or improving formal education alone.

Comparative studies on school-based afterschool programs and the relevant policies between Korea and Japan have seldom been carried out until now. That is, this research is the first study of its kind. Analysis of the current conditions and issues on afterschool programs between the two countries, and the elucidation of commonalities and differences

themselves would contribute to the addition of new knowledge to the study of extended education.

The origin of science lies in the classification of the patterns of various phenomenon. This research clarifies the commonalities and differences between the two countries. This is a fundamental study that will contribute to establishing a typology of afterschool programs and policies which can also be utilized in multilateral comparisons in the future. This research will serve as a foundation for the further development of future comparative research. Future studies comparing Korea and Japan that are based on this research will contribute to the validation of practices and the resolution of problems.

Finally, this research intended to apply the institutional and ecological perspectives to explain the reasons Korea and Japan share commonalities and differences in their afterschool programs. Future studies may extend this approach to examine extended education worldwide, which is increasingly developing into a global culture of education.

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