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Bukatsudô reform: extracurricular club activities in Japanese schools.

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***Bukatsudô* reform: extracurricular club activities in Japanese schools.**

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Abstract:

This paper examines government policies to reform *bukatsudô* (extracurricular activities) since 2010 when the new teachers' manual for student guidance was issued. It considers the assumed pedagogical significance of *bukatsudô*, concerns regarding excessive corporal punishment and the impact of *bukatsudô* on increasing teachers' working hours, and also explores strategies for developing management structures to ensure the long-term sustainability of *bukatsudô*. I argue that MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) has reformed *bukatsudô* in response to changing social conditions, namely, two cases of corporal punishment in 2013 (the Sakuranomiya High School Incident and the female judo practitioners' incident), the problem of teachers' long working hours, and the need for sustainable *bukatsudô* management systems in schools promoted by MEXT. The government's *bukatsudô* reform, mainly aimed to change the *bukatsudô* management system by requiring schools to manage *bukatsudô* in line with 'The national guidelines for supervision of extracurricular sports club activities'. But there are concerns that this may diminish the capacity of *bukatsudô* to develop students' interpersonal relationships (both vertical and horizontal). *Bukatsudô* have provided all students with the opportunity to engage in sporting and cultural activities, regardless of their place of residence and family resources, and played a vital role in their human development. The challenge facing schools is the creation of a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudô* based on the promotion of a sustainable *bukatsudô* management system and a recognition of the educational significance of *bukatsudô*.

Key Words: *bukatsudô*, corporal punishment, long working hours of teachers, sustainable management structure

Introduction

Bukatsudô [extracurricular club activities] have played a significant role in the development of students (Blackwood, 2016; Kawaguchi, 2020). Many decades ago, their benefit was seen in terms of guiding students who were often in trouble. Over time their function has changed as new issues have arisen within society. With the increase in technology use amongst adolescents, *bukatsudô* now provide students with opportunities to develop better interpersonal skills. The importance of *bukatsudô* has persisted; however, the societal issues that they address have changed over time. Thus, government policies have also adjusted to the continuous changes within society.

This paper examines national government policy initiatives to change *bukatsudô* in junior high and high schools since 2010, as seen in MEXT's "The Teacher's Manual for Student Guidance (*Seito Shidô Teiyô*, 2010)". Building on studies about the pre-2010 situation (e.g., Rohlen, 1983; Le Tendre, 1994; Cave, 2004), I will discuss these changes with reference to current debates (e.g., Nishijima, 2007; Kamiya, 2009; Nakazawa, 2014; Okano, 2021). First, this paper provides an overview of the reform of *bukatsudô* by MEXT, especially after the suicide of an Osaka city high school student in December 2012 (The Sakuranomiya High School Incident) because of corporal punishment by a teacher supervising *bukatsudô*. Next, this paper looks at the reform of *bukatsudô* carried out by MEXT as part of improvements of teachers' long working hours, which came to be viewed as a problem after the publication of the OECD's June 2014 survey (OECD 2014; National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2014). Finally, this paper outlines the government reforms aimed at constructing sustainable *bukatsudô* systems in schools. This study is significant in that it illuminates current government policy regarding *bukatsudô* and the problems inherent in the government's *bukatsudô* reform. In so doing, it contributes to discussions of how schools should manage *bukatsudô* and how *bukatsudô* should develop students' social competence.

I argue that MEXT has reformed *bukatsudô* in response to changing social conditions: (1) the two corporal punishment cases mentioned above, (2) the highlighting of the problem of teachers' long working hours by the media and the Teacher's Union in 2014, and (3) MEXT's own realization of the need to promote sustainable *bukatsudô* management systems in schools. MEXT has driven the *bukatsudô* reforms, which mainly aimed to change the *bukatsudô* management system. Schools came to manage *bukatsudô* in line with 'The guidelines for supervision of extracurricular sports club activities'. This change risks diminishing *bukatsudô*'s capacity to develop interpersonal relationships (both vertical and horizontal). After discussing these matters, I consider what the government's announcement regarding proposals related to creating sustainable *bukatsudô* since the publication of "Chûgakkô gakushû shidô yôryô" [The junior high school course of study] in March 2017. To this end, I provide a perspective on future *bukatsudô* reform. *Bukatsudô* is an essential element of Japanese education. Schools must

create a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudô* by paying attention to promoting the development of a sound *bukatsudô* management system and to the educational significance of *bukatsudô*.

Corporal punishment

In January 2013, two corporal punishment cases made the headlines of Japanese newspapers. The first case concerns the suicide of a high school student, who was a *bukatsudô* captain (The Sakuranomiya High School Incident). Reports indicate that a teacher supervising an extra-curricular activity used a degree of force against the student that had a severe impact on his physical and emotional wellbeing (Osaka shi kyôiku iinkai, 2014). The second case happened shortly after the Sakuranomiya High School Incident, when fifteen female judo athletes, including the London Olympic team players, submitted a document of complaint against their coaches to the Japanese Olympic Committee (Female Judo Incident). Their accusations detailed the violence and harassment of athletes by coaches (Yomiuri-Shinbun, 2013a). Both these incidents were instrumental in bringing about the *bukatsudô* reforms of the 2010's.

The government responded with a series of proposals and by banning corporal punishment in schools. MEXT issued '*Taibatsukinshi no tettei oyobi taibatsu ni kakaru jittaihaaku ni tsuite* [Prohibition of the use of corporal punishment and a survey of the use of corporal punishment]' in January 2013 (MEXT, 2013a). MEXT stated that the School Education Law prohibits corporal punishment, and that *bukatsudô* supervisors must not adopt a 'win at all costs' mentality which is used to justify corporal punishment as part of a strict education. Then, MEXT conducted surveys to establish the incidence of the corporal punishment of students. *Kyôiku Saisei Jikkô Kaigi* [Education Rebuilding Implementation Council], a private advisory body to The Second Abe Cabinet, announced '*Ijime no mondai nado eno taiô ni tsuite (Dai ichi ji Teigen)* [Approach to the problem of bullying (The First Proposal)]' in February 2013. This proposal clarified that any use of corporal punishment against students was prohibited. It also mentioned that schools must establish *bukatsudô* guidelines in order to motivate and promote the growth of students. MEXT issued '*Taibatsu no kinshi oyobi jidouseito rikai ni motozuku shidô no tettei ni tsuite* [On the enforcement of the prohibition of the use of corporal punishment and the supervision of students based on understanding their situations]' in March 2013 (MEXT, 2013b). MEXT declared that the law prohibits teachers from using corporal punishment, and that they must consider the student's physical and emotional wellbeing. With this provision in place, students are more likely to form better interpersonal relationships. MEXT created '*Undô bukatsudô deno shidô no gaidorain*' [Guidelines for supervision of extracurricular sports club activities] based on the first proposal which was made by *Kyôiku Saisei Jikkô Kaigi* in May 2013 (MEXT, 2013c). This guideline stressed the importance and responsibilities of teachers. Teachers who supervise *bukatsudô* have to abide by the policies aimed at eliminating any use of corporal punishment in these groups. The government announced these notifications and proposals to ensure the prohibition of corporal punishment. Moreover, MEXT asked schools to create *bukatsudô* guidelines. The government promotes these reforms to strengthen the management of *bukatsudô* in schools.

During this period, when the Board of Education began creating *bukatsudô* guidelines to help teachers improve their leadership skills in *bukatsudô*, I was a supervisor of school education in a Japanese city. Several cities conducted seminars for teachers around Japan. Schools had to create space for more democratic sports practices without threatening the positive social and physical education that occurs within *bukatsudô* (McDonald & Kawai, 2016).

Two factors had a significant impact on *bukatsudô* reform in the first half of the 2010s. The first was the Second Abe Cabinet, which was inaugurated in December 2012, and listed educational and economic regeneration as priority issues. The ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party, set up *Kyôiku Saisei Jikkô Honbu* [the Headquarters of Education Rebuilding Implementation] to consider education policies. Then, the cabinet established *Kyôiku Saisei Jikkô Kaigi* to promote education reform based on the proposals outlined by *Kyôiku Saisei Jikkô Honbu*. This was the context in which the Abe Cabinet proceeded with education reform (Arai, 2014). The second factor was that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) would be selecting the 2020 Olympics host city in September 2013. Shimomura Hakubun, the minister of MEXT, announced the government initiative '*Supôtsu shidô ni okeru bôryoku konzetsu ni mukete*' [Towards the eradication of violence in sports instruction] in February 2013 when the Female Judo Incident occurred (MEXT, 2013d). After making the announcement, the minister explained that its aims were to make clear, at home and abroad, that the government had wiped out violence in sports and got rid of the harmful effects of this on the Olympic bid (Yomiuri-Shinbun, 2013b). The government had to deal with the corporal punishment incidents in order to succeed in its bid for the Olympics.

This section has illustrated how corporal punishment triggered the *bukatsudô* reform and has also described the background to these reforms. The widespread discussion of corporal punishment in Japan gave the government a convenient reason to advocate major educational reforms (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). In the first half of the 2010s, two political events, the inauguration of the Second Abe Cabinet in December 2012 and the bid to host the 2020 Olympics, had a significant impact on the reform.

Long working hours of teachers

The media began talking about teachers' long working hours as a social problem. A 2013 study revealed that junior high school teachers in Japan worked an average of weekly 53.9 hours a week, longer than other surveyed countries (Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), 2013). For other surveyed countries, the supervision hours for extracurricular activities were 2.1 hours a week (Yomiuri-Shinbun, 2014). This is significantly different to Japan which has an average of teachers supervising extra-curricular activities for 7.7 hours a week. The media and the teachers' union recognized teachers' working long hours as a social problem after this survey was released (Nikkyōso, 2014; Mainichi-Shinbun, 2014). Awareness of this problem has influenced the reform of *bukatsudō*.

MEXT began considering how this burden on teachers could be reduced. *Chûdokyôiku shingikai* (The Central Council of Education), an advisory body to the minister, issued a proposal to MEXT '*Cîmu to shite no gakkô no arikata to kongo no kaizen hōsaku ni tsuite (toshin)*' [School as a team and a plan for future improvement (report)] in December 2015. In this proposal, *Chûdokyôiku shingikai* suggested ways to improve the management system of schools such as participation by professional staff not only teachers. Additionally, *Chûdokyôiku shingikai* proposed institutionalizing the practice of allowing schools to utilize *Bukatsudō shidōin* [extracurricular activities instructors] who supervise *bukatsudō* and accompany students to games against other teams without the support of teachers. Subsequently, MEXT established a task force; the *Jisedai no gakkô shidō taisei ni fusawashii kyōshokuin no arikata to gyōmu kaizen no tameno tasukufōsu* [Task force to consider suitable teacher working conditions and the necessary improvements for the next generation of schools] in November 2015. MEXT constituted this task force after *Chûdokyôiku shingikai* delivered its reports and then tried to promote improvements in teacher's working conditions.

MEXT established a legal framework for supporting teacher's *bukatsudō* supervision. In July 2016, the task force mentioned above published '*Jisedai no gakkô shidō taisei no arikata ni tsuite (saisyuu matome)*' [Next generation school leadership (final report)]. In this report, the task force announced the following proposal to improve long work hours for teachers engaged in extracurricular activities: acknowledge the placement of the *Bukatsudō shidōin* [extracurricular activities instructors] as *bukatsudō* supervisors. Though schools have previously used volunteers and external coaches as *bukatsudō* instructors, these staff members have not been able to supervise students to date. The task force suggested that *bukatsudō shidōin* be able to supervise *bukatsudō* on behalf of teachers. After the task force's proposal in March 2017, MEXT revised *Gakkō kyōiku hō shikō kisoku 78* [Enforcement regulations for the school education law 78], to acknowledge the placement in schools of *bukatsudō shidōin* [extracurricular club activities instructors]. These regulations assume that *bukatsudō shidōin* are responsible for the following roles in *bukatsudō*: Accompanying students to sports conventions, supervising *bukatsudō*, and carrying out guidance and counselling activities. Subsequently, principals were empowered to assign *bukatsudō shidōin* as sole supervisors of *bukatsudō* without support from teachers.

In this section I have outlined the process of the legal acknowledgement of the placement of *bukatsudō shidōin* following the recognition of teachers' long working hours as a social problem. The government amended the law to provide support for teachers in *bukatsudō* as a part of the effort to improve working conditions for teachers.

Creating a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudō*

In the second half of the 2010s, MEXT promoted *bukatsudō* reforms to build a sustainable *bukatsudō* management system in schools. The 2017 course of study for junior high and high school mentions the need for schools and communities to create a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudō*. Moreover, *Kyōiku Saisei Jikkō Kaigi* announced *Dai Jū-ji Teigen* [The Tenth Proposal]. This proposal addressed the necessity of changing '*bukatsudō* managed by schools' into '*bukatsudō* managed by social communities'; for example, a school could engage in discussions with a community sports club or a social community to consider how to manage *bukatsudō*. Also, on February 18, MEXT announced "*Gakkō ni okeru hatarakikata kaikaku ni kansuru kinkyū taisaku no sakutei narabini gakkō ni okeru gyōmu kaizen oyobi kinmujikan kanri tō ni kansuru torikumi no tettei ni tsuite*" [Formulating urgent measures regarding matters such as work reform in schools, implementing successful work hours management and improved working conditions in schools] (MEXT, 2018). According to this announcement, it is unnecessary for teachers to supervise *bukatsudō*, respond to a survey, instruct students during break time, or clean school with students. In addition, this announcement stresses the importance of further improvements in working conditions in schools. In this announcement, MEXT further suggests that schools implement improvements such as utilizing a *bukatsudō shidōin* or an external coach who supports *bukatsudō*, organizing *gōdō bukatsudō* [joint extracurricular club activities] which are composed of several schools or establishing rules for activity hours and a rest day for *bukatsudō*. The government is attempting to create a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudō*; social community-based *bukatsudō* management and supervision structures in which teachers and experts cooperate.

Moreover, the central government has responded well to the challenge of *bukatsudō* reform. The Japan Sports Agency [Supōtsu chō] issued "*Undōbukatsudō no arikata ni kansuru sōgōteki na gaidorain*" [Comprehensive guidelines for extracurricular sports club activities] in March 2018 (The Japan Sports Agency, 2018), in which it

emphasized the necessity of establishing a *bukatsudô* management system, establishing rest days and creating a good school sports environment that considers students' needs. In this announcement, MEXT also demands that the Board of Education in each area create an "Extracurricular Sports Activities Policy" and that junior high and high schools create an "Action Plan for Extracurricular Sports Activities". The government has been attempting to promote *bukatsudô* reform by controlling the policies of local education boards and schools.

This section has detailed how MEXT promoted building sustainable *bukatsudô* management in schools in the second half of the 2010s. The government took control of the *bukatsudô* management policies of local governments and schools to carry out a thorough reform.

Conclusions

First, this paper provided an overview of the reform of *bukatsudô* by MEXT, especially after the Sakuranomiya High School Incident. Next, it looked at the reform of *bukatsudô* conducted by MEXT as part of its improvement of teachers' long working hours which was publicly recognized as a problem after the publication of the OECD survey June 2014 (TALIS 2013). This discussion then turned to the government's announcements regarding its proposals for creating sustainable *bukatsudô* following the publication of "*Chugakkô gakushû shidô yôryô*" [The junior high school course of study] in March 2017.

This section considers the educational significance of *bukatsudô* and discuss a way for ensuring sustainable *bukatsudô*. In 2016, the Japanese government announced '*Dai goki kagaku gijutsu kihon keikaku*' [The 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan], through which it aims to realize a "super-smart society" (Society 5.0) that equips people to be able to respond to the changing world. This plan refers to 'Society 5.0' as follows.

Through an initiative merging the physical space (real world) and cyberspace by leveraging ICT to its fullest, we are proposing an ideal form of our future society: a "super smart society" that will bring wealth to the people.

Bukatsudô has a significant function in schools (Cave, 2004; Blackwood, 2005; Niki 2010): it provides students with social anchoring (Rohlen, 1983), and students develop social competence through the vertical relationships between *senpai* [senior] and *kôhai* [junior] in *bukatsudô* (Kawaguchi, 2020). The vertical structural principle, which has developed in the course of the history of the Japanese people, has become one of the characteristics of Japanese culture (Nakane, 1970). Even in the case of Japan achieving a "super-smart society", vertical relationships such as *senpai* and *kôhai* or *jôshi* [superior] and *buka* [inferior] would still persist as part of the nature of Japanese society in the future (Kawaguchi, 2020). Therefore, schools need to foster the qualities and skills of interpersonal relationships required in a vertical society, the hallmark of Japanese society, through educational activities for students, and schools must encourage students' social development. Generally, students work on educational activities in groups composed of students of the same age, such as class and school year groups. In contrast, *bukatsudô* provide opportunities for students to work and communicate with students of different ages such as <seniors-juniors>; seniors teach juniors, and juniors regard seniors as role models for their lives. *Bukatsudô* have the critical guidance and counselling functions and they help schools to support students in developing the social literacy that they need in interpersonal relationships (Kawaguchi, 2020).

This study has described how the government promoted *bukatsudô* reform in response to changing social conditions since 2010. MEXT has carried out the *bukatsudô* reforms, which mainly aimed to change the *bukatsudô* management system. From now on, schools will shift from school-based club activities to community-based clubs, and teachers will supervise *bukatsudô* in cooperation with *bukatsudô shidôin* [extracurricular activities instructors] and external coaches. However, we should keep in mind that *bukatsudô* reform is not a goal but a process.

Bukatsudô are an essential element of Japanese education (Blackwood, 2016); they have provided the opportunity to engage in sporting and cultural activities for all students, regardless of their place of residence and family resources, and have played a vital role in their human development. Schools must create a sustainable management structure for *bukatsudô* by paying attention to promoting the development of viable *bukatsudô* management systems and to the educational significance of *bukatsudô*.

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