



# Transnational *juku*: Japanese shadow education institutions in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shanghai

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## Abstract

Japan has a longstanding history of shadow education, which has evolved, transformed, and extended beyond its borders. Japanese shadow education institutions, known as *juku*, have expanded worldwide, including in Asia, the US, and Europe, offering offline and online tutoring services mainly for Japanese expatriates. This study examines the role and features of *juku*, specifically in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. It identifies 20 different *juku*, analyzes their types, and explains a different type of *juku*, the “Japanese cultural supplementary school,” that caters to expatriate parents aiming to nurture Japanese culture and traditions in their children. Although the Japanese *juku* phenomenon has previously attracted the attention of scholars, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to transnational *juku* and its operation outside Japan. This paper contributes to informing scholars, policymakers, and the public on the transnational movement of shadow education as a global phenomenon.

**Keywords** Shadow education · Private tutoring · Japan · Transnational education · Japanese expatriates · Beijing · Hong Kong · Shanghai · China

## Introduction

Private supplementary tutoring is a global phenomenon, widely known as shadow education as it corresponds to and stands in strong relation with mainstream education (Bray, 1999; Bray & Lykins, 2012). It has a long history and substantial presence in some parts of Asia, including Hong Kong, Mainland China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, where enrollment rates are high (Bray & Lykins, 2012). East Asian tutoring institutions share some long-standing and common socio-cultural aspects, such as an examination orientation and teacher-centered pedagogy (Kwok, 2004).

Yamato and Zhang (2017) focused on shadow education in Japan, describing the development and transformation of Japanese shadow education in response to the mainstream education system. They observed that the *juku* industry plays a central role in shadow education in Japan and has expanded its acceptance and influence in society. Zhang (2023) also provides the overall development of *juku* in Japanese society, explaining how tutoring became a norm, despite criticism from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). From the 1970s onwards, the Ministry of Education started monitoring trends through national surveys too. Participation rates on *juku* are extremely high. According to the most recent national survey on national academic and learning situations, 45.9% of Grade 6 students, and 60% of Grade 9 students are learning from a *gakushu juku* or tutor, in which includes online tutoring (MEXT National Institute for Education Policy Research, 2023). This percentage includes the different purposes students choose to learn outside of school: learning in advancement of school content, learning to remedy school content, for both reasons, and for other reasons. Therefore, this figure includes various types of tutoring, and it is important to note the diversity of shadow education, such as the target, subject, season, mode, tutor type, and further variations in

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the curriculum, pedagogy and learning style, and technology usage (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Entrich, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2008; Yamato & Zhang, 2017).

Yamato and Zhang's (2017) account of the rich history and prevalence of the shadow education phenomenon in Japan provides a comprehensive review of the development and phenomenon of *juku*. However, there is still a lack of literature on the topic in English, and international scholars have limited access to Japanese articles. Furthermore, there has been limited research on Japanese shadow education institutions operating overseas.

In this paper, the authors use qualitative research (content analysis) to identify the features and phenomenon of Japanese shadow education institutions overseas, with a particular focus on Japanese *juku* institutes in the major cities for Japanese expatriates in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. The central research question is as follows. What roles do Japanese shadow education institutions play overseas, specifically in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai? To understand this phenomenon, the authors conduct a contextual analysis of Japanese shadow education institutions in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

## The globalization of shadow education

Shadow education is seen in many parts of the globe, with such growing significance that it may even be coming out of the shadows (Bray, 1999; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Zhang & Bray, 2021; Kobakhidze et al., 2023). Manzon and Areepattamannil (2014) and Bray (2021) illustrated the expansion of geographic boundaries and blurring of traditional educational boundaries and thus the possibilities of conducting cross-national studies on shadow education. There are different definitions of shadow education, and various ways to analyze the phenomenon from a comparative perspective.

Shadow education is difficult to define as it is used as a metaphor for forms of private supplementary tutoring that mimic but extend beyond the mainstream education system (Bray, 1999). Bray (1999) defines shadow education as private supplementary tutoring offered as fee-paying instruction for primary and secondary students on academic subjects outside of school hours. This is distinct from earlier definitions, such as that of Stevenson and Baker (1992), who considered shadow education for tertiary preparation. Some of the more recent literature has redefined shadow education to include non-academic subjects and fee-free tutoring (Kobakhidze, 2019); also attempted to translate shadow education, which can be challenging as it can be understood differently across languages (Bray, 2023). The comparative perspective considers cross-disciplinary approaches, ranging from individuals' experiences (Bray & Kwo, 2013; Dierkes, 2010; Yung, 2021), different geographies (Bray, 2021), and

the historical development of the field (Bray & Zhang, 2020) through to a more macro, national-level policy perspective (Bray, 1999; Bray & Kobakhidze, 2015).

Patterns of micro-neoliberalism, including privatization and marketization at individual, family, and institutional levels, are driving the global expansion of private supplementary education (Bray, 2017). Although its effectiveness is questionable, the demand for tutoring is driven by a competitive climate and a strong belief in the benefit of education for social and economic advancement (Bray, 2006). The underpinning notion is therefore education as a marketable service, with a business-like model encouraged for efficiency. Mori and Baker (2010) added that shadow education could be seen from two perspectives: as either preparing for or reproducing social stratification.

In fact, shadow education follows the institutional logic of formal education, which primarily aims at learning and achievement (Mori & Baker, 2010). However, the logic has become more homogenized and expansive globally. Mori and Baker (2010) predicted that shadow education would increasingly be incorporated into the broader culture of education, including the neo-institutional idea, with similar intent, forms, and practices worldwide.

Furthermore, it is important to examine the broader implications of the involvement of government in shadow education, alongside an awareness of the blurring boundaries between mainstream and shadow education (Bray, 2010). Indeed, shadow education continues to expand and diversify across the world (Bray, 2010). For instance, shadow education has innovative and entrepreneurial characteristics, which allow it to respond rapidly to the transformation of societal needs (as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic), which has implications for mainstream education (Zhang & Bray, 2020; Tsaloukidis & Kobakhidze, 2023). Thus, Zhang and Bray (2020) recommended a continued mapping of shadow education, especially in regard to the curriculum, pedagogy and mode, technology and innovation, power regulation, and governance and legitimacy.

## Shadow education in Japan

Japan is a high-income country with a long history of shadow education. Dawson (2010) described an egalitarian rhetoric in support of a meritocratic public education system in Japan, where private tutoring supplements public school education and reduces anxiety, although it comes with a financial burden. Supplementary private tutoring institutions are widely known in Japan as *juku*. From the 1960s and 70s onwards the *juku* industry continued to expand, not only because of the expanding access to education and rising competition and family income levels but also due to the industry's ability to complement and fill gaps in mainstream

education (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). However, the *juku* institutions are not only responsive suppliers but also create the demand for supplemental education.

Japan is one of the many countries sharing the global trend of the marketization and privatization of shadow education, where “over time the marketplace has become less hidden” (Bray, 2010, p. 101). For this reason, Yamato and Zhang (2017) redefined the roles of shadow education in Japan to reflect in particular the recent context of neoliberal ideologies in Japan, in which the private sector, including the *juku* industry in education, have increasing power and influence on society. From the 1990s onwards, Japanese society has become increasingly stratified, with worsening poverty issues placing a heavier burden on teachers (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). Thus, the ministry formerly known as the Ministry of Education (MOE) requested support for public schools from the *juku* industry, in recognition that *juku* provides an alternative educational platform for extra-curricular activities offering life-long learning (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). Neoliberal changes in society, such as the easing of restrictions on public school zones and increased freedom of school choice have accelerated the value of the after-school classes provided by *juku* as a new way to attract students (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). Therefore, the mainstream education system’s partnership with *juku* for educational reform has become essential: with the increasing promotion and institutionalization of *juku* in the public education agenda, the boundaries between the two are becoming blurred. Moreover, the increasing influence and presence of shadow education and its scale and diversity is a familiar topic for most Japanese people (Entrich, 2017).

Responding to the often-heard misperception that *juku* is devoted exclusively to examination success through rote learning and drilling, Roesgaard (2006) put forward a typology for analyzing the diverse *juku* market in Japan, in which four types of *juku* were distinguished on eight dimensions: 1. *shingaku-juku* (exam preparation), 2. *hoshu-juku* (remedial study), 3. *kyosai-juku* (for school refusers and drop-outs), 4. *doriru-juku* (drill-work; e.g., Kumon). Furthermore, there is a trend toward comprehensiveness in the industry, with the new category of the *sogo-juku* (comprehensive type) and even some providers that take the role of care-centers for the community; however, these categories were excluded from Roesgaard’s main typology (Roesgaard, 2006).

One critical issue for shadow education is equity and access. Accordingly, Bray and Kwo (2013) raised questions on the social justice implications of the phenomenon. Shadow education can help students to overcome challenges and further develop talented children; however, there is also risk that it weakens the effects of public education and excludes certain social groups. Nevertheless, shadow education itself may not lead to social inequality. In fact, among the many types of shadow education, there are those offering

fee reductions (Entrich, 2015) or even low-fee *juku* classes at school (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). Correspondingly, Entrich (2015) suggested that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to benefit from shadow education. However, it is not possible to simply draw cause-and-effect relations between shadow education and social inequality without careful evaluation over time and the consideration of different factors. For instance, there is still a lack of literature on the relationship between shadow education and recent sociodemographic and economic changes.

Many school systems around the world have increased governmental regulation of shadow education (Bray & Lykins, 2012). The different government bodies have different approaches and attitudes towards *Jukus* (Zhang, 2023). The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI, which later became Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry—METI) enforced commercial regulations, and later promoted *juku* self-regulations, forming a body to represent the industry to set standards and rules, establishing the Japan *Juku* Association (JJA) (Zhang, 2023). As for the MOE (which later became, Ministry of Education, culture, sports, science and technology) engaged in educational dimensions, such monitoring trends through national surveys increasing their involvement (Zhang, 2023). The government’s attitudes towards *juku* have shifted from rejection to collaboration as it mobilizes the profit-driven *juku* to serve the public good; since the end of the twentieth century, neoliberal ideology and policies have led public education to establish partnerships with the *juku* industry (Yamato & Zhang, 2017). Furthermore, Yamato and Zhang (2017) and Entrich (2018) have both suggested that there are gaps in the research on partnerships between *juku* and mainstream education, particularly private education, and there is a lack of overviews of the whole education system. It is true that much research has been conducted around the socio-political relation and development of shadow education, but there has been little study of the specific partnerships between the *juku* sector and mainstream education.

The scale, intensity, and mode of shadow education differs greatly between countries. Like other East Asian societies, Japan has high participation rates in shadow education; these countries share a culture with deep Confucian traditions, which highly value education (Bray, 2010; Bray & Lykins, 2012). This categorization cannot be fully confirmed, however, as there is a lack of evidence that directly supports the influence of the specific cultural context (i.e., Confucian traditions) of Japan on shadow education. Nevertheless, high academic performance and an examination-oriented culture is indeed evident in Japan today (Yamato & Zhang, 2017), where not only parents but also students themselves decide whether to attend shadow education. Furthermore, although there is a debate on whether shadow education is a driver of high academic performance, numerous

other factors, such as cultural values and norms, influence supply and demand and attendance. For instance, one rationale to attend *juku* is to increase the chances to gain a prestigious education certification (*gakureki*) as a form of cultural capital (Entrich, 2015). More research is surely needed regarding the cultural concepts, norms, and values and to attain a deeper background understanding of what cultural aspects influence shadow education enrollment.

Moreover, many Japanese shadow education companies, such as ANEM Holdings Group, Tomono-kai (EDUBAL), Ichishin Kyoiku Group, JOBA, Kumon, Sundai, and Waseda Academy, operate at a global level, which illustrates a transformation of the Japanese model of shadow education into a global model (Mori & Baker, 2010). In other words, over the past 50 years or so, the role of *juku* has diversified, intensified, and expanded, even well beyond national borders.

### Shadow education in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai

China's rapid socio-economic transformation in the past three decades, with the neoliberal forces of increased marketization and privatization, influenced the expansion of the shadow education sector (Zhang & Bray, 2017). For instance, in Shanghai, the neoliberal environment has brought a diversification of schools and increased school choice, thus leading to further competition for admittance to elite institutions and to climbing the social ladder (Zhang & Bray, 2017). However, recently, from 2018 onwards, a policy was introduced to regulate the development of the tutoring industry; another policy was introduced in 2021, to deinstitutionalize, recapitalize the tutoring industry through a 'Double Reduction' policy, to protect student wellbeing, reduce burdens and alleviate parental anxieties (Zhang, 2023). However, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the demand for online tutoring increased. Meanwhile, many tutoring centers closed down, as they lost clients in an intensive competition in the industry (Zhang, 2023).

Liu and Bray (2017) investigated on shadow education using a large sample of students and parents in China. They discovered few gender gaps in enrollment, but a high influence of family demographics, specifically urban or rural *hukou*, household income, and parental years of education. These findings are quite similar to the large-scale statistics from Japan (Benesse, 2017) and match Japan's situation with shadow education. In addition, the student's perspectives of pressure, anxiety, and satisfaction are also factors that influence enrollment (Liu & Bray, 2017; Zhang, 2020). To this argument Zhang (2020) added the perspective of increased external parenting, illustrating the case with an observation of middle-class parents in Shanghai, among whom not only traditional cultural values but the complexity of

socio-economic-cultural factors shape/drive parental choices in shadow education.

This spread of shadow education is visible also in Hong Kong, where the enrollment rate of shadow education is over 70% for upper primary, lower secondary to higher secondary students, with some variety in enrollment rates by age level, demographics, subject, mode, cost, and other factors (Bray & Lykins, 2012). According to the most recent statistics gathered by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG, 2023), 96.7% of primary and secondary school students in selected schools in Hong Kong reported participating in tutoring at some point in their lives. Besides, 72.2% mentioned they were currently receiving tutoring at the time of the survey. Furthermore, a recent study by Kobakhidze and colleagues (Kobakhidze et al., 2023) discovered that families from all social classes—low, middle, and upper class—engage in tutoring.

Subject matter and pedagogy can be highly influenced by the characteristics of particular locations. For instance, Chan and Bray (2014) illustrated private tutoring in Hong Kong in the relatively new and core subject of Liberal Studies and its unique, innovative approach, together with the complicated relationship between the mainstream schooling and shadow education sector. Koh (2014) found that the attraction and expansion of private tutoring in Hong Kong must be understood in the context of the neoliberal environment of increasing marketization, within which the media marketing of tutoring institutions plays a critical role. Koh's (2014) analysis illustrated the magical attraction of cram schools, which sell guarantees of educational success while generating fear and anxiety: education becomes a commodity. Yung's (2021) study of the experiences of secondary students in Hong Kong supported the similar argument that private tutoring is reinforcing the banking concept of education, emphasizing performativity and generating oppression. Private tutoring is associated with academic enrichment needs, including college preparation, regardless of the school quality, parental pressure, and the local community's socioeconomic circumstances (Song, Park & Sang, 2013).

From this literature review focused especially on Japan and China, it is evident that shadow education is intensifying, reflecting, and shaping many aspects of society, including economics, politics, and culture; meanwhile, there is great diversity even in the same region or country. Although many studies have depicted the historical development of the *juku* industry in Japan and private supplementary tutoring in China, there are still research gaps in the area of the transnational spread of the *juku* shadow education institutions overseas.

Manzon and Areepattamannil (2014) noted that it was necessary to investigate the blurring of traditional boundaries with transnational private tutoring. Cook (2013) studied expatriate parents in Japan and examined their reasons for



enrolling in supplementary education in Japan as a survival or acculturation strategy. Nevertheless, little is known about the use of supplementary education by Japanese expatriate parents overseas. From Cook's (2013) study, it is evident that peer influence (insider counseling) and contextual influence may be key factors, with *juku* enrollment possibly seen as an acculturation strategy to adapt to the Japanese educational culture. This may also be the case for Japanese expatriate parents overseas. From ethnographic insights of Japanese expatriates in Singapore, Japanese white-collar expatriate families substitute tutoring routines which reproduce their Japanese-ness (Toh, 2013). Parents are highly influenced by *juku* advertisements and information sessions, convenient location, high-end tutoring activities, the prestige, which prescribe to the cultural and ideologies of Japan; *juku* establishes its credibility and profitability in its operation (Toh, 2013). Meanwhile, Ho's (2017) study of Chinese migrants in Australia illustrated how the values and investments in shadow education of Chinese migrants may even change behaviors in the host cultures. Thus, in this paper, the authors also examine the implications of *juku*'s impact on the local cultural context.

## Methodology

To gain insights into the phenomenon of Japanese shadow education institutions abroad, the authors conducted a contextual analysis involving the identification, categorization, and interpretation of Japanese *juku* in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. These locations were selected as they have many Japanese expatriates living in these locations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Besides, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai are significant educational hubs within the broader Chinese context, hosting a diverse range of educational institutions. The study involved collecting and analyzing data from official homepages of *juku* institutions and social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter). The authors chose a qualitative method because they saw the need to first gain a basic understanding of the phenomenon through contextual analysis, given the relative newness of the research topic.

For our theoretical framework the authors drew inspiration from Manzon and Areepattamannil's (2014) expanded analytic framework based on the Bray and Thomas cube (1995). The authors specifically focused on the sixth dimension, "implications of shadow education research for stakeholders," which connects with our research question on the implications of exporting *jukus* to education systems outside Japan, or the concept of "transnational private tutoring" (Manzon & Areepattamannil, 2014, p. 398).

The authors used a web search to identify and collect data on major *juku* in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai using the keywords "学習塾" (*gakkushu-juku*, meaning "private

supplementary tutoring") or "塾" (*juku*) and the location. Our selection criteria for *juku* included being privately run, offering academic subjects (such as English, Japanese, Math, Science, and Social Studies) outside of mainstream school hours, charging fees, and targeting primary and secondary students. The authors also reviewed local Japanese expatriate-targeted magazine websites to gather information about these *juku*. For cross-validation, the authors employed various search engines (including Baidu, Google, and Yahoo) and social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter), utilizing both Japanese and English queries. Furthermore, in 2024, the authors conducted follow-up communication with the *juku* institutions to verify the accuracy of their websites. The corresponding data were subsequently updated in the tables.

## Findings

### The target, type, and educational landscape of *juku* in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai

The authors identified 20 *juku* (Japanese privately run tutoring institutions) in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. The basic information on these 20 *juku* is provided in Appendix A. The variables for data collection were name, location/area, provider (association), type/mode of tutoring and intensity, history (year of establishment), subjects, courses, language of operation, target students, and goals. To organize the results, the authors drew on published literature and previously proposed frameworks to categorize the 20 *juku* (Roesgaard, 2006; Yamato & Zhang, 2017) identified in the data collection (see Table 1).

The authors discovered that the majority (16 out of 20) of these overseas *juku* belonged to Type A, the *sogo-juku* (Yamato & Zhang, 2017), with diverse functions from basic and remedial learning to catching up with school testing requirements through to competitive entrance examination preparation; thus, they combined the functions of the *shingaku-*, *hoshu-*, and *kyosai-juku* (Roesgaard, 2006). In addition, these *sogo-juku* were branches of Japan's major corporate-run *juku*; the materials and content were not very distinct from those in Japan, and in fact these institutions promoted themselves as offering high-quality services where students could learn the same material they would in Japan. There were three privately owned *juku*, but one had established partnerships with the major corporate Japanese *juku* for materials, examinations, and networking and another ran on a very small scale. It was difficult to even find any recent updates on the third private institution, raising questions about the challenges of survival for such small private *juku*.

The other distinct type was *doriru-juku* (Roesgaard, 2006), which was offered by Kumon in Beijing, Hong Kong

**Table 1** List of *juku* in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai

Location	Name of <i>juku</i> — <i>Type</i>
Beijing	JOBA— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Kumon— <i>Drill-juku</i> (Type A)
	Beijing Academy— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
Hong Kong	Epis Education Centre— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Exceed— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Hong Kong Japanese Supplementary School (HKJSS)—Japanese cultural supplementary school (Type D)
	Ichishin Gakuin— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Kumon— <i>Drill-juku</i> (Type A)
	Sundai— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	V-Zemi— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
Shanghai	ENA— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	JOBA- <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Kumon— <i>Drill-juku</i> (Type A)
	NOW— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Shanghai Pudong Japanese Saturday club—Japanese cultural supplementary school (Type D)
	Shanghai Academy— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Sundai— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	Wing— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	WIT— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
	EDUBAL— <i>Shingaku-juku</i> (Type A)
Online (offered and targeted to students in Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai)	

and Shanghai. Kumon centers are widespread across these cities, found in most areas. The unique feature of Kumon is not only the pedagogy (drill-style with no age limit) but also their targeting of local students. In fact, Kumon is one of the pioneers of exporting/franchising *juku* overseas; for instance, they established their affiliated company in Hong Kong in 1988 (Kumon, n.d.) which is the earliest operations in Hong Kong, compared to other *juku* institutions in this research. As they target local students and not Japanese expatriates, the language of operation is usually the local language, with slight exceptions. Out of 105 classes in Hong Kong, only two classes (Hong Kong Island—Causeway Bay, Kowloon—Mongkok) targeted Japanese expatriates, as a Japanese Education Center. In fact, this drill-style pedagogy is increasingly being implemented by the major corporate run *sogo-juku*.

Nevertheless, one category is missing from the literature when considering overseas *juku*, is “Japanese cultural supplementary school.” There is one in Hong Kong and one in Shanghai, and is called a Japanese supplementary school or club depending on the size, scale and founders. They are uniquely run by parent volunteers who have established a non-profit organization and formed partnerships with the Japanese government and other Japanese *juku* based in the local area, which provide some financial aid for their facility rent, payment to instructors, and for safeguarding purposes.

They also do use textbooks provided by the Japanese government and are officially acknowledged by the Japanese government. At the same time, supplementary Japanese classes ask families to pay an annual fee to enroll themselves into the classes. Some classes separate students into ability classes regardless of age/grade (i.e. Shanghai), although the decision about how they decide classes and lessons differs according to the supplementary Japanese class. Most supplementary classes only have it once a week (on Saturdays) and students learn only some subjects, mainly Japanese. Furthermore, they do not have their own school facilities, but borrow places such as Japanese schools, Chamber of commerce meeting rooms, or *Juku* facilities (i.e. Hong Kong EPIS classroom). This is, therefore, similar to other *juku* institutions. Also, based on conversations with Japanese expatriate parents' (involved in previous research projects) many parents see these Japanese supplementary classes as a form of *juku*-like institution. Furthermore, not only parents, but also from a teachers perspective, a teacher who taught in a supplementary class (Sekiya, 2009), pointed out how supplementary Japanese classes are similar to a type of *juku*, with unique and diverse features for its purpose, characters, and forms.

Indeed, both supplementary schools in Hong Kong and Shanghai have a purpose of nurturing Japanese culture, traditions and identity, which is very different from other *juku*

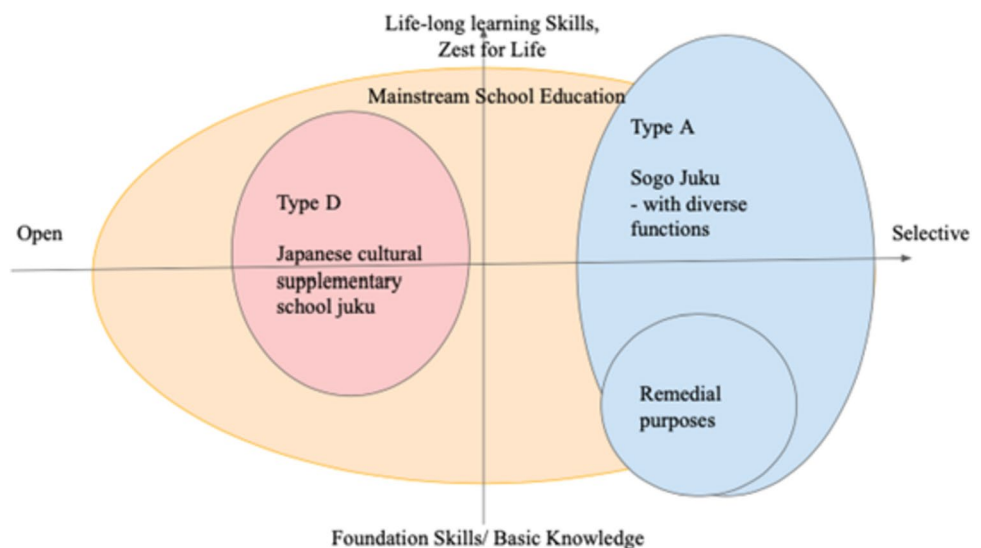
institutes. However, they are held only on weekends, with limited subjects, in non-school facilities and the name of Japanese supplementary classes differs among classes: Shanghai Japanese Hoshuko (supplementary school) Club and Hong Kong Japanese Supplementary School. Thus, the authors see supplementary school as a new type of *juku*, similar to *Chiiki Mirai Juku*, but providing a wider purpose for life. Their educational goal is to nurture global Japanese citizens living abroad with dignity and pride; the courses offered mimic the school curriculum with special cultural events and utilize the government official textbook to teach the fundamental subjects, with the strongest emphasis on Japanese. The authors therefore suggest adding Japanese cultural supplementary schools as a Type D category to our framework (see Fig. 1).

However, the fundamental differences between overseas *juku* and both local tutoring centers and the *juku* in Japan are the courses they offer and the target students. The most common courses were preparation for the *kikoku-shijyo nyushi* (returnee entrance examinations), with specific courses in preparation for this exam's unique requirements such as essay writing and TOEFL English scores. Another example is the IB/IGCSE course offered for Japanese expatriates in international schools who need support in a certain subject, including Japanese. One *juku* in Shanghai offered a course specifically designed to achieve higher grades (*naishin*) in the Shanghai Japanese School, with the aim of helping students receive a good recommendation from the school for university entrance. A similar approach was adopted by a *juku* in Hong Kong located close to the Delia School of Canada, which offered support specifically for that program. These courses are developed according to local needs, whether these are for an international or Japanese school. Nevertheless, one gap the authors discovered was that there appeared to be no *juku* to support Japanese expatriates attending local school programs.

Regarding the target students, most may be considered elite as the *juku* courses are expensive and aim to assist students to enter prestigious schools. For this reason, when borrowing the educational landscape depicted by Yamato and Zhang (2017), there is a large overlap of Type A with Type B (selective and exclusive for elite students) in overseas *juku*. However, there is an absence of Type C (*mirai-juku*, emphasizing equality of life and with open and free access) *juku*. Moreover, the Japanese cultural supplementary school type may occupy another place in the landscape as it is not aimed at academic success and examinations but instead has its unique characteristic of an emphasis on culture; furthermore, although it does not provide completely free access, it is relatively affordable and covers foundational/basic knowledge and skills while aiming for life-long learning.

Regarding the implications of *juku* for the local cultural context and how they compete with local tutorial schools, the *juku* have a unique status as they are offering completely Japanese courses targeting Japanese expatriates who will possibly return to Japan for their academic pursuits in the future. Nevertheless, there are exceptions, such as Kumon and the Japanese cultural supplementary school, both of which have established their own niche. Kumon may be the most localized, in the sense that it is franchised but locally owned and operated in the local language and offers local subjects. Indeed, Ukai (1994) stated that when Kumon method is used in new environments, it provides additional insight on how users' needs and expectations differ. For instance, in Hong Kong, they offer two English and Chinese classes, Kumon EFL (English as a Foreign Language), ERP (English Reading Program), and Kumon Chinese (Traditional and Simplified) targeting local students, alongside Japanese, English in Japanese and Math in Japanese for Japanese expatriate students.

**Fig. 1** The educational landscape of overseas *juku* (adapted from Yamato & Zhang, 2017)



Furthermore, the role of the majority of overseas *juku* is to meet the needs of Japanese expatriates in their preparation for returning to Japan and taking an entrance examination. However, there are exceptions, as some *juku* offer the Japanese-born drilling pedagogy (i.e., Kumon) or seek to nurture Japanese culture and identity in students (i.e., the Hong Kong Japanese Supplementary School and Shanghai Pudong Japanese Saturday club).

## Discussion

This section compares and contrasts the *juku* in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Although there were more similarities than differences, some notable differences include the diversity in providers, teaching materials, and course offerings. The earliest *juku* overseas, Kumon, was opened in Hong Kong in 1988, Shanghai in 1995, and Beijing in 2010 as it aimed to spread the Kumon method to locals in those cities and around the world. Sundai Hong Kong was established in 1994, and they currently promote their long history as a factor that increases their reputation. Epis and Exceed (both in Hong Kong) were established in 2002 and 2004, respectively, and other *juku* were established from 2010 onwards. This may be related to the increasing number of Japanese nationals moving overseas to China during that period (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009) and the resulting increased demand for such services. China is still the second-largest number of Japanese nationals living overseas, but the numbers are not rising (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

Regarding location, *juku* are concentrated around the main Japanese expatriate district areas where Japanese companies and schools are located, such as, Chaoyang in Beijing; Eastern, Kowloon, Wanchai, and Yau Tsim Mong in Hong Kong; and Changning and Pudong in Shanghai. Location and convenience are factors in location decisions, illustrating their target market and focus on Japanese expatriates and creating competition among the *juku*. The major corporate *juku* companies are ANEM Holdings Group (V-Zemi), Tomono-kai (EDUBAL), Ichishin Kyoiku Group (Hong Kong Ichishin), JOBA (JOBA Beijing, Shanghai), Kumon (Beijing, HongKong, Shanghai), Sundai (Hong Kong, Shanghai), and Waseda Academy (Beijing Academy, Shanghai Academy), which offer various features such as high results in entrance examinations, one-on-one tutoring, wide-scale examinations, and high-quality education resources. There are also creative/innovative classes, such as robotics, coding, puzzles, and iBT (internet-based teaching) and learning, especially for lower primary grades and even early childhood education. These have been implemented at increasingly large scales especially over the past few years as a rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some *juku* offer new drill-learning courses (similar to the Kumon style)

that are self-paced and have no age limit. Furthermore, some *juku* have expanded their services to provide local language courses in affiliation with a language school (tutoring institutions), targeting a larger population including adults and parents. However, these courses are more expensive than the same *juku* in Japan or to local tutoring institutions.

It is questionable whether overseas *juku* consider local traditions and culturally appropriate pedagogies. From our content analysis of the websites, there is no evidence that overseas *juku* give much consideration to local traditions and culturally appropriate pedagogies; instead, they have a quite intense schedule for their pedagogy and Japanese-taught subjects, with clear goals for students to enter certain prestigious schools when returning to Japan. Nevertheless, these overseas *juku* offer IB/IGCSE support, which is different from the corresponding *juku* in Japan. Some *juku* have longer histories than others and some are accredited by local education committees (i.e., Shanghai Academy) while others are not. This mirrors the same situation in Japan, where *juku* are not strictly regulated. Regardless of their effectiveness and accreditation, major corporate names and best practices can be powerful factors in the market. Some small privately owned *juku* have decided to cooperate with major corporate *juku*, and the drill-learning style may be seen as a best practice and an appropriate strategy.

The Japanese cultural supplementary school is a unique type of *sogo-juku* that operates only in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and not in Beijing. This may reflect a lack of demand and manpower for the operation of these institutions in other places. However, culture is a complicated factor, especially when institutions move overseas. *Juku* are not only exported/imported but also locally produced. This creates a global–local nexus of education reconstructed through locally produced social interactions. Supplementary education targets globally mobile individuals with transnational cultural values and backgrounds who seek education opportunities beyond their regular school to meet their needs and goals.

This study has some limitations, as the data collection was limited to basic web searches and access to in-depth information was restricted. As this research was mainly conducted during COVID-19 restrictions (2020–2021) authors found it difficult to gain access to such private institutions. It is noteworthy that, during the follow-up contacts with the *juku* in 2024, the authors identified instances where some *jukus* were no longer operational despite their websites remaining online. Further investigation is needed to understand the underlying reasons of closure, which could include factors such as COVID-19, policy regulations, or other potential influences. Additionally, the *juku* identified in this study were mainly major tutoring institutions, and the results might have been different if more personalized tutoring institutions/companies were included. Furthermore, it is difficult to access information about individual freelance tutors working in informal



settings such as homes, who may not even be registered. For example, EDUBAL (Appendix A: Table \*\*\*\*\*, *juku* 20) is a wholly online tutoring service that offers courses to expatriates in 53 countries, including many parts of China. In addition to the success of the major *juku* corporations, there is an increase in privately owned online services that needs to be further explored to understand the phenomenon comprehensively.

## Conclusions

The expansion of Japanese *juku* overseas primarily targets Japanese expatriates seeking an advantage in entrance exams when returning to Japan. Corporate *juku* from Japan partner with or operate overseas *juku* and offer the same materials, pedagogies, and technologies as Japanese *juku*, whereas Kumon centers are operated locally. Another type of *juku* found in Hong Kong and Shanghai is the Japanese cultural supplementary school, which caters to expatriate parents wanting to nurture their children's Japanese tradition and culture. Location is a significant determinant of the influence of Japanese *juku*, but except for Kumon, they have yet to expand beyond expatriate areas into the local population.

The expansion of private supplementary education is a global trend mostly driven by neoliberal privatization and marketization. The examination system in Japan is a pathway to enter prestigious schools and is popular with expatriates seeking foreign experience aided by overseas *juku*. Japanese *juku* have expanded worldwide, including through the United States, Europe, and Asia, with large-scale online tutoring services catering to the high demand.

Understanding the expansion of shadow education worldwide by mapping its patterns, curriculum, pedagogy, technology, innovation, power regulation, governance, and legitimacy is crucial for advancing the field. This paper explores the transnational movement of Japanese shadow education institutions, informing scholars, policymakers, and the public. *Juku* patterns in Japan have developed alongside public-private partnerships, where changes and trends come from school reforms (Zhang, 2023). Whereas, transnational *juku* is prescribing to the cultural ideologies of Japan, and has developed serving a well-defined niche targeted towards white-collar business community (Toh, 2013). Parents have predisposed expectations of examination preparations, and *juku* institutions are well prepared to meet such needs. Prestigious, well-advertised and systematic large corporate *juku*, categorized and customized small *juku*, and cultural supplementary school *juku* all play a continuing importance for social and educational roles.

It suggests gaps for future research and draws attention to the diversity of offerings that are blurring the boundaries

of mainstream and shadow education. In terms of academic implications, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of Japanese shadow education institutions overseas and highlights areas for further research for both domestic and international scholars. For instance, it is worth further exploring the influence and impact of the 'Double Reduction' policy launched by Beijing in July 2021 on transnational *juku*. Additionally, investigating the reasons behind the closure of some *juku* or changes in their tutoring modes recently would be valuable. The study is also relevant to stakeholders, including policy-makers, as it reveals the diversity within Japanese shadow education. Moreover, it has implications for the general public, particularly Japanese expatriates; specifically, it sheds light on the complex and intricate nature of overseas Japanese shadow education institutions and its transnational movement.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** No conflict of interest.

**Ethical approval** According to the regulations of the University of Hong Kong, using secondary data from public websites does not require ethical approval.

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