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Implications for Teacher Training: An Analysis on School Choice in Japan

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1. Introduction: Background of the Research

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) reduced approximately 30 percent of subject content in the Course of Study for public elementary and junior high school in April 2002. In addition to reduction of school time (the complete five-school-day-a-week system), 15-20 percent of time that used to be allocated for major academic subjects such as mathematics and English is now dedicated to the so-called 'comprehensive learning' for which each public school can choose the content that deals with more general and cross cutting issues such as international exchange, information technology, environmental issues, and welfare and health education (Namikawa 2001).

The education reform initiative under the name of *Yutori* education in 2002 has been leading to controversy not only in the policy sphere but also among the general public in the Japanese society. The proponents of the education reform claim that this is a preferable sign of decentralization initiative whereby each school has more freedom to run their own programs and increase educational diversity to respond more flexibly to the students' needs (Miyazaki 2002; Terawaki 2002). Such diversity and expanded autonomy at school level is believed to further enhance productive efficiency through competition among schools yielded by the public school choice system that has been partially introduced in the Tokyo metropolitan area since 2000. Furthermore, it is explained that the reduction of academic subject content in the Course of Study also means to ensure all students to master basic and fundamental subject content, rather than cramming detailed knowledge, and to overcome the current situation whereby the proportions of students who master the content taught at school in elementary, junior high, and high school, are 70 percent, 50 percent, and 30 percent respectively (Terawaki 2002).

On the other hand, the opponents of education reform cast skepticism because they believe *Yutori* education will motivate affluent families to send their children to private schools or supplementary school called *juku*, since they tend to prefer more rigorous environments for their children's education (Saito 2002; Osano 2003). It is argued that such parental behavior will worsen disparity in the school system. Furthermore, it is also indicated that the academic achievement level in public schools has been declining over the last 10-20 years while the Course of Study has been gradually reduced (Kariya 2002; Nishimura 2003; Sato M., 2003; Kariya, et al. 2002) and economic disparity has been widening during the same period (1) (Tachibanaki 1998). Besides, it is argued that since there has been no additional financial arrangement for schools to conduct comprehensive learning classes for which schools may like to invite people from outside to provide some demonstration lesson on certain issues, *Yutori* education

does not seem to have a significant impact on students' learning (Nishimura 2001). Thus, the opponents conclude that the idea of *Yutori* education is neither realistic nor ideal and may exacerbate educational and economic stratification.

The availability of literature, however, that links the issue of private spending on education, socio-economic background, and the current education reform in Japan is sorely lacking. One primary reason why the studies do not exist is the difficulties in data accessibility or availability, especially on the part of socio-economic status. Almost all government data on educational spending lack questions regarding socio-economic status or even if they are available, they are not open to general researchers for further analysis. Kariya (2002) indicates this phenomenon as due to the uniqueness of the Japanese official administration that seems to regard a survey on socio-economic background as taboo. Yano (2001), on the other hand, explains that outstanding economic growth in Japan in the 1960s and subsequently expanded educational opportunities, which was supported by parental overheated aspiration for and educational spending on their children's education, overshadowed the necessity of research on three major educational policy concerns, namely, internal efficiency, external efficiency and equality of educational opportunity. Thus, in spite of the aforementioned controversial observations on the education reform, there has been scarce accumulated knowledge on efficiency and equity of education in Japan. In other words, despite the emerging problems of expanding disparity in the society as a whole, there has been no way of examining the actual impact of *Yutori* education on financing on private education and parental preference in school choice that clarify the linkage among private spending on education, socio-economic background, and the current education reform in Japan.

In light of the research gap mentioned above, this article aims to clarify the factors that determine parental school choice under the current education reform and subsequently draw implications for the field of teacher training in Japan.

2. Conceptual Framework and Data Instrument

2.1 Conceptual Framework

As for socio-economic and cultural background, some sociologists have already shown that there seems to be an influence of socio-economic and cultural background on students' participation in supplementary school (Aramaki 2000) and on student's learning attitude and behavior (Kariya 2001; Kariya, et al. 2002). Among socio-economic status, mother's education and father's occupation are found to be significant factor to determine children's education (Kariya 2001; Aramaki 2000). Furthermore, the available descriptive statistical data shows that there is a significant difference in the absolute amount of spending on education by household income level and occupation of the household head (MPHPT various years). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that student's socio-economic background affects school choice.

School factors are also important determinant of school choice. James (1987 and 1995) asserts that while the phenomenon of high private expenditure on education in developing countries is explained by "the excess demand" model in which the role of private sector is to fill the gap between small capacity of the public sector, relative to the size of the age cohort, and excessive demands for education, the issue in

developed countries seems more to do with differentiated tastes about the kind of education to be consumed. Distinguished from the excess demand model, this model is called “the differentiated demand model”. This model hypothesizes that important taste differences about education stem from religious and linguistic differences as well as academic quality.

In addition to socio-economic and school factors, in order to measure the impact of *Yutori* education on school choice, I use a comprehensive framework presented by Levin (2002) to examine the education system. Underlining is the fact that the education system often faces tradeoffs of values and these values can be examined for each education system. According to Levin (2002), the tradeoffs are expressed by productive efficiency versus equity and freedom of choice versus social cohesion. Productive efficiency refers to the relationship between resources provided for schooling and their educational impact. Equity in general refers to fairness that holds a sense of judgment and distinguished from equality that is a state of fairness. A central concern of equity is distribution of goods and services among populations, namely, race, gender, income, geographical region, ethnicity, disability, immigrant or language status, and so on. Freedom of choice places a heavy emphasis on the private benefits of education and the liberty to ensure that schools are chosen that are consistent with the child-rearing practices of families. Lastly, social cohesion denotes a common educational experience that will orient all students to grow to adulthood as full participants in the social, political, and economic institutions of our society. This is generally interpreted as necessitating common elements of schooling with regard to curriculum, values, goals, language, and political orientation.

Using this comprehensive framework for the education system, parents’ perception can reveal as to what values parents emphasize most when they evaluate *Yutori* education. As long as education has the aspect of private investment as well as public investment, parents are likely to face the dilemma or trade offs of educational values when financing education of their own children. In addition, local education policies are held constant in order to see the impact of implementation of *Yutori* education at local level. Thus, it can be clarified if parental perception on *Yutori* education in this framework affects their behavior on school choice over and above socio-economic status, school factors, and local education policies. The following ordinary-least squares (OLS) regression models are used for the analysis:

$$Y_i (\text{Degree of considering public school}) = \beta_0 + \text{SES} + \text{SCHOOL} + \text{LOCAL EDUCATION POLICIES} + \text{FREEDOM OF CHOICE} + \text{EFFICIENCY} + \text{EQUITY} + \text{SOCIAL COHESION}$$

Where:

SES = $\beta_1 X_1$ (household income/expenditure) + $\beta_2 X_2$ (father’s occupation) + $\beta_3 X_3$ (mother’s education) + $\beta_4 X_4$ (location of residence) + $\beta_5 X_5$ (number of children in household);

SCHOOL = $\beta_6 X_6$ (T-score) + $\beta_7 X_7$ (size of school); and

LOCAL EDUCATION POLICIES = $\beta_8 X_8$ (public school choice system in the residential area) + $\beta_9 X_9$ (proportion of students in assigned public schools in the residential area) + $\beta_{10} X_{10}$ (emphasis placed on freedom of choice) + $\beta_{11} X_{11}$ (emphasis placed on efficiency) + $\beta_{12} X_{12}$ (emphasis placed on equity) + $\beta_{13} X_{13}$ (emphasis placed on social cohesion).

For four criteria of parental perception on *Yutori* education, I weighed the questions shown in Table 1 that raise issues of freedom to choose, productive efficiency, equity and social cohesion regarding *Yutori* education by 8 levels of agreement from 8=Strongly agreed to 1=Strongly disagreed and calculate the weights of each perspective and add them as independent variables to the regression Models.

Dependent variable *Yi* was tested by several variables including number of school choice, influence of *Yutori* education in choosing school, expectation of bad influence of *Yutori* education on quality of learning, expectation of time constraint, expected increase of supplementary education due to academic concern in public school, and expected increase of supplementary education due to time concern in public school.

Table 1 Statements Used to Measure Parental Perception on *Yutori* Education

Freedom to choose: 1. Upon the introduction of <i>Yutori</i> education, each school is thriving to obtain originality in comprehensive learning classes. Such efforts generate many school choices. 2. It is easy to obtain school information when selecting schools. 3. Transportation is not a problem when sending a child to a favorite school. Productive efficiency: 1. The overall students' achievement seems to be declining after the change of course of study in 2002. 2. The five-days-a-week system increased parental burden in terms of time. 3. The five-days-a-week system increased parental burden in terms of cost. Equity: 1. Competition of entrance exams at junior high school level is overheated due to anxieties about <i>Yutori</i> education. 2. <i>Yutori</i> education turns affluent people away from public schools. 3. <i>Yutori</i> education increases disparity between those who go to supplementary school and who do not (or cannot) go. Social cohesion: 1. Diversity in school program in comprehensive learning class undermines the common experience that is believed to be necessary among all citizens. 2. The content taught at school under the current course of study is enough to create a good citizen.

2.2 Data Instrument

The data for this article comes from the original data collected from 9 private schools in 6 central wards in Tokyo and from 76 ward or city level education committees in September-November 2004. The Sampling method used was criterion and convenience sampling according to Creswell's types of sample (Creswell 1998: 119). The criterion sampling is applied to parents of the ninth graders because ninth graders have made the decision of school choice when *Yutori* education initiative was undertaken in 2002. The convenience sampling was unintentionally adopted because it was difficult to obtain cooperation from schools. There were only 9 schools out of 137 (the participation rate of 6.6%) that agreed to participate in the study. Thus, 9 sample schools are convenience samples that generated access to the targeted population in question (2).

In order to maintain generalizability for the Tokyo metropolitan area (23 wards), the location of schools spread in various areas in Tokyo and the sample size needs to be statistically justified. Using the random sampling calculator, I calculated the number of sample students to be surveyed, set tolerance level of error at 5 percent and confidence level at 95 percent, which generated the minimum sample of 377 students. I obtained 477 completed questionnaires out of 1,429. The overall response rate was 33.4 percent. As for the education committee, I obtained complete questionnaires from 76 committees at the overall response rate of 77.6 percent.

While the classification of occupation was adopted from the National Household Expenditure Survey (NHES) data, the income quintile could not be used from the same source. This is mainly because the pilot data (3) revealed that the income level of households that have junior high school student in private schools in Tokyo has higher income levels than the national average and the income quintile of national average that includes households without children or all age group. In addition, NHES' occupational classification was adopted and further transformed into three dummy variables for individual proprietor of managerial category, private office workers, and public office workers, while no occupation, non-office workers (both temporary and permanent), and individual proprietors of merchants/artisans were held as the control group of blue color occupation when conducting the analysis.

1. Results

3.1.1 Parental Perception and Local Education Policy on *Yutori* Education

When aggregating the scores of three questions under the same angle outlined in Table 1, scores were adjusted according to positivism of the statement. Thus, the aggregated score is not a simply added number but can be interpreted in that the higher the score, the more positive parental perception of *Yutori* education becomes. The range of score is from 3 to 24. The results are shown in Table 2. It is shown that parents in general do not appreciate the current reform from all four angles. While the mid point that divides positive and negative evaluation is 13.5, means are all below 13.5. Among four angles, freedom of choice and social cohesion obtained relatively high average scores with smaller standard deviation while equity and efficiency received severer evaluation with larger standard deviation. It is generally seen that parents acknowledge the emerging disparity and inefficiency in education under the current reform.

Table 2. Aggregated Scores for Four Angles of Parental Perception on *Yutori* Education

Angle	Mean	SD	Range	N
Freedom of choice	12.485	3.275	21.00	471
Efficiency	10.073	4.349	21.00	469
Equity	8.080	4.278	21.00	473
Social cohesion	12.439	2.914	18.00	462

Note: The maximum 24 is perfectly positive evaluation of *Yutori* education and positivism decline as the number gets closer to 3.

Source: Author.

The Education Committees were also asked how much they value aspects of freedom to choose, efficiency through competition among public schools (efficiency I), efficiency through competition between public-private schools (efficiency II), equity, and social cohesion in making their education policies. As shown in Table 3, on average, the education committees put more emphasis on freedom of choice and equity than efficiency and social cohesion. Competition between public and private schools is not considered much in general.

Table 3. Value of Freedom, Efficiency, Equity, and Social Cohesion in Education Policy of Local Education Committees

Angle	Mean	SD	Median	Range	N
Freedom of choice	6.02	1.77	6	7	61
Efficiency through: competition among public schools (I)	5.02	1.76	5	7	60
public-private competition (II)	3.38	1.77	3	7	60
Equity	6.18	1.69	6	7	60
Social cohesion	4.98	1.37	5	6	61

Note: 1=not considered to 8=highly considered
Source: Author.

3.1.2 Findings on Public-Private School Choice under *Yutori* Education

There are four major findings from the regression analysis on school choice as shown in Table 4. First, all models are statistically significant at 1 percent or 5 percent level. That is to say, all variables included in the models together explain parental school choice.

Second, it is revealed in Models (1) and (2) of Table 4 that consideration of public school is explained by T-score of school and mother's education level with statistical significance at 1 percent level and 5 percent level respectively. Household whose child is in school with higher T-score and whose mother with longer years of education thought less of public school, when holding other variables constant. Furthermore, household income, household expenditure, father's occupation being individual proprietor or manager, number of children, and local education policy on social cohesion and equity are statistically significant factors at 10 percent level. As for father's occupation, household with father being individual proprietor or manager think less of public school than those in other occupation. Household with a larger number of children think more of public school than household with a fewer number of children, when controlling other variables.

As for the effect of local education policy, where the education committee values social cohesion more, parents thought less of public school. It can be inferred that when parents see more uniform education system in public schools, they will choose private school even under the same public school choice system. Likewise, parents who have more public school options are not attracted to public school perhaps because of some disappointment by the public school programs after considering several options or deep-rooted distrust of public school system. It can also simply be interpreted in that public school choice system has been introduced in the place where private school going children occupies a fairly large proportion of enrollment (4) and that there was a need for the education committee to improve public schools for survival. However, the outcome of public school choice system may not yet be apparent since public schools would need more time to establish their new style of management and improve quality of education to attract parents who may naturally think of private school regardless of local education policy.

It is also revealed that local education policy on equity has an impact on parental consideration of public school with statistical significance at 10 percent level. Parents who reside in the location where the local education committee emphasizes more on equity tend to consider public school more, when holding other variables constant.

Third, as shown in Models (3) and (4) in Table 4, when holding SES, school factors, parental perception on *Yutori* education, and local education policies constant, father's occupation being private office worker and public office worker, size of school, parental perception on efficiency, local public school choice system in 2002 are all statistically significant factors at 1 percent or 5 percent level. When holding other variables constant, household with father being in either private office work or public office work will have more school options to consider than those in other occupation. Also, household whose child is in school with higher T-score had more school options to choose from than others, with all else being equal. Furthermore, parents who view *Yutori* education as less efficient had more school options. That is to say, parents who perceive the current education reform inefficient searched for other options, most likely, among private schools as an exit from public school system.

In relation to local education policy, where there are more public school choices, household considers more school options for a child to enter, when holding other variables constant. In other words, parents seem to utilize school choice system to some extent. However, it is also true that in those wards or cities where public school choice system had been introduced by 2002 have larger proportion of students who go to private school. Thus, it can be inferred that public school choice may have been utilized as options but parents who reside in the places with public school choice system may have had more options among private schools as well.

Fourth, influence of *Yutori* education on school choice is not affected by local education policies but determined by parental perception on efficiency, equity, and social cohesion of the education reform as shown in Models (5) and (6) in Table 4. Holding SES, school characteristics and local education policies constant, parents who see the education reform more inefficient, inequitable, and socially less cohesive were more influenced by *Yutori* education on choosing school. In addition, father's occupation being individual proprietor or manager and public office worker are contributing factors at 1 percent and 5 percent levels respectively and size of school also affects the influence of *Yutori* education on school choice with statistical significance at 10 percent level. When holding other variables constant, household with father being individual proprietor or manager or public office worker was less influenced by *Yutori* education on their school choice than that in other occupation, especially blue color occupation. Also, household whose child is in school with higher T-score was more influenced by *Yutori* education on school choice.

3.1.3 Findings on Expected Parental Behavior on Supplemental Education in Public School

When it comes to the factors that determine predictive parental behavior on supplemental education in public school, socio-economic status, school factors, local education policies, and parental perception on *Yutori* education are all statistically significant factors as shown in Table 5.

First, as shown in Models (1) and (2) in Table 5, parental expectation of bad influence on quality of

education in public school is determined by household income level, T-score of school, parental perception on efficiency and equity, and public school choice system in 2002 with statistical significance at 1 percent or 5 percent level, while father's occupation being individual proprietor and local education policy on equity are also statistically significant contributing factor at 10 percent level. Holding other variables constant, household with higher income or with father being individual proprietor or manager think more of bad influence of *Yutori* education. Also, household with child in school with higher T-score expects bad influence of *Yutori* education more than others, when controlling other variables. With regard to the impact of *Yutori* education, parents who think that *Yutori* education is more inefficient and inequitable expect bad influence of *Yutori* education. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that public school choice system in the location of residence significantly affects parental expectation of bad influence of the education reform. It is shown that parents who reside in the location where public school choice existed in 2002, when they chose junior high school for their child, felt bad influence of *Yutori* education more strongly, holding other variables constant. Here again, parents seem to feel more resentment to public school even when they have choices among public schools. Moreover, parents who reside in the location where the local education committee emphasizes on equity more expected bad influence of *Yutori* education, when holding other variables constant.

As for parental expectation of time constraint, statistically significant contributing factors are household expenditure and parental perception on efficiency of *Yutori* education at 1 percent level and father's occupation being individual proprietor or manager at 10 percent level, as shown in Models (3) and (4) in Table 5. When holding other variables constant, parents who perceive the education reform more inefficient expect more time constraint. Also, household with father being individual proprietor or manager expect more time constraint due to *Yutori* education, holding other variables constant. None of the local education policies seem to have statistically significant effect on parental expectation of time constraint born by the current education reform.

With regard to possibility of increasing supplementary education due to academic concern, had the sample child gone to public school, the determinant factors are household with father being individual proprietor or manager, parental perception on efficiency, equity, and social cohesion of *Yutori* education, public school choice system in 2002 with statistical significance at 1 percent or 5 percent level. In addition, T-score of school and the proportion of students in assigned public school are also statistically significant at 10 percent level. When holding other variables constant, household with father being individual proprietor or manager and with child being in school with higher T-score is likely to increase supplementary education, if their child had gone to public school. It is also shown that parents who perceive *Yutori* education as more inefficient, inequitable, and socially less cohesive are likely to increase spending on supplementary education for their child in public school. Furthermore, household who resides in the location where public school choice system was already in place in 2002 and there are more students in proportion are enrolled in assigned public school by the local education committee thinks more of increasing supplementary education, were their child in public school.

Finally, as for possibility of increasing supplementary education due to time concern of *Yutori* education, parental perception on *Yutori* education and local education policy are statistically significant

determinant factors, while none of the socio-economic and school factors are influential factors. In fact, holding other variables constant, parents who perceive *Yutori* education as more inefficient, inequitable, and less cohesive are likely to increase their spending on supplementary education due to time concern. It is also shown that household who resides in the location where education committee has more open public school choice system but there are more students in proportion enrolled in officially assigned public school is likely to increase supplementary education.

In sum, local education policies have a statistically significant impact on school choice and predicted parental behavior on supplemental education in public school over and above socio-economic status, school characteristics, and parental perception on *Yutori* education. It can also be said that parental perception on *Yutori* education is powerful determinant of school choice in general and supplementary education in public school in particular, beyond socio-economic status, school factors, and local education policies.

Table 4. Results of Regression Analyses: Public-Private School Choice

	Consideration of public school		School options		Influence of Yutori education on school choice	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Income	-.100†		-.007		-.094	
(10 levels)	(-1.894)		(-.250)		(-1.542)	
Expenditure		.006†		-.0009		-.001
(in 10,000 yen)		(1.868)		(-.516)		(-.410)
Father's occupation:						
Individual	-.552†	-.633†	.174	-.003	-.580	-.782*
Proprietor/Manager	(-1.732)	(-1.919)	(.974)	(-.019)	(-1.572)	(-2.117)
Private office	-.206	-.311	.346*	.225	-.025	-.248
worker	(-.772)	(-1.083)	(2.315)	(1.441)	(-.080)	(-.769)
Public office	-.431	-.489	.590**	.455*	-1.403**	-1.544**
worker	(-1.184)	(-1.261)	(2.909)	(2.182)	(-3.324)	(3.553)
Mother's education	-.093	-.173*	.013	.034	-.076	-.079
(yrs. of education)	(-1.352)	(-2.398)	(.333)	(.854)	(-.956)	(-.978)
Number of children in	.279†	.208	-.155†	-.162†	.038	-.151
household	(1.786)	(1.201)	(-1.779)	(-1.719)	(.212)	(-.790)
T-Score of school	-.052**	-.059**	.016	.013	-.003	-.014
	(-2.735)	(-2.880)	(1.554)	(1.193)	(-.148)	(-.600)
Size of school	.220	.123	.297**	.282*	.378†	.296
	(1.169)	(.600)	(2.807)	(2.519)	(1.732)	(1.290)
Public School Choice	-.161	-.150	.113*	.104†	.128	.161
(2002)	(-1.599)	(-1.362)	(2.016)	(1.740)	(1.102)	(1.307)
Students in assigned	.007	.006	.006	.007	.001	.008
public school (%)	(.842)	(.642)	(1.305)	(1.360)	(.100)	(.745)
Local edu. policy on:	.064	.069	-.037	-.041	.043	.019
Efficiency	(1.076)	(1.074)	(-1.117)	(-1.179)	(.623)	(.259)
Equity	.195†	.125	-.076	-.079	.172	.092
	(1.932)	(1.138)	(-1.351)	(-1.316)	(1.474)	(.742)
Social Cohesion	-.234†	-.250†	.097	.122	-.108	-.022
	(-1.820)	(-1.805)	(1.344)	(1.623)	(-.721)	(-.143)
Parental Perception						
on:	-.018	-.008	-.005	-.009	-.014	-.037
Freedom of choice	(-.518)	(-.205)	(-.279)	(-.466)	(-.349)	(-.891)
Efficiency	.030	.022	-.035*	-.039*	-.054	-.093*
	(.951)	(.641)	(-2.016)	(-2.042)	(-1.472)	(-2.375)
Equity	.004	.015	-.020	-.023	-.095**	-.107**
	(.119)	(.414)	(-1.154)	(-1.203)	(-2.614)	(-2.714)
Social Cohesion	.040	.036	.023	.029	-.081†	-.094†
	(.943)	(.799)	(.976)	(1.180)	(-1.659)	(-1.877)
Constant	4.315**	5.896**	1.635	1.640	7.219**	8.808**
	(2.285)	(2.858)	(1.542)	(1.449)	(3.201)	(3.809)
R square	.113	.129	.191	.181	.171	.202
N	354	309	350	306	354	309
Model fit	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.

Note: †significant at .10 level, *significant at .05 level and **significant at .01 level. Numbers in parenthesis are t-value.

Consideration of public school is measured by 1=not considered at all to 8=very much considered. School options variable denotes number of school options considered when entering public junior high school.

Influence of Yutori education on school choice is measured by 1=not influenced at all to 8=very much influenced.

Source: Author.

Table 5. Regression Results:
Expected Parental Behavior in Increasing Supplementary Education in Public School

	Expect bad influence		Expect time constraint		Think of increasing supplemental education due to:			
					Academic concern		Time concern	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Income	.080* (2.178)		-.012 (-.218)		.003 (.099)		.015 (.438)	
Expenditure		.001 (.592)		.009** (2.647)		-.0005 (-.248)		-.0001 (-.048)
Father's occupation:								
Individual	.185 (.843)	.377† (1.684)	.564† (1.688)	.345 (1.022)	.400* (2.179)	.514** (2.783)	.102 (.494)	.284 (1.378)
Proprietor/Manager								
Private office	-.216 (-1.172)	-.228 (-1.168)	-.008 (-.003)	-.041 (-.139)	.150 (.974)	.182 (1.132)	-.029 (-.169)	.014 (.077)
worker								
Public office	-.231 (-.919)	-.044 (-.168)	-.569 (-1.493)	-.411 (-1.037)	-.074 (-.354)	.058 (.269)	-.202 (-.860)	.027 (.110)
worker								
Mother's education	.023 (.491)	.033 (.683)	-.075 (-1.043)	-.045 (-.611)	-.012 (-.301)	.007 (.183)	-.011 (-.243)	-.008 (-.175)
(yrs. of education)								
Number of children	-.134 (-1.248)	-.156 (-1.331)	.007 (.046)	-.112 (-.630)	.047 (.523)	.081 (.838)	.005 (.046)	.048 (.445)
in household								
T-Score of school	.035** (2.711)	.031* (2.201)	-.003 (-.166)	-.009 (-.444)	.020† (1.833)	.016 (1.419)	.013 (1.076)	.013 (1.009)
Size of school	.013 (.103)	.027 (.195)	-.108 (-.546)	-.118 (-.561)	.118 (1.077)	.080 (.701)	.119 (.971)	.104 (.811)
Public School Choice	.150* (2.169)	.154* (2.058)	-.058 (-.555)	-.037 (-.326)	.109† (1.881)	.165** (2.666)	.105 (1.617)	.164* (2.374)
(2002)								
Students in assigned	.008 (1.327)	.006 (1.005)	-.004 (-.486)	-.006 (-.555)	.007 (1.466)	.008† (1.655)	.011† (1.920)	.011† (1.949)
public school (%)								
Local Edu. policy on:								
Efficiency	-.001 (-.032)	-.023 (-.527)	-.027 (-.434)	-.014 (-.216)	.012 (.353)	.006 (.175)	-.001 (-.030)	-.020 (-.487)
Equity	.116† (1.674)	.109 (1.450)	-.006 (-.056)	-.102 (-.906)	.020 (.347)	.026 (.428)	-.015 (-.233)	-.002 (-.304)
Social Cohesion	.085 (.962)	.081 (.863)	.124 (.921)	.182 (1.287)	.041 (.555)	.006 (.810)	.016 (.198)	.078 (.904)
Parental perception								
on:								
Freedom of choice	-.004 (-.188)	-.010 (-.400)	-.042 (-1.176)	-.005 (-.132)	.004 (.188)	-.0007 (-.036)	.027 (1.235)	.020 (.841)
Efficiency	-.058** (-2.690)	-.057* (-2.409)	-.175** (-5.319)	-.201** (-5.640)	-.040* (-2.178)	-.043* (-2.222)	-.074** (-3.660)	-.082** (-3.772)
Equity	-.116** (-5.400)	-.124** (-5.214)	.006 (.181)	.009 (.248)	-.058** (-3.245)	-.065** (-3.305)	-.039† (-1.949)	-.052* (-2.379)
Social Cohesion	-.020 (-.700)	-.025 (-.832)	-.041 (-.927)	-.040 (-.885)	-.054* (-2.241)	-.046† (-1.845)	-.032 (-1.199)	-.030 (-1.091)
Constant	4.429** (3.393)	5.269** (3.763)	8.203** (4.139)	7.828** (3.716)	6.229** (5.706)	5.857** (5.070)	6.388** (5.226)	6.147** (4.768)
R square	.281	.283	.161	.192	.206	.220	.171	.206
N	353	309	351	308	352	308	352	308
Model fit	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.

Note: †significant at .10 level, *significant at .05 level and **significant at .01 level. Numbers in parenthesis are t-value.

Source: Author.

1. Conclusion: Policy Implications on Teacher Training

The introduction of *Yutori* education brought about controversy on education system in Japan. The education reform is an everlasting and important theme in any country, but it is particularly so in post-industrialized Japan. It is critical not only because basic education builds the foundation for a nation but also because the current education reform is being implemented with unsteady steps and causing loss of interest in public school among increasing number of parents. At the end of the year 2004, PISA study disclosed the result of fifteen-year-old students' achievement in 41 nations and reported that the deviation of those who perform well and those who do not perform well has been widened in Japan as compared to the study in 2000 (Kokuritsu-Kyouiku-Seisaku Kenkyujo 2004). It is also estimated that the proportion of students who take the entrance exam of private school has reached as high as 16 percent for the first time in Tokyo and surrounding prefectures this year (Nichinoken 2005). It is evident that *Yutori* education inevitably confronts with issues of quality and equity of education. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) has just started to review the education reform and amend some contents of the Course of Study for elementary and junior high school curriculum.

In face of such an unstable path of *Yutori* education, this article attempted to examine how parents reacted to the *Yutori* education initiative in 2002 in terms of school choice and supplementary education and to analyze what factors influence different parental behaviors in private spending on education and school choice in face of *Yutori* education. It was found that parents in general have deep concern about *Yutori* education and such anxieties drove parents, especially fathers in blue color occupation, to choose private school more than before. As a result, many parents who had not thought of sending their children to private school chose private school in 2002. In predictive terms, parents of public school students are likely to invest in supplementary education more than others if they believe that *Yutori* education is inefficient and inequitable. While the national data shows that private spending on education by parents of public school students shows a decreasing trend (MEXT various years), it is likely that the gap between parents who increased supplementary education due to *Yutori* education and those who did not is widened. It can therefore be noted that parents reacted to *Yutori* education in different ways and there is more gap in investment and interest in basic education in Japan under the current education reform. Since the research did not include samples from public school, the future task will be to investigate the actual variability and equity in private spending among parents of public school students.

This research also showed that private spending on education is affected by household wealth and other socio-economic factors but that the reform factors are also important determinant of private spending on education via school choice. More importantly, it is revealed that parents choose private school not only by overall disappointment with public education and anxieties about philosophy of *Yutori* education, but also by observing local implementation of the education reform. Where local education committees prioritize social cohesion in the education policy, parents tend to choose private school over public school. As many parents indicated, if public schools can provide diverse and quality education beyond the "minimum" curriculum, parents may choose public school. Likewise, if quality of education in public school improves, parents will not have to send their children to supplementary education.

The current education reform does not show clear information on what parents can expect at school

site with regard to quality and equity of education. Dissemination of proper information on the current education reform and its monitoring and feedback system will be necessary. Also, financial and technical support to school and designation of decision making power to school in personnel and financial management will be critical to make the current decentralization movement more meaningful. As long as the current education reform is implemented without any financial and technical support and no power attached to school in terms of personnel and financial management, the real change at school site can hardly be expected. Japanese schools are fully involved in academic content and its evaluation but leaves roles and responsibilities of personnel and financial management to local education committees and the MEXT according to the result of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted in 2003 (Schleicher 2005). Thus, in order to embody decentralization of education services to go beyond the “minimum curriculum”, there should be some measures to activate school management as well as financial support service to socio-economically disadvantaged household to generate fair school choice and economic burden of education at basic education level.

Furthermore, quality of education in public school needs to be improved: in particular, how to manage comprehensive classes is of great importance among teachers. When *Yutori* education was introduced in April 2002, public expenditure per junior high school student in Tokyo decreased by 20,415 yen per student, while the expenditure increased by 25,438 yen on average in all parts of Japan (MEXT 2002 and 2003). Also, budgetary allocation within junior-secondary sub-sector in Tokyo has not changed much between 2001 and 2002. In 2001, only 4.6 percent of total expenditure was allocated to educational activities and it is still only 4.5 percent that was spent on educational activities in 2002 (TMG 2002; TMG 2003). Therefore, considering the fact that per capita expenditure has decreased and budgetary allocation for educational activities remain unchanged in Tokyo, per-student expenditure on educational activities is likely to have declined between 2001 and 2002. Thus, it can be seen that there was no financial measure to make *Yutori* education smoothly take off such as teacher training and adoption of external human and physical resources to run comprehensive learning classes. The reality is that existing teachers are faced with the situation whereby they have to manage new endeavor set under *Yutori* education for themselves and it is only if they are lucky that human and physical resources are donated by local community on voluntary basis, the extent of which varies widely by locality. It is in this respect that higher education in the area of teacher and principal training would require great attention.

Without a proper training for teachers in public schools, parental concern on *Yutori* education will not be decreased or diminished. Absence of special financial and technical support to teachers and principals in public schools under *Yutori* education may principally be the reason why parents think that *Yutori* education is inefficient. The MEXT's emphasis on *Yutori* education as “the minimum requirement” can be interpreted as “the minimum input” and this is why parents would pay even more for supplementary education in public school. If the new approach to basic education is to be introduced, the initial public financial and technical support would be necessary. If parents see improved quality of education including comprehensive learning classes, the situation may be different. Good choices would be widely available regardless of public and private schools and parents and students will be able to “choose” from various school programs regardless of their socio-economic status. The current education

policy without any financial and technical support does not seem to generate real good choices or sustain quality and equity of education. If this situation continues, educational service that meets students' needs is only available outside school. Since learning cost outside school is solely determined by household income and number of children (5), the consequence is that educational quality and choice will be controlled by wealth of family; and the number of children is likely to further decline if parents pursue quality education for each child.

Note

- (1) Gini-coefficient of household income before tax changed from 0.349 in 1980 to 0.439 in 1992, while that of after tax has also increased from 0.314 to 0.365 (Tachibanaki, 1998: 5).
- (2) However, the characteristics of these sample schools are verified with the average characteristics of private schools in Tokyo in terms of variability of academic level (t-score), annex to high school, religious orientation, and location (located in 6 wards). On the other hand, sample schools are different from the average in respect of gender distribution and size of school. Public schools were originally targeted, but cooperation from principals of 26 public schools contacted could not be obtained.
- (3) Pilot studies were conducted twice in New York and Tokyo in May-June 2004 with five parents and 30 parents respectively.
- (4) The data shows that the average proportion of students in officially assigned public school, non-assigned public school, and private school in 2002 were 59.4%, 16.2%, and 24.3% respectively in areas with free public school choice system while those of areas with no public school choice system shows 80.2%, 1.8%, and 18% respectively.
- (5) According to the author's analysis, household with higher income level and a fewer number of children spends more on learning cost outside school, when holding other socio-economic status constant.

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教員訓練への示唆：日本における学校選択の分析(要約)

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2002年の教育改革以降、その是非について幅広い論争が繰り広げられている。最低限の教育レベルを確保するという、地方分権化の一步とも取れる視点と、縮小された学習指導要領の下での私立校と公立校の教育の質や機会の格差の拡大を問題とする視点が数多く聞かれてきた。こうした議論の背景には、我が国において、教育の格差というものが研究の対象としてタブー視され、経年的に比較できるデータが不足していることに加え、急速な近代化の中で、国民的な教育熱と私的教育費用負担に支えられ、教育政策の中で教育の公平性という課題が、科学的データを基に扱われることがなかったという問題がある。本稿では、こうした問題意識の下、親の学校選択が、ゆとり教育の下でどのような要因により規定されているかを分析し、教育政策への一助となるために教員訓練への示唆を導き出すことを目的とした。東京都内の私立中学に在籍する中学2年生を持つ477世帯と首都圏の76教育委員会から収集した独自のデータを基に重回帰分析を行った結果、家庭の社会経済的背景と現在通っている学校要因を一定に保った上で、ゆとり教育に関する保護者の考え方が学校選択に大きく影響しており、特にゆとり教育の下での教育の効率性と公平性への保護者の低い評価が公立校離れを促進していることが判明した。また、子どもを公立校に通わせたことを想定した場合、ゆとり教育の効率性と公平性への保護者の低い評価が、塾や家庭教師等の補習教育を増大させることに繋がっているとの予測的結論を得た。言い換えれば、公立校の教育の質の改善が、現在の教育システムの効率性と公平性を高めることによって、保護者の公立校への期待感につながり、ひいては私立校や補習校に頼らざるを得ない状況を改善する可能性が指摘できる。2002年の教育改革に当っては、特段の財政措置も取られず、総合学習の時間の活用方法についても、教員に一任しているのが現状である。教員や校長への財政的、技術的支援なしに、教育の質と公平性を確保することは困難であり、この分野における高等教育の役割が期待されるところである。