

## **For better education in remote areas**

### 1. Motivation behind Research Paper

Which do you think is better, a school with few students or a school with many students? Even though remote area education is increasing, I would like to see more education in which children in the future can gain the knowledge and experience they need in society, so I chose remote area education as the theme. Also, there are remote areas in Nara Prefecture where I live, and I felt that there was something I, as a student, could do to address school issues from the student's point of view.

### 2. Introduction

In order to achieve the final goal of this paper, “thinking about better educational methods based on the characteristics of education in isolated areas,” a detailed survey of education in isolated areas was conducted. A study conducted by Monbukagakusho states that remote area education is an educational method in which children attend classes at elementary and junior high schools in remote areas such as mountains and isolated islands, which are not close to cities. In addition, the number of children and students is small, ranging from a few to several dozen, and education in isolated areas is increasing year by year, which has become a major educational problem in modern times. Some of the education in remote areas reduces the number of schools, or creates "multiple classes" where children from multiple grades study together in one grade, such as grades 1 and 2, or multiple

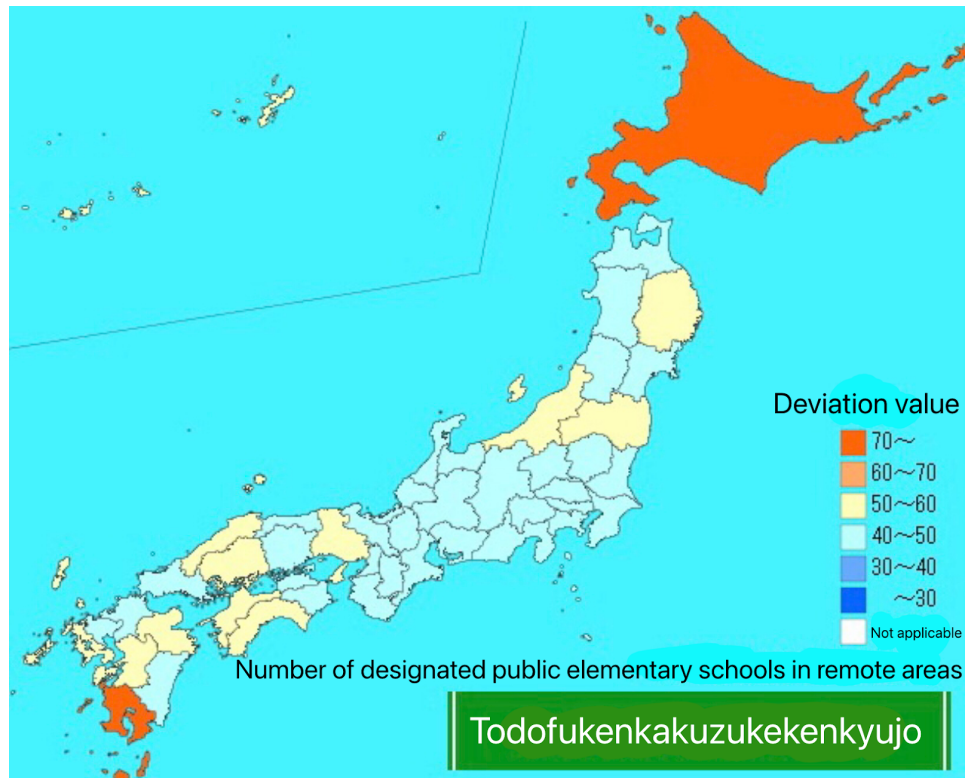
schools. At present, it is difficult to maintain schools with a certain number of students in isolated and remote areas because many people live in urban areas or in unbalanced areas.

The data collected for this study will include online sources and articles on some websites. Also, I considered it myself from the opinions of people who said in online articles and the characteristics of education in remote areas.

### 3. Results and Analysis

First, I tried to think about why education in remote areas occurs based on literature and research. In my opinion, the declining birthrate and aging population caused by the declining population are, of course, due to the fact that people no longer live in depopulated and isolated areas. People who used to live in isolated areas are thought to have come to live in cities, such as Tokyo, because they no longer feel the benefits and attractions of those areas.

It was then important to find out specifically why such areas are not attractive. According to the Prefectural Rating Research Institute document shown in Figure 1, Hokkaido has the largest number of public elementary schools designated as isolated areas of the 47 prefectures with 467 schools, followed by Kagoshima Prefecture with 250 schools, and 112 schools in Nagasaki Prefecture, which has the third largest number. On the other hand, prefectures such as Kanagawa, Osaka and Ibaraki have a small number of public elementary schools designated as isolated areas.



*Figure 1. Todofuken Kakuzuke Kenkyujo (2012)*

Many of the common characteristics of places with remote education are small populations, lack of environmental facilities and digitalization, few children and elderly people making up the majority of the population, inconvenient transportation, and few commercial facilities and offices.

Next is the consideration of the merits and demerits of education in remote areas by referring to literature and papers and dividing them into the viewpoints of students and teachers and schools. The benefits for students include a wealth of educational activities such as nature experiences, traditional cultural activities, and industrial education unique to remote areas. In addition, because the number of students is small, students can receive detailed instruction, according to each individual. Through multiple classes, students can learn from each other across

grades and schools, learn about the hierarchical relationship between seniors and juniors, and be deeply involved with friends. The disadvantages are that the number of schools is small, so it takes time and money to travel, and the number of students is small, so there is little off-campus training. Also, group activities are restricted, so it is difficult to acquire diverse ideas, thoughts and language skills. Sometimes communication is not possible due to fixed human relationships.

The advantage for teachers and schools is that the number of students is small, so the burden of classes and class work is less and there is more time to spare. Also, since teachers can communicate properly with each student, they can have a better relationship with each student. The disadvantage is that one person has multiple grades and classes, so it is easy to be a burden. In addition, there are cases where there are no opportunities for in-school training between teachers, and it is not possible to create a lively school. Based on these merits and demerits, it is necessary to consider better educational methods in remote areas.

Following this information, an investigation was carried out into what kind of efforts are actually being made in isolated areas in Japan. Since 2004, the Hokkaido University of Education has been conducting the Remote School Experience Practicum. This is a teaching practice by university students at elementary and junior high schools in remote areas. At each school, they experienced not only teaching practice but also farm activities and community life. As a result of this remote area school experience training, the trainees gave the following feedback: "I was able to actually see and learn about the classroom layout, how to spend time with children, and how to proceed with classes unique to a small school," "I was able to see and

learn about the good points of a remote area, the desire to take care of the lower grades on their own arises,” “The higher the grade, the more time the class is led by the leader of the child.”

In 2014, Tokunoshima Town in Kagoshima Prefecture started an initiative to improve classes in small-group, multiple-class classes by utilising ICT. As shown in Fig. 2, this is called the "Tokunoshima Model". Using a video conferencing system, interactive lessons are held at two small schools in different locations, and two remote schools are placed in one classroom. A joint class will be organised, and teachers from both schools will mainly be in charge of one grade each. It was the first nationwide effort to transcend the distance between two schools and treat the same grades "just like one class space".

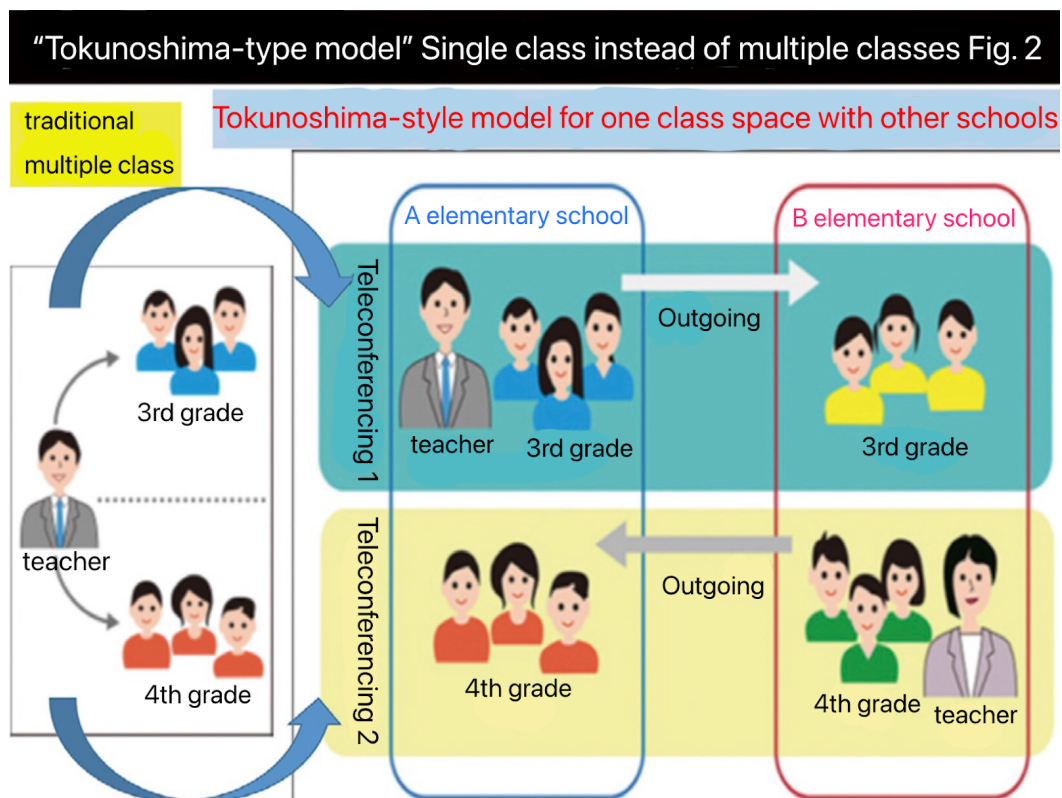


Figure 2. Kagoshima Prefecture Tokunoshima Town Board of Education(2021)

As an effect of the Tokunoshima-style model, it was difficult to take advantage of the specialties of the limited number of teachers, but they were able to improve the quality of the lessons by teaching each other's areas of expertise. In addition to classes, field trips and swimming classes are positioned as joint classes, making it possible to build mutual friendships. Also, there are results of data comparing self-evaluation through the National Academic Ability/Learning Situation Survey and distance learning . Excerpts from the data show that 28.5% of the nationwide survey agreed with the question, "When I discuss with my friends, I am able to accept their thoughts and have my own thoughts." This amount was 34.6% for the students who were asked the same question. In a national survey, 32.3% of respondents agreed with the statement, "When I was discussing with classmates in class, I understood what was being discussed, listened to the other person's thoughts until the end, and conveyed my thoughts clearly." On the other hand, 33.1% of the students who received distance learning agreed. In this way, it can be seen that the students' way of thinking and how they interact with others had a positive impact on distance learning. By applying ICT equipment to the multiple teaching techniques that have been cultivated so far, teachers were able to develop learning activities that take advantage of the benefits of remote joint classes.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Problems

In the preparation of this paper, it is important to understand that education in remote areas is an educational method in which children are taught in schools located in areas with few residents, far from urban areas. It turns out that each school is devising various methods to improve this education. To answer this paper's

question, "What can be done to best educate students in schools with education in remote areas?" I believe that there are advantages as well as disadvantages to education in remote areas, so it's important to think about what classes are appropriate for students and teachers, find specific ways to improve them, and actively work on them.

As a challenge for the future, it is necessary to make efforts to increase the number of people, since the reason for the creation of remote areas is, of course, the declining birthrate and ageing population, but also the lack of attractiveness, such as inconvenient transportation and lack of facilities and events that internet for young people.

## 5. Reflection

I had never heard of education in remote areas and had no interest in the characteristics and educational issues of each region until this exploration. However, through this exploration, I was impressed by the various efforts being made by each community and school for students and teachers, and by the fact that not only one school but several schools were teaching together in some areas. I also gained a deeper understanding of students' lives at school, communication among students, and expanded my knowledge of educational issues. I would like to make use of what I have learned through this exploration to gain a broader perspective, acquire a wider range of knowledge and values, and proactively explore things in the future.

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