



Japanese children on their way home from elementary school (c. 2018)

YUTORI KYŌIKU

August 16, 2017

Charlie and José were discussing the article below:

"20% of Japanese junior high school students score a zero on nationwide English writing test"

José Cruz: The Ministry doesn't care if you have any (Mm hmm) communicative skill. (Yeah) They will say, oh it'd be nice if you did (Well their) but really we want writing and reading.

Charlie Bell: The headline now, nowadays if you go on their, on their website or read any information you know about their- their strategy towards English teaching it's all about active learning and you know, don't worry about- don't worry about grammar and just give it a go, and you know, measuring on trying. You know it's all about, "tried to," not, can do. But that's complete rubbish that's not what they're do- You know they, they say one thing and do something completely different.

José: It's true. I roll my eyes at stuff like that. Because you're probably too young to remember this term, but tell me if you do. Um there was a ph- phase back in the late 90s when Japan tried out this thing under the first **Abe Shinzo** government (Mm hmm) called "**yutori kyōiku**". Or what's called (Yaki-) gentle education? (Yutori) Yutori kyōiku. So the idea that um...

Charlie: Oh, I've never heard of it.

José: Kids don't need to go to school on Saturdays. Uh, schools (OK) should finish at 4:00 in the afternoon and and... (They should) And they should, but what ended up happening because they didn't change the university entrance exam standards **is that** these kids and their parents were panicking wondering how am I going make it into university entrance (Mm hmm) and it just created an opportunity for the cram schools to actually (Yeah yeah yeah) increase hours. So the parents were paying the junior high schools what they were paying last year for less education, and were forced to pay more to the cram schools for more hours for the students to catch up. (Yeah) And nothing changed, it made things worse. It made- I got a wave for about ten years of way worse students in all levels, like their class attitude, their general rational thinking skills, of course their English skills, and their general human skills (Well they) and now it's better because that got stopped but I...

Charlie: They don't get time to sleep you know these kids (Yeah) they wake up at the crack of dawn. They go- Some of my (It's sad) high school students say, you know we've got early class. What's early class? They say, oh there's a class before school starts, (Mm hmm) from 8:00 until 9:00 I was like, you know that just means that first period starts at 8:00 instead of 9:00. No no no it's, it's before class, it's before school, sorry. You know

it's school. Oh, and then after school, what do you do? Oh I have to do you know, club activities, which is pretty much mandatory if (Yeah) you **want to** stay- you know, if you want to keep your friends. (Yes it is) And then you go to cram school and then you go home at 10:00 or you know, what? And you just, you do your homework (Mm mm) Ha ha.

José: I remember when I just came to Japan and riding the bus home after work- After you know maybe a couple of weeks in Japan, and I would see these kids. And I wouldn't- and I couldn't quite understand why they were all grouped around this one bus stop at 9:00 at night wearing their pitch black military uniforms waiting to go home. And I was looking really close and you know, these kids were like 15, 16 years old. What are they doing out at 9:00 at night? And eventually I came to understand those were kids just leaving their cram school (Yeah) all of

them together. And you know they weren't going home to get some sleep or they weren't you know, doing whatever they should be doing.

Charlie: They're doing homework at the bus stop. That's what I see (It's insane) everyday when I go home. They're, they're sat at the bus stop in the pitch black trying to do their homework. (Mm mm) And like, you know the parents- Oh, I **don't know** It's- there's too many-

José: They're they're- we can go on forever. There's...

Charlie: We could go- we have gone on forever.

Word count	Time	Words/Min.
719	3:17	218.98

Pointers:

Abe Shinzo: Yutori kyōiku was begun in 1989 and the Prime Minister of Japan was **Takeshita Noboru** (0:43)

yutori kyōiku: translated officially to, "**relaxed education**" (0:45)

is that: pronounced, "**IZZAT**" (1:06)

want to: pronounced, "**WANNA**" (2:14)

don't know: pronounced, "**DUHNO**" (3:11)

Discussion:

What were your school start and finish times?

Do schools put too much pressure on students?

What are the best ideas for education?

VOA ARTICLE: "20% OF JAPANESE STUDENTS SCORE A ZERO ON NATIONWIDE ENGLISH TEST"
<https://bit.ly/2AY0QJt>

IMAGE COURTESY RAY IN MANILA
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/21186555@N07/41786846054/>

