

Call for papers: *Educational Studies in Japan* Vol. 15. 2021

Special Issue: "*Ibasho*," Youth Participation, and Education

Submission deadline: September 15, 2020

*Ibasho* (居場所) is a Japanese term for "a place or community where one feels at home," composed of "i" for being or existing and "basho" for place. *Ibasho*, originally a phrase in everyday conversation, came to be used by policy papers and academic associations in the 1990s. Truancy became a serious educational problem in the late 1980s in Japan. The Ministry of Education published a report on truancy in 1992, subtitled with "to make each school an *Ibasho* for everyone." After the report, a lot of publications focused on the theme of *Ibasho*, which has been discussed frequently by academic associations such as education, sociology, and psychology in Japan.

There are three main reasons why *Ibasho* has become popular. First, the conditions of child-rearing worsened; nuclear families and lack of traditional communities resulted in less support for child-raising. Second, the national and societal safety net weakened, partly because of rapid globalization. Finally, the collective teaching method lost effectiveness in schools, although it had been the main style of teaching for a long time in Japan. These made people start to pay more attention to "making *Ibasho*" as an alternative for children out of the school system.

The concept of *Ibasho* may contain the following three elements: a comfortable place, reliable human relations, and a belief in the near future. The typical functions of *Ibasho* may include three aspects. One is a shelter from the pressure of the outer world. For example, so-called free schools and free spaces are often shelters for absentees. Second, a place for empowerment. People gain the power to struggle against the pressures of the outer world by experiencing *Ibasho*. Third, *Ibasho* is a place of self-actualization. In this safe place, people enjoy or make an effort to enrich their lives regardless of the outer society. However, we need to remember the negative functions of *Ibasho* as well: it is generally a closed community and sometimes excludes or discriminates against outsiders and deviants. While absentees may feel that they have been kicked out of schools, they may also take a turn to deliberate victimhood.

Themes or issues that such papers may address are as follows:

- "*Ibasho*" for NEET or "hikikomori"
- Safe place for "futoko" (absentees), immigrant youth, and socially vulnerable people
- Education policy and welfare
- Inclusive education
- Comparative analysis of "*Ibasho*"