



HOUSUJUKU: ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN SAGA PREFECTURE, JAPAN

Saga Prefecture, Japan—

- Established in 1999, *Housujuku* (HSJ; “a school offering entrepreneurship education”) provides entrepreneurship education with the aim of developing and fostering talent in the region.
- HSJ provides entrepreneurship education by utilising its industry-academia-government network, contributing to the development of business and adult learning through hands-on activities such as internships and programmes in collaboration with companies.
- Approximately 5 000 elementary to high school students have received career education through HSJ, helping them develop skills that are required to evaluate potential career paths, while over 600 individuals have graduated from its business school, some of whom have been able to list their companies on the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

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● Theme

SMEs and entrepreneurship |
Economic and community
development

● Tag

Innovation | Youth

● Geographical scale

City

● Geographic scale

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● Keyword

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● Countries

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What are the objectives?

Saga Prefecture, located in the northwest corner of the Kyushu Island, is one the smallest prefectures in Japan, with a population of approximately 800 000 people. In the late 1990s, the prefecture faced challenges regarding economic decline and needed to develop capacities for entrepreneurship and innovation. However, there were only a few young people with an active entrepreneurial spirit, and insufficient opportunities for collaboration and learning within the region.

To address these challenges, the Bank of Saga established the Saga Venture Business Council in 1997 as an organisation for entrepreneurship education, which was chaired by the bank's then-president. Local industries, in collaboration with universities, took the lead in developing entrepreneurs, and by 1999, *Housuujuku* (HSJ; "a school offering entrepreneurship education") opened as a business school for working adults with the aim of developing and revitalising entrepreneurship and innovation in the region.

How does it work in practice?

HSJ's entrepreneurial education takes a practical approach that enables students to develop the strategic thinking skills required for entrepreneurship by allowing them to think and discuss among themselves. The initial objectives of HSJ were to provide university students and working adults with entrepreneurship education, in areas such as market research, resource management, product manufacturing and experimental sales. However, after being commissioned by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to carry out a career education project for three years, the school transitioned from being a voluntary organisation to a non-profit organisation (NPO), expanding the scope of its activities.

Based on the curriculum for working adults, the school now applies similar education methods to a wider age range, including primary, junior high, high school, and university students, while also incorporating education practices to equip them for future careers. Hands-on activities such as internships and programmes for manufacturing and sales have also been implemented in collaboration with companies, to foster entrepreneurial mindsets. Moreover, HSJ also aims to help students acquire practical skills through its education programme, which is supported by a strong network of industry, academia and government.

HSJ's programmes are publicly funded by both Saga City and Saga Prefecture. After the METI project was completed, the Economic Department of Saga City began supporting HSJ's entrepreneurship education with funds for its activities. The school has since increased its funds by undertaking projects other than entrepreneurship education on behalf of Saga City and Saga Prefecture, such as offering consulting services related to highly profitable business start-ups, as well as through *Furusato Nozei* (a national programme that allows taxpayers to pay a portion of their taxes to a regional area, often in exchange for gifts or local specialties) which financially supports NPOs. However, HSJ is seeking to increase its independence from public funding by diversifying their sources of income, such as through monetising their own projects and inviting companies to the school.

What has been the impact?

Thus far, over 600 individuals have graduated the business school, while approximately 5 000 elementary to high school students have received career education. Some entrepreneurs who attended HSJ have been able to list their companies on the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

Furthermore, HSJ's work contributes to economic development in Saga City and the broader region. The school seeks to create a virtuous circle in which the human resources cultivated through entrepreneurship education and their networks contribute to a succession of innovation originating from Saga. For example, many local entrepreneurs open their business in the region and those originally from Saga who were initially active in Tokyo and other cities, have returned to Saga. As such, this has contributed to Saga's economic growth, as well as regional and city-centre revitalisation through entrepreneurs filling vacant spaces and opening new shops and offices.

HSJ's leading efforts in providing entrepreneurship education has been praised nationwide, with the school receiving multiple awards since its establishment. For example, in 2003, HSJ won the prestigious Nikkei Shimbun Award which led to the beginning of various inter-regional collaboration initiatives, such as their alliance with the *Internet Shimin Juku* (a school where citizens offer courses of their own making by utilising the internet) in Toyama Prefecture. Other awards include the 2010 Regional Development Award from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, as well as the Fostering Entrepreneurial Momentum Award which HSJ received from the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency within METI.

What can other communities learn from this example?

Providing spaces for different generations to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and skills is essential for communities that are also struggling with low rates of entrepreneurship and innovation. Entrepreneurial education also remains pivotal for areas with stagnating economies, particularly considering that local entrepreneurs from HSJ have been key to the economic development of Saga City, through revitalising the local community with their businesses. Moreover, private-sector leadership has also proven crucial in developing these initiatives, considering the important roles played by the Bank of Saga and the Saga Venture Business Council in founding HSJ.

Further information

- [Housuujuku's main website](#) (in Japanese)
- [Tourism Promotion Division | Saga City Official Homepage](#)

OECD resources

OECD (2023), OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2023, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/342b8564-en>

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OECD (2024), Mobilising the Elderly for Economic and Community Development: The Leaf Business in Kamikatsu, Japan, [Mobilising the Elderly for Economic and Community Development: The Leaf Business in Kamikatsu, Japan \(oecd.org\)](#)