

Staffing

In order to fulfill the Kominkan's specialized functions, a system was established in the Social Education Act for official certification of experts in social education. This system plays a significant role in the support and development of Kominkan activities.

Types of Employees

Kominkan have staff members including a director, Kominkan Chief Coordinator, and others. By law, the director is responsible for such things as planning and implementation of the various Kominkan projects and directing the other staff members. The Kominkan Chief Coordinator, under the supervision of the director, is responsible for implementing Kominkan activities. In addition to these staff, there are also part-time staff members.

Employment

In order to become a Kominkan staff member, one must be employed as a civil servant in the relevant municipality. Also, while not mandatory, it is desirable for employees to have studied social education at universities or other institutions.

Training

For current employees of Kominkan, various training opportunities are provided at the national, prefectural and municipal level based on individual themes and years of service.

Duties of Kominkan Staff

The main duties of Kominkan staff are the following:

- Plan and implement social education activities held by the Kominkan
- Provide information and discuss learning opportunities with individual residents and groups of residents
- Provide learning spaces for organizations conducting social education activities
- Promote collaboration among residents and organizations within the community

Social Education Coordinator

(Social Education Director*)

A certification system for the position of social education coordinator has been set up based on the Social Education Act. To obtain this certification, one must take prescribed course units at a university or other institution or undergo a training course offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. By law, a social education coordinator must be stationed in all municipal agencies. The duty of the coordinator is to provide expertise and technical advice concerning social education activities within the relevant municipality. In reality, the coordinator is often stationed at the central Kominkan, where s/he plans the Kominkan's major projects.

*Note: The term "Social Education Director" has been used in Japan. However, we use the term "Social Education Coordinator" in this publication to better reflect the actual duties of the position.



The Role of Kominkan in a Changing Society

Present-day Japanese society is confronting many social issues, including the aging of society, informationization, and environmental concerns. In order to address the social issues within each community, Kominkan work with related institutions and organizations to seek solutions.

Supporting School-Based Education

In order to create safe and comfortable places for children to go after school and on the weekends, the national government uses Kominkan and school buildings as bases for activities and is implementing a national "Program to Promote After-School Classes for Children." The director and staff of Kominkan are responsible for coordinating with their local boards of education and schools, and families and community volunteers have been active in the planning and management of these after-school classes.



Tsuchido Kominkan,
Onomichi City,
Hiroshima Prefecture

A Base for Disaster Preparedness Education

Many Kominkan are designated shelters in the event of disaster. Among these Kominkan, some implement training involving overnight stays in order to have people actually experience living in a shelter. This training is premised on lifelines being cut off, and the participants themselves practice everything from emergency cooking to setting up of simple toilets.



Tsurumaki Kominkan,
Hatano City,
Kanagawa Prefecture

System of Commendation for Superior Kominkan

The content of Kominkan activities has changed in each era, and since 1947 the national government has celebrated Kominkan activities that have met the needs of their time.

Based on the recommendations of prefectural boards of education, superior Kominkan are chosen by a selection committee formed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan and receive commendations from the Minister.

Judging criteria include management based on the needs of residents from the community and on the community's situation, and the energy used to pursue solutions to current societal issues and issues in the community.



Timeline

- 1945** End of World War II
Discussion of Kominkan concept begins at the Ministry of Education.
- 1946** **Official notification from the Ministry of Education calling for “promotion of the establishment of Kominkan”**
*Vision for Kominkan first expressed throughout the country.
Formation of the Central Federation for the Establishment of Kominkan
*An organization formed to promote the establishment of kominkan through cooperation between the government sector and citizens
Mr. Teranaka publishes *The Construction of Kominkan-New Cultural Facilities for Towns and Villages*
*Mr. Teranaka Sakuo, then the Director of the Social Education Division of the Ministry of Education and the originator of the idea of Kominkan, writes about the concept of Kominkan.
Promulgation of the Constitution of Japan
- 1947** **Promulgation and Enforcement of the Basic Act on Education**
National government conducts the first “Superior Kominkan Commendations” (held annually thereafter).
Lyrics of “The Song of Kominkan” selected from 1,017 entries from across the country
- 1949** **Promulgation and Enforcement of the Social Education Act**
*The base in law for Kominkan is established, and Kominkan activities are able to take place upon a legal foundation.
Number of Kominkan surpasses 10,000.
- 1950** National government holds first national-scale training for Kominkan staff.
National government begins a program of financial subsidies for Kominkan (continued through 1988).
- 1951** National Kominkan Liaison Council formed (predecessor to the National Kominkan Association).
*A national-scale network of Kominkan is organized.
- 1952** First national level conference of Kominkan held, spanning three days (held annually there after)
- 1954** First “Superior Kominkan Employee Commendation” awarded by the National Kominkan Liaison Council (awarded annually thereafter)
Number of Kominkan staff surpasses 50,000.
- 1956** First publication of a specialized periodical on Kominkan “Gekkan Kominkan (Monthly Kominkan)”. (Continues today)
- 1959** **Ministry of Education publishes official notification *Standards for the Establishment and Management of Kominkan.***
*Standards are established for the scale of Kominkan facilities, target areas, and equipment.
- 1960** **Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance establish *Ten-Year Plan for Providing All Cities, Towns and Villages with Kominkan.***
*Comprehensive plan for all cities, towns and villages to have at least one Kominkan
- 1967** National Kominkan Association establishes *Current Indicators for Well-Functioning Kominkan.*
*Kominkan staff themselves determine the appropriate management for Kominkan in changing times.
- 1979** National government subsidies for Kominkan facilities and equipment exceed 10 billion yen.
- 2003** **The Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan is established.**
- 2006** **The Basic Act on Education is revised.**
- 2008** **A portion of the Social Education Act is revised.**



The Future Hope for Kominkan

- To serve as a base from which social education can be used to help people in the community maintain strong motivation throughout their lives
- To serve as a base in the community for learning at a "daily life" level that promotes solutions to the various problems modern society faces, including environmental issues, the aging of society, and informationization
- Through social education, to provide momentum for the formation of trusting, mutual human relationships and the creation of a vibrant community
- To play a coordinator role in order to increase collaboration and cooperation with other social education facilities, schools, families and voluntary organizations, and to create a good learning environment reflecting the needs of the learners themselves
- A central institution within an international network that can collaborate with community learning centers (CLC) throughout the world and, within diverse and flexible networks, contribute to the development of social education



Related Organizations

National Kominkan Association (Zenkoren)

The organization consists of members that are the prefectural Kominkan liaison councils and implements the following work:

- Publication of a monthly newsletter magazine (features themes that are important to Kominkan, case studies, data, and notices)
- Holding of a National Kominkan Conference
- Implementation of various types of training and dispatch of training lecturers

URL: <http://kominkan.or.jp/>

Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan

The Society's members, recognizing the central role of Kominkan for social education, conduct expert research about Kominkan from varied angles.

URL: <http://www.la.biglobe.ne.jp/kominkan/home/>

National Council of Mayors of Municipalities Promoting Kominkan

The Council, consisting of mayors of municipalities, conducts research, information exchange and advocacy work to promote Kominkan.

National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ)

From 1989, NFUAJ has provided opportunities for literacy education and income generation in 43 countries and one region, including the establishment of community learning centers (CLCs) as a base for community development efforts.

URL: <http://www.unesco.jp/en/>

Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

ACCU implements cooperative programmes in the fields of education, culture and personnel exchange within the Asia/Pacific region. ACCU has provided many opportunities for exchange between Kominkan and community learning centers in Asia and the Pacific.

URL: <http://www.accu.or.jp/en/>

