

School System and Teacher Education in Japan

The Japanese school education basically constitutes a ladder system consisting of a six-year course at elementary school, three years at junior high school, three years at senior high school and four years at university. But, thanks to the introduction of institutes of technology and secondary education schools, students currently have more choice, and diversification of schools are promoted.

The laws on which the system of school education is based are the Constitution, the Basic Act on Education, the School Education Act, and other related legislation. As for compulsory education, the Constitution stipulates parents and other guardians are obligated to have children receive general education and that compulsory education programs should be provided for free. The Basic Act on Education also states compulsory education programs should cover a total of nine years, and that national and other public schools offering compulsory education should not charge students tuition fees.

Children start studying at schools for compulsory education in the first year after they turn six years old. Children (between the ages of four and six) can also receive preschool education programs at kindergartens. They cannot study at any type of school before they reach the legal school age.

The School Education Act cites eight factors as educational targets to be achieved at elementary school, such as (1) nurturing correct understanding of and cooperation in mutual relations of people as well as fostering students' spirits of independence and autonomy based on experiences in social life in and outside school; (2) teaching students about correct understanding of the situation and tradition of their hometowns and homeland as well as actively developing their spirit of international cooperation; and (3) nurturing basic understanding and skills concerning housing, food, clothing, industries, and other factors that are needed in daily lives. Meanwhile, educational goals at junior high school comprise three topics, such as (1) further fulfilling education targets at elementary school and developing abilities necessary for students to become members of the nation and society; and (2) nurturing fundamental knowledge and skills regarding occupations needed for society, building an attitude of putting a high value on work and developing capabilities for students to make a career choice according to their individual characteristics.

To achieve these goals, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has set guidelines for school teaching, which are standards for educational curricula. The ministry screens and approves textbooks that meet requirements in the guidelines as the main educational materials at schools.

Levels of educational achievement are measured based on absolute criteria and are evaluated according to the targets specified in the state-set schoolteaching guidelines. In addition, nationwide academic ability surveys are conducted to review the goals and contents of the schoolteaching guidelines as well as to examine to what degree those targets have been achieved.

As for education at home and elsewhere, the School Education Act refers to compulsory school attendance and bans guardians from offering compulsory education programs for their children at their homes. However, in some cases, parents and other protectors have their sons and daughters receive education at home when there are serious problems for their children, including bullying, their refusing to attend school and health issues.

In relation to Japan's educational system, the government is considering integrating kindergartens — facilities for preschool education — and day nurseries, which are infant care facilities. The government is also considering introducing "grade skipping" systems at post-compulsory education schools.

日本の教育制度と教員養成

日本の教育制度

日本の教育制度の基本は小学校－中学校－高等学校－大学（6－3－3－4）という単線型となっているが、高等専門学校、中等教育学校の制度化によって学習者の選択肢を多くし、学校系統の多様化が図られている。

学校教育の根拠法としては、憲法及び教育基本法、学校教育法等関係法令等があるが、義務教育については、憲法において、保護者が子どもに普通教育を受けさせる義務を負うことと、義務教育の無償が規定されている。また、教育基本法において、義務教育期間が9年であることを規定し、また、国公立の義務教育段階の学校について授業料の不徴収を規定している。

就学年齢について、義務教育は6歳に達した後の最初の学年に始まる。就学前教育として幼稚園（4～6歳）がある。就学年齢前の就学は認められていない。

学校教育法には、小学校における教育の達成目標として、(1) 学校内外の社会生活の経験に基づき、人間相互の関係について、正しい理解と協同、自主及び自律の精神を養うこと、(2) 郷土及び国家の現状と伝統について、正しい理解に導き、進んで国際協調の精神を養うこと、(3) 日常生活に必要な衣、食、住、産業等について、基礎的な理解と技能を養うこと、などが示されている。中学校における教育の達成目標としては、(1) 小学校における教育の目標をなお十分に達成して、国家及び社会の形成者として必要な資質を養うこと、(2) 社会に必要な職業についての基礎的な知識と技能、勤労を重んずる態度及び個性に応じて将来の進路を選択する能力を養うこと、などが示されている。

これらの目標を達成するために、文部科学省は教育課程の基準である学習指導要領を定めており、教科の主たる教材として重要な役割を果たしている教科書について検定を実施している。

学習到達度の評価の方法は、絶対評価に基づくものであり、国が定める学習指導要領に示す目標に照らして、その実現状況を評価する。国レベルでは、学習指導要領の目標・内容、実現状況の把握のため全国的な学力調査を実施している。

家庭等における教育に関して、学校教育法は就学義務を規定、義務教育を家庭で行うことを認めていないが、いじめや不登校、健康上の問題等の事情で在宅学習を進めるケースもある。

日本の教育制度に関わって就学前教育における教育機関としての幼稚園と児童福祉施設としての保育所の一元化や、義務教育後学校における「飛び級」制度の導入等について検討されている。

日本の教員養成

日本の教員養成は、以下のように、大学における教員養成と開放制とを二大原則として行われている。(1) 幼稚園から高等学校まですべての教員は大学において養成する、(2) 教員養成は戦前の師範学校のような特定の学校に限定することなく、国・公・私立すべての大学（もしくはこれに準ずる機関）において教育職員免許法の規定する所要の単位を修得すれば免許状を取得できる、という制度である。

実際には、義務教育とりわけ小学校の教員は、国立（国立大学法人）の教育大学・学部においてその大部分が養成され、一般大学において中学校教員の一部と高等学校教員の多くが養成されている。この国立の教育大学・学部は各都道府県に設置され、これらの大学・学部は教員養成を主たる機能としているために、「教員養成系大学・学部」とよばれている。一般の大学における教員養成については課程認定の制度がとられており、文部科学省の認定を受けた教職課程をもつ大学において行われている。

Teacher Education in Japan

teacher education in Japan, as shown below, is based on the two major principles. teacher education at university and the open policy. One of the principles is that all teachers ranging from kindergartens to senior high schools should be developed at university. The other principle is that teacher education should not be limited only to a certain type of school, such as normal schools in the prewar period, and anyone who has earned certain credits stipulated in the School Teacher's License Act at any university, including national and other public universities as well as private ones (or organizations equivalent to those schools), should be able to obtain teaching licenses.

In reality however, most teachers for compulsory education, especially teachers for elementary school, are fostered at national universities and faculties of education (both of which are operated by national university corporations), while part of junior high school teachers and many teachers for senior high schools are developed at general universities. Those national universities and faculties of education are set up in each prefecture. As a major purpose of these national organizations is fostering teachers, such schools are known as "Teacher education universities and faculties." Those who hope to become teachers can also receive training programs at general universities that are officially allowed by the MEXT to provide teacher education courses.

In the 1990s, teaching was more or less established as a specialist job. Developing specialists is work concerning human relationships that centers on highly sophisticated intellectual skills, and nurturing those human resources inevitably requires long-term, intellectual professional education. Therefore, master's courses for teacher education have been set up within graduate schools of many education universities and teacher education faculties. Also in 1996, a doctoral course was set up within a newly established graduate school primarily sponsored by the Tokyo Gakugei University and the Hyogo University of Teacher Education.

In 2008, amid the trend of developing highly specialized human resources at professional graduate schools, the teacher education graduate school system (professional schools for teacher education, professional degree program) was introduced. The system is designed to train students who go on to graduate schools after acquiring bachelor's degrees to be teachers who have practical leadership and development abilities. The system also aims to develop professional teachers who enter those graduate schools into school leaders equipped with theory, practice and practical skills.

A report on "reform and improvement in teacher education at graduate schools" was released in 2013 by the MEXT's panel of cooperators on the implementation of temporary measures to improve teachers' qualifications and abilities. Reform and improvement in teacher education at graduate schools have since been called for. The report uses the term "advancement of teacher education" as a key word to explain future challenges and directions. In this era, it is essential not only to nurture new teachers through undergraduate programs but also to train teachers at master's courses. It is especially recommended that the significance of graduate schools for teacher education be clarified and teacher's capacities be enhanced. The report mentions policies to be adopted in the future. The document, for example, states that individual teachers need to obtain advanced expertise and leadership skills via training or other programs at graduate schools throughout their career as teachers, so that they can acquire practical leadership abilities and other capabilities to better respond to new forms of education and increasingly complicated challenges facing schools. In enhancing teachers' skills and abilities, the report also says it will be useful to collaborate with teacher education graduate schools and other types of graduate schools as well as to make full use of their educational capacities via various efforts, such as boards of education and other bodies offering training programs for new teachers through collaboration and fusion with graduate schools for teacher education.

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1990年代には、教職＝専門職論がほぼ定着し、専門職養成には、高度に複雑な知的技術の中核とする人間関係の仕事であり、長期の知的な専門教育を不可欠とするために、大学院修士課程が多くの教育大学・教員養成学部設置された。また1996年には東京学芸大学、兵庫教育大学を基幹大学とする博士課程の連合大学院が設置された。

その後、高度専門職業人の育成をみざす専門職大学院の流れのなかで、2008年には教職大学院制度が導入され、学部から入学する学生を実践的な指導力と展開力を備えた新人教員に、現職から入学する者を理論と実践力、応用力を備えたスクールリーダーに養成することがみざされている。

その後、2013年には文部科学省の教員の資質能力向上に係る当面の改善方策の実施に向けた協力者会議から「大学院段階の教員養成の改革と充実等について」(報告)が出され、大学院段階の教員養成の改革と充実が求められるようになった。そこでは「教員養成の高度化」をキーワードにして、今後の課題と方向性がまとめられている。学部における新人教員養成はもとより、こうした教員養成の修士レベル化が必置の時代となっており、とりわけ教職大学院の有意性を明確にして、教員の力量形成を図ることが提言されている。今後の方向性として示された内容として、新たな学びと複雑化する学校課題に対応した実践的指導力等の資質能力を身につけるために、それぞれの教員が教職生活全体の中で、研修や大学院での学修等を通じて高度な専門的知識・指導力を身につける必要があること、また、教育委員会等の研修として、例えば、教職大学院と連携・融合した初任者研修を行うなど、教職大学院を中心とする大学院と連携し、その教育力を活用することは、教員の資質能力を向上させるために有益であることなどである。

こうした動向の中で、教員養成段階における教育課程の見直しに関する提言も文部科学省の中央教育審議会の教員の養成・採用・研修の改善に関するワーキンググループ等でなされており、校種間の接続に対応可能な教科横断的な学習活動技能、学習者の主体的・協働的な学びの方法、発達障害等の特別な支援を必要とする学習者に関する理論・指導法等を学部の教育課程に、大学院においては、理論と実践の往還を重視した実践的科目、教育委員会と大学・大学院との連携・協働を推進する内容等を位置づけることが求められている。

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Under such conditions, reviews of teacher education courses have also been proposed by the MEXT's Central Council for Education's working group on improvement in pedagogical education recruitment and in-service training programs, and other such groups. These proposals demand that undergraduate teacher education courses cover the following matters: (1) techniques for learning activities encompassing differing subjects that can respond to interaction among different types of school; (2) methods for learners to study voluntarily and cooperatively; and (3) theories and instruction methods targeting students with developmental disabilities and those with special needs. Meanwhile, graduate schools are required to cover topics, such as (1) practical subjects that put priority on interaction between theory and practice; and (2) contents to promote tie-up and cooperation among educational boards, universities and graduate schools.

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