

Teacher Training and Certificate System

1. Teacher Training

Teacher training in Japan started with the establishment of normal schools (schools for teacher training) in 1872. In 1886, a higher normal school was established. Elementary school teachers were trained by normal schools, and normal school and secondary school teachers were trained by higher normal schools.

The current system of higher education was inaugurated in 1949 by the post-WWII education reforms, and the present teacher training system began. The traditional normal schools were abolished. In order to produce diverse human resources with broad outlooks and highly specialized knowledge and skills, at least one national university that had a faculty of education or a teacher training college was established in each prefecture, and it was decided that teacher training would be offered by these universities (the principle of teacher training in colleges and universities). In addition to this, it was decided that after having the teacher training courses accredited by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), any national, public, or private university could be equally involved in teacher training under this system (the principle of an open system) by offering their students classes that provide the required number of credits for them to acquire teaching certificates.

As of May 1, 2008, 582 out of 729 universities (79.8%) (47 out of 73 national universities), 423 out of 597 graduate schools (70.9 %), and 277 out of 385 junior colleges (71.9 %) had teacher training courses. More than 70% of institutions of higher education have teacher training courses.

A different teaching certificate earned through these university and college training courses is required for teaching at each level of schooling, such as kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, and special needs education. In addition, there are teaching certificates for school nurses and diet and nutrition teachers that are independent of school levels, and which are also earned through universities and colleges.

Laws and regulations have established the minimum number of credits that a person must acquire in the teacher training courses at universities, graduate schools, and junior colleges. Table 1 shows the basic requirements and the minimum number of credits to obtain a teaching certificate.

Table 1: Basic Requirements and Minimum Number of Credits for a Teaching Certificate

Type of Teaching Certificate		Basic Requirements	Minimum Number of Credits			
			Teaching Subjects	Pedagogical Subjects	Teaching subjects or pedagogy	Special Needs Education Subjects
Kindergarten	Advanced	Master's Degree (ISCED 5A second degree)	6	35	34	
	Type I	Bachelor's Degree (ISCED 5A first degree)	6	35	10	
	Type II	Junior College Associate's Degree (ISCED 5B first degree)	4	27		
Primary School	Advanced	Master's Degree (5A second degree)	8	41	34	
	Type I	Bachelor's Degree (5A first degree)	8	41	10	
	Type II	Junior College Associate's Degree (5B first degree)	4	31	2	
Lower Secondary School	Advanced	Master's Degree (5A second degree)	20	31	32	
	Type I	Bachelor's Degree (5A first degree)	20	31	8	
	Type II	Junior College Associate's Degree (5B first degree)	10	21	4	
Upper Secondary School	Advanced	Master's Degree (5A second degree)	20	23	40	
	Type I	Bachelor's Degree (5A first degree)	20	23	16	
Special Needs Education	Advanced	Master's Degree (5A second degree) and a general certificate to teach kindergarten/primary/lower secondary/upper secondary school				50
	Type I	Bachelor's Degree (5A first degree) and a general certificate to teach kindergarten/primary/lower secondary/upper secondary school				26
	Type II	a general certificate to teach kindergarten/primary/lower secondary/upper secondary school				16

In addition to the above, each student is required to complete two credits of coursework in subjects involving the Constitution of Japan, physical education, foreign language communication, and the use of information devices. It also requires that students who aspire to earn teaching certificates for primary or lower secondary schools participate in nursing, assistance services, or communication with the elderly and/or people with disabilities for more than seven days at an institution for social welfare and/or special needs.

2. Teaching Certificates

The teaching certificates for kindergarten and primary school are issued for the relevant level of school, and teaching certificates for lower secondary school and upper secondary school are issued by school level for each teaching subject. Teaching certificates for lower secondary school are provided for such teaching subjects as Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, music, fine arts, health and physical education, health, industrial arts, home economics, vocational subjects, vocational guidance, vocational practicum, foreign languages, and religious education. In the same manner, teaching certificates for upper secondary school are provided for such teaching subjects as Japanese, geography and history, civics, mathematics, science, music, fine arts, arts and crafts, calligraphy, health and physical education, health, nursing, nursing practicum, home economics, home economics practicum, agriculture, agricultural practicum, industry, industrial practicum, business, business practicum, fishing, fishing practicum, mercantile marine, mercantile marine practicum, vocational guidance, foreign languages, and religious education.

A new type of secondary schools was introduced in 1998, one that provides both lower and upper secondary level education for a total of six years. There is no single teaching certificate for both, and teachers need to acquire teaching certificates for both lower and upper secondary school. However, it is possible for a person with a teaching certificate for only one of these levels to teach at that level alone for a certain period of time.

As a general rule, special needs education teachers must acquire both a teaching certificate for the relevant level of school (kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school, or upper secondary school) and a teaching certificate for special needs education. However, if a person has a teaching certificate either for kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school, or upper secondary school, he/she may work as a teacher in special needs education for a certain period of time.

2.1. Three Types of Teaching Certificate

There are three teaching certificates, which differ in acquisition method and validity, namely the regular teaching certificate, the special teaching certificate, and the temporary teaching certificate.

* Regular Teaching Certificate

The regular teaching certificate is the most popular, and is usually referred to as a “teaching license.” This certificate is issued by the prefectural boards of education upon a student’s completion of the necessary training programs in a teacher-training course at a university or

teacher training institution designated by MEXT.

A regular teaching certificate is valid for all prefectures in Japan. The period of validity is 10 years, and it can be renewed by taking a certificate renewal course given by a university. Regular teaching certificates are further categorized into Advanced, Type I, and Type II certificates, depending on the teacher's academic background.

A master's degree is the basic qualification for an advanced certificate. To earn such a certificate, a person needs to obtain more than a certain number of credits for teaching subjects and professional subjects at a graduate school, in addition to the requirements for a Type I certificate. A bachelor's degree is the basic qualification for the Type I certificate, and in general, a person needs to obtain more than a certain number of credits for teaching subjects and professional subjects at a university to earn it. An associate degree from a junior college is the basic qualification for a Type II certificate. Teachers with Type II certificates are requested to try to acquire Type I certificates in a suitable or related field, to the best of their abilities.

* Special Teaching Certificates

A special teaching certificate was introduced by a revision to the Act on the Certification of Educational Staff in December 1988. This aims to provide certificates through teacher examinations in each prefecture, in order to employ a variety of people with superior knowledge, experience, technique, social prestige, ambition, and insight in education. The special teaching certificate is issued based on employer recommendation (adopting board of education, school, etc.) after an interview with specialists. This certificate is valid only in the prefecture that provides it. The valid period of the certificate is for 10 years, and can be renewed just like a regular certificate, by taking a certificate renewal course.

The number of special teaching certificates that were issued from 1998 to 2001 was very small. However, this number has increased every year due to a relaxation of the requirements from 2002. Due to this revision, teachers with special teaching certificates can acquire a regular certificate by completing more than three years of teaching and the prescribed number of credits.

* Temporary Teaching Certificates

Temporary teaching certificates are given when an employer cannot employ a person with a regular teaching certificate. The valid period is three years in general, and the certificate is only valid only in the prefecture that awards it. Very few temporary teaching certificates have been issued in recent years.

3. Current Reform in Teacher Training

During the postwar period, the principles of teacher training in universities and the open system for teacher training have provided quality teachers. It has been more than half a century since this time, and now, the following issues have been pointed out in particular regarding the course for training teachers at universities.

- With the background of changes in children's social environment, teachers need to respond to increasing challenges, such as giving educational guidance to students involved in violence and bullying, supporting children who require special assistance, and the reduced capacity of the family and community to raise them.
- Looking at the age structure of current teachers, it is expected that 34%, or nearly 200,000, will retire in the next 10 years as they reach the mandatory retirement age, and a great number of less-experienced teachers will remain in their teaching positions. Therefore, in terms of both quantity and quality, training and securing excellent teachers has become an extremely important issue.

Amidst such circumstances, in July 2006, MEXT's Central Education Council reported on what teacher training and the teaching certificate system should look like in the future. This report states that the two principles of teacher training in universities and the open system for teacher training should be maintained in the future as well, while at the same time, it is quite critical to define them and proceed with the necessary reforms, in order to respond to the present issues appropriately.

The report proposes three specific measures as follows; 1) improvement of quality standards in teacher training courses, 2) establishment of new graduate courses for teaching staff, and 3) the introduction of the teaching certificate renewal system.

3.1 Improvement of the quality standards in teacher training courses

Comprehensive preparation for working in the teaching profession will be added as a new subject. It is expected that through this course, students will start their teaching lives more smoothly as they will be able to recognize what issues face them in the future, adding to their knowledge and skills. Considering the purpose of the courses concerned, specifically, it is appropriate for the following three items to be additionally required of the teacher.

- A sense of mission and responsibility, and a passion for education
- Social and interpersonal skills
- Understanding children and students and classroom management

A teaching practicum is a required course that trains students through observation, and actual teaching under the guidance of school teachers for four to eight weeks. It aims to give students a valuable opportunity to consider the suitability of the teaching profession and career course. Teaching practicums are an opportunity to cultivate the next generation of teachers in collaboration among universities, schools, and boards of education.

3.2 The establishment of new graduate courses for teaching staff

The establishment of new graduate courses for teaching staff is expected to promote more effective efforts in teacher training, as it demonstrates models for systematically training well qualified teachers, effective educational methods, and the guidance system. In addition, the establishment of new graduate courses for teaching staff is expected to secure guidance teachers who share a common awareness, and aims to foster teachers to be highly specialized professionals and experienced teachers (teachers with practical experience in teaching positions).

3.3 Introduction of a system for renewing teaching certificates

A teaching certificate guarantees the qualifications and abilities the holder is required to have as a teacher, and these must be continuously maintained. Teachers must always strive to keep up-to-date on their knowledge and skills. However, especially in recent years, the curriculum guidelines and the standards of education content in schools have been so often revised that teachers must now inevitably have qualifications and abilities that constantly correspond to new curriculum guidelines. Also, conditions surrounding school education has changed dramatically. Considering the drastic changes in society and their impact on teachers, the qualifications and abilities required of them should be updated according to the times. The system for renewing teaching certificates was introduced on April 1, 2009.

4. Hiring Process for Public School Teachers

Public school teacher is very popular occupation among young people in Japan today. It is considered a stable profession, and stability is one of the most important aspects by which young people living in economically unstable society select a profession. To become a for public school teacher, a person is required to pass a hiring examination implemented by the board of education in one of the 47 prefectures and 18 specified major cities (65 in total as of July 2009). Hiring examinations are mostly conducted by category for each school level.

A hiring examination is conducted with a combination of various selection methods to evaluate multiple aspects of aptitude, ability, and competence as a teacher, such as written examination,

practical examination (physical exercise, music, arts and crafts, foreign language performance), interview (individual/group), essay/thesis examination, microteaching with assigned subjects and class activities, preparation of lesson plans, and situational instruction by role-playing various school life situations, and aptitude tests.

The requirements for taking a teacher hiring examination are different in each prefecture and specified major city. There might be an age limit for taking the examination, but this limitation has tended to become more lax in recent years. Most examinations take place from July to September for next fiscal year, which starts from April. Some test-takers can be excused from taking certain components of the examination, for reasons such as foreign language competency, skill and actual results in sports or arts, and activities participated in toward international co-operation, or a special selection of examination contents might be given for other reasons.

A person is not automatically hired after passing the examination. This is because most of prefectures and specified major cities hire teachers through a listed registration system, in which candidates are registered on a list in order of examination score and employed based on registration order. Therefore, when there are a number of successful candidates on the list in a time when the teacher supply exceeds the demand for teachers, those who are registered lower on the list will not be hired. When candidates are not hired during the period, they must take the examination again in the following year, at which time, they are excused from taking a certain portion of the examination.

4.1 Number of Applicants for Public School Teacher Hiring Examinations

In 2009, there were 166,729 applicants for the public school teacher hiring examinations in Japan, an increase of 7,855 (4.9%) in comparison with the previous year. The breakdown was 54,418 applicants at the primary school level, 59,060 for lower secondary schools, 34,732 for upper secondary schools, 8,091 for special needs education, 9,227 applicants for school nurse, and 1,201 applicants for diet and nutrition teacher with an increase at all school levels.

4.2 Number of Teaching Candidates Hired in the Public School System

In 2010, the total number of teaching candidates was 26,910, a 1,013 (3.9%) increase in comparison with the previous year. However, this total number was for a number of candidates who were hired by June 1, 2010. The breakdown was 12,302 at the primary school level, 6,810 for lower secondary schools, 4,289 for upper secondary schools, 2,366 for special needs education, 982 school nurses, and 161 diet and nutrition teachers, and the increase took place at all school levels except for primary school.

4.3 Competition Ratio

The competition ratio was 6.2 to 1 overall. Since the competition ratio for the previous year was

6.1 to 1, the ratio increased by 0.1 point. The break down was 4.4 to 1 for primary school, 8.7 to 1 for lower secondary school, 8.1 to 1 for upper secondary school, 3.4 to 1 for special needs education, 9.4 to 1 for school nurses, and 7.5 to 1 for diet and nutrition teachers, and an increase took place for primary school, lower secondary school, and school nurses but a decrease took place for upper secondary school, special needs education, and diet and nutrition teachers. Table 2 shows a summary of the number examination applicants, the number of hired candidates, and the competition ratio for the 2009 examination. The highest competition ratio for the 2009 examination was 17.4 to 1 in Okinawa prefecture. On the other hand, the lowest competition ratio was 3.6 to 1 in Kawasaki city.

Table 2: Applicants, Adopted Candidates and Competition Rate by School types in 2009

	No. of Applicants	No. Hired	Competition Ratio
Primary School	54,418	12,302	4.4 to 1
Lower Secondary School	59,060	6,810	8.7 to 1
Upper Secondary School	34,732	4,289	8.1 to 1
Special Need Education	8,091	2,366	3.4 to 1
School Nurse	9,227	982	9.4 to 1
Diet and Nutrition Teacher	1,201	161	7.5 to 1
Total	166,729	26,910	6.2 to 1

(source: MEXT 2010)

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教員養成と免許制度

1. 教員養成制度の概略

明治期に始まる師範学校および高等師範学校による教員の養成から第二次大戦後の戦後教育改革による新しい教員養成制度の導入。

二つの原則(大学による教員養成・開放性)に則った教員養成。

教員養成課程を持つ大学の数と割合。

教員免許制度の概要と免許取得に必要な教科/単位数。

2. 免許状の種類

教員免許制度の概略

幼稚園と小学校は学校種ごと、中学校・高等学校については学校種/教科ごとの免許であること。

中等教育学校と特別支援学校の免許について。

2.1 三種類の免許

普通免許状・特別免許状・臨時免許状、それぞれの取得要件および有効期間等について。

3. 教員養成制度改革の動向

社会状況および教員を取り巻く状況の変化に応じた教員養成制度改革の必要性

3.1 教員養成課程の質の向上

教職実践演習の導入と教育実習の一層の充実

3.2 教職大学院の創設

より高い専門性を有する教員を育成するための教職大学院の創設

3.3 教員免許更新制の導入

これまで終身有効とされてきた教員免許に更新制度を導入し、一定期間ごとに教員が新しい技術や知識を身につけることで、社会の尊敬と信頼を得ることを目指す。

4. 公立学校教員採用試験

公立学校教員採用試験制度の概要・実施者、試験の内容、名簿登載方式について。

4.1 受験者数

4.2 採用者数

4.3 競争率