

Changing Profiles of Teachers in Japan

Generally Japanese teachers have won respect and gratitude from parents and the public at large and enjoy a relative high social status, secure positions and good salaries. Almost all teachers take pride in their work and have high professional ethics. On the other hand, in Japan, parents expect exceedingly much from teachers and exert extreme pressures on them. Teachers dedicate themselves to their work and undertake extensive tasks including extracurricular activities and out-of-school activities. The expected roles and images of teachers have changed in the course of times. Here we discuss the changing profiles of Japanese teaching profession in the context of the development of Japanese society.

1. Classical teachers in the Edo era

Under the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), Japan enjoyed a long period of peace and social stability. There was a wide diffusion of educational institutions. For the samurai warrior class, there were institutions for public education (*Hankô* or fief schools) in which to study classical Chinese literatures (Confucian studies). On the other hand, private academies (*Shijuku*), equivalent to secondary schools, developed and were open to all regardless of social classes. And there was also a large number of popular learning houses called *Terakoya*, which concentrated on teaching the practical skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic to the commoners.

The fief schools were taught mostly by masters from the samurai class. Private academies and *Terakoya* were taught by samurai, priests, or enlightened wealthy farmers. Because there was no formal schooling system, teaching was a voluntary task and the teacher's prestige was uncommonly high. Even though the financial return was low, teachers (masters) were held in high esteem by their pupils and disciples, their parents, and the community at large. In *Terakoya*, especially in urban areas, there were a considerable number of commoner teachers, including female teachers. In these cases, a transition was taking place from the concept of teaching as a heavenly mission to that of teaching as a regular occupation.

2. Emergence of teachers in modern schools

In the early part of the 19th century Japan faced great pressure and military threats by a number of western countries that were competing for Asian colonies. In the final stage of the Edo era, Japan fell into a state of civil war. In 1868, a political revolution took place in Japan, marked by the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the birth of a new system of political authority with the Emperor at its head. The beginnings of the modernization of Japan can be seen in this revolution known as the Meiji Restoration.

Educational development was also included within this modernization process that aimed to turn Japan into a unified, modern nation-state. The School System Order of 1872, based on western models, set out an ambitious school system which was intended to expand education for the general public and to introduce the advanced learning and technology of the Western countries into Japan. Traditional educational institutions were transformed and incorporated into the new systems. Many Terakoya became elementary schools. Many of the fief schools were transformed into local middle schools.

Teachers were in many cases former Terakoya teachers, unemployed former samurai, and Buddhist or Shinto priests. but, their status was changed into that of semi-officials employed and paid by each school district. Teachers of new public schools were expected to serve as agents for enlightening the people of a new nation. The new curriculum and subjects of the schools were quite different from those that had been taught in Terakoya. Schools adopted the graded system and the frontal teaching method, which were unprecedented among old-fashioned teachers. In 1872, the government invited a specialist in teacher education from the United States, and the Tokyo Normal School was established.

Among teachers, there were many who intensely supported an emerging movement that demanded political democracy (the establishment of a National Diet elected by the people), and schools were frequently used as meeting places for the movement's supporters. In 1881, the Ministry of Education issued an Ethical Guide for Elementary School Teachers and Regulations for Examining the Conduct of Schoolteachers. Under these provisions, it became impossible for teachers to talk about political matters or even to listen to political speeches, and they became virtually isolated from social and political controversy. Around the end of the 1870s, the conservatives in the Imperial Court alleged a decline in public morals resulting from excessive Westernization and emphasized the need for a restoration of morals based on traditional ethics.

In 1885, a cabinet system of government was introduced. As the first minister of education, Mori Arinori was appointed. He was an enlightened bureaucrat who created the basic framework of an education system in Japan. Mori aimed to harmonize the twin objectives of, on the one hand, modernizing Japan and, on the other hand, realizing the spiritual unity of the people through a strengthening of national morality. The elementary school was identified as the training center, responsible for bringing up children to become loyal subjects of the Emperor.

Mori recognized the importance of training elementary school teachers for national education, and carried out a thorough reform of the normal school system. One ordinary normal school was set up in each prefecture and a higher normal school was set up in Tokyo. Students at these normal schools were expected to acquire the three ideal dispositions of "obedience, trust and dignity". Ideal teacher would be obedient to the commands of their superiors, feel affectionate confidence in their colleagues, and strictly regulate their students' manners and attitudes with dignity.

The normal schools were designed to inculcate the principles of nationalism through a strict program of physical, moral, and mental training of future teachers, who were, in turn, to inculcate the spirit of loyalty and patriotism in their students. The students of normal schools were required to live in dormitories to develop a sense of group identity and dormitory life was organized along the lines of a military camp.

Students of normal schools were entitled to a number of privileges, including exemption from military service and awarding scholarships in the form of food, clothing and other miscellaneous expenses, in addition to free tuition. Graduates of normal schools were obliged to teach for a certain period at primary schools within the prefectures in which their normal schools were located. The time set was ten years for men and five years for women.

In 1897, considerable effort was put into the expansion and strengthening of the teacher training system. Normal schools and female normal schools were rapidly established one after the other. To cope with the shortage of teachers, a special one-year teacher training course was offered to graduates of middle schools and girls' high schools who had the desire to become a teachers. In 1890, the percentage of unqualified teachers was 58%, but in 1895, the percentage stood at 20%, and by 1905 it had been reduced to 16%.

As the enrollment rate of school-age children expanded, the number of teachers also increased rapidly. At first, female teachers were only a small percentage of the teaching forces. Their numbers increased gradually and accounted for a quarter of elementary school teachers at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1887 the Herbartian education theory (Johann Friedrich Herbart, German Philosopher and Pedagogue) and teaching method were introduced from Germany and were gaining popularity among Japanese educators. The Herbartian theory appealed to Japanese leaders as an ideal combination of moral training and the acquirement of knowledge. Its teaching methods were based on a five-step process, which appealed to teachers seeking the most efficient means of systematically teaching a great deal of information and factual knowledge in the shortest possible time.

In 1883, the "Imperial Education Association" was established as a nationwide organization of teachers, and local education associations were also organized at prefectural levels. These teacher organizations, in addition to carrying out educational research activities, campaigned for improvements in working conditions and for a systematization of financial support from the national treasury. However, the attempts to make a union-type teacher organization were banned and oppressed by the government.

3. Ambivalent social status of teachers

The status of teachers was quasi-official as employees of local municipalities, and their remuneration and working conditions were not necessarily good. Following the First Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) and Russo-Japanese war (1904-05) at the turn of the century, the industrial revolution had started. During World War I (1914-18), Japan was able to enjoy unprecedented economic prosperity. But salaries of teachers, as civil servants with a fixed income, fell markedly behind industrial and commercial salaries and price increases, which led to a hopeless situation for teachers. These teachers had to manage to get by on a low salary. Low teachers' salaries undermined the social prestige of the teaching profession and the self-respect of teachers.

On the other hand, in general, the teaching profession was looked on with respect and gratitude by parents and the public at large. Teachers were faced with the agonizing dilemma of the contrast between the ethics of a "sacred profession" with inferior economic conditions and the fact of an ambivalent social status, in other words, "living in honest poverty." A foreign scholar described the Japanese teachers at that time as "one of the most dedicated and self-sacrificing teaching corps in the world." (Duke B.C. "Japan's Militant teachers" 1973, p.4)

In the 1910s and 1920s the ideas of John Dewey were introduced into Japan and the influence of the global movement known as the New Education Movement was also felt here. The ideas of this movement did not permeate as far as becoming mainstream in public-sector education, but child-centered and activity-centered education were implemented by a group of pioneering educators in some elementary schools attached to normal schools and in private elementary schools. They criticized the pedagogical methods based on the Herbartian five-step process as encouraging rote memory in students.

But as Japan moved into the 1930s, an extreme form of nationalism gradually became discernible in education policies. In 1937, with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, militarism became increasingly prominent, and following Japan's entry into World War II, ultra-nationalist trends in education were strengthened. The majority of teachers accepted the course toward militarism. Most of them had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the normal school and thus believed in the cause. The national teachers' organization became one of the strongholds of ultra-nationalism and militarism. Control over ideas and academic content was strengthened. Serving officers were attached to secondary schools, and students were given military training. In the final stages of the war, students were mobilized to produce foodstuffs or military supplies. Teachers were also drafted into the armed forces, and children in urban areas were evacuated into rural districts to escape from air bomb attacks. At the end of the war, in 1945, Japan's school system was virtually completely paralyzed.

4. Teachers in the postwar education reform

After its 1945 defeat in World War II, Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces. The authorities issued a memorandum regarding the Japanese education system, prohibiting the propagation of ultra-nationalistic ideology. Teachers who had supported unacceptable ideology were purged. GHQ requested the U.S. to dispatch an Education Mission to Japan to examine the country's postwar education reforms. The Education Mission issued a report containing a series of recommendations. The large-scale postwar reform of the Japanese education system was carried out on the basis of the recommendations of this mission.

The report of the U.S. Education Mission recommended as follows; "The normal school program has repeated the pattern of formalism and directions from above..., with an emphasis on rote learning.----Normal schools should be reorganized on a higher level so as to offer better professional preparation and a more adequate liberal education"; "Since the curriculum should be designed to educate the prospective teacher as an individual and as a citizen, emphasis is needed on the liberal aspects, as in the natural sciences, social studies, humanities, and arts."

The teacher training system was reformed to a considerable extent. The prewar normal schools were isolated, closed establishments. There was criticism that the schools produced the "normal school type" with a narrow vision and a sense of subservience to authority. In 1949, all normal schools were abolished, and in their place faculties of education were newly established within 45 national universities. Furthermore, after 1947, it became possible for teacher training courses to be offered in faculties other than the faculties of education in all national and private universities for students who wanted to acquire a teacher certificate in specified subjects. Teacher training carried out in accordance with this type of formula became known as an "open system".

Within the framework of the postwar education reform, trade union activity by teachers was legalized. In 1947, the Japan Teachers Union (JTU) was formed, and within a very short time, had become a giant organization with over 500,000 members. In the atmosphere of postwar confusion, the JTU launched activities aimed at the improvement of teachers' living conditions, and, advances in the democratization of education. JTU denied that teaching is sacred work and declared that teachers were laborers. They felt regret for having been proactive collaborators for militarism and ultra-nationalism. Maintaining close links with left-wing bodies such as the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, the JTU began to develop radical activities.

In addition to economic demand to improve the extremely low salaries, the JTU developed a movement in opposition to the government's education policies, calling it a "reverse course", indicating a return to prewar conservatism. The Ministry of Education strengthened its confrontational posture, claiming to be "safeguarding political neutrality in education." In the latter part of the 1950s and the 1960s, confrontation between the JTU and the ministry reached a peak over the implementation of teacher evaluation and over the implementation of nationwide achievement tests. The JTU frequently organized nationwide strike protests, while the government invoked the

criminal law against many teacher union leaders.

At the same time, the JTU also began to organize, on its own initiative, large-scale educational study activities. Spontaneous research activities were organized by teachers in successively larger units, first in individual schools, then at the municipal and district level, and then at the prefectural level. Once a year, teachers from all over the country came together at the Educational Research Conference (*kyôiku kenkyû shûkai*). This kind of spontaneous school-based study activity, organized by teachers, in particular the strengthening of in-school lesson studies (*kônai-kensyû*) as an everyday occurrence, played a major role in maintaining and raising the quality of teachers' educational activities in Japan.

Until the 1960s, the salaries of public school teachers were modest, and teachers lived humble lives. Economic struggle was the main motive of teacher unionism. The popularity of teaching as an occupation was not so high. In general, among young university graduates, the teaching profession was their second- or third-best choice.

5. Teaching profession in contemporary Japan

In 1974, during the period of rapid economic growth, the Japanese government enacted the “Law Concerning Special Measures for Securing Capable Educational Personnel in Compulsory Education Schools.” It aimed to recruit capable youths into the teaching profession, against the tendency for such youths to be concentrated in private companies. The law stipulated that “the salary of the teachers in compulsory education schools must be treated more favorably than the salary level of the general civil servant.”

Following the enactment of this law, the salary scale of teachers in compulsory education schools was considerably revised, and came to be higher than the salary paid to general civil servants. The effect of this measure was outstanding. After this time, the traditional image of teachers as being low-paid was shaken off. The teaching profession became an attractive job option among young people. The number of applicants for teaching positions increased sharply and the examination for employment organized by boards of education became more competitive. In some prefectures, the ratio of successful applicants for examination approached one in ten. In some cases, unsuccessful persons tried again and again while working as part-time instructors.

From the latter part of the 1970s into the 1980s, teachers' militant activities began to show signs of stagnation. This was due to a number of factors, including the general acceptance of the prohibition of strikes by public servants, the raising of union fees to provide support for dismissed teachers, and a decrease of interest in labor movements. The large-scale improvement in teachers' salaries in 1974 also contributed to this trend. At its peak, membership of the JTU included nearly 90% of all teachers, but by 1985, the proportion had sunk to below 50%. Subsequently, the decline continued,

particularly among young teachers. Aggressive teacher activities had by the end of the 1980s virtually disappeared from the Japanese educational world.

Japanese teachers have faced increasing and diversified demands from rapidly changing Japanese society. The increase of advancement to upper secondary schools and higher education institutions since the 1960s was very striking, and competition for entry to the best schools and to top-class universities has intensified. The pressure on the teachers for preparing their students for entrance examinations was increasingly strengthened, and excessive competition for entry to the best schools or top-class universities inflicted psychological stress on both children and parents. This intensive examination competition was often referred to in the media as “examination hell.” Criticisms were made that compulsion to rote memorization of enormous amounts of data and educational force-feeding was robbing children of the spirit of inquiry and creative thinking.

On the other hand, attention has been drawn to the increase in the number of children who are unable to keep up with their lessons, the so-called “*ochikobore*”. The desolation of education has been frequently reported in the media in the form of *futôkô* a phenomenon whereby some students refuse to attend school, in-school violence, bullying (*ijime*) among pupils, and apathy on the part of students. Teachers are asked to tackle such demanding problems.

In the controversy on education reform in the 1990s, criticisms were leveled at the excessive way that schooling and education was dominating children’s lives. It was argued that children had hardworking and busy lives at school, and that even after school hours they were under a lot of stress and strain because of pressure from school. One of the main themes of discussion on education at the time was how to secure “*yutori*” (latitude or a relaxed feeling) in the lives of the children and their families. In order for them to have *yutori* in their school lives, in 2002 the five-day school week was completely implemented. Also, in 2002, the educational content in the revised curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools was cut back, and the total number of teaching hours in a school year at the compulsory education level was reduced.

The new curriculum emphasized also “*ikiruchikara*” (competences for positive living or zest for living) as the basic idea of the curriculum reform. In addition to normal subject classes, an integrated study period (*sôgôteki gakushû no jikan*) was created in order to cultivate children with a rich sense of humanity and a vigorous physique, and to further promote cross-curricular, comprehensive studies, such as international understanding, information education, environmental education, volunteer activities, and nature contact experiences. The integrated study period is a time slot without textbooks, in which each school and each teacher are expected to develop their own synthetic learning activities depending on their own sense of creativity and ingenuity.

However, when faced with the implementation of the new curriculum, open criticisms

began to surface about the assertion on *yutori* which had underpinned the educational discourses of the 1990s. A number of science and engineering professors of universities expressed their dissatisfaction and anxiety over the new curriculum. They alleged that the level of knowledge in science and mathematics among present-day university students had clearly sunk when compared to that of the previous generation,¹ and they warned that any further reduction of teaching hours or reduction of the educational content would result in a further large drop in academic ability. Controversial debate on student's academic achievement was heatedly disputed.

In March 2008, the Ministry of Education announced new courses of study for elementary and lower secondary schools that would be implemented from April 2011. According to the explanation by the ministry, the basic idea of *ikiruchikara* would be maintained also in the new curriculum as a principle of education. In primary school and junior secondary school, the total number of teaching hours would be increased by around 10 %. Teaching hours in the subjects of Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, and foreign languages were increased. Teachers were confronted with the difficult task of achieving certain academic abilities while paying enough attention to cultivate *ikiruchikara* in their students.

In recent years, various types of development disabilities among students such as LD (learning disability), ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), and HFA (high-functioning autism) are recognized. Students with those non-intellectual development disabilities are not cared in the special needs education schools but in the regular classrooms of regular schools. Teachers are also asked to cope well with such problems.

In addition, generally, the parents and the community expect schools and teachers to take their place in playing an extensive role and assuming a heavy responsibility including instilling discipline and morality in their students. Japanese students tend to stay in school after lessons for extra-curricular activities. Many students engage in various kinds of athletic or cultural club activities. Teachers are also asked to take care of these activities. Schools often supervise the lives of their students out of school. Some schools occasionally send teachers to patrol the streets and downtown area to protect against vicious practices and juvenile delinquency.

On the other hand, nowadays, the building of a new partnership between schools and the community is asserted. Opportunities for parent and community participation in school management have expanded. In 2000, a School Councilors system was introduced at each school level, as a new way to promote communication and cooperation among schools, parents, and the community. According to regulations, people recommended by the principal are appointed as school council members. Councilors are able to voice their opinions about the school's management. In 2004, another type of forum for participation, called the School Management Council was initiated. Local boards of education designate the schools in which School Management Councils should be established. The council members are appointed from

among local community members, parents of the students, and the people recommended by the board of education. School Management Councils have more power than the school councilors as they can present opinions on the management of the school and on the hiring and transferring of teaching staff to the board of education and the principal. Teachers and schools will be held more accountable to parents and the community at large for their activities.

Teachers dedicate themselves to their work and undertake extensive tasks including extracurricular activities and out-of-school activities. Teachers lead busy lives. Almost all teachers take a pride in their work and have high professional ethics. According to recent surveys, however, an increasing number of teachers are suffering physical or/and mental disorders in these stressful, hard-working circumstances (MEXT document, "Present condition of mental health of teachers." 2012).

One thing that concerns us is that the number of teachers who work as part-timers or provisional teachers has increased in recent years. The proportion of teachers who works as non-regularly employed teachers in the public primary and lower secondary schools has expanded from 12.3% in 2005 to 16.0% in 2011. This situation is caused by the stagnation in policy for improvement of the pupil-teacher ratio, restriction on the employment of local public servants, and the adjustment of intakes for making well-balanced age composition in the teaching workforce. These non-regular teachers are working under disadvantageous conditions and are not given the opportunities for regular in-service teacher training. We are concerned that the increasing number of non-regular teachers in the school may bring about problems in some way (MEXT document, "Concerning employment of non-regular teachers." 2012) .

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日本における教員像の変遷（記述の要点）

日本の教員たちは、比較的高い社会的地位と職業的安定、そして恵まれた経済的待遇を享受している。大部分の教員たちは、自らの職業にプライドを持ち、また高い職業的倫理を持っている。一方で、父母や社会全体からの教員に対する期待と圧力はきわめて大きい。教師たちは熱心に職務に専念し、通常の教授学習活動の他に、課外活動や学校外活動の指導をふくむ活動を行っている。日本の教員の役割とイメージは、日本の近代史の中で時代とともに大きく変貌を遂げてきた。ここでは、以下のような視点から日本の教職像の歴史の変遷について概観する。

- ・江戸時代の伝統的教師
- ・公立学校教員の出現
- ・国民の啓蒙と近代化の担い手としての教員
- ・教育勅語の教育理念(国民道徳と天皇への忠誠)の推進者としての教員
- ・「聖職」として清貧に甘んずる末端官吏としての教員
- ・軍国主義と国家主義への協力者としての教員
- ・戦後教育改革の中での教員
- ・日教組と戦闘的教員運動の中の教員
- ・「デモシカ教員」から「人材確保法」の下での教員
- ・多様な教育要求に応えることを求められる教員

1. 近世における伝統的教師像

2. 近代代学校の下での教職の出現

師匠から教員へ。教員養成の開始。教員の行動の統制。森文相の教員養成論。教授法・教授理論の探究。教員団体の組織化。無資格教員の減少。

3. アンビヴァレントな教職の社会的地位

大正自由教育と教員。軍国主義の台頭。国家主義的教員像。

4. 戦後の日本社会と教職

軍国主義教員の排除。師範学校の廃止と大学における教員養成。日教組の結成と活動。教員集団による教育研究活動。デモシカ先生。

5. 現代社会と教職像

人確法の制定とその効果。教員組合活動の減退傾向。日本社会の変化と教員に対する要求の多様化。