

Moral Education in Japan

Moral education is included in school education in many countries as values education, citizenship education, and religious education, both formally and non-formally. Some countries have issues regarding the reasons for such education activities in the formal sector¹, but Japanese formal education entails little discussion on this topic because the system has a national curriculum consisting of secular principles.²

Central Council for Education, the ad-hoc advisory committee for the central Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) pointed out in 2008 that Japanese children have a poor mind-set in terms of respect for life and self-esteem, and many of them lead an inappropriate lifestyle, while their normative consciousness is becoming lower and their inadequate social skills prevent them from forming good human relationships and participating in group activities. The present Course of Studies, showing the minimum contents of the national curriculum, has aimed at enrichment and improvement of moral education for elementary schools since 2008 and secondary schools since 2009.

This article illustrates the modern history, present situation, and issues of moral education in Japan.

I. Brief History of Moral Education in Modern Japan

I-1. From Nation-State Building to World War II (1873 - 1945)

Elementary School Regulation (*Shogaku Kyosoku*) was issued in September 1873, and in the same year, the Educational System Ordinance (*Gaku Sei*), which included Oral Instruction on Morality called *Shushin*, was promulgated. This was the beginning of official moral education in Japanese education. There were many direct translations from the moral science found in the Western world then, but the story-telling³ method spread across the nation in 1877.⁴ Later, the Educational System Ordinance was abolished and replaced by the Education Order (*Kyouiku Rei*), and independent *Shushin* lessons were set separately from other subjects in 1879.

¹ For example, the United States of America faces the issues of who should receive religious education and how it is taught without a curriculum or textbooks. (<http://doors.doshisha.ac.jp/webopac/bdyview.do?bodyid=BD00005469&elmid=Body&lfname=003065020003.pdf>) In Thailand, religious educators must also be keen analysts of social factors, even those that do not seem to be religious or spiritual in nature. It also means that religious educators must be critical interpreters of the truth and wisdom that are nurtured in faith/religion. (http://old.religiouseducation.net/member/01_papers/antone.pdf).

² However, private schools can count religious activities as time spent on moral education. (<http://repository.dl.itc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2261/815/1/KJ00002358716.pdf>)

³ For example, moral education was based on local folk tales.

⁴ Encyclopedia of Japan's Modern Education (1971: 336).

Moreover, the modified Education Order in 1880 moved *Shushin* from the lowest position among teaching subjects to the highest. *Shushin* remained in the highest position until the end of World War II in 1945 (Ma & Nishimura 2010).

The Meiji central government of Japan formed the constitution as a modern nation-state in 1889 and issued the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. The Ministry of Education also provided the second edition of the Elementary School Order in the same year. Article 2 in the order stated that, as moral education and national education formed the central goal, knowledge and skills should be mastered based on the two. In other words, moral education was assigned as the focal point of all educational efforts and activities for loyal subjects of the Emperor.⁵

The Taisho⁶ era, which followed the Meiji era, saw the rise of democracy, stemming from the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles in 1918. Japan also started to have active party politics at the national level, with a universal suffrage movement, women's suffrage, and political participation as a process of democratization. The Taisho New Education Movement arose and gave importance to child-centered approaches, freedom, initiative and individuality for children. Theories and practices of new trends from Western studies were often applied in Japanese schools.

However, strong reaction against these liberal movements was seen when times became difficult. Some people suggested education reform to develop students' sense of norms and subjection through military-style instruction and nationalist education. The Great Depression struck in 1929, accelerating the unstable situation in Japanese society, and Japan headed for war in the 1930s. The war against the United States of America broke out in 1941. Japanese nationalism during that time became so strong that moral education had the mission of strengthening Japanese ethnocentric consciousness. The social system faced a paradigm shift enforced by the United States after Japan lost the war in August 1945.

I-2. From the End of WWII to the Present (1945–)

According to Watanabe and Ikeyama (2008), moral education in Japan can be summarized as follows: The order of Suspension of Courses in Morals, Japanese History and Geography” by the American-led General Headquarters, called GHQ, terminated *Shushin*, or morality instruction, in December 1945. “The Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan,” published in 1946, criticized morality education in Japan and suggested necessary reforms on education, but never denied moral education itself. “The General Course of Study” in 1951 showed the direction of moral education not as a teaching subject in school but as teaching by whole school education.

⁵ *ibid*: 339.

⁶ The Taisho era was from July 1912 to December 1926, between the Meiji era (Jan. 1868–July 1912) and the Showa era (Dec. 1926–Jan. 1990).

However, “Report of the Curriculum Council: Establishment of Special Time of Moral Education,” in 1958, pointed out that the whole-school approach did not produce effective education and suggested that a period for moral education should be established formally. The principle was that moral education should be closely aligned with other subject lessons, which will supplement, enrich and integrate its own instruction. This became the prototype of the present formal moral education in Japan. Here there were four pillars of moral education practice and contents in formal school education: 1) basic lifestyle and behavior, 2) moral mentality and judgment, 3) expansion of personality and creative lifestyle, and 4) ethical attitude and practical motivation as member of the nation and society.

The Central Council for Education illustrated “the Ideal Japanese”⁷ in 1965. The four special expectations of the Japanese person were as an individual, as a family member, as a member of society, and as a citizen/national.⁸ The updated Course of Study emphasized Japanese people with commitment and respect for living things as recommended by the National Council on Education Reform in 1986. The update raised the necessary fulfillment of moral culture and education, called *Toku Iku*,⁹ and showed “Education Goals in the 21 Century” with three aspects: 1) tolerance, sound body and creativity; 2) freedom and self-reliance with public spirit; and 3) Japanese people in the world. Central Council for Education introduced in 1999 the concept of *Ikiru Chikara*, or competency for living (frequently translated as “zest for living”), and its core was “rich humanity.”

⁷ “Education targets perfection of student’s personality. It is personality itself that holds significant value of integrating the various characteristics and abilities of a person. ... [The expected image is] each individual as a subject forming a nation-state ... can desire his/her character formation. ...The following three issues are important for today’s Japanese, and we express the expected image of people who can obtain some characteristics and practical norms and can deal with the issues: 1) How commitments/engagement of people are assured in the age of such rapidly changing technology? 2) How Japanese tackle international tensions accompanying Japan’s unique position? and 3) What efforts are required for democracy in Japan?” (Ministry of Education 1965:2-4) For an English summary, see Anderson (1975: 371–374).

⁸ For more information, see Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (1965). For an English summary, see Anderson (1975: 371–374).

⁹ Education traditionally aims at a three-part development of personality, namely, *Chi-iku* as intelligence, *Tai-iku* as physical strength, and *Toku-iku* as ethics.

II. Present Moral Education Lessons

II-1. Targets and Contents of Lessons

The present Fundamental Law of Education (2006, No.120) mentions that education should “cultivate morality and ethics (*Dotokushin wo yashinau*)” and shows the meanings and position of moral education in formal school education. Article 2 states that “to realize the aforementioned aims, education shall be carried out in such a way as to achieve the following objectives, while respecting academic freedom,¹⁰” and the first item of the article lists, “to foster an attitude to acquire wide-ranging knowledge and culture, and to seek the truth, cultivate a rich sensibility and sense of morality, while developing a healthy body.” The law suggests the importance of morality.

Chapter 3 of the Course of Study, renewed in 2008, shows the goal of moral education,¹¹ which is to cultivate student’s morality, including moral mentality, judgment, engagement, and attitude, by all the education activities in school. The period for moral education, with the above goal and by planned instruction for children’s development, should be closely aligned with other subject lessons, the period for integrated study,¹² and special activities. It should supplement, enrich and integrate its own instruction in moral education, and should also develop the self-awareness of a lifestyle as a human and practical engagement based on moral values.

The contents of moral education lessons are categorized by four perspectives, which are summarized by the following four pillars that teachers can use to instruct students:

1. About the self: people are independent, they do what they can do themselves, and live moderately.
2. About relationships with other people: people know the importance of courtesy and communicate honestly with other people.
3. About relationships with nature and sublime things: People are moved by the magnificence and wonder of nature, and feel the importance of nature and living things.
4. About groups and society: people keep promises, follow rules, and have a sense of public duty

These pillars are simply summaries of the four perspectives. For example, the detailed contents in the final perspective “About groups and society” show the self-awareness of Japanese-ness in the world and the awareness that Japanese people contribute to world peace and human happiness.

¹⁰ <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/lawandplan/1303462.htm>

¹¹ http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/chu/dou.htm

¹² A cross-curricular lesson period introduced in 2000.

心のノート		とくじ	
あなたがしるす心の軌跡.....	4	この地球に生まれて.....	70-87
私の自画像.....	5	自然や崇高なもののかかわり.....	
はじめの一歩.....	6-9	かけがえない生命.....	72-75
いまここに24の鍵がある.....	10-11	悠久の時間の流れこの大自然.....	76-79
心で見なければ.....	12-13	かみめたい人間として生きるすばらしさ.....	80-83
		生命を考える.....	84-87
自分を見つめ伸ばして.....	14-29	社会に生きる一員として.....	88-137
自分自身.....		集団や社会とのかかわり.....	
この人生の主人公.....	16-17	あなたはいつも一人じゃないから.....	90-91
元気ですか あなたの心から.....	18-21	縛られたくないのはみんな同じ.....	92-96
ステップアップのために.....	22-25	自分だけがよければいい...そんな人が多くなったと思いませんか?.....	96-99
自分のことは自分で決めたい.....	26-29	この学級に正義はあるか!.....	100-103
自分の人生は自分の手で切り拓こう.....	30-33	集団、そして一人一人が輝くために.....	104-107
自分をまるごと好きになる.....	34-37	考えよう「働く」ということ.....	108-111
心の姿勢.....	38-39	家族だからこそ... ..	112-115
思いやる心を.....	40-69	この学校が好き.....	116-119
他人とのかかわり.....		ここが私のふるさと.....	120-123
君がいるから.....	42-43	我が国を愛しその発展を願う.....	124-127
礼儀知らずは恥知らず?.....	44-47	世界の平和と人類の幸福を考える.....	128-131
「思いやり」って...なんだろう?.....	48-51	一人一人が厳守すべきものがある.....	132-133
太陽みたいにきらきら輝く生涯のたからもの.....	52-55	マっていました!.....	134-135
同じ一人の人間として.....	56-59	日本人としての自覚をもって 眞の国際人として世界に貢献したい.....	136-137
いろいろな立場があり考えがある.....	60-63		
ありがたい心の贈り物に... ..	64-67	あの人からのひと言 あなたに伝えたいことがある.....	138-139
コミュニケーションは心のキャッチボール.....	68-69	道徳の時間に感じたこと、考えたこと.....	140-141
		新しい出発.....	142-143
		私の自画像.....	144

Fig. 1. Contents of Notebook for the Heart (Lower Secondary School)

MEXT started to provide free supplemental learning material called *Kokoro no Noto* or “Notebook for the Heart,” consisting of sets of worksheets, to promote moral education based on the above four pillars in 2002 and each topic became downloadable in 2011.¹³ The present administration empathize moral education because it won the election in December 2012 by strong public expectation toward economic recovery after the great earthquake and tsunami. It tries to make moral education an official teaching subject, and the hardcopy of Notebook will be distributed across nation as education advisory group made of conservative experts suggested at the end of February 2013.

The set of Notebook materials is designed for each compulsory school grade between one to nine and children’s development level. Fig.1. shows the downloaded contents of Notebook for the Heart for the lower secondary education level as an example. The contents follow the four pillars in order. Inside, there are plenty of blanks in worksheets for students to fill in (Fig. 2). The teachers encourage students to write down their mind and thoughts during and after period of moral education.

¹³ For example, Notebook for the Heart material can be downloaded from the below site: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/doutoku/detail/1302318.htm.



そわやかに目覚めていますか。
 元気ですか。
 しっかり食べていますか。

元気ですか

Free Space 思いどおし、考えたことを自由に書いてください。(200文字以内で記入してください)

元気は、目に見えないからもの。

**あなたの元気で
きっとだれかが
勇気づけられます。
そしてだれかの元気が
あなたの心を
明るくしてくれます。**





心もからだも
元気ですよ

あなたの心とからだ

多あなたはどうしていますか?

項目	頻度	回答欄
自分の生活の規則に励む・我慢	□	
朝ごはんをしっかり食べる	□	
お腹ふさいないで過ごす	□	
身のまわりの整理整頓	□	
何事でも人にしない	□	
自分の勉強・作業を怠らぬ	□	
健康的な生活を心がける	□	

いま自分を見つめてみて、何か変わったことはありませんか?
 いままで守ってきた基本的な生活習慣が乱れたり
 抜けたりになっていたりしていませんか?
 心のコントロールができていますか?
 少し立ち止まって、自分の毎日を考えてみましょう。

自分で自分をコントロールする

□いくつになってもむずかしいのが、自分で自分をコントロールすることです。

□生活の乱れが心の健康を害し、心の乱れがからだの健康をそときます。

□自分で自分をコントロールする、心の健康・からだの健康のために大切なことなのです。



なぜ大切なのか?

□整ましいといわれる生活習慣。それが、「なぜ」大切なのか考えてみましょう。

たとえば

- 一日をリズムよく過ごすこと
- 早寝早起きすること
- 朝は必ず食事をとること
- バランスよくしっかり食べること
- 身のまわりの片付けすること
- 学習・作業をしっかりとすること

考えてみよう

□ **いま、自分が大切にしている生活習慣は?**

年月日	年月日	年月日

心とからだについて 学んだことや感じたことを記録しよう

学校で学んだことや周囲の人から得た「心とからだ」に関する情報をまとめてみましょう。休食、食生活、睡眠、病気や健康法など、きょうたくさんあるはずです。

□ **理科**で

年月日

□ **保健体育科**で

年月日

□ **理科・家庭科**で

年月日

□ **学習活動**で

年月日

□ **連絡の時間**で

年月日

□ **家庭**で

年月日

□ _____で

年月日

□ _____で

年月日

Fig. 2. Example Worksheet in Notebook for the Heart (Lower Secondary School)

II-2. Lesson Hours

The annual lesson hours for elementary school (grade one to six) and lower secondary school (grade seven to nine) are shown in Table 1. The period for moral education is highlighted. It is not a teaching subject like other obligatory subjects, but 34 hours are set for grade one and 35 for the other grades. For other subject lesson hours, elementary school¹⁴ and lower secondary school¹⁵ show the details on this information service.

Table1: Lesson Hours at Elementary and Lower Secondary School

		G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9
Sub ject	National Language (Japanese)	272	280	235	235	180	175	140	140	105
	Social Studies	n.a.	n.a.	70	85	90	100	105	105	140
	Arithmetic	114	155	150	150	150	150	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Mathematics	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	140	105	140
	Science	n.a.	n.a.	70	90	95	95	105	140	140
	Living Environment Studies	102	105	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Music	68	70	60	60	50	50	45	35	35
	Arts and Handicrafts	68	70	60	60	50	50	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Home Economics	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	60	55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Physical Education	90	90	90	90	90	90	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Fine Arts	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	45	35	35
	Health and Physical Education	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	105	105	105
	Industrial Arts & Homemaking	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	70	70	35
Foreign Language	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	140	140	140	
Moral Education	34	35								
Period for Integrated Study	n.a.	n.a.	105	105	110	110	50	70	70	
Special Activities	34	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	
Total	782	840	910	945	945	945	1015	1015	1015	

Note: Lesson hour is 45 min. for G1 to G6 and 50 min. for G7 to G9

Source: MEXT (2012b; 2012c)

¹⁴ http://www.nier.go.jp/English/EducationInJapan/Education_in_Japan/Education_in_Japan_files/201109BE.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.nier.go.jp/English/EducationInJapan/Education_in_Japan/Education_in_Japan_files/201203LSJ.pdf

III. Issues and Challenges

III-1. Issues in School: *Ijime* Bullying

Ijime bullying has recently become a major issue again¹⁶. Bullying in Japan does not always consist of physical violence; in fact, psychological bullying is more common (Taki et al. 2008). This means that bullying tends to be separated from school violence in official statistics.

Moral education could play an important role in preventing *Ijime* bullying in school before the situation becomes severe. Table 2 shows the number and ratio of schools that used had lesson topics relating with *Ijime* bullying in the period for moral education and classroom activities to address bullying.¹⁷ More than 60% of schools discussed *Ijime* bullying in their lesson periods until 2010, when the number dropped compared to 2009. In addition, practical issues are shared, for example, student's feelings about the period for moral education are not positive.¹⁸

Table 2: Schools Used *Ijime* Bullying as a Lesson Topic in the Period for Moral Education

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Elementary	19,967 (88.8%)	19,681 (88.4%)	13,181 (60.0%)	13,143 (60.5%)
Lower Sec.	9,657 (88.2%)	9,591 (87.9%)	6,900 (63.6%)	6,932 (64.2%)

Source: MEXT (2007-2012a)

III-2. Issues concerning “Notebook for the Heart”

There is some debate surrounding Notebook for the Heart, or *Kokoro no Noto*, the supplemental learning material provided by the central ministry. One of the advantages expected with the notebook is that teachers can save time and avoid a heavy burden in terms of preparation stemming from the fact that the period for moral education is separated from teaching subjects and so general teachers have to instruct. Other advantages are that students can review and reflect how their thoughts change later because they fill in the worksheets themselves, and their parents can also check their records.

On the other hand, there are negative opinions. One is that the contents are decided with a top-down approach and tend to lead students to the image of good children but exclude negative

¹⁶ For example, the case of an eighth grader committing suicide due to *Ijime* bullying received a lot of public attention, with news items about it nationally broadcasted in October 2011. In response, all boards of education began to conduct emergency surveys on bullying. The latest survey was conducted from August 1 to September 22 in 2012 and the results were opened to the public on November 22, 2012. (http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/24/11/1328432.htm).

¹⁷ The 2007 survey had different categories from the surveys conducted since 2008. No survey was conducted in 2006 because the definition of *Ijime bullying* changed. Thus, this figure shows only the results of the most recent four years.

¹⁸ See the discussions on practice, issues and improvement of the period for moral education (http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/004/siryu/06100302/004.htm)

feelings in personality development when they should actually directly face difficulties in a certain life stage. Some experts also point out that the materials emphasize “feeling” but deal too little with “thinking” aspects. In addition, some people question the legitimacy of using public money for moral education, which should be guaranteed with more diversity.

Today’s globalization and economic situation cause various domestic gaps within Japan. Values and lifestyles in Japan are diversifying due to the increase of information accessed and the number of non-Japanese citizens living here, but the formal education system is not sufficiently responsive to this situation. Moral education requires more flexibility as teachers are becoming busier but have to keep maintaining their students’ performance and tackle bullying.

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28/2/2013
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日本の道徳教育

道徳教育は、価値教育、市民性教育、宗教教育等の様々な形態で行われている。国によっては公教育における価値教育や宗教教育が問題となることがあるものの、日本の公教育では、ナショナル・カリキュラムをもとに、教育における世俗性の原則を持つ。近年、日本の子どもたちは、生命尊重の心や自尊感情が乏しいこと、基本的な生活習慣の確立が不十分、規範意識の低下、人間関係を築く力や集団活動を通じた社会性の育成が不十分等といった指摘がなされ、2008年および2009年に改訂した新学習指導要領において道徳教育の充実・改善が図られた経緯を持つ。

I. 近代日本における道徳教育の略史

I-1.戦前（1873-1945）：「学制」の廃止、新たな「教育令」で「修身科」が設置。「改正教育令」では、「修身」が最初にリストされた。ナショナリズムとも連動した。

I-2.戦後（1945～）：学校における道徳教育は教科でなく、学校教育全般を通して行うことになった。「生きる力」の核となるものが「豊かな人間性」とであるとされている。

II. 道徳教育の現状

II-1.道徳教育の「目標」と内容：改正教育基本法で「道徳心を培う」ことが明記され、学校教育における道徳教育の意義および位置付けが示されている。第2条には、「幅広い知識と教養を身に付け、真理を求める態度を養い、豊かな情操と道徳心を培うとともに、健やかな身体を養うこと」と記されている。道徳の時間で扱う内容は、児童生徒の道徳性を次の4つの視点から分類整理し、指導が行われている。補助教材として、「心のノート」が用意されている。

II-2.時間数：小学校と中学校における授業時間数34または35時間、設置されている。

III. 道徳教育に関連する課題

III-1. 学校教育における課題：いじめ問題には予防策が求められることから、学校における道徳教育が重要な役割を担うと考えられる。

III-2. 「心のノート」に関する課題：「心のノート」には、メリットとデメリットが議論されることもある。