

Outcome of Research on Improving of Teacher Training (Outline)

The National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) assembled the results of the above-mentioned research conducted from 2011 to 2012.

1. Aims of the Research

The research aims to collect “unique educational activities” (“Good Praxis of Teacher Education” from universities and colleges taking measures to improve their undergraduate-level teacher-training programs and extract common philosophies among their initiatives, directions of reform, improvements in curriculum, and educational methods. Based on these results, it seeks to make policy recommendations for the improvement of teacher-preparation programs.

2. Outline of the Research (as per attached)

(1) Contents and Methods of the Research

Selecting universities and departments that have promoted excellent initiatives in terms of the organizational structures of teacher training, curriculum, and educational methods and are considered to show the ways and directions of future teacher training, including the ones awarded the “Teacher Training Good Practice Grant” (a part of Grants for Promoting University Reform by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2005 and 2006), and conducting on-site surveys (through interviewing relevant personnel) and questionnaire surveys on the contents of their initiatives.

(2) Subjected Universities

Thirty-one universities with teacher-training curriculum (21 national universities and 10 private universities)

(3) The Ways and Directions of Future Teacher Training Found through the Research Results

- The significance of clarifying the norms and necessary qualifications/abilities of a teacher that needs to be trained (Disengagement from the existing structure that relies too much on the Educational Personnel Certification Law where universities only offer courses on subjects required for the certification, setting the specific and concise targets for learning.)
- The organizational structures for managing teacher training (Inauguration of university-wide teacher-training centers.)
- The importance of establishing systematic teacher-training programs and processes to implement them (Offering specialized scientific subjects and general teaching requirements,

ensuring that a persistent system is in place within a curriculum by bridging theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, understanding in the actual state of children and in their ways of learning, cultivating skills of reflection.)

3. Application of the Research Outcome

- Based on the interim and other reports of the research, recommendations were made on how the future teacher-training programs should be in meetings of the Central Education Council on August 2011 and March 2012
- The full text of the report in Japanese can be found on the website of National Institute for Educational Policy Research (<http://www.nier.go.jp>)

Research Project 2011-2012: Research on teacher training
Surveys and studies for the improvement of teacher training (by Teacher Training Improvement Unit)

Why do we need to enhance the quality of our schoolteachers today?
—Circumstances and Challenges surrounding the Study

The social expectation for schools and teachers has shifted into a new stage today:

1. Rapid changes in the society; the advent of a knowledge-based society and a lifelong learning-based society
2. Changes in our school and children's play environments
3. The pressing need to establish the norms of teacher as a professional who spearheads the creation of schools in the 21st century and play among children.
4. An international trend of moving teacher-training courses up to the graduate level to provide for professional development programs
5. The ongoing mass retirement trend accelerating the replacement of old teachers with young ones



We now need to create a training/education system that can provide our teachers with lifelong professional development opportunities.

1. Training teachers with higher qualifications and improving the quality of teacher training
2. Enhancing the qualifications and competencies of current teachers and systemization and upgrading of training programs

Current status and issues of teacher training at universities
—directions for the improvement of training and education

**Assessment
of
current
status**

1. The current structure depends heavily on the Educational Personnel Certification Law.
2. There is a lack of common understanding across relevant organizations regarding "what competencies of educators need to be cultivated."
3. There is a tendency among students, regardless of their specialized subjects and teacher-training enrollment status, to misinterpret professional education as training and education in their fields of specialization.
4. There is a deep-seated skepticism and rivalry between subject-specific teaching and general teaching fields and too much dependence as well as a sense of distrust on the "practical skills for teaching" concept.
5. There is a lack of coordination between universities and government offices, and little continuity between in-class training and practicum.



**Proposed
directions
for
addressing
the issues**

1. Disengage from the current structure that depends too much on the Educational Personnel Certification Law and establish and share the norms of a "teacher that needs to be cultivated."
 2. Create organizations that play a vital role in "developing practical skills for teaching," promote engagement of all teachers, and encourage the systematic employment of practitioners.
 3. Implement systematic faculty development (FD) to help improve the existing teacher training.
1. Share the common goal of developing "practical skills for teaching" across all parties.
 2. Unify subject-specific training courses and general teaching and utilize subjects that can be taken as "specialized subjects or general teaching."
 3. Clarify the positioning of experimental activities including practicum in the entire curriculum.
 4. Co-establish subjects and routinely have several personnel check a syllabus and improve its content.



Good practices for the improvement of teacher training at universities (Good Praxis)
Drastic reform of teacher training to fulfill the function of developing advanced professionals
→Development of practical skills for teaching

1. Through responding appropriately to changes in the times and the society and systematically dealing with such changes.
2. Through developing "new areas of education" beyond the minimum requirements stipulated in the Education Personnel Certification Law and implement practices in these areas

Why do we need to enhance the quality of our schoolteachers today?

1. Triggers and outcomes of training enhancement efforts

Universities that are taking measures to improve their teacher training and education programs have been prompted to engage in a full-scale discussion and practice by such events as the release of reports on the government-led “Round Table Conferences” on various issues, the incorporation of national universities in Japan, and the issuance of reports by Central Council for Education. These efforts can be regarded as responses to some of the policy recommendations and policy prescriptive measures including fiscal matters. They can also be seen as the universities’ self-reformation efforts to deal with the declining reputation of the teaching profession among the public and critical views on the existing teacher-training programs. With these efforts in place, these universities now offer unique teacher-training curriculums by offering courses on the subjects designated as compulsory in the Educational Personnel Certification Law as minimum graduation

2. Enhancement of management and governing organizations for the purpose of improving teacher training

The university-wide management of teacher training today is overwhelmingly done by the university’s committees and existing organizations such as School Affairs Committee. Some universities have organizations dedicated to teacher-training programs with full-time professors and administrative staff in place. These organizations tend to be more able to enhance their teacher-training curriculums and to carry out unique educational activities than the ones with committee-based

3. Clearly setting the norms of a teacher to be trained

The universities that are taking measures to improve their teacher-training programs have established norms of a teacher they want to train. These norms are not given in abstract terms but presented in a clear and specific manner. These universities have also specified the following concrete items as required qualities of a teacher (teacher competencies) that needs to be trained together with other requirements such as bachelor’s degree and diploma policies.

Qualities required to become a teacher as a highly professional expert

- a. Having scientific knowledge of children’s learning and advanced learning abilities that support such knowledge
- b. Being able to construct educational contents based on the advanced understanding of the taught subjects
- c. Having the ability to reflect on his or her own teaching practices and improve them autonomously through continuous learning

4. Improvement in teacher-training curriculums

The universities that are taking measures to improve their teacher-training programs are not only improving and enhancing courses offering subjects and practicums specified in the Educational Personnel Certification Law but also taking other unique measures to reform their teacher-training curriculums such as introducing new subjects, establishing subject encompassing the two fields of specialized subject and teaching techniques, implementing programs to try out teaching, and upgrading teacher practicums. They are also taking measures to upgrade their educational methods such as promoting proactive introduction of Team Teaching (TT), utilizing workshops, and so forth. The aims of these improvement measures are as follows:

- a. Introducing the concept of “encompassment” to ensure the systematic consistency across the program
- b. Promoting knowledge and practical skills regarding the true state of students and their learning
- c. Cultivating the student’s ability to look back on his or her own practices and improve them

In recent years, some universities have also taken measures to improve “subjects related to the foundation of teaching” as part of educational areas of their “teacher training programs.” These foundational subjects play a significant role in the formation of teacher qualities, and as such, the contents and their teaching methods need to be further improved. In addition, as the contents that their subjects are supposed to teach account for a major part of the required courses for the renewal of teacher’s certificate, such foundational subjects are expected to improve both educational and practicum