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OUT-OF-SCHOOL TRAINING AND ITS ROLE IN SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS DURING THE INDUCTION PROGRAM IN JAPAN

Summary. *The article studies the out-of-school part of the teacher induction program in Japan. Based on the analysis of the Japanese researchers' views on the topic, the article characterizes some issues of initial professional adaptation, professional and social maladjustment, the notion of "reality shock", and the ways to prevent and manage beginning teachers' maladjustment. A literature review on the problem of the out-of-school component of teacher induction showed that the information is somewhat limited because some studies de-emphasize this part as less important than the in-school one. To gain a better understanding of the goals, content, forms, evaluation methods, and duration of the mandatory out-of-school component of teacher induction programs in Japan, several interviews were conducted at the Prefectural Education Centers during the two-month Japan Foundation grant program at the Kansai Japanese Language Center. The analysis of the guidebooks provided to teachers at Saitama and Osaka education centers gives insight into such issues as the teachers' self-assessment and self-analysis that is conducted by filling out "My portfolio" pages. Besides continuing teacher development, the paper also examines various general activities of education centers, such as educational counseling, which is considered particularly important. The results show that mandatory postgraduate teacher training in Japan follows a standardized structure recommended by the Ministry of Education. However, the implementation of the internship program is the responsibility of each Prefectural Board of Education. As a result, the number of sessions, methods, and content of the program can vary substantially based on each local administrative body's priorities and needs, making it rather decentralized.*

Key words: *beginning teachers, out-of-school training, teacher induction program, adaptation, Japan, education centers, teacher development.*

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ПОЗАШКІЛЬНА ПІДГОТОВКА ТА ЇЇ РОЛЬ У ПІДТРИМЦІ ВЧИТЕЛІВ-ПОЧАТКІВЦІВ ПІД ЧАС ПРОГРАМИ ВХОДЖЕННЯ У ПРОФЕСІЮ В ЯПОНІЇ

Анотація. У статті розглядається позашкільна частина програми входження вчителів у професію в Японії. На основі аналізу поглядів японських дослідників на дану тему охарактеризовано деякі проблеми первинної професійної адаптації, професійної та соціальної дезадаптації, поняття «шоку при зіткненні з реальністю», шляхи попередження та управління дезадаптацією вчителів-початківців. Огляд останніх досліджень показав, що інформація з позашкільного компонента програми входження вчителів у професію децю обмежена, оскільки дослідження переважно не приділяють увагу позашкільній частині, вважаючи її менш важливою, ніж шкільну. Для кращого розуміння цілей, змісту, форм, методів оцінювання та тривалості обов'язкового позашкільного компонента програм входження вчителів у професію у Японії було проведено кілька інтерв'ю в префектурних освітніх центрах протягом двомісячної грантової програми від Японської фундації в Центрі японської мови регіону Кансай. Аналіз посібників, які надаються вчителям освітніх центрів м. Сайтама та м. Осака, дає зрозуміти такі питання, як самооцінка та самоаналіз викладачів, які проводяться шляхом заповнення сторінок у розділі «Моє портфоліо». Окрім підвищення кваліфікації вчителів, у статті також досліджуються загальні види діяльності освітніх центрів, наприклад консультування з питань освіти, які вважаються особливо важливими. Результати показують, що обов'язкова післядипломна підготовка вчителів у Японії має стандартизовану структуру, рекомендовану Міністерством освіти, проте реалізація програми стажування є обов'язком кожної префектурної Ради з питань освіти. Як наслідок, тривалість, методи та зміст програми можуть суттєво відрізнятися залежно від пріоритетів і потреб кожного місцевого адміністративного органу, що робить підготовку вчителів-початківців досить децентралізованою.

Ключові слова: вчителі-початківці, позашкільна підготовка, програма входження вчителів у професію, адаптація, Японія, освітні центри, розвиток вчителів.

Introduction. The time when students of teaching become teachers of students is often regarded as a difficult transition period from pre-service education to actual classroom teaching. The heavy workload and expectations put on teachers cause burnout or so-called reality shock.

Stress becomes a significant reason for teachers to leave the profession. An effective induction program conducted during the first year after employment for newly qualified teachers can help alleviate stress and make teachers feel good about their accomplishments. It may also help to produce better teachers (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997, p. 182). The study of effective induction practices can be a helpful tool for future policy improvement in continuing teacher education in developing countries.

In Japan, teacher turnover has been historically low compared to other developed countries. Teacher retention rates in Japan are a positive aspect of Japanese education and the culture of teaching (Fujita, 2007, p. 47). In the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation report, the Japanese teacher induction program model is viewed

as successful and may be considered one of the “best practices” (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997).

The high quality of Asian teachers inspires researchers to conduct comparative international studies attempting to find the key elements that contribute to the excellent performance of the teaching force. H. Stevenson and J. Stigler, studying the difference between the Asian and American educational systems, noted: “But what has impressed us in our personal observations and in the data from our observational studies is how remarkably well most Asian teachers teach. It is the widespread excellence of Asian class lessons, the high level of performance of the average teacher, that is stunning” (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 198).

As a part of a two-month grant from the Japan Foundation, Olha Luchenko was undergoing a Japanese Language Program for Specialists in Cultural and Academic Fields from June 5th through July 31st of 2019. The visits were agreed upon to be documented with audio recording at Saitama Prefectural Education Center (Kantō region) and Osaka Prefectural Education Center

(Kansai region). A series of interview questions was devised and conducted in Japanese, with the sessions recorded and later transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts of two live interviews were used as research material for this study.

The article is based on Olha Luchenko's previous Ph.D. dissertation, "Professional adaptation of novice teachers to school work in Japan" (2018), as well as subsequent research activity and results. The research methodology involved reviewing relevant studies and conducting in-person interviews with the staff of Prefectural Education Centers. The data collected during the interviews was later updated via e-mail correspondence in April 2023.

Analysis of recent publications. Some issues of professional and social adaptation in Japan are highlighted in the works of M. Wakabayashi, Y. Wakamatsu (1995), T. Kikuchi, K. Ikeuchi, Ch. Nakano, M. Yoshida, A. Itagaki, K. Sakakibara, S. Ooba, M. Fujiwara and others.

Investigating initial professional adaptation in Japan, Y. Wakamatsu notes: "Adaptation is a multi-meaning term, similar to such concepts, such as *satisfaction with the service, devotion to the organization* and others. Almost all definitions of this term are considered in only one direction: how a person who has found a job feels or evaluates himself. So, adaptation is often mistakenly understood as one's own satisfaction or dissatisfaction". Y. Wakamatsu agrees with T. Kikuchi's definition, which, as he points out, differs from others because it takes into account the opinion of both parties – the employee (newcomer) and the employer: "This is a state of satisfaction in response to one's point of view of being regarded as needed at work and expected to fulfill a certain role" (Wakamatsu, 1995, p. 195).

Problems of professional and social maladjustment were studied by I. Ishii, M. Masaki, Y. Matsumoto. Japanese scientists understand the term "maladjustment" as the state of a person whose actions do not correspond to the situation (Morimasa, 1981, p. 112), and often associate this concept with the feeling of "disappointment" (Y. Wakamatsu, M. Wakabayashi, K. Ishiguro). K. Ishiguro paid particular attention to the problem of maladjustment of novice teachers and identified its six types: loss of confidence, excessive consciousness, a complex type of maladjustment (combining the first two mentioned), the right type of maladjustment, a type of excessive self-confidence, and maladjustment caused by excessive expectations.

When considering the maladjustment caused by excessive expectations, it is necessary to note that many Japanese researchers studying the issue of primary teachers' adaptations often mention "reality shock". As a separate concept, it is very common in the research of Japanese scientists as one of the types of professional maladjustment experienced by beginning teachers. It was studied by S. Ishii, M. Kumazawa, M. Matsunaga, M. Miura, N. Nakamura, A. Sakai, M. Sugihara, Y. Harada, E. Yukawa (2014) and others. The difficulties that are faced by teachers in the first years of work are characterized in the scientific works of Y. Iemoto, Y. Ishihara, and H. Kojima.

E. Yukawa believes that the occurrence of reality shock is almost impossible to avoid for beginning teachers. After analyzing research on this issue, she notes: "Scientists agree that teachers at the beginning of their professional activity often face primary shock and tend to find a gap between their expectations and reality, which can sometimes be extremely challenging to overcome" (Yukawa, 2014, p. 105).

Based on the analysis of Japanese researchers' views on prevention and managing the maladjustment of beginning teachers, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- the most effective way to manage maladjustment is by changing factors after employment, such as improving the training content (on-the-job training), working environment, and interpersonal relations;
- it is necessary to reduce the workload of young teachers during the adaptation period in order to provide an opportunity for beginners to participate in internships;
- professional development of experienced teachers and improvement of pedagogical skills contribute to the introduction of new and updated training methods in schools, which helps alleviate the reality shock experienced by beginning teachers.

A considerable number of studies is devoted to the issues of novice teachers' adaptation and Japanese practice of teacher induction (D. Nohara, S. Waida, 2012; Y. Kameyama, K. Ishiguro, Y. Ishihara, H. Kawada, Y. Morimasa, 1981; B. Friehs, 2004; M. Maki, M. Padilla & J. Riley, 2003; N. Shimahara, 2002; H. Ojima). However, the out-of-school component (*kōgaikenshū* 校外研修) of the training was often underestimated and overlooked as "not important". Therefore, it needs to be comprehensively analyzed.

The purpose of the article. The research aims to find out if the obligatory out-of-school part is

relevant and what its benefits can be for beginning teachers. The objectives of the research are to study the out-of-school component of the teacher induction program in Japan, to compare the programs existing in Saitama and Osaka (Kanto and Kansai regions of Japan), to determine the purpose, the content, the methods, and the evaluation of results of the teacher training in education centers.

Presentation of the main material. In Japan, responsibility for continued teacher training after pre-service education is divided into three levels:

1) MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology), which establishes national policies for teacher education, funds various in-service efforts at all levels, and sponsors a small number of in-service courses for educators nationwide;

2) the Boards of Education (*kyōiku iinkai* 教育委員会) of the 47 prefectures and 12 specially designated cities, which have established Education Centers for the support and training of teachers in their local communities;

3) local schools, which plan and carry out various formal and informal staff training activities.

The organization of the induction program (*shoninsha kenshū* 初任者研修) for newly recruited teachers is done as a component of more significant and comprehensive professional development initiatives. Training in relation to the number of years of service can be broadly divided into two categories: 1) training for newly-appointed teachers, and 2) training for teachers with teaching experience (Tanaka et al., 2004, p. 218).

The induction program in Japan was introduced in 1989. It consists of two components: an in-school internship program (*kōnaikenshū* 校内研修 designed by a school principal and a mentor) and an out-of-school part (developed by a prefectural education center). The program is meant to assist beginning teachers in adjusting and adapting to their new position. The purpose of induction training is to prepare novice teachers with practical instructional skills and a sense of mission, while also broadening the teacher's perspective (Tanaka et al., 2004, p. 219).

The Law for Special Regulations Concerning Educational Public Service Personnel (*kyōiku komuin tokureihō* 教育公務員特例法) outlines the general structure for providing support for newly recruited teachers. The establishment and implementation of the internship program, based on a model recommended by the Ministry of

Education and locally created programs, is the responsibility of the Prefectural Boards of Education. They provide mandatory first-year induction training, and newly recruited teachers must complete the program while teaching classes in their schools.

Different terms describe out-of-school practice: out-of-school teacher training (N. Moriyoshi, J. Williams), off-site training (OECD reports), center-based program (B. Friehs), off-campus training component (H. Fujita), outside-school training program (M. Padilla & J. Riley). The term out-of-school training will be primarily used in this article.

MEXT establishes the following guidelines for off-site training: 1) theoretical and practical courses offered at the Center for Education of each prefecture; 2) occupational experience at social service sectors and/or business sectors; 3) volunteer service experience and others (OECD, 2016, p. 33).

Most government-sponsored in-service education is provided at the national and prefectural education centers. The latter are established and operated by each of the 47 prefectural boards of education. There are also centers in large designated cities like Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima. The prefectural education centers employ full-time staff, including numerous experienced teachers on leave from their schools (Friehs, 2004, p. 9).

As Naoko Moriyoshi states, the out-of-school component aims “to enhance in-school training through interactions with teachers who have experience in other school communities to increase understanding of various views on education and teaching” (Moriyoshi, 1999, p. 422).

The internship component designed by the education centers includes formal lectures (*kōgi* 講義) on the legal framework and ethical foundations of teaching, human rights, minority education, moral education, classroom management, and student behavior. There are opportunities to broaden the perspective of interns through special arrangements to teach at schools other than their own and to visit various types of social institutions, information technology workshops, and a three-day retreat that allows interns to reflect on critical issues in teaching and to share their own experiences as first-year teachers (Shimahara, 2002, p. 67).

Teacher development through “social participation” offered by centers is also regarded as an essential part of the program

because teachers are perceived as increasingly isolated and unaccustomed to life outside the classroom.

MEXT divides the content of the program into six broad categories. Most of them are taught both in- and out-of-school: *moral education*, *special activities*, and *pupil guidance*. *Classroom management* and *subject guidance* categories primarily occur within the school. *The basic knowledge* component takes place outside the school (Padilla & Riley, 2003, pp. 275-276).

The in-service training at the prefectural education centers follows a uniform basic structure across Japan. There are two types of in-service education to enhance teacher growth at various levels: mandatory and optional. The Ministry of Education supports compulsory courses, which comprise several programs that must be taken to advance teachers' professional goals using a career development framework (Friehs, 2004).

Besides an obligatory induction program for novice public school teachers (*kōritsu gakkō kyōin* 公立学校教員) there are mandatory programs for teachers with five years of work experience (10 days) and with ten years (11 days). School administrators and principals must regularly attend courses to meet evolving administrative issues.

Moreover, each prefectural education center provides optional study courses for teachers that concentrate on particular subjects like minority

education, environmental education, mathematics, science, counseling, curriculum development, and others.

Each prefecture or designated city has a well-equipped professional development center or prefectural education center. Figures 1-5 represent the pictures taken during the visits to Saitama and Osaka Prefectural education centers and aim to show the site and some forms of training.

Saitama Prefectural Education Center

We visited the Saitama Education Center on July 3rd, 2019 (see Fig. 1). The visit aimed to learn about the general activities of the center and the forms and the training content for newly-qualified teachers. During the visit, we had an opportunity to talk to the center staff members: Masuda Masao (the head of the general planning section), Oogawa Tsuyoshi (the head of the planning and coordination section), Kuroda Yuki (managing director of education and senior manager of teacher guidance), Sakaniwa Chie and Nakamura Tsukasa (members of the teacher training group).

However, on the day of the visit, beginning higher secondary school teachers had a so-called "agriculture/farming and food experience" in a different venue in an inconvenient location far away from the center. Instead, we had an opportunity to observe classes for the fifth-year high-school teachers: social studies, physical education, and computer programming (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. The entrance to Saitama Prefectural Center and the national flag of Ukraine in front of the main building

The following is the interview data from the Saitama Prefectural Education Center visit.

Among various general activities, educational counseling (*kyōikusōdan* 教育相談) is considered to be of particular importance. The most frequent topics of consultations that are provided either

face-to-face or remotely are the following: abuse, *ijime* (bullying), child development (learning disabilities, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech delay), school non-attendance, conditions and behavior (obsessive-compulsive disorders, abnormal behavior), character and



Figure 2. Practice training for computer programming teachers that became a compulsory subject in elementary schools in 2020

emotional state (domestic violence, anxiety, deflection), schoolwork and future course (career-path selection, aptitude, academic performance), school life (relationships with teachers and classmates), home environment (child-rearing attitude, discipline, parent-child relationship).

Face-to-face consultations are much less numerous than telephone ones. In 2017 there were 1071 consultations in person compared to 9248 via the telephone (Saitama kenritsu sōgō kyōiku sentā, 2018, pp. 24-25).

The handbooks and guidebooks presented at Saitama and Osaka centers contained detailed information about the teaching training conducted there. Newly appointed teachers typically engage in a regular course of study, which usually takes place one day per week throughout the academic year (16-25 days). The comparison of the precise number of days in 2018-2019 for elementary, lower, and higher secondary school teachers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of the number of training sessions provided to beginning teachers at Saitama and Osaka Prefectural Centers

| № | Name of Induction Training | Number of Sessions / Days | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | Saitama | | Osaka | |
| | | 1 st year | 2 nd year | 1 st year | 2 nd year |
| 1 | Training for elementary school teachers | 16 | 2 | 19 | 6 |
| 2 | Training for lower secondary school teachers | 16 | 2 | 19 | 6 |
| 3 | Training for higher secondary school teachers | 25 | - | 21 | 4 |
| 4 | Training for special support school teachers | 25 | - | 21 | 4 |

As we learned from Oogawa Tsuyoshi: “The format and contents of teacher training differ for teachers at elementary schools, lower secondary schools, higher secondary schools, and special support schools. For instance, elementary and lower secondary school teachers also receive training during the second year of employment”.

As mentioned above, teachers visit social education facilities and private companies during out-of-school training and engage in volunteer work. Therefore, we inquired about the activities teachers undertake outside the education center or school. We were explained that teachers spend a day visiting a company located in the city where

their affiliated school is situated. Off-campus training provides them with the idea of running a company in the city as well as exposes them to the atmosphere of interacting with customers. Beginning teachers arrange appointments with companies they want to visit and request permission to undergo one-day training sessions there. While off-campus training can take the form of volunteering activities, not many teachers choose to participate in it. They also visit a special needs school and different schools to observe classes (*gakkō homon* 学校訪問) and engage with other teachers. They inquire about their teaching experiences, aiming to improve their own teaching



Figure 3. The seminar on social studies at the Saitama Prefectural Center

skills. After observing classes, they have a study group discussion (*kyōgi* 協議) to enhance classroom teaching skills. While there is no direct class evaluation, the group discussions serve particular functions. By observing the lessons of veteran teachers, beginning teachers aim to learn effective teaching techniques (Fig. 4).

Saitama Prefectural Center cooperates with about 30 different establishments. The University of Tokyo, Saitama University, Kyoto University, and others are among them.

In 2019, neither Saitama nor Osaka Education Center offered e-learning courses, but the situation changed after the pandemic. Oogawa



Figure 4. Orientation lecture on the purpose of the school visit

Tsuyoshi, the current principal of Konosu Girls' High School in Saitama, graciously answered our questions via e-mail in April 2023 to update some data. As Oogawa Tsuyoshi stated, "Due to COVID-19, it became impossible to gather and conduct training at the Education Center. As a result, ICT was utilized to distribute training videos. Currently, we are conducting training sessions both through in-person gatherings at the education center and by watching training videos at the respective schools where teachers work".

On July 26th, 2019, Luchenko agreed to visit Osaka Prefectural Education Center and

had an interview with Tode Katsuhiko from the Education Planning Department. Two main topics of interest were "overall activities of the Osaka Prefectural Education Center" and "the contents of the training for beginners".

The following is the interview data from the Osaka Prefectural Education Center visit.

Osaka Prefectural Education Center was established in 1962, about 60 years ago. The center staff used to be teachers, and now they are supervisors of beginning teachers. As full-time center employees, they are away from the school site. Their responsibilities are to guide teachers

and collect teaching materials, statistics, and other information.

The general activities of the center include:

- Training of academic staff (school teachers and all education-related staff).
- Conduction of surveys and research studies on specialized or technical matters.
- Providing academic counseling.

The center usually provides consultations for children, parents, and school teachers via telephone and e-mail. Recently, counseling for lower and higher secondary school students via SNS (LINE app) has been introduced. For example, the specialists provide advice for students who would like to attend school but cannot for various reasons. They are students who become mentally distressed when they go to school (i.e., anxiety, *ijime*, chronic lateness, school non-attendance, or *hikikomori*). Some study at support centers instead of school and do activities such as growing flowers.

There are several high schools attached to the Osaka Prefectural Education Center. Their purpose is to put into practice the theory taught at the center. The supervisors visit the high schools and work collaboratively with trainees on how to teach the class and provide guidance (*shidō* 指導) so that beginning teachers can conduct good lessons.

There are different types of training for newly-employed educational staff:

- training for elementary, lower, higher secondary and special support school teachers;
- training for school nurses;
- training for nutrition instructors who manage school lunches and teach children about nutrition, manners, good eating habits, and food culture;
- training of school clerks/office employees.

The boards of education determine the training themes. Many things that Osaka Prefecture considers crucial, such as lesson planning and human rights, are covered. Common topics taught for beginning teachers include conducting lessons, class management, and special needs education. The guidebooks and textbooks contain all the necessary information for teachers, but it does not mean that everything included is taught during the training. They only give the outline for the study.

Introductory training provided only to public school teachers lasts 19 days in the first year and six days in the second year. Regarding the format of the center's initial training, it is held once for three hours. This time is divided between lectures, beginning teachers' group discussions, and presentations. As social experience-based training, they get volunteer experience at a social welfare facility.

In addition to training from education centers, there is also training conducted by municipal boards of education. The latter may decide where the activity will occur. There is a practice when elementary school teachers volunteer at lower secondary and other schools.

Moreover, some teachers volunteer at welfare facilities such as homes for older people and facilities for people with disabilities. They can also visit private companies, but it is not a widespread practice. The purpose of such activities is to create a good relationship with the school and the community.

Figure 5 shows a photograph of a lecture given to the beginning teachers of elementary and lower secondary schools on "Deepening students' understanding" at the Osaka Education Center.



Figure 5. Photograph of a lecture at the Osaka Education Center

While MEXT regularly evaluates its programs, many prefectural centers also engage in informal evaluation activities. New teachers are usually asked only to complete a survey evaluating induction training. However, the evaluation of beginning teachers' training results is an issue we had little information about.

Oogawa Tsuyoshi noted that "There is a supervisor or mentor (*shidōkyōin* 指導教員) at the school teachers belong to, so beginners learn how to teach from them. The instructor watches the beginner's class, evaluates it, and gives guidance. In addition, the principal and head teacher also observe the classes of the newcomers and give guidance. Finally, the evaluation of all beginning teachers, as well as the whole teaching staff, is conducted by the school principal".

Tode Katsuhiko said: "There are no research papers or conference presentations at the end of the course. When the training is over, we conduct a questionnaire. All beginning teachers write their thoughts and impressions in a mini report (one page at most). I believe the school evaluates new teachers, but the education center does not. The principal checks the report of newly-employed teachers. As for evaluation, they learn the theory, put it into practice at school, and summarize it in a report that is usually discussed at the next training session. Newly appointed teachers conduct a self-assessment three times yearly and submit it to their teaching supervisors".

Some prefectures publish guidebooks describing their year-long program for novice teachers. During the visit to the Osaka Education Center, we received a guidebook and some teaching materials.

The guidebook contains pages for self-assessment (*jiko seichō kakunin shīto* 自己成長・確認シート) and "My portfolio" for beginning teachers of elementary, lower secondary, and higher secondary schools (Ōsaka fu kyōikuiinkai, 2019, pp. 13-16). The topics are as follows: teaching ability in classes and subjects, ability to tackle group building, passion for education, power as a member of an organization, and basic knowledge as a member of society. There is a four-grade evaluation: 4 – well accomplished, 3 – almost accomplished, 2 – not much accomplished, and 1 – not accomplished. The chart is filled out 3-4 times a year: in April, August, and February by teachers of all grades, and in January of the second year – only by elementary and lower secondary school teachers.

The example of a sheet for self-assessment and confirmation of personal growth for the

topic "skills for conducting lessons and teaching subject" is provided in Table 2. Mapping skills development using a radar chart helps to reflect on current skills and confirm progress.

"My portfolio" contains two sections: "plan and review of each term" and "lesson study" (*kenkyū jugyō* 研究授業). The first section should be completed after analyzing the self-assessment sheet (three times during a course). The aim is to clarify the participants' achievements, challenges, and future goals by reflecting on their initial intentions and self-practice as a teacher.

The second section is supposed to be filled out on the occasion of lesson study. It is meant to clarify what kind of aim the beginning teachers set for the research class, what type of guidance and advice they received in the pre-and post-course direction, and what the result was. Both sections are submitted to a supervisor for confirmation (Ōsaka fu kyōikuiinkai, 2019, pp. 13-16).

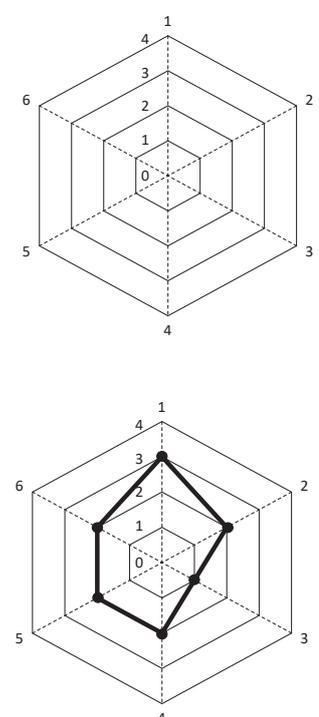
When asked whether the number of out-of-school training days was being reduced, we received the following response from the Saitama Education Center staff: "Initial training has remained the same throughout the years. The number of out-of-school training days for first-year and tenth-year teachers has already been mandated by law, but we are gradually exploring ways to reduce it. Until the year before last, the law required 25 days of training for first-time employees. However, since last year, there has been a discussion to make it more flexible, and we are currently deliberating on how to respond to that". At Osaka Education Center, Tode Katsuhiko noted the following tendency: "When I took the training in 1994, there were 25 sessions for the beginning teachers, but now it lasts 19 days. However, the training has recently been provided for second-year teachers".

Having conducted the literature review, we noticed concerns about the efficacy of the current out-of-school components: "Indeed do these ministerial and prefectural in-service teacher education programs offer no opportunities for teacher collaboration and often do not meet their needs and expectations. The courses are felt to be too short and fragmented. Especially those in the field of education are regarded as not satisfactory at all by teachers. This is why they prefer courses in their special disciplines and often avoid the others" (Friebs, 2004, p. 11).

Among the other shortcomings of the program, some education authorities have identified the following: "The effectiveness of outside-school training program is questioned, especially when

Table 2

The sheet for self-assessment and confirmation of personal growth with an example radar chart

| № | Skills for Conducting Lessons and Teaching Subject | | Grades (1-4) | | |
|---|--|---|--------------|--------|--|
| | | | April | August | |
| 1 | Content understanding | textbooks and the Ministry's curriculum guideline | | |  <p>An example of a completed chart is below</p> |
| 2 | Educational guidance | ability to consider teaching materials that enhance children's interest | | | |
| 3 | Educational guidance | ability to clarify the aim of the unit, nurture thinking ability, judgment ability, and expressiveness, and create a teaching plan according to the actual situation of the child | | | |
| 4 | Educational guidance | guidance techniques such as writing on the blackboard, asking questions, and giving instructions for easy-to-understand lessons | | | |
| 5 | Assessment | ability to understand learning evaluation methods and apply them to learning guidance | | | |
| 6 | Assessment | ability to look at class evaluation sheets and other teachers' classes and improve their own classes | | | |

the extra hours of training neither enhance the in-school training nor bring new learning. The effectiveness of the outside-school training may be weakened if the 30 days of study outside the school places more burden on teachers and merely repeats the in-school part” (Moriyoshi, 1999, p. 424).

Both scientists concur that the benefits of the out-of-school experience must be acknowledged (Moriyoshi, 1999, p. 424) and that follow-up studies on the results and efficiency of the courses are still lacking (Friehs, 2004, p. 11).

Conclusions. Common activities conducted by education centers can include research projects, teacher training (based on the number of years, specialization, on particular topics; for managerial staff, the staff related to lifelong learning etc.), and educational counseling (face-to-face or via telephone, e-mails, and SNS). More specific activities may involve research and development of selection methods, support for experiential learning, guidance on lesson planning, and management of a teaching material library (as in the case of Saitama Center). Consultations are

provided on various issues, including bullying, school refusal, character and behavior, learning delays, development, and disabilities.

New first-year public school teachers are required to participate in training programs offered by each prefecture and municipality. The out-of-school training is conducted at centers and other locations outside schools. Having compared the induction programs of the education centers visited, it can be observed that no requirements or specific standards are applied uniformly nationwide, as each Board of Education plans its induction training autonomously.

The training is conducted in various forms, including lectures, workshops, practice teaching, collaborative learning, lesson studies, and guidance. It also involves observation visits to different types of schools, educational centers for children, welfare homes, and private businesses. In addition, outside activities such as volunteering in the community and participating in study group discussions on various topics are included.

Teaching in Japan is considered a collaborative activity that requires continuous interaction and

reflection with peers. Consequently, in-school training is planned jointly, taking into account the personal needs of individual teachers as well as the necessities and requirements of schools. In general, we can say that researchers view government-initiated, top-down programs with more skepticism than school-based professional development.

While training within a school is often considered the most important, we believe that a Japanese program with two components (in-school and out-of-school) is well-balanced. The latest improvements in out-of-school training programs focus on active learning approaches to address practical teaching issues and include the introduction of more programs on mock lessons (*mogijugyō* 模擬授業) and practice-oriented learning.

During the visits to both education centers, we learned that they teach the theory on the importance of certain types of lessons and how to encourage critical thinking among children. Beginning teachers put the theory into practice mostly at schools, but sometimes they conduct mock classes during the training in the center, where teachers act as students and supervisors give them instructions.

In addition, education centers collaborate with affiliated institutions, including schools (beyond those where teachers are employed) and universities, to plan and implement teacher

induction programs. This collaborative approach ensures that the training is more practical and helps beginning teachers gain a broader perspective in achieving their goals.

The Japanese system for professional development is based on a peer-driven approach. In contrast, teaching in many countries is characterized by the structural isolation of individual teachers, with instruction taking place without active peer participation. We think it is crucial to recognize the benefits of teacher networking and collaboration as essential strategies for fostering teacher growth and reflection. While the Japanese approach may not be directly applicable to Western society as a whole and can only survey as a model to a certain extent, some progressive ideas can be implemented to restructure and modernize the out-of-school part of teacher induction training.

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