



Curriculum Center for Teachers
Tokyo Gakugei Univ.

Creative Curricula & Teaching
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“21st Century Competencies” and the Teacher’s Role

The 16th “Future School Education and Teacher Education Curriculum” took place at Tokyo Gakugei University on the afternoon of December 13 (Sun.), 2015, under the theme of the “21st Century Competencies” and the “Teacher’s Role.” It was a symposium hosted by Curriculum Center for Teachers (and supported by Japan Association of Universities of Education, The Japanese Society for the Study of Teacher Education, Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, and other organizations). Based on proposals from Professor Tadahiko Abiko (Kanagawa University), Professor Hatsu Mitsuishi (Teikyo University), Professor Manabu Kishi (Vice-president of Tokyo Gakugei University), a lively discussion was developed among approximately 130 participants who had gathered from all over Japan.



The proposal of Professor Abiko was developed from the viewpoint of how to see “qualities and abilities that students should foster” and turn them into a policy in relation to the next revision of the Course of Study, based on his extensive experience involved in policy deliberation. The attitude existed in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which tried to advance “quality and ability” as the center relating to the nature of evaluation, altering the “content”-based, conventional revision of the Course of Study, which is related closely to the key competencies to which the OECD refers. Professor Abiko introduced the idea that, although the investigative committee on which he served as the chairperson had been conducted with that tone, the issue of “active learning” was strongly set out at the stage of the consultation with the Central Council for Education, probably because the Minister of MEXT had preferred it, and led to the three pillars in the “Summary of Issues.” Subsequently, Professor Abiko pointed out the importance of making revisions in the following points at school sites as the points related to the teacher’s role: (1) Make students aware of the limitations of national

sovereignty; (2) Be careful to include personality elements into competency; and (3) Encourage children’s independence under the circumstances likely to be twisted around by policies.

The following, Professor Mitsuishi’s proposal, was started with organization of the flow of the consideration mainly by the Subcommittee on Teacher Education of the Central Council for Education, which led to the release of a report the week after the symposium (on December 21). The points of deliberation here lay in the trends of a distinction: what was called the subject contents (subjects related to school subjects) and the teaching method of school subjects was disappearing. Moreover, the training education at the graduate school of teacher education was being valued. It was emphasized that, behind the trends, a change of the view existed on academic ability. At the same time, he indicated that caution was necessary when considering children’s academic abilities in future Japan because some things were included or excluded from the OECD framework. Subsequently, Professor Mitsuishi proposed that we might need to consider teacher education at university with four images in mind: teacher as a practitioner, teacher as a researcher, teacher as a person of culture, and teacher as an adult.

Furthermore, Professor Kishi reported on the examination of ideal teaching models and evaluation in a project that is being implemented through a tie up between the Research Organization for Next-Generation Education, Tokyo Gakugei University, and the OECD. As preparatory work, an attitude survey of school teachers was conducted in terms of whether the elements of the key competencies to which the OECD referred could be fostered or not. He pointed out that the characteristic differences between subjects were shown clearly as a result of the survey.

In a discussion based on them, many points of argument were put forth, including subjects related to how to see active learning itself (particularly in relation to the “use-oriented” in the previous Course of Study), relationships between them and new educational movements to date, and relationships between teaching and evaluation. A lively exchange of views was held. Although the time was insufficient, many issues such as the following were apparently shared. The direction in which students are positively engaged in learning is strongly being set forth, and being closely related to that, teachers also foster new positivity.

(Yasuyuki Iwata)

Invited a Teacher Education Researcher from Saxony, Germany

In February 2015, the Curriculum Center for Teachers extended an invitation to Prof. Dr. Axel Gehrmann from Technische Universität Dresden, Germany, to be a visiting professor. During his stay until August this year, we will arrange an opportunity for him to talk about the latest teacher education research and practice in Germany.

Prof. Dr. Axel Gehrmann contributed a brief self-introduction to the newsletter.

Scientific Career

For more than 25 years I have been working actively as a lecturer and researcher in the field of school and teacher research at various university sites in Germany. In 1989 I finished my studies focusing on educational science at the Free University of Berlin in the Western part of Berlin and worked there as a research assistant in different departments for more than 10 years.

After positions as a visiting professor, i. e. as a professor in the federal states of Berlin, Thuringia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Baden-Wuerttemberg, since 2010 I have been working as a Professor of Educational Science at the Dresden University of Technology. The Dresden University of Technology (TUD) is one of eleven Universities of Excellence in Germany and has more than 35,000 students. As a comprehensive university with a wide range of subjects, TUD is among the leading research universities in Germany, and considers exchange and cooperation of sciences with economy and society as its basis.

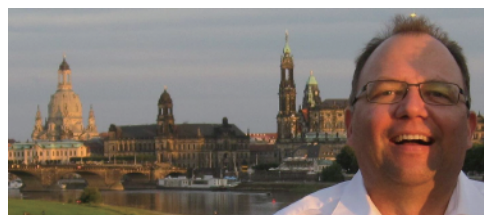
During my activities so far, I have practiced the qualitative as well as the quantitative research paradigm. My dissertation is an individual case study based on qualitative interviews with male and female teachers with practice in Berlin and dealing with the question of how individual schools in the eastern part of the city are developing after the reunification in the course of the educational regulations. My postdoctoral thesis is based on representative surveys of 3,000 male and female teachers and emphasizes the areas of “professional experience” and “professional attitude”. Finally, I have especially been concentrating on career changers to the teaching profession. Together with colleagues I concluded an EU-Project funded with 1 million Euro, for merging 40 university graduates, who originally haven’t been educated teachers, into school teaching in the federal state of Saxony.

Current Main Focus

In October 2012 the rector of the TUD appointed me as managing director of the [Center for Teacher Education, Schooling and Vocational education \(ZLSB\)](#) of the Dresden University of Technology, which was celebrating its 10th anniversary that year. The Center has service and research functions for all sub-areas of teacher education in connection with the support of 3,500 student teachers of the TUD. In the ZLSB more than 30 employment relationships are embedded, including 15 teachers from school practice, being seconded there for up to 5 years from their schools by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of Saxony. The service area of the ZLSB includes the coordination of teaching offerings, internships and examinations, participation in the arrangement of study and examination rules, support of evaluations on teaching and studies, as well as participation in the development and profiling of offerings for studies and continuing education development. The research area includes the coordination and initiation of interdisciplinary research as well as the promotion of young academics for teacher education.

Finally in the course of the ZLSB under my leadership, we worked intensively on the preparation of a competition procedure for the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, whose goal is the promotion of site-specific teacher education in Germany against a background of an external

program evaluation. Thereby in October 2015, Dresden University of Technology was the only university in Saxony, which could persuade its application in the course of the promotional “Quality initiative teacher education” program. For the package of measures of “Synergetic teacher education in the course of excellence” from January 2016 until June 2019, about 5.4 million Euros are used at the TUD. With these funds more than 30 new positions for academic and non-academic personnel are established, which directly benefits the improvement of teacher education. Altogether, 16 sub-projects attend to the focal points of “Organization Development”, “Quality Improvement” and “Regional Networking”.



Challenges of Teacher Education

After the completion of the academic reforms, the teacher education classes of the TUD are in a phase of consolidation. Simultaneously, the teacher training in Saxony faces a range of current challenges. Three quarters of the teachers currently teaching at schools in Saxony, are about to retire between 2018 and 2035. This results in a continuing high demand for replacements, which cannot be covered right away by the teaching profession graduates of Saxony’s universities in consideration of existing study capacities. Therefore, already in the first phase of the teacher education, efforts should be made to acquire a sufficient number of teachers for professional activities, especially for activities in rural areas. Last but not least, against the background of a demographic variation, questions will follow with regard to the problem of how sites in regions distant from big cities can be maintained at all.

Other Activities

Besides my activities for TUD, I was chairman of the [commission for Profession Research and Teacher Education of the The German Educational Research Association \(GERA\)](#) for five years until end of 2014, and for 12 years I have been the co-publisher of [The Educational Science Review \(EWR\)](#) – a review magazine for all sub-areas of educational science. Since 2013, as a liaison lecturer of the [Hans-Böckler Foundation](#), I have taken care that studying is also possible for those who have the abilities but not the financial backup from their parents.

In private, I like cycling. I also occupy myself with the German author [Walter Kempowski](#), who died in 2007, who worked actively as a teacher for a long time and processed his experiences in books, and he went far beyond that by presenting a “German Chronicle” on the basis of his family history, which he merged into the so-called “Echo sounder Project” at the end of his life. He tried to preserve the various voices of the Second World War for posterity.

Prof. Dr. Axel Gehrmann
Technische Universität Dresden

Affiliated School Exchange between TGU and NENU Starts

The Curriculum Center for Teachers of Tokyo Gakugei University (TGU) has been conducting joint research on teacher education practice with the Academy for Research in Teacher Education of Northeast Normal University (NENU). Based on the achievements, this year the joint research project was extended to affiliated schools of the two universities. In October last year, vice principals and teachers from our affiliated International Secondary School and Oizumi Elementary School visited NENU and its affiliated schools to engage in research exchanges.

On the Occasion of Visiting Affiliated Schools of NENU

Hisao Akahane
Vice Principal, Tokyo Gakugei University
International Secondary School

On October 11, 2015, we departed from Narita Airport for Changchun on a flight longer three hours. Leaving the workplace with two accompanying elementary school teachers, I had many worries about the one-week training in terms of language, customs, and culture. However, we were given a warm welcome at the site. During the period, we had a great deal of support from teachers at the university as well as students who used to study in Japan, which allowed us to have truly meaningful training. Especially, the visits to affiliated schools brought endless surprises to me in a sense. At present, Japan idealizes education by which teachers can keep an eye on each student, reducing the number of students in a class. In contrast, the class in China is quite large. Once students sit down in the classroom, they cannot even move; it is almost impossible for teachers to walk around students' desks to inspect them. Under the circumstances, teachers provide uniform teaching, making a full use of IT devices. Students also were well-adapted to the environment. To be honest, I felt that students who relaxed their attention during the class were fewer than in Japan. The training this time left a deep impact on my mind. I strongly felt that exchanging students who were in completely different learning environments might bring about new learning effects; thus I wanted to have such student exchanges.

Hoping for the Continuation and Development of Affiliated School Exchanges with NENU

Koichi Hosoi
Vice Principal, Oizumi Elementary School Attached to
Tokyo Gakugei University

I was given an opportunity to make a presentation at an NENU forum. At the forum, I disseminated information that "active learning" was a key word in education reform in Japan. I expected to get some reactions, but the response was weak. Furthermore, telling a similar story at a social gathering, I did not receive a good response. Although I was unable to figure out the reason fully, I feel that they treated it as if "there is no need in China." I felt cultural differences in education. This time I visited five affiliated schools of NENU, from elementary to high schools, and observed many classes. In each class, students certainly had high motivation to learn and gave great responses to teacher's questioning all together. There might be no need to be active. Given this, I wonder if "Japan might have forgotten important things before active learning." And yet I can say that "No. Active learning has other meanings as well ..." It was a good opportunity for me to think about education anew.

This was the first teacher exchange between the affiliated schools of NENU and TGU, so I had heard. The visit marked a first step for the exchange and led to an agreement on its continuation. Although the gradual exchange of schoolchildren is under consideration, approval was made for the proposal: At the elementary school level, "first, let us start with exchanges between affiliated school teachers ..." It was a great success.

The next exchange will become more fulfilling if it is not merely to observe classes, but to provide an opportunity for teachers of China and Japan to examine teaching plans in a head-to-head manner, have some debriefings after observing one another's classes, and consider "What is a good class?" and "What to do for it" beyond cultural differences. With hope that the exchanges will continue and develop, I am very grateful for my involvement in the first step.

Terminology of Teacher Education Upgrading of Teacher Education

Generally in Japan, "upgrading of teacher education" means to accommodate pre-service teacher education at a level beyond undergraduate study. Under the principle of "teacher education at the university," the fundamental prerequisite for teachers in Japan had been a bachelor's degree, in general, for a long time after the war. However, since the Democratic Party of Japan, which became the ruling party in 2009, came out with "teacher education at the master's degree level" as a policy, discussions related to "upgrading" became active. Nonetheless, the concrete form was considered in various ways such as the following: existing academic master's programs; professional degree programs (graduate school of teacher education); and short-term qualification programs for graduates. To what the "upgrading" refers depends on the advocate. In addition, most discussions related to "upgrading" are biased to the aspect of standards. Discussions related to the contents of programs tend to be left behind. (Yasuyuki Iwata)

A Special Lecture "The Gift of a Commercial-Free Childhood" Held

On September 7 last year, the Curriculum Center for Teachers invited Dr. Susan Linn, a psychologist from Harvard Medical School and puppet therapist, to give a lecture under the theme of child development and commercialism. As the representative of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, she has been warning about the effects of the commercial environment on children in the United States, which is a country with advanced marketing.

Dr. Linn argues what have mainly been pointed out in the fields of pediatrics and psychology: violent behavior and precocious sexual consciousness can be effects of games and television viewing. However, what concerns Dr. Linn, who is also a puppet therapist, most is that play to encourage children's creativity is at stake because of games and video viewing on tablet computers and the existence of character toys.

Through the lecture, I was able to deepen my understanding of the need for securing commercial-free time and places in children's lives. (Yoshimi Uesugi)

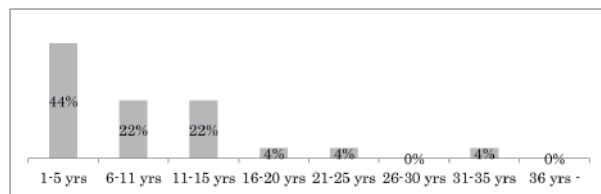
Sites Where Teachers Are Nurtured

Kokubunji City Daigo Elementary School

Keiko Ohta

Principal, Kokubunji City Daigo Elementary School
Member of the Advisory Board for the Curriculum Center for Teachers

Our school is a middle-sized elementary school with 14 classes, 443 students, and five resource rooms for students with emotional disturbance. The composition of teachers (except management) by years of teaching experience is the following:



After retirement of the “the baby boomer generation”, one to three new teachers are hired each year. The newly hired teachers account for more than half of all teachers. It would be a common concern for many schools that experienced teachers are so few in number. Young teachers are good in terms of learning with enthusiasm and bringing vitality. However, for this situation, efforts must be made for the promotion of human resource development within schools. Based on the reality of school organization, the following two can be regarded as pressing issues.

[Issue 1] Improvement of basic teaching ability.

To foster teaching ability as a basis for the teaching profession, abilities to conduct classes, to enhance the understanding of children, and to try raising the teaching standards of all teachers.

[Issue 2] Development of communication skills.

To develop the capability of building “smooth human relationships” with parents, local communities, and colleagues, to support “Team Gosho (Daigo Elementary School)”, and to solve problems constructively.

Our school is planning and implementing the following two types of in-school training to resolve two issues.

In-school training to solve [Issue 1]

Thoroughness of class improvement conducted by the in-school study group

The in-school study group has been working on the establishment and improvement of the abilities to conduct classes and to understand children for the implementation of “Special Subject: Moral Education”, following the designation as a *kenkyu shorei ko* (research encouragement schools) by the Board of Education in

Kokubunji-city, with class improvement in “Moral promise for the class improvement called the “Guideline Gosho,” they are implementing it across all grades and subjects to enhance the learning environment and teaching standards and to promote improvement further. The following are excerpts from “Guideline Gosho”.

- Improvement of the settled class environment (consideration for posted notices)
- Class discipline “Hai, Tatsu, and Desu”
- Blackboard instructions clarify the “aim” and “summary”
- Enrichment of “learning to express and learn from each other” using hand signals and story patterns

The in-school study group is making an effort to establish the “Guideline Gosho” developmentally. Furthermore, it is trying to improve motivation by which teachers make it known to parents and local communities, showing it in the school management plan, are evaluated using a school evaluation questionnaire, and receive training based on the PDCA cycle with specific goals.

In-school training to solve [Issue 2]

Human resources development in accordance with OJT guidelines

For teachers to undertake efforts to improve their own quality and to inherit and improve school affairs smoothly, the development of communication skills is fundamentally important. Our school provides the “OJT training workshop to promote the improvement of school affairs.” It is a petit training workshop in which a chief teacher mainly serves as a lecturer to teach each other knowledge and skills useful for class management, response to parents, and regional cooperation. An executive teacher watches over a chief teacher’s planning and management, identifies issues for which teachers are searching at the moment, and gives training to provide information that is immediately useful. It is enjoyable training that is eagerly awaited for the next workshop.

What I, as a principal, assign the most importance to is the process by which teachers become mutually involved in the management and enrichment of these two types of workshop, transcending the job classes and deepening mutual understanding, providing information to one another. By teaching each other, teachers enhance self-efficacy and self-esteem and foster the mind to respect oneself and others. All young teachers who worry about teaching, mid-career teachers who worry about balancing child-rearing and work, and veteran teachers who worry about how to pass down their rich experiences are satisfied with exchanges in in-school training and accumulate energy for the next. Herein lies the true value of in-school training.

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