



Curriculum Center for Teachers  
Tokyo Gakugei Univ.

Creative Curricula & Teaching  
Newsletter

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## Rethinking of “Learning” and “Growth” of Teachers: The 2018 Public Symposium Report



The Curriculum Center for Teachers held its 19th Annual Public Symposium on December 16, 2018 (Sun.). We invited three symposiasts under the theme of “Rethinking of “Learning” and “Growth” of Teachers”.

Professor Emeritus Hiromichi Ojima at the University of Tsukuba gave a speech entitled “Roles of Graduate Education in Developing Teaching Professionals” based on his own teaching experience in professional schools for teacher education. He particularly emphasized his critical view of the current situation of professional schools for teacher education by contrast with matters to be addressed in graduate education, which should be called “graduate school knowledge.” For example, “circulation of theory and practice” as a key concept of professional schools for teacher education is far from a convenient concept that automatically brings something good. It is necessary to discuss what ways of ‘knowledge’ are assumed there and which are mutually conflicting. His proposed idea of “graduate school knowledge” is something that is realized in the work which connects “the knowledge in action” carefully with the fertile knowledge system. This “knowledge in action” as “a tiny spark” is created in “problem-based” learning oriented in actual issues in school.

Principal Yoko Kaneko, from a public elementary school in Tokyo, delivered a report entitled “‘Learning’ and ‘Growth’ in Professional Schools for Teacher Education.” With experience as a teacher, she had studied at the professional school for teacher education at Tokyo Gakugei University and has pursued her career as an educational supervisor, vice-principal,

and principal. The principal spoke about how learning in the professional school has been used in activities along her career path. On that basis, she made the following suggestions as expectations for future professional schools for teacher education: “to cultivate an ability to see one’s own practices objectively from a bird’s-eye view” and “to develop personnel who can relate to and work with people of different backgrounds.” In this context, the characteristics of professional schools for teacher education, as places where the so-called “straight master” and experienced in-service teachers can learn together, should be highly appreciated and strengthened.

Associate Professor Takahiro Watanabe of Tokyo Gakugei University introduced the content of “Practice of Curriculum Design and Lesson Study” that has been prioritized to develop and practice while looking back on the curriculum for professional schools for teacher education, which marks its tenth anniversary this year. He presented the following points. The “stamp-rally style subject structure” giving a fulfilling impression at first glance has shifted to the “integrated curriculum”; and it is necessary to grasp, in a concrete manner, changes in the content and style of “questions” and “talks” in a single lesson study meeting, not limited to the changes in curriculum and timetable structures. The associate professor also presented a perspective that an enthusiastically initiated reform would always make the essence a mere façade and formality. We were deeply impressed that these new efforts must constitute “double-loop learning” in the sense that they needed to question themselves constantly. (Kenji Maehara)

## Introduction of New Visiting Associate Professor from Thailand

Curriculum Center for Teachers welcomed Dr. Phongthanat Sae-Joo, Assistant Professor at Khon Kaen University, in December last year as the International Visiting Associate Professor of 2018-2019. He is delivering lectures on computer education and teacher education in the North Eastern region of Thailand at the Center until June of this year.



Dr. Phongthanat Sae-Joo

Thailand has a 3-6-3 compulsory education system: the first three years are for kindergarten education; the subsequent six years are for primary education; and the final three years are for secondary education. Students can then choose to continue with another three years of upper secondary education or vocational education. During my experience of 10 years as a teacher of those seeking to become teachers, I have had many hundreds of students graduate with Bachelor degrees. They teach computer-related classes and other subjects in primary and secondary education in several provinces throughout the country. My pride in these students is in their magnificent teaching spirit. They are attentive to producing morally good students with great potential. Although some of the schools to which they have been assigned are not physically well equipped, my former students are not discouraged from practicing their teaching wholeheartedly. While studying at the university, they learned and were trained to be well prepared to be good teachers. Even after graduation, they must be assigned to undergo professional development for their coming professional careers.

Presently, computer-related courses in compulsory education address computing science and design and technology. These courses enhance digital learning, computing, coding skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking, and 21st century skills. Computer study programs must specifically examine the development of students who can be computer school teachers equipped with skills in contents and techniques for efficient learning management designs.

I am a full-time lecturer and the Program Chair of the Computer Education Department. For the past three years I have been assigned to the position of Deputy Dean for Student Development Affairs. As a result, in addition to teaching in the program, I am responsible for arranging student development activities for all students of the Faculty of Education. My responsibilities include monitoring the administration of the Faculty of Education's Student Union and the design of activities in accordance with the policy and guidelines of student development scheme of the faculty and the university. Acting as a representative of the Dean in attending several meetings has brought experiences through which I have learned about the education system in Thailand, in addition to several projects designed to produce teachers for local development and to produce teachers with talents in mathematics, sciences, and computers. As academic affairs, I am the Editor of the

academic journal of the Faculty of Education of Khon Kaen University (KKU) and am a peer reviewer of national and international academic journals. My research interests include computer education, development of intellectual equipment to enhance learning by students with computer technology, construction of learning media with computers, game-based learning, and project-based learning management.



The first induction program in the North Eastern region

In Thailand, teachers for local development projects are the focus of a large national project to develop teachers for their hometown schools. Khon Kaen University is the most successful university at which students can pass the qualification examination for admission. I am assigned to implement this project for the Faculty of Education at KKU, not only during their study at KKU, but also when they become teachers at schools (in the induction program) for two years. Earlier, I completed the first induction program in Thailand for the upper North Eastern region of Thailand. Interesting open class activities on how to improve class management were conducted for in-service teachers.

Being a part of the Curriculum Center for teachers of Tokyo Gakugei University presents an opportunity for me to learn and exchange experiences in teacher and teacher-student production and development. I hope for beneficial opportunities and collaboration between our universities and hope that the learning and exchange of experiences can be employed further for future teacher development.

**Phongthanat Sae-Joo**  
Assistant Professor  
Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University

## Considering curriculum reform in moral education

Sam Bamkin

This period is a fascinating time to take an interest in moral education in schools in Japan. The written curriculum was finally revised in 2015, triggering a series of stages of preparation to respond to the new requirements and guidance. At the same time, it triggered uncertainty and a fresh wave of critique from the media and concerned educators. The initial stage was argued along ideological lines, with reference to pedagogy. Three years later, the new curriculum is underway in elementary schools, and planning is gaining momentum in junior high schools. The current discussion is largely pragmatic, with reference to pedagogy. It focuses on incorporating the concrete requirements of the revision - mainly the use of a textbook, the creation of a syllabus map and assessment. However, it remains unclear whether this pragmatism is an act of acquiescence, the result of a curriculum more benign than expected, or somewhere in-between. Either way, new requirements may hold advantages for schools and teachers, who are also afforded scope to develop the curriculum locally.

Whilst on one hand the curriculum prescribes the use of a textbook, it still expects planning of moral education in cooperation with community members and a wide range of stakeholders, and in consideration of each school's particular context, and circumstances of students. Furthermore, the curriculum guidance suggests utilising a range of activities and content in classtime, with room to develop new materials. These including readings, discussion and presentation, but also role-play, video, connection with students' everyday life experience and aspirations, surveys to understand students, relations to the local community or region, and stories from the teacher's experience. In this sense, the curriculum encourages at least some augmentation and swapping of content and teaching methods, beyond what is provided in textbooks.

A separate requirement is the creation of an annual syllabus map for moral education. Faced with the concrete requirement of the annual syllabus map, many schools have adopted the units of the selected textbook, in the order printed, adding reference to links with related existing content in other subjects and activities. Following the textbook appears more concrete and less time-consuming than cooperative planning and material development.

However, at the invite of curriculum policy, the syllabus map and repositioning of moral education could represent an opportunity to foster studies and activities relevant to students' daily life and future development. This may include topics that have not traditionally been associated with moral education

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classes. Some junior high schools in Tokyo publically present planning to undertake aspects of career education in moral education time, re-purposing readings found in coursebooks. I recently observed a local junior high school planning three weeks of activities leading up to student council elections. This included moral education lessons which incorporated activities, videos and readings encouraging reflection relevant to participation in the school council. These are not new topics, but find a connection with moral education and can be implemented in its classtime. Elementary schools continue to use video materials, such as NHK's *Kokoro-bu* and others.

Following the textbook encourages the adoption of materials before considering how they are related to students' lives. The examples above, on the other hand, begin with specific goals considered important by the teacher or school, then search for materials to match the purpose. These specific examples may not be relevant to all schools, but this approach is more likely to generate lessons that are relevant to students' life in school or society, whilst linking more closely with other events and educational activities. Finally, any concern about undesirable content or government control over character formation only grows under the assumption that textbooks dictate the syllabus and teaching resources.

The textbook will remain useful for inspiration and provide content for intervening moral education lessons, as coursebooks have in the past. The syllabus map will remain a useful reference point when adding and moving activities. However, the curriculum currently allows scope to utilise moral education classtime to support school activities, and can be flexible when teachers consider what goals are important first, and match materials afterward.

### Notice for readers

The Curriculum Center for Teachers, founded at Tokyo Gakugei University in 2000 as a Nationwide Joint Usage and Research Center, has promoted curriculum research for school education and teacher education during the past 19 years of its service. In March 2019, the Center closes its history with the reorganization of research centers at the university. In April 2019, the *Jisedai Kyouiku Kenkyuu* Center, the English language name of which has yet to be determined as of March 1, 2019, is launched by realigning and integrating three centers at the university. Research staff of the Center shall continue to promote research that contributes to school education and teacher education, using their experiences and networks to date, as members of the new Center. (Mariko Kaneko)



## Sites Where Teachers Are Nurtured

Curriculum Center for Teachers,  
Tokyo Gakugei University

**Yasuyuki Iwata**

The Curriculum Center for Teachers at Tokyo Gakugei University was established in April 2000 as a nationwide joint-use facility (Article 13 of the National School Establishment Law and Paragraph 4 of Article 20 of the Enforcement Regulations for the Law). Although located on the Koganei Campus of Tokyo Gakugei University, the Center is independent from the faculties and graduate schools of the university. Its mission has been to contribute to research by making the Center available to researchers in related fields beyond the boundaries of universities: in other words, it is intended to be a Japanese public think tank related to teacher education and curriculum study research. In addition to the Director (concurrent appointment), 5 Center Researchers (3 professors and 2 associate professors) and two Visiting Scholars (1 internal and 1 international) were budgeted for work in the following three established divisions: Division 1 (Curriculum Research and Development), Division 2 (Pre-service Teacher Education Research and Development), and Division 3 (Research and Development for In-Service Teachers).

In light of its mission of “nationwide joint-use,” its collaboration with others has been positioned as a key challenge from its inception. Collaboration is done not only with national funded universities and faculties of education, including Tokyo Gakugei University, but also with national, public, and private universities in Japan that provide pre-service teacher education under the “open system” principle, as well as education centers in prefectures and ordinance-designated cities that offer teacher training. Symposia such as “Future School Education and Teacher Education Curriculum” and “Workshops on Practices for Teacher Educators” have been held annually to discuss various issues in teacher education and curriculum in a structured and multifaceted manner. In addition, the Center has built an international research network centering on annual international visiting scholars (the incumbent Dr. Phongthanat Sae-Joo is the 19th), has held international seminars, and has remained involved in joint research projects. The results have been summarized in printed books and reports in Japanese



The building where the Curriculum Center for Teachers is located  
(Photo by Noriko Watanabe)

including “Future of Teacher Education Reform” (Sofusha, 2006), “Reform Trend over the Japanese Teachers and Academe’s Role” (Tokyo Gakugei University Press, 2008), and “A ‘Practical’ Program in Teacher Education: Learning from Chinese knowledge” (to be published in 2019 from Tokyo Gakugei University Press). Our reference room presents national and international materials related to teacher education and training as well as the school education curriculum, which have been used by researchers in Japan and abroad. With the increase in international attention to challenges of Japanese teachers, frequent inquiries have been made from abroad. At the same time, five center researchers have taken charge of research guidance at the Graduate School of Education (mainly the school education course) and the Faculty of Education (students enrolled during academic years 2010–2014) and have provided teacher education and researcher education.

After national universities were transformed into national university corporations in 2004, the Curriculum Center for Teachers, Tokyo Gakugei University became an attached facility in a corporation and lost its legal status for “nationwide use.” Nevertheless, it is stipulated in its rules and regulations that the Center must maintain that mission. The Center has therefore continued its activities without changing its fundamental nature by obtaining competitive funds amid budget cuts.

However, pressure for reform on teacher education universities after incorporation has extended to the Center. The successor post of a center researcher was not filled at the end of 2013 academic year. In addition, a university-wide reorganization will commence from the 2019 academic year. Amid those changes, the Center will put an end to its 19-year history.

### ● From the Editor ●

Corresponding to the reorganization of research centers at Tokyo Gakugei University, the Curriculum Center for Teachers is to enter a transition to becoming a new center. The current website will be preserved for some time after April. The new website will be available as soon as preparations are completed. Thank you very much for being readers of this newsletter over the years. (Yoshimi Uesugi)

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