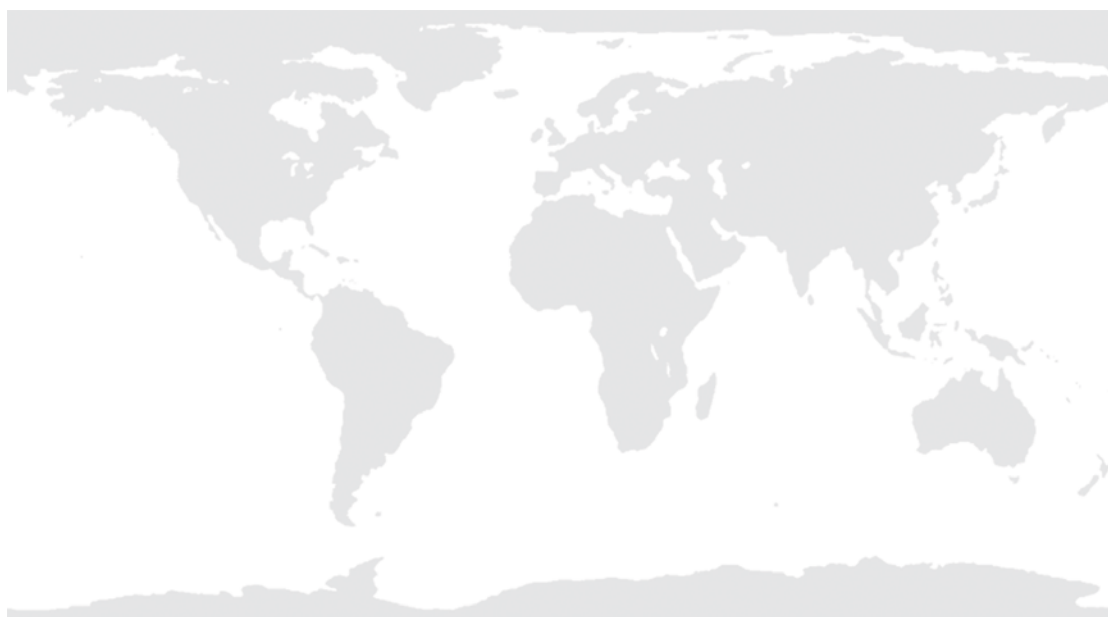




World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11



Japan

Updated version, June 2011.

Principles and general objectives of education

The basic principles for education in Japan are defined in the Constitution, enacted in 1946, and the Fundamental Law of Education of 1947, revised in 2006. The Constitution provides for the basic right and duty of citizens of Japan to receive education as follows: “All citizens shall have the right to receive an equal education corresponding to their abilities, as provided for by law. The citizens shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive general education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.” (Article 26).

Article 1 of the revised Fundamental Law (2006) stipulates that education shall aim at the full development of personality and strive to nurture the citizens, sound in mind and body, who are imbued with the qualities necessary for building a peaceful and democratic state and society. To achieve this aim, and while respecting academic freedom, education should:

- 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;
- develop the abilities of individuals while respecting their value; cultivate their creativity; foster a spirit of autonomy and independence; and foster an attitude to value labor while emphasizing the connections with career and practical life;
- foster an attitude to value justice, responsibility, equality between men and women, mutual respect and cooperation, and actively contribute, in the public spirit, to the building and development of society;
- foster an attitude to respect life, care for nature, and contribute to the protection of the environment;
- foster an attitude to respect our traditions and culture, love the country and region that nurtured them, together with respect for other countries and a desire to contribute to world peace and the development of the international community.

Articles 4 and 5 of the Law further specify that all citizens should be given the opportunity to continue to learn throughout their lives, on all occasions and in all places, and apply the outcomes of lifelong learning appropriately to refine themselves and lead a fulfilling life. Citizens shall all be given equal opportunities to receive education according to their abilities, and shall not be subject to discrimination in education on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin.

From 1984 to 1987, the National Council of Educational Reform engaged in wide-ranging deliberations regarding education and other related fields. The Council set forth three basic viewpoints for educational reform: (i) emphasis on individuality; (ii) transition to a lifelong learning society; and (iii) coping with various changes



including internationalization in various sectors of society and the spread of modern information media.

The emphasis on individuality, defined by the Council as the most important aspect to be considered in all aspects of the educational reform, encompasses the principles of dignity of individuals, respect for personality, freedom and self-discipline, and individual responsibility. This principle, defined by the Council as the most important aspect to be considered in the educational reform, presupposes the elimination of the existing negative characteristics of education in Japan: uniformity, rigidity and closed-ness, and therefore necessitated review of the whole education system, including content and methods of teaching, educational structures and government policies in education. The importance of fostering children creativity, thinking ability and powers of expression, avoiding emphasis on memorization, was also stressed.

The transition to a lifelong learning society was intended to correct a mode of thinking that places too much value on formal schooling, and to create a new education system whereby people can participate in learning by freely choosing relevant opportunities at any time throughout their lives. The creation of such a new education system is intended to meet the diverse learning demands brought about by the increase in leisure hours, the improvement of the average level of formal schooling completed by individuals, and the aging of the population. In addition, it is designed to respond to the necessity of acquiring new knowledge and skills relevant to the various social changes, including the progress of advanced science and technology and the greater predominance of software industries. It is also important that mutual links among the family, the school and the community be ensured.

Coping with various changes implies that education must interact actively and flexibly with the changing environment. The most important tasks with which education is confronted are coping with internationalization and with an knowledge-based society.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Specific provisions relating to the school system, educational administration, financial support and other matters are contained in the **School Education Law** and other education legislation enacted in the spirit of the **Fundamental Law of Education** of 1947. The fundamental law has been completely reviewed and the revised text was promulgated and put into effect on 22 December 2006 as the **Act No. 120** of 2006. The revised School Education Law was issued in June 2007. (MEXT, 2008). Article 11 of the Act of 2006 stipulates that, considering the importance of early childhood education as a basis for the lifelong formation of one's personality, the national and local governments shall endeavor to promote such education by providing an environment favorable to the healthy growth of young children, and other appropriate measures.

In view of the important role played by private educational institutions, the national government, under the **Private School Promotion Subsidy Law**, has been providing subsidies to these institutions for their current and other expenditure, with a



view to helping maintain and improve the level of the educational and research activities of these institutions, as well as to helping alleviate the financial burden of their students.

The **Law concerning Special Measures for Securing Competent Educational Personnel in Compulsory Education Schools with the Aim of Maintaining and Improving the Level of School Education**, enacted in 1974, aimed at attracting qualified people to the teaching profession by providing public compulsory schoolteachers with favourable salary conditions. This law led to a positive improvement in the level of teachers' salaries.

The Law concerning the Development of Relevant Mechanisms for the Promotion of Government Policies for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning (abbreviated as **Law for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning**) was enacted in June 1990. Under this law, a Lifelong Learning Council, an advisory organ to the Minister, was created in August 1990, and relevant government services and programs at the prefectural levels have been promoted. This law is intended to provide a legal framework for the development of relevant government mechanisms for promoting lifelong learning at the national and local levels.

In 1991, the Ministry revised the regulations entitled **National Standards for the Establishment of Universities**, in order to make their provisions broader and more flexible. Provision is made for national optimum standards for the curriculum, teacher qualifications, teaching methods, physical facilities and equipment for universities. In the same year, the Ministry introduced a system for the self-monitoring and self-evaluation of individual universities. In accordance with the **National University Corporation Law** promulgated in July 2003, national universities have become corporations since 1 April 2004. In the same year, all national, public, and private universities have introduced a system under which universities will be evaluated, on a regular basis, by evaluation agencies authorized by the Ministry of Education (certified evaluation system).

The **Law for the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care**, promulgated in June 2006, stipulates the establishment of a system through which prefectural governments authorize comprehensive facilities providing preschool education and childcare services (centres for early childhood education and care).

Following the revision of the Basic Act on Education, the partial amendment to the **Social Education Act** was enacted in June 2008. This Act established the duties of national and local governments for social education, the administrative works of the Boards of Education, the management of *kominkan* (community learning centers), libraries and museums, and the regulations concerning the certificates for librarians and others. The amendment established new regulations for after-school classrooms and school support regional headquarters, and reviewed the qualifications requirements for librarians and curators to set up systematic and explicit librarian training in the universities.

The five-day school week system had been implemented in a phased manner, being adopted once a month since September 1992 and twice a month since April 1995. The report prepared by the Central Council for Education recommended the

implementation of this system for the purpose of enabling children to engage in various activities in everyday life, society, and nature, in order to nurture their *ikiru chikara* (zest for living), which includes the ability to learn and think for themselves and development of well-rounded characters, by providing them through mutual cooperation among schools, families, and communities, with more pressure-free hours. Following this recommendation, the comprehensive five-day school week system has been implemented since 2002. The report prepared by the Central Council for Education in January 2008 recommended maintaining the five-day school week system.

Education is compulsory for children from 6 to 15 years of age. Public education is free and all children are required to attend a six-year elementary school and a three-year lower secondary school.

Administration and management of the education system

The central educational authority in Japan is the **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology** (MEXT), formerly the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (MONBUSHO). The mission of the MEXT consists in: fostering creative people with warm-hearted human nature specifically by advancing education and promoting lifelong learning; encouraging academic, sport and cultural activities as well as comprehensive progress in scientific technologies; and carrying out properly religious administrative affairs. Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau of the MEXT there were nine divisions in 2006, including the Early Childhood Education Division, the Textbook Division, and the **School Curriculum Division**. Other Bureaus included: lifelong learning policy; higher education (including the department of private education institutions); science and technology policy; research promotion; research and development; and sports and youth. (MEXT, 2008).

Schools as well as national universities, junior colleges, and colleges of technology as well as social educational facilities and cultural facilities such as youth houses, museums and art museums have gradually come to be operated as independent administrative institutions since April 2001.

With regard to its relation with local governments, the Ministry has the power to provide guidance, advice or assistance to local educational authorities (i.e. administrative heads of prefectural and municipal governments, and prefectural and municipal boards of education), and to require them to submit such reports as are deemed necessary relating to educational activities under their jurisdiction. The Ministry may also instruct local educational authorities to correct or improve their policies or measures, when it considers that such policies or measures violate the provisions of laws and regulations or impede the primary objectives of education.

In Japan there are 47 prefectures (*To-Do-Fu-Ken*), further divided into a number of municipalities. In every prefecture there is a **Prefectural Board of Education** which serves as the central authority in the prefecture. The board is responsible for the administration and management of government services relating to education, science and culture.



The Prefectural Board of Education is composed of five members appointed by the governor with the consent of the prefectural assembly (both the governor and the members of the prefectural assembly are elected directly by the people). The members hold office for four years.

The Prefectural Board of Education appoints a **Prefectural Superintendent of Education**, who serves as its chief executive officer responsible to the board for the execution of the policies and measures determined by the board. The appointment of the superintendent has to be approved by the Minister of Education.

The Prefectural Board has the following main functions: administer and manage prefectural educational establishments (upper secondary schools, special schools for the disabled, museums, public libraries, lifelong education promotion centers, centers for educational research and training, etc.) other than universities and junior colleges; conduct and promote activities for social education, physical education and sports; promote cultural activities, and contribute to the protection of cultural properties; approve the establishment and abolition of municipal kindergartens, unified secondary schools and upper secondary schools, special schools for the disabled, special training schools and miscellaneous schools; and issue certificates for teachers.

The **prefectural governor** also has some powers and responsibilities on education. His/her main functions concerning education include the following: administer and manage prefectural universities and junior colleges; approve the establishment of private kindergartens, elementary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, unified secondary schools, special schools, special training schools and miscellaneous schools, and provide general supervision, advice and assistance to these schools (private higher education institutions are under the general supervision of the MEXT).

In each municipality (*Shi-Cho-Son*) there is a **Municipal Board of Education**, which serves as the authority responsible for government services relating to education, science and culture in the municipality.

The municipal board of education primarily consists of five members (a board of three members is allowed in the case of towns and villages) appointed by the mayor with the consent of the municipal assembly (both the mayor and the members of the municipal assembly are elected directly by the people). Members hold office for four years.

The municipal board appoints a **Municipal Superintendent of Education**, who serves as its chief executive officer, from among the board members with the approval of the prefectural board of education. The municipal board has the following main functions: administer and manage municipal educational establishments (mainly, elementary and lower secondary schools, citizens' public halls, public libraries, centers for educational research and training, etc.); conduct and promote activities for social education, physical education and sports; and adopt textbooks to be used in municipal elementary and lower secondary schools.



The **municipal mayor** also has some powers and responsibilities in the area of education, e.g. administer and manage municipal universities and junior colleges; and administer budgets on matters under the jurisdiction of the municipal Board of Education, and also to acquire and dispose of municipal educational properties.

There are several advisory bodies supporting the Minister of Education. From 1984 to 1987, the **National Council on Educational Reform** deliberated wide-ranging issues in the whole fields of education, science and sports, while focusing on strategies for thorough educational reform. Other relevant bodies include the **Central Council of Education** (created in January 2001), the **University Council** (set up in 1987) and the **Lifelong Learning Council** (set up in 1990).

There are also other important advisory organs, such as the **Textbook Authorization and Research Council**, the **Educational Personnel Training Council**, the **Curriculum Council**, and the **Science Education and Vocational Education Council**.

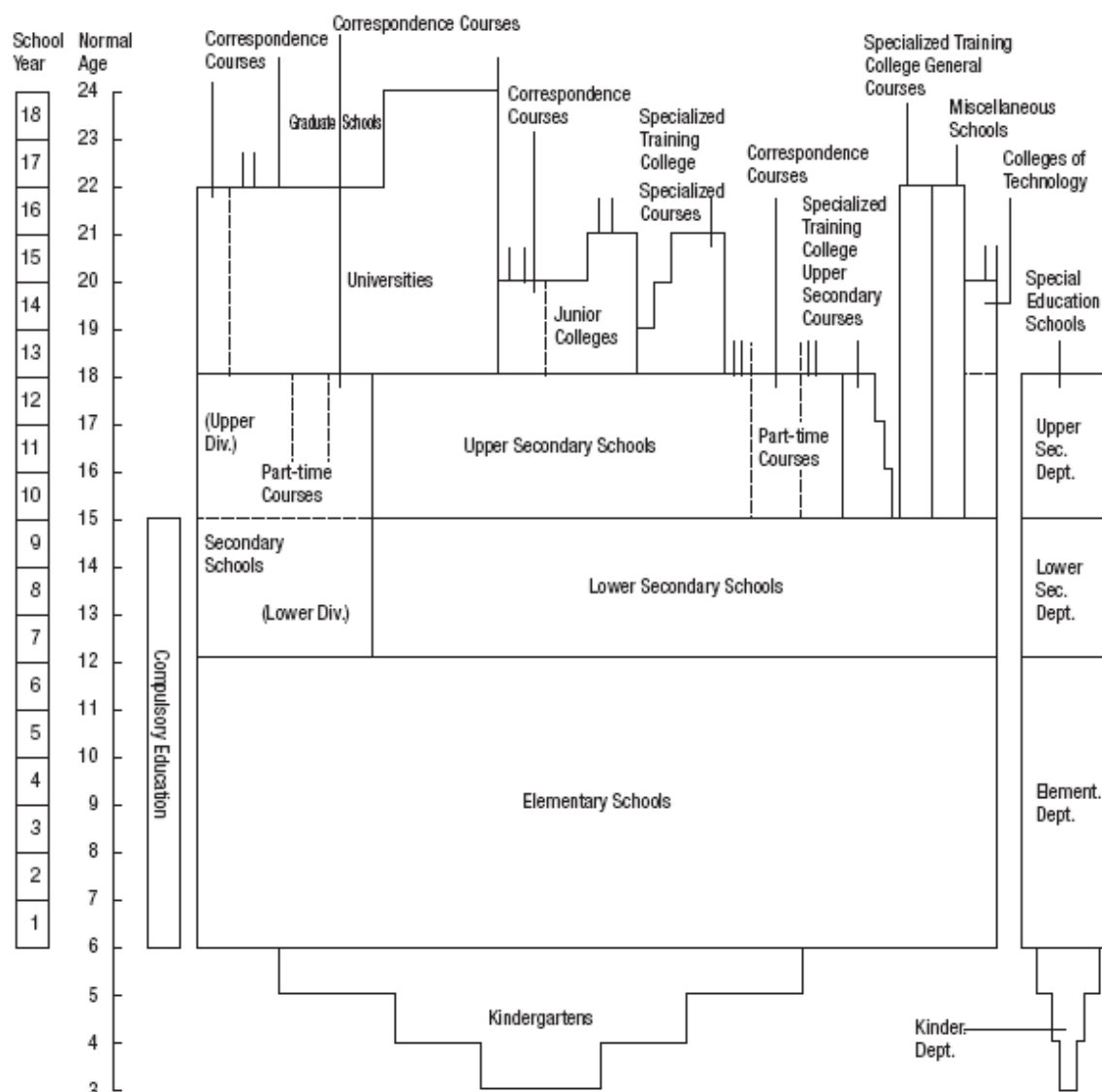
The **Japan Scholarship Foundation** was founded in 1944 with the aim of providing scholarships (loans) for students who perform well but find it difficult to continue their studies for financial reasons, thus contributing to the equalization of educational opportunity and to the development of human resources needed by society. The Foundation is supported by the national, prefectural and municipal governments, as well as non-profit corporations. The government-supported **Japan Private School Promotion Foundation** provides low interest long-term loans for private institutions for the improvement of their facilities and equipment.

The **National Center for University Entrance Examinations**, under the control of MEXT, is an independent administrative institution in charge of the National Center Test for admissions to university. The **National Institute for Educational Policy Research** (NIER) is a national research body for comprehensive educational policy, responsible for collecting and analyzing academic research data. NIER's structure also includes a Curriculum Research Center. NIER also organizes the participation of Japan in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The **National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation** is responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of degree-awarding programmes and of universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology and law schools.

In the field of vocational and technical training, institutions under the Ministry of Labour provide a wide range of skill training courses. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) provides guidance and advice to prefectural governors and mayors on issues related to daycare centers (nurseries). The MEXT MHLW Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care deals with issues related to the establishment of comprehensive facilities providing preschool education and childcare services. (MEXT, White Paper 2008).

Structure and organization of the education system

Japan: structure of the education system



Source: MEXT, 2008.

Pre-school education

Kindergarten education is for children aged 3-5 years. Preschool education is not compulsory and is mainly provided by private institutions. Kindergartens may admit preschool children who have reached the age of 3 and have not attained the compulsory school age of 6. Nurseries (day-care facilities) also accept children below the age of 3 in need of daytime childcare for specific reasons (for example, both parents are working). Nurseries are welfare facilities established according to the Child Welfare Law and are operated under the authority of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.



Primary education

Elementary education is the first stage of compulsory schooling and all children between the ages of 6 and 12 are required to attend elementary school for six years. Almost all children are enrolled in public schools supported by local governments.

Secondary education

Lower secondary education is the final stage of compulsory schooling and caters to pupils between 12 and 15 years. Upon completion of lower secondary education students receive the lower secondary school-leaving certificate. All students having completed the three-year lower secondary programme are entitled to apply to upper secondary schools (through the high school entrance examinations) or colleges of technology. Upper secondary education is not compulsory. There are three types of upper secondary school programmes: full-time (lasting three years), part-time and correspondence courses. Part-time courses are mainly offered in the evenings. In terms of the content of teaching, upper secondary school programmes can be broadly classified into three categories: general, specialized and integrated. General education programmes emphasize academic subjects, while specialized programmes are designed to provide vocational and technical education for those students who have chosen a particular vocational area as their future career. These programmes are further classified into several categories, such as agriculture, industry, business, fishery, home economics, nursing, science and mathematics, etc. Integrated programmes offer general and specialized education. In addition to the three-year lower or upper secondary school education that has prevailed until now, a unified lower and upper secondary school education became a part of the education system in April 1999, allowing students to enrol in a comprehensive secondary school offering a six-year programme. Upon successful completion of upper secondary education students receive the high school certificate of graduation.

Higher education

Higher education institutions in Japan include universities (*Daigaku*), junior colleges (*Tanki-daigaku*) and colleges of technology (*Koto-senmongakko*). In addition, there are special training schools and miscellaneous schools offering advanced programmes. Admission to universities and junior colleges depends on the results of the entrance examinations.

Junior colleges offer programmes lasting two or three years, mainly in the fields of humanities, home sciences, education and social sciences. A university has one or more undergraduate faculties or other basic units for educational activities, which offer programmes usually lasting four years, or requiring a total of 124 credits for graduation, (six years in the case of medicine, dentistry, veterinary and pharmacy) leading to a bachelor's degree. A university may set up a graduate school aiming to give graduate students opportunities to pursue in-depth study and research concerning academic theories and their application. Graduate schools require the completion of an undergraduate programme or its equivalent for admission. A graduate school offers master's degree programmes (usually taking two years to complete) and doctoral degree programmes normally lasting three years except for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, which last four years. Five-year doctoral degree programmes can



be combined into two phases, the first one being considered as a two-year master's degree course.

While universities and junior colleges require for admission the completion of upper secondary schooling, colleges of technology, established in 1962, offer programmes to lower secondary school graduates. A college of technology usually offers several programmes in engineering and mercantile marine studies. A variety of programmes are offered in different fields, including those in mechanical engineering, electric engineering, electronic control, information technology, civil engineering, mercantile marine, and management information. The duration of programmes is normally five years (five and a half years for mercantile marine programmes, including one year of on-the-ship training).

Special training schools are a new type of educational institution created in 1976. These schools are required to maintain an enrolment of at least forty students and to offer instruction for 800 hours or more per year for each programme. The programmes may be classified into three categories: upper secondary programmes admitting lower secondary school graduates; advanced programmes admitting upper secondary school graduates; and other programmes. Those special training schools offering upper secondary programmes are called upper secondary special training schools, while those offering advanced programmes are referred to as special training colleges. Miscellaneous schools are intended to give adults and young people a wide range of educational opportunities similar to the formal education offered in secondary schools or institutions of higher education. They provide learners of varied ages with knowledge and skills required for their vocational and daily life.

The school year begins on 1 April and ends on 31 March of the following year, corresponding with the fiscal year of the country. At the elementary and lower secondary levels the school year is usually divided into three terms: April-July, September-December and January-March. It consists of thirty-five working weeks (thirty-four weeks in the first grade of elementary education). While the majority of upper secondary schools adopt a three-term school year, some of them adopt a semester system (usually, the first semester ranges from April to September, and the second from October to March). Higher education institutions usually adopt a two-semester academic year. At all school levels, vacations are granted in summer (from around the end of July through August), in winter (from the end of December to early January) and in spring (at the end of the school year). The beginning and ending dates of these vacations are determined by respective boards of education and schools according to each locality and the circumstances of schools.

In general, educational institutions in Japan are closed on Sundays and on national holidays. Furthermore, a five-day school week was introduced in a phased manner by implementing such a week once a month from September 1992 and twice a month from April 1995. The system has been implemented in a full-fledged manner since April 2002, making every Saturday a no-school day.

The educational process

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) lays down the educational contents and the minimum number of school days per year for kindergartens, and the subjects to be offered in elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, as well as the standard number of yearly school hours for each subject.

MEXT also specifies the objectives and standard content of each subject or each area of school activity in the Courses of Study, which presents national curriculum guidelines for each of the four school levels: kindergarten, elementary school, lower and upper secondary school. The content of the courses of study for the respective schools is prescribed and announced by the Minister of Education based on a report by his/her advisory organ, the Central Council for Education. Each school organizes and implements its own curriculum in accordance with the provisions of the relevant statutes and the course of study, taking into account the actual circumstances of the locality in which it operates, as well as the characteristics of children enrolled and the stage of their mental and physical development.

In March 1989, the Ministry started the process of revision of the national course of study for each of the four school levels. The basic objective of this revision was “to contribute to developing citizens who are rich in heart and are capable of coping with the changes in society.”

Under the comprehensive five-day school week, the Ministry put the revised courses of study into effect since April 2002 for elementary and lower secondary schools, and from 2003 for the freshmen of upper secondary schools. The basic aim was to provide education in a worry-free environment adapted to each school, allowing children to acquire the basic and fundamental content included in the courses of study without fail, and nurturing a ‘zest for living’ (*ikiru chikara*) such as the ability to learn and think on their own based on such content. The courses of study were intended to promote a teaching approach that puts the focus on individuals through tutorials and group study, and teaching according to the degree of understanding, expanding the range of elective courses and enabling children to learn advanced content according to their interests.

Deliberations were carried out from April 2005 regarding the whole revision of the curriculum. In order to realize the philosophy of fostering ‘zest for living’, in January 2008 the report *Improving Courses of Study of Kindergartens, Elementary Schools, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, and Schools for Special Needs Education* was delivered, stating the direction to revise the Courses of Study to establish concrete steps to realize the above principle. The new Courses of Study specify that each school is required to formulate its curriculum in compliance with the goals defined in the Basic Act on Education, the School Education Act, as well as the provisions of other laws. (MEXT, White Paper 2008).



The objectives of compulsory education, as stipulated under the revised School Education Law, are the following:

- Social activities are promoted both inside and outside the school in order to nurture in students voluntary, independent and cooperative attitudes, respect for rules and models, the ability to make sound judgments and a sense of public spiritedness that will help them to become productive members of society.
- Activities for experiencing nature are promoted both inside and outside the school in order to nurture in students a spirit of respecting nature and life and a desire to contribute to environmental preservation.
- Students are to be given proper guidance in the history and current situation of Japan and their hometown, teaching them to respect traditions and culture, and nurture them with an attitude of loving their country and hometown. Then, through an understanding of foreign cultures, students should be instilled with a respect of other countries and a sense of contributing to the development and peace of the global community.
- Students are to be nurtured with a basic understanding and abilities related to the roles of the family and home, and about food, clothing, shelter, information, production, and other items necessary for daily living.
- Students are to be nurtured with a love for reading, a proper understanding of and basic skills for using the language they will need in their daily lives.
- Students are to be nurtured with basic skills to properly process and understand quantitative relations they will need in their daily lives.
- Students are to be nurtured with basic skills for scientifically understanding and processing, through observations and experiments, natural phenomena that are part of their lives.
- Efforts are to be made to instill in students the proper habits needed to live safe, healthy and happy lives, to build up body strength through physical activities, and to harmoniously develop their bodies and minds.
- Students are to be nurtured with basic understanding and skills needed for music, art, literature, and other fine arts in order to brighten and enrich their lives.
- Students are to be nurtured with basic skills and knowledge needed for their careers, an attitude of respecting work, and the ability to choose their career path that matches their own individual aptitude.

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, kindergartens cater to children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. Preschool education is not compulsory and is mainly provided by private institutions. Kindergartens may admit preschool children who have reached the age of 3 and have not attained the compulsory school age of 6. Nurseries (day-care facilities) also accept children below the age of 3 in need of daytime childcare for specific reasons (for example, both parents are working). Nurseries are welfare facilities established according to the Child Welfare Law and are operated under the authority of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Nurseries are normally open for eleven hours a day. There are also home childcare services, e.g. a day-care service provided at home by child-carers accredited by the local government. Eligible children are under



3 years of age. Application procedures and fees may vary according to each city, town or village. In 2008 there were 22,898 day nurseries providing services to some 2,138,000 infants; the total number of staff was 444,727.

Kindergarten education is intended to help infants develop their minds and bodies by providing them with an appropriate educative environment. The Course of Study for Kindergarten was put into effect in 1990 and recently revised in 2008. It sets forth the specific aims of kindergarten education, as well as the specific content to be taught to achieve each aim. It is also specified that the standard number of daily hours should be four (kindergartens normally start at 9 a.m.) and that the number of school weeks per year should be not less than thirty-nine except under special circumstances. Kindergartens usually offer programmes for 4-5-year-olds (two-year programmes) and for 3-5-year-olds (three-year programmes).

According to the revised course of study for kindergarten (2008), kindergarten education integrates all aspects of each child's development: health (physical and mental health); human relationships (the relationship between the child and other people); environment (children's surroundings, and relationship to them); language (the process of language acquisition); and expression (feelings and expression). All objectives and related content are to be achieved through the play-based learning.

The basic principles of kindergarten education are the following:

- Encouraging children to undertake voluntary activities and allowing them to lead a life appropriate to early childhood, based on the idea that young children utilize experiences essential to their development through fully demonstrating their abilities in an emotionally stable manner.
- Comprehensively achieving the aims of kindergarten education through play-centered instruction, and based on the idea that play (a child's voluntary activity) is an important aspect of learning which cultivates a foundation for the balanced physical and mental development.
- Aiming to carry out developmental tasks while responding to the individual characteristics of each child, based on the idea that early childhood development is achieved through diverse processes and interactions between various aspects of the physical and mental, and that the life experiences of each child are diverse.

Teachers should create a learning environment with the intention of ensuring that children participate in voluntary activities, based on an understanding and anticipation of the individual actions of each child. Kindergartens should endeavour to develop a foundation for children to embrace a zest for living by achieving the goals of kindergarten education. Each kindergarten should maintain its unique qualities, and formulate a curriculum appropriate to the development of the young child's physical and mental as well as the context of the kindergarten and its local community. Kindergartens should organize extracurricular educational activities for those who wish to participate in such services.

As regards the above-mentioned aspects of children development, kindergarten education has the following general aims:



- Developing healthy children both physically and mentally, and fostering children's abilities to independently maintain a healthy and safe life.
- Developing self-reliance and fostering the ability to communicate with others in order to associate with and support each other.
- Fostering children's abilities to relate to the environment with curiosity and inquisition, and to incorporate this into their daily life.
- Developing the willingness and attitude to verbally express experiences and thoughts in one's own words, as well as to listen to others' spoken words, and fostering an understanding of language and skills of expression.
- Developing rich feelings and the ability to express oneself, and enhancing creativity by expressing experiences and thoughts in their own words.

Kindergartens should formulate balanced systematic and constructive instruction plans, and deliver an education which is flexible and child-centered. An appropriate environment should be created to achieve the intended aims, and to enable children to gain the experiences they need by developing various activities through their individual active interaction with the environment. Importance should be placed on the aspects of life and the imagination of children, and this environment should be appropriately maintained at all times. Children's activities should encompass individual, group, and whole class activities. While creating a cooperative system among kindergarten teachers as a whole, appropriate assistance should be provided to ensure that the interests and desires of each child are fully satisfied. Although the home remains the foundation of children's lives, it should be noted that contact with the local community broadens their horizons and should be developed by maintaining a sense of continuity between kindergarten life and the family and community through full cooperation with children's families. Local nature, human resources, events, and public facilities should be actively utilized, and creative measures taken to enrich children's lives. With regard to cooperation with the home, consideration should also be given to deepening parents' understanding of early childhood education by providing opportunities for parents to exchange information and to participate in activities with children. Consideration should also be given to the fact that kindergarten education helps to develop a foundation for life and learning in and after elementary school, and such a foundation incorporating creative thinking and a desire to participate in voluntary activities should be cultivated through a life suited to early childhood.

Concerning children with disabilities, the contents and instruction methods should be devised systematically and organizationally in accordance with the needs of individual children and should encourage children to fully develop their lives within their peer group. This should be achieved by seeking advice and assistance from school for special need education, for example, and formulating individual instruction plans and assistance plans in cooperation with families and relevant medical institutions, welfare services, etc. (See: MEXT, *Course of Study for Kindergarten*, 2008).

In recent years the number of children per family has rapidly declined and the environment of the family and the community has changed. To meet the diversified needs of kindergartens and daycare centers flexibly and adequately, the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care System started operating in October 2006. According to the system, early childhood education will be provided in combined

kindergarten and daycare facilities. In April 2008, there were 229 accredited early childhood and care centers all over Japan, including 104 combined kindergarten-daycare centers, 76 kindergartens, 35 daycare centers (under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare–MHLW), and 14 local centers.

According to national data, in 2009 there were 13,516 kindergartens (of which 8,261 private) with 1,630,336 children enrolled and 110,692 teachers (of whom 103,487 females). (Statistics Bureau, 2011).

Primary education

The elementary school provides children with elementary general education suited to the relevant stages of their mental and physical development. All parents are required by law to have their children attend an elementary school for six years from the beginning of the school year after the children have attained the age of 6 until the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 12.

The (revised) School Education Law defines the goals of elementary education as follows:

- To develop a spirit of understanding, cooperation, independence and autonomy concerning human relationships based on social and life experiences in and out of school.
- To encourage students to understand and appreciate local history, as well as present national conditions and traditions, and to promote a spirit of international cooperation.
- To develop basic understandings and skills regarding food and nutrition, clothing, shelter and industry as useful and required for daily life.
- To foster the ability to understand and to use correct Japanese as needed in daily life.
- To foster the ability to understand, handle and participate in quality relationships as necessary in daily life.
- To foster the scientific ability to observe and manage natural phenomena in daily life.
- To develop habits necessary for a healthy, safe and happy life, and to attempt to improve the development of individual minds and bodies.
- To develop basic understanding of and skills in music, art and literature that can help to make life happy and enriched.

In September 1992, a five-day school week began to be introduced once every month, and in April 1996, the five-day week began to be implemented twice every month. The five-day school week is intended to contribute to an overall review of the educational functions of the school, the home and the community. It is also aimed at bringing about the sound character formation of children. The comprehensive five-day school week is implemented throughout the country since 2002. The report prepared by the Central Council for Education in January 2008 recommended maintaining the five-day school week system.

The following tables show the subjects to be taught in elementary schools, as well as the standard number of teaching periods per year to be devoted to each subject, as specified in the 2008 course of study as well as in the new course to be implemented in 2012. Each school is expected to develop its activities for teaching respective subjects with due regard to the provisions of the new course of study.

Japan. Elementary education: yearly lesson timetable (2008)

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Japanese language	272	280	235	235	180	175
Social studies	–	–	70	85	90	100
Mathematics	114	155	150	150	150	150
Science	–	–	70	90	95	95
Life environment studies	102	105	–	–	–	–
Music	68	70	60	60	50	50
Art (drawing and handicrafts)	68	70	60	60	50	50
Home economics	–	–	–	–	60	55
Physical education	90	90	90	90	90	90
Moral education	34	35	35	35	35	35
Special activities	34	35	35	35	35	35
Periods for integrated study	–	–	105	105	110	110
Total periods per year	782	840	910	945	945	945
Average number of periods per week	23	24	26	27	27	27

Source: MEXT, 2008. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Special activities include class activities, pupils' councils, club activities and 'school events'. The number of periods for special activities includes periods for class activities only. Periods for integrated study can include combinations of several topics that students have learned in different subjects or applications of basic contents in some subject areas, for example the use of computers or foreign language conversation. Life environment studies combine science and social studies.

Japan. Elementary education: yearly lesson timetable (to be implemented in 2012)

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Japanese language	306	315	245	245	175	175
Social studies	–	–	70	90	100	105
Mathematics	136	175	175	175	175	175
Science	–	–	90	105	105	105
Life environment studies	102	105	–	–	–	–
Music	68	70	60	60	50	50
Art (drawing and handicrafts)	68	70	60	60	50	50
Home economics	–	–	–	–	60	55
Physical education	105	105	105	105	90	90
Moral education	34	35	35	35	35	35
Special activities	34	35	35	35	35	35
Periods for integrated study	–	–	70	70	70	70
Foreign language activities	–	–	–	–	35	35
Total periods per year	853	910	945	980	980	980
Average number of periods per week	25	26	27	28	28	28

Source: MEXT, 2008. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Pupils in grade 4 and above participate in club activities during school hours as part of 'special activities'. There are comic illustration, model-craft, computer, badminton, table tennis, basketball, cooking/sewing, games, softball, science, and dance clubs as well as many others, which meet about once a month. There are also schools that hold activities in participation with the community or region. Many schools provide after-school lessons in hobbies and skills that, if they are taught in school at all, do not account for much class time. Many pupils take after-school lessons in swimming, musical instruments, English conversation, calligraphy, soccer and baseball. Most children attend lessons once or twice a week for about two hours each time, but some children do both, or take several kinds of lessons, in order to satisfy all their interests. School lunches are provided in public elementary schools. Students take their lunch in the homeroom with classmates and the homeroom teacher. Part of the cost is borne by the pupils' parents. There are different types of 'school events' (an average of twelve events per year), such as the entrance ceremony, the anniversary of the founding of the school, field days, field trips, concerts, performing art shows, exhibits, and the closing ceremony.

'Periods for integrated study' were introduced under the Courses of Study of 2002 as a period in which each school may conduct creative and original educational activities on cross-sectional/comprehensive issues beyond the framework of subjects, such as international understanding, information, environment, and welfare and health, as well as topics that draw the interest and preference of the students, according to the circumstances of the community, school, and students. Elementary school teachers commonly assign homework daily in order to help pupils develop



good study habits at home. Homework is primarily review and preparation, and the content can be quite varied depending on the subject and area of study, including long-term project assignments or other types of work.

Pupils' performance is evaluated every trimester based on criteria adopted by each school. Evaluation methods differ from teacher to teacher, but many teachers evaluate their students comprehensively, based on quizzes given for each textbook unit and on daily conduct in grade 6. Normally children move on the next grade based on age.

The enrolment ratio for compulsory schools in Japan has always been nearly 100%, and grade-to-grade promotion is practically automatic. In 2004, there were 23,420 elementary schools with 7,200,933 pupils enrolled and 414,908 teachers. The average pupil-teacher ratio was 17.4:1 and the average number of pupils per class was 26.3. (Ministry of Education, 2005).

According to national data, in 2009 there were 22,258 primary schools (of which 210 private and 74 national) with 7,063,606 pupils enrolled (of whom 3,448,943 girls) and 419,518 teachers, of whom 263,469 were females. There were also 1,030 special needs education schools with a total enrolment of 117,035 students (of whom 41,051 girls) and 70,518 teachers, of whom 41,725 were females. (Statistics Bureau, 2011).

Secondary education

The lower secondary school aims to provide pupils aged 12-15 with general secondary education suited to the level of their mental and physical development, building on the basic education provided in the elementary school. It is obligatory for all parents to have their children attend a lower secondary school for three years from the beginning of the school year after the children have completed the elementary school course until the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 15. Upon completion of lower secondary education students receive the lower secondary school-leaving certificate. All students who have completed lower secondary schooling (compulsory education) are entitled to apply for upper secondary schools (through the high school entrance examinations) or colleges of technology.

The (revised) School Education Law defines the goals of lower secondary education as follows: (i) to continue the educational goals of elementary schools adapted for lower secondary schools and to foster qualities that are necessary for individuals as members of the Japanese nation and society; (ii) to develop the ability to select a future career based on adequate knowledge regarding jobs and the qualifications needed in society, and to inculcate attitudes that value labour and character; (iii) to promote social activities in and out of school and to develop the ability to make fair judgments and to control feelings.

The following tables show the subjects to be taught in lower secondary schools, as well as the standard number of teaching periods per year to be devoted to each subject, as specified in the 2008 course of study as well as in the new course to be implemented in 2012.

Japan. Lower secondary education: yearly lesson timetable (2008)

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade		
	7	8	9
Japanese language	140	105	105
Social studies	105	105	85
Mathematics	105	105	105
Science	105	105	80
Music	45	35	35
Fine arts	45	35	35
Health and physical education	90	90	90
Industrial arts and home economics	70	70	35
Moral education	35	35	35
Special activities	35	35	35
Elective subjects	0–30	50–85	105–165
Periods for integrated learning	70–100	70–105	70–130
Foreign language	105	105	105
Total periods per year	980	980	980
Average number of periods per week	28	28	28

Source: MEXT, 2008. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. Special activities include class activities, students' councils, and 'school events'. In the table above, the number of periods for special activities includes periods for class activities only.

Japan. Lower secondary education: yearly lesson timetable (to be implemented in 2012)

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade		
	7	8	9
Japanese language	140	140	105
Social studies	105	105	140
Mathematics	140	105	140
Science	105	140	140
Music	45	35	35
Fine arts	45	35	35
Health and physical education	105	105	105
Industrial arts and home economics	70	70	35
Moral education	35	35	35
Special activities	35	35	35
Periods for integrated learning	50	70	70
Foreign language	140	140	140
Total periods per year	1,015	1,015	1,015
Average number of periods per week	29	29	29

Source: MEXT, 2008. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

At the lower secondary level, students' performance is assessed by teachers and students usually proceed automatically to the next grade every year. At the end of lower secondary education most students opt to take high school entrance exams. "In terms of prefectural/municipal high school examinations, the contents of this exam are



carried out by the prefectural/municipal Board of Education where a public upper secondary school is located. In terms of private school examinations, each school decides examination methods or other tasks to determine student selection such as asking for junior high school academic records. Students take examinations in five subjects: Japanese, mathematics, social studies, science and English. The higher their final score, the better the chance they have of being admitted to a good upper secondary school and subsequently being admitted to a good university.” (NUFFIC, 2011).

In 2004, there were 11,102 lower secondary schools with 3,633,513 students enrolled and 249,794 teachers. The average pupil-teacher ratio was 14.7:1, and the average number of pupils per class was 31. In the same year, 96.3% of students completing lower secondary courses entered upper secondary schools or colleges of technology.

According to national data, in 2009 there were 10,864 lower secondary schools (of which 745 private and 75 national) with 3,600,323 students enrolled (of whom 1,761,184 girls) and 250,771 teachers, of whom 104,676 were females. (Statistics Bureau, 2011). In 2007, 97.7% of lower secondary graduates entered either upper secondary schools or colleges of technology. (MEXT, 2008).

Local public upper secondary schools select students on the basis of: the scholastic achievement test given by the Board of Education of the prefecture or municipality running the school; and the records on each applicant presented in the student credentials or other documents submitted by the lower secondary schools. Then the school principal approves the admission of the selected students. Upper secondary schools are intended to give lower secondary school graduates general and specialized secondary education suited to their level of mental and physical development, on the basis of the education given in lower secondary schools. Upper secondary schools may offer a number of elective subjects at their discretion, so that the curriculum in each school may be adapted to the aim of the courses offered in the school and to the differing abilities, aptitudes and future prospects of individuals and so that students may choose appropriate subjects suited to their own abilities, aptitudes and future prospects.

The new Courses of Study for upper secondary schools have been implemented for the new entrants in 2003. Upper secondary school subjects include general education courses (ordinary courses) and specialized subject courses (specialized courses) such as agriculture, industry, business, fisheries, home economics, nursing, information, welfare, science-mathematics and English language. However, as a part of the reforms of upper secondary education since April 1994, a newly established integrated course programme went into effect, which provides general and specialized education on an elective basis to students. In 2007, 72.3% of upper secondary school students were enrolled in general academic courses, and the rest in specialized (mainly industrial, 8.2%, and commercial, 6.9%, courses) or integrated courses (4.5%). (MEXT, 2008). The course of study specifies the subjects both in general education and in specialized education, as well as the objectives and the standard content of teaching in each subject. The table below shows the standard number of credits to be acquired for most of the general education subjects.

Japan. Upper secondary education: general education subjects and standard number of credits (2008)

Subject Area	Subject	Std. No. of credits	Compulsory Subjects for all students
Japanese Language	Japanese Language Expression I	2 ○	
	Japanese Language Expression II	2	
	Integrated Japanese Language	4	
	Contemporary Japanese Language	4	
	Classics	4	
	Appreciation of Classics	2 ○	
Geography and History	World History A	2	
	World History B	4 ○	
	Japanese History A	2	
	Japanese History B	4	
	Geography A	2	
	Geography B	4	
Civics	Contemporary Society	2 ○	Either "contemporary society" or "ethics" + "politics and economy"
	Ethics	2	
	Politics and Economy	2	
Mathematics	Basic Mathematics	2	
	Mathematics I	3	
	Mathematics II	4	
	Mathematics III	3	
	Mathematics A	2	
	Mathematics B	2 ○ ○	
	Mathematics C	2	
Science	Basic Science	2	Two subjects (including at least one of "Basic Science," "Integrated Science A," or "Integrated Science B")
	Integrated Science A	2	
	Integrated Science B	2	
	Physics I	3	
	Physics II	3	
	Chemistry I	3	
	Chemistry II	3	
	Biology I	3	
	Biology II	3	
	Earth Science I	3	
	Earth Science II	3	
Health and Physical Education	Physical Education	7-8 ○	
	Health	2	
Art	Music I	2	
	Music II	2	
	Music III	2	
	Fine Art I	2	
	Fine Art II	2 ○	
	Fine Art III	2	
	Crafts Production I	2	
	Crafts Production II	2	
	Crafts Production III	2	
	Calligraphy I	2 ○	
	Calligraphy II	2	
		Calligraphy III	2 ○
Foreign Language	Oral Communication I	2 ○	
	Oral Communication II	4	
	English I	3	
	English II	4	
	Reading	4	
	Writing	4	
Home Economics	Basic Home Economics	2	
	Integrated Home Economics	4	
	Home Life Techniques	4	
Information	Information A	2	
	Information B	2	
	Information C	2	

Source: MEXT, 2008. At the upper secondary level teaching periods last 50 minutes.



Schools may offer subjects that are not included in the table above. Thirty-five lesson periods per school year are counted as one credit. The number of credits to be earned by the time of graduation is 74 or more. Special activities include homeroom activities, students' councils, and school events. Each school will allocate an appropriate number of periods to special activities other than homeroom activities (35 periods or more per year should be devoted to homeroom activities). In addition, there are 105-210 periods of integrated study (by the time of graduation), for which three to six credits can be granted. Each school may decide on the subjects to be taught for specialized secondary education and the number of credits granted for them, based on the subjects indicated in the Courses of Study for upper secondary schools and the standard number of credits specified by the owner of the school. (MEXT, 2008). Upon successful completion of upper secondary education students receive the high school certificate of graduation.

In 1988, credit-system upper secondary schools, which fall under a special category of part-time and correspondence upper secondary schools, were institutionalized. This system was introduced to the full-time upper secondary schools in 1993. It aims to provide upper secondary school education to a variety of students at any time in accordance with their own needs. They are non-graded schools whose intent is to give these students the qualification for graduation from an upper secondary school course on the basis of the total number of credits. There were 785 schools of this kind in 2007. In addition, some upper secondary schools offer part-time and correspondence courses to working young people. In order to meet the diverse situations of students and ensure their individual growth, MEXT has been advancing the reform of upper secondary school education by, for example, establishing new types of upper secondary schools such as those with integrated courses or credit systems, and by organizing diverse courses with a wide variety of optional subjects. MEXT has also addressed the improvement of the selection system for students advancing to upper secondary schools by implementing diverse elective methods.

In 2004, there were 5,429 upper secondary schools with 3,719,048 students enrolled and 255,605 teachers. The average student-teacher ratio was 14.5:1. In the same year, 50% of the age group enrolled in upper secondary schools entered universities and junior colleges.

According to national data, in 2009 there were 5,183 upper secondary schools (of which 1,321 private and 16 national) with 3,347,311 students enrolled (of whom 1,652,340 girls) and 239,342 teachers, of whom 69,198 were females. There were also 42 comprehensive (lower and upper) secondary schools with a total enrolment of 20,544 students and 1,576 teachers. (Statistics Bureau, 2011).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

School evaluation is viewed as a process of identifying problems and issues concerning each school's activity by evaluating the extent to which schools' goals are achieved. Based on the criteria for establishment of elementary schools that were

introduced in 2002, schools are now obliged to make efforts to conduct self-evaluation and to make the results open to the public.

For the purpose of measuring students' learning outcomes, it had been planned to implement national academic achievement tests at elementary, junior high and high school levels. At the elementary level, tests were to be administered in grades 5 and 6 in four subjects (Japanese, social studies, mathematics and science). At the junior high level, tests were to be administered in all grades in five subjects (Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science and foreign language). (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The National Assessment of Academic Ability for grade 6 elementary students and grade 3 junior high students is carried out from 2007. The National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) handles the drawing up and analysis of results, the preparation of explanatory materials and the reports.

Though Japanese children rank high in terms of academic ability on an international basis according to the results of nationwide and international surveys (such as PISA and TIMSS), problems such as insufficient motivation to learn and lack of study habits have become obvious. On the other hand, according to the results of various surveys, including OECD's PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), Japanese students have weaknesses in comprehension and essay questions that assess the ability to think, judge and express; in solving problems that require knowledge and skills; in motivation to learn; and in study and lifestyle habits. (MEXT, 2008).

In 2008 a survey concerning science education was implemented in conjunction with the Japan Science and Technology Agency and a nationwide survey in the form of questionnaire was carried out on the science teaching staff in elementary, junior high and high schools regarding the teaching environment of science classes. The results showed that the budgetary situation regarding teaching materials is very difficult in all elementary, junior high and high schools and that there are fewer experiments at high school level compared to elementary and junior high school due to the lack of time for such activities.

The Survey on the Basic Scientific and Technological Literacy Required for Japanese People (2006-2007) was carried out in conjunction with the Science Council of Japan, which aimed at drawing up the knowledge, skills and views related to science, mathematics and technology that everyone should have at adult stage. (MEXT, White Paper 2008).

Teaching staff

Elementary and secondary school teachers in Japan are trained mainly at universities or junior colleges accredited by the Ministry of Education (MEXT). Most elementary school teachers are graduates from four-year elementary school teacher training programmes at national universities. Lower secondary school teachers are trained mainly at national, local public or private universities, while upper secondary school teachers are trained at universities (undergraduate courses) and national, local public and private graduate schools. In 2007, teachers who were university graduates



accounted for 87.2% of elementary school teachers, 93.8% of lower secondary teachers, 97.8% of upper secondary teachers, and 97.8% of the comprehensive secondary school teachers. In the same year, professional graduate schools (Graduate School of Teacher Education) specializing in training teachers were established in an effort to train teachers with practical teaching skills and capabilities. (MEXT, 2008). Practically all teachers at institutions of higher education including colleges of technology are university graduates.

The majority of teachers at elementary, lower secondary, upper secondary and special needs schools are working at local public schools, while the majority of teachers at kindergartens, junior colleges, special training schools and miscellaneous schools are employed at private institutions.

Elementary and secondary school teachers are recruited by competent authorities from among those who hold relevant teacher certificates. The prefectural Board of Education is responsible for the appointment of teachers of prefectural schools (most of which are upper secondary schools), as well as of municipal elementary/lower secondary schools and part-time courses of upper secondary schools, with a view to facilitating the exchange of teachers among different municipalities. The responsibility for the appointment of teachers of the other municipal schools (including kindergartens and full-time upper secondary schools) rests primarily with the municipal Board of Education.

Teachers at private kindergartens and at elementary and secondary schools are appointed by the authority of the corporation establishing the respective school, while teachers at elementary and secondary schools attached to a national university are appointed by the Minister of Education on the basis of the nomination by the president of the university. There are three types of teaching certificates: regular certificates (Advanced class for master's degree holders, 1st class for bachelor's, and 2nd class for associate degree holders), special certificates and temporary certificates for each school type. Certificates for lower and upper secondary schools are further divided by subjects. Regular certificates are valid in all prefectures. A system for renewing educational personnel certificates was to be introduced in April 2009. Under this system the regular certificate and special certificate will be valid for ten years and be renewed after completing certificate renewal course, so that teachers can acquire the latest knowledge and skills. There is no certification system for teachers at higher education institutions. The qualification standards are specified in the respective ordinances of MEXT providing for national establishment standards for the different types of institutions of higher education. (MEXT, 2008).

Regarding the in-service training of elementary and secondary school teachers, a statutory system of one-year induction training for newly appointed teachers was created in May 1988. The one-year compulsory training for all new teachers at all public elementary, lower and upper secondary schools, and special schools is conducted at the prefectural and municipal levels. In 2003, a system was established to provide training to teachers who have reached their tenth year in the teaching profession in order to improve their skills in teaching the content of textbooks and in providing student guidance, according to their individual abilities and aptitude. Teachers are also provided with other training opportunities according to their teaching experience, as well as social experience training at private companies.



Furthermore, a variety of training programmes for developing leaders in school education and for addressing urgent challenges are provided at the National Center for Teachers' Development, and independent administrative institution established in April 2001.

The majority of kindergarten and elementary school teachers are assigned to a single class, and are responsible for teaching all or most subjects to the class. In elementary schools there are a small number of teachers specializing in each of practical subjects such as music, arts and handicrafts, physical education and home economics, because the teaching of these subjects requires special competences. In lower secondary schools the majority of teachers are specialists responsible for teaching one or two subject areas to several classes of students. This is more pronounced in upper secondary schools, where the greater majority of teachers teach only one subject area or even only one subject.

The maximum number of pupils per class for elementary and secondary schools is defined by law. The standard class size is defined as 40 pupils. In May 2007, the national average number of pupils per class was 25.7 for elementary schools, and 30.2 for lower secondary schools. The average number of pupils/students per teacher (teachers here include the school principal, the vice-principal, and other teaching staff) was 17.1 for elementary schools, 14.5 for lower secondary schools, and 13.9 for upper secondary schools. It is required by law that the number of teachers to be assigned to each school be more than the number of classes. Concerning teacher workload, in 2004 the average number of school hours per week for public teachers was 18.4 hours at the elementary school level, 14.9 hours at the lower secondary level, and 13.6 hours at the upper secondary level. (MEXT, 2008).

The salary scales and the kinds and amounts of allowances for teachers at national educational institutions, who used to be national government employees, had been laid down by laws. However, they are now specified by individual national university corporations since these teachers became employees of national university corporations instead of national government employees when national universities became incorporated in 2004. Those for teachers at prefectural or municipal educational institutions, who are local government employees, are determined by ordinances of each prefecture or municipality. The salary scales and the kinds and amounts of allowances used to be provided for in prefectural and municipal by-laws based on those for national schoolteachers, so they were more or less at the same level nationwide. Nevertheless, the system was revised in 2004 from one based on the standards of national schools to one in which the prefectures independently decide the salary scales and the kinds and amounts of allowances according to the local circumstances based on the duties and the special expertise of the teachers. The salaries for local public compulsory schoolteachers are basically paid by the prefectural governments due to their stable financial conditions, but one-third of the amounts are borne by the national government in order to maintain the national level of compulsory education and to secure equal opportunities for education nationwide. Salaries of private school teachers are determined individually by school juridical persons that have established the respective private schools.

With regard to the salaries of teachers at compulsory educational institutions, the "Law concerning Special Measures for Securing Competent Educational



Personnel in Compulsory Education Schools with the Aim of Maintaining and Improving the Level of School Education” provides that necessary preferential measures must be taken for the salaries of teachers compared to the pay standard of general government officials. This Law was aimed at attracting excellent people to the teaching profession, thereby further improving the level of compulsory education. This system is expected to become increasingly important for securing competent teachers as the issues facing schools become increasingly diversified and complicated. (MEXT, 2008).

In order to help teachers improve their qualifications and capacities and to utilize them to the maximum extent possible, each Board of Education has piloted or implemented a new teacher assessment system which assessed the capacities and performances of teachers in all prefectures and designated cities by the end of 2007. (*Ibid.*).

References

Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture. *Development of education in Japan 1992-1994*. Presented at the 44th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 1994.

Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture. *Development of education in Japan 1994-1996*. Presented at the 45th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 1996.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *Development of education in Japan 1997-2001*. Presented at the 46th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2001.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *The Development of education in Japan 2002-2004*. Presented at the 47th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2004.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *FY2004 White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*. MEXT, Tokyo, 2005.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *Japan's Education at a Glance 2005*. MEXT, Tokyo, 2005.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *The development of education in Japan 2005-2008. National report of Japan*. Presented at the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2008.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. *White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*. Tokyo, 2008.

NUFFIC (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education). *Country module: Japan. Evaluation of foreign degrees and qualifications in the*



Netherlands. Second edition, International Recognition Department, The Hague, January 2011.

Statistics Bureau. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. *Japan Statistical Yearbook 2011*. Tokyo, 2011.

Web resources

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology:
<http://www.mext.go.jp/english/> [In Japanese and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Center for University Entrance Examinations: <http://www.dnc.ac.jp/> [In Japanese. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Institute for Educational Policy Research: <http://www.nier.go.jp/> [In Japanese and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Institute of Special Needs Education: <http://www.nise.go.jp/> [In Japanese and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation:
<http://www.niad.ac.jp/> [In Japanese and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>