

Higher-level Teacher Training and the Six-Year Combined Teacher Training Course

Majima Kiyoko (Aichi University of Education)

1 Introduction

The theme of this symposium is a "higher-level teacher training in graduate schools." This brings us to the question of what can be done and how should it be implemented to create a higher-level teacher training course?

On the topic of higher-level teacher training, Yada (2015) brought up and investigated MEXT's policies, the initiatives taken by national university facilities (Hyogo University of Teacher Education, Nagoya University, Hokkaido University, and Kyoto University) and the practices at graduate schools of education (The United Graduate of Professional Teacher Education)ⁱ. In this investigation, Yada asserted, "the cultivation of practical leadership qualities will equal higher-level teacher training in Japan." There is a strong tendency for people to gravitate towards this way of thinking, and under these circumstances, it seems that practical leadership qualities cannot be reduced to simple know-how or the ability to be immediately effective. Thus, one question that has been raised is how it is best to learn investigative and research abilities.

Horiuchi (2014) brought up the cases of South Korea, Thailand, Finland and England and pointed out that almost all of these countries were attempting to make a higher-level teacher training system. He also noted that the substance of the higher-level training was an academic improvement. In addition, Horiuchi stated the following about the 6-year teacher training system "practical abilities cannot be manifested if there is not an abundance of knowledge. It is essential to be able to design a system where people are trained as knowledgeable teachers or human resources over a combined 6 yearsⁱⁱ.

This presentation will give my personal opinion about the higher-level teacher training in graduate schools based on the trends in reforming vocational licensing and the enhancing of the functions of national

universities. Next, it will introduce the initiatives for a combined 6-year teacher-training course at Aichi University of Education as an example to embody this opinion. Finally, the issues for making a higher-level teacher training system will be described.

2 The Focus on Reforming Teacher Training

(1) The Focus on Improving Vocational Licensing

On October 25th, 2013 MEXT's Cooperative Council compiled a report "On the Reform and Improvement of Graduate Level Teacher Training." In this report, MEXT instituted practical courses emphasizing the interplay of practice and theory as compulsory credits to ensure the development of practical leadership as a focus for improving vocational licensing. Here we should focus on the following sentences that have been written about the trends in reforming vocational licensingⁱⁱⁱ.

In order to ensure the cultivation of practical leadership, it is recommended that all of the graduate schools implement practical courses emphasizing the interplay of practice and theory as a part of the 24 compulsory credits required for obtaining a vocational license. Vocational licensing ensures advanced expertise based on profound scholarship. Thus, it is essential that the content of the practical course subjects go beyond simply being practiced in school and being designed merely for the objective of acquiring instructional technique that will be used in an actual classroom. Rather, it should be based on expert knowledge about a specific field that was learned in a graduate course, and this expert knowledge should be able to be utilized in actual school-based educational activities.

The trends in the higher-level teacher training at graduate schools are concisely exemplified in these sentences.

- ① The qualifications and abilities that are ensured by the vocational license are basically high level expertise based on profound scholarship.
- ② It is essential that the content of the practical courses be based on expert knowledge and that it can be utilized in actual school-based educational activities.

- ③ This should not be content that is practiced in school and with the objective of merely acquiring an instructional technique that will be used in an actual classroom.

In short, the important points in creating a higher-level of teacher training are:

- ① that it be based on cultivating advanced expertise based on profound scholarship ② that it allow the application of expert knowledge in actual school-based educational activities; and ③ the objective is not merely to acquire instructional technique.

(2) Enhancing the Functions of National Universities

The report "*A way of thinking to enhance the functions of national universities going forward*" from June 20th, 2013^{iv} exemplified attempts to enhance functions in order to improve the quality of teachers who are in charge of elementary and secondary education.

○ There are plans to reduce the size of universities and departments that train teachers based on the future demand for hiring teachers and population changes. However, there are also plans to enhance their functions in order to improve the quality of the teachers who are responsible for elementary and secondary education. Specifically, the following things will be implemented: an increase in hiring university professors who have teaching experience in actual schools; a shift to a practice based curriculum (strengthening practical learning by training in actual schools); and enhancing or drastically revising organizational structures (repealing the so-called "new curriculum" and placing importance on graduate schools of education and the curriculum for training elementary school teachers).

The following 8 points are examples of enhancing functions^v.

- Problem solving based lessons whose foundation lies in the main/affiliated school system
- Structuring of curriculum and reorganization of schools to create inter-disciplinary educational research organizations
- Literacy tests and the acquisition of knowledge prior to teaching

practice

- Organization of the curriculum to place importance on stakeholders
- A guarantee of the diversity and quality of teachers (securing experienced educators, talented young people, foreigners, tenure track system)
- An increase in teacher training expertise by the teaching staff in charge of specialized subjects
- Introduction of a system to assess teaching staff at regular intervals
- The cooperation between departments and universities that is required for the "refinement of educational science" in a mature society

Of the eight examples mentioned above, the two that are believed to be particularly important in creating a higher-level teacher-training program are ④ the structuring of curriculum and reorganization of schools to create inter-disciplinary educational research organization and ⑤ an increase in teacher training expertise by the teaching staff in charge of specialized subjects.

3 Aichi University of Education's initiative for a "6-year combined teacher training course"^{vi}.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the 2006 launch of Aichi University of Education's 6-year Combined Undergraduate-Master's Teacher Training Course. By confronting contemporary problems and conducting course-specific classes that deepen interdisciplinary research while developing individual areas of expertise, the students gain a foundation that will underpin their teaching careers that may last as long as forty years.

This course allows undergraduate students to audit graduate courses, providing insights into graduate-level research to ① cultivate advanced expertise based on profound scholarship.

Also, through seminars re-examining and refining learning outcomes from practical problem-based exercises (Y3), topical exercises (Y4), and independent research (Master's Y1), ② students apply expert knowledge in actual school-based educational activities. The independent research done in first year of the master's program is a long-term project done over

the course of an entire year where the students regularly go to a practice school and determine their own research topic. In the second half of the independent research, the students plan a teaching unit based on the topic of their research and then give a practice lesson. The practice research lessons are open to the public, and the students hold a research council with other peers in the course to examine these lessons.

Furthermore, in the second year of their Master's degree, students write dissertations summarizing teaching practices from independent studies. Substantiating these academic contributions through publication in a pedagogical journal demonstrates that ③ the objective of these school-based exercises is not merely to acquire instructional technique.

In addition to this, the students in the course are recruited from every discipline, and interdisciplinary classes are conducted by using their varied expertise. This course ④ structures the curriculum and reorganizes the school to create an inter-disciplinary educational research organization. It does this by improving cooperation between students of different levels by fostering a link between undergraduate students (Y3-) and Master's students (until Y2).

The instructors responsible for the classes and coordinating this course are also recruited from every discipline. The instructors in the education program and those in charge of specialized subjects team up to hold classes, and they also work together to hold joint conferences and teaching practicum sessions. Thus, the course attempts to ⑤ increase the teacher training expertise held by the teaching staff that are in charge of specialized subjects.

This course is thus consistent with enhancing the functions of national universities and MEXT's focus on improving vocational licensing. Through the unique classes offered in this course over the last decade, great efforts have been made on a teacher-training program combining practical skills with research capabilities.

4. Conclusion

Some issues surrounding higher-level teacher training are institutional reforms like the recruitment examination and providing incentives after recruitment and employment. These issues are not just confined to a 6-year

combined teacher-training course; graduate schools of education and postgraduate pedagogy courses also face these problems. Iwata (2013) pointed out the following about the poor institutional endgame of Japan's teacher training policies^{vii}. "The system for licensing teachers in Japan lacks the institutional incentives like the establishment of an exclusive range of work for advanced license holders. The question of who among the licensed "teachers" working at a school advances to management positions like administrator or teacher supervisor is left the people in HR."

There are aspects of institutional reform that are not possible without great efforts by graduate school instructors. An important future issue for Japan's teacher-training policies is institutional reform, and it will be required that MEXT, the national government and the universities that handle teacher-training work together to achieve this reform.

ⁱ Yada, Sadayuki *"A Study on Aspects of the Development of Japanese Teacher Education Reform"* "Tokaigakuen University Bulletin" Volume 20, 2015, pp.69-83.

ⁱⁱ Horiuchi, Tsutomu *"Improvement of Teacher Education and Its Trend in Some Leading Countries"* (Japan Association of Educators for Human Development 15th Annual Conference, March 7th, 2014 lecture text)

"Research on Teaching Science" 15, 2014, pp.1-12.

ⁱⁱⁱ MEXT "On the Reform and Improvement of Graduate Level Teacher Training" (Report), Cooperative Council for the implementation of current reform policies related to improving teachers' talents and abilities of teachers, October, 15th 2013.

^{iv} MEXT's report *"A way of thinking to enhance the functions of national universities going forward"* 6.20.2013.

^v Goda, Tetsuo *"Teacher Training and Curriculum in a Mature Society: The Japanese Society for Studies on Educational Practices' 18th annual research conference"* Ministry of Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau, 10.24.2015. Lecture materials, p.4.

^{vi} There have been research reports (like the following ones) published at Aichi University of Education's 6-year combined teacher training course. *"The Possibility of a 6-Year Combined Teacher Training Program that Attempts to Create a Higher Level of Teacher Training"* Aichi University of Education, 2012.

"Research on Developing a Graduate School Curriculum that Handles Teacher Training at the Masters Program Level I - The Trial of a 6 Year Combined Teacher Training Program through the Cooperation of the

Graduate School and Undergraduate Department at Aichi University of Education" Aichi University of Education, 2015. Also, a journal for the publication of class research by students who have completed the course and the dissertations by the second Master's year students entitled "Six 1 collection" was launched in 2013. In addition, there is book that is published annually that compiles the activity reports by students in the six year combined course. *"Aichi Six 1 Education Activity Reports 2014: Contemporary issues in education currently being considered by students"* Aichi University of Education 6 year combined teacher training course, 2015.

^{vii} Iwata, Yasuyuki "The Improvement of Teacher Training and the Role of Graduate Schools of Education" "The United Graduate School of Professional Teacher Education's Annual Report" (2) 2013, p.3.