

OECD Teacher Preparation study

# Promising practices

Mandatory 1-year induction for new  
teachers in Japan

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This case study describes a “Promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of Initial Teacher Preparation in Japan from 5-9 September 2016.

The OECD Review Team – Hannah von Ahlefeld (OECD), Francesca Caena (University of Venice), Kjetil Helgeland (OECD) and Danielle Toon (Learning First) – identified a number of “Promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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## *Promising practice 6.*

### *Mandatory 1-year induction for new teachers in Japan*

#### Context

The first years in the profession are crucial to teacher retention and development, and strong support systems must be in place to assist new teachers with challenges early in their careers. Indeed, a growing body of research demonstrates the positive impact of induction programmes on teachers' job satisfaction, well-being and commitment to the school, in addition to student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009<sup>[1]</sup>; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011<sup>[2]</sup>; Wechsler et al., 2010<sup>[3]</sup>).

However, in Japan, participation in formal induction is twice as high as the OECD average. 83% of teachers in lower secondary education in Japan reported having participated in an induction programme, compared to the OECD average of 49%. In addition, one third of teachers in lower secondary education in Japan reported having an assigned mentor to support them, compared to the OECD average of 13%. (OECD, 2014<sup>[1]</sup>).

#### How does 1-year induction for new teachers work in Japan?

Since 1988, the Law for Special Regulations Concerning Educational Public Service Personnel (EPSP) has mandated Boards of Education (BOEs) in Japan to provide new teachers with induction training in the first year of their appointment (Government of Japan, 1949<sup>[2]</sup>). Participation in induction has been rising steadily (Table 1). New teachers are placed under a conditional employment status during their first year, and BOEs are also mandated to evaluate new teachers before removing their conditional status. Only 1-2% of teachers fail to pass their induction year. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) provides guidelines to support Boards of Education in the 47 prefectures to develop induction programmes (MEXT, 2014<sup>[3]</sup>). BOEs can decide on the delivery and contents of induction programmes. They also prepare detailed induction guidebook for schools (MEXT, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>).

**Table 1. Total number of new teachers in induction in Japan (2004, 2009-14)**

	2004	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Primary education	10 170	11 607	11 841	12 044	12 783	13 072	13 183
Lower secondary education	4 457	6 270	6 603	7 421	7 603	7 904	7 894

*Note: The total number of teachers in induction is equal to the number of individuals with permanent contracts hired in teaching positions in public schools in primary and lower secondary education. However, teachers who have previous experience in teaching in national, municipal or private schools for more than one consecutive year are exempt from induction training.*

Source: MEXT as cited in MEXT (2016), *OECD ITP Study, Japan Country Background Report*, MEXT, Tokyo.

The law also requires the assignment of a mentor for every new teacher. The MEXT Guidelines therefore describe the tasks and responsibilities of:

- *Guidance teacher*, who is responsible for providing support to the new teachers for the school-based part of the teacher induction programme (generally 2 days per week).
- *Subject specialist*, who is responsible for subject-specific training. This is useful where the guidance teacher and the new teacher have different areas of specialisation (generally 1 day per week).
- *School principal*, who is the interface between the new and more experienced guidance and subject specialist teachers.

Mentors and subject specialist teachers are selected on the basis of seniority and subject specialisation.

According to the MEXT Guidelines, induction programmes consist of 300 hours of training in total, including 120 hours of in-school training, and at least 25 days of off-site training (Table 2):

- *In-school training* (generally 3 days per week) includes consultation, demonstration and observation sessions with the guidance and subject-specific teachers. Lessons are often preceded or followed by detailed discussions of lesson plans, instructional technique, and successes or challenges, typically covering:
  - *Fundamental aspects of the education*, such as anti-discrimination education, lunch-time duties and promoting health and safety in schools.
  - Academic instruction, such as improving lesson plans, developing weekly plans, using instructional equipment and teaching mixed-ability classes
  - *Homeroom management*, such as developing homeroom management plans, preparing report cards, meeting with parents and conducting home visits.
  - *Special activities*, such as leading school events and club activities and guidance counselling.
  - *Student guidance*, such as techniques for students working in groups and individually, methods to praise and discipline students and case studies of problem behaviour.
- *Off-site training* (generally 1 day per week) is typically offered by the Center for Education in each prefecture. Activities typically consists of:
  - Theoretical and practical courses, including a 5-day residential training workshop, seminars, lectures, discussion, observations, tours and research projects.
  - Occupational experience in the social service and/or business sectors, including visits to schools in other regions, schools for students with disabilities, etc.
  - Volunteer activities. (Nohara, 1997<sup>[51]</sup>)

**Table 2. Example of a programme for a new Japanese elementary teacher during 1-year induction**

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Homeroom	Off-site training	<b>Consultation, with guidance teacher</b>	<b>Demonstration, with subject teacher</b>	Homeroom	Homeroom
2			<b>Demonstration with guidance teacher</b>	<b>Meeting, with subject teacher</b>	<b>Demonstration with guidance teacher</b>	Homeroom
3	<b>Home room, with mentor teacher</b>		<b>Observation with guidance teacher</b>	<b>Observation, with subject teacher</b>	Homeroom	Homeroom
4			Homeroom	Homeroom	<b>Observation with guidance teacher</b>	
5	<b>Moral education</b>		<b>Consultation, with guidance teacher</b>	<b>Consultation, with subject teacher</b>	Homeroom	
6			Club	<b>Lesson planning and preparation</b>		

*Note:* Bold indicates induction-related activities.

*Source:* Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) guidelines on induction.

However, the guidelines are implemented differently across prefectures, for example, in many prefectures, BOEs have extended the duration of teacher induction trainings from beyond one year (Box 1).

### Box 1. Extending induction for new teachers in Japan beyond 1-year

In 2011, Chiba Prefecture increased the duration of induction training for new teachers from the mandated one-year induction to three years. The rationale is to reduce teacher workload, which is especially heavy for new teachers, and to make the context of training more practical.

In Miyagi Prefecture, a three-year induction programme was developed to minimise the pressure and administrative burden of 1-year training programs and ensure the depth of learning. Teachers receive 15 days of off-site training in their first year, 7 days in their second year, and then 3 days in their third year of teaching. Furthermore, new teachers are given an opportunity to work with the teachers undergoing their legally mandated tenth-year professional training program. New teachers play a role of student in a classroom where the experienced teachers deliver their mock lesson as a part of their training programme.

Hokkaido Prefecture has a 5-year induction programme:

- *Year 1.* Focus on pedagogical skills and classroom management, 150 hours of on-site training, 4 days off-site training and 2 overnight training.
- *Year 2.* Focus on classroom management and career guidance. 30+ hours of on-site training, 3 school visits over the year using shadowing method.
- *Year 3.* Focus on community collaboration and teamwork. 30+ hours of on-site training, 3 days internship in the private sector and 1 day for pre- and post-guidance
- *Year 4.* Focus on assessing skills. 20+ hours of on-site training, 3 days off-site training
- *Year 5.* Focus on mentoring and teamwork. 2 days off-site training.

Source: Chiba, Hokkaido and Miyagi Prefecture Induction Manuals.

### Why is it a strength?

The OECD Review Team in its visit to Japan from 5-9 September 2016 concluded that induction is a strength in that it:

- *Is mandated by law* for implementation by Boards of Education, who can adapt content to suit local needs.
- Induction is *extensively implemented and well-documented* by BOEs.
- *Promotes a culture of (co-ordinated) collaboration in the school to support new teachers.* Schools are encouraged to use a co-ordinated whole-school approach to training new teachers, drawing on the experience and observation of new and experienced teachers and guidance teachers (lesson study).

### How could it be improved?

The OECD Review Team also noted there could be:

- *The culture of seniority may make mentoring too directive.* In addition, guidance teachers are nominated by school principals *on the basis of seniority and subject specialisation*, not on other criteria such as leadership or relationship skills.

- *Guidance teachers may be overloaded and not trained for the task.* Guidance teachers receive limited training to prepare for mentoring. Even with additional support, mentors may have a heavy workload.
- *The induction programme is currently one-size-fits-all.* It could be better tailored to new teachers' previous experiences and current needs, for example new teachers who have been temporary teachers ("lecturers") need less training in communication skills and lesson planning.
- *Work overload*, for both new teachers and guidance teachers, may undermine the effectiveness of 1-year induction, and even exacerbate practice shock and teacher attrition.

### For more information

- Government of Japan (1949), *Law for Special Regulations Concerning Educational Public Service Personnel (EPSP)*. [2]
- MEXT (2016), *OECD Initial Teacher Preparation study Country Background Report: Japan*, Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. [4]
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