

Competency-based curriculum reform and current issues in teaching of school subjects

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Since the 2000s, in elementary and secondary education, Japan has become conscious of PISA literacy, and has begun to emphasize the abilities of thinking, judgment, and expression regarding applying knowledge and skills to problem solving. In higher education, the importance of generic skills is emphasized by catch phrases such as 'bachelor's degree ability' and 'basic skills to become a fully-fledged member of society.' The next National Course of Study tries to clarify not only subject matter content but also 'qualities and competencies' including cross-curricular generic skills, and is endeavouring to drive a shift towards 'quality and competencies' (competency) based curriculum, through systematized instruction and assessment of competencies and the reform on entrance exam or articulation system between upper secondary education and higher education that assess students' ability to continue learning in university, workplace and society (college and career readiness).

In this lecture, I first outline the development of competency-based curriculum reform in Japan and summarize both its perceived problems as well as its potential. Next, I raise some key points aimed at encouraging a positive direction in competency-based curriculum reform. Finally, I propose a framework for categorising and structuring qualities and competencies that should be developed at school. And I propose the following direction of reform in curriculum and instruction of school subjects: It is necessary to emphasize the process of 'doing a subject' toward authentic learning.

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