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Teacher Training and Japan's Current Higher Education Reform

Ever since the immediate aftermath of World War II, teacher training in Japan has been integrated into higher education institutions that offer teacher training programs. Recently, universities revised their teacher training programs to comply with the curriculum model suggested by the Japan Association of Universities of Education (J.A.U.E.): The newly systematized programs revolve around core subjects in which “experience” and “reflection” are intended to be complementary. In addition, the new subject “practical seminar for the teaching profession” is designed to standardize students’ skills and competencies prior to their graduation so that universities can ascertain the new teachers’ quality and ability. New approaches to teacher training in Japan are not confined to the undergraduate level: A new type of postgraduate course, named “professional graduate school of education”, was established in 2008. Recent reforms of teacher training, introduced as a part of higher education reform more generally, are increasingly oriented towards professionalization and standardization: policy makers discuss whether teacher training programs should be prolonged beyond the bachelor level, and whether teaching certificates should be exclusively awarded by the Ministry of Education. These developments tend to homogenize the teachers’ academic background, thereby weakening the diversity that used to characterize postwar teacher training.

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Toshiko Ito studies the interplay of Western and Japanese theories of education, the history of ideas in education (especially Enlightenment and New Education), and value education. She earned her doctorate in educational sciences from the University of Bern in 1992 for her thesis *Die Kategorie der Anschauung in der Pädagogik Pestalozzis: Theorie und Rezeption im Japan des 19. Jahrhunderts*. She was appointed as Associate Professor by Mie University in 1996 and as full Professor in 2008.