

Curent Issues in Japanese as a Second or Foreign Language Teacher Training

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Abstract

In 1983, the Japanese government announced, “A plan to receive 100,000 foreign students in Japan in order to deploy the 21st century foreign student policy.” With this plan in mind, the Japanese government calculated the need for at least 24,900 Japanese language teachers by the year 2000.

The required number of foreign students and Japanese language teachers by the Ministry of Education (current Ministry of Education & Science) in 2000 was achieved in 2003. The number of Japanese teachers amounts to more than 28,500. If we look at the numbers only, we can say we have achieved the target to meet the need for Japanese language teachers. But around 80% of Japanese language teachers in Japan are working in public Japanese language training schools and agencies. Full-time teachers among these Japanese language teachers are only 15% of the total; around 34% of them are part-time teachers, and more than 50% of the teachers are volunteer teachers for local foreign residents. This means that, for the last 15 years, even though there has been a shortage of Japanese language teachers, the number of full-time teachers has not increased.

There are many issues in teacher training, such as how the new classroom teachers can deal with the new national curricula for Japanese language teaching and how the teacher training institutions can also adapt their programs to the new curricula without adulterating its vigor and intensity. Japanese language teacher training is not finished by just completing the course work in a school and passing the JLTCT (Japanese Language Teaching Competency Test). Even after becoming a full-time teacher, one needs to constantly meet the requirements of Japanese language education and teaching methods.

But the most important problem is Japanese native speakers. They are not keen to promote the Japanese language and believe any Japanese can teach Japanese easily, so Japanese teachers cannot get a suitable social position in Japan at all.