

Session 3 (Thursday 19 October) "Improving Schools as Places for Teachers to Learn"

About promising and effective policies for improving teacher learning in Japan

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1. Are there some specific examples of the Japanese policies that will help participants understand why they were initiated and how they are working?

By a law enacted in 1949, every prefectures and designated cities have a responsibility in professional development of their teachers in public schools. They have established teacher training centers for this purpose. Each center has staffed with curriculum/teaching specialists and organized a wide range of training programs for teachers and administrators throughout the year. Schools can send their teachers to the center for their professional development and for the school benefit as a whole. Local municipalities have also staffed with curriculum/teaching specialists in their offices for assisting and improving their schools and teaching practices. National government can disseminate new educational policies through this system.

2. What do you think have been the most effective policies? How long have they been in place? Has any impact been tracked?

Since the end of 19th century, there has been a culture of lesson study. Some of national schools attached to universities have played important roles in experimenting, improving, and demonstrating the new teaching styles for other schools and teachers in the region. There are not only university attached schools but also many public schools around the nation where nearly a thousand of teachers come to see their curriculum and teaching, discuss and exchange ideas on the day of demonstration. I think supporting this kind of activities in local, regional, and national level has been the most effective policy. There is no tracking system, but such a large number of participants and a long lasting tradition endorse its effectiveness.

3. Is there any research we should be aware of – that has been done or is planned?

From the spring of 2007, all 6th and 9th graders - 2.4 million students - in all schools throughout the nation have to take a national test. Language and math achievements will be measured. This will be used partly for the purpose of school evaluation.

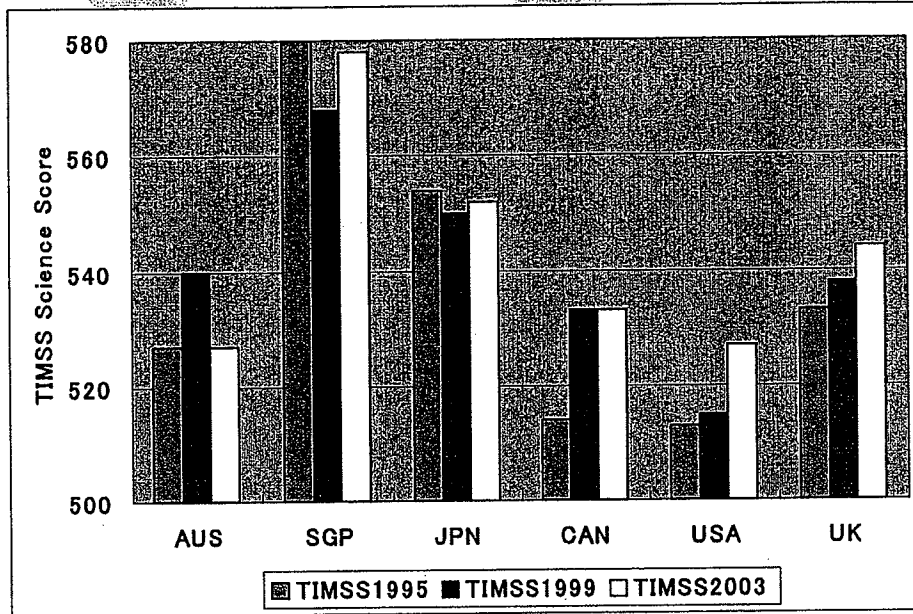
4. What do you find are the major barriers to improving teacher policies that lead to continuous improvement?

Pressure for the entrance examination on students and teachers from the society is the highest barrier.

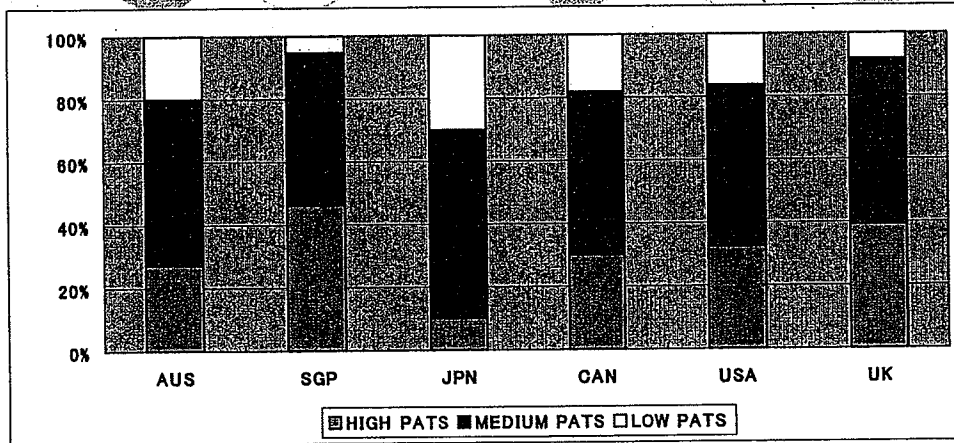
5. Where do you see the most promising opportunities for improvement?

Demonstrating schools as described above (#2). Such schools have a strong collaborative atmosphere among teachers for the improvement of their school as a whole. Individual teacher can not be isolated in the system.

Output: High level of test achievement (TIMSS 8th grade science scores in 1995, 1999 and 2003)



Output: Low level of positive attitudes (TIMSS 1999 8th grade)



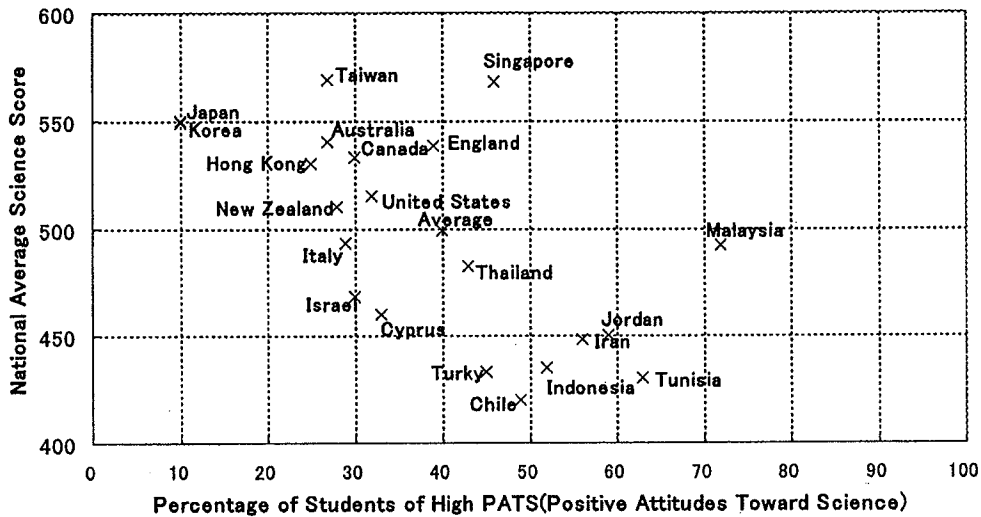
Index of Students' Positive Attitudes Towards the Sciences (PATS) TIMSS1999

Index based on students' responses to five statements about science: 1) I like science; 2) I enjoy learning science; 3) science is boring (reversed scale); 4) science is important to everyone's life; 5) I would like a job that involved using science.

Output: Unbalance between achievement and attitudes (TIMSS1999, 8th grade)

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Relationship between national average science score of 8th grade students and proportion of High PATS students in that population where science is taught as an integrated subject (based on IEA/TIMSS1999 result)



Opportunities to learn teaching in collaboration among teachers – lesson study

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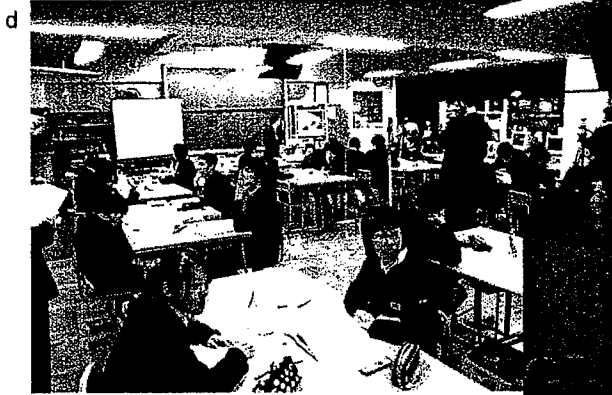
a. visit lessons of other teachers

b. discuss & exchange ideas

c. plan, do and improve lessons in a small group of teachers

Expanding opportunities to learn from other teachers – *lesson video study*

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d. Videotape lessons not as models to imitate but as resources for development

e. Watch lesson video, analyze, and discuss the points of the lesson



Top-to-down approach is not enough. Teachers need autonomy to change as lifelong learners.

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- "The American approach has been to write and distribute reform documents and ask teachers to implement the recommendations contained in such documents. --- this approach simply does not work." (Stigler & Hiebert, "The Teaching Gap", 1999, p.12)
- "Japan has succeeded in developing a system that not only develops teachers but also develops knowledge about teaching that is relevant to classrooms and sharable among the members of the teaching profession. --- Through the process of improving lessons and sharing with colleagues the knowledge they acquire, --- They begin viewing themselves as true professionals." (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 126)