

# In Japan Prospects for Introducing IBCTL at Graduate School of Teacher Education to Advance the Teaching Profession and Foster OECD Student Agency: Considerations for Curriculum Development and Syllabus Creation\*

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The purpose of this study is to gain perspectives on introducing IBCTL (International Baccalaureate Certificate in Teaching and Learning) into graduate school of teacher education in Japan, which are currently providing advanced teacher training programs aimed at cultivating student agency, a comprehensive set of skills necessary for children living in the future, as advocated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education 2030 Project. To achieve this goal, I examined the curriculum and structure that are important for IB teacher training and the introduction of IBCTL. I attempted to achieve this goal by examining the curriculum being developed at a graduate school of teacher education attempting to implement IBCTL and the creation of a syllabus based on that curriculum through lesson planning. As a result, I examined the curriculum and structure as a perspective for introducing IBCTL into graduate school of teacher education in Japan, where advanced teacher training is required. I found that a core curriculum and structure that incorporates the core of the IBCTL into the core of graduate school of teacher education programs is important for implementing an IB education that is aligned with the advancement of teacher training and the development of student agency.

*Keywords:* graduate school of education, IBCTL, OECD student agency, core curriculum, improving teacher training

## Purpose and Background

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a perspective on the introduction of the IBCTL (International Baccalaureate Certificate in Teaching and Learning) (Tokyo Gakugei University Graduate School of Education, 2025) that is IB Teacher Training Course into graduate school of teacher education, which is teacher training institutions established to advance the teaching profession in Japan.

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\* **Acknowledgments:** I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the many organizations and individuals involved who cooperated with this research.

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## Background

In recent years, Japan has seen a demand for more advanced teaching, and legislation has been put in place to support teacher training institutions, with graduate school of teacher education being established since 2008 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2025a). Furthermore, as of 2026, there is a need for a renewal of this level of education. Amidst changing social and historical circumstances, the government is considering restructuring teacher training, including the role of teachers, to enhance teacher expertise by incorporating an international perspective and a shift in views on teaching and learning. Japan is continuing to examine this issue from the perspective of the role and systems of teacher training institutions (Kimura, 2025). One direction for this restructuring is the development of the student agency (OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) student agency), as advocated by the OECD Education 2030 Project (hereinafter referred to as the OECD Project) (OECD, 2019)), a global trend, regarding children's views on learning. Japan is also aiming to achieve this goal. Student agency is defined as "the ability to set goals, reflect, and act responsibly to bring about change". It also implies "a sense of responsibility to influence people, things, and the environment for the better through social participation" (OECD, 2019). Fostering student agency in children has a strong influence on Japanese school education and is heavily reflected in the curriculum guidelines that form the foundation of school education (Shirai, 2020). In other words, when considering the advancement of the teaching profession, Japan needs teacher training that fosters student agency. Furthermore, IB education, one of the specific educational methods for fostering student agency, is flourishing in Japanese schools due to its affinity with this development. In order to promote IB education, in addition to increasing the number of schools offering IB curriculums, there is also a need to improve the training of school teachers who will carry out this education (Tsuboya, 2014). Meanwhile, in Japan, while the benefits of IB education have been recognized in light of the advancement of internationalization, recent educational policies at the primary and secondary levels have prioritized solutions to issues identified in immediate results from international academic achievement surveys of students, leaving little time for the institutional advancement of IB education (Sato, 2018). Partly as a result, there are few universities and graduate schools in Japan that offer IB Teacher Training Courses (IBCTL) at higher education institutions (Eriguchi, 2022). Going forward, to advance the teaching profession in Japan, we hope to see an expansion of IB teacher training programs and the associated institutional aspects, such as the introduction of IB Teacher Training Courses (IBCTL). Therefore, this paper examines the curriculum and structure that are important for the introduction of IB teacher training and IBCTL. The purpose of this paper is to achieve the above objectives through a consideration of the curriculum being developed for the introduction of IB teacher training (IBCTL) at a certain graduate school of teacher education, and the creation of a syllabus based on that curriculum through lesson planning.

## Previous Research and Discussion

This chapter introduces four content areas that form the basis of the structure of the curriculum (IBCTL curriculum) being developed at a certain graduate school of education to introduce the IB Teacher Training Course (IBCTL) (hereinafter referred to as IBCTL). Furthermore, within this introduction, we identify the elements that are considered to be incorporated into the development of the IBCTL curriculum.

### What Is Graduate School of Teacher Education System in Japan?

**Graduate school of teacher education system in Japan.** In recent years, with the changes in society brought about by globalization and information technology since the end of the 20th century, there has been a

push to improve the level of teaching in Japanese schools. In 2006, the Central Council for Education (hereafter referred to as CEC) recommended the establishment of graduate school of teacher education as a central focus for training highly skilled professionals in its report, “On the Future of Teacher Training and Certification Systems” (Central Council for Education, 2006). The core concept of this training is “bridging theory and practice”. The 2006 CEC report, mentioned above, used the phrase “integrating theory and practice” to propose the enhancement of university teacher training programs and the establishment of a graduate school system for teaching. The 2012 CEC report, “Measures for Comprehensively Improving the Qualifications and Abilities of Teachers Throughout Their Professional Lives” (Central Council for Education, 2012), adopted the phrase “bridging theory and practice” (sometimes referred to as “bridge between theory and practice”), based on a similar awareness of the issue. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s emphasis on the “cross-pollination between theory and practice” recommended by the Central Council for Education is seen as one way to achieve high-quality education that can address the diverse challenges facing modern education. The Central Council for Education’s 2012 report continued to emphasize this cross-pollination in its efforts to improve teacher competence and the quality of education, placing it at the center of the curriculum, particularly in the graduate school system. Since the graduate school system was established in 2007, the “cross-pollination between theory and practice” has been at the core of the graduate school system and positioned at the center of the curriculum. The goal is to link actual school experience with theory and create “practical knowledge” that contributes to solving specific problems and improving the quality of education. Furthermore, this cross-pollination is expected to foster practical skills among teachers, enhancing their “ability to understand and guide children” and “ability to plan and develop lessons”. On December 25, 2024, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) submitted two consultations to the Central Council for Education: “Regarding the State of Curriculum Standards in Primary and Secondary Education” (hereafter referred to as the “next revised curriculum guidelines”) (Central Council for Education, 2024a) and “Regarding Measures to Accelerate the Formation of a High-Quality Teaching Staff With Diverse Expertise” (hereafter referred to as the “formation of a high-quality teaching staff”) (Central Council for Education, 2024b). While it goes without saying that the content discussed in the “next revised curriculum guidelines” will be used as a learning subject at graduate school of teacher education to advance the teaching profession, it is also important for teachers to embody the intent of the revisions in their own schools. In other words, it goes without saying that graduate school of teacher education, which focus on learning through the “crosstalk between theory and practice”, will play a leading role in ensuring that teachers who complete graduate school of teacher education understand the intent and then put it into practice in their own schools.

**Graduate school of teacher education curriculum in Japan.** Figure 1 on the right succinctly illustrates the current curriculum of graduate school of teacher education in Japan. The five areas of the “common subjects (foundation subjects) portion” in the center of Figure 1 are combined with the “school-based training” at the bottom of Figure 1 to create the curriculum of graduate school of teacher education, as described above, as a “back and forth between theory and practice”. In other words, when considering the structure of the curriculum of graduate school of teacher education, the “common subjects (foundation subjects) portion” is the basis, combining these practices with “school-based training”, and then the “elective courses” at the top of Figure 1 are set up on top of that. If we were to explore the core elements of IBCTL in the teacher training programs of graduate school of teacher education that this study seeks from this structure of the curriculum of graduate school of teacher education, we could say that it is the “common subjects (foundation subjects) portion” in the center of Figure 1.



Figure 1. Structure of the curriculum at Japanese graduate school of teacher education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2025a).

Common Subjects (Foundational Subjects) Section (Notification 5 Areas):

- Areas related to curriculum organization and implementation;
- Areas related to practical teaching methods for subjects, etc.;
- Areas related to student guidance and educational counseling;
- Areas related to classroom management and school management;
- Areas related to school education and teacher roles.

### What Is OECD Student Agency?

**Student agency and their development.** The OECD Education 2030 Project presents a learning framework called the Learning Compass, and its central concept is the word “student agency”, which expresses the skills children need for their future. Student agency is defined as “the ability to set goals, reflect, and act responsibly to create change” (OECD, 2019). The metaphor of the Learning Compass (see Figure 2) emphasizes the need for children to navigate unfamiliar environments independently and find their way in meaningful and responsible ways, rather than simply accepting the routine guidance and instructions of teachers and others. The concept of student agency is closely related to the Learning Compass, and the OECD (2019) uses a picture of a student holding a Learning Compass (bottom left of Figure 2) to represent children using a sense of purpose, taking personal responsibility, and learning to improve the people, events, and situations around them. Student agency does not mean student autonomy or student choice; rather, it is something that people learn, develop, and exercise within a social context. For this reason, OECD (2019) uses illustrations to depict students surrounded by peers, teachers, family, and community, who interact with and guide children toward well-being (Figure 2). This is the concept of shared student agency.



Figure 2. Learning Compass (OECD, 2019).

Furthermore, OECD (2019) emphasizes that research findings show that for all learners to exercise student agency and progress toward realizing their potential, they must have a core foundation of learning. These core foundations of learning refer to “the fundamental conditions and key knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for learning across the school curriculum”. Using the concept of competencies, OECD argues that competencies can be developed based on these core foundations of learning. Competencies are a comprehensive concept that includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, and the OECD Future of Education and Skills.

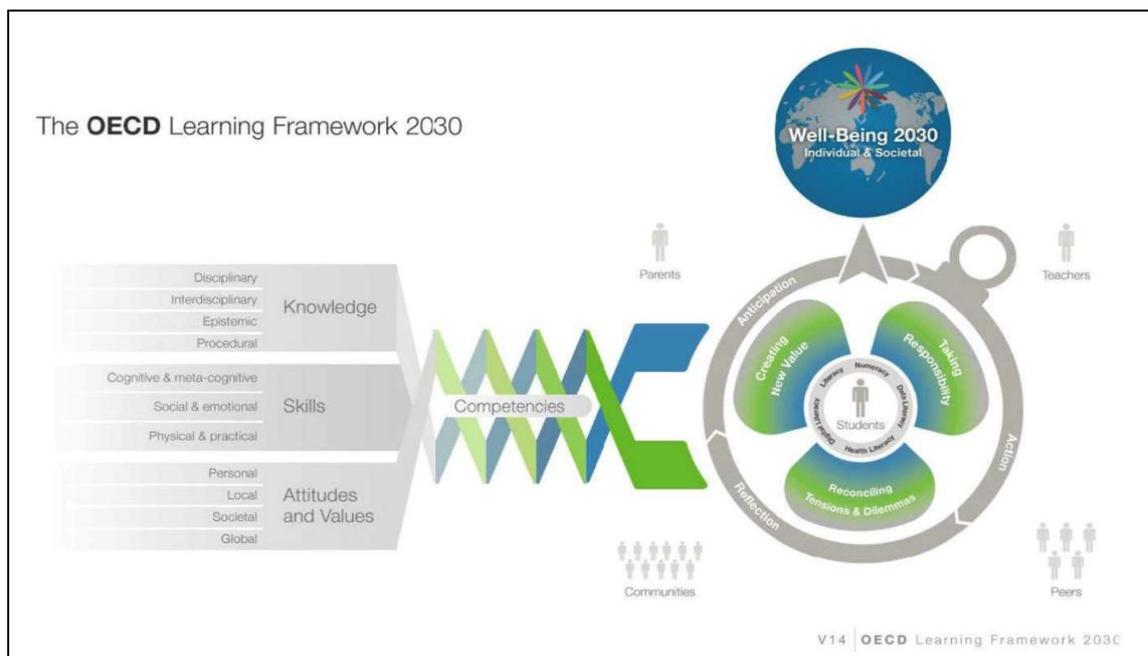


Figure 3. Transformative competencies (OECD, 2019).

2030 project views competencies as more than just “skills”. Skills are a prerequisite for demonstrating competencies, and it is pointed out that to be prepared and able to thrive in 2030, students need to be able to use their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values responsibly and coherently to change the future for the better.

OECD (2019) points out that student agency functions as the foundation of the competencies students need to shape their future. Student agency can be demonstrated in all contexts of life, including moral, social, economic, and creative. Therefore, in this section, we will attempt to understand student agency from the perspective of competencies and will introduce the core competencies below.

The OECD project redefines the competencies required to meet the needs of modern society as “competencies with the power to bring about change” into the following three categories. Student agency is positioned as the foundation of these three competencies (Figure 3).

### **What Is an IB Education?**

The reason why IB education has flourished in Japan as one way of fostering the student agency necessary for children is that it aligns with the international trend of fostering the student agency that we hope children acquire. This aligns with the IB’s philosophy of “providing an education that equips students with the skills and dispositions necessary to act responsibly” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019). Furthermore, the IB’s goal is a broad, balanced, conceptual, and connected curriculum based on the following three principles:

**IB learner profile (10 personalities).** Inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

**Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL): Learning how to learn.** Inquiry-based instruction, instruction focused on conceptual understanding, instruction that reflects local and global contexts, instruction that emphasizes effective teamwork and collaboration, instruction that removes barriers to learning, and instruction that incorporates assessment thinking skills, research skills, communication skills, social skills, and self-management skills.

**International-mindedness.** Having an international perspective that recognizes our shared humanity and our shared responsibility to protect the Earth.

I believe it is appropriate to take the above three elements, which are the principles of IB education, as the three elements necessary for an IBCTL curriculum based on an interconnected curriculum. This is because I believe it is essential to create an IBCTL curriculum based on what is being taught to children, how it is being taught, and how children are learning, in other words, based on the principles of IB education.

### **What Is an IBCTL?**

Figure 4 below shows the basic structure that forms the basis of the IBCTL curriculum at a graduate school in Japan that has introduced IBCTL.

Based on Figure 4, it seems reasonable to identify the necessary elements for a graduate IBCTL curriculum, starting with the principles shown on the left.

Principles:

- Effective Teaching and Learning;
- Collaboration and Collegiality;
- Innovation and Risk-Taking;
- International Perspective and Cultural Understanding.

I believe that a curriculum that fosters these four elements in an integrated manner through inquiry, activity, and reflection will be necessary for IBCTL advanced teacher training.

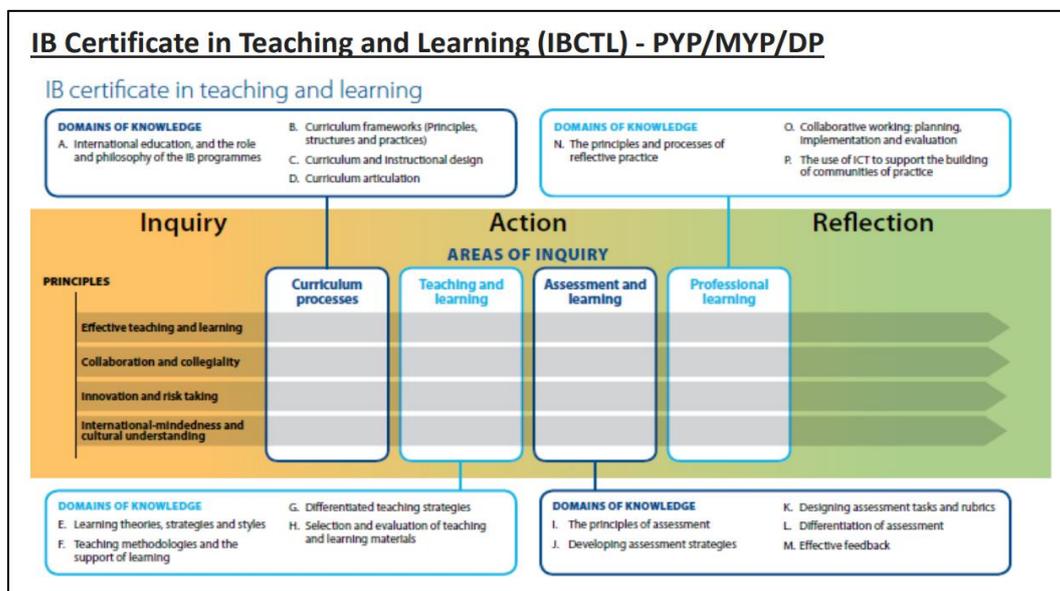


Figure 4. From “International Baccalaureate Teacher Certification at the University of Tsukuba” (University of Tsukuba, 2021).

### Considerations for Curriculum Development and Syllabus Creation

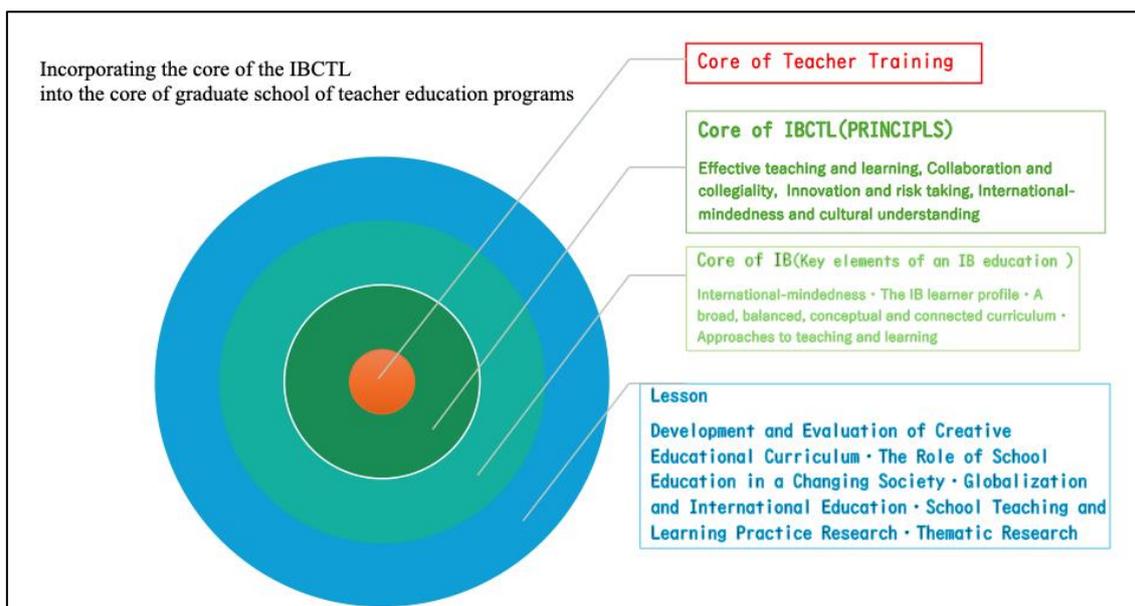


Figure 5. Incorporating the core of the IBCTL into the core of graduate school of teacher education programs.

In this chapter, I will present the curriculum developed from the discussions in the previous chapter and the syllabus created based on it, and attempt to gain a perspective for its introduction by examining the aspects of each curriculum that have been devised to introduce IBCTL, as well as the lesson plans.

### Curriculum Development and Considerations

Figure 6 below shows a curriculum structured and developed at a graduate school of teacher education. What’s notable about this curriculum development is that it incorporates elements of IB education and establishes the entire curriculum as a core curriculum, incorporating interrelated elements. Furthermore, the core of the

graduate school’s teacher training is designed to encompass IBCTL, with IBCTL principles surrounding the central core. Furthermore, Figure 6 shows that specific courses are arranged to encourage students to explore the core, while also allowing them to explore, engage in, and reflect on the central elements and principles that guide their exploration. In other words, the core curriculum shown in Figure 6 can be described as a curriculum that smoothly advances a graduate school of teacher education by incorporating IBCTL principles. This is the pattern shown in Figure 7 below University D. Other patterns are also shown in Figure 7 for comparison.

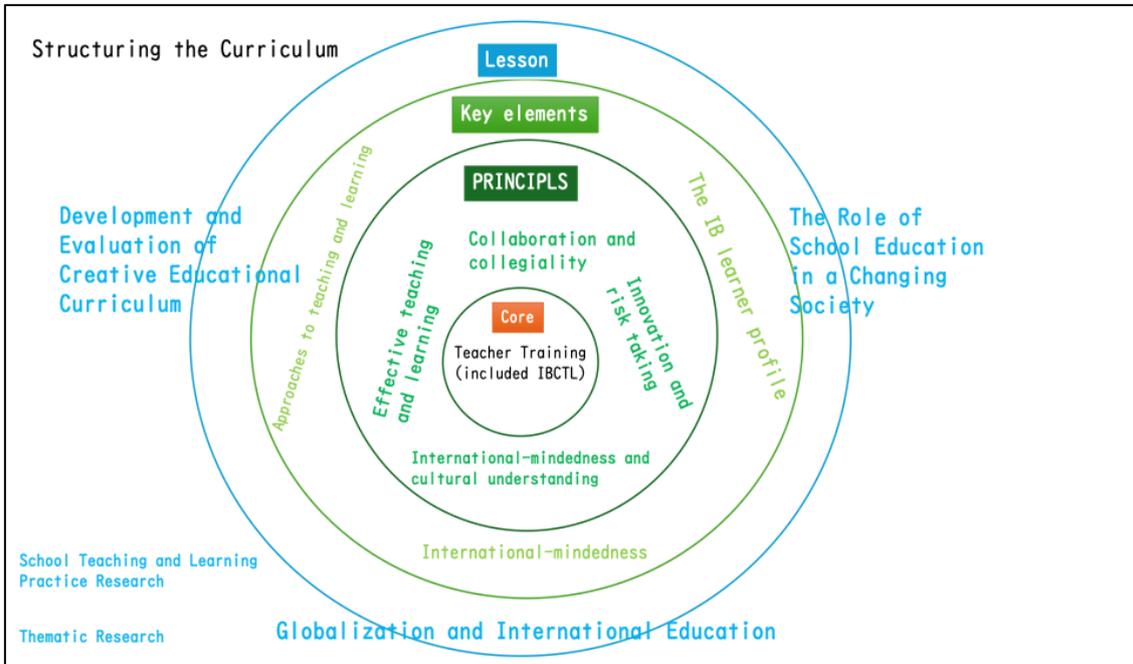


Figure 6. Structuring the curriculum.

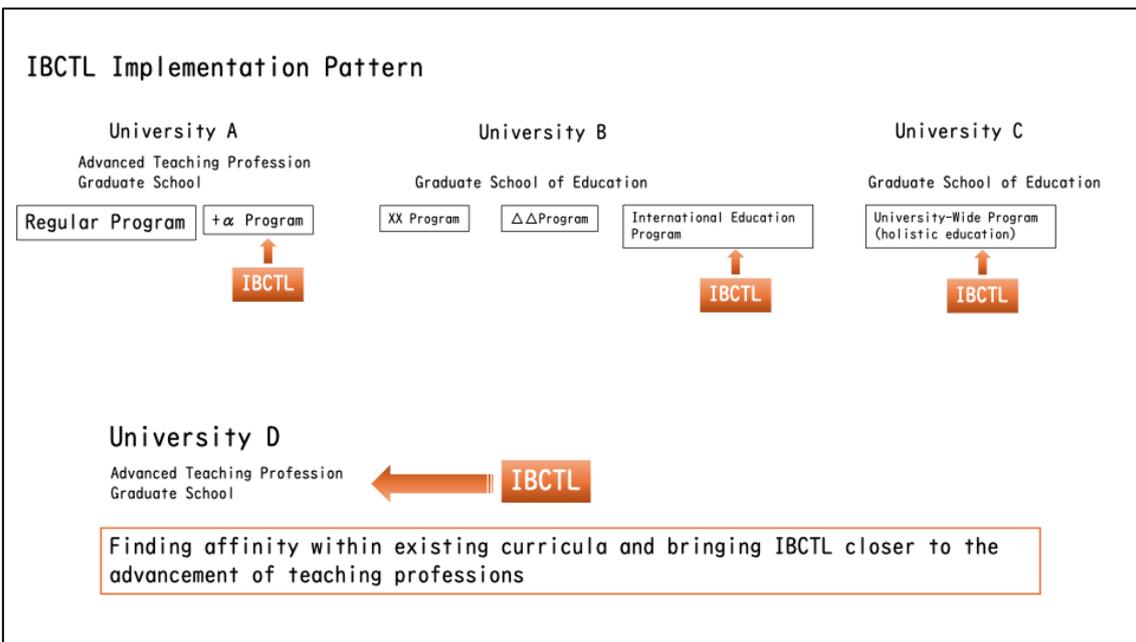


Figure 7. Patterns of IBCTL implementation in teacher training programs.

Furthermore, it is difficult to explain the interrelated curriculum that incorporates elements of IB education, which is a feature of the core curriculum being developed, using Figure 6 as it is. Therefore, I will next explain the structure of the core curriculum by providing an example outline in Figure 8 below.

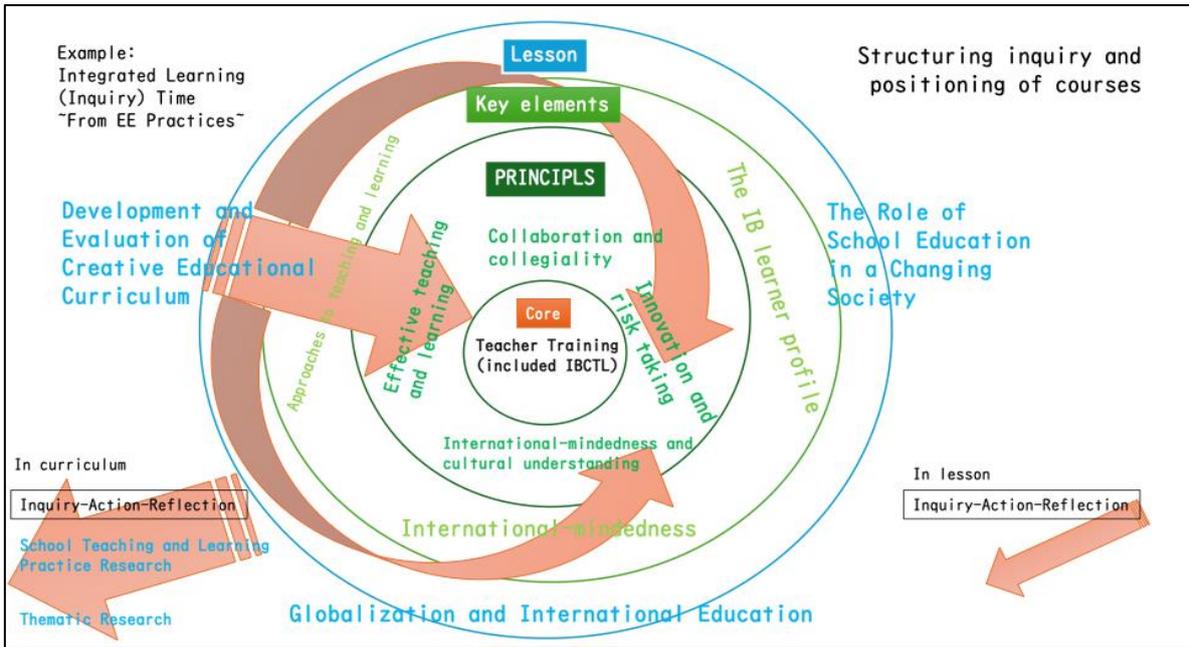


Figure 8. An interrelated core curriculum incorporating elements of an IB education and principles of IBCTL.

I will first use the example of the lesson subject “Development and Evaluation of Creative Educational Curriculum” to explain the curriculum and classroom practice of “Integrated Learning (Inquiry) Period”, which has been implemented in Japanese primary and secondary education for approximately 30 years. In “Integrated Learning (Inquiry) Period”, which is incorporated into the school curriculum for Japanese primary and secondary education, lessons are expected to develop in which students independently and collaboratively explore, engage in, and reflect on a theme that cuts across subject areas. Figure 8 shows a specific example of a lesson program called Entrepreneurship Education (EE). In Japan, EE is being used to foster the aforementioned student agency at the primary and secondary education levels (Shigeno, 2024). In Figure 8, students can start their research by exploring “effective teaching and learning”. They can explore the flexible curriculum structure of the Japanese school curriculum, which focuses students’ learning by allocating afternoons for “integrated learning (inquiry) time”, as a trend in the next Japanese curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2025b). This approach also allows for exploration of teacher guidance and student learning. This perspective can be further linked to the perspective of “collaboration and collegiality”. Specifically, this involves collegiality through learning, such as collaboration with entrepreneurs, teacher-to-teacher classroom practice, and joint workshops between teachers and entrepreneurs to improve curriculum and lessons. Finally, students can explore and realize the ideal student profile for EE, including teachers’ challenging attitudes and resilience, as well as planning and management, including negative capabilities and consensus building in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world. Furthermore, from the perspective of “international-mindedness and cultural understanding” students can broaden their horizons to include cultural comparisons with Japan and other countries, and inclusion of diversity, all of which broaden the scope of their learning.

In the above example, the inquiring around the core begins with “effective teaching and learning”, and then moves clockwise to “collaboration and collegiality”, “innovation and risk-taking”, and “international-mindedness and cultural understanding”. However, students can begin anywhere, and by linking these inquiring and progressing through action and reflection, they can move closer to the core (Figure 8, bottom right). Furthermore, the learning gained from this class can be used in school practicums and project research, where students are provided with a comprehensive core curriculum that involves large-scale Inquiry-Action-Reflection across the entire curriculum (Figure 8, bottom left).

### Syllabus Creation and Consideration

In this section, I will present and discuss the creation of a syllabus based on the core curriculum described in the previous section (Figure 9).

Example of creating a syllabus (A total of 15 lessons)		Development and Evaluation of Creative Educational Curriculum (B) For Teacher Student Courses
1	(A)(B)	Introduction and unique curriculum A Historical and Cultural Study of the Japanese Educational Curriculum (Based on Students' Personal Accounts of the Changes in the Course of Study)
2	joint	
3		Consideration of the outlook and issues for the educational curriculum at the school where you work (practical training school)
4		
5		Considerations and Reflections on the Unique Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning (From the Perspective of Steiner Education and IB)
6		Consideration of Japan's school evaluation system in the international community (Comparing historical, social and policy changes between Japan and the UK)
7		Consideration of trends in curriculum development and evaluation in the international community (focusing on the core curriculum, parents, and policymakers)
8		Considerations on learner-centered alternative education and curriculum/lessons (focusing on special curriculum schools, local school-family collaboration)
9		Consideration of curriculum, teaching and learning, and teacher's position in OECD agency (competency) development (from the perspective of OECD/TALS, EE, and multicultural coexistence)
10		Preparing for the creation of a creative curriculum (based on student explanations of trends in the next curriculum guidelines (conceptual knowledge, curriculum flexibility, teacher collegiality and work style))
11		Preparing for a presentation on creative curriculum development (through collaborative activities by each group)
12		Presentation and reflection on creative curriculum creation (from each group's presentation and overall reflection)
13	(A)(B)	Presentation and Reflection on Creative Curriculum ((B) From Student Teachers)
14	joint	
15		Considerations for the future outlook for educational curricula (from the perspectives of local and global, uncertainty and decision-making, etc.)

In syllabus  
Inquiry-Action-Reflection

Inquiry-Action-Reflection

(A) Straight students: Students who entered a graduate school of education immediately after graduating from an undergraduate program

(B) Student teachers: Students who enroll in a graduate school of education while still working as school teachers.

Figure 9. Example of creating a syllabus.

The syllabus in Figure 9 can be said to have been created for the course “Development and Evaluation of Creative Educational Curriculum((B) For Teacher Student Courses)” with a lesson plan that allows students to learn by linking inquiry, beginning with “effective teaching and learning”, to “collaboration and collegiality”, “innovation and risk-taking”, and “international-mindedness and cultural understanding”. What’s particularly noteworthy about this syllabus is that it also incorporates an Inquiry-Action-Reflection structure. This structure allows students to approach the core of teacher training at graduate school of teacher education, including the IBCTL mentioned above.

### Summary: Perspectives on Introducing IBCTL Into Graduate School of Teacher Education in Japan

The purpose of this study was to gain perspectives on introducing the IBCTL (International Baccalaureate Certificate in Teaching and Learning) that is IB Teacher Training Course into graduate school of teacher education in Japan, which are institutions that train teachers to advance the teaching profession and foster student agency, a comprehensive set of skills necessary for children living in the future, as advocated by the OECD

Education 2030 Project. This paper examines the curriculum and structure that are important for IB teacher training and the introduction of IBCTL. The study aims to achieve its objectives by examining the curriculum being developed at a graduate school of teacher education attempting to introduce IBCTL and the creation of a syllabus based on that curriculum through lesson planning.

As a result, by examining the curriculum and structure as a perspective for introducing IBCTL at graduate school of teacher education in Japan, where the advancement of teacher training is required, it was found that a core curriculum and structure that incorporates the core of the IBCTL into the core of the teacher training program at graduate school of teacher education is important for providing an IB education that advances teacher training and fosters student agency.

The reason for this importance is that the introduction of the IBCTL curriculum suggests that it could facilitate the advancement of teacher preparation in Japan. The reason why this advancement would be possible is that the advancement of teacher preparation in Japan requires teacher preparation that fosters the student agency necessary for the development of learners. The development of this student agency is in line with the requirements of IB education. In other words, incorporating the IBCTL core into graduate school teacher preparation programs would result in a teacher preparation curriculum that fosters the student agency necessary for children.

The results of this study demonstrate that incorporating the IBCTL core into school education would result in a core curriculum that not only fosters the IB educational philosophy in students, but also enables teacher preparation that promotes the advancement of the teaching profession. In other words, the core curriculum developed as an example in this study is a structure that makes it possible to incorporate the elements and principles necessary for the development of IB education and the teacher preparation programs that it fosters. The results also demonstrated the feasibility of incorporating the IBCTL core into the core of advanced teacher training at graduate school of teacher education.

Similar to the curriculum guidelines that form the basis for student learning in advanced teacher training curricula at Japanese graduate school of teacher education, creating a core curriculum that centers around the IBCTL core and incorporates the fundamental elements of IB education could contribute to IB education and fostering student agency. This is because the core curriculum structure, incorporating the core, interconnects IBCTL principles and the central conceptual elements of IB education in advanced teacher training programs. It also demonstrates the potential for students to acquire IBCTL principles through a spiral learning methodology of inquiry, action, and reflection. Furthermore, the consideration of lesson plans for creating syllabuses based on the core curriculum developed in this study suggests the potential for this spiral learning method to function in advancing student teacher training at large, medium, and small scales, whether it be the overall curriculum, within a syllabus, or within a single class.

Based on the above, the introduction of IBCTL into graduate school of teacher education is expected to improve the curriculum and enhance the level of education at graduate school of teacher education in Japan. Meanwhile, this study aims to structure a core curriculum that incorporates the IBCTL core into the core of the current advanced teacher training at graduate school of teacher education. It is hoped that other curriculum structures will be considered based on the curriculum design of this study. Furthermore, future research questions, based on the results of this study, include what students who study through the core curriculum described above will learn and what practices they will implement as teachers. Furthermore, I look forward to further practical research into how teachers' behavior in schools affects students' learning.

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