

# ***Comparative Analysis of Kindergarten Teacher Induction Training Policies in Japan and China***

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**Abstract.** Since 2000, the increasing international focus on early childhood education has coincided with a significant rise in newly appointed kindergarten teachers in both Japan and China. These novice educators, though entering the profession with great enthusiasm, often experience challenges in adapting to real classroom environments. This transitional phase underscores the necessity of structured induction training to support their shift from “learners of education” to “practitioners of education.” This paper conducts a comparative analysis of the legal and policy frameworks governing the induction training of kindergarten teachers in Japan and China, with particular attention to their core national-level training guidelines. The study identifies three key commonalities: authoritative policy support, comprehensive training content, and a shared commitment to improving educational equity through governmental involvement. However, it also highlights significant differences. Japan legally institutionalized induction training earlier and provides broader coverage through both public and private channels, though its national guideline has seen limited updates in recent decades. In contrast, China has recently moved toward legal formalization but still lacks clearly defined mandates for novice kindergarten teachers, particularly in private kindergartens. Drawing on these findings, the study recommends that Japan revise its national training framework to incorporate emerging competencies, such as ICT and inclusive education, while enhancing evaluation mechanisms. For China, it suggests establishing legal definitions for novice teacher training, decentralizing policy implementation, and promoting more flexible, needs-based training models to reduce teacher burden and improve practical outcomes.

**Keywords:** Novice Kindergarten Teachers, Japan, China, Comparative Study, Teacher Training

## **1. Introduction**

High-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) plays a foundational role in promoting children’s development and social progress [1]. This view is not only supported by international organizations but also widely recognized by both the Japanese and Chinese governments [2][3]. As the core of ECEC, kindergarten teachers must possess strong professional competencies to ensure educational quality [4].

According to official statistics, the number of kindergarten teachers in Japan increased from 106,703 in 2001 to 192,169 in 2022, and in China from 546,200 to 3,123,018—an increase of 80% and 83%, respectively. These figures suggest a substantial annual intake of novice teachers in both countries. Entering the profession with enthusiasm and hope, novice teachers are at a crucial stage in their careers, where effective training plays a pivotal role in shaping their professional identity and long-term development [5][6].

However, many new teachers struggle to adapt to real-world classroom environments. Research highlights a significant gap between pre-service training and actual teaching responsibilities, often leading to early attrition [7]. Common challenges include low confidence, anxiety about child safety, weak professional identity, and limited practical skills [8][9].

Although Japan and China have introduced support measures for novice teachers, challenges persist. In Japan, while structured in-school and external training systems exist, access is sometimes hindered by time constraints or limited peer collaboration opportunities [7][10]. In China, public kindergarten teachers typically receive more training than those in private institutions, and needs assessments are often inadequate [11].

Policies for novice teacher training serve as the foundation and guarantee for the effective implementation of induction programs. In light of the current challenges, it is worth examining whether the existing policies in Japan and China can truly support novice kindergarten teachers in navigating psychological and environmental transitions. Furthermore, how have these policies evolved in response to changing social conditions, and to what extent have they been improved? This study focuses on the legal frameworks and key national policy documents concerning the induction of kindergarten teachers in both countries. Through a comparative analysis, it aims to clarify their respective strengths and weaknesses and to offer insights for future policy refinement..

## **2. Methodology**

This study selects key legal and policy documents from Japan and China related to the induction training of novice kindergarten teachers. A qualitative content analysis method is employed to systematically analyze, examine, and compare the evolution and characteristics of the induction training systems in both countries. The primary policy documents analyzed include Japan's 2004 revised version of *Together with New Teachers* (MEXT Model for Training Newly Appointed Kindergarten Teachers) and China's *Implementation Guidelines for the Standardized Training of Newly Appointed Kindergarten Teachers*.

## **3. Evolution of induction training for kindergarten teachers**

### **3.1. Changes in laws and policies on induction training for kindergarten teachers in Japan**

Since the enactment of the Special Act for Education Personnel in 1949, Japan has legally guaranteed the rights of teachers to receive professional training. In 1988, a revision to the law mandated one year of practical training for newly appointed teachers, including those in kindergartens and certified centers for early childhood education and care. In 1992, temporary kindergarten teachers were also included as eligible trainees.

Building upon this legal foundation, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) issued the guide *Together with New Teachers* in 1998, which was later revised in 2004. This policy document outlines the objectives, content, and structure of induction training, contributing to the development of a more systematic and coherent training framework.

Subsequently, the 2006 Early Childhood Education Promotion Action Plan emphasized the inclusion of private kindergarten teachers in such initiatives.

In 2020, MEXT issued an interim report stressing the need for a comprehensive training system spanning different career stages. In 2022, further revisions to the Special Act for Education Personnel introduced indicators for improving competencies of public-school principals and teachers, identifying five key areas including ICT use and special needs support. Japan's induction training is entering a new phase of multi-tiered development.

### **3.2. Changes in laws and policies on induction training for kindergarten teachers in China**

Since the 1990s, China has progressively advanced from policy-led initiatives to the legal institutionalization of continuing teacher education. The 1993 Teachers Law formally established teachers' rights and responsibilities for professional training, laying the legal foundation for early childhood educators. This was reinforced by the 1999 Regulations on Continuing Education for Primary and Secondary School Teachers, which mandated at least 120 hours of training for newly appointed teachers, including kindergarten teachers.

In 2002, the Private Education Promotion Law extended training obligations to private-sector teachers, promoting their integration into national development systems. Momentum increased in 2010 with the National Education Reform and Development Plan (2010–2020) and the State Council's Opinions on the Development of Preschool Education, which introduced innovative training models and large-scale programs for principals and lead teachers.

A major shift occurred in 2018 with the Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Teaching Profession and the Teacher Education Revitalization Action Plan, which emphasized digital integration, structured induction systems, and broader training coverage. By 2019, training programs had become more diverse and content rich.

This policy trajectory culminated in the 2020 Implementation Guide for the Standardized Training of Newly Recruited Kindergarten Teachers, which clarified objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. Finally, the 2024 Preschool Education Law institutionalized the framework by mandating systematic, role-specific training, marking the transition from policy guidance to a legally guaranteed professional development system.

### **3.3. Comparison of relevant policies between Japan and China**

Both Japan and China emphasize the role of induction training in improving education quality and equity. However, they differ in legal frameworks, implementation structures, and the institutionalization of training for new kindergarten teachers.

First, in terms of legal foundations, both countries mandate continuous professional development. Japan's 1949 Special Act on Education Personnel, revised in 1988 and 1992, introduced a mandatory one-year induction training for new teachers, including those in kindergartens, and clarified administrative responsibilities. These developments led to the issuance of *With New Teachers*, which provided systematic guidance on training content and methods. In contrast, China's 1993 Teachers Law offers a general legal basis for training but lacks detailed provisions or enforceable mandates specific to induction, signaling a slower legal institutionalization.

Second, in terms of policy development, both countries followed legal enactments with supportive policies. Japan established detailed training systems encompassing both public and private teachers, including temporary staff. China began emphasizing induction in 1999 through the Regulations on Continuing Education for Primary and Secondary School Teachers, but it wasn't

until the 2018 Teacher Education Revitalization Action Plan that integrated induction programs were prioritized. In practice, China has focused on addressing disparities in rural and under-resourced regions, leaving formal induction training for kindergarten teachers underdeveloped.

Third, regarding system development, Japan has a well-established continuum covering induction, mid-career, and leadership training. It emphasizes early-career support and reflective growth. China's system began as remedial support but is gradually evolving. The 2020 Implementation Guidelines for the Standardized Training of Newly Appointed Kindergarten Teachers and the 2024 Preschool Education Law signal progress toward institutionalizing induction training, though specific implementation for new teachers remains vague.

In sum, Japan has built a mature, law-integrated training system with early institutionalization and wide coverage. China is moving from policy-led experimentation toward legal consolidation, with a focus on educational equity. Understanding how these frameworks operate in practice requires closer examination of their core policy documents.

#### **4. Comparison of induction training policy documents**

Currently, the key policy documents guiding kindergarten teacher induction are Japan's Together with New Teachers (MEXT model) and China's Implementation Guide for the Standardized Training of Newly Recruited Kindergarten Teachers. This section compares them in terms of goals, structure, content, and evaluation mechanisms.

##### **4.1. Comparison of relevant policies between Japan and China**

In Japan, induction training is led by prefectural and designated city education boards. It aims to develop practical teaching abilities, a sense of mission, and broader pedagogical understanding. The program includes 10 days of in-school and 10 days of off-site training annually, with a 5-day residential component. The curriculum is organized into four core domains.

In China, the program is provincially designed, municipally coordinated, and implemented by county-level authorities. It spans a full year, beginning with a two-week pre-service intensive, followed by semester-based base and school-based training, and ending with a third intensive phase in the second year. Content is divided into four modules across 18 topics.

The specific details are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Comparison of Policy Contents between Japan and China.

Category	Japan	China
Policy & Legal Basis	With New Teachers (2004); Special Act for Education Personnel	Training Guidelines (2020); Teachers Law of the PRC
Objectives & Duration	Develop practical skills, mission awareness; 1 year (20 days total)	Enhance qualification and competence; 1 year (≥6 weeks)
Governance & Planning	Led by prefectural/city boards; plans set locally with stakeholder input	Guided by provinces; plans co-developed with universities/training centers
Implementation & Participants	Conducted at training centers and home kindergartens; new public/private teachers	Delivered at local institutes, base schools, and home schools; all new hires
Training Methods & Content	Off-site workshops and in-school practice (10 days each); focus on literacy, classroom, curriculum, and child development	Three-phase model (centralized, base, in-school); covers ethics, teaching, child support, and development
Evaluation & Support	Evaluation not specified; partial access to manuals and videos	Multi-dimensional evaluation; access to official documents and video materials
Funding	Not clearly stated	Publicly budgeted across all government levels

Source: Compiled by the author based on Together with New Teachers (Japan) [6] and the Implementation Guide for the Standardized Training of Newly Recruited Kindergarten Teachers (China) [12].

Table 2. Comparison of Specific Training Contents.

Training Module	Japan	China
Professional Ethics & Foundational Beliefs	Service mindset, ethics, inclusion, local context, management understanding	Ethics, role models, traditional culture, codes of conduct
Classroom Management & Professional Growth	Class management, parent communication, internal research, career planning, reflective learning	Home-school collaboration, career planning, lifelong learning, research ability
Curriculum & Instructional Practice	Goal setting, activity planning, teaching tools use, environment design, care observation	Activity planning, play and daily routine, care reflection, collaboration
Child Understanding & Support	Development observation, behavioral support, documentation, primary school transition	Child differences and behavior support, developmental assessment, applying research

Source: Compiled by the author based on Together with New Teachers (Japan) [6] and the Implementation Guide for the Standardized Training of Newly Recruited Kindergarten Teachers (China) [12].

## 4.2. Key commonalities

Both Japan and China's induction training policies are issued by national education authorities and legally mandated, ensuring training quality and educational equity. Each emphasizes practical competencies through a combination of in-school and off-site training, with content covering professional ethics, classroom practice, and child development. Both also support teacher growth through career development and reflection components. While China explicitly includes training costs in education budgets, Japan provides indirect financial support through the 2017 Child and

Childcare Support System, offering monthly subsidies to promote skill development [13]. These frameworks help standardize training nationwide and reduce disparities across regions.

### 4.3. Key differences

Japan introduced induction training earlier and offers a more structured framework, but its core policy has not been updated in over two decades and lacks content on ICT or AI education. China's newer policy includes career planning and lifelong learning but is less explicit regarding the inclusion of private school teachers. Governance also differs: Japan promotes central-local collaboration, allowing for more responsive planning, while China's top-down model may limit local flexibility. Training content diverges—Japan focuses on situational application, whereas China emphasizes ethics and cultural knowledge. Evaluation systems also differ: China employs a multi-dimensional approach, while Japan's assessment framework remains limited and underdeveloped.

### 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the emphasis both Japan and China place on early childhood education and the induction training of kindergarten teachers. Despite progress, challenges remain.

For Japan, evolving social demands necessitate policy updates. The Ministry of Education should revise the outdated core training document to include ICT and AI applications and develop clearer evaluation criteria, potentially borrowing from China's multi-layered approach.

For China, legal formalization is key. Legislation should clearly define the identity and rights of new kindergarten teachers, establish mandatory training timelines, and specify enforcement mechanisms to boost participation and compliance. Local governments should be granted more autonomy to design contextually relevant training programs.

Finally, both countries face logistical challenges. The 2018 OECD survey highlighted scheduling conflicts and staff shortages as key barriers to participation in Japan—issues also present in China [14]. Adapting training formats, such as integrating sessions into working hours or offering flexible modules, may help reduce burdens and improve engagement.

In conclusion, by refining laws, updating policies, modernizing content, and optimizing delivery and evaluation, Japan and China can further strengthen induction systems for kindergarten teachers and enhance the overall quality of early childhood education.

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