



## 20<sup>TH</sup> OECD-JAPAN SEMINAR

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### Outline of the talk

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- International trends in curriculum reforms
- The Japanese context
- Making the curriculum reform happen



## INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN CURRICULUM REFORMS



### International Curriculum Context

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After a period in which the prime focus of education policy has been to improve the effectiveness of schools against generally well-established curriculum frameworks, countries around the world are now posing more fundamental questions about the purposes of school education, against the background of our increasingly complex and fast-changing world.

Education policy is increasingly being shaped by developments in the wider environment: the impact of globalisation, involving the complex interaction of greater interdependence and increased competition; equally complex patterns of migration; and technological developments in computerisation, robotics and artificial intelligence.



## International Curriculum Context

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“...no education system can remain static. The world is changing rapidly, technology is transforming our lives. **The skills needed in the future will be very different from those needed today.** Education offers each individual and nation the best chance of navigating an unknown future – coping with uncertainty, adapting to evolving conditions and learning how to learn.”

Lee Hsein Loong,  
Prime Minister of Singapore 2012  
(Oceans of Innovation, IPPR 2012)



## 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

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### Importance of

- connected, coherent and authentic knowledge
- deeper conceptual understanding
- strong basic skills
- applied learning –critical thinking, creativity and problem solving
- learning in collaboration and to collaborate
- ethics and values
- personal agency



## THE JAPANESE CONTEXT



### Overview

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- Japan's efforts to shift its education system to focus on 21st century competencies build on a strong foundation.
- It has a highly skilled and hard-working teaching staff, a system that delivers high equity and quality, effective teaching practices such as lesson study, a well-established curriculum implementation process and local engagement and ownership at the school level.
- The National Curriculum Reform is focusing on improving lessons from a perspective of proactive, interactive and authentic learning



## Curriculum Reform in Japan

Japan's curriculum reform is far-reaching, and builds on Japan's strong tradition of holistic education.

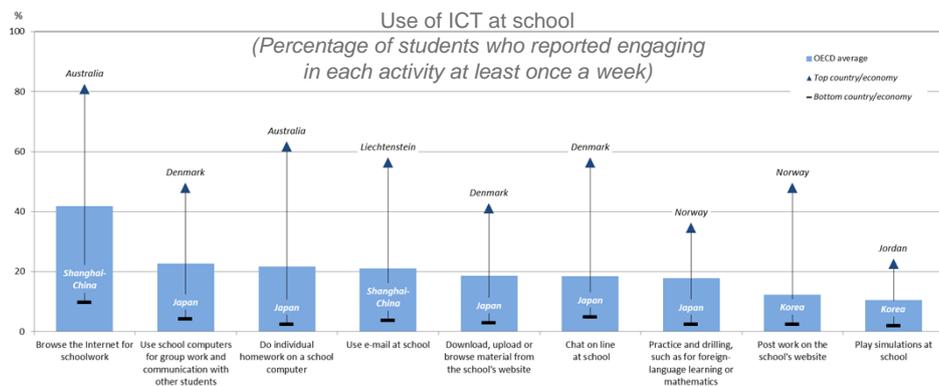
Students success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not just about academic knowledge, but also about character qualities involved in achieving goals, living and working with others and managing emotions, such as perseverance, perspective taking, mindfulness, ethics, courage or leadership.

The curriculum reform appears to build on the understanding that 21<sup>st</sup> century students live and work in a world in which most people need to appreciate a range of ideas, perspectives and values, and collaborate with people of different cultural origins; a world in which people need to decide how to trust and collaborate across such differences, often bridging space and time through technology; and a world in which their lives will be affected by issues that transcend national boundaries.



## Specific Curriculum Issues

In addition to responding to emerging trends in the external environment, Japan needs to tackle the areas it has already identified as needing improvement, such as development of digital and global competencies, problem-solving skills and proficiency in foreign languages (particularly English).



Source: PISA 2012



## MAKING THE CURRICULUM REFORM HAPPEN



### Strengths and development priorities

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- The curriculum reform: an ambitious attempt to prepare young people for the future
- Schools already exhibit some features of the curriculum reform, but significant efforts are still required
- Implementation and monitoring experience, but a need to align assessment practices
- Piloting and review processes already exist in Japan
- Overwhelmed teaching staff might hinder effective reform implementation
- Additional assessment expertise is required



## Implications

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- The reform will require a change in teaching and pedagogical approaches, moving towards more proactive, interactive and authentic learning, often described as active learning.
- Teachers in Japan already employ some features of active learning, but for Japan to achieve the ambitious objectives of the curriculum reform, active learning must be embraced as a system.
- Defining active learning as the new pedagogical standard will require sustained support from the governing institutions.



## Active Learning – Students & Teachers

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In considering active learning approaches, Watkins et al. (2007) identify behavioural, cognitive and social dimensions to the forms that such approaches can take in school classrooms:

*“From the perspective of the students, active learning engages them in ways that can involve working individually and collaboratively, taking responsibility, posing and answering questions, creating solutions and reflecting on their own learning and that of others.”*

In relation to teachers, Pellegrino (2017) identifies major implications for professional learning to

*“... support teaching that encourages deeper learning and the development of transferable knowledge and skills.”*

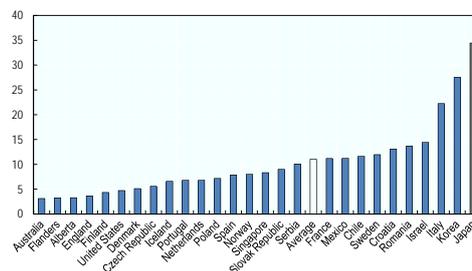


## 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogy includes assessment

- If curriculum changes are to take root, alignment of assessment practice to support the intentions of reform should be one of the main priorities for the professional development of teachers.
- Assessment of deep learning is complex and teachers may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to fully assess students' progress in such areas as creativity, problem-solving or independent learning.

### Teachers' views on their ability to provide cross-curricular skills

Percentage of lower secondary education teachers indicating they have a high level of need for professional development in teaching cross-curricular skills (e.g. problem-solving and learning-to-learn)



Source: PISA 2012

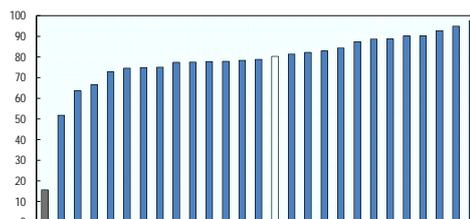


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### Teachers' views on their ability to provide cross-curricular skills

Percentage of lower secondary education teachers who feel they can help students think critically



Source: PISA 2012



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- Assessment of deep learning is complex and teachers may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to fully assess students' progress in such areas as creativity, problem-solving or independent learning.
- The increased emphasis on deep learning will require further development of the assessment skills of Japanese teachers.
- To ensure teachers are well-prepared on this front, systematic training on how to assess students according to the new curriculum should be available for every teacher.

Source: PISA 2012



## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Assessment

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- The Japanese reform programme faces the task of integrating assessment into its framework in ways that promote valid approaches to assessing the creativity, problem-solving skills and independent learning that underpin the reform's objectives.
- If assessment practices do not reflect national standards, there will be a lack of valid evidence upon which to judge how well or to what extent students' learning is meeting expectations.
- The established impact of competitive tests and examinations on teaching and learning in Japanese secondary schools highlights the need to align the content of these assessments with the new curriculum goals.



## Policy Options

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- Align the key factors that influence implementation and further encourage local responsiveness
- Ensure this positive curriculum reform also encompasses new priorities
- Align both formative and summative assessments to the new curriculum
- Ensure that professional development for teachers and resources for teaching and learning are an integral part of the implementation strategy



ありがとうございます

*Arigato Gozaimasu*