

[handout1]

‘Kounai-ken’ (Japanese In-Service Teacher Training System within school)

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Introduction

There are some InSeT programs in Japan, which are lecture style, workshop style, the style of observing other school practices. And there is an activity called ‘Kounai-ken’.

Firstly, the lecture and workshop styles are held by the city/prefecture board of education or the educational research center. In these programs teachers mainly acquire academic knowledge about teaching/classroom management and the latest information about Government’s policy. This knowledge does not always serve to solve practical problems in the classroom.

Second, in the observation style almost teachers collect other schools’ lesson plans/unit plans and record some lessons by video camera. The Japanese Ministry of Education proposes new initiatives for educational reform in quick succession, so teachers are at their wits’ end for how to implement lessons according to the new policy. Teachers need the new lesson models, that is, how to implement new style lesson. This program also does not serve to brush up teacher’s skill and knowledge because almost all teachers are used to mimicking other teacher’s lesson, and so they eventually stop developing and creating new teaching methods and new practical knowledge.

Third, Kounai-ken is the excellent InSeT program, which is based on teaching practice. ‘Lesson study’ is well known as the Japanese teacher education system/programme, but it is not the same as Kounai-ken. ‘Lesson study’ is ‘Jugyo Kenkyu’ in Japanese. Kounai-ken consists of three programmes; a lecture style, a workshop style, a discussion style based on the observed lesson. As a lecture style, school teachers learn/get the up-date information/knowledge about the trend of educational research and policy from the academic staff and governance staff mainly during summer vacation. As a workshop style, school teachers practice how to use media, how to practice artificial respiration, and so on under instruction by supervisors. As a discussion style, school teachers acquire useful practical knowledge to help them to solve their own problems and share the school policy through actual(real) teaching practice. In Japan, Kounai-ken usually means a discussion style(see Table.1).

Fig.1 shows the example of the Kounai-ken schedule of a public elementary school. Now Kounai-ken usually is held as each sub-group. In this school, for example, all

school teachers are divided 3 sub-groups; 1st and 2nd grade teachers, 3rd and 4th grade teachers, and 5th and 6th grade teachers. One reason is because school teachers are very busy for dealing with many school affairs. Therefore, it is very difficult to make the time all school teachers take part in the meeting. Another reason is why the kounai-ken as a whole is not necessarily effective. Because the discussion time is limited, teachers cannot express their own idea and opinions about teaching and the interaction among them is not active.

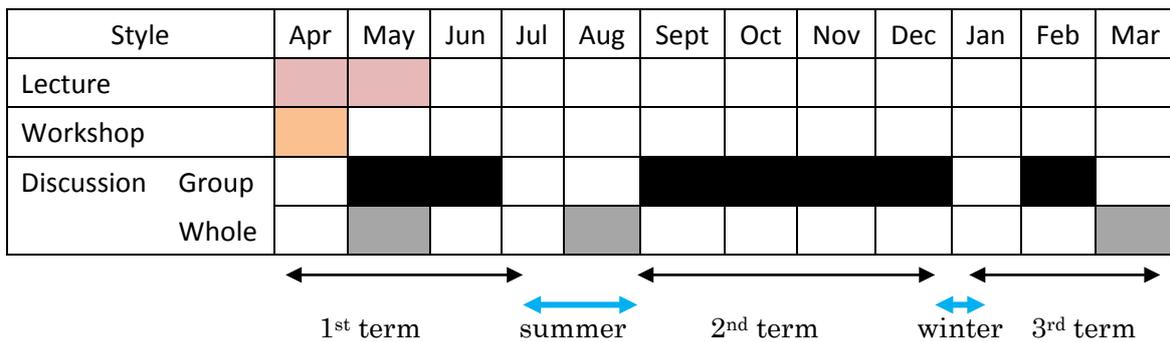


Fig.1 the example of Kounai-ken schedule

Table.1 the System of 'Kounai-ken' based on observed teaching

Process	Activities	Knowledge type
Jizen-ken (before lesson)	Discussion about lesson planning etc. before teaching by some teachers and sharing teacher's intention/device etc.	Tacit knowledge Explicit knowledge
Teaching in the classroom	When other teachers observing classroom teaching, all teachers in a school can share a common experience	Tacit knowledge
Jigo-ken (after lesson)	Discussion about an observed lesson after teaching by all teachers and creating new practical knowledge	Tacit knowledge Explicit knowledge

The features of Kounai-ken

(1) Kounai-ken is a learning community for teachers

Kounai-ken is regarded as the key-place of learning community for teachers. The learning community means that teachers share the teaching experiences, express their own practical knowledge related to practice, and create new practical knowledge through discussion.

"Japanese teacher," as Akita(1999) pointed out in her work about Kounai-ken, "seems to attach too much importance to the relationship with his or her peer teachers, however, he or she also is conscious as professional teacher in it."

In addition, Akita asserted that building up informal network with peer teachers will form one of the important resources for coming school. Shimabara(1998) also said that Japanese professional development is embedded in a social context in which peer teachers are committed to creating and regenerating craft knowledge of teaching. They share certain similarities in that building up social network in "Kounai-ken" with peer teachers have great significance for encouraging teacher professional development.

They asserted that personal teacher's practical knowledge should be opened in Kounai-ken.

(2) Kounai-ken has advantages for both individual teacher professional development(CPD) and the improvement of school learning

Kounai-ken must be held to create the solution of the school-based problems from assessment of students, teachers and so on. This means that a school is doing the problem solving for school year. In this problem solving process, individually teachers are thought to learn many things about teaching through participating in it.

Fig.2 shows an example of Kounai-ken with professional development by reflection. The problem is to develop the learning unit for mixed age classes. The aim of this unit is to facilitate the liaison between kindergarten and elementary school. The process of developing and improving a learning unit has the function to serve teacher professional development through the reflection in 'Kounai-ken'. This is a supportive and collaborative system for curriculum development. The process is below:

- 1) To identify the objectives of a learning unit through brainstorming among some teachers based on the Table of Learning process, the existing school curriculum and the National Curriculum.
- 2) To make a learning unit (subject , materials , lesson plans ,the way of introduction) based on assessment what students already know and the tables of Learning process and so on) ,and to discuss about the each teaching role during the lesson
- 3) To implement a lesson plan
- 4) To reflect on the lesson and write the reflection cards down after lessons with asking ourselves 'why' ,based on the facts. For example, 'why did I have concerned with this situation?' 'Why did I think some students were bored during the lesson?' 'What did the students learned indeed?'

- 5) To discuss the implemented plan and learning unit among some teachers based on the reflection cards and To make the revised learning unit plan
- 6) To improve the Table of Learning process after accumulating a lot of reflection cards

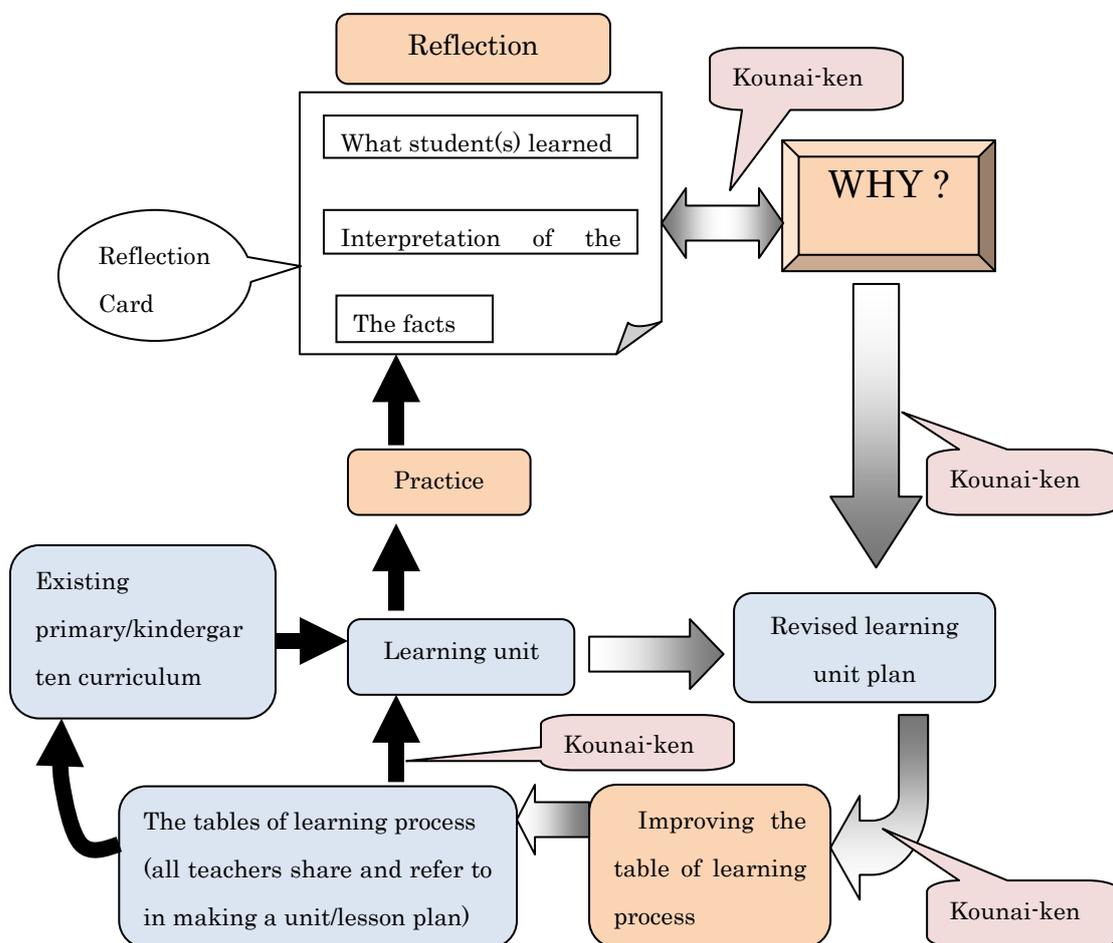


Fig. 2 The process of developing and improving a learning unit through reflection in Kounai-ken

- (3) Kounai-ken facilitates the active interaction among teachers
- (4) Kounai-ken is the key place to create new practical knowledge/skills to solve the school-based problems

The discussion by school teachers aims to create the solutions or hints to improve their own problems in teaching. So they should interact among one another based on the observed lesson. Because they share the concrete classroom events and are easy to be drawn their practical knowledge out from them, they are facilitated to express their practical knowledge. Consequently, they can exchange them and create new knowledge

related to the solution.

This process can be regarded as the SECI model(see Table.2 & Fig.3, Nonaka & Takeuchi,1995).

Table.2 The process of Kounai-ken from the view of SECI model

SECI model	Knowledge type	The process of Kounai-ken
Socialization	Tacit	Jizen-ken
		Observation of lesson
Externalization	Explicit	Jigo-ken
Combination	Explicit	
Internalization	Tacit	Teaching in each classroom using new practical knowledge

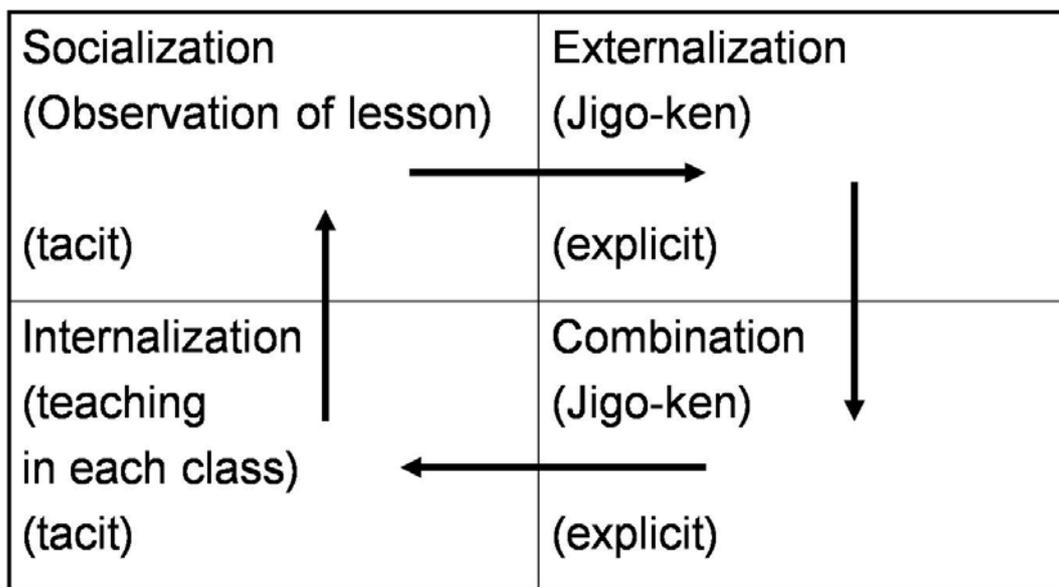


Fig.3 Kounai-ken Model as knowledge creation

(5)Kounai-ken is the main place to hand down the skilled teaching techniques to the inexperienced teachers

In Japan, the birth ratio is declining, so that the number of new teachers is small. However, because in a few years many, many experienced teachers have retired on reaching retired age, it has become a big problem how to hand down teaching skills and practical knowledge to new teachers. As to this concern, Leonard and Swap(2005) noted that in the company organization the knowledge coach is required to cultivate and transfer enduring business wisdom. The most effective method to transfer

wisdom/practical knowledge is for the inexperienced to learn through practice under the supervision and guidance of the knowledge coach(Leonard & Swap,2005). In Kounai-ken all teachers observe the same teaching, which the inexperienced teacher sometimes shows his/her teaching, so that it is possible that Kounai-ken might become the place to hand down skilled teaching techniques if there is a knowledge coach in a school. In the school organization some teachers might well need to play the role of the knowledge coach.

(6)Kounai-ken serves for teachers to enhance their organizational commitment

In Japan school teachers work separately based on the culture among them. This culture is called 'the ethos of egalitarianism'. The school organization is not always a cooperation system. For example, if one teacher is charge of a problematic child, he/she must work hard to deal with the problem without other teachers' support in many cases. Kounai-ken is the chance that all school teachers meet and discuss with a common school goal, and if they can come to recognize that Kounai-ken is useful and effective for individual professional development, their commitment to the school organization may be enhanced. Consequently, all school teachers come to collaborate among one another. If they work together, the possibility to create new practical knowledge will be increasing.

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