

# Citizenship Education in Japan: The Challenges of High School Civics

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## Citizenship Education in Japan : The Challenges of High School Civics

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## 1. Introduction

- In Japan, citizenship-related education has so far been provided in school education.
  - \* Elementary schools  
'Life Studies' (the first two years)  
'Social Studies'
  - \* Secondary school : geography, history and civics

2006 the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) announced the “Citizenship Education Declaration.

- Some schools implemented citizenship education on their own, however, new subjects were not immediately established by the government.

- After the revision of the Curriculum Guideline in 2018, civics education was reformed for High school. New Subject “Public” has introduced in April, 2022, this year.

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## 1. Introduction

**This study aims to review the content and challenges of civic education in Japan.**

**- To clarify the main content of the newly established subject, “Public,” based on the latest “Curriculum guidelines (Gakushū shidō yōryō)” and commentary to the curriculum guidelines (Gakushū shidō yōryō kaisetsu)” published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and discuss the challenges faced in the implementation of this subject.**

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## 2. The current situation in Japan

- the arrival of a new era, also known as Society 5.0, is predicted to drastically change society and people's lives, with advanced artificial intelligence (AI) making various decisions and the spread of IoT, in which the functions of everyday objects are optimized via the Internet.
- In a society where information technology and globalization are advancing, various events are becoming more complex, and it is becoming more difficult to foresee the future of change.
- In this unpredictable situation, the voting age have lowered since 2016 and the age of majority was lowered from 20 to 18 on this April 2022.
- This has led to high school students becoming more familiar with politics and society and being expected to participate in forming their country and society actively.

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## 3. Curriculum of high school in Japan

- the subjects studied as common subjects
  - Japanese, -geography and history, **-civics**,
  - mathematics, -science, -health and physical education, -arts,
  - foreign languages, -home economics, -information,
  - science and mathematics, -Tokkatsu (Student-Led Activities)
  - Period for Integrated Studies (Period for Inquiry-Based Cross-Disciplinary Study)

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### The Latest Curriculum Guideline for High School

To develop the qualities and abilities required in the new era and to enhance learning assessment

- (1) the acquisition of knowledge and skills useful in daily life,
- (2) the cultivation of the ability to think, judge, and express in response to unknown situations,
- (3) the cultivation of humanity toward learning.

### "Curriculum Open to Society"

#### How to learn

to enhance the learning process from the perspective of independent, interactive, and deep learning (active learning).

- qualitative improvements in the learning process to ensure understanding without reducing the quantity of knowledge.

#### What we learn

to establish new subjects and review their goals and contents based on the qualities and abilities needed in a new era, through the implementation of foreign language education as a subject in elementary schools and the establishment of the new subject, "Public," in high schools.

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## Civics in the latest Curriculum Guideline

### Civics for High School (Previous version)

Civics in high school used to require students to select "Contemporary Society" or both "Politics and Economics" and "Ethics"



### Latest Civics for High School

"Public" is newly established as **a required civics subject**.  
 "Ethics" or "Politics and Economics" as electives.

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## 4. New Trends in Civics in High Schools

### (1) Objectives of the new subject "Public"

the goal of this subject is to cultivate the civic qualities and abilities necessary to be effective shapers of a peaceful, democratic nation and society that proactively live in an increasingly globalized international society. To this end, the students must develop views and ideas about the nature of human beings and society and pursue and solve contemporary issues from a broad perspective.

- (1) To understand contemporary issues related to concepts and theories, ethics, politics, and economics that provide clues for making choices and judgments, and to acquire the ability to research and summarize variety of information appropriately and effectively.
- (2) To solve various problems in the real world, cultivate the ability to consider and make fair judgments from multiple perspectives based on facts and to discuss their ideas with a view to consensus building and social participation, utilizing ideas that serve as clues for selection and judgment and basic principles in the public space.
- (3) To deepen awareness of how to live as a human being in modern society and as a citizen who lives in a public space and bears the sovereignty of the people, love one's country and strive for its peace and prosperity, and deepen awareness of the importance of each country's mutual respect for sovereignty and the cooperation of its citizens.

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## (2) Contents of the "Public"

### A. Door to the public

- 1) We create public spaces (e.g., self-formation, tradition, and people in culture).
- 2) How to be and live as a human being in public space (e.g., fairness, bioethics, and environmental ethics).
- 3) Fundamental principles in the public sphere (e.g., Japanese Constitution and democracy, the rule of law, freedom, rights, and responsibilities and obligations).

### B. We are independent actors who participate in the formation of a better society

**Legal matters:** Significance and role of laws and norms; various contracts and consumer rights and responsibilities; and significance of judicial participation.

**Political Matters:** Political participation and the formation of fair public opinion, local autonomy, national sovereignty, territoriality (including sea and airspace), security and defense, and Japan's role in the international community, including its international contributions.

**Economic matters:** Occupational choice, employment and labor issues, the role of finance and taxation, social security in an aging society with low fertility, the functions and limitations of the market economy, the system of finance, and economic globalization and interdependence.

### C. We are the main actors in the creation of a sustainable society

The main goal of this section is for students to explore contemporary issues on their own.

a. Issue setting, b. Gathering, reading, and analyzing information, c. Explore the issues d. Explanation of personal ideas and discussion

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### (3) Considerations in teaching

The commentary on the curriculum guidelines (MEXT, 2018, pp. 82–84) points out what should be taken into consideration in learning and teaching, which consists mainly of the following three points:

- (1) Learn in relation to other subjects: The content of "Public" should not be biased toward any subject, and it is studied in relation to the content of social studies studied in junior high school and various subjects studied in high school.
- (2) Encourage collaboration with experts and related organizations outside the school: To conceive of solutions to real-world problems and enhance their activities, students need to collaborate and cooperate with experts and related organizations. For example, it mentions the participation of people outside the school in creating classes, inviting them to the classes, and borrowing materials from them.
- (3) Opportunities to practice moral education: "Public" is a subject in which students learn how to be human beings and live through their own analyses and exploration of diverse information on various current issues. Therefore, it is considered an opportunity for moral education, which must be conducted throughout school education.

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## 5. The characteristics and challenges of learning through "Public"

### 1. Learning through the exploration of personal issues

The instruction guidelines for "Public" in the "Curriculum Guideline" and "Commentary to the Curriculum Guidelines" indicate that

students need to have the skills to research and summarize necessary information on their own effectively. It also emphasizes that students learn the importance of their career development, self-realization, and participation in society through activities they independently set and explore.

Therefore, each student is expected to examine various sources and consider multiple perspectives to understand the complexities of the real world. When teaching "Public," the government encourages teachers to relate to other subjects and incorporate learning in partnership with outside people and organizations, which is linked to implementing the government's "Curriculum Open to Society" policy.

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## 5. The characteristics and challenges of learning through “Public”

### 2. Future issues: Need to reconsider past experiences.

To develop student inquiry learning in civic education and learning from overseas examples, it will be important

- 1) To make use of the experience of each community and school. utilizing local facilities, such as museums and libraries, and collaborating with other local organizations and regions.
- 2) Rethinking the history of teaching and learning to reconsider the history of the pre-modern education system while also aiming for civic education with enhanced cooperation between schools and local communities, which is appropriate for the current era.

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Thank you very much

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ありがとうございました  
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