

School System

The modern school system of Japan began from the promulgation of the school system in 1872.

The Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law were enacted in 1947 and the 6-3-3-4-year system of school education was established aiming at realizing the principle of equal opportunity for education.

Upper secondary schools were first established in 1948, offering full-time and part-time courses, and in 1961 correspondence courses were added to the system.

The new system for universities began in 1949. The junior college system was established on a provisional basis in 1950 and on a permanent basis in 1964, following an amendment to the School Education Law.

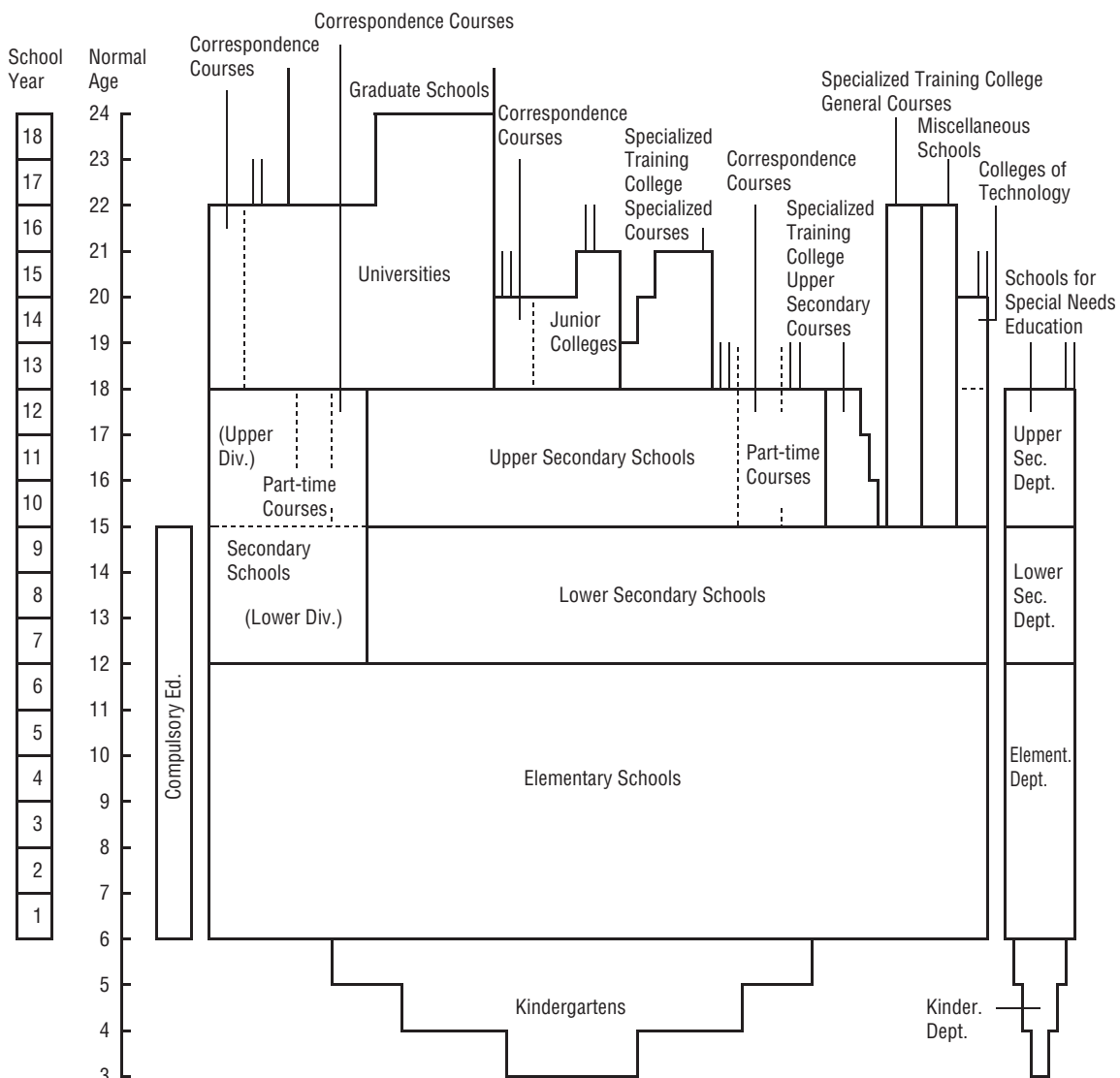
Colleges of technology were initiated as an educational institution in 1962 to provide lower secondary school graduates with a five-year consistent education (five-and-a-half years in the case of mercantile marine studies).

At first, special schools were established separately by types of disabilities, such as Schools for the Blind, for the Deaf, for the Intellectually Disabled, the Physically Disabled and the Health Impaired. Recently, in order to cope with children with multiple disabilities, the School Education Law was partially amended and the former school system was turned into "Schools for Special Needs Education" system that can accept several types of disabilities, which was enacted in FY2007.

In addition, there are kindergartens for pre-school children, and specialized training colleges and other miscellaneous vocational schools, which are offering technical courses or those for various practical purposes.

Also, pursuant to the amendments to the School Education Law and other legislation in June 1998, the six-year secondary school can be established to enable consistent education covering teachings at both lower and upper secondary schools from FY1999.

Organization of the School System in Japan



Brief notes on each of the different types of educational institutions shown in the diagram are given below.

1. Kindergartens (Yôchien)

Kindergartens aim at helping pre-school children develop their mind and body by providing a sound educative environment for them. Kindergartens cater for children aged 3, 4 and 5, and provide them with one- to three-year courses.

2. Elementary Schools (Shôgakkô)

All the children who have attained the age of 6 are required to attend elementary school for six years. Elementary schools aim at giving children between the ages of 6 and 12 primary general education suited to the stage of their mental and physical development.

3. Lower Secondary Schools (Chûgakkô)

All the children who have completed elementary school are required to study in lower secondary school for three years until the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 15. Lower secondary schools give children between the ages of 12 and 15 general secondary education suited to the stage of their mental and physical development, on the basis of the education given in elementary school.

4. Upper Secondary Schools (Kôtô-gakkô)

Those who have completed nine-year compulsory education in elementary and lower secondary school may go on to upper secondary school. Students must normally take entrance examinations to enter upper secondary school.

In addition to full-day courses, there are also part-time and correspondence courses. Full-day courses last three years, while both part-time and correspondence courses last three years or more. The last two courses are mainly intended for young workers who wish to pursue their upper secondary studies in a flexible manner in accordance with their own needs. All these courses lead to a certificate of the upper secondary education.

In terms of the content of teaching provided, the upper secondary school courses may also be classified into three categories: general, specialized and integrated courses.

General courses provide mainly general education suited to the needs of both those who wish to advance to higher education and those who are going to get a job but have chosen no specific vocational area.

Specialized courses are mainly intended to provide vocational or other specialized education for those students who have chosen a particular vocational area as their future career. These courses may be further classified into: agriculture, industry, commerce, fishery, home economics, nursing, science-mathematics, physical education, music, art, English language and other courses.

Integrated courses were introduced in 1994. These courses offer a wide variety of subject areas and subjects from both the general and the specialized courses, in order to adequately satisfy students' diverse interests, abilities and aptitudes, future career plans, etc.

5. Secondary Schools (Chûtô-kyôiku-gakkô)

In April 1999, a new type of six-year secondary education school, called "Secondary School" was introduced into our school system. Secondary schools combine lower and upper secondary school education in order to provide lower secondary education and upper secondary general and specialized education through 6 years. The lower division in the first three years provides lower secondary school education and the upper division in the latter three years gives upper secondary school education.

6. Schools for Special Needs Education etc. (Tokubetsu-Shien-gakkô)

Special Needs Educations are schools for children with comparatively severe disabilities and aim at giving education suited to their individual educational needs. Those schools comprise four levels of departments, namely, kindergarten, elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary departments. (The elementary and lower secondary are compulsory education.) After school system was turned into the current system that permits schools to accept several types of disabilities in 2007, this new implementation is gradually spreading.

Special Needs Education is provided also in regular schools. Special classes are small classes for children with comparatively mild disabilities that may be established in regular elementary and lower secondary schools. It may also be established as a branch class in a hospital for sick children.

There is another program of resource rooms (in regular elementary and secondary schools) where children with disabilities who are enrolled in and studying most of the time in regular classes may visit resource rooms few times a week to

receive special instruction.

7. Institutions of Higher Education

Institutions of higher education in Japan include universities, junior colleges and colleges of technology. In addition, specialized training colleges offering postsecondary courses (see 8 below) may be regarded as one type of higher education institution.

a. Universities (Daigaku) are intended to conduct teaching and research in depth in specialized academic disciplines and provide students with advanced knowledge. Universities require for admission the completion of upper secondary schooling or its equivalent, and offer courses of at least four years leading to a bachelor's degree (Gakushi).

Universities may set up a graduate school offering advanced studies in a variety of fields leading to master's (Shushi) and doctor's (Hakushi) degrees. Graduate schools normally last five years, consisting of the first two-year courses leading to a master's degree and the following three year courses leading to a doctor's degree. However, there is a possibility for those who are especially successful in their studies to get a master's degree in one year, and a doctor's degree in two years.

b. Junior Colleges (Tanki-daigaku) aim at conducting teaching and research in specialized subjects and at developing in students such abilities as are required for vocational or practical life.

Junior colleges require for admission the completion of upper secondary schooling or its equivalent, and offer two- or three- year programs in different fields of study, which lead to the title of associate (Jun-gakushi).

Most courses offered in these colleges are in such fields as humanities, social sciences, teacher training and home economics.

The great majority of the students in these colleges are women.

Those who have completed junior college may go on to university and their credits acquired at junior college may be counted as part of the credits leading to a bachelor's degree.

Junior colleges are also allowed to offer advanced courses which may lead to a bachelor's degree.

c. Colleges of Technology (Kôtô-senmon-gakkô), unlike universities or junior colleges, accept those who have completed lower secondary schooling, and offer five-year (five and a half years at colleges of maritime technology) consistent programs. They were established in 1962, intended to conduct teaching in specialized subjects in depth and to develop in students such abilities as are required for vocational life. Students who have completed colleges of technology are granted the title of associate (Jun-gakushi) and may apply for admission to the upper division of university. Colleges of Technology are also allowed to offer a two-years advanced courses, which follow the five-year program in order to provide a higher level of technical education.

8. Specialized Training Colleges (Senshû-gakkô) and Miscellaneous Schools (Kakushu-gakkô)

In addition to the above mentioned institutions of primary, secondary and higher education, there are educational institutions known as "specialized training colleges" and "miscellaneous schools", which offer a variety of practical vocational and technical education programs in response to diverse demands of people in a changing society. The great majority of these schools are privately controlled.

a. Courses provided in Specialized Training Colleges may be classified into three categories: upper secondary, postsecondary and general courses. Each course gives at least 40 students systematic instruction, lasting not less than one year, for 800 class hours or more per year.

Specialized training colleges offering upper secondary courses are called "upper secondary specialized training schools (Koto-senshu-gakko)" and those offering postsecondary courses are called "professional training colleges (Senmon-gakko)." .

The former require for admission the completion of compulsory education, while the latter accept those who have graduated from the upper secondary schools or upper secondary courses of specialized training colleges and award the title, "technical associate (Senmonshi)," to those who complete post-secondary courses that fulfill certain criteria, including a study period of at least two years. Students who have completed an upper secondary course lasting three years or more of specialized training colleges designated by the Minister are entitled to apply for a university place.

b. Miscellaneous Schools provide people with vocational and practical training such as dressmaking, cooking, book-keeping, typing, automobile driving and repairing, computer techniques, etc. Most courses in miscellaneous schools require for admission the completion of lower secondary schooling. These courses normally last one year or more with at least 680 class hours per year, but there are also shorter courses of three months or more.