Disciplinary Perspectives and Methodologies of Japanese Social Studies Researcher

Kazuhiro Kusahara * Hiroshima University *
Thomas Misco ** Miami University **
Tatsuya Watanabe *** Tokyo Gakugei University ***

Hiroko Taguchi **** Kagoshima University ****
Noboru Tanaka ***** Osaka-Ohtani University *****
Masato Ogawa ****** International Pacific University ******

Abstract
This paper clarifies the research philosophies and methodologies shared by a selection of social studies education researchers in Japan. Based on a questionnaire targeting 121 board directors from two large social studies education associations (the Japanese Association for the Social Studies (JASS) and the Japanese Educational Research Association for the Social Studies (JERASS)), we sought to better understand research interests, research methods, the influences researchers experience from abroad, and perspectives on the roles that researchers are expected to play in Japan. Results indicated that there are two distinct approaches to social studies education research in Japan: research aiming to propose practical applications and research of historical documents and philosophical topics. The research interests of the respondents are classified into “educational thought,” “subject contents,” and “children's conception.”

Introduction
The field of social studies education in Japan is currently one-directional. The work of Japanese scholars is limited in reach to Japanese scholars and readers because it is rarely available in English. As a result, social studies education research in other countries is only disseminated to, and consumed within, Japan. This paper marks the first piece in a series of efforts to provide insight into the work of Japanese social studies education researchers. Organized in 1951, Japanese Association for the Social Studies (JASS) and the Japanese Education Research Association for the Social Studies (JERASS) are the organizations charged with constructing and producing social studies theories and practices. As social studies in Japan was a new emerging school
subject established in 1947 in order to build a democratic society and citizen after World War II, the U.S. educational consultants appointed by the CIE (Civil Information and Educational Section, General Headquarters occupying forces of the Allies) organized the conferences for collaboration on social studies education. After the conferences, the participants became founding member of these associations, and JASS and JERASS have led the academic activity as nationwide associations.

JERASS currently has 1,650 members, including 300 in higher education and 550 junior and high school teachers. JERASS has published two journals since 1953: Syakaika Kenkyu (Journal of Educational Research on Social Studies) and Syakaika Kyoiku Ronso (Bulletin of Japanese Social Studies Research Association). Though these associations has long history of "social studies" education research, in addition, research has been influenced from U.S. as well as other countries, and research trajectories have not always been well-known by foreign scholars, primarily due to language barriers.

Given this gap in the global understanding of social studies education research in Japan, this study sought to explore the predominant disciplinary perspectives and methodologies among Japanese social studies researchers. In particular, we sought to understand:

1. What research methods do Japanese social studies educators employ?
2. What topics do they study?

The essence of social studies research in Japan can be categorized into three approaches within the Japanese academic context: empirical-experimental as science, empirical-experimental as engineering, and normative theoretical as engineering (Kusahara, 2012). The concept of "engineering" means to develop something similar to an engineer, which is derived from Shaver's terminology. Shaver (2001) showed a way of "engineering," in comparison with "science" that were predominant over U.S. researchers. He illustrated that the engineering was equivalent to the work of designing the aircraft based on the data of a wind tunnel test, the work to design the effective irrigation system verified by making the experimental water current on the model of dam, channels and their branches in lab. On the contrary, the concept of "science" is related to describing and explaining phenomena using the empirical data. Engineering is directed towards the development of the educational program (e.g., for promoting the higher order thinking), which is verified by trials in different types of classes and schools. This study sought to identify the characteristics of Japanese social studies research by applying his framework.

We used a questionnaire to collect data from the members (including the president, vice-president, directors, councilors, coordinators, and auditors)
of the two social studies education associations (JASS and JERASS), both of which substantively direct social studies education research efforts in Japan through the planning and management of research activities. We sent questionnaires by mail to 121 board members with 69 replying, constituting a 57% response rate. The questionnaire was composed of 16 questions (see Appendix A) classified into four sections, part A: research interests, methods, and environment, part B: career, part C: understanding/evaluation of U.S. Social Studies Research, and part D: understanding/evaluation of Japanese Social Studies Research.

Findings

Research Interests, Methods, and Environment

Respondents were asked to choose two themes where their research interests were high, out of the following seven items: educational thought/aims, curriculum, teacher (instruction/teaching methods), student (conception/learning processes), teacher education, subject contents/material, and other. The results showed that subject contents/materials (52.2%) and curriculum (44.9%) were exceptionally high, followed by educational thought/aims (27.5%) and teacher (27.5%) tied for third place, followed by student (23.2%), and teacher education (17.4%).

Respondents were asked to choose two research methods they use, out of the following eight approaches: quantitative-statistical, qualitative-descriptive, ideological/philosophical, practical proposal, historical text, empirical scientific (academic works in order to describe and explain the educational phenomena founded by the empirical evidence), normal scientific (academic work in order to propose or illustrate the policy, curriculum, subject, or lesson models justified by one ideal educational thought or ideology), and other. The most common was practical proposal, answered by over half of respondents (53.6%). There was a large gap between this and other methodologies, which are as follows: qualitative-descriptive (33.3%), empirical-scientific (29.0%), historical text (29.0%), ideological/philosophical (17.4%), normal-scientific (14.5%) and quantitative statistical (5.8%).

Respondents were asked to choose one location where they learned research methods from these seven options: special class/course from graduate school with a research methodology focus, general class/course from graduate school without a research methodology focus, seminar by supervisor, specialized handbook/textbook, study/emulation of preceding literature, advice from senior/colleague, and other. The results showed that seminar by
supervisor (33.3%) was the most common, followed by study/emulation of preceding literature (17.4%), specialized handbook/textbook (14.5%), special class/course from graduate school with a research methodology focus (11.6%), and general class/course without a research methodology focus (10.1%).

Respondents were asked to choose the ratio of each task compared to education, out of the following: 5:1, 5:2.5, 5:5, 5:10, 5:15 and other. For the ratio of “education” to “research”, 5:5 was the most common (46.4%), followed by 5:2.5 (21.7%) and 5:1 (20.3%). For the ratio between “education” and “administration”, 5:2.5 was the top (36.2%), and for the ratio between “education” and “social services like regional contribution”, 5:2.5 was the majority (44.9%). Social studies researchers in Japan tend to stress practicality or the proposal of thought, curriculum and materials, and that they devote much of their time to “education” and “social service.” These data are not the result of a study on in-service teachers or inactive researcher, but the results of a questionnaire on the leaders of Japanese social studies education research.

Career

In regards to years of K-12 school teaching experience, 10.1% of respondents answered none, 18.8% had less than three years, 10.1% had 3-4 years, 20.3% had 5-10 years, 17.4% had 11-19 years, and 23.2% had 20 or more years. For years of university teaching, 5.8% of respondents answered none, 2.9% had less than three years, 5.8% had 3-4 years, 21.7% had 5-10 years, 34.8% had 11-19 years, and 29.0% had 20 or more years. Regarding “major in graduate school”, 7.2% people responded “Never finished graduate school,” 4.3% responded Education (including educational philosophy, educational methodology, and educational sociology), 69.9% responded Curriculum & Instruction, 10.1% responded Geography, and 7.2% responded History. No respondents indicated Law/Political science, Economics/Sociology, and Ethics/Philosophy. These findings suggests that most of the social studies researchers in Japan are graduates of educational programs specializing in curriculum and instruction, and graduates of subject contents programs with a base in geography or history, and that the majority have experience as school teachers, despite variation in length.

Understanding/Evaluation of U.S. Social Studies Research

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they cite U.S. social studies journals. Respondents were asked to select from: Theory and Research in Social Education (TRSE), Social Education (SE), Social Studies and the Young Learners (SSYL), The Social Studies (SS), Other, and None of the Above. 46.4% answered TRSE, 56.5% answered SE, 40.6% answered SS, 17.4% answered SSYL, and 15.6% answered “none of the above.” 10.1%
answered "other."

We also asked about writing experience dealing with social studies education in U.S. Of all responses, 71.2% answered "Had experience" and 28.8% answered "No experience." The most frequent reason provided was "Because it is possible to comprehend the issues in the Japanese curriculum and lesson, and obtain implications to plan improvement strategies through them," selected by 89.2% of the whole. This reason had overwhelming support. Next came "Because it is beneficial when researching the origins or nature of social studies (geography/history/civics) education," at 45.9%. This was followed by "Because it is important to understand research trends and methodologies on a global scale", at 35.1%. "Because it is highly meaningful to know about education in regions with a differing cultural/political background" and "Because it is necessary for Japanese and foreign researchers (particularly in U.S.) to cooperate and implement global research" each had 10.8%.

Of the respondents who answered "no experience" the most common reason was "because it is necessary to uncover and analyze class practices and research results on a more local level", with 40.0% of respondents. Next, 26.7% answered "because there are no direct connections to the Japanese curriculum and lessons, and there are few implications that can be obtained for planning improvement strategies." One respondent answered "because it is not meaningful to know about education in regions with a differing cultural/political background." No respondents answered "because it is more important to understand the trends and methodologies in neighboring Asian nations," and "because there are few points in common between Japanese social studies (geography/history/civics) education and foreign education (particularly in U.S.)."

We asked respondents to provide the names of researchers in the U.S. that had influenced their research. The most commonly cited were J. Dewey, J. Bruner, E. Fenton, S. Engle, A. Ochoa, F. Newman, J. Banks, W. Parker, and S. Thornton. As a whole, many respondents gave the names of individuals who were active during the "New" and "Neo new" Social Studies period (1960s-80s). There were few cases where psychologists were mentioned, and J. Bruner aside, only included A. Maslow. There were also no sociologists mentioned. Educational philosophers such as J. Dewey, S. Engle, S. Thornton, and H. Giroux were listed, but on the practical side, there were developers of objective educational materials and curriculums unit, such as E. Fenton, F. Newman, B. Massailas, and M. Croddy. The practical researcher B. Lewis was also mentioned.

We also asked about the presence of U.S. social studies education
theory or educational programs the respondents referenced. Of the responses, 53.8% answered "Yes", and 46.2% answered "No". When asked to describe the specific theory or project, 23 responded. Examples of theories and programs multiple respondents mentioned included MACOS, the Harvard Social Studies Project, Holt Social Studies Series, Service-Learning, and Counter Socialization theory. As a general trend, educational theories mentioned were concepts that came into fashion in the late 1980s in U.S., but the specific programs focused on programs developed from the 1960s to 1970s.

Japanese social researchers consult U.S. research for the purpose of improving the curriculum and lessons within Japan, demonstrating a height of interest in the thoughts and products of curriculum development. On the other hand, Japanese researchers do not pay attention to psychological or sociological theories, and generally have a low interest in recent U.S. trends based on such empirical research focusing on human subjects. Additionally, 80% of researchers who studied curriculum and instruction in graduate school read U.S. scientific journals, showing that their influence is extremely high. In the main, these influences are accepted through the filters of Japanese researchers’ interests.

Understanding/Evaluation of Japanese Social Studies Research

We also asked about the roles that researchers ought to play. Responses with the support of the majority were "To prescribe and propose the nature and purposes of social studies (geography/history/civics education)" and "To theorize perspectives and methods for developing and improving curriculums and lesson", each chosen by 60% of respondents. This was followed by "To describe and explain the states of and issues in the curriculum", and "To develop and implement educational materials, based on local needs and academic results, together with teachers", chosen by 21.7% of the respondents. "To describe and explain the states of and issues in children’s learning" (13.0%), "To train teachers" (10.1%), "To describe and explain the states of and issues in teachers’ instruction" (5.8%), "To describe and explain the phenomena and issues occurring in the classroom", and "Other" (2.9%) followed, and "To interpret the intents and causes of National curriculum" had no respondents.

We asked about the relationship "researchers" and "practitioners" ought to have and respondents generally supported one of unity and cooperation. Specifically, 37.7% selected "Researchers and practitioners have a unified relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to collaborate with practitioners to clarify problems, and develop and improve new curriculums and lessons." The choices describing complementation, "Researchers and practitioners have a complementary relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to get
close to practitioners, draw knowledge from practical experience, and analyze and evaluate it” and “Researchers and practitioners have a complementary relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to test, theorize, and formulate their own hypothesis, with the cooperation of the practitioners”, chosen by 11.6% and 18.8% (total: 30.4%) respectively. Meanwhile, 20.3% stressed the heterogeneity of researchers and practitioners by choosing “Researchers and practitioners have a fundamentally differing position. The responsibility of the researcher is to objectivize, then describe and explain practice, while maintaining an appropriate distance from practitioners”. 10.1% chose “Other”. Japanese social studies researcher strongly believe that they should bring up the identity of social studies, analyze and develop curriculums and lesson plan with educational materials while building some sort of close relationship with the field, and contribute to the field through proposing theories and practices.

The Ideal Orientation of Social Studies Research

Finally, we asked in an open response item about the “future direction of research” that we ought to follow. The description contents had a wide variety, but the comments were coded on the basis of “ideal state as discipline” and “ideal state of lesson study.” The descriptions of “ideal state as discipline” were not necessarily monolithic. Opposing claims or opinions were included, and they can be organized into the following points.

The first point is “establishment of independent basis” versus “acceptance of various research frame.” The former opinion, seeking endemism in social studies research as discipline is represented by the succinct comment that “establishment and development of social studies research methodology independently” which is distinguished from other discipline like curriculum studies, teaching methods, educational phycology and sociology and so on. The latter claim, supporting interdisciplinarity is stood by the sentences using the word of “variety” and “multiple.” The researcher who recognizes “there is an increase in options of educational theories or curriculums” seems to believe the importance to tackle issues in social studies lessons while drawing upon multiple and various ‘research’ styles.

The second point is “pursuing the original or universal identity of social studies” versus “dealing with modern issues and context.” One respondent indicated that “social studies research is research on the ideals of the subject, even if it orients to theory, practice, and history.” The primary approach is regarded as typical former opinion, wanting to define the nature of the subjects. The latter opinion, seeking a dynamic and contextual state of subjects is likely to focus on the concrete situation in the particular students and classroom. One respondent indicated:
Regarding education in school subjects that involve the formation of social awareness of children today, I propose a model for practitioners to validate the effectiveness of a theory through elucidating the issues and problems seen in the implemented lessons and curriculums, constructing a theory to overcome them, and conducting unit development and lesson planning. Other respondents mentioned the “ideal state as discipline” included “maintaining distance from authority and national curriculum,” conversely “working within the framework of national curriculum”, and “evidence-based research.”

Opposing claims were also seen in the “ideal state of lesson study”. These included the top-down idea that eminent researchers and practitioners should create a general theory or model, and lower it into the field. For examples, “theory should be created, that practitioners and society can rely on” reflects a theory-drive approach clearly. On the other hand, one respondent answered “my ideal research is to implement a problem solving from the educational field, like action research” which supported the bottom-up idea, founded by practice in the field.

However, there were many comments that advocate a fusion of top-down and bottom-up. This is expressed as an opinion indicating the importance of the PDCA cycle, like “to think of lesson plan and practices grounded in theory, and to revise theories based on practice” with try and error. If researcher contributes to this cycle, “researchers should join together with practitioners to seek a mutual relationship of practice and theorization, and realize their original theories by demonstrating lessons.” Respondents voiced variety and opposition in the free-description on the orientation of research activities, but these were focused on the reform of ideal state of discipline and lesson study. This trend can be said to indicate the depth of interest in the perspectives and methodologies on social studies research. Attention should be given most of all to the fact that methodologies in line with a normative and practical consciousness are mentioned and stressed ubiquitously, such as through the pursuit of the “nature” or “purposes” of subjects, and the collaborative “proposal” of curriculum and lesson as problem-solving.
Discussion

Research Methods: how do they research?

Respondents were asked to select up to two “research methods.” The first trend (see table 1) is the overwhelming abundance of respondents who answered Practical Proposal Approach, and the lack of respondents who selected Quantitative Statistical Approach. This trend differs greatly from present trends in American social studies research (Kusahara, 2012). The second trend is that the Practical Proposal Approach selection has a negative correlation with the Historical Text Approach and the Ideological Philosophical Approach. In other words, these two approaches are rarely selected together. It is possible that researchers who take pride in Historical Text Approach or Ideological Philosophical Approach tend to distance themselves from proposing practices, and researchers who conduct Practical Proposal Research are not oriented towards Historical Text or Ideological Philosophical Approaches.

These two trends are also evident in the results to question 14, which asked about “the roles researchers ought to play.” Question 14 had respondents to select up to two choices of what was crucial to the role of social studies researchers, out of ten. Respondents classified the goal of research (see table 2) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice (Number)</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>①</th>
<th>②</th>
<th>③</th>
<th>④</th>
<th>⑤</th>
<th>⑥</th>
<th>⑦</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>① (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>② (23)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③ (13)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④ (36)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤ (22)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥ (20)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦ (10)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑧ (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Major research methods (pair of answer in question 2)

Normal Scientific Approach

Empirical Scientific Approach
### Table 2 Roles that researchers ought to play (pair of answer in question 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice (Number)</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>① (40)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>② (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③ (14)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④ (7)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤ (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥ (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦ (44)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑧ (15)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑨ (7)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑩ (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Group A: Defining nature/purpose of social studies ... ①
- Group B: Describing/explaining States ... ②③④⑤⑥
- Group C: Supporting the improvement/development of practice ...⑦⑧
- Group D: Teacher Education ... ⑨

Along with group A, many respondents selected group C and the responses are concentrated here. This trend coincides with the fact that the majority of respondents selected Practical Proposal Approach in question 2. This once again confirmed that the improvement/development of practice founded in the nature of social studies, combining groups A and C (40.6%), forms the mainstream of Japanese social studies researchers.

Compared to this, there were few combinations between group C and group B. In other words, researchers who attempt to empirically propose ideal states for lessons based on the human conditions in the classroom (18.8%). There were also few respondents solely selecting group B academic-oriented researchers who do not actively commit to proposing practices and combinations of group A and group B (17.4%). Furthermore, the majority of respondents who selected group D, who understand the researcher’s role to be in training educators, were researchers rich in field experience, with over 20 years of teaching experience (10.1%). There was only one respondent with less than 5 years of experience who selected this choice. Also, 8 of the 12 respondents who selected both group A and group B selected Historical Text Approach or Ideological Philosophical Approach in question 2. This also confirmed that researchers aspiring for Historical Text Approach and Ideological Philosophical Approach tend to avoid proposing practices.
The third trend located within table 1 is the multiple conceptions of “Qualitative” methodology. Unlike the actual publication trends (few articles) of social studies journals in Japan (Kiritani, 2012; Kusahara, 2012), one-third of the respondents chose Qualitative Descriptive Approach as their own methods. Furthermore, respondents who chose Qualitative Descriptive Approach also chose Historical Text Approach, Ideological Philosophical Approach, and Practical Proposal Approach. From this fact, the possibility that social studies researchers in Japan identify Historical, Ideological and Practical Proposal Approach (which are not regarded as empirical human subject research) are affinitive with the category of Qualitative Research, can be inferred. Meanwhile, no more than three researchers chose the Empirical Scientific and Qualitative Descriptive Research which combination is widely conducted in U.S. in its original sense (Kusahara, 2012). There is a possibility that social studies researchers in Japan define “Qualitative Research” extremely broadly.

The fourth trend is the lack of a monolithic identity of the Practical Proposal Research that forms Japan’s mainstream faction. This is because there is a near-equal number of respondents who chose Empirical Scientific Research, and who chose Normal Scientific Research as a pair to Practical Proposal Research in question 2 (8-10 respondents). Manabu Sato defined proposal-based research as “Normal Science”, and fact-describing or nomothetic research as “Empirical Science”, and placed the study of educational methods in with the former, and the study of educational history and educational sociology/educational psychology in with the latter (Sato, 2010). Invoking Sato’s definitions, Practical Proposal Approach would be affiliated with “Normal Science”. But to ensure that educational claims do not turn ideological or abstract, social studies research has been expressed in the form of objective lesson plans based on theory, and stressed reviewing their validity through practice/trials (Moriwake, 1999:24-25) as a branch of social science (Utsumi, 1971). Therefore, there are number of people understand this proposal process demonstrating the effective educational plans or solutions with no theoretical or logical discrepancies, to be “Empirical Science”.

Research Interests: what interests do they have?

Researchers’ research interests (see table 3) suggests that the responses can be grouped into Group A, centered on Educational thought/aims, Group B, centered on Subject Contents/Materials, and Group C, centered on Children. These can be specifically organized into the following selection pairs:

- Group A: Centered on Thought/Aims (① as focus)...①-②
- Group B: Centered on Contents (⑥ as focus)...⑥-②,⑥-③,⑥-⑤,⑥-④
• Group C: Centered on Children (4 as focus) …4-3, 4-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Major research interests (pair of answer in question 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice (Number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Thought/Aims has a high fidelity with Curriculum and this combination overshadows the others. However, we note that Subject Contents/Materials are tied not only to Curriculum, but also more broadly to Children and Teacher Education.

The second trend is the connection between response trends of “research interest” in question 1 and “major in graduate school” in question 8. Respondents who chose Educational Thought/Aims and Curriculum for “research interests” all majored in Curriculum and Instruction on social studies in graduate school. Conversely, 12 of the 13 who majored in humanities or social sciences in graduate school selected Subject Contents/Material as their “research interests,” and none chose Educational Thought/Aims. In other words, this showed that Group A of research interests was composed of researchers who majored in Curriculum and Instruction, and researchers who majored in humanities or social sciences affiliated solely with groups B and C.

This indicates the possibility that social studies researchers are divided into the following three groups: Group A (Curriculum & Instruction majors), who propose curriculum and lessons by designing appropriate content and methodologies based on the aims of the social studies, researchers in Group B (Humanities or Social Sciences majors) who propose materials that convey the content or appeal of disciplines, and researchers in Group C (Humanities or Social science and Curriculum & Instruction majors), who design material while familiarizing themselves with the needs and cognitive trends of children. In question 16, the different vectors of top-down and bottom-up were proposed.
regarding the ideal state of lesson study. This can be inferred to correspond to the differences and breadth of researchers’ interests as seen above.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This study demonstrated that social studies researchers in Japan have a variety of ways of thinking and research trajectories. Although there is clearly variety, this study recognized least-common-denominator ideas that subsumed this variability. The research views and methodologies that are common to the majority of researchers can be summarized in the following three points. First, practice in social studies itself is considered equivalent to research on social studies. During this study, terms such as establishing goals, proposing practice, development and improvement of curriculums or lessons, came up across multiple questions as part of research interests and methodology, and gained repeated support. These remarks constitute the everyday actions and interests of teachers who work in primary/junior high schools. Instructors “construct their lessons by establishing goals hoping for the better growth of their children, and consider this goal achieved if they learn these contents by this method. If the goal is not achieved, they should redesign their lesson, while reflecting on whether the set goal was impossible, or whether the content or method was inappropriate” (Moriwake, 1986: 182-183). This process of trial and error, repeating the cycle of hypothesis and verification, is a scientific act. In fact, about 35% of articles published in JERAS journals are the results of lesson studies authored by practitioners (Kusahara *et al.*, 2011). In other words, people in charge of research on social studies are primarily practitioners, and the acts of developing/practicing/improving curriculum and instruction are equal to research. This is the idea that “practice (practitioners) = research (researchers),” and this qualitative sameness is the first disciplinary perspective that supports Research on Social Studies.

Second, though research methodologies may vary by the researcher, there is a shared goal of contributing to practice. What became clear through this study was that the methodologies for developing/practicing/improving curriculum and instruction were truly varied. A number of approaches to curriculum/lesson designs were displayed, from ones that originate from the educational thoughts/goals, to ones that standardize the contents and methods of professional science, even to ones that focus on the environment and learning of children. Variation was also seen in the process of design, from a direct cooperation of practitioners and researchers, to indirect suggestions from researchers directed at practitioners. But there is no diffusion of research
purpose. Their viewpoints converged on the purpose to clarify what social studies is, in order to improve social studies. In other words, as practice equals research there is great resistance to research being an end in itself. For instance, the goal of international comparative research is not foreign understanding. It is consistently given the position of a method and a medium to be used in problem-solving in Japan, and the subjects they direct their attention to are foreign practices, programs for practice, and their developers. This idea of “research as development/improvement of curriculum and instruction,” supporting a normative and goal-oriented problem consciousness, for improving the daily practice of curriculum and instruction is the second disciplinary perspective of research on social studies.

Third, researchers serve the role of supporting the development and improvement of curriculum and instruction under the constraints of the subject’s characteristics and social structure/institution. As social studies as an integrated school subject emerged after World War II, there is still a necessity to insist on returning to its origin and suggest the way of realizing the original idea. The normative debate of “what is the nature of social studies” and the practical debate of “what do we do for social studies” are treated as fundamental questions by social studies researchers in Japan.

So why did the researchers take on this role? The basic condition for the formation of Research on Social Studies as discipline is the “teachers’ freedom of education” (Moriwake, 1986:183), but in reality, Japan has many legal restrictions. Ideally, if practitioners, in-service teachers pursue the ideal aims of social studies and implement them through their daily classes, this should become research on social studies. But as this is not allowed under the existence legislation because researchers, as university academic professors who are ensured freedom of speech and action, have come to assume the role of research on social studies, through suggesting ideas and theories that respond to today’s issues, proposing alternative curriculums, partnering with practitioners to develop lessons, and developing improvement plans as consultant or collaborator. This is the idea that “research equals social service” and these opportunities and venues for service are becoming the driving force and field for generating yet more pioneering and challenging “practice.” In fact, researchers spent much of their time in this area. This is the third disciplinary perspective.

In sum, research on social studies in Japan is characterized by the design and methodology that consists of a cycle of research for: (1) Practice → (2) Development/Improvement → (3) Social Service → (1) Practice and is supported by ideas that comprehensively bind these three points together.
Furthermore, this system of Japanese research on social studies should be transmitted overseas in a set with Japanese "lesson studies" tradition that is ideologically high in fidelity. When this academic system that evolved like the Galapagos is spoken about along with the context that has demanded such disciplinary perspective and methodologies, its significance will be understood deeply and widely (Kusahara, 2012).

Notes
1) Kiritani(2012) and Watanabe(2012) suggested that the qualitative research in the meaning of western academy seldom appeared in the journals published in Japan. Their findings are not consistent with the response tendency of our questionnaire. This seems to means the acculturation or reconstruction of the concept of "qualitative research" in the context of Japanese disciplinary perspectives and methodologies.
2) The in-service teacher also can enjoy the freedom of speech and action, as far as they participate in the academic association, and then contribute the paper to the journal independently and in collaboration with the university professors.
3) Kusahara(2012) introduced an irony using the term of Galapagos which one U.S., researcher criticized the academic system in Japan.

References


Appendix A

【Part A】Research Interests, Methods, and Environment

Q1: Choose two themes where your research interests are high.
①Educational Thought/Aims
②Curriculum
③Teacher (instruction/teaching methods)
④Student (conception/learning processes)
⑤Teacher Education
⑥Subject Contents/Material
⑦Other

Q2: Choose two research methods you use.
①Quantitative-Statistical Approach,
②Qualitative-Descriptive Approach
③Ideological/Philosophical Approach
④Practical Proposal Approach
⑤Historical Text Approach
⑥Empirical Scientific Approach
⑦Normal Scientific Approach
⑧Other.

Q3: Choose one location you learned research methods.
①Special class/course from graduate school with a research methodology focus
②General class/course from graduate school without a research methodology focus
③Seminar by supervisor
④Specialized handbook/ Textbook
⑤Study/Emulation of preceding literature
⑥Advice from senior/ colleague
⑦Other

Q4: Describe your important mottos in your research?

Q5 -1: Choose the ratio of research in your work compared to education.
①Education: Research = 5:1
②Education: Research = 5:2.5
③Education: Research = 5:5
④Education: Research = 5:10
⑤Education: Research = 5:15
⑥Other

Q5 -2: Choose the ratio of administration in your work compared to education.
①Education: Administration = 5:1
②Education: Administration = 5:2.5
③Education: Administration = 5:5
④Education: Administration = 5:10
⑤Education: Administration = 5:15
⑥Other
Q5-3: Choose the ratio of social service in your work compared to education.
1. Education: Social Service = 5:1
2. Education: Social Service = 5:2.5
3. Education: Social Service = 5:5
4. Education: Social Service = 5:10
5. Education: Social Service = 5:15
6. Other

Q5-4: Choose the task to be occupied more in future.
1. Research
2. Education
3. Administration
4. Social service

Part B] Career

Q6: Choose the years of elementary/secondary school teaching experience.
1. None
2. Under 3 years
3. 3-4 years
4. 5-10 years
5. 11-19 years
6. 20 or more years.

Q7: Choose the years of university teaching experience.
1. None
2. Under 3 years
3. 3-4 years
4. 5-10 years
5. 11-19 years
6. 20 or more years.

Q8: Choose the major in graduate school.
1. Never finished graduate school
2. Education (including educational philosophy, educational methodology, and educational sociology)
3. Curriculum & Instruction of Social Studies
4. Geography
5. History
6. Law/Political science
7. Economics/Sociology
8. Ethics/Philosophy.
9. Other

The respondent who chose 2 and 3 in Q8 → please answer [Part C] and [Part D].
The respondent who chose 1 and 4 ~ 9 in Q8 → please skip [Part C] and answer [Part D].
【Part C】Understanding/Evaluation of U.S. Social Studies Research

Q9: Choose all which you refer or cite the social studies journals in U.S..
   ① Theory and Research in Social Education
   ② Social Education
   ③ Social Studies and the Young Learners
   ④ The Social Studies
   ⑤ Other
   ⑥ None

Q10: Do you have experience dealing with social studies (geography/history/civics) education or social related education (law education, service learning, and moral education, etc.) in U.S.?
   ① Yes → Please answer Q11-1
   ② No → Please answer Q11-2

Q11-1: Choose the reason within 2 choice why you dealt with the education in U.S..
   ① Because it is highly meaningful to know about education in regions with a differing cultural/political background.
   ② Because it is important to understand research trends and methodologies on a global scale.
   ③ Because it is possible to comprehend the issues in the Japanese curriculum and lesson, and obtain implications to plan improvement strategies through them.
   ④ Because it is beneficial when researching the origins or nature of social studies education.
   ⑤ Because it is necessary for Japanese and foreign researchers (particularly in U.S.) to cooperate and implement global research.
   ⑥ Other

Q11-2: Choose the reason within 2 choice why you did not deal with U.S education.
   ① Because it is not meaningful to know about education in regions with a differing cultural/political background.
   ② Because it is more important to understand the trends and methodologies in neighboring Asian nation.
   ③ Because there are no direct connections to the Japanese curriculum and lessons, and there are few implications that can be obtained for planning improvement strategies.
   ④ Because there are few points in common between Japanese social studies education and foreign education (particularly in US)
   ⑤ Because it is necessary to uncover and analyze class practices and research results on a more local level.
   ⑥ Other

Q12-1: Do you have researcher and/or practitioner in U.S. that had influenced your research?
   ① No → Please answer Q13-1
   ② Yes → Please answer Q12-2

Q12-2: Provide the names of researchers and/or practitioners within 3 people.
Q13-1: Do you have U.S. social studies education theory and/or educational programs that you refer frequently.
① No → Please answer Q14
② Yes → Please answer Q13-2

Q13-2: Provide the names of education theories and/or educational programs within 3 items.

[Part D] Understanding/Evaluation of Japanese Social Studies Research

Q14: Choose the roles within 2 choices that researchers ought to play.
① To prescribe and propose the nature and purposes of social studies (geography/history/civics education)
② To interpret the intents and causes of National curriculum
③ To describe and explain the states of and issues in the curriculum
④ To describe and explain the states of and issues in teachers’ instruction
⑤ To describe and explain the states of and issues in children’s learning
⑥ To describe and explain the phenomena and issues occurring in the classroom
⑦ To theorize perspectives and methods for developing and improving curriculums and lesson
⑧ To develop and implement educational materials, based on local needs and academic results, together with teachers
⑨ To train teachers
⑩ Other

Q15: Choose the relationship “researchers” and “practitioners” that you support.
① Researchers and practitioners have a fundamentally differing position. The responsibility of the researcher is to objectivize, then describe and explain practice, while maintaining an appropriate distance from practitioner
② Researchers and practitioners have a unified relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to collaborate with practitioners to clarify problems, and develop and improve new curriculums and lessons”
③ Researchers and practitioners have a complementary relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to get close to practitioners, draw knowledge from practical experience, and analyze and evaluate it
④ Researchers and practitioners have a complementary relationship. The responsibility of researchers is to test, theorize, and formulate their own hypothesis, with the cooperation of the practitioners
⑤ Other

Q16: Describe the future direction of research that social studies researcher ought to follow.