
Inclusive Citizenship in Japanese Textbooks : Shift in the foundations of citizenship

Kazuya Taniguchi
Tohoku University

Abstract

This paper analyzes the aspect of inclusive citizenship in Social Studies textbooks for junior high school (JHS). In the 1998 version of the National Curriculum Standard, there is the first mention of a shift in Japanese society toward a “pluralistic society.” From this version on, there can be seen textbook content which deals with aspects of living in a multicultural Japanese society. However, the textbooks still retain a certain amount of confusion and ambiguity about what it means to live in a “pluralistic society.” This paper will explain this change in thought towards the foundations of citizenship in Japanese textbooks over the last decade and its current limitations.

1. The Second “Perfect Form” of the National Curriculum Standard

The Japanese education system was reconstructed after World War II and the first National Curriculum Standard¹ was issued in 1947. Since then, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT)² has revised the standards every ten years. These standards are revised to reflect current trends in society and education [Table 1].

The 1947 National Curriculum Standard and the following 1952 version were developed according to the principles of Progressivism. But an academic-centered curriculum was introduced in the 1955 version. The fundamentals and the writing style of the overall objectives of Social Studies for Junior High School (JHS) were determined in the 1969 version.

New content was added to the overall objective for the Social Studies curriculum which reflected social and educational changes. For example, a multi-cultural view of historical development was introduced into the 1970 version of World History in High School.

Starting with the 1997 version, Social Studies began using a “π” style curriculum.

Table 1 Overall Objectives of JHS Social Studies

1969ver.	1977ver	1989ver	1998ver
To develop the basic quality	To develop the basic quality of Citizens	To develop the basic quality of Citizens,	To develop the basic quality of Citizens,
		who lives in an International Society,	who lives in an International Society,
required as members in a Democratic and Peaceful Nation/Society,	required in Democratic and Peaceful Nation/Society,	required in a Democratic and Peaceful Nation/Society,	required in a Democratic and Peaceful Nation/Society,
to cultivate knowledge and understanding for their social lives			
through the study of Geography, History, Politics, Economics and Civics.	through cultivating affection for their homeland and its history,	through cultivating the affection for their homeland and its history,	through cultivating affection for their homeland and its history,
	and the basic capabilities as a citizen,	and the basic capabilities as a citizen,	and the basic capabilities as a citizen,
	from a broader perspective,	from a broader perspective,	from a broader perspective,
			by developing an interest in society and thinking from multi-faceted perspectives based on various data.
	Introduction of the “π” style curriculum	Perestroika(1985) Sign IMF(1987) The end of the Cold War(1985-1989)	Toward Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society(1986-1999) Globalization(1990’s)

The two legs of “π” were Geography and History, taught through 1st-2nd grade. The top table of “π” was Civics, which was taught in 3rd grade. Former

versions relied on a parallel study curriculum: Geography in 1st grade, History in 2nd grade, and Politics, Economics and Civics in 3rd grade. As a result of this change, the overall objective became split into parts, replacing “through the study of Geography, History, Politics, Economics and Civics” with “through cultivating affection for their homeland and its history,” and “and the basic capabilities as a citizen.” In short, the objectives focused on “homeland and history” and “citizenship.” The last half of the 1980’s marked the end of the Cold War. The framework of international society changed dramatically. As a result, “those who live in an international society” was added to the 1989 version of the course objective. The next period was globalization, which resulted in the inclusion of “multi-faceted perspectives.”

Between the 1998 and the 2008 versions, there were many educational reforms. For example, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised in 2006. Nevertheless, the next version of the National Curriculum Standard embraced an almost identical overall objective³. The fundamentals of citizenship education based on a pluralistic society were carried over from the 1998 version. From a historical standpoint, the second “perfect version” of the Social Studies curriculum objective was finally created.

2. The Actualization of a Globalized Age

In order to talk about the foundations of Japanese education over this last decade, two keywords must first be discussed.

The first keyword is “standard.” Educational reform movements started in 1980’s U.S. in response to the report “A Nation at Risk.” As a result, the National Standard was adopted in the latter half of the 1990’s and NCLB acts came in 2002. In the same year, Japan also adopted many educational policies: the introduction of an absolute evaluation system into JHS, the introduction of a system for evaluating schools and teachers, the introduction of market principles as applied to education, and the English name “Course of Study” was changed to “National Curriculum Standard.” All of these occurred in 2002 and were related to Outcome-Based Education. The role of teachers, learning and evaluations were dramatically changed

The second keyword is “Globalization.” The 1998 version of the National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies maintains that “Ability of Expression (*Hyogen-ryoku*)” is the final aim of JHS Social Studies. “Competence (*Gengonoryoku*)” in Japanese Language and “Communication Skill” also has the same roots. These skills mean “the ability to demonstrate the process and conclusion of learning and thinking to others effectively through concrete and logical explanations.”⁴ MEXT states that these kinds of abilities are required

in a multi-cultural society, in which people of diverse values live together. Students should be able to communicate with others, express their own opinions logically, and negotiate and problem-solve with people who have diverse values and different viewpoints.

As a result, some learning and testing standards have changed. The questions are tests MEXT developed to check how the concepts of the new National Curriculum Standard have been implemented. The first one does not ask for specific knowledge. Instead, students speculate on the cause and choose an appropriate graph. The right answers are both graph A and Graph C. Students can choose either one of them. The key point students are being tested on is “why the graph proves the explanation.” Below is an example of such a test question:

[Story]

Students find a notice in which the rules for collecting trash are written in four different languages. The students speculate the cause for this new change and research data which shows the increase of foreign immigrants.

[Questions]

- 1) Choose one of the graphs from graphs A to C.
 Graph A (shows an increase in the number of foreign immigrants)
 Graph B (shows the immigrants' origins)
 Graph C (shows the numbers of immigrants from each country)
- 2) Explain why the graph shows evidence of the change in the notice.

The next question is more typical. There are limitless “right answers.” Students can respond using any appropriate keywords concerning environmental issues.

[Story]

Students are studying environmental issues all over the world. They want to research current environmental issues on the Web.

[Question]

When you research environmental issues on the Web, what keywords would you type into the search field?

In this globalized age, in which many people of diverse values live together, there is no “right answer” in such a situation. Students should use what they learn in the classroom, both knowledge and skills, and they are required to develop their own opinions and demonstrate “how” and “why.”

Many activities were introduced in Social Studies textbooks, especially

Civics textbooks. Having a discussion using cards is a typical activity designed to reflect a “pluralistic society.” In the past, students were simply taught “right knowledge” concerning human rights. However, this new kind of activity has no “right answers.” Instead, the students, each with their own values, discuss “Why are certain differences acceptable while others are not?”

- Use the cards on which various examples of differences are written. Discuss among your group and divide the cards into “acceptable differences” and “unacceptable differences”

[Some examples of cards]

Card 1: Females are allowed to marry at the age of 16, but males must be over 18.

Card 2: My parents ask my sister to help clean up after meals, but they never request my brother.

Card 6: Muslims never eat pork, while Hindus never eat beef.

Card 9: Students must pay a fee to ride a town bus, but it is free for those 65 and over.

Card11: Japanese people do not pay a penalty when they don't vote in elections, but in Australia people are fined when they don't vote.

Card12: Adults can use credit cards when shopping, but JHS students cannot.

“Multi-cultural” means that each student belongs to their specific cultural groups; such as ethnicity, gender, race, religion, generation, and so on. However, in this case, students do not judge from the views of one certain cultural group. They may have multi-faceted opinions which they can discuss from many perspectives with each other.

This kind of discussion, according to the National Curriculum Standard, needs to be based on the knowledge, thought and data analysis that students have learned in class as well as their own knowledge and values. The National Curriculum Standard states that this kind of performance is necessary for a multi-cultural society, in which people of diverse values live together⁵.

3. The Confusion surrounding Inclusive Citizenship in JHS Civics Textbooks

Although the Japanese National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies has changed its fundamental ideas to reflect life in a multi-cultural society, Civics textbooks still retain strange aspects of “inclusive citizenship.” Table 2, shown below, shows “inclusive citizenship” as it appears in the textbook. It shows the

nominatives of the actors of civic actions.

For example, in Chapter 1, under “Contemporary Society and Our Life” the textbook reads, “We live with access to an abundance of durable products, such as electronics, cars and PCs.” The “We” in the sentence, of course means, “Japanese.” In Chapter 3-3, “Local Politics and Governments,” the following is written: “To realize a better society, we should show more concern for the works of local government.”⁶ This “we” refers to “community members” in different levels.

Table 2 Inclusive Citizenship Seen in Japanese Civics Textbooks

Unit	Expanding Inclusive Citizenship Who are WE?	Citizenship Act as...
Chapter 1 Contemporary Society and Our Life		
Contemporary Society and Our Life	Japanese	Japanese
Chapter 2 The Japanese Constitution and Respect for Human Rights		
1. Individual and Society	Members of Japan, Specific Group and Community	Members of Japan, Specific Group and Community
2. The Japanese Constitution and Human Rights	Human Being, Japanese	Human Being, Japanese
3. Human Rights in The Convivial Society	Community Member, Japanese	Community Member under The Japanese Political System
Chapter 3 Contemporary Democratic Politics and Society		
1. Contemporary Democratic Society	Members of Japan and Community	Japanese National
2. National Political System	Japanese	No Nominatives
3. Local Politics and Government	Members of Japan, Specific Group and Community	Members of Japan, Specific Group and Community
Chapter 4 Economics and Our Life		
1. Economics and our Life	Human Being	Individual as a Customer
2. Market Economy and Finance	Customer under The Japanese System	Individual as a Customer
3. People’s Life and Public Welfare	Customer under The Japanese System	No Nominatives
Chapter 5 Global Society and Us		
1. Global Issue and Global Citizen	Global Citizen	All Levels of Citizen
2. Global Society and Peace	All Levels of Citizen	All Levels of Citizen

On the other hand, some descriptions in Japanese lack nominatives or inanimate subjects in contrast to English. For example, “The Diet enacts the law, and makes important political decisions.” Another example is, “Laws guarantee our rights and preserve the order of the society. They are also how we judge issues and punish crimes.” Both explanations seem strange, because the Diet and the law function independently and autonomously.

Strangely enough, in Chapter 5-2 “For a Better World” (6), the government doesn’t seem to be made up of any actual people. It reads, “National government assists developing countries in order to help their people...Not only government, but also ordinary citizens can help foreign people who are in need...The local governments, in which we live, address a variety of international activities.” “To solve global issues, such as environment problems and poverty, it may be crucial to cooperate with each other, not only as national government but also as citizens and local governments” This unit describes the role of the international contributions while distinguishing the sovereignty of national and local government.

4. What is the role of the National Government appeared in the textbook?

The textbook distinguishes national government from sovereignty in social activities, while the National Curriculum Standard emphasizes that our society has become pluralistic and many activities in the textbook promote citizens discussions. What is the intention of the textbook?

After careful examination, the role of national government can be broken down into these three parts,

- 1) Main Focus of Various Forms of Human Security
Ex. “Food” “Economics” “Defense” “Energy and National Resources”
- 2) Basic Component of Political and Judicial System
Ex. Nation State is Described as The Fundamental Power and System for Human Security of Japanese Citizens (Life, Welfare, and Local System).
- 3) Society Shares Social Aspects and Foundation
Ex. “Information Society” “Aging Society with Low Birthrate” “Internationalized Society” Based on The Fundamental Principle of The Japanese Constitution

While the textbook expresses a basic perspective on both worldwide globalization and multi-culturalization in domestic society, it still considers the governmental bodies as having the most important roles. The nation has,

according to the descriptions of the textbook, three important aspect of our inclusiveness. The first aspect is that the nation is still our main force for guaranteeing human security. Although we are increasingly becoming more of an international player in the global sphere, the nation is still our primary force for guaranteeing human security, such as food, economic welfare, military defense, energy, and natural resources. The second aspect is the nation is the fundamental component of our political and judiciary systems. The textbook promotes volunteering in the community, as well as playing an active role in local government and NPOs. However, these activities, according to the textbook, are guaranteed by national laws. The third aspect is that the same social aspects and issues within our own country are shared. Japan is an “Information Society” and an “Internationalized Society.” Japan faces specific issues such as “an Aging Society with a Low Birthrate.” The nation is the primary source of the sense of inclusiveness.

These are convincing explanations of the roles of the nation. However, these explanations have some controversial points. For example, in the chapters which cover the national political system and the national financial and welfare system, in these chapters, the descriptions of the textbook lack nominatives for the actors. Also, there are few concrete steps for how citizens can use national power.

Although the political system at the national level is where citizens can exercise their primary political and economic power, and influence global and local issues, this level of national activities has nearly disappeared [Fig 1]. The textbook seems to explain that citizens have many chances to participate at all levels of society under the support of legislative and systemic preparations by the National Government.

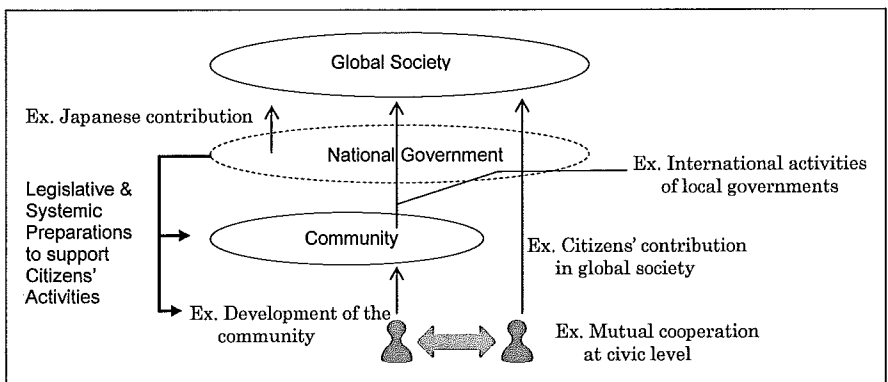


Fig.1 Citizens' activities and the role of National Government

5. Conclusion

Over the last decade, the National Curriculum Standard for JHS Social Studies has shifted its fundamental values to reflect life in a multi-cultural society. Many activities have been added to the textbook which promote the students' involvement in the community. In addition, the 2008 National Curriculum Standard in 2008 included "social participation" as the final goal of compulsory education. It may be said that Japanese education has started to go beyond narrow national education.

However, textbooks encourage students to become involved in community service or to contribute on a global level; this independent mind seems to disappear in textbook activities which deal with issues on a national level. National political systems and laws act like guardians of citizens.

This antilogy is caused by the present uncertainty of inclusiveness. National governments are not only the actors in international and global society now. Many levels of actors, from individual citizens to private companies and international organizations, are becoming influential powers. However, national governments are still the most influential sphere in which citizens can exercise their political powers. They are still the most useful organization to guarantee citizens' security. A balance should be made "using national powers as sovereign" with "establishing a new sense of inclusiveness as citizens in pluralistic society".

Students in Japan have just started to absorb what it is like to live in such a society. Through many activities both in and out of schools, students should be offered many opportunities to participate actively in our society.

Notes

¹ MEXT used "Course of Study" before 2002 and now they use "National Curriculum Standard." These two words will have serious differences the roles and character of The Acts. However, this paper will not deal with the differences.

² Former name of MEXT was "The Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture." It was reorganized and renamed in January 2001.

³ Strictly speaking in Japanese, the words "democratic" and "peaceful" were linked by "and" in 2008 version, instead of a dot as in the former version.

⁴ MEXT, *National Curriculum Standard for JHS Social Studies*, 1998, p.154.

⁵ Kazuya TANIGUCHI, 'Promotion of the Adoption of Standard and Neo-Nationalism in Education' "Kyoiku-Kagaku Shakaika-Kyoiku (The Social Education)," (The Nov. Issue, 2008) No.595, Meiji-tosho Shuppan, Tokyo, Japan, pp.162-163.

⁶ *Atarasi Syakai: Komin (New Social Studies: Civics)*, Tokyo Shoseki, Tokyo, Japan, 2001, p.86.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.68.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

⁹ Kazuya TANIGUCHI, 'Three Keywords for Advanced Learning,' *Kyoiku-Kagaku Shakaika-Kyoiku (The Social Education)*, (The Dec Issue, 2008) No.596, Meiji-tosho Shuppan, Tokyo, Japan, 2008, pp.20-21.