

*Norio Ikeno*

## **New Theories and Practice in Social Studies in Japan: Is Citizenship Education the Aim of Social Studies as a School Subject?**

This paper aims to introduce new theories and practice in Social Studies in Japan since the 1990s, to outline some trends and characteristics relating to the question 'Is Citizenship Education the aim of Social Studies as a school subject?' and to identify 'Applied' and 'Academic' Social Studies as two separate categories.

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology has long advocated the merits of Applied Social Studies, but recent trends have seen educational researchers and local education administrators actively supporting the reformation and promotion of Social Studies from an 'applied' perspective. Going even further, several schools and districts are so in favour of this development that Citizenship Education has been incorporated as a subject or topic into the school curriculum. However, defence of Academic Social Studies is also deeply rooted; its argument being that Social Studies means Social Sciences. According to this view, Geography, History and Civics (comprising politics, economics and sociology) are treated as distinct fields of Social Studies.

### **Keywords**

School subject, Social Studies education, Citizenship Education, Japan

## **1 Introduction**

This paper will focus on Social Studies as a school subject. Debate over the nature of Social Studies in the world of education has raised issues of how to include Citizenship Education and what kind of things it should cover. In broad terms, opinions emerging from the debate can be divided into two sets of views, the first favouring Applied Social Studies with a general mission to develop Citizenship Education and the second Academic Social Studies with a more specific brief to teach social sciences. Recently, growing attention has been paid to the intersection between these two views, and new research and practice are being carried out in this area. The aim of this paper is to summarize these trends and to examine the function and significance of that intersection. In order to do this, the following sections will clarify trends in Social Studies and Citizenship Education in Japan in the 1990s and 2000s, explain the intersection between Applied and Academic Social Studies, and consider the place of Geography and History within Citizenship Education.

## **2 Trends in Social Studies/Citizenship Education in Japan in the 1990s and 2000s**

### **2.1 The Shake-Up in Social Studies in Japan**

Social Studies has been taught as a school subject in Japan since the end of the Second World War. Since shortly before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the generally accepted definition and concepts of Social Studies as a subject have vacillated and become ambiguous.

There are three main reasons for this, the first being changes in education policy and administration. Since 2007, in the process of revising their aims, the government and MEXT have implemented one change after another in the Fundamental Law of Education, the School Education Law and the Courses of Study. The need to develop “builders of the nation and society” has been reaffirmed, and the new aims of fostering love for one’s home town and patriotism have been added. The aim of Social Studies itself within the Courses of Study, namely “to cultivate the basic civic qualities necessary to be a builder of a peaceful and democratic nation and society living in international society,” has not changed, but several items have been added to its content, in accordance with revisions in related laws. A transition in emphasis has also occurred, from ‘an education free of pressure’ to ‘back to basics,’ leading to greater focus on basic knowledge and its acquisition and use. The development of this trend has become the leitmotif for individual subjects, the Period for Integrated Studies and school education as a whole.

The second reason is the reorganization of Social Studies in line with reforms in school education in general. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the main motivators of educational reform were the administration sector, in the form of MEXT and the prefectural Boards of Education, and private educational research organizations. Schools themselves did not act as motivators. During the period of transition around the turn of the century, however, Shinagawa Ward in Tokyo and Kure City in Hiroshima Prefecture made use of the Special Education Zone system to restructure elementary and junior high schools into 9-year integrated institutions, developing appropriate curricula and implementing an education based on them. This marked the beginning of school-initiated reform. It also indicated the start of educational reform being carried out in schools in conjunction with the direct involvement of local government offices. In line with these initiatives, Social Studies was also included in reforms that diverged from the existing Courses of Study. The best example is the subject called Shimin (Citizenship), which was established in Shinagawa Ward in 2004. The origin of this initiative was a subject called Yo-no-naka (In the world), which was being taught at Wada Junior High School in Sugunami Ward and in which Social Studies was reorganized to adopt the content and methodology deemed necessary for children in a changing contemporary world. This led to questions about what was required of children in contemporary society, and the existing concepts of Social Studies began to be shaken.

The third reason is the changes in the actual teaching of Social Studies. There has been substantial development in the practice of Social Studies

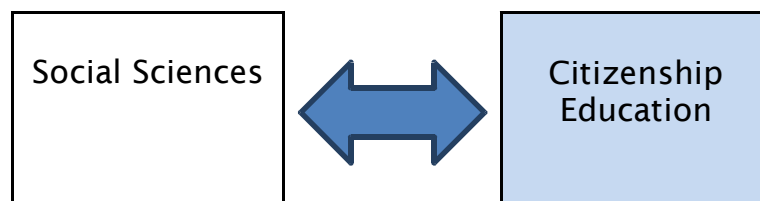
classes in the past; however, most of this has emphasized knowledge and understanding of social life, or the educational practice of social understanding. In this paper, this approach to Social Studies is called ‘social science education.’ From around the turn of the century, aspects that had not previously been included in Social Studies, such as values, criteria, rules and order, began to be incorporated. In addition, some researchers and teachers emerged who wanted to reform Social Studies classes, thus furthering the rethinking of Social Studies.

These changes demanded a re-examination of the question of what Social Studies as a school subject was and should be. Until then, Social Studies had been defined as a subject in which “citizenship qualities are cultivated through the development of social understanding” (Utsumi 1971). This definition has remained constant since the introduction of Social Studies into the curriculum in 1947. The Courses of Study continue to maintain this definition. At the same time, in the revisions of the Courses of Study in 1989, Social Studies was abolished in the first two years of elementary school and in senior high school, being replaced by Life Environment Studies in elementary school and by Civics and combined History and Geography in senior high school. This reform has had a significant impact, playing a major role in leading to our current investigation of the nature and scope of Social Studies.

## 2.2 Diversification of the Social Studies Subject Model

From the period around the turn of the last century, Social Studies in Japan changed in terms of both educational theory and educational practice. This trend manifested itself in the diversification of the relationship between Social Sciences, which focused on understanding society, and Citizenship Education, which focused on the development of responsible citizens. Their relationship within Social Studies can be represented in various forms. The three models shown below are the most common.

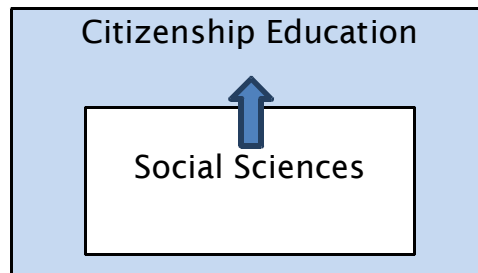
Figure 1. Social Studies Model 1: The separatist model



I use the term ‘separatist model’ for Figure 1. In this model, Social Sciences and Citizenship Education are set alongside each other, and the aim is to link them. This model has been used in the world of Social Studies in Japan for more than 60 years. In basic terms Social Sciences and Citizenship Education are treated as two separate entities, and it is assumed that they are distinct spheres. They can be set vertically or horizontally in relation to each other. If they are set vertically, it becomes a relation of hierarchy; if they are set horizontally, it becomes an aim-method link or a cause-and-effect relationship. This lack of specificity in the relationship is the black

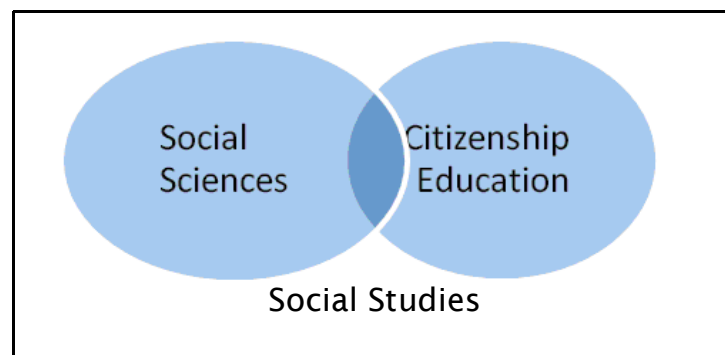
box feature of this model. Until now, definitions have existed only within the parameters of Figure 1, and for many years debate has centred on how to connect the two.

Figure 2. Social Studies Model 2: The integrated model



I use the term ‘integrated model’ for Figure 2. In this parent-child model, Social Sciences becomes subsumed into Citizenship Education, following an aim-method structure. The aim is Citizenship Education, and the method is Social Sciences. Social Studies theory and practice in Japan has rarely followed this model, which originated in the late 1940s based on the experiential education theories of Dewey and others. Around 1950, citizenship was set as the aim of all education, and Social Studies played a central role in achieving it.

Figure 3. Social Studies Model 3: The linked model



I use the term ‘linked model’ for Figure 3. Here, Social Sciences and Citizenship Education overlap and are linked; however, the premise is that each has its own independent aim. The link itself creates new aims, and new theories of Social Studies are being organized around this area of overlap. It is here that two areas of education merge to create a new field of study and new directions for development. These new developments have progressed apace in Japan since the 1990s.

## **2.2 Trends in Social Studies from the Turn of the Last Century to the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Social Studies in Japan has diversified since the 1990s. This diversification can be summarized by saying that theories of Social Studies and lesson development have progressed from the separatist model of Figure 1 and the integrated model of Figure 2 to the linked model of Figure 3.

### *- Context and Turning Points*

The context of these developments is the constantly shifting demands made of education in Japan, together with revisions to educational laws and systems and to Courses of Study made in response. Structural reform and the easing of regulations associated with neo-liberalist theory, as well as the resultant free-marketization of education and the conservatism of an emphasis on uniquely Japanese traditions and culture, are among the influences to be noted.

Social Studies has been equally influenced by these trends, leading to the changes that have occurred since the 1990s. In particular, the definition and concept of Social Studies became ambiguous. For many years after the end of the Second World War, its aim had been to “cultivate citizenship qualities through the development of social understanding,” but this concept became unstable. The first step in this process was the advocacy of Social Sciences in the latter half of the 1970s by Moriwake and others (Moriwake 1978). This group, influenced by the new Social Studies movement in the USA, restricted Social Studies to Social Sciences and abandoned Citizenship Education. By limiting the remit of Social Studies to what could be empirically proven, a high degree of scholarship in education could be guaranteed. They stressed that Social Sciences should be limited to what could actually be implemented in practice and what was possible in real terms. This further narrowed the sphere of responsibility of Social Studies. Teachers were released from the burden of Citizenship Education that they had previously shouldered, and relieved of their mission. This was the theory of ‘Academic Social Studies.’

Such restrictions reformed Social Studies by using Geography, History and social science research as a platform from which to introduce academic research and its results and methods into school education. The strength of the theory of Academic Social Studies lies in the way in which solid content and methods, based on academic research, are used in practice. It is organized in such a way that teachers experience academic research for themselves and then adapt this research according to the type of school, the interests of the children and their level of study, thus enabling children to experience and learn from it. Just as Social Sciences educational theory was incorporated into the new Social Studies movement in the USA, it was used in Japan to organize classes premised on absolute trust in academic research and reflecting it faithfully. One of the best-known proponents of this movement, Moriwake (1978), proposed a model for Social Sciences through the creation of a History unit on the Shogunate system, based on historical research into the Edo era, and a Civics unit on pollution, based on social science research. The most important aspect is that the social

understanding created by children should be 'scientific,' and securing academic standards and objectivity is the guarantee of this.

In terms of the model of Social Studies shown in Figure 1, Academic Social Studies is found only within Social Sciences, and the responsibility of Social Studies in general covers only a small section of this area. As a result, many theories about Social Studies are regarded as belonging to Applied Social Studies, thus linking all Social Studies to Citizenship Education and its development.

Seen from the perspective of Academic Social Studies, and based on the theory of Social Sciences, the traditional Applied Social Studies appears to encompass huge responsibilities and tasks, imposing a psychological burden on education researchers and teachers by making them conscious of the weight of their moral responsibility and imposing on them the duty to resolve this burden themselves. On the other hand, the abandonment of Citizenship Education in Social Studies stimulated the formation of an educational research group which supported the specific mission of Social Studies and education in citizenship, and led to them to emphasize the role of citizenship even more.

#### *- New Aspects*

The theory of Academic Social Studies began as a movement within academic associations and grew to have enormous influence, threatening to destroy existing definitions and concepts. It first surfaced in the 1989 Courses of Study, in which the models shown above in Figures 1 and 2 began to move towards the linked model in Figure 3 as various new aspects began to identify themselves.

The first new aspect was a renewed emphasis on theories of Citizenship Education in Social Studies. These had previously centred on students' attitudes and interest, but new Citizenship Education addressed such aspects as values and norms (Mizoguchi 2001; Yoshimura 1996, 2000, 2001), as well as rules and order (Ikeno 2001, 2006), thereby requiring skills of judgement and decision-making in addition to understanding of social situation. In linking Social Sciences with Citizenship Education in Social Studies in this way, the new integrated model shown in Figure 2 was created.

The second aspect was the move to extend the educational remit of Social Studies to include not only values, norms, rules and order, but also the fields of moral education and ethics. This move began with the textbooks entitled "Yo-no-naka" (In the world) and "Rules", edited by Fujiwara and Miyadai (1998, 1999), which were not authorized textbooks for secondary schools. These textbooks cover fields such as law and psychology as well as the Civics fields of economics, politics and sociology. They are written from the viewpoint that it is not enough simply to provide knowledge about society, because this knowledge needs to be closely linked to 'life' and how to live 'in the world;' and that what students need to learn is not how to relate to society and the world, but how to actually 'manage to live' in it. "In the World" was established as a new subject. Fujiwara became the principal of Wada junior high school in Sugunami Ward, Tokyo, and introduced the subject into Social Studies and the Period for Integrated Studies. Another

initiative related to this movement was the establishment of Shimin (Citizenship) as a subject, replacing life environment studies and Social Studies at the elementary school attached to Ochanomizu University (2004) as part of its research development programme from 2001; the aim of Shimin is to develop the skills and abilities of ‘responsible citizens’ through the cultivation of social value judgements and decision-making. One more example is the educational reform in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo, where Citizenship was established as a subject – a part of an original 9-year integrated curriculum for elementary and junior high school children. “Citizenship” integrates the three areas of moral education, the Period for Integrated Studies and Special Activities, and its aim is for students to “be aware of their own way of being and living, and find their own path in life.” This second aspect is clearly a reaction to the minimization of moral duty in subject teaching and the attempt to exempt education from responsibility as represented by Academic Social Studies, swinging instead to a widening of the responsibility of education and an expanded role for Applied Social Studies (Ikeno 2007). These new movements appear to be crossing the borders of Social Studies and extending to education as a whole, thus fitting the parameters of the integrated model shown in Figure 2.

The third aspect was the response of ‘academic’ theory as a reaction to ‘applied’ theory in Social Studies and education in general. New Social Studies courses have been developed to resolve the ambiguity in the relationship between Social Sciences and Citizenship Education (Moriwake 2001; Harada 2000; Kodama 2005). This movement is creating new developments in the area of intersection between them, as indicated in Figure 3. These developments will now be examined.

### **3 Applied Social Studies and Academic Social Studies: Exploring the Intersection**

#### **3.1 New Developments in Models of Social Studies**

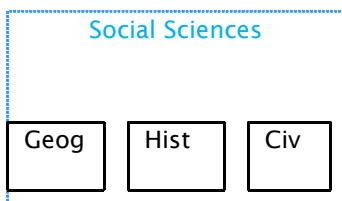
In the previous section, I suggested that models of Social Studies have become more diversified and are producing new zones of intersection. I would now like to introduce these theoretical developments in schematic form. It is important to note that these models represent a theoretical ordering of new developments, which is not the same as the actual or chronological order of developments.

The group of models shown in Figure 4 focus on the component areas of Geography, History and Civics in Social Studies, and illustrate the various relationships between Social Sciences and Citizenship Education. Blue lettering indicates related areas that are taken into consideration but not directly aimed at; dotted lines indicate areas that are taken into consideration without being directly related.)

The models in the left hand column place a relatively strong emphasis on Social Sciences. They put primary importance on the relationship of Geography, History and Civics to Social Sciences and then, in descending order, pay increasing attention to links with Citizenship Education. Figure

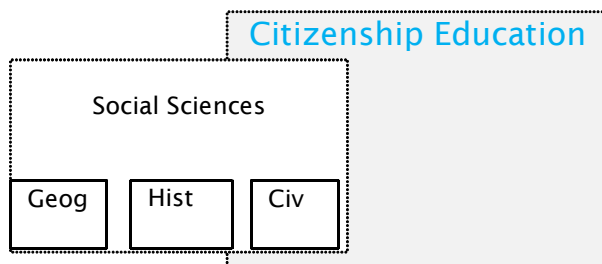
4.4.1 shows a model in which Geography, History and Civics are integrated into Social Sciences, which in turn is directly related to Citizenship Education. The models in the right hand column place the stronger emphasis on Citizenship Education. They are consistent in setting Citizenship Education as the actual aim of Social Studies, and in making Social Sciences the process by which that aim must be realized. Going down the column, Social Sciences in themselves become less and less important, while the relative emphasis on citizenship becomes stronger. Once again, it must be stressed that this series of models is a theoretical structuring, and does not represent actual practice or chronological developments in Social Studies research since the 1990s.

Figure 4.1. Geography, History and Civics as discrete subjects



In Figure 4.1, Geography, History and Civics are taught separately, as distinct and unconnected subjects. Naturally, consideration of Citizenship Education is not included and, in practice, classes often lack awareness of a Social Science perspective. In junior high school Social Studies and senior high school Geography, History and Civics, many teachers in their separate classrooms follow the example of Figure 4.1. If the teachers see themselves as Geography or History specialists, they tend to use class time exclusively for the purpose of their own subject. Umbrella titles such as 'Social Studies' or 'Geography with History,' together with the citizenship aspects of their aims, are regarded as nothing more than decorative labels.

Figure 4.2. Geography, History and Civics as Social Sciences

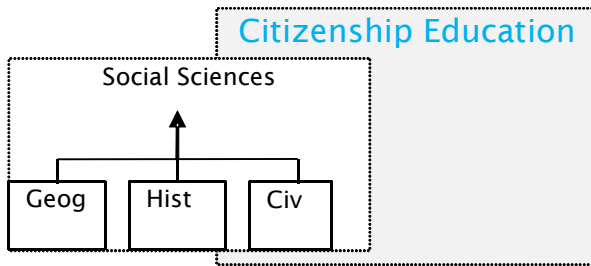


In Figure 4.2, no consideration is given to Citizenship Education, but there is awareness of the sphere of Social Sciences. Although Geography, History and Civics are taught separately, they are taught either as a means of acquiring knowledge and understanding about society or as an actual Social Science course. The content is drawn from the individual subject areas, but a conscious effort is made to link this content with contemporary society and its functions. This link is made directly in Geography and indirectly in



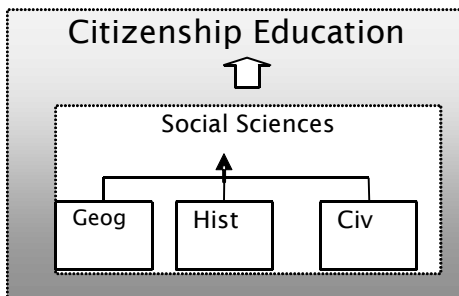
History. Areas of knowledge from individual academic fields are taught, and classes are organized and developed in accordance with research findings. The model shown in Figure 4.2 is a theory of Social Sciences based on academic research.

Figure 4.3. Geography, History and Civics as connected Social Sciences



In Figure 4.3, although Geography, History and Civics are taught separately, there is a requirement that each should fulfil the criteria of Social Sciences. These criteria are concepts and theories that can be used to understand contemporary society. In this type of approach, Geography, History and Civics are sometimes interconnected and may be explicitly structured into an integrated Social Studies curriculum, using their concepts and theories to address contemporary society and its problems; and in this link with contemporary society, Citizenship Education can be indirectly implemented.

Figure 4.4.1. Geography, History and Civics for Citizenship Education through Social Sciences



In Figure 4.4.1, Geography, History and Civics transcend Social Sciences and are directly linked to Citizenship Education. According to this model, it is possible in Geography classes to go beyond explanation of the problems of contemporary society to examine ways of coping with and resolving these problems by investigating the values and norms at issue, examining judgements and decisions, and reflecting on them critically in order to test them and possibly make better ones. In History classes, too, ways of dealing with contemporary problems and resolving them can be found or considered through comparative analysis of issues in past and present societies, thus demonstrating the contribution of the past to the present

and revealing the link between them. This model shows a new theory of Citizenship Education in which the study of Geography and History involves interpretation, explanation and resolution through judgements and decisions that entail explication of values and norms, together with a close investigation of their function and role.

In the Citizenship Education models on the right, Geography, History and Civics are not accorded their own independent existence, but they are three fields that can be integrated to provide explanations and solutions within the primary framework of educational content related to contemporary society and its problems. The entry point may be Geography, but any one unit will also involve a study of History and Civics as well, so that the unit as a whole provides education that integrates all three. Furthermore, it also requires individual responses in making judgements and decisions regarding problems; deals with the responses, judgements and decisions made by social groups, classes and society as a whole; and considers the way that society should be from individual, group and macro perspectives, requiring value judgements, social choice, creativity and application.

Figure 4.4.2. Geography, History and Civics for Citizenship Education

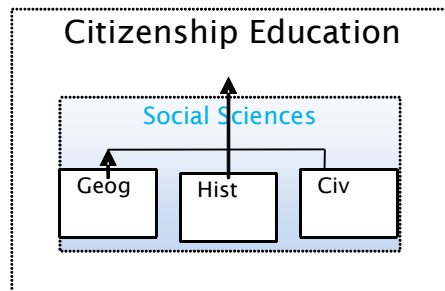
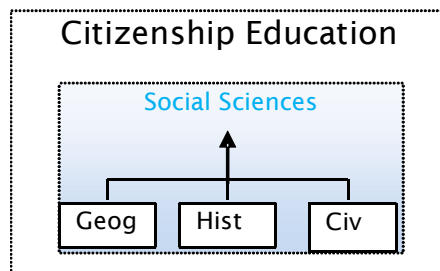


Figure 4.4.2 shows a model in which Geography, History and Civics are linked to each other and also to Citizenship Education. By making the main focus of study society and its problems, Geography, History and Civics are not separated but they are linked with the aim of providing integrated explanations, and then organized in such a way that students can progress to analyzing, discussing and solving problems in society, thereby providing a connection to Citizenship Education.

Figure 4.5. Geography, History and Civics aimed at Citizenship Education



The model in Figure 4.5 is similar to that in Figure 4.4.2, but it aims to analyse, discuss and solve problems in society from the very beginning. In this respect, citizenship is more in the spotlight, while Geography, History and Civics fade more into the background. At times, the distinction between Geography, History and Civics disappears, and the approach is to deal with society and its problems. This model adopts the approach of using Geography, History and Civics as a means by which to deepen thinking and discussion on the diverse perspectives involved when comparing problem-solving and strategies in terms of spatial relationships, temporal processes and historical differences. Drawing together Geography, History and Civics as Social Sciences, or proceeding through the stage of Social Sciences, is not a feature of this model. There can be changes according to the topic of study, but the focus is always on Citizenship Education, and each individual child is required to think about how an individual citizen or society as a whole should respond to a social problem, engaging in discussion about social choice, development and practice.

### 3.2 Types and Features of Intersecting Areas

The main aspects of the models shown in Figure 4 can be summarized in the table below, focusing on six points: subject of study; aims; main content and methods; examples in Geography; examples in History; and purpose.

Table 1. Types of relationship between Social Sciences (SSc) and Citizenship Education (CE) in Social Studies

Type	Separate, independent areas of education (Fig. 4.1)	Awareness of SSc (Fig. 4.2)	Linked SSc (Fig. 4.3)	CE through SSc (Fig. 4.4.1)	SSc for CE (Fig. 4.4.2)	Geography, History and Civics aimed at CE (Fig. 4.5)
Subject of study	Content of separate fields	Content of separate fields	Content of separate fields	Content related to contemporary society	Social problems	Social problems
Aims	Acquisition of knowledge in separate fields/areas	Acquisition of knowledge and explanation in separate fields/areas	Acquisition of knowledge in separate fields/areas	Understanding and explanations of society	Analysis and discussion of social problems	Discussion and resolution of social problems
Content	Study of geographical areas and historical periods	Study of geographical areas and historical periods	Study of geographical areas and historical periods	Social study of geographical areas and historical periods	Research into social problems	Social development based on social problems
Methods	Teacher-centred (lecture)	Teacher-centred (lecture/exploration)	Teacher-centred (lecture/exploration)	Teacher-centred (exploration/lecture)	Collaborative study between teacher and students	Collaborative study between teacher and students
Examples (Geography)	Topography study	Topography study	Topography study	Regional social research	Geographical research on social problems	Study to resolve social problems
(History)	Study of eras	Study of eras	Study of eras	Social research into eras	Historical research on social problems	
Purpose	Geography, History, Civics education	Geography, History, Civics education	Education for geographical, historical and civic aspects of social understanding	SSc as social research	CE as research into social problems	CE as social problem-solving

## **4 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **4.1 The Place of Geography and History within Citizenship Education**

As described above, there have been new movements in the world of Social Studies in Japan during the period from the 1990s to recent years in terms of linking the two educational theories of Social Sciences and Citizenship Education. This movement can be said to have brought about new developments in both fields in the area of intersection between them. There have been pioneering moves on both sides of the intersection (Figure 4), as summarized in Table 1, with the result that the two educational spheres of Social Sciences and Citizenship Education have come closer and more open to compromise, developing relationships which have led to new developments in both fields.

In these new developments, novel ideas have emerged in both Geography and History education. I would like to end this paper by using examples to examine the future direction of Citizenship Education in Social Studies and subject teaching in Japan.

Kusahara (2006, 2007, 2008) has already reviewed the new developments in Geography. According to Kusahara, Geography has moved in the direction of socialization and Civics and, in relation to Citizenship Education, has proceeded from a theoretical base of specialization and compartmentalization toward theories of collaboration. Whereas Geography used to entail the teaching of specifically geographical content, it now incorporates contemporary societal issues in a move towards 'socialization' and includes links with Citizenship Education in a move towards 'civic education.'. New elements emerge in the development of Geography, such as geographical and social science research.

One example is an actual lesson on demographic change, which involves exploring the causes of population change in post-war Japan, linking them to social change and examining the historical changes of contemporary society through spatial population movements (Kotani 2005; Kusahara 2006). This lesson goes deeper than a merely geographical view of population change, explaining it in terms of temporal change by applying a social science perspective and revealing links to contemporary society.

However, there is a danger that the approach through social scientific explanation might be abandoned in favour of mere study of geographical content, risking a retreat to isolationist Geography education. As Kusahara (2006) points out, linking Geography education to Social Sciences is the most effective policy in the current Japanese education system and it is practical for many teachers, but there are limitations. Academic and scientific geographical knowledge is prioritized over the aims of Social Studies as a whole to the detriment of Social Sciences, not to mention Citizenship Education. More emphasis on the development of Social Sciences itself, as well as of Citizenship Education through Social Sciences, is required.

In the field of History education, reviews by Sato and Kuwabara (2006) and Ikeno (2007a) indicate that new developments are occurring more actively than in Geography. Social Sciences relating to historical and societal facts and to values, Social Sciences for the purpose of Citizenship Education, and

History courses aimed at Citizenship Education are all types of initiative that have been created and fit into the group of models shown in Figure 4.

Ikeno (2006) suggests incorporating the topic 'Use of Force' in teaching World History. This would look at post-independence America and link its history with contemporary issues in Japan and the world, analyzing, examining and making judgements about the ways in which people and citizens, as well as political authorities, can use 'force'; and encouraging students to develop their own opinions about the society of the future. This approach could be cited as one example of the potential for building a democratic society through the study of history.

There are issues that remain to be addressed in this approach. Just as in the Geography lesson described above, the method is not limited by the topic, but can develop Social Science skills through research into contemporary society and making judgements about problems, as well as directing educational practice towards Citizenship Education. However, a question arises: where and how to develop such a course in practice? In other words, even if the theory and lesson models are established, the problem of actually guaranteeing their use in real classroom situations remains.

School education in Japan is heavily restricted by the Courses of Study and textbooks, and teachers have little freedom. Even when new theories and practical models are developed, only a minority of teachers make use of them and indeed, not all are able to. The area of intersection between Social Sciences and Citizenship Education is being widely explored, but the freedom of teachers to make use of these developments in actual classroom situations needs to be increased, step by step. For this to happen, there needs to be more pressure from schools calling for the expansion of educational freedom, and an easing of regulations by the government and MEXT.

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