
What Japanese High School Teachers Say about Social Studies

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate what Japanese social studies teachers at two different types of schools say about social studies. The researchers highlight the following three research questions inspired by Evans(2004)'s work; 1)What is the learning goals which the sampled Japanese social studies teachers set for their lessons?; 2) How do the Japanese school teachers teach social studies?; 3) Why do they prefer to choose those goals and pedagogies? By asking these questions, the researchers hoped to gain a better understanding of Japanese teachers' beliefs, teaching, and attitudes and perceptions of social studies instruction.

The classroom teachers seem to be one of the most powerful forces shaping social studies goals and objectives. The teacher's beliefs, social studies knowledge bases, and understanding of students and learning resources available mold the nature of any social studies programs. Teachers may have little control over budget and only occasional influence on the selection of textbooks, but they are the final arbiters of what occurs in classroom. Any curricular change that is not viewed favorably by teachers can be effectively vetoed. Teachers also make myriad decisions to select and effectively implement a particular teaching strategy. Any change or improvement in social studies, of course, lies largely in the hand of teachers.

Himeno et al. (2014) pointed out that the high school teachers would be required high professionalism in relation to subject teaching comparing to other types of school. This is probably because the achievement gap between the schools is bigger due to the entrance examination of high school. With rise of the rate of enrollment in senior high schools to about 98%, the high school teachers are required to confront more problems such as high dropout rate

and achievement gap. As described in details later, the main focus of teacher research in Japan seemed to be the teacher in compulsory education, namely, elementary and junior high school and high school teachers has been received less focus. Thus, this research will show how high school teachers say about their lessons in different types of high schools.

Literature Review

In the United States, many researchers have studied social studies teachers as instructional decision-makers and have identified contextual factors that explain instructional decisions (Kirkwood, 2002). Teachers often vary in their perceptions of their role in planning curriculum and instruction (Brown, 1998; Marsh, 1984; Stodolsky, 1988; Thornton, 1991). Some teachers base their curriculum decisions on their availability of instructional materials such as textbooks (McCutcheon, 1981) and on concerns about classroom management (Parker & Gehrke, 1986). Other teachers are influenced by methods that are best suited for their students' needs and interests (Kagan, 1993; O'Loughlin, 1995) or their values (Levstik, 1989). Other studies show that particular issues within the school building and community influence teacher instruction (McNeil, 1986). Several studies show that teachers' underlying beliefs and professional and personal experiences are the dominant influences in shaping their instructional decisions (Cornett, 1990; Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1980).

Unlike the United States, the Japanese social studies research tradition used to be rooted in the introspective (Ogawa & Kusahara, 2011). It is more inclined towards a holistic and dialectical approach, which sees the world as a complex whole with a full set of relationships, stressing the meaning and value of the whole over its components. However, in the past ten years, the trend began to change and more empirical research has been introduced in the research field of social studies.

In Japan, two large-scale and comprehensive studies were conducted by National Institute of for Educational Policy Research (2007) and Benesse Educational Research and Development center (2010). Those studies focused on the practice in social studies and aimed to reveal teaching and learning strategies over all subject areas including social studies based on quantitative survey. Both studies offered coherent information around current social studies education in Japan. The results of both studies provided the main teaching and learning approach in practice, but there is little information about how the teachers employed various teaching approaches in their classrooms and why they used them for their students.

Igarashi's study (2011) explored 10 Japanese social studies teachers'

perceptions about their own practice at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels. His quantitative and qualitative research study showed a variety of pedagogies and factors in Japanese schools, but the study mainly focus on elementary and junior high school teachers. Generally speaking, many senior high school teachers tend to emphasize more on their subject disciplines than elementary and junior high school teachers. Murai (2013; 2014) examined the works of the high school social studies. However, the sampled teachers which he selected were received highly evaluated and he did not focus the type of schools which teachers belonged to.

Methodology

Research Site

Similar to the other Asian neighbor countries such as China and South Korea, Japan has relatively centralized educational system. On the premise to ensure the quality of the standard of school education, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Tokyo has revised the national curriculum which all Japanese authorized schools, including both public and private schools are required to implement every ten years and it has authorized the all school textbooks. Although Japanese government seems to provide schools with more flexibility to decide their school curriculum throughout the recent reform, MEXT remains a strong power in school practice. Public school teachers are usually employed by local or state governments. Regardless of their willing, most teachers have to move their schools every five to seven year and accumulated experience of various school types. Historically, as Japanese school education emphasizes social promotion which allows students to promote to the next grade only at the end of the current year, there is no official end-of- course examination from elementary to high school level. At the same time, a university entrance examination is highly competitive and thus the exam tends to have strong effect on the course of high school (Kennedy & Lee, 2010). Like mathematics and languages, social studies has also been regarded as one of the main subjects and it has relatively stable and high position in Japanese high school curriculum, because the most universities require the result of the examination of social studies as a tool of selection.

For this study, the data was collected from two different types of schools in Japan: Naga High School and Hayashi High School. Those sites were chosen because those schools hold distinctive missions, in particular in relation to preparation for their students' post-school destinations and because those schools develop distinctive subcultures. The site selection was convenient based upon on of the researchers' professional relationships with

the teachers at two schools.

Naga High School (pseudonym) is a large and mixed high school located in urban area. Naga High School is officially designed as ‘top leader school’ by local prefecture, accepts the cream of the age cohort in terms of academic excellence, and sends the majority of its graduates to the nation’s top universities. School curriculum seems to emphasize on preparing the students for university entrance examination. The school also encourages the students to involve extra-curricular activities such as school council, sports and volunteer activities which could enrich their life and mind. The school website shows that the school offers a variety of activities for students.

Hayashi High School (pseudonym), in contrast, is a small and mixed high school in rural area. The school aims to prepare some students for less prestigious universities and colleges and to encourage other students to gain a job after graduating. The percentage of students going on to higher education is less than 50%. For students in academic track, the school provides the various elective special courses, like social welfare and food according to the interests of students there. As a whole school ethos, this school seems to emphasize to develop morality and responsible behavior in social life rather than independent activities by students. This means that the school aims to foster basic knowledge and attitudes for acceptable member of society after graduation.

Research Methods

Because of the nature of the research purpose, we adhered to a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995). As a total, nine high school teachers participated in this study: Seven teachers from Naga High School and two from Hayashi High School who accepted our application after reading the outline of our study. The different number of participants in each school was brought because of the school size. While Naga High School has seven social studies teachers, Hayashi has only three teachers.

Data were collected semi-structured individual interviews lasting 30-60 minutes. With the permission of the participants, the all interviews were recorded and transcribed. For enhancing validity and reliability in the study, classroom observations and participation, and classroom materials were also analyzed. Data analysis was conducted to answer the three main research questions. The analysis followed an inductive process influenced by ‘grounded theory’ developed originally by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (as cited in Grbich, 2007). The raw data was coded in terms of their view of learning goals and pedagogical approaches and the factors used to establish the writing frame

and arguments. The data was analyzed by both focusing on individual responses and comparing the two contrasting schools. To maintain the credibility of the findings, the member check has been done (Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995).

Findings

Teachers' goals

The interview data indicates that the individual teachers seemed to have three different goals: developing frameworks for understanding the societies; developing general study skills; and preparing for future citizens. Most teachers, however, did not indicate the importance of academic discipline, such as academic knowledge or skills. Mr. Sasaki, a geography teacher at Naga High School, is only one teacher emphasizing the improvement of geographical literacy skills based on his constructivist view.

I expect that our students would have an opportunity to face the number from statistical data or maps in various real-life situations. In such a situation, I would like students to read and use them critically, thinking 'the geographical data can be easily transformed according to the interest of users'. I think it would be useful for students after graduating.

Developing frameworks for understanding the societies

Regardless of school types, many teachers from both schools insisted the importance of developing frameworks for understanding and interpreting various societies. In their interviews, the frameworks were translated into various words and had a number of meanings. For instance, Mr. Tanaka, a geography teacher at Naga high school regarded a framework as a tool to transform disconnected facts into joined-up image and perspective on certain place inductively.

The lesson about industry in the US can be one of the examples. Before taking the lesson about industry, our students are required to learn the characteristic of the climate, the natural resources and the feature of landscape in different sections. As you know, it would be really painful for students to learn and to memorize those things discretely. But, if you show how to connect that information to understand the feature of industry in the US, they may develop their own image as a whole and they may come to understand the importance of learning different parts about the US.

Mr. Suzuki, a world history teacher at Naga High School, emphasized that the frameworks as scaffolding student constructions of the past were important for history education. Mr. Arie, a Japanese history teacher, however, indicated that the framework is the result of being reconstructed and interpreted about historical events in their own words. Mr. Maeda, a teacher at Hayashi High School, highlighted the importance of producing framework in his lesson, but

he said that the framework included concepts and theories standing behind a number of facts in his context.

I don't focus on detailed information of social events in my history and civics lesson, while I emphasize the importance of framework. They (=students) may have a chance to travel somewhere or watch the news. At that time, I would like students to think critically, asking like 'why did the Japanese-Sino War occur or 'why is the price of a bottle of coke in summer the same that in winter? Even coke would be well-sold in summer though.

The possible reason why the teachers from both schools agree could be that they believe that framework facilitate students' learning about societies and increase the motivation for it because the students would connect with the piece of facts into big picture. At the same time, a number of teachers especially from Naga High School mentioned difficulties to conduct the type of teaching in real classroom settings because the conflicts between time and coverage of textbook under the pressure of examination.

Developing general study skills

The interview data showed that most of the teachers at both schools for this study referred the basic study skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking skills should be fostered in their classroom. This statement made by Mr. Maeda, a teacher from Hayashi High School, was typical.

Throughout the lesson, I usually give many, many questions to our students aiming to improve their listening and speaking skills.

Interestingly, the teachers at Hayashi High School for this study seemed to more focus on oral skills than other skills. It was probably because of the students' characteristics and their intellectual motivations. Ms. Kojima mentioned the importance of improving speaking and listening skills for their life.

Yes, our students can speak something, sometimes too much though. But, as you can see, what they say does not seem to be the result of deep thinking. They can say something before they think. This has sometimes brought some conflicts with friends, family and the other people. Thus I try to improve my questions which provide in my lesson to encourage them to speak something after thinking. Of course, I understand there is a limit to be achieved by them. But, I would like to continue it as long as we can.

Many teachers at Naga High School, in contrast, appeared to value writing and reading skills rather than oral skills. This is because these skills would be useful for students to prepare for university entrance examinations as

well as for their life. Mr. Tanaka, a geography teacher, explained.

I encourage my students to summarize what they learn from the lesson if we had time. This could be effective to fix knowledge they learned.

Mr. Kawamura, a Japanese history teacher, emphasized that the writing task is important not only for exam preparation but also for their life:

I develop the written tasks from the data of past university tests. The students increase the motivation to tackle these tasks because they think it is useful for their preparation for exams. 'Usefulness' is important factors for them to learn. (...) But, I also believe that writing and reading skill are important for them to live. The students today tend to speak partial words instead of whole sentence, I guess. Thus I try to encourage them to write the complete sentences and texts.

Preparing for mature members of communities

With regard to the role in school curriculum, both Naga and Hayashi school teachers mentioned that social studies were provided as a firm foundation for human development. Knowledge and skills that students would learn during social studies lessons are viewed as an important and useful for their future. Variation was apparent across the samples. At the same time, many history teachers emphasized that history could become benchmarks for reflecting and making a prediction for future society. The points made by Mr. Azuma, a world history teacher from Naga High School would be typical:

I guess that social studies is a subject to encourage children for development and socialization. ...This is because history could be one of the useful models if pupils think about causation, namely cause-and-effect, or process to attain the goal during the lesson.

Mr. Suzuki, a history teacher, also stated.

I believe 'history repeats itself.' Thus I guess the solutions of contemporary problems and issues may be found in the historical context. I would like students to have a number of questions about what the cause of war is.

Naga School teachers seemed to display that a role of social studies was to enhance intellectual and critical thinking, compared to their Hayashi counterparts. Mr. Kawamura, a Japanese History Teacher at Naga High School, described the importance of critical thinking which could be fostered in history lesson using examples:

I believe the extent of usefulness give greater meaning to history education. If you visit new place, you can make a plan based on what you learned in social studies, particularly, history class. For example, you may explore whether underground shopping area can be built in fragile ground condition using some challenges in the past.

In contrast, Mr. Maeda, a teacher at Hayashi School, highlighted the aspect of morality saying.

Students should have motivation to know more about social issues. Also, they should have general listening skill. They are important morality when they start to work.

Teaching practices

In this section, we examine how teachers intend to teach social studies in their actual lesson. As shown in previous section, many teachers seemed to prefer to set learning goals beyond transmission of academic knowledge stating developing overall abilities as the base of living in their lessons. Comparing between goals and practices, however, huge gaps were shown in interviews and observations.

Most teachers at both schools acknowledged the importance of performance-based strategies. For instance, Mr. Arii at Naga School stated followings.

I agree that group activity, discussion and debate could be useful for my lesson. If it is possible, I would like to introduce them into my classroom.

Teacher interviews and observational data showed that teachers for this study tended to use their preferred instructional strategies. Mr. Sasaki, a Geography teacher at Naga high school, emphasized the importance of small-group activities in order to develop specific geographical skills effectively.

In geography, I think that knowledge as a result is not important. Rather, academic skills, like reading statistics and drawing graphs and tables are important and tried to develop. But, I feel that there are big differences among individuals in terms of skills. Thus small group activities for students with mixed abilities are useful to help each other to obtain geographical skills.

Interviews and observational data showed that teachers' practices were conducted predominantly in the classroom context and that school-wide and community based activities were few. No teacher used ICT during the classroom, and most teachers employed a traditional teacher-centered teaching style. Many teachers for this study seemed to have some dilemmas between their own teaching goals and their implementations in their classrooms.

Teaching strategy: Teacher exposition and questions

The teacher-centered approach was dominant in both schools, but there were some differences between those two schools. In Naga School, all teachers seemed to emphasize practices that aimed to increase student knowledge in an

efficient way. Whether teachers were conscious or not, most classes observed were occupied by teacher exposition meaning that teachers spend most of the time to deliver information through the ways of explanation during classes. If questions were given, those were closed questions, like ‘Who was the prime minister at that time?’ ‘What is the characteristic of utilitarianism?’ aiming to check students’ knowledge and understanding, or to review and recall learned points in previous class. Although the learning goals were different among teachers, the teachers valued transmission of knowledge because teachers believed that it is necessary to obtain high exam scores for university entry examinations which could be the main motivation of students toward learning social studies. Therefore there were several teachers who showed conflicts between their goals and practices. Mr. Kawamura, a Japanese history teacher, stated followings.

I would like to omit history from the subjects which are required to take in entrance exam. I would like to use a variety of strategies in my lesson.

Data collected at Naga High School revealed that teachers emphasized various factors such as a relation to concepts, temporal and contextual consideration, and relative importance of depth and/or breadth of understandings. In referring the interview and observation data, Mr. Azuma and Mr. Suzuki, world history teachers at Naga School, can be marked contrast. Mr. Suzuki emphasized the connection of facts during his lesson to understand sequence of the events deeply and encourage the students to reflect and rebuild their own interpretation after the lesson, but Mr. Azuma highlighted breadth of knowledge and he tried to provide wide range of information beyond the boundary of ‘world history’ or even social studies. This is because he believed that:

World history should expand the student’s perspective through delivering various type of knowledge. I believe that not all, but some students will connect with the piece of information and understand the meaning for future. Thus I have delivered a lot of information discretely throughout the lesson.

At Hayashi High School, there were less time for teachers to deliver lectures in classes, and teachers conducted in a way of dialogue-based, namely question by teachers and answer by children. Although most of the questions were about knowledge, the teachers pointed out the two aims beyond checking knowledge and understandings of students; to direct attention to teacher and lesson; to let someone to be confident intellectually. Following statements show that teachers at Hayashi have the role of not only delivering knowledge but also for encouraging students to become confident in the classroom.

As our students tend to have less intellectual interest and disappoint their own, they cannot pay attention to lesson....Thus, I often give very, very easy questions to them at the beginning of the lesson and say ‘Well-done!’ ‘Good job, guys! Please keep on!’ if they answer them correctly. You might think this is too simple gimmicks, but this is really useful for them to turn on teacher and take lesson. This is because they have not had such an experience in their school life. They have just got scorched or been ignored until junior-high school .

My main task for my class is how students sit and concentrate on the lesson. It is difficult for them to keep sitting and listening to teacher’s talk throughout the lesson. They can be aware of ‘lesson has begun!’ after answering to my question.

Instructional tool: hand-out or blackboard

By the laws, Japanese teacher are recommended to use authorized textbooks as a main teaching material (Otsu, 2008). According to interviews and observation data, most teachers did not only use textbooks. They used unique materials developed by teachers as a main instructional tool.

All but one teacher at Naga School used their deigned hand-outs as a main instructional material throughout their class. Students are required to keep and organize the teacher-made-handouts. The main reason of teacher-made hand-outs used in classrooms is that information in a textbook would be covered and deliver them effectively for entrance university exams. Mr. Kawamura stated:

We must use hand-out if our students try to apply it...without using it, it is almost impossible to complete textbook.’

Some teachers combine use of hand-outs and other materials such as textbooks and resource books, and other teachers utilize hand-outs only. Although each teacher has different principles for developing them, most teachers employ fill-in-the-blank style because of efficiency. In the case of Mr. Suzuki, a world history teacher, his hand-outs looked like summary of textbook, itemizing the important historical events and figures. He stated that:

This is just summary of textbook. Basically, my class has been conducted based on the order of handout. But I usually put the other information for deepen understanding of the events during the lessons.

Mr.Arii, a Japanese history teacher, stated that some reference data or the portraits of famous figures were also added into his paper, because he would like to have visual images not only from reading materials. Mr. Sasaki, a geography teacher, developed unique designed hand-outs. In his class talking about environmental issues, the cause and effect were schematized, and he

encouraged students to understand causations of environmental issues both logically and sensuously. In addition, the paper made by Mr. Kawamura, a Japanese history teacher, had a space for writing task added to blank space which students filled.

All teachers at Hayashi School used a blackboard instead of using teacher-made handouts, although they understood the effectiveness of handouts in terms of coverage of textbook. Two teachers at Hayashi High School explained the reasons in terms of the character of the students and the school.

(Copying the blackboard) is a kind of training for them. It was hard task for them to sit and write long sentences with no words. I believe this training would be useful for delivering message of ‘concentrate on lesson!’ to students’ (Mr. Maeda)

The main reason why I use blackboard is because that our school is released from the pressure of entrance examination and coverage of textbook. When I worked in a high school where most students are planning to take higher education, I used hand-out because I believed that no important terms can be omitted. (Ms. Kojima)

Assessment: predominant paper and pencil test

In the interview data, all teachers articulated a preference for paper-and-pencil short answer test (e.g. multiple choice test, fill in-the-blank tests, true-false test) as a main tool of assessment and performance-based assessment as an optional. The teachers often spent most of time to refer paper-and-pencil short in answering the questions about assessment. Particularly, they tended to pay more attention to knowledge and understanding, with much less attention to beliefs or skills. According to interview data, the teachers showed the different emphasis of knowledge for assessment. For example, Mr. Arii, a history teacher from Naga School, stated that he mainly focus on checking the memory of piece of knowledge, such as the name of important figure or the date of historical event happening. Meanwhile, Mr. Maeda, a teacher from Hayashi School, told that he focus more on concepts or theories, rather than the simple facts. The data showed that there are appeared to be increasing attention to include the aspect of skills or short-essay style. This is not because the teachers change the mind and understand the importance, but there seemed to be various external factors, like the change of entrance examination or the pressure of school ethos, working: As an example, Mr. Arii stated that ‘Because of the requirement by principles, essay type test had been included for assessment’

Added to formal test as a main assessment tool, both schools employed the specific performance-based assessment, called ‘Notebook check’, according to interview data. Students were required to submit the notebook

or the file of handout in order to be checked the extent to understanding or the attitude toward taking lesson. The teachers should make a judgment whether students understand the content of lessons, or they take the class seriously to read the notebooks/ files the students filled in. As this assessment was optional, the result of the assessment operated as a bail-out: ‘There are a number of students who are not able to obtain good scores even though they seem to take the lesson seriously. In the case, the result of this assessment worked as a bonus (Mr. Maeda).’ About the other performance-based types of assessment (e.g. assessment rubric), a number of teachers showed that they recognized the importance of them. At the same time, however, the teachers believe that these types of assessment could not be trusted by students and parents because the system cannot avoid subjectivity. In recent years, the term of ‘accountability’ has been one of the important themes for Japanese society including educational field and thus the teachers need to prepare to have sufficient and fixed evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of their assessment system.

Comparing between learning goals and assessment, somewhat incongruousness can be shown because the teachers only focused on knowledge acquisition in terms of assessment. However, it is difficult to argue that this tendency is a unique tendency for Japanese teachers. This is because previous works (Linn & Gronlund, 2000; Evans, 2004) also suggested that teachers tend to emphasize paper-and-pencil forms of assessment and they hardly change the mind. However, this could be one of the main causes why people believe that ‘social studies =memory’ the data would suggest the further research in terms of it.

The Factors which could Influence the learning goals and practice

Like many previous studies (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Evans, 2004; Shulman, 1987), this study showed variety of factors influencing teachers’ goals and practices. Although each teacher has different variations of mixture and various emphases within those factors, data revealed that four main factors: authorized textbook, university entrance examination, personal background experience, and personal understanding of social studies. First two factors are external and last two are internal. Evans (2004), who studied Canadian and England school teachers in the context of citizenship education, argued that contextual factors in relation to school (e.g. school ethos and status) were regarded as one of the influential factors, the data from this study did not follow the result. Rather, the context beyond the school such as the system of university entrance examination or authorized textbook seemed to be more influential on the lesson of social studies.

Beyond the types of schools, authorized textbooks could be most influential factor on practices because most teachers for this study referred it to consider how their lessons are conducted. However, to what extent the textbooks involve in practices showed variation depending on the school type. Compared to Hayashi School, the teachers from Naga High School seemed to rely more on textbooks and they tried to cover the overall textbooks following the order and the content described. The teachers from Hayashi School, in contrast, stated that the basic structure of the textbooks, such as the order of chapters was used for long-term planning. Thus, for mid-term or each lesson planning, these teachers may sometimes make a change from original textbooks to fit the context of the schools. This tendency would be connected to the influence of university entrance examination, as a second factor. The examination tended to relate on teaching practice strongly. If a large number of students will apply for universities, obtaining high scores in the entrance exams tend to become a big concern and this could drive the students to move toward learning social studies. The teachers from Naga School seemed to conduct the lesson underpinning the principles of ‘obtain high score to pass the exam’, instead of the original learning goals which teachers intended. As a result, specific teaching strategies to nurture specific knowledge and basic skills on textbooks were predominant, according to data. Therefore, there are a number of teachers from Naga schools expressed the conflict between exam-oriented practice and their original learning goals. For high school teachers, the school type, particularly, the number of students taking university examination is one of the important factors to consider their practice.

Data showed that personal background experiences (e.g. educational and instructional experience, main major or teaching experience) effect on both learning goals and practice. Interestingly, the teaching experiences of ‘tough school’ seemed to play powerful operation to reflect and reconstruct their practice. For example, Mr. Azuma, a teacher from Naga School, emphasized that ‘teaching experience at an academically difficult school has become the foundation of my practice.’ In addition, there is evidence indicating that an understanding of social studies was worked as a significant factor in determining the pedagogical practice, rather than learning goals. For instance, Mr. Tanaka, a geography teacher from Naga High school, he stated about understanding of social studies saying that ‘social studies is a subject dealing with everyday life of students’ and tried to provide a number of questions which connect between the content and students’ life. There are no sufficient data to indicate clear correlation and causation between each factor and learning goals and practice, because various patterns of relationship had been raised.

Discussion

Numerous previous studies (Brown, 1998; Marsh, 1984; Stodolsky, 1988; Thornton, 1991; Evans, 2004) have shown that there were various patterns of decision making in relation to curriculum and instruction by teachers and this diversity brought the different results to their schools. Similar to those studies, this study revealed notable differences in how social studies teachers say about their learning goals and practice.

While this study showed general tendency of contrasting two Japanese schools, we should emphasize that the relationship of their learning goals and pedagogical approaches was not a linear way but complicated. The teachers seemed to try to achieve their learning goals by various routes. This is partly because teachers need to be aware of the various factors in order to develop their practice. They could not conduct their lessons only because of their internal factors but also they should be conscious of the external factors, such as the university entrance examination and the school attitude of textbooks.

Although most of the teachers showed the gaps between learning goals and practice to some extent, there are variety of reactions toward them. While several teachers seemed to be frustrated, the others did not. The reasons why some teachers did not feel discomfort would be because they regarded the goals as hope or desire and they did not see them as what they needs to accomplish. This could reflect their perceptions of curriculum and the autonomy for their curriculum. These findings could provide effective information for teacher training and policy making and demonstrate the effectiveness of empirical research which had not been a popular research style in Japan.

This study, of course, cannot generalize how and what Japanese high school teachers think and say about social studies. In order to generalize the tendency, it would be useful to investigate teachers who are represented nationally by using same format in future research. In addition, this study investigated teachers' perceptions about their lessons broadly. Therefore, it would be useful to focus on particular aspects in more detail and investigate the relationship with the underlying factors in the future research. Furthermore, future research will be needed to examine students' and head teachers' perceptions and compare the data from three different sources.

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