



This paper is taken from

*Human Rights and Citizenship Education
Proceedings of the eleventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Academic Network*

London: CiCe 2009

edited by Peter Cunningham, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 978-0-9562789-6-8

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Tanaka, N. (2009) Research about the nature of citizenship in Japan, in Ross, A. (ed) Human Rights and Citizenship Education. London: CiCe, pp 244 - 250

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Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Lifelong Learning Programme and the personnel of the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Research about the nature of citizenship in Japan

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Abstract

This is the research about the nature of citizenship in Japan. Citizenship Education takes place in Japan in a number of setting. Teachers recognise that citizenship education occurs in the community, in the curriculum of the whole school, more particularly in Social Studies lessons, as well as through the individual subjects of geography, history and civics. But the nature of citizenship among UK, USA and Japan are different. Especially, Japanese children think about the basis of citizenship is moral issues in opposite to democratic issues in the case of UK. This research is to clear the typical types of citizenship education being constructed as a new subject in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo in 2006 and show the nature of citizenship in Japan.

Diverse aspects of citizenship education

The aim, contents and methods of citizenship education greatly differ according to the nature of citizenship being premised. The aims of this research are to:

- 1) Clarify the general view of the citizenship education in Japan,
- 2) Indicate differences in the lesson composition of citizenship education between nations, and
- 3) Clarify the reasons for differing logical structure of lessons.

The following four procedures are adopted in this paper. First I will show an outline of citizenship education in Japan. I will then analyze the differences in citizenship as seen in U.K. citizenship education and Japanese social studies education based on a lesson dealing with the same topic. Thirdly, I will show the analysis perspective of this research. And lastly, I will show the analysis results of citizenship awareness investigation providing the premise of lesson composition and clarify the nature of citizenship in Japan.

There is no subject called Citizenship Education in Japan. Citizenship education adopts various forms in various school settings, and various contents are carried out (Norio Ikeno, 2005). The form of implementation of citizenship education has various patterns. For example, there are cases of implementing within existing subjects such as social studies education or moral education; over the entire school curriculum as volunteer or special activities; in cooperation with the local community and so on. Because there are such diverse methods, the educational content is also varied. There is the example of directly implementing U.K. and American pioneering practices; there is development of citizenship education content based on the essence of that practiced overseas; and there is the approach of superimposing citizenship logic within existing subjects. However, in recent years the mode of citizenship education implementation has, and continues to see, change. Although still in the experimental stage, there are cases of incorporating citizenship education into curriculums as a course of study.

One of the most prominent of these innovations is emerging from citizenship education being constructed as a new subject in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo in 2006. The name given to this initiative is "Shimin-ka (Citizenship Education)." When someone installs a new subject in Japan, certain requirements are demanded. As a result, the curriculum for "Citizenship Education," includes domains of self management, autonomous activity, culture creation and future design. Plural low rank domains are also set, and educational content under each item is taught in line with a textbook.

As for any new subject it is necessary for "Citizenship Education" to develop seven areas of competency in: independence, positiveness, adaptability, public morality, logicity, execution, and creativity. While regarded as an essential subject for developing citizenship among children, "Citizenship Education" is also subject to criticism as being based on neo-liberal thinking reserved for moral education.

Because the Japanese citizenship education is carried out in various forms as mentioned earlier, the citizenship education indicated as a new subject is only one aspect of citizenship education in Japan.

Pioneering practices of citizenship education are often performed in social studies education and have democracy and law as the direct education contents. Accordingly, in this research I will compare citizenship lesson practices between the citizenship curriculum of the U.K. and social studies education in Japan and seek to extract citizenship education theory in the respective lessons.

Citizenship development stratagem -Lesson practice in Japan and the U.K. as examples

(1) Lesson: practice aiming at developing citizenship

Firstly, "Mock Election" is an example of the U.K. citizenship education. It was performed in "J" school for one day as a "Citizenship Day." The target was Year 8. This lesson aims to enable understanding of the election system through conducting mock voting. The goals are 1) understanding the election system and 2) conducting a mock election. Six parties each put forward one candidate, and each political party made a manifesto and 'campaigned', with learning developed to prepare for final election speeches.

In the lesson, the teacher first explained the election system. She asked various questions such as "Do you know Tony Blair?" "What is the purpose of the vote?" and so on, and briefly explained the election system utilizing the students' responses. She then divided the school year into nine groups including an election administration committee, media team, political parties and so on and prepared for the mock election. Each political party carried out a campaign speech meeting, and each candidate appealed for voters to vote for his or her own party. After the speech meeting, voting was conducted and the results were announced, bringing the lesson to an end.

There are two characteristics of the practice. The first is that the learning method is built around the children's activity. This day-long experiment was conducted almost totally under the initiative of the children. The children organized the groups and selected the candidates, while the teacher played the role of adviser. Since intervention by the teacher was minimal and there was little preliminary learning using textbooks, doubts remain concerning how much knowledge of the election system was guaranteed, however, the lesson was basically built around the children's activities. The second feature is that the learning contents are designed to provide a practical understanding of the election system. The lesson comprised real political activities such as candidate selection, public information magazine making, manifesto making, PR by mailing list, and staging of the campaign speech meeting, etc. Even though children don't have the right to vote, through designing the election as their contact with society, they could understand society in actual terms.

Now, what kind of lesson plan would be adopted in Japan taking the same example of an election? The second target for analysis is, "Our lifestyle and politics – Problems of politics as seen from elections" by Takayama Yutaka (Hyogo University of Teacher Education Attached Elementary School). This lesson targets elementary school sixth grade children.

This lesson aims to teach about the election system through the phases of understanding, investigation and criticism. The aim of the lesson is threefold: 1) Understand the election in relation to oneself, realize the importance, and practically consider the shape of elections in the future; 2) Discern the importance of sovereignty of the people in relation to self through considering the meaning of declining voting rate and measures to counter this while associating the significance and current conditions of elections, foreign election systems and public awareness of elections; and 3) Understand the importance of and the difficulty in realizing democratic politics (sovereignty of the people) from the election mechanism and its issues and the significance of elections.

The lesson begins with understanding of the election system. The students talk about why we hold elections while looking at the workings of parliament and the concept of democratic government. Next, the students survey and discuss problem points with a view to investigating the election system. Here, based on the children's investigations, the class discusses such questions as why the voting rate has declined, what are the problems behind the decline in voting rate, what are the solutions and so on. The children prepare an election reform report detailing ways to reform the existing election system. Finally, the children report their election reform report to the election administration committee and criticize and examine their own ideas in relation to real society.

This lesson has two characteristics. First, dialogue is set as the focal point of the learning. In addition to explanations given by the teacher, the children have frequent opportunities to discuss the role of the election system, its problems and so on. This enables each individual's opinions to be critiqued and

examined within communication. Secondly, regarding the feature of the learning contents, the lesson is built on theoretical analysis of the election system based on investigation and survey. This learning seems to have the ultimate objective of seeking connection with real society through preparing the election reform report. However, concerning the logic of the lesson composition, the report is prepared and presented based on analysis of the system and phenomena. The feature of the learning lies in its foundation on social analysis. The above two points can be pointed to as features of this lesson.

(2) Features of lesson composition in U.K. and Japan

I analyzed the above two examples of lessons built around the case study of an election in the U.K. and Japan. The following three points can be pointed to describe the features of each case:

- 1) Concerning the lesson objective, whereas the U.K. case aims to realize the autonomous activities of the children, the Japanese case targets critical analysis of society.
- 2) Concerning the lesson method, the lessons in both countries place emphasis on the children’s activities. In this, whereas the U.K. case encourages the pro-active participation of the children, the Japanese case emphasizes dialogue based on evidence.
- 3) Concerning the lesson contents, the U.K. lesson comprises realistic contents geared to simulating society. In Japan, the lesson comprises analytical contents geared to the critical understanding of society.

The U.K. lesson performs a mock election in order to let the children gain simulated experience of the real world. The children actively participate in the class, advertising their own political parties by various means. Conversely, the lesson in Japan entails logically observing and analyzing the present election system and problems based on data, with a view to nurturing a critical viewpoint of society.

Now, why should lessons dealing with the same topic differ so much in terms of objective, contents and method? In this research, I will seek the differences in lesson composition in the differing nuances adopted with respect to citizenship in each country.

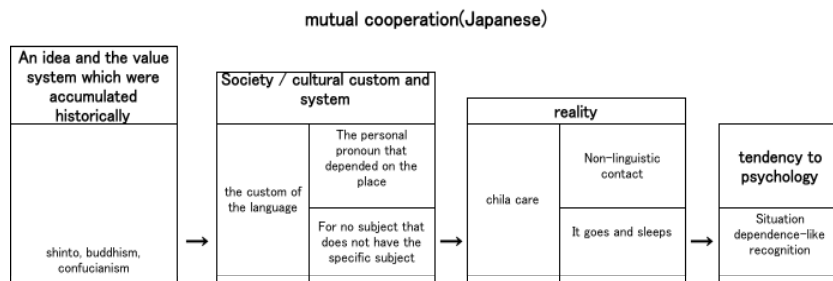
Analytical viewpoint - From the perspective of cultural psychology

The background to practicing citizenship lessons in the classroom comprises overt factors such as the school system, legislation, curriculums and textbooks, as well as invisible cultural factors (latent factors) such as the children’s awareness of having to become independent citizens, customs, the sense of belonging, inference bias, self identity formation and sense of belonging to the group (Norio Ikeno, 2005). Culturally determined invisible latent factors such as the consciousness and thought patterns of children, the outer world and atmosphere in society dictate not only citizenship and other education activities, but all of our activities in general. The mutual regularity of culture and society has mainly come to be debated in the field of cultural psychology from the 1990’s onwards. Takata points to low self esteem and higher self-criticism among the Japanese compared to Westerners (2001). According to Suzuki and Takahashi (2007), Japanese people thought patterns contain many dialectics (thinking that permits contradictions or does not use exclusive logic to clarify deliberations and the Japanese make more eclectic judgments than Westerners. In addition, Kitayama, in his "Handbook of Cultural Psychology," shows the differences in psychological trends between Japanese and Westerners as shown in the figure 1.

Kitayama points out that the Japanese psychological tendency of mutual cooperation is historically born out of thought based on Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, and he says that this is totally different from the European and American psychological tendency of mutual independence that has developed from rationalism and individualism.

Considering these cultural and psychological research findings, this study aims to apply knowledge concerning the mutual regularity of culture, society and education to pedagogy especially citizenship education. In other words I aim to clarify the nature of citizenship through crossing cultural and psychological knowledge with knowledge with citizenship research and practice.

figure1: the differences in psychological trends between Japanese and Westerners (Shinobu Kitayama and Don Cohen 2008)



4, Citizenship awareness

(1) Overview and strategy

This research shows the citizenship consciousness that children possess based on the findings of a survey carried out at Japanese junior high schools. The study shows the judgment criteria for the children's code of conduct based on investigation carried out at K Junior High School and H Junior High School. The questionnaire that I carried out is as follows .

questionnaire	
<p>There is a big park in your town. A party of parent and child takes a walk almost every day there. In addition, the event of the town is performed on the weekend. Everybody plays happily. For activation of the town, a big shopping center will be done this time near a park. Because the reason is because there were few places doing shopping so far. At the shopping center, space performing the event of the town is established, and an exhibition to introduce your town is performed every day. However, I matched it with shopping center construction, and a plan to change a park into a parking lot and the bus terminal went up it. The reason is because it is necessary to secure a big parking lot and the departure and arrival place of the bus in the shopping center.</p>	
1	<p>How do you think of this plan? Please choose one of a thing of the nearest thought. A, objection! B, agreement! C, others</p>
2	<p>Please write the reason that you judged.</p>
3	<p>What is the most important matter that you make a decision in a daily life? a. local participation b.community awareness c. morality of confucianism d.global perspective e. contribution to society</p>
4	<p>You think that there is a scene hesitating about judgment by daily life. For example, do you obey course choice, the election of the captain of student council, school regulations? In addition, you may be at a loss whether you separate garbage whether you hand over a seat to a senior citizen by bus. When it looks like it, what do you judge them in a standard in? Please choose three things which are near to your opinion. a. democratic values b.opinions of nearby people. c.social profit d. moral sense e.social norms f.others</p>

The first and second questions were about development and preservation. Assuming there is a plan to remove a park in line with shopping center development, I investigated children's opinions. The third question was a question to investigate required conditions for citizenship. I investigated the conditions that the children value as members of the local community and state. I cross-totaled Questions 1 and 2 with Questions 3 and 4 so as to clearly measure each child's judgment criteria including whether or not the survey items induced their responses. The timing and venue of questionnaire enforcement were entrusted to each school. As a general rule, around ten minutes was set for duration. Only the analysis findings for Questions 3 and 4 are shown in this research.

(2) Inclination of citizenship awareness in Japan

Figure 2 and 3 shows the citizenship awareness and citizenship requirements surveyed at K Junior High School, where 125 children were surveyed. In the case of K Junior High School, the students who chose "morality of Confucianism" as the first requirement were more than half at 54.0%. This was followed by "community awareness" at 14.5% and "contribution to society" at 7.3%, however, it can be seen that the children regard Confucian morals such as taking care of family and grandparents as the primary requisite for living as a member of the local community and state. The overall high priority placed on family and friends as compared to community participation, international perspective and contribution to society agrees with the judgment criteria of the children. The most valuable criteria for leading social lifestyles are given as "moral sense" (36.0%), followed by "social norms" (15.2%) and "opinions of nearby people" (12.0%). "Democratic values," which are given high priority in the U.K. and Hungary, has a generally low ranking of just 11.2%.

figure 2: Citizenship Requirement (K Junior High School)

	N	%
local participation	6	4.8%
community awareness	18	14.5%
morality of confucianism	67	54.0%
global perspective	8	6.5%
contribution to society	9	7.3%
(invalidity)	16	12.9%
total	124	100.0%

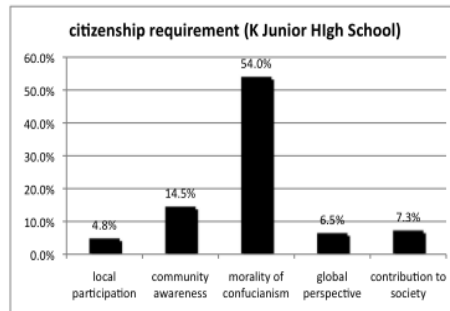


figure 3: Citizenship Awareness (K Junior High School)

	N	%
democratic values	14	11.2%
opinions of nearby people	15	12.0%
social profit	11	8.8%
moral sense	45	36.0%
social norms	19	15.2%
others	5	4.0%
(invalidity)	16	12.8%
total	125	100.0%

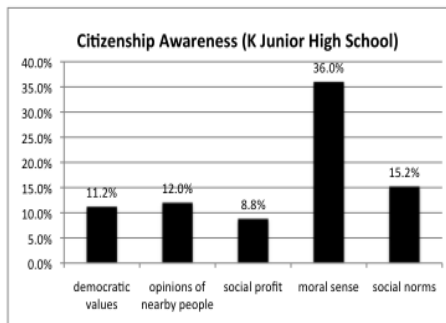


Figure 4 and 5 shows the citizenship awareness and citizenship requirements surveyed at H Junior High School. The questionnaire targeted 113 children. As in the case of K Junior High School, the students who chose "morality of Confucianism" as the first requirement were in the majority at 55.8%. This was followed by "community awareness" at 18.6% and "international perspective" at 11.5%. The same trend is also seen in judgment criteria, where "moral sense" is cited as the most important criterion at 22.2%, followed by "opinions of nearby people" at 19.4% and "social norms" at 18.5%.

figure 4: Citizenship Requirement (H Junior High School)

	N	%
local participation	6	5.3%
community awareness	21	18.6%
morality of confucianism	63	55.8%
global perspective	13	11.5%
contribution to society	3	2.7%
(invalidity)	7	6.2%
total	113	100.0%

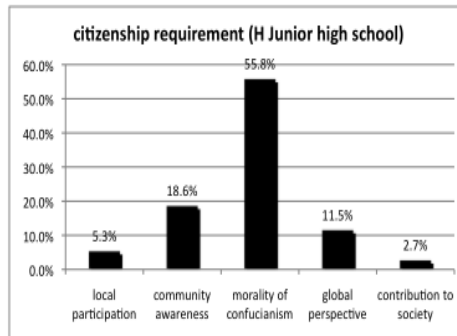
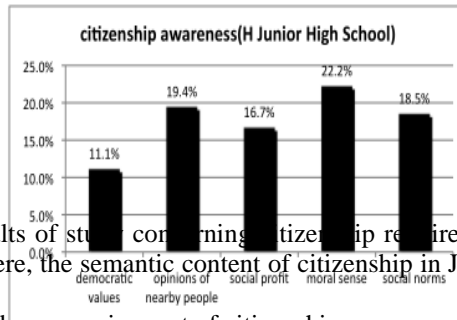


figure 5: Citizenship Awareness (K Junior High School)

	N	%
democratic values	12	11.1%
opinions of nearby people	21	19.4%
social profit	18	16.7%
moral sense	24	22.2%
social norms	20	18.5%
others	6	5.6%



The above findings show the results of studies concerning citizenship requirements and judgment criteria conducted at two schools. From here, the semantic content of citizenship in Japan can be characterized as follows.

- 1) Confucian morals are viewed as a requirement of citizenship.
- 2) Moral sense is regarded as a judgment criterion for children.

I wonder if we can find a relationship between the differing citizenship awareness of Japan and the U.K. and differences in citizenship education in those countries. Based on this point of view, differences in lesson composition between Japan and the U.K. can be explained as follows:

U.K.: Lesson composition based on reality-based activities geared to developing political citizens.

Japan: Lesson composition based on analytic activities geared to developing logical thinking.

In the case of the U.K, since it is required to develop political citizens, it is necessary to re-enact at school, activities that take place in society and to conduct actual debate and activities. On the other hand, in Japan, since the judgment criteria of children are guided by non-logical viewpoints such as Confucian morals, it is necessary to correct, improve and evolve this into analytical thought in education. Such differences are thought to influence the differing lesson compositions.

Conclusion

In this research, I compared Japanese and British lesson practices and sought to explain differences in terms of citizenship awareness. In the U.K., the objective of education is the active participation of children in activities; the education content is simulated experience of society; and the education method is active participation in activities. Conversely, in Japan, the education objective is the acquisition of critical thought; the content of education is critical understanding of society; and the education method comprises discussion and debate. These differences reflect differing semantic content in citizenship between the U.K., where reality-based activities are conducted with a view to nurturing political citizens, and Japan, where education aims to revamp the moral judgment criteria of each person.

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This work was supported by JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (20830055).