Trends in Japan’s Geography Education: Focusing on the 1980s to the Present

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Abstract
This report aims to inform the current state of geography education in Japan to countries abroad. An organized effort to create such a report is the first since 1980 when the IGU convention was held in Tokyo. This report aims to present the trends in Japan’s geography education since 1980, although trends before 1980 may be discussed depending on the topic. Chapter I provides an overview about the general geography curriculum in Japan. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports and Technology (MEXT) created the Course of Study to serve as a standard for the educational curriculum. Therefore the historic development of the Course of Study is classified. Chapter II presents a discussion of articles and research results concerning geography education during this time period. The subsections are overall review, geography education research, foreign research, geography curriculum/coursework composition theory research, cognitive research, and geography education content theory/methodology theory research. Chapter III describes the promotional activities and training activities promoted by academic groups. The main focus of this chapter will describe the activities that are targeted for school teachers and children/students regarding geography education.

Key words: geography curriculum, the Course of Study, trends in geography education research, social contribution activities by the geographical society

1 Geography Curriculum

Workings of the Course of Study
Following World War II, the Japanese government created the Course of Study to serve as a standard for the educational curriculum. School curriculums are created by the schools or regional boards of education in accordance with the Course of Study that meets the national educational standards. Also, the textbooks that are authorized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) must follow the Course of Study.

The Course of Study is divided into the Course of Study for the elementary school, junior high school and high school. The Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act states the
necessity of these guidelines and provides grounds for legal enforcement. On the other hand, the process to make the guidelines is ensured to be democratically conducted which demonstrates the difference from the Statism that was practiced before the war.

Therefore, the creation of the Course of Study begins with a meeting held by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology with the Central Council for Education to decide the direction of the guidelines. The Central Council for Education consists of experienced educators as well as business officials from the public where a democratic debate is encouraged. For new sets of the Course of Study, the Central Council for Education utilizes three years to deliberate the necessary amendments to report to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

New sets of the Course of Study are created from the reports mentioned above. At the same time, “The Explanation of the Course of Study” is edited for each subject for each grade level in elementary, junior high, and high schools. This document is created from discussions by a group of collaborators led by the Senior Specialist for Curriculum. The collaborators included school teachers and university researchers. In most cases, the Senior Specialist for Curriculum is an experienced former educator. “The Explanation of the Course of Study” is edited through discussions by several education specialists and is used as a valuable reference when schools or boards of education are creating the study curriculum or when textbook companies are creating textbooks.

The first Course of Study following the war was created in 1947. At first, revisions were made every few years, but after the 1960s revisions have been made every about ten years. This is due to the fact that the deliberation period for new guidelines takes approximately three years, the composition of the guidelines takes approximately one year, and creation of “The Explanation of the Course of Study” takes approximately one year for a total of roughly five years. In addition to those five years, time is required to create textbooks. Although each textbook company approaches creating textbooks using different approaches, creating textbooks that follow the Course of Study generally takes about one year for reading the guidelines and coming up with the plan, one year for writing and editing, one year for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to conduct its examination, and one year to present and adopt the sample copy for a total of approximately four years.

Today’s world is rapidly changing along with great advances in media which gives rise to the issue of how to shorten the period of time it takes to update the Course of Study. However, if the processes listed above are followed, creating a new Course of Study would take at least eight to nine years.

**Changes to the Course of Study**

Many changes have been made to the Course of Study in the past 60 years. Figure 1 displays the main points of the Social Studies and Geography section of the Course of Study from the first guidelines after the war to the newest edition. Notable points from this figure will be mentioned.

First of all, since the first Course of Study was created in 1947, the title of the subject has been Social Studies for elementary, junior high and high schools. Social Studies did not exist before the war in Japan, although in the United States, Social Studies was a central theme in the education curriculum. Due to these circumstances, Social Studies was implemented under strong influence by the United States. The framework and name of the subject is continued in junior high school, but in 1989, the subject was discontinued in high school and replaced with
Geography and History as well as Civics. In the same year, first and second grade in elementary school removed Social Studies and Science and replaced them with Life Environmental Studies.

Second, as seen in the 1947 version of the Course of Study, subjects and courses were absent while learning themes such as “problems” or “units” were mentioned. This reflected an experience-based education process that was being practiced in the United States. The frameworks of the education process did not center on specialized academic areas such as geography, history, or civics, but aimed to teach a comprehensive overview of Social Studies. Table 1 displays the 1951 version of the junior high school Social Studies units. Although the units are not divided into Geography or History, the content contains geography and history elements combined with politics and economics to ultimately pose the question of “How can we protect world peace?” The classroom style also differed in that teachers did not give lectures but instead guided students in problem solving exercises. This type of experience-based learning from the 1947 and 1951 versions of Social Studies is referred to as the Early Social Studies.

Third, when looking at the 1955/56 version of the junior high school guidelines, Option A and Option B are listed in parallel, leaving the decision of which option to utilize up to the school or board of education. Option A switches the focus subject from geography (first year), history (second year), to politics and economics (third year) and is thus known as the “zabuton (Japanese cushion) format” because zabuton can be easily stacked on top of each other. On the other hand, Option B teaches geography and history together (first and second years) followed by politics and economics (third year) and is known as the “pi format” from the shape of the curriculum or the “parallel geography and history teaching format.” The difference between the two options is rooted in different theories concerning how to develop knowledge in geography and history. Each option has its merits and demerits and differs on subtle differences, but the guidelines that follow have generally adopted the “pi format.”

And fourth, in elementary and junior high schools, all subjects and areas of study are required, but in high school there are required and elective classes. Depending on the version of the Course of Study, there are major differences in its stance. Until the 1977/78 version of the guidelines, Geography, Japanese History and World History (formerly known as Eastern History and Western History) were not required but World History became a required subject beginning with the 1989 version. As a result of the curriculum change in 1989, an increasing number of high school students did not learn geography and is currently at a very high level. A balance between geography and history is not being maintained due to this change.
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Figure 1. Changes to the Social Studies Curriculum

Notes: 1. This figure is a partially edited version Asakura (1992) with recent additions by Toida to the Course of Study.

2. When annual proceedings overlapped over two years, the first year would be the elementary and junior high school guidelines followed by the high school guidelines in the following year. When annual proceedings overlapped over three years, the first year would be the elementary school guidelines, followed by the junior high school guidelines in the second year, and lastly the high school guidelines in the third year.
Curriculum after the 1980s
As stated previously, the curriculum after the war was referred to as Early Social Studies, and was based on experience–based learning. However, in the 1960s to 1970s the curriculum became more systematic and was referred to as New subject education. During this time, almost all courses (Geography, Japanese History, World History, Politics and Economics, and Ethics and Civics) were required and a vast amount of information was taught for each course.

This situation was not unique to the Social Studies curriculum but was a basic principle for both humanities and science subjects. On one hand, this philosophy was crucial in developing a capable workforce for rapid economic growth but on the other hand it produced a social problem of cram education, severe competition for entrance examinations, and ochikobore students, or students who fell behind. As a result, a relaxed education became desired which emphasized more selective curriculum contents, optional courses, and a return to experience–based learning. The culmination of these theories became the 1989 version of the Course of Study.

(a) 1989 Version
We will discuss the characteristics of the 1989 version, especially in regards to geography. First, in high school, Geography (4 credits) became newly divided into Geography A (2 credits) and Geography B (4 credits). Geography B is a comprehensive course covering topics from the previous Geography course with a focus on the understanding of the natural environment (landscapes, weather, soils, etc.) and developments in civilization (farming, industry, business, cities, transportation, culture, etc.). Geography A on the other hand, is a newly created course which compresses Geography B and also focuses on a discussion of world issues. Schools can choose between the two courses which differ in the number of credits, which fosters a relaxed education system. However, as previously stated geography is not a required class and is one option that can be chosen instead of Japanese history. Many students who prefer math or science select Geography A or B but students who prefer the humanities overwhelmingly choose Japanese History A or B.

Second, a common characteristic of the curriculum of junior high and high schools was that the teaching content was very selective and only two or three examples were studied in-depth. This enabled a decrease in the amount of teaching material and promoted the relaxed education policies. However, this trend led to issues such as a gap between the level of difficulty of the entrance exams as well as a possibility of teaching a stereotyped view of the world. In regards to the latter, environmental issues would always be associated with the Sahel and city problems with India. This problem is aggravated by the repetitive studying of the topics in junior high and high schools.

(b) 1998/99 Version
Geography in the 1998/99 version was not significantly changed compared to the 1989 version. In high school, geography was divided into Geography A and B, and only World History A or B was a required course. Students were required to choose between Geography A or B and Japanese History A or B. The teaching of a limited number of in–depth examples was carried over from the last guidelines. Taking this into account, the following points are noteworthy of the changes in the 1998/99 version.

First, example–based teaching expanded in high schools as well as junior high schools. World
geography in junior high schools only focused on roughly three countries and Japanese geography on three prefectures. As a result, students mostly only learned about the U. S. A., China, and Australia while for Japanese prefectures, only Tokyo, Fukuoka, and Yamagata were taken up by a major textbook. Many people questioned whether such a limited study of countries and prefectures would provide a sufficient amount of knowledge for geography.

Second, due to the continuation of the optional nature of geography in high schools for two versions of the guidelines, the selection of geography decreased which in turn led to a significant decrease in the utilization of the geography textbook. A major cause of the declining number of students who select geography is due to the lack of availability of geography as a testing subject by both public and private university entrance exams. In Japan, private universities create their own entrance exams and select the subjects that they include for testing of the 273 universities and 860 departments that make “Geography and History” an available major, 848 (98.6%) provide World History as a testing option, 810 (94.2%) for Japanese History, and only 380 (44.2%) for Geography. Private universities tend to not provide unpopular subjects as a testing subject. Along with students not choosing geography, private universities are aggravating the declining popularity of geography.

The third point does not concern geography but it is noteworthy that the revisions included an addition of The Period for Integrated Studies from third year elementary school to junior high and high schools. This is an over-arching theme not specific to any one subject and aims to foster the individual learning of each student that adds to the experience–based learning. As stated previously, since 1989, a return to experience–based learning and a relaxed education system has been promoted. However, schools had trouble utilizing this additional subject and most teachers or schools used this subject to teach from the textbook or teach English. The extremely limited selection of study topics led to an opposing view that claimed the curriculum lacked basic knowledge and dubbed the children who grew up during this version of the Course of Study as the “relaxed educational generation,” which holds a negative connotation.

(c) 2008/09 Version

The newest Course of Study was made public in 2008 for elementary and junior high schools and in 2009 for high school. The guidelines were implemented from 2011 for elementary school, 2012 for junior high school and 2013 for high school. This section summarizes the recent characteristics of geography education through the new Course of Study and new textbooks.

The new Course of Study put an end to the example–based teaching that lasted for two versions of the guidelines or twenty years. The newest version revived the comprehensive learning of geographical regions. In agreement with these changes, while the total weekly studying time of geography has continually declined in recent years (Figure 1), the studying time in junior high schools has slightly increased. The number of pages in the textbooks has also increased. The most frequently utilized textbook “Updated Geography B” (Teikoku shoin) was composed of 331 A5–sized pages in the old version but the new version scaled up the page size to B5 and also increased the number of pages to 336. The amount of information increased by to approximately 1.5 times the previous amount. This trend is also seen for high school textbooks in other subjects as well as junior high school textbooks when compared to previously used versions. These changes indicate that the education system is moving in a new direction from the selective and limited example based teaching that lasted for 20 years, and is now promoting the increase of the amount of actual knowledge.
In addition to increasing the individuality of learning, many educational measures have been set forth to develop model citizens and promote “social participation.” Some people interpret this as an experience-based teaching method and think it is indicative of a return to the Early Social Studies. The new geography curriculum on one hand strengthens systematic and course-based teaching while also providing opportunities for experience-based learning, thus aiming to solve the seemingly mutually exclusive types of education. This trend is common for geography education in both junior high and high schools.

Future Issues
The 2009 for high school version of the Course of Study did not have any changes in regards to the course structure or required/optional nature of Geography and History. World History was still required with students choosing between Geography and Japanese History as their second course. This means that high school Geography will have been an optional course for thirty years and a worsening effect on the current situation concerning geography education can be predicted. Although the new Course of Study has been made recently, a plan to restore geography education is needed for the next set of revisions. A balanced opportunity to learn geography and history is needed to expand the temporal and spatial thinking abilities of people in Japan.

In order to do so, the current groupings of Geography, Japanese History and World History may need to be restructured into two courses divided into Geography and History. Due to the reduction in credits required for graduation, specific division of courses, and five-day school weeks it has become increasingly difficult to teach three courses, so a radical change such as dividing the coursework into Geography and History may be needed.

In that case, a possible division of coursework could be a choice between History of Humankind (4 credits) or Modern History (2 credits) and a choice between Geography A (2 credits) or Geography B (4 credits) (Course titles are hypothetical). In this case, it would be necessary to develop the content of History of Humankind and Modern History to include world history and Japanese history.

II Trends in Geography Education Research after the 1980s
In this chapter, we will review the results of research studies conducted on geography education in Japan primarily through academic journals and books. Geography education research discussed here refers to school education. We would like to discuss the trends in elementary, junior high, and high schools concerning geography education. We used the “Academic perspectives” section of the journal “Human Geography” as a reference to come up with the subsections of this review. The subsections are overall review, geography education research, foreign research, geography curriculum/coursework composition theory research, cognitive research, and geography education content theory/methodology theory research. Due to spatial limitations, a comprehensive review of all important articles cannot be introduced. With the development of geography education for the future in mind, articles that the author deemed to be most important will be introduced.

Table 2 displays an organized view of academic meetings and journals concerning geography education following the war. In addition, commercial journals that relate to geography education such as the monthly magazine “Chiri (Geography)” (Kokon-shoin, October 1956 First Issue) and the
monthly magazine “Kyouiku Kagaku Shakaika Kyouiku” (Educational Science Social Studies Education)” (Meiji-tosho, October 1964 First Issue). These two magazines have played a major role in shaping geography education.

In addition to the Human Geographical Society of Japan and the Association of Japanese Geographers, academic meetings concerning social studies education and geography education became the center of the development and deepening of geography research.

By the 1980s, national education universities provided master's degrees for education and several students wrote their master's theses on geography education. Also, some national universities provided doctoral degrees. For example, University of Tsukuba, Hiroshima University, and from 1996, Tokyo Gakugei University and Hyogo University of Teacher Education. This set the stage for doctoral theses concerning geography education.

### Overall Review

One of the achievements of geography education research is the completion of an encyclopedia and lecture books multiple times over the course of 30 years.

The Geographic Education Society of Japan (2006) created an encyclopedia covering 139 topics that included explanations of basic terminology/concepts and theories/practices related to geography education. The main purpose of the encyclopedia is to provide information for geography education. The Human Geographical Society of Japan (2013) included 12 items concerning geography education in its “Human Geography Encyclopedia”.

A four-book collection of geography lectures as a lecture book series was published (Nakamura et al. 2009). This series covers the purpose, history, curriculum, content, and teaching methods of geography education.

Since the mid-1950s, a concept of “geographical view/thinking” has developed. It is believed that there are conceptual theories and academic skills that are unique to the subject of geography. This “geographical view/thinking” is the academic skill that many academics believe is what should be developed in students. The Course of Study made public in 1969 included the skill of “geographical view/thinking” as a skill to develop and the high school version of the guidelines also placed this skill as a goal for students to learn. However, as Toida (1999) has
indicated, there is not common understating of the meaning of this concept at the level of geography education.

Kusahara (2004) believes that geography education is a measure to develop the next generations of leaders of the nation and society, a purposeful education tool, and a central subject. He developed a new framework named “Education to develop leaders of a democratic nation and society” to rethink the theories governing geography education. He used geography education research in America as a reference when developing the new framework. He concludes that geography education that contributes to the development of its citizens is “desirable for the development of scientific social awareness.” He has created curriculums, chapters for the education process, and recommendations for professor lecture schedules based on research results and communicate the necessity of geography in social studies education.

There are also other books that have discussed geography education theories notably (Nishiwaki 1993, Sakurai 1999, Yamaguchi 2002, Ida 2005).

**Historical Research**

Selected studies will be discussed concerning research on the history of geography education and history of geography education theories which serve as a backdrop for the implementation of geography education policies. The research area covers a broad topic including geography concepts, geography education theories, and implementation research.

Iwata (1985a) explains the problems with the implementation of the Landscape theory in Japan by Taro Tsujimura. He especially argues that Schluter’s landscape theory was not appropriately included in Tsujimura’s implementation. Iwata (1985b) analyzed the actual usage of Landscape geography education conducted by Kumataro Yamamoto. Iwata points out the gap between using philosophical ideologies as a base for implementing the Landscape theory while using quantitative methods to design the classes. Iwata mentions that a discrepancy arises when analysis and overall theory is brought down to the implementation level. This research can be grouped in the realm of history of geography education theory.

In order to research the history of educational process theories in geography, Kondo (2006) investigated the roles of four geography researchers and their views on geography education. The four researchers are Naomasa Yamasaki, Takuji Ogawa, Goro Ishibashi, and Keiji Tanaka who played major roles in the development of Japan’s modern geography. Kondo discusses the roles that each person played and places them on a historical timeline of influential geography education researchers.

Gion (2009) conducted a study that looked at the history of geography education in Fukuoka prefecture from before and after World War II. This study clarified that social studies education during the Meiji and Taisho periods contained early forms of developing a scientific social awareness. The research study is entitled "Discontinuation of social studies education before and after the war."

**Overseas Research**

Many studies have been conducted on geography research in developing countries including theories on education and curriculum components as well as studies that provide insight into the development of social studies education in Japan.

Nakayama (1991) reported on the geography education revival movement that occurred in the United States during 1987 to 1988. The geography revival movement’s actions in Minnesota and
the “Elementary and Junior High School Geography Education Guidelines” in the United States were translated in this report. Along with the revisions of the Course of Study when it was decided that social studies would be broken up in high school, a strong response was elicited due to the fact that changes in geography education was not unique to Japan. Tabe (2008) focuses on the textbooks written by the “father of American geography,” Morse as well as Goodrich who is known for “Parley’s Universal History”. He explains the establishment process of modern geography education. This study clarifies the establishments of modern geography education in America and Europe, which is an achievement in itself.

Shimura (2010) describes the state of geography education in England through the “Geography: The National Curriculum for England”. This study captures the big picture by not only referencing articles but also by visiting several elementary and junior high schools and holding discussions with researchers. The study included perspectives on the strengthening of topics for environmental geography that includes sustainable changes, studies on textbooks and teaching materials such as maps, studies on scheme of work, geography education revival movements in England, graphicacy, sample studies, and case studies. This research is comprehensive and detailed, thus a valuable reference since geography education in England is frequently raised as an example when discussing geography education in Japan.

Murayama (2005) discussed the Swedish textbook “The Wonderful Adventures of Nils” which is used in upper level elementary schools in Sweden. She uses the textbook to provide perspective on the joy of learning geography from a child’s perspective. From there, instead of teaching the regional produce of individual areas, general geographical rules on various scales to learn phenomena will promote the richness of the content taught in geography education. Also, geography education promotes the awareness and respect of diversity in regions as well as respect and love for the earth that supports life. Murayama suggests that this could be what is lacking in Japan’s geography education.


**Geography Curriculum/Course Composition Theory Research**

In Japan, the Course of Study was created after the war under the supervision of the GHQ. The provisional Course of Study was created in 1947. Since then the Course of Study has been periodically revised and serves as a legally binding document. Therefore, the motivation for elementary and junior high school teachers to individually develop their own curriculums did not arise. Schools only needed to teach according to certified textbooks. A byproduct of the Course of Study was that teachers lost interest in the composition of the curriculum. However, Ito (1994) stated that “the greatest mistake and crime of social studies is that history and geography were included within the subject”. Due to the unstable nature of the balance between geography and history within the required social studies class sparked countless debates. Social studies and geography education researchers worked to study the curriculum within the Course of Study. Curriculum research was based on foreign curriculum component theories and the creation of curriculums looked to gain insight from these foreign studies.

Iwata (1986) argues that the Geography textbook should be utilized in an easy to understand lecture based on the components of knowledge and geographical views/thinking. He presents a lecture structure that allows for students to search for concepts in geography and enables them to differentiate between “understanding” and “knowing.” He based his work on social science
research studies. Recently, due to the influence of the PISA test, there has been a trend to promote explanations and descriptions but Iwata has been pushing this type of explanation-based learning. Iwata also understood that social studies is a subject to develop model citizens for society. He conducted a value analysis referred to as rational decision-making of the potential of citizens. He was a proponent of classes that allowed students to search for concepts and analyze values within societies (Iwata 1991). This type of explanation-based learning and normative knowledge-based teaching was agreeable with the Course of Study and teachers were able to understand it as well. These teaching styles became the impetus to create geography education content and promoted research on social studies education.

Ando (1993) studied the principles underlying the social studies curriculum for the United States elementary schools. His theory on curriculums was an extension of P. R. Hanna’s theory in the “expanding communities of men” section in the article written in 1956 entitled “Society, Children, Curriculums.” It is that Hanna’s theory has been modified to become incorporated in Japan’s social studies curriculum. Expanding Environments is a foundation for Japan’s elementary school social studies curriculum.

Kusahara (1996) demonstrated that the HSGP curriculum structure that was previously unpopular among geographers and geography education researchers was actually well-balanced for its use for teaching social studies. This study was ground-breaking and serves as one of the basic references when discussing geography education within the realm of the subject of social studies.

Saito (2003) received influence from J. Piaget’s research on cognitive development and proposed a “Developmental Geography Education Theory”. This theory strives to match “spatial experiences,” “knowledge acquisition” of the world, and “skill acquisition” with a child’s development to teach international understanding, international politics, and environmental problems while creating a connection with modern society. This perspective has led to new curriculum theories as well as experimental research on children’s spatial cognition.

Nagata (2009) studied the “lifestyle studies” taught in Asakusa elementary schools in the early Showa period and analyzed the geography curriculum that was utilized during this time. He demonstrated the history of national education curriculums and its contrasting structure to world/country spatial formations from the perspective of “production of space” by H. Lefebvre.

**Cognitive Research**

One important aspect of geography education research is that experimental research has been conducted on the expansion of a child’s worldview or spatial awareness. After the 1970s, humanities-based geography became prominent which influence geography education during that era. Experimental geography education research focused on spatial and locational awareness. Researchers aimed to experimentally measure the changes in children’s experiences, perceptions, and awareness. These research trends are introduced by Iwamoto et al. (1985) and Teramoto (2003).

Iwamoto (1981) studied the visual environment of children and the structure of their local environments while referencing Hart’s (Hart 1979) theories. He succeeded in measuring the spatial domains of children who live in cities. This research is a valuable resource containing experimental results that can be used when creating a geography curriculum or selecting the content of the geography education. Teramoto (1984) utilized handwritten maps to understand the activity domains of children through detailed fieldwork. Onishi (1999) demonstrated through
handwritten maps about children’s understanding of their environment. Teramoto and Onishi (2004) compiled their research results concerning spatial understanding and provided a novel perspective regarding geography for children which focuses on their use of spatial skills in their daily lives. This view raised a new way to think about the problems surrounding cognition and understanding of geography raised in the area of geography education.

Yamaguchi (2002) created a collection of his research findings in which high originality is shown in the section regarding the development of children’s geography awareness. He believes that children’s geography awareness has three stages: “preparation period,” “development period,” and “deepening period.” The “development period” is also known as the “explosive growth period” which is crucial to understand in order to create a successful curriculum for geography education. His views are persuasive due to the great amount of data he uses as evidence.

**Content Theory and Methodology Research Related to Geography Education**

Content theory research during post-war geography education in Japan was a reflection of social conditions. The Course of Study also reflects the social conditions and is also responsive to developments and trends in academia. Environmental conditions were discussed in the cognitive research section, so here we will discuss international understanding.

International understanding was incorporated into the studies of foreign countries in high schools since the 1970s. The aims of the course are to promote understanding of other countries and teach students about foreign lifestyles and culture. Nishiwaki (1993) discusses the aim for geography education to develop world citizenship. He argues that international understanding education should not stop at simple memorization or understanding of facts but should promote a student’s ability to participate in society. Nishiwaki discusses how geography education can play a role in teaching how to participate in society. Nishioka (1996) wrote the first systematic development education book by a geography education specialist. His aim was to understand the causative factors and reality of poverty in developing countries and class differences between the north and south. He also discusses how we can change our attitudes to overcome these issues.

Research on education methodology is a broad topic including maps (globes, atlases, topography maps), GIS, landscape pictures which are uniquely tailored for geography education, simulation materials which were influenced from western textbooks, discovery of teaching topic, scale theory, and the study of the development of citizenship.

In regards to GIS, Murayama (2004) has compiled theories related to GIS for geography research and Ito (2010) has developed a low–budget GIS program that can be easily used and could be utilized in the classroom. Ito introduces his findings in his article.

In regards to simulation teaching resources, Watanabe (1984) introduced a simulation game used in geography textbooks in England. Nishiwaki (1989) has reported an original simulation teaching resource. Yamaguchi et al. (1993) introduced and conducted a study on a foreign simulation teaching resource as well as an original resource. They compiled research results concerning a group of simulation resources.

In regards to ESD, Onishi (2008) translated the Luzern proclamation which is a valuable resource that touches upon sustainable development of geography education. Nakayama et al. (2011) introduced concrete examples of ways in which to incorporate the perspective from the U.N’s report entitled “Ten years of ESD” as well as suggested examples for the development of geography education.

There are many studies that are related the development of geography units or lessons.
As a basic study for unit development, Yoshimizu (2002) arranged the standards of the learning problem about the location and distribution concept based on the results of geographical research to secure the validity of learning contents in the curriculum. Yoshimizu (2011) performed unit development using multi-scale approach based on the concept of the geographical scale. Takeuchi (2012) proposes a geography education that is based on various scales with an aim for multi-layered citizenship resource development within the realm of geography education.

Future Issues
Looking back at Japan's geography education demonstrates the broad and detailed nature of research, but also indicates the relative scarcity in research on geographical theories, ratings of knowledge acquisition, and ratings of lectures. These are some of the tasks that need to be addressed.

As Kusahara (2007) has pointed out, Japan's geography education is becoming polarized. One of the views is “Region/environment centered view” while the other is “Society/structure centered view.” The former is an applied version of traditional geography education. Supporters of this trend argue that geography education should use geography as its fundamental base. However the latter view attempts to place geography in the context of social studies. Supporters of this view stress the importance of developing awareness of society rather than recognizing regions. Saito (1988) argued that geography education research should collaborate with other fields such as philosophy, educational studies, and cultural humanities among other subjects. At this point, the two views may be able to exchange ideas and work together instead of diverge.

III Social Contribution Activities and Geography Education by the Geographical Society of Japan

The Origin and Background of Social Contribution Activities by the Geographical Society
(a) Needs and Background of Social Contribution Activities
The social contribution activities by the geographical society referred to in this document includes all activities that are planned and conducted as an organization for non-members. The main focus of this section will describe the activities that are targeted for school teachers and children/students regarding geography education.

In recent years, the geographical society regularly holds events that non-members can participate in for free such as competitions. Many of the geographical society’s activities are strongly conscious of providing social contributions.

There are two main problems with the involvement of the geographical society in social contribution activities.

The first point is that the geography is becoming socialized. Currently, many university students who majored in geography become employed in various fields in society and promote the socialization of geography. These students are likely to be putting geography to use in their respective new fields. However, the current situation in our society has a lack of awareness of the utility of geography partly due to the fact that a national certificate concerning geography has not been available. In order for the general public to understand the utility and importance of geography, the geographical society must work to develop certificate exams and transmit information to the general public about geography.

The second point is that a revival of geography education is desired in the current state of a
low percentage of students choosing geography in high school. Beginning with the 1978 version of the Course of Study, Contemporary Society became a required course leading to the decline of the popularity of geography. The 1989 version of the Course of Study further aggravated this issue dismantling Social Studies and creating Geography and History that required either World History A or World History B (Kohno 1996). The geographical society has repeatedly voiced its opinions for reform to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and is still attempting to bring about a change in policy. On one hand, policy reform is important, but the promotion of the contents of geography education to make the material more compelling is also important. This issue brings about the necessity to work with school teachers as well as students and children.

This document presents the activities of the Association of Japanese Geographers and the Human Geographical Society of Japan in regards to social contributions. The meaning of these activities will also be discussed.

**The Creation and Developments of Public Events Held by the Geographical Society of Japan**

The “Geographical Review of Japan Series A” and “Japanese Journal of Human Geography” are often cited as a reference to clarify when the Association of Japanese Geographers became active in social contributions. In this section, we will discuss the publicly held events such as lectures, seminars, and symposiums.

The fall competition of the Association of Japanese Geographers was held in Joetsu University of Education in September 1990. A lecture was conducted at this venue although the program did not explicitly indicate that the lecture was “publicly available.” This is essentially the beginning of the publicly open events. Ryutaro Asakura spoke to attendees who attend to the lecture at attached junior high school Joetsu University of Education. The theme of the lecture was “Looking Back and Forward on Geography Education: Using Practical Examples.” In the fall competition of October 1991 held in Shimane University, Yoshihisa Fujita, Shigenori Shinohara and others lectured about the “Increase in Elderly, Decreasing Population, Settlement Issue: From a Geography Perspective.” The lectures took place in the Matsue City General Welfare Center. At the time, incorporation of the Association of Japanese Geographers was the top priority thus leading to the end of the public events.

Public lectures by the Association of Japanese Geographers were conducted in 1997, 2004, and 2005 but have not been planned since. Beginning in 2006, the symposium during the competition became publicly available and has continued until 2012. The 2010 competition held at Nagoya University had ten publicly available symposiums. It can be said that publicly available events are engrained in the current Association of Japanese Geographers. However it is unclear how many attendees of the symposium were non-members.

The Human Geographical Society of Japan conducted a public lecture in November 1998 at the Kyoto public hall to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The theme was “Internationalized Social Space and Regional Lifestyles.” This was the first public event organized by the Human Geographical Society of Japan. The three lecturers were Kozo Narita, Keiichi Takeuchi, and Komei Sasaki. It was reported that 160 people were general members of the public that attended to the event.

Since its 50th anniversary, the Human Geographical Society of Japan began to plan public seminars and public events. In December 1999, the board of directors created a future structure committee. The committee raised an important aim as “increasing social contributions” thus
placing social contributions as one of its important activities. Following these changes, the Human Geographical Society of Japan held its first public seminar at the Osaka labor center located in the Chuo ward of Osaka (Theme: “Frontiers of Human Geography”). The Human Geographical Society of Japan held this event separate from its competitions and has continued to hold public seminars within the Kinki Region. Each public seminar tackles issues that are raised in general society. The theme for the seminar held on November 2011 in Rikkyo University was “Rebuilding and Reviving following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Disaster: Proposals from Human Geography and Proposals for Human Geography.”

Although the first instances of social contributions by the Human Geographical Society of Japan were in the 1990s, full-fledged participation did not occur until after 2000.

According to the Association of Japanese Geographers and the Human Geographical Society of Japan, they conduct these public events for the general public but these events also promote social contributions activities in the field of geography education which will be described in the following sections.

### Activities Targeted Towards Teachers

(a) **Activities by the Commission of Geography Education for the Association for Japanese Geographers**

The Association of Japanese Geographers created the Commission of Geography Education in 1998 to generate more interest in geography education. Since then, they have been active in holding public events for teachers as well as the general public. The purpose of these endeavors is to make people aware of the utility of geography and again to generate more interest in geography education.

One of the main activities conducted by the Commission of Geography Education is to plan the Geography Education Public Lecture during the competitions. The fall 2012 competition will mark its 22nd time running, having occurred every time since the fall 2001 competition. The purpose of this lecture is to provide information from geography field researchers for topics that can be used as a teaching resource for geography education (Shimura 2007).

The overall theme of the first Geography Education Public Lecture that took place during the 2001 fall competition was “Professionals Speak about their Field: Learning about the World through Geography First Lecture Turkey.” Yasuyuki Nishiwaki lectured about “Turkey and its Spatial Perspective,” and Toshihiko Sugai lectured about “The People Who Live in the North Anatolian Fault.” The regions that were focused on in the next lecture include America in the second lecture, China in the third, New Zealand in the fourth, India in the fifth, South Korea in the sixth, and England in the seventh. The 2008 fall competition focused on “ESD and Geography” and lectures that followed did not focus on a specific region. However, the purpose of the lectures remains the same in that it generates interest in geography education.

The Commission of Geography Education also conducts seminars since 2007 for teachers in elementary and junior high schools. The seminars focus on geographical teaching techniques with themes including “How to Utilize Maps with Literature” and “Creation of Thematic Figures and Distribution Figures Using Map Software.” Many teachers have become geography teachers without any geographical skills (Akimoto et al. 2010).

One of the seminars was conducted by Yoshiyasu Ida in February 2007 in Saitama Prefecture. The attendees were junior high school social studies teachers who were not specialized in geography. Ida introduced “Twenty Four Eyes” which is a literary work of Japan. He connected the plot with a 50,000:1 map and taught with the goal of fostering geographical skills. This
A characteristic of the Geography Education Summer Seminar is that field trips are scheduled in almost all of the seminars. Again, the participants are elementary and junior high school teachers, university professors, students, and graduate students which provide an opportunity for participants to stimulate each other.

Activities for Children/Students
(a) Science Geography Olympiad Japan Competition
The social contributions targeting children/students that is most active is the Science and Geography Olympiad Japan Championship (herein referred to as Championships).

The Championships began in 2007 and 2012 marks the sixth time. The Championships also serves as a preliminary event for the International Geography Olympiad held by the International Geography Union. The purpose of this event is to revive geography education by having high school students compete in the areas of “knowledge/concepts,” “thought process/decision-making,” and “skills/expression” of geography knowledge. At the same time, the students will be challenged by questions of international standards and serves as an opportunity to reexamine the geography education in Japan. It also creates an opportunity to think about the social utility of geography (Izumi and Iwamoto 2012).

Geography educators from Asia and across the world have come to expect Japan to emerge as a leader in geography education and the participation of Japan in the Geography Olympiad serves to at least in part, live up to those expectations (Ida 2008).
There were only 13 participants in the 2007 Championships but the first round of the 2012 Championships included 571 high school students. The 2012 Final Round Championships was held on March 11th with 117 participants. Out of the 11 gold medal winners, four members will compete in Cologne, Germany in August in the 9th International Geography Olympiad as Japanese representatives.

The questions from the 2012 Championships were all multi-media test questions (MMQ) but the second round was solely a written response test (WRT). Twenty percent of the answers are written in English due to the fact that English is the language used in the international competition. The international competition also includes a fieldwork test (FWT). For the students who will compete in the international competition, a seminar for the fieldwork questions is conducted in June since 2007.

The administrative tasks (publicity, venue preparation, question preparation, scoring, and recruiting competitors for the international competition) of the Championships are conducted by the International Geography Olympiad Japan Committee. Most of the committee is composed of junior high and high school teachers as well as university professors who are also the Commission of Geography Education members for the Association of Japanese Geographers as well as the Geography Education Research Group members for the Human Geographical Society of Japan. Since 2007, the necessary funding for the Championships was collected from the Association of Japanese Geographers. However, efforts from Yoshiyasu Ida and others led to the certification of the Championships as a Science Olympiad from the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST). A financial grant to fund a portion of the expenses became available since 2011. The recruitment of participants was since conducted by JST, and the burden on the committee members decreased. However, it remains that the Championships is a major social contribution for the geographical society of Japan.

(b) Geography Week
According to various records from “Human Geography,” “Geography Week” is a seminar that is hosted by the Human Geographical Society of Japan and targets junior high and high school students during their summer vacation. The purpose of this event is to foster interest in geography. The plan was to have high school students and geography teachers participate together. The first “Geography Week” was named “Geography Week in Kansai 2001” and was held in Campus Plaza in Kyoto on July 29, 2001. In 2002, “Geography Week in Kansai 2002” was held in the Osaka International Exchange Center along with “Geography Week in Tokai 2002” in the Nagoya city center. From 2003 to 2005, “Geography Week” was conducted in the Kansai area.

The “Geography Week 2005” held in July 2005 covered the theme of “Disasters from a Geographical Perspective.” A total of four lectures were conducted including one entitles “Our Natural Environment and Natural Disasters” by Masatomo Umitsu.

“Geography Week” was a social contribution by the Human Geographical Society of Japan but it has not been conducted since 2005. The reason for this is due to the unexpectedly low number of high school participants and the overlapping of topic with the public seminars discussed previously. As stated before, the Geography Education Research Group was created in 2005 with the expectation for this group to carry the responsibility of coordinating efforts for the education of teachers and high school students. Therefore, it can be said that “Geography Week” played a leading role in setting the foundation for efforts with teachers and high school
students.

(c) Our Local Environment Map Exhibition

“Our Local Environment Map Exhibition” (herein referred to as Map Exhibition) is an exhibit that displays the artistic map works from across Japan and the world, that are selected by judges. It is held in Asahikawa, Hokkaido and is preparing for its 22nd exhibition. Its first exhibition was in 1991.

This Map Exhibition is hosted by The Society for Environmental Map Education (Chairman: Yukio Himiyama) based in Asahikawa. Their efforts are supported by the Association of Japanese Geographers and Geography-related groups and can be thought of as an extension of the social contributions by the Association of Japanese Geographers. The 21st Map Exhibition held in October 2011 received 2811 works from Japan, 795 works from China, for a total of 3606 works. Judges select approximately 100 works and display them in the exhibit.

According to the exhibition guidelines for the 22nd Map Exhibition in 2012, the environment map is “a map that is made of things in the local environment that you investigated, observed, or thought about.” Any student/child between the ages of 6 and 18 can submit a work. The submission genres include two genres: “selected theme” and “original theme.” “Selected themes” began in 1996 and the selected theme for the 22nd Map Exhibition (2012) is “Disaster Prevention.”

Submission of map works is mainly done through schools. Two examples where map creation is included in the geography curriculum are described below.

The First Urawa Girls’ High School in Saitama Prefecture requires first year students to take Geography A (2 credits) in which summer homework is the creation of a map that deals with the “local environment” and also demonstrates the results of a regional survey. The teacher, Toshio Asakawa explains the methods and procedures for constructing an environment map and gives concrete advice on how to conduct a regional survey using one class period before the summer vacation. After the summer vacation, one or two class periods will be dedicated to two-minute presentations for each map with question and answers. The ten highest rated works will be submitted to the Map Exhibition (Asakawa 2012).

Arata Ohno, a teacher from Junior & Senior High School at Komaba, University of Tsukuba dedicates two class periods before the summer vacation and four to five class periods after the summer vacation for the environment map creation. This process is part of the Geography Area of the Social Studies classes. After the completion of the maps, over half of them are submitted to the Map Exhibition. The best works are also presented in the school festivals which provide an opportunity for parents to view the works (Ohno 2012).

The incorporation of environment maps as part of geography education also serves as a “regional survey” in junior high and high schools. The Map Exhibition is greatly generating interest in geography education. The submission of the maps to the Map Exhibition requires the hard work of the teachers, but other schools could utilize this Exhibition as well.

Future Issues for Social Contribution Activities

This document discussed the beginning efforts in the 1990s and the serious developments from the 2000s in social contributions by the Association of Japanese Geographers and The Human Geographical Society of Japan. The concrete examples of recent social contributions conducted by the Commission of Geography Education for the Association of Japanese Geographers and the Geography Education Research Group for the Human Geographical Society of Japan were
listed above. Aspects of their efforts were described in regards to its involvement with the “Science Geography Olympiad Japan Competition” and the “Local Environment Map Exhibition.”

Due to these efforts, along with much of the general public, many students and teachers can understand the utility and joy of geography education. However, there are many issues that need to be considered for the future of social contributions by the geographical society of Japan.

The most important issue is that the results from the social contribution efforts are not always clear. For example, the popularity of geography in high schools seems to be declining despite the efforts by the geographical society of Japan. This is not a direct relationship and in some areas like Tokyo, high school Japanese History has become a required course. As a result, the opportunity to learn geography is decreasing (Shibata 2011). This is a reflection of the lack of understanding of the utility of geography.

There are also issues that need to be addressed for the geographical society of Japan. There is a limit to the human resources that can be expended on social contributions. Many of the activities are supported by the dedication of its members. There needs to be a system in which one group of members does not handle the entire burden. In that regard, it is a step in the right direction that the Science Geography Olympiad Japan Competition (Preliminary competition for participation in the International Geography Olympiad) was certified by the JST and some of the administrative responsibilities have been transferred to JST.

Postscript
Chapter I was written by Toida, Chapter II by Yoshimizu, and Chapter III by Iwamoto, all of whom were leaders of Geography Education Research Group in the Human Geographical Society of Japan.

Notes
1. Homepage for the Japan Committee for International Geography Olympiad, see http://japan-geo.com/ (last accessed July 10, 2012)
2. Homepage for the Environmental Map Research Group, see http://environmentalmap.org/ (last accessed July 10, 2012)

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