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**Geography Education as Citizenship Education:
Focusing on Agency, Co-agency and Co-creation**

Hiroataka TAKUSHIMA

Osaka Sangyo University, Osaka, Japan

Corresponding author: Hiroataka Takushima (takushima@edo.osaka-sandai.ac.jp)

Abstract

Who creates geography education as citizenship education? This question has so far been discussed from the teaching perspective. However, recent empirical research findings indicate that children do not always learn as their teachers intend. Geography education as citizenship education is not something that only teachers should aim for, but something that they should aim for together with students. This study examined two cases of geography learning that sought to change the locus of power regarding aims and assessment, with “Agency”, “Co-agency,” and “Co-creation” as key words. The results are summarized as follows: (1) In geography learning, learning activities in which students set their own learning aims and create their own assessment tasks are considered effective for learning in which students exercise agency. (2) The role of the teacher as an expert is essential to geography education as citizenship education. (3) To co-create geography education as citizenship education, teachers and students need to share a common understanding of the changing locus of power in teaching and learning. However, teachers remained in control of many of the decisions regarding the content of geography learning. Further discussion for geography education as citizenship education is needed.

Keywords: Geography, Citizenship education, Agency, Co-agency, Co-creation

Introduction

Who creates geography education as citizenship education? This question has so far been discussed from the teaching perspective (Takushima, 2023a). Scholars who have argued for the usefulness of geography have focused on how acting with the disciplinary knowledge of geography is useful in the development of democratic citizens (Stoltman, 1990; Lambert, 2002). In Japan, research on the improvement of geography education as citizenship education has accumulated from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Specifically, theoretical research on “powerful disciplinary knowledge” (Lambert, 2017; Shimura, 2020) and the development of unit models based on discipline-based epistemological approaches to geography (Izumi, 2018) have been conducted. From the standpoint of emphasizing citizenship education, overseas curriculum structures (Kusahara, 1998; Ito, 2021) and lesson development (Nagata, 2013) have also been analyzed.

However, in most of these studies, the logic of academia has taken precedence and has failed to become a “democratic approach” (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009) to the use of geography based on the interests and needs of children and society. As a result, as Delpish et al. (2010) points out, a situation has arisen where “Students are accustomed to, and often comfortable with, assuming a relatively powerless role in the classroom, just as faculty are trained to believe that their disciplinary expertise gives them complete authority over the learning process.” In addition, recent empirical research findings indicate that children do not always learn as their teachers intend (Hoshi, 2019; Takushima, 2021).

Geography education as citizenship education is something that both teachers and students should aim for. From this perspective, this paper discusses how to improve geography education for citizenship education.

Research Methods

Three Key Words

Agency

The OECD describes “Agency” as follows.

Student agency is thus defined as the capacity to set a goal, reflect and act responsibly to effect change (OECD, 2019).

Teacher agency refers to empowerment granted to teachers to use their professional knowledge, skills, and expertise to co-design and deliver the curriculum effectively (OECD, 2020).

Co-agency

The OECD describes “Co-agency” as follows.

Co-agency is defined as interactive, mutually supportive relationships with parents, teachers, the community, and with each other that help students progress towards their shared goals (OECD, 2019).

3. Co-creation

“Co-creation” is defined as follows.

Co-creation of learning and teaching occurs when staff and students work collaboratively with one another to create components of curricula and/or pedagogical approaches (Bovill et al., 2016).

Co-creation changes the assumptions about where power in teaching and learning lies (Bovill, 2020a, p. 50).

Geography Education Redesigned for Citizenship Education

In this paper, “geography education for citizenship education” is defined as follows, and three key words are applied to this definition for consideration.

Through geography education, students themselves discover social issues and become the agent of their own inquiry.

•“Through geography education” (Co-agency)

Assuming geography education in schools, it is necessary to work with parents and the community, with a focus on cooperation between teachers and students. Based on this cooperation, it is necessary to support students to achieve their aims through geography education.

•“Students themselves discover social issues” (Agency)

In order for the issues that students discover and inquire on their own to become “social issues” as geography learning, rather than mere interests, they must be supported by teachers.

•“Become the agent of their own inquiry” (Co-creation)

The co-creation of learning and teaching involves shared decision-making, shared responsibility, and negotiation of learning and teaching (Bovill, 2020a, p. 2). Co-creation is a shared responsibility for learning that implies a greater level of student agency and empowerment than in active learning (Bovill, 2020b). It is not just the transmission of textbook-based knowledge by teachers but the co-construction of knowledge or ideas with the goal of democratic education (Bovill, 2020a, pp. 6, 50; Cook-Sather, 2022, p. xviii).

For example, starting with students who are interested in how and where deltas are formed, the study could identify “vulnerability to natural disasters in delta areas” as a social issue in the delta, and attempt to improve the current hazard map in geography lessons.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between “Agency,” “Co-agency,” and “Co-creation.”

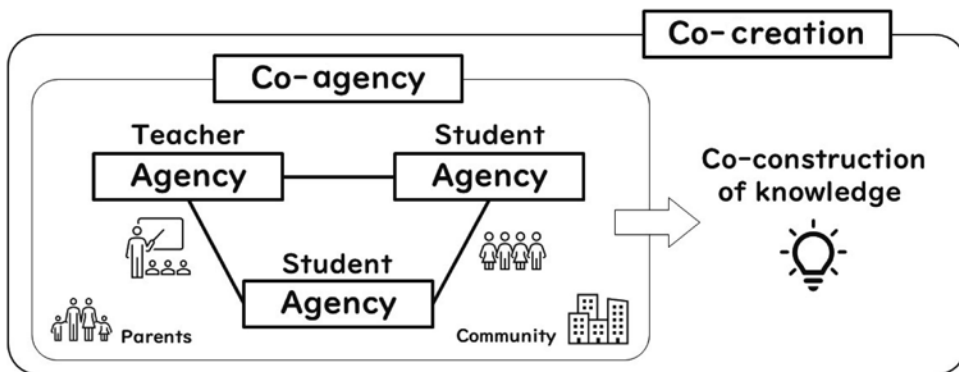


Figure 1. Illustration of the three key words

Subject of Analysis

This study analyzes the following two papers. The first paper is “Takushima (2023a),” which attempt for Co-creation of Geography Learning by Students and Teacher through “Student Voice.” “Student Voice” is a concept and a set of approaches that position students alongside credentialed educators as critics and creators of educational practice. Here, students themselves set their own learning aims and create corresponding assessment tasks in an activity (Figure 2). At the beginning, the teacher explains the aims and outline of the unit. Then, students do the first activity, working individually or in small groups of several students. The teacher provides feedback on each student’s learning. After the second activity, the whole class will learn together, followed by the third activity at the end of the unit.

The second paper is by “Takushima (2023b),” which attempted to involve students in some of the “Assessment of learning.” Here, the students themselves created some of the questions that would appear on the periodic examinations in an activity. The students were involved in the creation of questions for all seven periodic examinations over two years. The questions created by each student were reviewed by everyone, including the teacher, and some of them were submitted as examination questions.

作問活動 (3 回目) 日付 () 2年2組 () 番 氏名 ()

○単元「世界の気候」 教科書 p. 50～81

目標：① 地域により気候的な特徴が異なることを理解し、その気候が地域に与える影響について、気候が② 地域の自然環境的な特色をよめるための具体的な方策を構想する

learning aims by teacher

○今日の単元では、どんな学習目標を設定しますか？

目標	目標の特徴
自・社	よりよい自分の将来と、よりよい社会を創造するための目標。自分にとっても社会にとっても重要度が高い。
社会	よりよい社会を構築するために必要な知識・技能・態度・価値観を身に付け、社会に貢献する。
自分	現在や将来の自分にとって重要度が高い。
理解	授業内容をしっかりと理解することが目標。自分や社会との関わりは特になし。

types of learning aims

○学習目標：この単元の学習をおして、できるようになりたいことを書いてみましょう。

○目標 (変更あり・変更なし)

○なぜそれを

learning aims by student

○学習の進め方：どのように学習を進めていけば、さらに学習目標達成に近づけますか？

how to proceed with learning

○評価：掲げた学習目標に対応した評価課題を作成してみましょう。

○評価課題 (変更あり・変更なし)

○解答：現時点で答えられるところまで書いてみましょう。

○振り返りと今後の方針

○自己評価と振り返りをしてみましょう。今日の単元では、どんなことができて、どんなことができませんでしたか？次に向けた振り返りを。

目標	評価課題
自・社	× △ ○
社会	
自分	
理解	

×：できなかった △：あと一歩 ○：できた

reflection

○フィードバック

feedback by teacher

Figure 2. Worksheet

Results

Analysis of Takushima (2023a): Attempt for Co-creation of Geography Learning by Students and Teacher Through “Student Voice”

Agency

The teacher sets the unit aims as geography learning and shares them with the students. Students then set unit aims by themselves based on the contents of the unit and their own interests. For example, various learning aims are set by students, such as “memorizing textbook content for examination,” “learning about disasters caused by the weather,” and “learning about the topography of X city, identifying problems and areas for improvement and sharing countermeasures with various people.”

However, not all aims set by students themselves discover social issues. Some students are simply oriented toward memorizing terms for a test. Therefore, the exercise of agency is partial.

Co-agency

The teacher gave feedback on the learning aims set by the students and the assessment tasks they created. For example, feedback was given to student learning such as, “Can you use the ‘why’ perspective for something other than testing?” “Do the effects of global warming vary by climate zone in the region?” and “Why don’t you explore the case studies of some country or region and propose ‘countermeasures’ based on your findings?” (Figure 3)

However, “Co-agency” here is not linked to parents or the community. It is a co-agency between the teacher and the students through geography learning in the classroom.

The development and practice of units in which students collaborate with external resources, such as

parents and communities, is also important for students to exercise agency and to make their inquiry of social issues more authentic (Inoue, 2022).

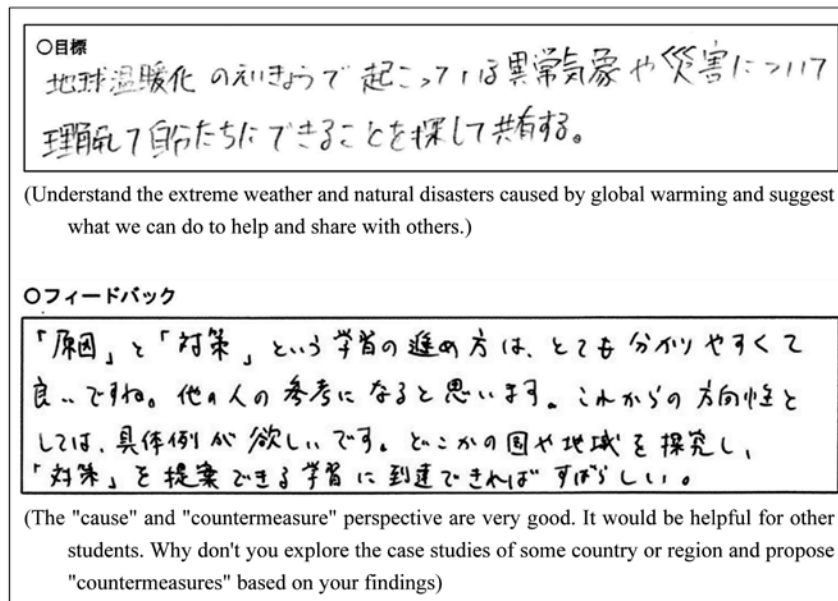


Figure 3. Examples of student-set aims (above) and teacher's feedback (below).

Co-creation

In this practice, the whole classroom learning process is based on the learning aims set by the students. It is an attempt to change the assumptions about where power in learning aims and assessment lies. For example, group work was conducted on topics such as "Floods and landslides in Bolivia," "Climate classification in Australia," and "The impact of climate change on African industry and its countermeasures."

However, these studies were pursued only in groups of about five students and did not lead to the sharing of learning with the entire classroom. Therefore, it was not a co-construction of knowledge as "Co-creation" in geography learning.

Analysis of Takushima (2023b): Possibilities for Reforming "Assessment of Learning" in Geography Learning

Agency

Students created the examination questions following the teacher's instruction: "Prepare one question related to the scope of the examination." For example, questions were created by students to select the correct combination of the name of the grain and the name of the country that corresponds to the blank in the statistical data on the three major grains, explain the definitional difference between official and national languages, and explain the reasons for the changes in Peru's fish catch from the perspective of changes in sea-water temperature in the surrounding sea area (Figure 4).

However, many of the test questions created by the students did not target or seek to change social issues but rather required an understanding of geographic events. Therefore, the exercise of agency was limited.

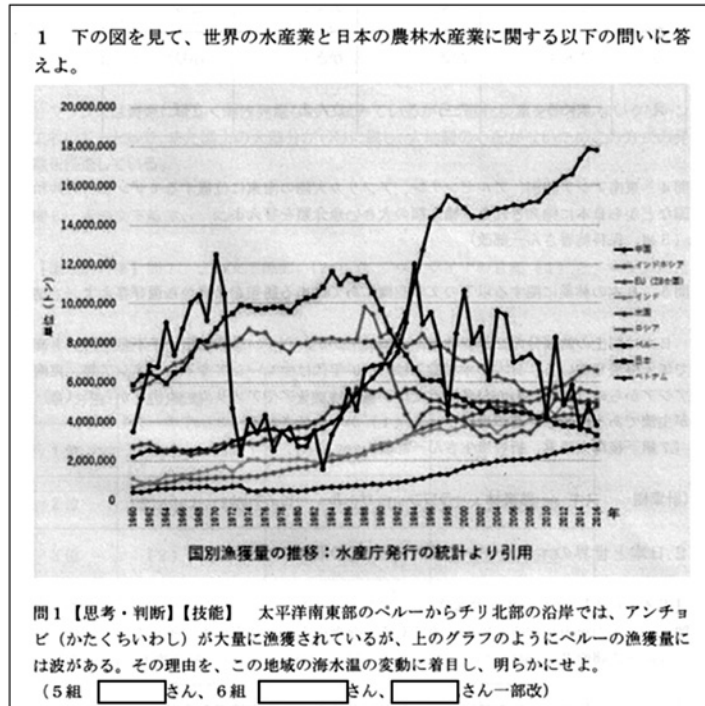


Figure 4. Examples of student-created test questions

Co-agency

The teacher and the students reviewed the questions created by each student to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion in the periodic examinations. For example, students gave feedback on questions created by their peers, such as “good question because it is tied to the historical background,” “good understanding of definitions,” and “use of thinking skills (Figure 5).”

However, the teacher’s role here was centered on balancing the overall periodic examination questions. More active teacher intervention is required to determine which questions are worthy of inclusion in the geography learning as citizenship education.

Co-creation

In this practice, students create the periodic examination questions. It is an attempt to change the assumptions about where power lies in assessment. For example, they mentioned that they “learned to make connections rather than just memorizing geographic knowledge,” learning from other students’ knowledge and ideas, and the existence of “hidden power” that is difficult for teachers to see in classes and tests.

However, most students focused on how to understand geography-related content. Although they were the subject of this pursuit, again, their learning did not lead to the co-construction of knowledge as “Co-creation” in geography learning.

Discussion

How can we improve geography education toward citizenship education? The three key words mentioned so

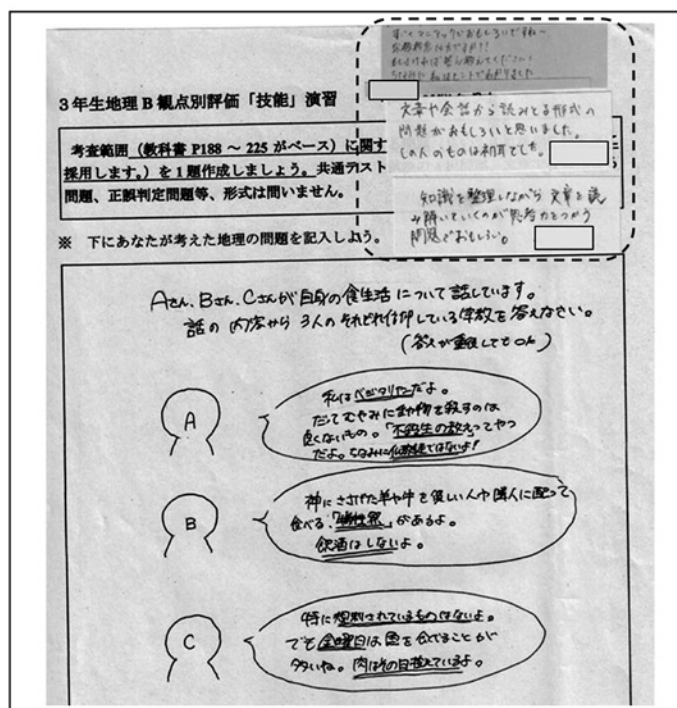


Figure 5. Feedback comments from other students

far, “Agency,” “Co-agency,” and “Co-creation,” are discussed below.

How to Exercise “Agency”

In geography learning, learning activities in which students set their own learning aims and create their own assessment tasks are considered effective for learning in which students exercise agency. Students can make connections between what they learn and their own interests and visualize what they should be able to do. In the classroom, some students focus on social issues such as disaster prevention and climate change. Such individual learning should be shared with the entire classroom.

From the perspective of citizenship education, social studies learning should not be limited to the interests and concerns of children and individualized learning. It is important to find connections between individual interests and social issues. This will lead to the exercise of “Agency” in geography education as citizenship education.

How to Exercise “Co-agency”

The role of the teacher as an expert is essential to geography education as citizenship education. Learning activities such as feedback from the teacher on each student's learning process and working together to create periodic examination questions would be effective in exercising co-agency by the teacher and the students. By being exposed to the geographic learning perspectives of others, students can clarify their own geographic learning perspectives and learn new things, such as knowledge and ideas from different perspectives. Some students have developed their learning through the teacher's feedback and group work. For example, in one case, a student's goal was to learn about disasters caused by the weather, which was transformed into learning to reflect on the impact of climate change on African industry and what to do about it.

From the perspective of citizenship education, social studies learning should not be merely about group work. The active intervention of teachers as subject matter experts will enable the pursuit of social issues through geography education. Additionally, there are people outside the classroom with diverse knowledge and experience. Support from a diverse group of people, not just teachers, could encourage students to reach their aims. This will lead to the exercise of “Co-agency” in geography learning as citizenship education.

How to “Co-create”

To co-create geography education as citizenship education, teachers and students should share a common understanding of the changing locus of power in teaching and learning. It is not simply memorizing textbook terms for tests but democratic geography learning, in which the teacher and the students work together to pursue social issues. The sharing of aims and assessment helped identify examples of students going beyond teacher expectations, connecting geography learning to everyday life, and discussing their awareness of their “hidden power.”

On the other hand, in the two practices analyzed, the co-construction of knowledge as “Co-creation” in geography learning was not clearly shown. One reason for this may be the inadequate use of academic knowledge on social issues. For example, the inquiry of questions such as “What industries in Africa are affected by climate change and how?”, “What measures have already been taken to address this?”, and “Why is the problem not being solved despite the measures being taken?” Such knowledge is called “powerful disciplinary knowledge (PDK)” (Geo Capabilities, n.d.), which is unlikely to be learned informally by happenstance and everyday experience. Teachers as subject specialists are expected to fulfill their responsibility to ensure that geography education does not fall into the development of generic competencies or easy relativism (Lambert 2017, Shimura 2020).

From the perspective of citizenship education, social studies learning should not be limited to merely transferring knowledge by teacher or co-understanding of the contents in the textbook by the teacher and the students. The intention must be to create new knowledge based on existing content, including textbooks, and how teachers and students can work together to become agents of inquiry in social issues. Sharing the learning assessment of what we have accomplished will help the “Co-creation” of geography education as citizenship education.

Conclusion

How can we improve geography education for citizenship education? This paper examined two cases of geography learning that sought to change the locus of power regarding aims and assessment, with “Agency,” “Co-agency,” and “Co-creation” as key words.

However, teachers remained in control of many of the decisions regarding the content of geography learning. What does geography learning in which the teacher and the students exercise agency and co-create learning content look like? Further discussion is needed. The discussion would then lead to the next two further discussions.

The first issue is how to democratize our schools. Citizenship education cannot be accomplished in geography or social studies classes only. How can social studies or social studies teachers contribute to the democratization of schools?

The second issue is to reconsider the role of the social studies teacher as a gatekeeper. Who creates geography or social studies education as citizenship education? This issue, including the role of students, should be discussed further.

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