

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
Teacher Education and Social Studies**

Editorial

Amidst ongoing global transformations—ranging from increasing sociocultural diversity to political polarization and environmental crises—the role of social studies education has become more vital than ever. Preparing future citizens who can navigate complexity and contribute to democratic societies is a central mission of the field (Martell, 2017). Consequently, teacher education must equip both pre-service and in-service teachers with a multifaceted set of competencies, including disciplinary understanding, culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter, 2001), and global citizenship education (Davies, 2006). These requirements are not only aspirational but demand careful rethinking of how we conceptualize and implement teacher education.

While these goals are widely shared, realizing them in practice requires attention to the specific cultural and institutional contexts in which teacher education is situated. As Adler (2006) has argued, teacher education exists within a dynamic tension between ideals and structural constraints. In Asia, this tension is shaped further by unique cultural influences, such as Confucian-informed norms of teacher–student relationships, which often emphasize hierarchy, moral duty, and social responsibility. Moreover, teacher education systems vary significantly across countries in Asia in terms of structure, curriculum, and institutional governance. This diversity challenges the applicability of universal models and calls for more context-sensitive approaches that acknowledge the lived realities of local educators. As such, social studies teacher education in Asia must simultaneously engage with globally circulating theories and develop pedagogies that are grounded in specific educational traditions and practices.

The article featured in this special issue, Urushibata (2025), offers an insightful and richly contextualized account of teacher learning in Japan. Focusing on the case of Fumio Nagaoka, a teacher at Nara Women’s University Elementary School, the study examines long-term practical records of classroom teaching to trace how social studies teachers form practical knowledge. The analysis reveals that teachers develop expertise through resolving concrete pedagogical challenges and deepening their understanding of how children think and learn. A key feature of this research is its methodological orientation: the use of practical records (Jissen Kiroku)—a form of documentation closely linked to Japan’s long-standing tradition of Lesson Study (Miyamoto, 2024). This practice of recording, analyzing, and refining lessons collaboratively is emblematic of the Japanese approach to teacher learning and represents a culturally embedded method of knowledge formation.

Urushibata’s study challenges the dominance of narrative-based approaches in teacher education research by offering an alternative methodology that captures the temporality, complexity, and social embeddedness of classroom practice. By tracing shifts in lesson structures before and after key instructional moments, the article sheds light on how teachers adapt curricula over time and cultivate practical expertise grounded in their daily interactions with learners. In doing so, the study repositions lesson study not merely as a professional development tool but as a culturally situated epistemology of teaching—one that holds valuable insights for global conversations on teacher education.

Although this special issue includes only a single article, we believe its contribution is significant. We

hope that this issue serves as a small but meaningful step toward a more inclusive and dialogic international research community in social studies education. We particularly look forward to future contributions from Southeast Asia and other underrepresented regions, and to the continued development of cross-national dialogue on teacher education that respects both diversity and shared aspirations.

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