<SPECIAL ISSUE>

Design Process for a Unit Inquiring into "Difficult History": The Case of Collaboration Between a Researcher and a Practitioner in Japan

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to clarify 1) what the "difficulties" are in introducing alternative historical narratives into Japanese history units and critically inquiring into those narratives themselves, and 2) what the collaborative process between a researcher and a practitioner to support decision-making in design to overcome those "difficulties". The research method was case study research in Japan and the second author's self-study. There are various considerations for practitioners in teaching classes dealing with "difficult history". We believe it is unrealistic to make these considerations the responsibility of a single practitioner. In this research, the 'colonial modernity' theory in the history of Japan's colonial rule of the annexation of Korea was introduced as the content of the unit and designed for practice in Japanese classrooms. The following were identified as "difficulties" for the practitioners in designing this unit: a) "The Difficulty of Identity," b) "Challenge of Social Media and Students' Historical Understanding," c) "Challenges of Finding Resources," d)"Accountability to Colleagues".These "difficulties" were then overcome through a process in which the researcher collaborated with the practitioner to design the unit. And this process was clarified qualitatively.

Keywords: Difficult history, Collaboration between a Researcher and a Practitioner, Unit design, 'Colonial modernity' theory, Historical narratives

Introduction

Domestic and International Contexts in History Education That Inquire into Difficult Histories

"Difficult history" refers to histories that are currently "difficult" for teachers to teach and students to learn, not only because it is a traumatic history but also because it involves intense partisan historical perceptions (Harris et al., 2022). These histories are expressed as historical narratives associated with exclusive behavior (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011). Thus, "difficulty" is expressed when encountering historical narratives that conflict with one's own. This encounter requires teachers and students to engage in 'alternative' perspectives and can generate emotional resistance in the classroom (Zembylas, 2017). [1] In addition, it becomes difficult to contain those feelings and critically inquire into contested historical narratives (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018). In this research,

we believe that the "difficulty" of "difficult history" in history education exists in these areas. Although the term "difficult history" is not used in Japanese history education, lessons and units have been developed and practiced that focus on historical narratives related to colonial rule and imperialist policies (Fujise, 2007; Yamamoto, 2014). In addition, in recent years, research has been conducted on lessons that allow students to explore conflicts related to historical narratives based on the concept of "difficult history" (Hoshi, 2022; Ono, 2021). In the context of Japanese history education, it can be said that research has focused on the development of lessons on "difficult history" and on the principles of such lessons.

What Is "Difficult History" in Japanese History Education: 'Colonial Modernity' Theory

One example of a historical event in Japan that creates "difficulties" in introducing alternative historical narratives into the classroom is the annexation of Korea. In Japan, historical narratives affirm or ignore colonial rule itself, claiming that the approximately 35 years of Japanese colonial rule after the annexation of Korea in 1910 brought about 'modernization' (Kimura, 2019). These historical narratives often aim only to justify Japanese colonial rule, promote biased nationalism, and connect to the ideological background of political conservatives in Japan. These have been regarded as revisionist and unworthy of scholarly examination. However, the 'colonial modernity' theory has been problematic in Korean historical studies, and many criticisms are accumulating (Mitsui, 2012). The narratives that seek to justify Japanese colonialism, known as the 'colonial modernity' theory, have been primarily critiqued in historical research from the following perspectives: 1) It understates the political and cultural oppression and human rights abuses resulting from colonial rule, emphasizing economic growth exclusively. 2) It is fundamentally based on the viewpoint that the agent of modernization was Japanese, not Koreans, thereby denying Korean agency (Miyajima et al., 2004; Matsumoto, 2005). Unfortunately, this academic trend is not fully reflected in Japanese curriculum guidelines and history textbooks.[2] Although historical narratives justifying Japan's colonial rule in Korea after the annexation have been circulating through conservative media, it has been difficult to critically analyze them in Japanese history education. There are "difficulties" in the Japanese history of colonial rule after the annexation of Korea based on both the emotional reactions in the classroom based on national identity and the obstruction to historical inquiry that arises from the introduction of alternative historical narratives.

Teacher Decision-making

It is not easy to implement history lessons that inquire into difficult history in the school setting. Schools, especially social studies classes, play a role in conveying to students the official historical narratives prescribed by textbooks and standards. Blevins et al. (2020) then argue that teachers' introducing alternative counter-narratives into the classroom involves a political nature and that history teachers are required to critique ideology. Despite teachers' agency over their decision-making, they often accept the dominant historical narratives in a particular nation or society and adopt a pedagogy of silence or avoidance of counter-narratives (Blevins et al., 2020). In these circumstances, Harris et al. (2022), suggest that as gatekeepers (Thornton, 1991), history teachers need to be aware of the political nature of historical narratives while selecting pedagogical content and methods consistent with their goals. How do we deal critically with historical narratives that are political in nature, taking into account the feelings students may have about the historical narratives that arise in the classroom? Teacher decision-making for this purpose becomes essential in classes dealing with "difficult history" (Harris et al., 2022).

More recently, the Canadian province of Nova Scotia has developed teacher guidelines for teaching difficult history from primary to secondary (Government of Nova Scotia, 2023, 2024). These include many

checklists for teacher decision-making in selecting resources and teaching strategies. The checklist requires not only the selection of content and methods but also the determination of a facilitation style responsive to students' feelings during the learning process and in line with their identity. The many factors to be considered indicate that it is difficult for teachers to make decisions alone. We argue that this reality also makes it important for researchers to be involved in the teachers' decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework

What is important in making decisions to teach "difficult history" are the following goals: 1) introduce socio-culturally circulating historical narratives into the classroom, 2) consider students' emotions, and 3) encourage students' critical inquiry into historical narratives. In light of prior research, the following perspectives on decision-making are required to achieve these goals: a) considering what are the difficulties of addressing specific historical narratives in a particular socio-cultural context (Epstein & Peck, 2017; Gross & Terra, 2018) and teacher decision-making to overcome them, b) considering what specifically is "difficult" in the implementation of the unit or how it can be used for students' further learning, given the emotional context about the school, the classroom where the lesson takes place, and the students (Zembylas, 2007), and teacher decision-making to design pedagogies and educational spaces (Sheppard & Levy, 2019), c) finding "difficulties" in having students engage in critical inquiry into historical narratives (Goldberg, 2017) and teacher decision-making to design pedagogies that engage students in selecting historical sources and disciplinary thinking for critical inquiry (Goldberg & Ron, 2014). These perspectives are specifically reflected in the "difficulties" felt by the second author and his decision-making to overcome them. We will proceed to write the finding sections with reference to the specifics of these processes.

Research

Summary of the Process of Designing, Teaching, Researching the Difficult History

The first author had studied the concept of "difficult history" during his doctoral program, and was exploring methodologies for application and practice in Japan. The results of his research were included in his doctoral dissertation at his graduate school. As a part-time lecturer, he has practiced a unit that dealt with the content of colonial rule after the annexation of Korea and was confronted with the difficulty of accepting alternative historical narratives regarding students' perceptions and reactions. The results of his practice and research were to be used in the collaborative unit design with the second author.

The second author teaches history and civics classes at a public high school in the Kanto area. While in the master's program at the graduate school, he researched children's understanding of history in the classroom. While practicing history lessons at the school where he works, he learned that some students affirm the annexation of Korea in the classroom and that revisionist historical narratives in the media have affected students' historical understanding. Under these circumstances, he was conscious of how to practice history lessons.

From April to May 2022, the first and second authors were considering what would be the unit design where students would critically inquire into historical narratives that offer a political nature, while considering the students' feelings about these narratives that arise in the classroom. From June to July 2022, the first and second authors could design a unit on colonial rule after Japan's annexation of Korea (See Table 1 for the unit). In this collaboration,

we believe we overcame the "difficulty" in introducing alternative historical narratives different from those prescribed in the Japanese curriculum guidelines and history textbooks into the history classroom. However, the authors did not clarify what exactly these "difficulties" meant for the second author and what collaborative processes supported his decision-making in designing the unit. The first and second authors agreed that it would be important to clarify these questions and decided to research to do so in October-November 2023.

Table 1. Unit outline

Lessons	Main Learning Activities
Lesson 1 and 2	Understand the existence of the contested historical narratives regarding Japanese colonial rule after the "Annexation of Korea" (regarding the 'colonial modernity' theory) and acquire pre-existing knowledge for inquiry.
Lesson 3	Recognize how narratives that affirm or ignore Japanese colonial rule from the 'colonial modernity' theory in the historical context of the "Annexation of Korea, or that deny Japanese colonial rule from the aspect of perpetration and exploitation, are constructed. Students construct their own historical narratives to support either of the contested historical narratives (at this lesson, have students tentatively make a decision).
Lessons 4, 5 and 6	Critically inquire into conflicted historical narratives based on historical sources by jigsaw reading. Based on the inquiry, Make ethical judgments about Japan's colonial rule after the "Annexation of Korea" and reconstruct their own historical narratives. (After students interact with each other's historical narratives in class 6, collect students' questions and criticisms, and distribute historical materials to students that respond to those comments.)
Lesson 7	Share the constructed historical narratives with other students and reconstruct their own historical narratives.
Lesson 8	Considering what desirable attitude toward constructing historical narratives.

(Created by the authors)

Role of Collaboration in Research and Teaching

According to Barton (2018), teacher decision-making regarding difficult history requires consideration of students' identities and emotional tendencies in the classroom, teacher epistemology as a premise for practice, and a willingness and a sense of purpose. Therefore, he points out that it is difficult for a single teacher to implement the practice and the importance of a researcher working with a practitioner as a professional partner. In particular, collaboration between researchers and practitioners has been described in design research, which utilizes the expertise of academic research and instructional design while rooted in the school context (McKenney & Reeves, 2019). While emphasizing teachers' expertise in children's learning, previous research suggests the importance of collaboration between researchers and practitioners to reflect on how to translate that expertise into decision-making in classroom practice (Obenchain et al., 2019).

Although the first author has developed theoretical insights into the design of history units that inquire into difficult histories, he has not fully conceptualized how they should be grounded in the context of actual teaching in schools and put into practice. On the other hand, while recognizing the importance of dealing with difficult history in the classroom and the importance of students critically inquiring into historical narratives that emphasize the positive aspects of Japanese colonial rule, the second author did not have a clear vision of what kind of units could be designed. It was necessary to get support from other research partners on possible content and strategies other than the resources and methods he usually uses in his own practice. To address the theoretical and practical issues involved in designing

units that inquire into difficult histories and realize their implementation in school education, we thought it would be helpful for researchers and practitioners to collaborate and apply their expertise to each other.

Methods Used for Data Collection

To begin this research, we first collected class resources, class videos, and meeting materials used from June to July 2023 so that we could analyze the collaboration at that time. In addition, the first author conducted a semi-structured interview with the second author about what were the "difficulties" at that time and how they were overcome through collaboration.[3] The first author conducted a preliminary survey of the second author, given that the first and second authors designed the unit approximately one year ago. The second author was asked to look over the teaching resources for the designed unit and a video showing the class in action and ask 1) "What difficulties did you feel you had before designing the unit?" 2) "How were you able to overcome those difficulties?" and to summarize the results in the form shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Notes for reflection prepared by the second author

"What difficulties did you feel you had before designing the unit?"
(1) The difficulty of identity as learners and as a group

There are students with Korean and Chinese roots in the classroom. How should I care such students?

In a class where the majority of students identify themselves as "Japanese," Are they able to accept the content on "Japan's perpetration" without resistance?

(I had previously seen a case in a North American research study where the perpetration of an ancestor who shared identity with the student was not accepted in the classroom.)

(2) Challenges in dealing with social media that affect students' historical understanding

Revisionist historical narratives on social networking sites and online information: "There were positive aspects of Japanese colonial rule."

→Students' understanding: affirmation of perpetration by Japan (confirmed during classroom observation at another school).

The media report on Korea: "Koreans are constantly criticizing Japan, singling out Japan's acts of aggression."

→Students' understanding: Japan did not only do bad things, but also did good things (modernization).

(3) Challenges of finding resources on controversial topics

Because of the topic's controversial nature, consideration must be given to the bias of the resources handled in class compared to the usual class.

→The finding of resources by the practitioner alone may result in bias in the perspective of these.

It is desirable to include student inquiry activities when dealing with controversial historical topics. However, much work is involved in studying teaching materials to support the students' inquiry.

"How were you able to overcome those difficulties?"
(1) Collaborative reflection allowed me to design the unit based on consideration of students' emotions more than the second author could do alone.

By collaboratively discussing the students' comments and classroom activities in class, we were able to consider strategies for what kind of educational support should be provided next.

(2) In the process of collaborative unit design, I conceived a unit that would allow students to critically inquire into the historical narratives in the media.

From the beginning to the end of this unit, we incorporated a process that encouraged students to critically inquire into these narratives.

(3) Collaborative unit design allowed me to find resources.

Reduce the burden of finding resources and avoid bias in narratives when preparing these (compared to when done by practitioners only).

(Created by the second author)

Process of Data Analysis

We adopt a research method that generates knowledge about the second author's "difficulties" that can be shared with others from his personal situated context, and what collaborative process was fulfilled to overcome these "difficulties." We believe that self-study is a useful research method for this purpose. According to Samaras (2010), self-study is 1) a "Personal situated inquiry," 2) "Critical collaborative inquiry," 3)"Improved learning," 4)"A transparent and systematic research process," 5)" Knowledge generation and presentation." Based on these five elements, this research aims to generate knowledge that other practitioners can refer to when designing units that deal with difficult history.[4]

The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using the Steps for Coding and Theorization (SCAT) method (Ohtani, 2008). In the data analysis, the second author, the research subject himself, and the first author, a third party, checked each other for the validity of the interpretations, generated themes and constructs, and created interview storylines. We ensured "Critical collaborative inquiry" with the first and second authors during this process. SCAT method does not allow or intend to hierarchize concepts as "subcategory-," "category-," or "core category-." (Ohtani, 2019). This analysis procedure includes higher leveling and structuring of concepts in the interview data, and storyline creation based on "themes and constructs" is central to the analysis (Ohtani, 2019). In addition, to promote more "critical collaborative inquiry" and to deepen our understanding of the process of overcoming "difficulties" through the collaboration of the first and second authors, we reinterpret the interview data with the second author from the field notes that the first author wrote, class resources, videos, and meeting resources (When referring to these data, we note the date, all in 2022). Then, we will reconstruct the process revealed by the interview data.[5]

Findings

The findings from the research are described according to the items described in the reflection notes shown in Table 2. Then, following the storyline along the themes concepts generated by the SCAT, we show what they found "difficult" and how they were able to overcome them in the collaborative process. We will also add "difficulties" that were not described in the reflection summary but were mentioned throughout the interviews. We indicate to which segment of the interview data the theme/concept corresponds, and append the content of the resources (field notes, class resources/videos, meeting resources) that supplement and reconstruct the interview data, with the date and time at that time. If we find it necessary to supplement the storylines with raw data, we will include the relevant second author's remarks, as space permits.

Findings 1: The Difficulty of Identity

What Does This Mean?

The second author mentioned the "difficulty" in considering how to respond to students with ethnic roots in China and Korean in a history class dealing with the annexation of Korea and subsequent colonial rule. This relates to how to accommodate students who identify with countries that have been victimized by Japan in the past. Furthermore, many students in the class have a "Japanese" identity. He raised the "difficulty" of how to get them to accept the learning content about Japan's past perpetration without resistance during the learning process in this unit.

Evidence from the Data

"The difficulty of identity" was explained from the perspectives in the theoretical framework 2) the "difficulty" from the emotional context, 3) the "difficulty" toward critical inquiry into historical narratives. The second author emphasized [educational decisions and personal identity] (3) for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Among the [students with diverse self-awareness] (3), particular attention was paid to [students' emotional reactions to the perpetration] (4), which stemmed from [national consciousness] (4) and [ancestral history] (4). He was aware of the need to take into account [the treatment of war responsibility in history education] (4) and [its impact on students' historical perception] (4) and to make [educational responses] (4) to students' [learning willingness and psychological resistance] (4). He also confronted the [educational treatment of cultural and ethnic diversity] (5) in the classroom, noting the [importance of the victim's perspective] (5) in history, and then the [recognition of difficulty] (5) of dealing with such content. This was especially apparent [during the reading of resources] (7), and He also felt [anxiety about the learners' understanding] (7) in the situations of [interpretation of the perpetrated acts] (7) and [recognition of historical responsibility] (7). Specifically, this was [concern in reading the resource] (9), such as how [learners' cognitive and emotional reactions] (9) would be in [handling of historical facts in the teaching process] (9), which includes violent depictions of the annexation of Korea. The student's [emotional reaction and disruption of inquiry activities] (13) to [depictions of violence] (13) reinforced his [educational concerns] (13).

> *Firstly, it's important to note that most students in my class identify as Japanese. This raised a concern for me regarding their receptiveness to learning about the historical actions of Japan and its ancestors. As research conducted in North America, there's a tendency among some students to be less open to discussing the darker aspects of their nation's history, mainly when it involves their own ancestors. Therefore, I had some reservations about how these students, with their Japanese identity, would engage with a curriculum that critically examines Japan's past actions. (4)*

> *In the classroom, we also had students of Korean descent, as well as children from China and other countries. This diversity prompted me to consider how best to approach teaching about Japan's historical actions, especially given the reality that these actions had affected the ancestors of some of our students. Recognizing that these historical events involved the victimization of Korean people, among others, I anticipated that navigating this sensitive topic would be challenging before we began the project. (5)*

How Collaboration/Teaching Addressed This Issue

In this unit, students were expected to discuss with each other during lesson 7 on June 29. In implementing the unit, the first author made the second author aware in advance that [emphasis on the positive aspects of Japanese colonial rule] (107) was the dominant narrative of the students in the classroom, leading to the decision to [upset the dominant narrative and values] (107) in the school. On the other hand, there were narratives in the classroom that [emphasized the negative aspects of Japanese colonial rule] (108). This narrative led the students to [weigh the individual victimization of Japanese rule against the benefits to society as a whole] (108), or in other words, to [upset narrative/values](108) in a different way, in their inquiry within the unit. This view led students to [weigh the disadvantages of Japanese rule for the individual against the benefits for society as a whole] (108) in

the in-unit inquiry and, in another way, to [shake up views/values] (108). The first author's mapping of students' narratives was an important element in [pre-practice preparation] (108).

> *Specifically, there was a group of students who said that Japan's post-annexation colonial rule of Korea was unacceptable, and they focused on the unfair treatment of people of low social status living in Korea. The information compiled by the first author on why they consider colonial rule unacceptable, allowed me to consider the question that would upset such groups: "Does unjust treatment of a particular group make it unacceptable, even if the society as a whole benefits from it?" I could do this kind of pre-class preparation with the first author. Right? (108)*

During lesson 1 (June 1), many students expressed sympathy with the narrative that Japanese rule liberated the Korean people from tyranny; during lesson 2 (June 3), students explored aspects of this "liberation" and focused on identifying the reality of Japanese perpetration. As a result, student opinion was split 50/50 in favor of a narrative that presented the positive aspects of Japanese colonial rule, or a narrative that the negative aspects of it. Rather than continuing to have students argue dichotomous narratives of Japanese domination, the first author supported the second author's decision to focus on the contested narratives and ask questions that would allow for a more meta-analysis of the conflict while keeping track of the balance of students' narratives and values (from the field notes and class videos on June 1, June 3, June 17, and June 22).

[On the other hand, the relationship between students' historical perceptions and the identity of the victimization] (100) was seen in the classroom. To make this relationship visible, [understanding the students' ethnic context] (100) was essential. This was done to encourage [reflection at the researcher/practitioner based on the ethnic context of the students] (100). Specifically, [information sharing about students' historical perceptions from the first author] (103) was done to deepen the inquiry in the designed unit by a student who showed [historical perceptions that emphasize Japan's perpetration] (103).

> *A female student said something like, "The way they treated people in history was terrible". The first author told me what he had heard from her. The girl's mother was from China, where Japan perpetrated the crime, and I wondered if that was the context behind her opinion. From the information I got from the first author, I noticed the background of her historical perception. (100)*

> *The information shared by the first author about how she focused on Japan's perpetration compared to other children helped me understand more deeply. (103)*

After lesson 6 (June 24), this student (with Chinese roots) continued questioning the first author about interpreting the historical sources, even after the other students had left the class. She said that it was only the Japanese who enjoyed modernization, and that the strict systematic discrimination against Koreans that existed at that time was "terrible," and that Koreans would not have enjoyed the benefits of the modernization of the Korean Peninsula's infrastructure. She showed strong emotional resistance, especially to Japan's perpetration of the crime. Although it is not possible to determine whether the students' roots from countries victimized by Japan influenced such speech and behavior, the first and second author identified the need to consider how to have this student inquire into contested historical narratives (from field notes on June 24).

Like this student who emphasized Japan's perpetration, the students' reactions after class were positively directed at the first author. Units that inquire into "difficult histories" require [visualization of students' cognitive and emotional context, which the teacher alone is unaware of] (148), and this is what leads to [overcoming the difficulties of designing units by a teacher] (148). In visualization, [the importance of students' murmur in informal settings] (153) is confirmed. Therefore, it is important how to overcome [the difficulty for one teacher to cover diverse students' murmurs] (153).

> *After class...what do you call it...a student's narrative or murmur after a formal occasion like a class is over? I probably could not have picked up those murmurs on my own. Usually, I would not have time to listen to such things, because I would be cleaning up after class. I was able to notice them because the first author told me. (153)*

Findings 2: Challenge of Social Media and Students' Historical Understanding

What Does This Mean?

The second author felt that the presence of everyday media that influences students' historical understanding increased the "difficulty" in teaching. Students have more opportunities to be exposed to information on social media and the internet, and they often have information that differs from the class content, leading to cases where they reject the class content based on that information. Therefore, considering the influence of everyday media on students' historical understanding, how to conduct the class became a challenge in teaching.

Evidence from the Data

"Challenge of social media and students' historical understanding" was explained from the perspectives in the theoretical framework 1) the "difficulty" of introducing historical narratives, 2) the "difficulty" from the emotional context, and 3) the "difficulty" toward critical inquiry into historical narratives. In his own past educational experiences, the second author was confronted with [revisionist historical narratives about the annexation of Korea] (15) and [the impact of digital media on students' historical perceptions] (15) and was concerned about how these might affect [students' perceptions in the classroom] (15). In particular, in [a class about the annexation of Korea] (17), various narratives arose through [class discussions] (17), and the second author formed the recognition that [student narratives affirming the annexation of Korea] (17) [influenced the class] (17) based on his experience. While he felt that students' narratives were often shaped by [social media] (17), he also noticed [fewer students using media information] (19) in this class. However, he said that he had [pre-practice concerns] (19), including how to deal with the students, because he did not know what [the students' minds] (19) were.

> *I recall a similar theme being explored in a class at another high school, which centered around the debate over the annexation of Korea. In that class, there was a student who supported the annexation. He was noted as one of the top performers academically. Despite his academic prowess, his perspective gained traction primarily because he often cited information he found on YouTube. His views gradually became the dominant narrative in the classroom, significantly influencing the overall discourse. (17)*

> *In this class, I don't recall any students referencing such information. However, they might have held these perspectives internally without openly expressing them. Before designing our units, I had concerns that there could be students who have such perspectives, which I considered. (19)*

In addition, there are cases where students show [denial of historical sources based on media information] (23) or [rejection of content] (23) in [presentation of resources in class] (23). The second author had [concern about students' historical perceptions] (25) for [students' perception that Korea criticizes Japan] (25) and [historical revisionist argument that there were good aspects in Japan's acts of aggression] (25) and felt difficulties in conducting classes while responding to those historical perceptions.

How Collaboration/Teaching Addressed This Issue

The second author stated that the adoption of Twitter (X) statements as content in the introduction of the class and the [introduction of the contested historical narratives in contemporary society into the history class] (160) was made possible because of [the support from the first author to make it into a class] (160). He initially wanted to conduct [a class in which students critically analyze historical narratives] (171). Still, the situation of [unrealized desire to teach] (171) was seen until the collaboration with the first author. However, if [the question of what openness is required in constructing historical narratives] (175) was to be set at the conclusion of the unit, then [the design of learning stages to respond to the question] (175) was required. Support for this was provided in the following order: [sharing student readiness among the first author and second author] (183), [selecting lesson content and methods in line with student readiness] (183), and [putting this into practice through collaboration between the first author and second author] (183).

> *I think it was because we shared the students' situation, or rather, their pre-existing knowledge, that the first author suggested that this kind of subject matter would be easier for the students to think about, and I was able to practice. (183)*

On May 19, a meeting was held between the first and second author to discuss how to design the unit. In the meeting, we examined how to incorporate historical narratives surrounding colonial modernity theory in the annexation of Korea and post-annexation colonial rule into the unit and how to help students inquire into and respond to the concluding question without trouble. Some students had difficulty progressing in their inquiry in the school where the second author worked. Therefore, it was agreed that the content of SNS that was familiar to the students would be addressed, and the first author mainly reviewed the appropriate SNS posts. In addition, the first author initially envisioned a form of teaching using the question-and-answer method, but in keeping with the context of the second author, the second author moved into practice by subdividing the form of questions supposed by the first author and further utilizing jigsaw reading. Critical inquiry into historical narratives requires disciplinary thinking, but the forms in which this thinking is utilized vary, and decisions must be made based on student readiness. The first author's ideas about lesson content and questions were put into practice in a way that matched the second author's understanding of student readiness (from meeting resources on the May 19, class video on June 1, June 17-22).

The second author refers in particular to [the difficulty of organizing conclusions in units dealing with difficult history] (191), and the situation of [the lack of teaching derived from difficulties in the organization of

lessons] (191) was continued. The second author stated that if I had incorporated the annexation of Korea into the content of the unit, I would have made it [a unit that asks whether the annexation of Korea was right or wrong] (193). In this case, [the support of the first author to turn it into a lesson] (193) generated [a meta-question unrelated to the rightness or wrongness of the annexation of Korea] (193), [visualization of the inquiry process to the conclusion](193), and [realization of the lesson not yet conducted] (193) could be fulfilled.

> *Until then, for example, if I were to do it myself, I would have ended with questions such as whether or not the annexation of Korea was right or wrong. In that case, I think it would be quite difficult to decide how to summarize the conclusion of the units. However, what I had been thinking about with the first author was the last meta-question, "What is essential when narrating history?"; that was this unit's conclusion. I believe that no matter what the historical narrative, we can eventually consider the question itself, and creating such a question was the conclusion we found in this collaboration. That is why I think I was able to find a way to conclude, or rather, the path toward the conclusion, and that is why I was able to take up the question. If we had to decide whether it was right or wrong, we would end up wondering which was the correct answer. I think we could do this because we were able to create this question like the one in this case. (193)*

Based on the information from the May 19 meeting, we could design the students' inquiry in lessons 4 and 5 with no trouble (June 17 and June 22). However, there was some concern about how to conclude the unit. We were asked to design a lesson in a way that did not question the rightness or wrongness of the annexation of Korea and post-annexation colonial rule in a controversial matter, but rather to question it in a way that would lead to an openness toward various historical narratives among the students. Therefore, the first author suggested to the second author that on June 30, the day before the concluding lesson 8 (July 1), the students be asked the question, "What is essential when narrating history?" Students were asked to respond sensitively and emotionally to what they considered "good" ways of narrating history to deliberate this question. The second author was conscious of creating a space that was receptive to the students' various views and made use of a whiteboard for the students (from the meeting resource on June 30, the class video on July 1).

Findings 3: Challenges of Finding Resources

What Does This Mean?

The second author highlighted the difficulty of gathering appropriate resources for a class that inquires into contested historical narratives. These classes involve controversial content, necessitating the preparation of resources from diverse perspectives, which he found challenging to manage in daily work. Additionally, the teacher needed to prepare numerous resources to enable students to find and explore resources independently. Given this context, the second author emphasized the significant challenge of collecting resources for this unit.

Evidence from the Data

"Challenges of finding resources" were explained from the perspectives in the theoretical framework 3) the "difficulty" toward critical inquiry into historical narratives. For the second author, the importance of [the collection of sources] (27) in the history classroom was emphasized, especially in [controversial topics] (27), where [sources based on diverse perspectives] (27) are needed. He attempted to encourage [independent inquiry] and provide [guarantees of access to resources] (29) to students to avoid [inducement to a single interpretation and its dangers] (29) in [the treatment of resources in controversial topics] (29). However, they felt that the handling of a series of resources also entailed a [teacher burden] (29). In addition, [various sources for

interpretation] (31) are indispensable for students to construct [their own interpretation of the annexation of Korea] (31). Especially in this unit, the second author faced [troubles in collecting] (31) [resources for exploring historical contexts and vocabulary] (31). Compared to the second author's previous class, which [explored the historical context] (35), this unit was a [unit that questioned ethical judgments] (35). This created the need to provide more [assurance of diverse interpretations] (35), which the second author felt would [increase the burden of collecting resources] (35).

How Collaboration/Teaching Addressed This Issue

The first author provided [support for studying teaching resources] (51) in advance, and the first and second author shared [information (mainly students) about the history classroom] (58) and [shared visions (goals and content)] (58). They were aware of [considering students' difficulties in reading the resources] (59). The second author stated that such sharing and consideration may have occurred through [discussion of content, resources, and student considerations before class] (61) and [sharing of student reactions before and during lesson design] (61).

> *In the process of actually designing a lesson, we were able to talk about the specifics of what the students might have questions about before the class, and the first author was able to prepare resources in advance. Before class, was it? I think it might have been possible because we could discuss the class content and the student's reactions together before the class. (61)*

Such collaboration occurred mainly during the inquiry stage into historical sources describing contested historical narratives (Lessons 4, 5). As mentioned, the first author taught part-time classes. During the May 19 meeting, a vision was shared regarding why these historical sources were used (how to incorporate the contested historical narratives of modernization regarding the annexation of Korea and post-annexation colonial rule into history education). The second author then processed the resource as a jigsaw reading to facilitate students' analysis and interpretation. The first author also provided historical sources that responded to students' questions and criticisms expressed in the process of exchanging students' historical narratives during lesson 6, and the second author made the final decision to create the resources based on students' context (from meeting resources on May 19, class resources on June 17-29).

Findings 4: Accountability to Colleagues

What Does This Mean?

The second author raised the "difficulty" of accountability to colleagues when teaching a class that inquires into contested historical narratives. He had experienced concerns from colleagues when dealing with Japan's perpetration. To address these concerns, it was necessary to emphasize that the class content was based on multiple perspectives. In addition, He felt the importance of explaining the purpose and methods of the class to colleagues and maintaining transparency. He believed that understanding from colleagues was necessary to maintain fairness in history classes.

Evidence from the Data

"Accountability to colleagues" was explained from the perspectives in the theoretical framework 2) the "difficulty" from the emotional context. The second author felt [accountability in the workplace] (37) in his classroom practice, especially when dealing with controversial topics. In response to [concerns from colleagues] (37) about the dangers of induction in content, the second author reaffirmed [the need to guarantee diversity of

viewpoints when dealing with controversial topics] (37). In addition, [the existence of teachers with a negative perspective on masochistic view of history] (39) also led the second author to be more cautious about the content. These faculty members' [concerns about content] (39) and [suggestions from colleagues to the second author] (39) prompted [considerations in classroom practice] (41) to make the classes fairer and more multifaceted.

> *Let me see... I have a colleague who doesn't like a masochistic view of history. The teacher was concerned that the second author was teaching a class that dealt with Japan's perpetration and that Japan was evil. I sensed from conversations with him before and after class that he had a colleague concerned about such things. (39)*

How Collaboration/Teaching Addressed This Issue

The second author stated that emphasizing and conveying [collaboration with outside experts] (196) can lead to [building trust with colleagues when dealing with controversial topics in the classroom] (196). He said that by working with outside experts, he could overcome [concerns from colleagues that "This lesson is self-righteous"] (196). By [working with experts, such as researchers] (200), he stated that he was able to [respond to accountability based on expert backing] (200), which was seen in [the approval of colleagues from expertise] (200).

Before obtaining approval from his colleagues, the first author met with the principal of the high school where the second author works (May 31) and shared with him that, considering the wording of the courses of study, this unit would contribute to cultivating students' citizenship. The principal had long been interested in citizenship education in school [6], which seems to have been a factor in gaining approval for the unit design in this research. Not only did the second author gain the trust of colleagues by collaborating with experts such as the first author, but the approval of the school where the second author works as an educational space that deals with "difficult history" ensured the safety of students' learning (the resources of the meeting with the principal on May 31).

Discussion

In this chapter, we would like to discuss teacher decision-making and collaboration between researchers and practitioners based on the "difficulties" felt by the second author and the collaborative process that overcame those "difficulties" (see Figure 1 for a visual image of the process presented in the findings).
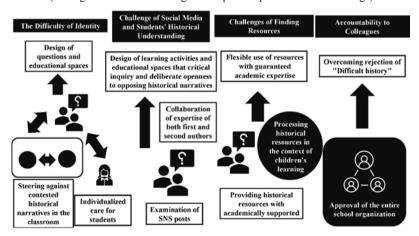

Figure 1. Collaborative process between a researcher and a practitioner (Created by the authors)

What Do We Learn About Teacher Decision-making and Teaching Difficult Histories?

First, most students in the second author's classroom had a "Japanese" identity. Are these students receptive to learning about Japan's perpetration? What are the emotional reactions of students whose roots are in countries that have suffered harm from Japan in small numbers to the history of Japan's perpetration? Responses to these questions may differ in some ways from the "difficulty" of addressing sensitive historical topics in the classroom due to ethnic conflicts in the countries and regions outside Asia (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Kello, 2016; Kitson & McCully, 2005). At first glance, the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students in a typical Japanese classroom may seem assimilated, but these topics may be unacceptable to specific students. In other words, we cannot assume that the general Japanese classroom is one in which ethnic conflict becomes apparent. The second author addressed "the difficulty of identity," which had been perceived as a "difficulty" due to the inability to predict students' emotional responses based on their appearances and uncertainty about how to proceed with critical inquiry in the unit. By lesson 7, the second author did not have students discuss narratives affirming or denying Japan's colonial rule as equally valuable. Although Goldberg (2017) argues that historical narratives that justify perpetration should not be given the same value as narratives that conflict with them, we must consider applying their findings specifically to the teacher's pedagogies. The second author, in collaboration with the first author, was to make decisions for the design of pedagogies and educational spaces that overcome "difficulties" by steering the entire classroom where historical narratives conflict, and the metacognition of the level of questioning, and the care for students who strongly resist Japanese colonial rule. However, this decision-making was based on the first author's sharing the students' murmurs before and after class with the second author. Facilitating a class based on the students' identity requires a deep understanding and consideration for the students. In Japanese classrooms, it is difficult to see how students think and feel about the topics. Therefore, the students' murmurs, not only in class but also outside of it, provide clues for decision-making.

Next, the second author had felt the "challenge of social media and students' historical understanding." Research has been conducted on how historical narratives affect students' feelings of legitimizing their nation and community and antagonizing others with different historical narratives (Barton & McCully, 2007; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). However, it is not easy for Japanese teachers to facilitate student inquiry while recognizing its complexity. Depending on how teachers handle historical narratives, it is often possible for students to believe that the historical narratives circulated by social media are legitimate and become dominant narratives in the classroom. Manfra & Lee (2012) discuss the importance of introducing SNS into social studies education. On the other hand, when teaching "difficult history," we need to consider carefully how SNS and other media can engage students' revisionist historical perceptions and feelings. Teachers need to make decisions about what SNS they desire to cover in their classes and what teaching strategies to use to critically inquire into the historical narratives by the media. In this case, we examined how historical narratives are handled on SNS and determined strategies that would allow students to inquire into them by disciplinary thinking in line with their readiness. To promote better decision-making by teachers, there is a need for a deeper understanding of SNS and a variation in the way students learn to engage in disciplinary thinking.

And finally, the second author had felt the "challenges of finding sources." He had understood that this unit was meant to be a unit of controversial issues in that the historical narrative that "colonial rule after the annexation of Korea brought modernization to the Korean peninsula" was treated in class, and the situation of contemporary Japanese society, where justifying colonial rule itself is disputed, was incorporated into the unit.

Thus, the unit had implications for learning that deals with controversial issues. He had recognized that presenting a single interpretation of the value held by the teacher would lead to valuing certain resources. He had seen the danger of leading students to a single interpretation as the "difficulty" in practice, and the importance of selecting historical sources that allow students to critically inquire into historical narratives to overcome this difficulty. This stance of teachers has been pointed out in a previous study on teachers' political neutrality in discussing controversial issues (Kelly, 1986). In this research, a vision was developed as to what resources should be selected, and decisions were made to process the selected sources according to the students' cognitive level. Although high academic expertise is required to select sources, student inquiry is facilitated by the teacher's deep understanding of the student's context.

What Do We Learn About Collaboration in Teaching Difficult Histories?

First, it is important for a researcher to share with a practitioner the students' responses in class, before and after it, and in informal settings. The practitioner alone is limited in understanding students' emotional responses in detail. This is due to the fact that it is difficult to be receptive to students' reactions outside of the classroom, especially when they are busy with their work as teachers. However, we could steer the entire classroom where historical narratives were contested, generate meta level of questions, and care for students who strongly resisted Japanese colonial rule, because we collaborated to address these issues based on student responses before and after the class. This suggests that the presence of collaborating researchers, such as the first author and team teaching, will be important.

Second, it is important to combine the expertise of researchers and practitioners to design units. Already, McKenny & Reeves (2019) in the context of design research, Obenchain et al. (2019) and Lo et al. (2019) in social studies education research aided by design research, have discussed the significance of researchers' respect for teachers' expertise in understanding students' learning contexts, which was confirmed in the implementation of the units in this research. The first author took the initiative in selecting this historical resource. On the other hand, the first author's ideas about what kind of learning is required for the critical inquiry into historical narratives were combined with the second author's choice of methods of inquiry based on student readiness. Moreover, the first author presented ideas for a practice of dialogue among students to think about what attitudes are required to construct historical narratives, rather than arguing about contested historical narratives as controversial issues, the creation of a space where students' feelings and sensations are accepted for this purpose was an initiative of the second author. It is assumed that the "difficulties" surrounding the introduction of historical narratives, student emotions, and cognitive inquiry were overcome in the process of unit design, which combined the expertise of a researcher and a practitioner.

Third, it is important to combine strong support for the selection of resources from academic expertise by researchers with the processing of resources by practitioners. Although some overlap with the aforementioned point about the expertise of researchers and practitioners in "difficult history," designing lessons based on whether one historical narrative or the other is correct is problematic because it leads teachers to allow students to construct revisionist narratives. In addition, unlike the case of dealing with controversial issues as part of civic education, there is the limitation of whether or not the textual resources have been preserved in the present. Teachers have the flexibility to make decisions to utilize historical sources, but, it is difficult for a single teacher to discover and introduce historical sources. To deal with "difficult history" in the classroom, teachers study teaching resources relevant to the school context. Whereas researchers need to play a supporting role from

academic knowledge.

Fourth, the very fact that the researcher collaborates with the practitioner provides backing for the practice of inquiring into "difficult histories" in school education. By collaborating with the first author, the second author was spared from criticism by his colleagues that his teaching was self-righteous, and the practice was accepted. Moreover, from the meeting with the school principal, the first author shared the educational goals of dealing with "difficult history" and was approved to practice in the school. By obtaining the approval of the teachers who usually teach the classes and the administration, the "difficulties" based on the various emotional contexts of the teachers and students could be overcome. In other words, the approval of the entire school organization, based on its expertise, may help design a space that overcomes the various feelings of rejection of dealing with "difficult history" in schools. Barton (2018) suggests that belonging to a network of dedicated teachers may help teachers spread the practice of dealing with "difficult histories" in a way that is empowering. Japan has similar organizational bodies, such as the Council of History Educators.[7] However, there is a limit to the academic support of the practice by such organizations. It is important to be more conscious of our contribution to practice and to support the position of teachers who deal with "difficult history" as researchers. Furthermore, there is a need to make the entire school organization a professional community (Hargreaves, 2003).

Conclusion: Next Steps in Teaching and Researching Difficult Histories

The "difficulties" of this research seem to be something that can also be imagined from studies that take it from the socio-cultural context surrounding teachers and children (Epstein & Peck, 2017) or from research on risk in dispute learning about controversial issues (Pace, 2019). However, in Japanese classrooms, there is a big obstacle for a single teacher to overcome such "difficulties" in the first place. While understanding students and collecting resources should naturally be considered autonomous activities of teachers who usually practice teaching, it is unrealistic to rely solely on teachers' autonomy to make decisions for practice when they consider teaching "difficult history." We would argue that the interplay between the expertise of researchers and practitioners leads to decision-making by practitioners, and the accumulation of such decisions also leads to autonomous decision-making by teachers. Barton (2018) argued that there are various considerations teachers must consider when making decisions for practice. Given these considerations, we should explore research methods to support decision-making.

On the other hand, Kim and Ono (2022) argue from Zembylas (2014) and others that the "difficult history" concept also includes a "difficult knowledge" trend that focuses on trauma rather than controversy and cannot address only historical controversial issues. As to what constitutes a "difficult history," there is no straightforward conclusion. What kind of unit design could be considered by focusing on historical trauma needs to be explored in other studies. The series of findings in this research does not focus on introducing historical trauma into the classroom. Research should also be conducted on the "difficulties" of dealing with trauma and the process of overcoming them.

Notes

1. Sheppard et al. (2015) studied the conceptualization of emotions in social studies education. This research also focuses on "difficult knowledge" and "difficult history."

2. The perpetration of colonial rule after Japan's annexation of Korea is within the scope of the content of Japan's Courses of Study and is also described in history textbooks (see Yamakawa Shuppansha's "Japanese History B," which is a major share of Japanese history textbooks for high schools). However, there are not enough resources and questions to focus on and criticize the "colonial modernization theory" itself.

3. Semi-structured interviews were conducted along the lines of the items in the second author's summary. The first author interviewed the second author for approximately 80 minutes. Since the first and second authors lived geographically far apart, we decided to use the web conferencing service Zoom. The interview items were as follows: As for item 1, "What are the reasons that led to this difficulty? "In particular, in what situations do you anticipate this difficulty in your practice?" "Have you ever experienced any other difficulties? "As for item 2, the interview questions were: "What specific support did the first author receive?" "What collaborative process helped you overcome the difficulty?" "What else could have been overcome?"

4. The five elements were satisfied as follows: a) based on the second author's situation; b) not only the second author's subjectivity, but also the first author's involvement in the second author's reflection through interviews and analysis of data on the collaborative design process; c) being a mirror of the "difficulties" felt by other teachers and supporting their decision-making to overcome them; d) accepting others' criticism through a systematic qualitative analysis method, and e) generating shared knowledge for designing units dealing with "difficult histories" that introduce alternative historical narratives in other schools.

5. In SCAT, the segmented interview data were analyzed in the following order: 1) "notable words in the text," 2) "paraphrases of words in the text," 3) "extra-textual concepts that explain 2," and 4) "themes/ constructs." The characteristics of this analysis method are its straightforward analytical procedure and its applicability to relatively small data sets. A further reason for using SCAT is that it allows analysis of what teachers consider "difficulties" and the actual state of the collaborative process as specific segments.

6. This school principal also approved a school rule making project led by the second author, who helped the school carry out the project while coming to terms with other teachers and parents.

7. The Council of History Educators was established in 1949 with the primary goal of developing post-war democratic history education while overcoming the issues associated with pre-war Japanese history education, such as militarism and fascism (Moriwake & Katakami, 2000). In addition to this organization, there are private research groups on history education in Japan that teachers participate in, such as the University-High School Collaboration History Education Study Group (For detailed activities, see https://kodairekikyo.org/).

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