

<CONFERENCE PAPER>

**Research Trends in Social Studies Education from 2012 to 2022 in Japan:  
Reflections of Social Change, Educational Reform and Classroom Practice**

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**Abstract**

This paper presents a thorough examination of the trends in social studies education research in Japan by analyzing presentations at the Japanese Association for the Social Studies (JASS) annual conferences spanning from 2012 to 2022. Utilizing KH Coder for content analysis, the paper scrutinizes 1,590 presentations, exploring presenter affiliations, prevalent words in titles, and overarching trends. Correspondence analysis further illuminated the intricate relationship between frequently used words in presentation titles and the affiliations of presenters. It was observed that university faculty and graduate students tend to present more theoretical and normative research, while school teachers often focus on practical research that is specialized to their respective school levels. Presentations from elementary school teachers are characterized by their focus on integrated learning organized by grade level. In contrast, presentations from secondary education teachers often concentrate on subject learning as a discipline-based approach. The paper identifies notable thematic trends, such as ESD in 2014/2015, sovereign education in 2016/2017, and the introduction of the new subject “Modern and Contemporary History” in 2018/2022. These trends reflect the responsive nature of social studies education to social changes and educational reforms, indicating a dynamic interplay between educational policy and classroom practice.

**Keywords:** Research trend, Content analysis, Japanese Association for the Social Studies (JASS), Annual conferences

**Introduction**

Social Studies, with its diverse objectives and content, is inherently influenced by national needs that vary from country to country. While each nation tailors its social studies education to meet its specific requirements, there is a growing recognition of the importance of comparative research from an international perspective. Such cross-national knowledge contributes significantly to the development of social studies education, offering valuable insights into diverse educational approaches and fostering a global understanding of the discipline.

The International Social Studies Association (ISSA) stands as a crucial entity working towards creating

an international public sphere dedicated to the discussion of social studies education beyond borders, particularly in Asia. With a mission to generate cross-national knowledge, ISSA serves as a platform for sharing experiences, research, and insights across different national contexts. The 2023 ISSA annual meeting centered around the theme “What Topics or Issues Are Being Discussed in ISSA Member Associations?” At this meeting, individual associations affiliated with ISSA provided insights into the topics and issues dominating their respective discussions. This collaborative effort aimed to compare research trends and explore opportunities for future cross-national collaborations.

As part of this initiative, I had the privilege of presenting the research trends observed in the Japanese Association for the Social Studies (JASS) annual conferences spanning from 2012 to 2022. Founded in 1951, JASS has played a pivotal role in promoting and disseminating research in social studies education in Japan. The JASS annual conference, a cornerstone of its activities, typically consists of three parts: one symposium, five panel sessions, and many general sessions. While symposium and panel sessions involve invited presentations, general sessions are open-call, providing a diverse range of topics from various presenters. In my presentation of ISSA annual meeting, the focus was on the general sessions, offering a snapshot of the wide array of topics covered by presenters over the past eleven years. As a next step in this research trajectory, a more advanced study is envisioned to encompass all aspects of the JASS annual conference, including symposiums and panel sessions, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the full spectrum of discussions and developments in the field of social studies education in Japan.

Some systematic reviews of social studies education research in Japan were undertaken. *The Journal of Social Studies* (JSS), published by JASS, specifically have issued papers on the trends in social studies education research conducted in Japan from the previous year. For example, Kinoshita (2022) selected 42 social studies education papers published in JSS, *Journal of Educational Research on Social Studies* (JERSS), *The New Geography: Japanese Journal of Geography and Education* (JJGE), *The Journal of Civic Education* (JCE), *Journal of Research on Education in Social Studies Department* (JRESSD), and *Journal of Social Education and Research Association* (JSERA). The selected papers were classified into three categories based on Lyu’s (2020): (1) theoretical and normative research; (2) lesson analysis and development research; (3) empirical research (quantitative/qualitative). Compared to Lyu’s (2020), which pointed out the paucity of theoretical and normative research as the trend in 2019, Kinoshita (2022) confirmed that in 2021, theoretical and normative research centered on foreign research was enriched. He revealed some findings about research trends in 2021; for example, it was observed that “the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent/Discipline-based epistemological approach,” “the new subject,” and “right to vote at age 18” were the most frequent topics used. He also stated that the research related to ICT was gradually gaining more attention among social studies education researchers.

Some systematic reviews on research trends over a longer period of time have also been conducted. Mine (2021) examined 404 papers published from 1990 to 2018 in the institutional journals of national academic societies on social studies education: JSS, JERSS, and JRESSD. He classified them into three categories: (1) development research; (2) evaluation and analysis research; (3) other. Research trends in social studies education emerged from the analytic results: the number of evaluation and analysis research papers has increased more than the development research papers in all the journals. With a review of geography education research papers in JJGE, JSS, and JERSS during 1998-2018, Lee and Yang’s (2019) semantic network analysis confirmed that

words related to “the teaching and learning of geography in social studies,” “environmental education,” “local learning” and “disaster prevention education” were positioned as relatively major nodes. On the other hand, words of “geography teacher education,” “curriculum” and “geospatial technologies” were positioned as comparatively minor nodes. In addition, Watanabe et al. (2021) explored the research trends regarding the formation of spatial cognition in elementary school social studies through systematic review of 28 papers published in journals of geography education and social studies education from 1989 to 2019. Based on the results of review, four research themes were determined: “objectives, principles, and curriculum,” “lesson design,” “maps and globes” and “learning assessment.”

These review papers provided a preliminary framework for analyzing the literature of social studies education. However, recent and extensive examinations of social studies education research may offer additional insights into the current status and research trends. As mentioned earlier, systematic reviews of papers published in academic journals have already been conducted in social studies education. According to Santos et al. (2023), academic journals are considered sources of high-quality and recent research; however, papers in journals took months and sometimes even years to publish. Social studies education is a field that easily reflects social state and changes. This dynamism may not be captured in academic journals due to the prolonged publication timeline. However, presentations at conferences are more current and accessible to a wider range of contributors, including teachers and individuals involved in implementing education, as well as researchers. Conferences play a crucial role for exchanging novel ideas and discussing new and ongoing research. Thus, this paper aims to identify the research trends in social studies education in Japan through the analysis of presentations at the JASS annual conferences that took place from 2012 to 2022.

## **Data and Methods**

The data utilized in this paper were extracted from the annual conference programs available on the JASS website. This dataset includes information about each presentation, encompassing details such as presenter(s), affiliation(s), title, and session. The tabulated results, presented in Table 1, illustrate the number of presentations at JASS annual conferences spanning from 2012 to 2022. With a cumulative total of 1,590 presentations over the 11-year period, averaging approximately 145 presentations per year, the conference solidifies its status as the largest gathering on social studies in Japan. Regrettably, there is a noticeable decline in the number of presentations per year since 2020, attributable to the conference’s deviation from its regular format in response to the shift to an online setting amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. The number of presentations at JASS annual conferences (2012–2022)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Symposium	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Panel	17	15	18	17	14	14	15	15	15	15	14	169
General	111	97	123	149	159	132	159	140	95	100	112	1377
Total	132	116	145	170	177	150	178	159	114	119	130	1590

The dataset, comprising titles, affiliations, and years, underwent analysis using KH Coder. Content analysis with KH Coder is becoming increasingly prevalent for examining research trends in Japan (e.g., Cheng, 2020; Moteki, 2022, and others). KH Coder, developed by Koichi Higuchi, is freely available software designed

for content analysis. Higuchi (2016, 2017) provides comprehensive details about the software, along with an application example using real text materials. Within the functionalities of KH Coder, this paper specifically employed correspondence analysis to illustrate the relationship between words present in titles and the affiliations of presenters, as well as trends in words used over the years.

## Results

### *Which Affiliations Were the Most Prominent Presenters at JASS Annual Conferences from 2012 to 2022?*

Presenters' affiliations were classified by school level: university, secondary school, high school, junior high school, elementary school, graduate student, and others. The "Others" category includes member of board of education, retired university faculty, retired school teacher, and so on. In the case of joint presentations, the affiliation of the main presenter was selected, and when an individual had multiple affiliations, the first affiliation was chosen. Table 2 and Table 3 display the counts of presentations by affiliation at JASS annual conferences, specifically in symposiums and panel sessions (Table 2) and general sessions (Table 3) spanning from 2012 to 2022.

Table 2. The numbers of presentations in symposiums and panel sessions by affiliation

Affiliation*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
University	6	10	7	9	6	6	10	11	7	8	8	88
Secondary school	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	8
High school	4	3	6	2	3	-	1	1	4	1	1	26
Junior high school	3	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	4	3	29
Elementary school	5	4	4	5	4	6	5	3	3	4	4	47
Graduate	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Others	3	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	14
Total	21	19	22	21	18	18	19	19	19	19	18	213

Table 3. The numbers of presentations in general sessions by affiliation

Affiliation*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
University	31	36	42	53	56	48	56	49	28	33	42	474
Secondary school	6	5	6	8	6	6	7	1	2	3	5	55
High school	17	12	17	11	19	19	21	8	8	7	10	149
Junior high school	11	7	13	18	14	11	16	13	7	11	14	135
Elementary school	22	15	24	22	30	21	28	34	30	22	19	267
Graduate	19	15	17	34	30	19	22	19	15	19	17	226
Others	5	7	4	3	4	8	9	16	5	5	5	71
Total	111	97	123	149	159	132	159	140	95	100	112	1377

Over the past 11 years, university faculty delivered the highest number of presentations, totaling 88 in symposiums and panel sessions and 474 in general sessions. The second-highest number of presentations come from elementary school teachers, with 47 presentations in symposiums and panel session and 267 in general sessions. Although there is a notable contribution from elementary school teachers, the cumulative number of presentations by secondary education teachers (including secondary school, high school, and junior high school teachers) surpasses that. In symposiums and panel session, there were 8 presentations by secondary school teachers, 26 by high school teachers, and 29 by junior high school teachers. In general sessions, there were 55 presentations by secondary school teachers, 149 by high school teachers, and 135 by junior high school teachers.

Graduate students ranked the third in the number of general sessions (226), but they were scarcely invited in symposiums and panel sessions. In Table 2, one graduate student's presentation involved two

Table 4. List of words used in titles more than 10 times in symposiums and panel sessions

	Word	Freq		Word	Freq	
1	社会科	social studies	94	15 開発	development	14
2	教育	education	69	16 視点	perspective	14
3	授業	lesson	60	17 単元	unit	14
4	実践	practice	51	18 学び	learning	13
5	学習	learning	43	19 活用	utilization	13
6	社会	society	37	20 学校	school	12
7	課題	challenges	28	21 カリキュラム	curriculum	11
8	小学校	elementary school	24	22 教科	subject	11
9	地域	local	24	23 事例	case	11
10	育成	nurture	20	24 教材	teaching materials	10
11	研究	research	16	25 教職	teaching profession	10
12	考える	think	16	26 大学院	graduate school	10
13	中学校	junior high school	16	27 地理	geography	10
14	防災	disaster prevention	15	28 歴史	history	10

Table 5. List of the top twelve most frequently appearing words in general sessions

	Word	Freq		Word	Freq	
1	社会科	social studies	531	21 課題	challenges	90
2	授業	lesson	395	22 地理	geography	84
3	学習	learning	351	23 問題	problem *	79
4	実践	practice	303	24 中心	center *	78
5	教育	education	259	25 分析	analysis *	77
6	開発	development	228	26 カリキュラム	curriculum	75
7	小学校	elementary school	202	27 日本	Japan *	69
8	社会	society	187	28 視点	perspective	68
9	歴史	history	186	29 学ぶ	learn *	60
10	研究	research	177	30 形成	formation *	60
11	育成	nurture	158	31 生徒	student *	60
12	事例	case	126	32 高等学校	high school *	58
13	中学校	junior high school	120	33 着目	focus *	58
14	単元	unit	116	34 高校	high school *	54
15	活用	utilization	113	35 構成	composition *	53
16	教材	teaching materials	111	36 政治	politics *	53
17	地域	local	111	37 意識	awareness *	52
18	考える	think	100	38 指導	teaching *	52
19	考察	consideration	96	39 評価	evaluation *	52
20	学年	grade	91	40 歴史教育	history education *	51

\* Non-duplicates of the words listed in Table 4.

affiliations, and he was also a high school teacher. Although not explicitly shown in Table 2, one joint presentation and two presentations with multiple affiliations were conducted by graduate students.

***Which Words Appeared Most Frequently in the Titles of Presentations from 2012 to 2022?***

The words used in symposiums and panel sessions more than 10 times are listed in Table 4, while Table 5 indicates the top twelve most frequently appearing words in general sessions. These words are measured by document frequency, a function of KH Coder, showing how many times each word was used in the title, avoiding double counting. The top five words in each table are the same, although the rankings differ: “social studies,” “education,” “lesson,” “practice” and “learning.” It can be said that the main characteristic of presentation in the JASS annual conference is on “learning and lesson practice in social studies education.”

Similar to presenters’ affiliations (excluding university), the majority of presentations are related to elementary school, but there are more presentations related to secondary education than primary education. “elementary school” appears 24 times in Table 4 and 202 times in Table 5. On the other hand, “junior high school” appears 16 times in Table 4. Furthermore, in Table 5, “junior high school” appears 120 times, and “high school” appears 102 times (高校 54 times, 高等学校 58 times). While not explicitly shown in Table 4, “high school” was used 11 times (高校 7 times, 高等学校 4 times) in symposiums and panel sessions.

Words that appear in both Tables 4 and 5, such as “society” and “local”, require attention. Symposiums and panel sessions at the JASS annual conferences are held in a format where a certain theme is set, and presenters are invited. Table 6 indicates the themes of symposiums over the past 11 years, and the themes of panel sessions are listed in Table 7. As shown in the tables, the themes often reflect social state and changes. For example, the symposium in 2016, titled “The reality of Japanese society and social studies lesson”, in 2014 focused on “Changing society by decrease of population and possibilities for social studies education.” The same is true of the themes of panel sessions. The panel sessions in 2021 and 2022 focused on “social studies in the digital society.” Additionally, the themes of symposiums and three panel sessions were set by the organizers of the year; therefore, many of the themes are related to the local context. For instance, the 2022 symposium, titled “Social studies education and children facing local challenges,” focused on the local context. Similarly, in 2019, the theme was “Pioneering the future of social studies and related subjects from Niigata!,” and in 2018, it covered “Disseminating from Nara to Japan and the World.” As the themes of symposiums and panel sessions were often consider social studies education in the context of social state and changes and local communities, it can be said that there were many presentations on the same theme in the general meeting sessions. In Table 5, “society” holds the 8th position, appearing 187 times, while “local” ranks 17th with 111 appearances.

On the other hand, Table 4 includes some words that are not in Table 5, such as “disaster prevention,” “teaching profession” and “graduate school.” This indicates that these words were more commonly used in presentations in symposiums and panel sessions than in general sessions. The JASS annual conference featured one symposium and six panel sessions on the theme of disaster prevention. The 2021 symposium titled “10 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake: Current state of disaster prevention and recovery education,” and panel sessions in 2016 and 2017, covered “Utilizing the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake in lessons.” Additionally, panel sessions in 2012 and 2013 focused on “How to create a disaster prevention class centered on social studies.” In 2015, a panel session was titled “How should social studies deal with the reconstruction of disaster-stricken areas,” and in 2020, it was “What should we do about the continuity of disaster prevention education?”

Table 6. Themes of symposium the JASS annual conferences

Year	Date	Venue	Theme of symposium
2022	22-23 OCT.	Shinshu University	Social studies education and children facing local challenges
2021	27-28 NOV.	Fukushima University	10 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake: Current state of disaster prevention and recovery education
2020	28-29 NOV.	University of Tsukuba	How does social studies lesson change by taking advantage of the perspective of “social participation”?
2019	14-15 SEP.	Niigata University	Pioneering the future of social studies and related subjects from Niigata!
2018	3-4 NOV.	Nara University of Education	Disseminating from Nara to Japan and the World
2017	16-17 SEP.	Chiba University	Rethinking globalization and social studies
2016	5-6 NOV.	Hirosaki University	The reality of Japanese society and social studies lesson
2015	7-8 NOV.	Miyagi University of Education	Social studies lesson that nurture the shapers of the future society
2014	29-30 NOV.	Shizuoka University	Changing society by decrease of population and possibilities for social studies education
2013	26-27 OCT.	Yamagata University	Questioning how classes should embed social issues into learning: Focusing on Japanese agriculture
2012	29-30 SEP.	Tokyo Gakugei University	Social studies education in a risk society: What is the <i>raison d’Etre</i> ?

Table 7. Themes of panel sessions the JASS annual conferences

Year	Themes
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. How should we convey the facts of war from the local community in social studies education?</li> <li>II. What should the social studies lesson be in the digital society?</li> <li>III. How can social studies and related subjects be integrated with Integrated Studies?</li> <li>IV. How do we monitor and evaluate children’s learning situations in social studies?</li> <li>V. How to train social studies teachers capable of creating learning opportunities that demonstrate the agency of students</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Reconstruction of social studies in the ICT/digital society as a “post-corona” society.</li> <li>II. Proactive, interactive, and authentic learning in social studies</li> <li>III. Social studies and the Integrated Studies connected through local teaching materials</li> <li>IV. Considering social studies lessons that will be required from a perspective of diversity in the future</li> <li>V. How to train teachers who can collaborate with institutions and human resources related to social studies</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. What should we do about the continuity of disaster prevention education?</li> <li>II. What gender bias is hidden in social studies?</li> <li>III. How to consider unit design that fosters competency in social studies.</li> <li>IV. Considering the nature of (Comprehensive) Geography, Modern and Contemporary History, and Public in the context of social studies</li> <li>V. Considering subject education specialization in social studies teacher training.</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Exploring social studies lessons in elementary, junior high, and high schools that foster the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent to social studies</li> <li>II. Exploring the role and prospects of social studies education in the global era with researchers from Japan, China, and South Korea - Using diversity and coexistence as keywords</li> <li>III. Exploring the ideal social studies curriculum to foster the ability to approach social issues</li> <li>IV. Considering diversity in social studies from now on.</li> <li>V. Prospects and challenges of social studies education at graduate schools of professional teacher education</li> </ul>

Year	Themes
2018	I. Consideration of proactive learning II. Rethinking social studies from a diversity perspective III. Structure and development of the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent to social studies IV. How to support children and students facing difficulties in social studies lessons V. Is this enough to reform of graduate schools for teacher training? Based on international trends in teacher training for social studies
2017	I. Fostering the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent to social studies in elementary, junior high, and high schools II. Understanding and fostering media literacy in social studies education - Social network service (SNS) /Utilizing ICT in the Internet of Things (IoT) era III. Social studies learning and curriculum management IV. Utilizing the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake in lessons V. Training social studies teachers proficient in ICT utilization
2016	I. Right to vote at age 18 and sovereign education II. Realities surrounding children and establishing of social studies lessons III. Possibilities and challenges of active learning in social studies IV. Utilizing the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake in lessons V. Current status, challenges, and possibilities of social studies education research at graduate schools of professional teacher education
2015	I. Theory of knowledge in the 21st century and the direction of improving social studies lessons II. Considering the relationship between social studies and morality III. How should social studies deal with the reconstruction of disaster-stricken areas IV. Issues in qualitative research methods for social studies lesson research V. Challenging the reform of geography and history
2014	I. "The age of knowledge-based socialization and globalization" and knowledge in social studies II. Inquiring again lessons for citizenship education III. How will social studies change with ESD? IV. Challenges of teaching practice in social studies V. Possibility of "basic history" and "basic geography"
2013	I. Inquiring again: Qualitative research methods in social studies lesson research II. Inquiring again: Expressions and thinking at the end of a social studies unit III. Sharing social issues in Asia and the possibility of developing social studies lessons IV. How to create a disaster prevention class centred on social studies V. Teaching practice in social studies explored from the voices of the field
2012	I. The Science of experience and research in social studies lessons II. How can social studies confront the reality of inequality and poverty? III. Inquiring again from practice: Problems of the national curriculum in social studies - Devising language activities and evaluation IV. Considering growth as a social studies teacher V. How to create a disaster prevention class centred on social studies

Each conference hosts two panel sessions designated by JASS. One of these sessions is related to teacher training. For example, two panel sessions focused on teaching practice for pre-service teachers. In 2013, a panel session was titled "Teaching practice in social studies explored from the voices of the field," and in 2014, it was "Challenges of teaching practice in social studies?" In Table 5, "teaching profession" and "graduate school" each appear 10 times. Three panel sessions focused on the practice of graduate schools of professional teacher education, which provide training for in-service teachers. In 2016, a panel session was titled "Current status, challenges, and possibilities of social studies education research at graduate schools of professional teacher education," in 2018, it was "Is this enough to reform graduate schools for teacher training? Based on international trends in teacher training for social studies," and in 2019, it was "Prospects and challenges of social studies education at graduate schools of professional teacher education."



**What Was the Relationship Between the Topic and the Affiliation in General Sessions from 2012 to 2022?**

This section explores the connection between the frequently appearing words, as identified in the previous section, and the affiliations of the presenters using correspondence analysis. As previously mentioned, symposiums and panel sessions determine their themes first, and presenters are subsequently invited, minimizing the influence of presenter affiliations. Therefore, this section exclusively addresses presentations from general sessions.

The results of the correspondence analysis based on the affiliations of the presenters are presented in Figure 1. The analysis incorporates 180 frequently occurring words that appear 13 times or more, with a specific focus on 60 words for which the number of appearances significantly varies across affiliations. Words from titles are depicted with circles, and the affiliations of the presenters, considered as variable, are represented by squares. This setup allows for exploring the correspondence between variables and words by plotting them on the same diagram.

In Figure 1, general words often used in titles are situated near the center, while more characteristic words used in specific presentations are positioned further away. Larger circles indicate higher frequencies; hence, it can be observed that four words of the top five words mentioned above, excluding “lesson,” are located in the center. It is instructive to observe the placement of squares. Words often used in titles for each affiliation are indicated near each display. “University faculty” and “Graduate student” are positioned close to each other and near the center, suggesting that presentations from these two affiliations share similar content, focusing on general research themes.

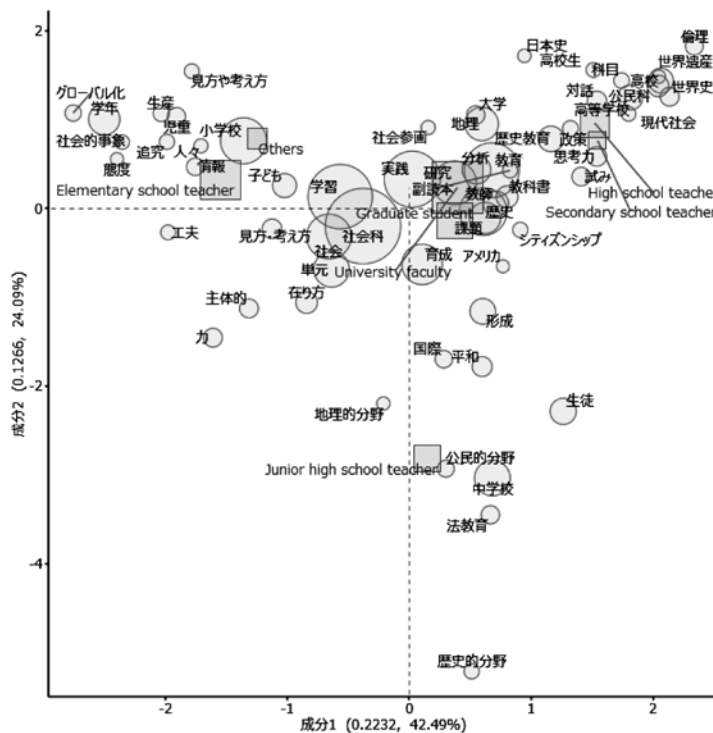


Figure 1. Correspondence analysis based on the affiliations of the presenters

In contrast, other affiliations are situated farther from the center. “Elementary school teacher” and “Others” are positioned closely to each other to the left of the centre, whereas “High school teacher” and “Secondary school teacher” are to the right of the center. “Junior high school teacher” is located below of the center. Members of the board of education, categorized under “Others,” frequently collaborate in presentations with elementary school teachers. Words such as “小学校: elementary school,” “子ども: child,” “児童: child/ elementary school student,” “学習: learning,” “学年: grade,” “情報: information” and “生産: production” close to “Elementary school teacher” and “Others.” This suggests that presentations from “Elementary school teacher” and “Others” focus on learning organized by grade level. For example, learning about industry and information are the contents for grade 5. Additionally, many presentations concentrate on “社会的事象の見方・考え方/見方や考え方.” This concept is emphasized in the revised 2017 national curriculum for elementary school and is officially translated as “the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent to social studies/discipline-based epistemological approach about social phenomena.”

“Secondary school teacher” close to “High school teacher.” This suggests that “Secondary school teacher” is more likely to present lesson practices in high school than junior high school. “High school teacher” and “Secondary school teacher” are positioned closely to words such as “高等学校, 高校: high school,” “高校生: high school student,” “科目: subject,” “公民科: civic,” “地理: geography,” “歴史: history,” “世界史 world history,” “日本史: Japan history,” “倫理: ethics” and “現代社会: contemporary Society.” It indicates a diverse range of presentations for each subject, such as world history, Japan history, ethics, and contemporary society. This suggests a prevalence of a discipline-based approach in many presentations within high school level.

Words such as “中学校: junior high school,” “生徒: student,” “公民的分野: civics in junior high school,” “国際: international,” “平和: peace,” “法教育: law-related education,” “地理的分野: geography in junior high school” and “歴史的分野: history in junior high school” appear on below closely to “Junior high school teacher.” There is less commonality among presentations compared to other school levels. However, it’s interesting to note that civics-related topics, including peace, law-related education, and international issues, are prominently discussed in junior high school presentations.

#### ***What Trends Did the Selected Topic Exhibit in General Sessions from 2012 to 2022?***

This section delves into the trends of the selected topic in general sessions from 2012 to 2022, utilizing correspondence analysis. Figure 2, enlarged around the origin, illustrates the results of the correspondence analysis based on the presented years. Three areas on the diagram warrant attention: 2014/2015 positioned closely to words such as “ESD,” “地理: geography” and “環境: environment”; 2016/2017 situated closely to words like “高校生: high school student,” “選挙: election” and “主権者: sovereign education.”; 2018/2022 closely related to words such as “歴史総合: Modern and Contemporary History,” “問い: question” and “科目: subject.”

In 2014 and 2015, the research trend was centered around Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Initially proposed by Japan at the *2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development*, ESD gained global attention, with UNESCO leading efforts from 2005 to 2014. Japan’s revised 2008/9 national curriculum incorporated the idea of a “sustainable society” into subjects like social studies, science, and moral education. Notably, junior high school geography included ESD content related to regional environmental problems. Additionally, the *2014 UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* marked the end of the UN Decade of ESD (2005-2014) and saw the launch of the Global Action Programme on ESD. The

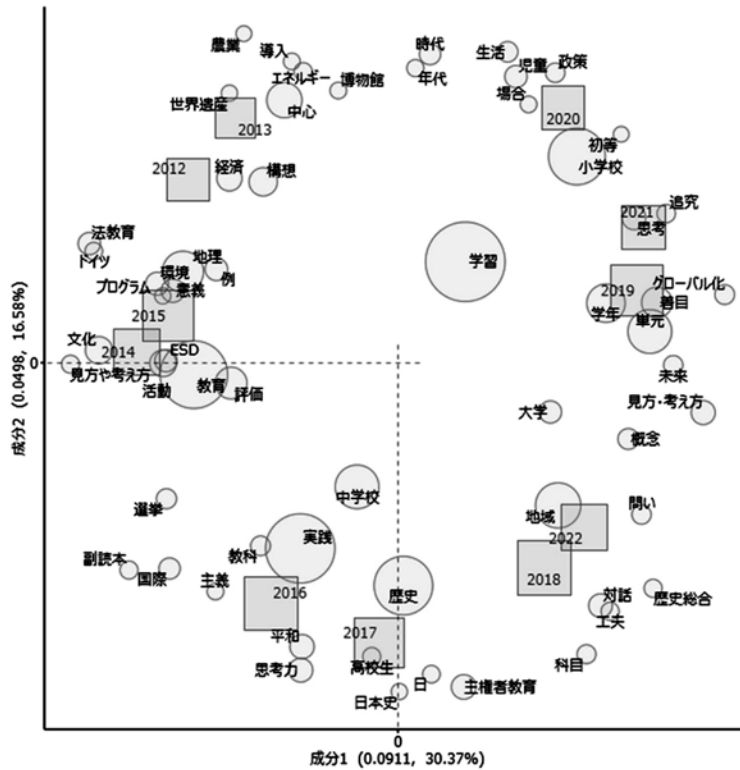


Figure 2. Correspondence analysis based on the presented year

conference took place from 10-12 November 2014 in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

Sovereign education emerged as a research trend in 2016 and 2017, following a significant legal change in 2015 that lowered the voting age from 20 to 18, granting voting rights to high school-aged individuals. Since the 2016 election, 18 years old high school students have exercised their voting rights, leading to an emphasis on sovereign education in schools. Eventually, the new civics subject, “Public,” commenced in 2022, based on the revised 2018 national curriculum for high school. Below is part of a declaration calling for the promotion of sovereign education by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations:

On June 17, 2015, the bill to partially amend the Public Offices Election Act and other acts was passed into law (promulgated on June 19 of the same year). This led to the lowering of the minimum voting age at public elections from 20 to 18. Through this amendment, efforts for implementing education for sovereign citizens (sovereign education) have been quickly expanded, such as the introduction of a new mandatory subject tentatively known as "Citizenship" at high school [10th to 12th grades; Students 16 to 18 years old] (Japan Federation of Bar Associations, 2016).

Similarly, “Modern and Contemporary History” was introduced by the revised national curriculum in high schools in 2018, and all students have been required to learn this subject from 2022. The main feature of this subject is that students learn how to understand history by focusing on major changes in history (OECD 2020). Kawakita (2022) who authored a textbook for this subject, states the following:

In the class, students are expected to develop skills to understand historical sources and materials,

express their own interest in history as “questions,” compare and relate historical events based on their acquired knowledge, and apply their historical learning to address the various challenges facing the world today.

These three trends in general sessions, reflecting the contemporary social movements, such as ESD and sovereign education, and anticipating revisions in the national curriculum, can also be observed in panel sessions, as previously mentioned. As indicated in Table 7, a panel session in 2014 was titled “How will social studies change with ESD?” In 2016, the focus shifted to “Right to vote at age 18 and sovereign education” and by 2020, the discussion centered on “Considering the nature of (Comprehensive) Geography, Modern and Contemporary History, and Public in the context of social studies.”

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The content analysis of the presentations included in the JASS annual conference programs from 2012 to 2022, as presented in this paper, confirms social education research trends in Japan that were already identified in previous review papers or had been previously assumed. Lee and Yang (2019) confirmed that words related to “environmental education,” “local learning,” and “disaster prevention education” were positioned as relatively key words in geography education research papers during 1998-2018. According to Kinoshita (2022), the frequent topics in 2021 were “the perspectives and ways of thinking pertinent/Discipline-based epistemological approach,” “the new subject,” and “right to vote at age 18.” Similarly, these topics are dominant in the in the JASS annual conferences. Words such as “local,” “disaster prevention” are dominant in symposiums and panel sessions. In the trends of the selected topic in general sessions, as analyzed using correspondence analysis, the frequent words in 2014 and 2015 were “ESD,” “geography,” and “environment”; in 2016 and 2017, “election” and “sovereign education”; and in 2018 and 2022, words such as “Modern and Contemporary History” and “subject” were dominant.

The results also indicate the dominance of certain topics over others based on the affiliations of the presenters. While university faculty and graduate students tend to present theoretical and normative research more generally, school teachers tend to present practical research that is specialized to the school level to which they belong. Presentations from elementary school teachers focus on integrated learning organized by grade level, while presentations from secondary education teachers focus on subject learning as a discipline-based approach. The JASS annual conferences are accessible to a wider range of contributors, including school teachers as well as researchers. Many school teachers have participated in academic conferences and presented their practice, highlighting their role as reflective practitioners. Additionally, the main characteristic of presentation in the JASS annual conference is on “learning and lesson practice in social studies education,” largely due to the contributions of many school teachers.

In conclusion, this comprehensive analysis of JASS annual conferences contributes a nuanced understanding of social studies education research trends in Japan, serving as a valuable resource for researchers, and teachers keen on staying abreast of emerging developments in the field. Reflecting on the goals of the ISSA Annual Meeting 2023, which aimed to compare research trends and explore opportunities for future cross-border cooperation, it becomes evident that topics such as ESD and sovereign education are common not only to Japan but also to other countries around the world. It is hoped that this work will foster the establishment of a

truly international network of researchers and teachers concerned with social studies education, promoting it for our sustainable world.

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