

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION IN JAPAN: CONSUMER OR PRODUCER?

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Abstract. This study intends to examine the position of fieldwork in comparative studies of education in Japan. For this purpose, the content of articles in the Japan Comparative Education Society's journal over the past 40 years is analyzed. Then, the implications, significance as well as apprehension surrounding doing fieldwork are discussed. The classification based on a full reading of 625 articles indicates 128 (20.48%) are found to be based on the data and information collected by the researchers themselves with the various techniques in their fields. While studies about Western advanced countries account for a majority, those utilizing fieldwork remain limited at 27. The rest of the fieldwork-based articles concern developing countries. Interestingly, not only has the speed of increase been accelerating, but the quality of the fieldwork seems to have been improving. Investigated countries and areas have been diversifying. Perhaps the most salient phenomenon is that studies centering on advanced Western countries are coming to adopt fieldwork. These recent trends may indicate that comparative education studies in Japan are coming into their own: what was long considered a 'peripheral' or 'consumer' position in academia is now being replaced with hope for making original and active contributions to the field.

Keywords: comparative education; fieldwork; Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES)

In the field of comparative education which relates to the analysis of overseas contemporary education or education in different cultural settings, fieldwork has been attracting more and more attention as an effective method of gathering data and information. It has been described in a large number of scholarly works as an important research method for many years. It is defined loosely as an investigative technique for visiting sites in person with a certain purpose in mind, making direct observations, interviewing parties concerned, conducting questionnaire surveys, and extracting historical records and data on the spot in order to get scientifically objective results. The literature focusing on following sound interview techniques,

the creation, distribution and interpretation of questionnaires, the intricacies of reliable participant observation, the taking of accurate field-notes and the writing of reports based on field experiences is too numerous to mention¹⁾. (Schatzman, L. & Strauss, A., 1990; S., Sato, I., 1995; Emerson, R., Frez, R. & Shaw, L., 1995; Lofland, J. & Lofland, L., 1995). Therefore, it is not the purpose of this article to discuss the merits and processes of fieldwork at large, but it is rather to aim at confining the argument to examining the position and role of the method in one discipline, comparative education. Since a vast majority of comparative educators in Japan maintain membership in the Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES)²⁾, the author will closely review the Society's past activities and clarify how fieldwork has been conducted and considered on various occasions. More concretely, contents of the articles published by the Society's journal over the past 40 years will first be analyzed to judge their research methods. Secondly, based on this analysis, the implications, significance, and apprehension surrounding doing fieldwork in comparative studies of education will then be discussed.

1. Retrospect of the JCES Development

Firstly I will look back upon the history of Comparative Education in Japan, which does not include its pre-history³⁾ but will just trace the development as a scientific discipline. Some books entitled 'comparative study' or 'comparative education' were published not at all later than the West. For instance, Hanjiro Nakajima, a professor of Waseda University published his book titled *Comparative Study on National Education in Germany, France, UK and USA* in 1916. Professor Choichi Higuchi of Tokyo Higher Normal School published his book titled *Comparative Education* in 1928. Professor Shigetaka Abe of Tokyo Imperial University published his book titled *History of School Education Development in Europe and America* in 1930. Whereas Professor Peter Sandiford of Canada edited *Comparative Education* in 1918 and Professor Issac Kandel of the United States published *Comparative Education* in 1933.

In the post-World War II era, institutionalization of the discipline shifted into high gear. Legislated university chairs were established in some leading universities and Comparative Education (CE) related lectures were increasingly taught in universities. According to previous surveys, there were 26 universities where CE was taught in 1974, 36 universities where 72 Comparative Education related courses were provided in 1986, and 62 universities with 168 related courses in 199 (JCES, 2012). And most importantly, the Japan Comparative Education Society (hereafter as JCES) was established. After holding 4 preliminary research meetings dating back to October 1962, the formal inaugural annual conference was held in Hiroshima in 1965 with 94 members. The membership increased to 977 as of 2017. JCES joined the WCCES as one of its 5 founding member societies in 1970, and hosted its 4th conference in Tokyo in 1980. The first issue of JCES' journal

appeared in 1974. Until 2006 it had been published annually; however, from that year on it was published biannually. In 2012 JCES published an Encyclopedia of Comparative Education for the first time in its history with cooperation of 333 authors who were dominantly the members of the society.

During the post-war years of development, Japanese scholars received Western influence particularly in terms of research methodologies including those proposed by Hilker, Bereday, Schneider, Holmes, Noah, and Exckstein during 1960's and early 70's. Since the late 1970's a trend adopting research methods of anthropology and ethnology developed as a reaction against of positivism and scientism of previous years. At the same time, Japanese scholars were influenced by post-Marxism, dependency theory, post-modernism and post-colonialism, etc. However, arguments on comparative study methods generally have not been remarkable and a fresh research method originating in Japan has regrettably not appeared yet. It is necessary for us Japanese to honestly admit that we are lagging behind the international standard of the discipline in terms of theory-building. On the contrary, the researches on a specific country or area has been accumulated considerably. A trend can be observed of diversification of research topics including development, environment, population, gender, human rights, religion etc. and also an expanding of target areas from Western developed countries to non-western developing countries.

From both inside and outside of the society, it is sometimes criticized that there is little comparison in the works by Japanese comparative educationists. To be sure, studies on a single country are the large majority. It is also often said that the description style of Japanese researchers differs from that of their Western counterparts, particularly American colleagues. It is said that even if a highly evaluated paper in Japan is translated into English as it is, the paper does not become highly regarded overseas. This may be because, a theoretical framework of papers written by Japanese researchers is not necessarily clear, despite the fact that they contain a detailed description about the facts and phenomena. Or they may be insufficient in the point of being positioned into an existing theoretical framework. While there is much hair-splitting description, a theoretical framework is not clear, etc. It is certainly a Japanese style to investigate the detailed facts very carefully. Then, what is theory? Isn't it sometimes a partial arbitrary belief or subjective preconception of the researcher? How should we, members of JCES respond to these critical comments? Are these criticisms to the point?

In these respects, in order to scrutinize the scholarly achievement by comparative education studies in Japan, I analyzed the contents of all articles published by the JCES journal from its inaugural issue to recent No.50. However, it is true that the JCES journal does not always represent the outstanding result of comparative studies or studies on foreign education. It is not too much to say that studies on foreign education, which are sometimes comparative studies, are conducted in almost all

sub-areas of pedagogy or educational science in Japan. These included areas such as educational philosophy, educational administration and governance, education sociology, didactics, studies on higher education and pre-school education as well as subject pedagogies such as the pedagogy of Japanese language, the pedagogy of mathematics and the pedagogy of social studies, etc. with the exception of a very tiny minority of purely Japan-related areas including the history of Japanese education. However, even in the studies on the educational history of Japan, explorations into the foreign impact on Japan are included, and these studies certainly belong to the field of comparative education.

2. Analysis of papers published in JCES journals

Table I classifies the content of JCES journal articles by country and other research themes, illustrating how research foci and methodology within the JCES have evolved over time.

As indicated in Table I, looking back at all the articles published by the Journal, there were 625 published from the first volume to No. 50. If we narrow our focus on single countries (with the exception of Japan) such as the United States and China, articles dealing with advanced countries in Europe and America received the majority of attention throughout the whole period. However, if we consider change over each ten year period, it readily becomes apparent that articles dealing with Asia, Oceania and other developing countries have been increasing. In addition, the number of articles dealing with single countries seldom written about in the past has been increasing rapidly.

Among these 625 articles, 128 (approximately 20.5%) are found to be based on original data and information collected and formed using various techniques in each authors' respective fields (see Table II). This classification is based on a full reading of all 625 articles. These 128 articles are distinguished by the criterion that the authors' research techniques including questionnaires, interviews, and observations in their respective fields are explicitly indicated in any part of the article.

Table 1. Article Content in JCES journals by Country and Other Research Themes

	Target Country or Topic	No.1-10	No.11-20	No.21-30	No.31-40	No.41-50	Total	
Single Country	U.S.	20	22	12	9	4	67	
	U.K.	11	11	10	4	6	42	
	Germany	5	7	11	6	4	33	
	France	4	9	4	3	2	22	199
	Russia (U.S.S.R)	5	4	3	2	1	15	
	Sweden	4	3	0	3	2	12	
	Canada	1	3	1	1	2	8	
	Australia	1	4	7	3	0	15	21
	New Zealand	0	1	1	2	2	6	
	Japan	18	14	8	4	11	55	55
	China	1	7	11	7	4	30	
	Korea	5	3	2	4	5	19	
	Thailand	1	5	6	5	1	18	
	India	1	2	3	2	0	8	168
	Indonesia	0	4	5	0	1	10	
	Malaysia	0	5	3	1	1	10	
	Philippines	1	1	2	1	0	5	
	Others(single country)*	0	6	11	17	34	68	
	Subtotal	78	111	100	74	80	443	
Region/Multiple Countries	Southeast Asia	1	1	0	2	3	7	
	Asia	2	0	1	0	6	9	
	Central & South America	0	1	1	2	1	5	24
	Africa	0	0	0	3	0	3	
	Comparison (multiple countries)	15	7	7	13	9	51	51
	Subtotal	18	9	9	20	19	75	
Other Topics	International Organization**	10	1	3	2	0	16	
	Theory/Methodology	33	25	17	3	13	91	
	Subtotal	43	26	20	5	13	107	
	Total	139	146	129	99	112	625	

Note: * Other single countries include Mexico, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Poland, Syria, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Chile, Kenya, Afghanistan, Turkey, Belgium, Tanzania, Greece, Taiwan, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Senegal, Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Guatemala, South-Africa, Hong Kong, Peru, Singapore. Ethiopia, United Arab Emirates, South Sudan and Qatar.

** International organizations include the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, EC and EU.

Table 2. Countries and/or Areas Studied Using Fieldwork[illegible]

Note:* Fieldwork was conducted in Thailand and partly in Malaysia.

** Fieldwork was conducted in Belgium and Holland.

*** Countries studied include the US, Canada, New Zealand, Netherland, Denmark, UK and Korea.

It appears that following edition No. 19 of the Journal, or since the beginning of the 1990s, research utilizing fieldwork has come to be seen with increasing regularity in JCES publications. Therefore, the period before this may be considered a 'run-up stage.' If we count the number of articles based on fieldwork in all 10 volumes of the journal, 10 appeared in Nos.1 – 10, 9 in Nos.11 – 20, 29 in Nos. 21 – 30, 42 in Nos.31 – 40 and 39 in Nos.41 – 50 (from 2006, i.e., after No.32 on JCES journals started to be published bi-annually).

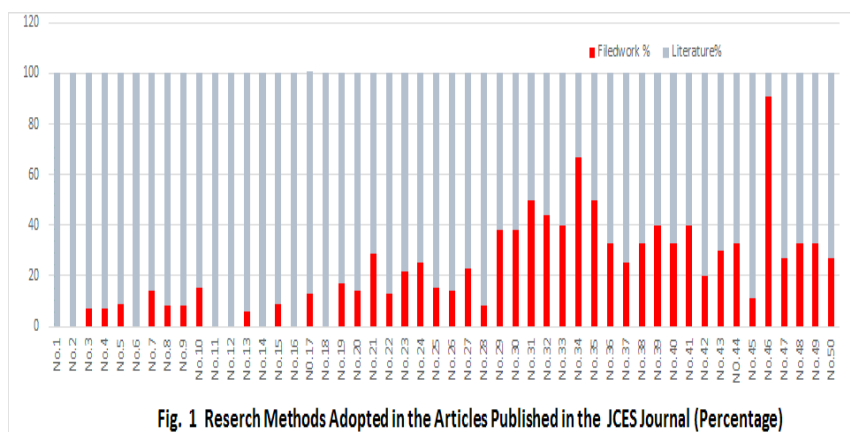


Fig. 1 Reserch Methods Adopted in the Articles Published in the JCES Journal (Percentage)

As seen in figure 2, however, there appeared a leveling off or slight decrease of percentage of articles using fieldwork in recent 10 volumes published in past 5 years. Behind this change was the increase of articles collecting information through the Internet which cannot be considered as fieldwork-based.

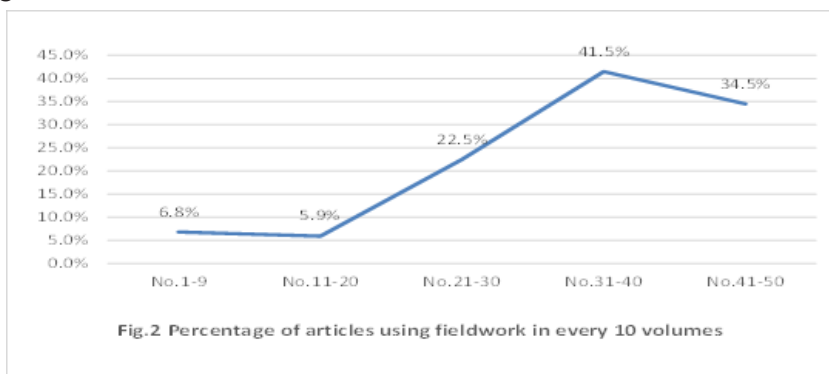


Fig.2 Percentage of articles using fieldwork in every 10 volumes

Besides, among the 128 fieldwork-based articles, only 27 (21.1%) are on Western advanced countries including areas such as the US, the UK, Canada and the EU throughout the whole period, and 99 articles (77.3%) are concerned with

non-Western areas, especially those located in Asia, while the articles on Western advanced countries are ascendant in terms of the total number. What does this mean? For researchers who are involved in the study of Western developed countries, is it sufficient merely to rely on a wealth of existing data in order to form and meaningfully test a hypothesis? Unfortunately, there seems to be an overwhelming reliance on existing research results produced in advanced Western countries, based perhaps on a ‘servile spirit’ (subordinate consciousness) of sorts on the part of Japanese researchers in terms of research.

3. Re-examining “Fieldwork”

Though there appear to be relatively more articles reporting findings based on ‘fieldwork’ undertaken in Asian countries, whether researchers’ practices in the field are in fact worthy of the term should also be strictly examined from the following viewpoints.

In the first place, fieldwork becomes self-contained only after appropriate activity is made in each phase of the process, i.e.: (1) before going to the field, (2) in the field, and (3) after returning from the field. Although the amount of data and information and the ease of access to these have increased enormously in the present global and Internet age, do we fully digest the data and information which are available before going to the actual site? Nowadays, while some vital details remain difficult to obtain, much information may be obtained instantly once connected to the World Wide Web from any access point around the globe in this ICT age⁴⁾.

Secondly, the methodological processes that distinguish ‘fieldwork’ from other approaches must be revisited (see Table III). In earlier days an overwhelming majority of the fieldwork by Society members was based on questionnaire surveys, with only a partial addition of interviews and observations. The situation gradually changed with studies based on interview having increased. When we view the method utilized by the 128 fieldwork-based studies, interview, questionnaire and observation account 84, 39 and 19 projects respectively, although some researchers combined these methods and therefore the total exceeds 128.

Table 3. Method and Extent of Fieldwork

Bulletin No.	Article No.	Method of Investigation	Unit or Target of Analysis	Country/Region
3	1	fact-finding	not clear	Thailand
4	1	questionnaire/interview	6 villages	Thailand/Malaysia
5	1	questionnaire	college students	Thailand
	2	fact-finding	13 schools of selected states	United States
7	1	questionnaire	a few cities	Korea
	2	questionnaire	13 high schools of one state	United States
8	1	questionnaire	selected cities	Korea
9	1	fact-finding	selected schools	United States
10	1	questionnaire	selected cities	Korea
	2	questionnaire	3 schools	United States
13	1	fact-finding	one city	Canada
15	1	observation	one community	Philippines
17	1	questionnaire	20 villages of 8 counties	Thailand
	2	interview	3 schools	Malaysia
19	1	interview/observation	one village	Thailand
	2	questionnaire	one university	Malaysia
	3	questionnaire	3 schools	Singapore
20	1	interview	3 counties in one province	Thailand
	2	fact-finding	selected universities	China
21	1	questionnaire	college students at one university	Thailand
	2	fact-finding	one village high school	Philippines
	3	interview	administrators in 3 provinces	Indonesia
	4	observation	one school	Indonesia
22	1	questionnaire	11 schools	Thailand
	2	interview/observation	one village	Indonesia
23	1	interview	2 cities	China
	2	observation	classroom of a school	Indonesia
24	1	questionnaire	4 counties	China
	2	interview/observation/questionnaire	one state	India
	3	interview	selected institutions	Vietnam
25	1	interview	one university	China
	2	fact-finding	not clear	Syria/Lebanon
26	1	questionnaire/interview	one county	Thailand
	2	fact-finding	not clear	Brunei/Bhutan
27	1	questionnaire	2 states	India
	2	interview	one district	Tanzania
	3	questionnaire	one school district	United States
28	1	questionnaire	3 districts	Nepal
29	1	questionnaire	selected schools in one state	Malaysia
	2	questionnaire	2 colleges and 11 schools	Myanmar
	3	interview	4 villages	Bangladesh
	4	interview/observation	2 schools in one state	United States
	5	questionnaire	4 schools in one city	United Kingdom
30	1	fact-finding	3 schools in 3 areas	Thailand
	2	interview	7 schools in one city	China
	3	interview	2 schools in one county	Kenya
	4	interview	one school and one council	Australia
	5	interview	selected schools in 3 states	United States
31	1	interview	2 administrative offices	Thailand
	2	interview/observation	one school	Thailand
	3	interview	one research institute	Korea
	4	fact-finding	one city	Afghanistan
	5	interview	selected persons	Latin America
	6	interview	8 countries	8 countries

Bulletin No.	Article No.	Method of Investigation	Unit or Target of Analysis	Country/Region
32	1	interview	selected institutions	China
	2	questionnaire	27 schools in 6 counties	Nepal
	3	interview	one school	Germany
	4	interview	13 schools	Holland/Belgium
33	1	interview/observation	selected schools in 2 areas	Philippines
	2	interview/observation	selected schools	Lebanon
	3	interview	one school	Tanzania
	4	interview	one administrative offices	Russia
34	1	interview	Ministry of Education	Thailand
	2	interview	selected persons	New Zealand
	3	questionnaire	teacher training colleges	United States
	4	fact-finding	selected institutions in 2 states	United States
	5	interview	one scholar	Germany
	6	interview	selected persons	Sweden
35	1	questionnaire	one county	Thailand
	2	interview	selected persons at one university	Korea
	3	fact-finding	selected institutions	China
	4	interview	selected schools	Uzbekistan
	5	interview	10 schools in 2 cities	Holland
36	1	questionnaire/observation	3 cities	Indonesia
	2	interview	one school	Cambodia
	3	questionnaire/interview	13 college students	United States
37	1	interview	selected institutions	Southeast Asia
	2	interview	selected persons	New Zealand
	3	interview	one institution	Germany
38	1	interview	selected persons	Korea
	2	interview/observation	one village	China
	3	questionnaire/interview	selected persons	Germany
39	1	interview	selected schools	Taiwan
	2	interview/questionnaire	10 villages in 2 states	India
	3	interview	selected schools and persons in one city	India
	4	questionnaire/interview	selected schools in 2 counties	Thailand
40	1	interview	selected persons	Australia
	2	interview/observation	one school and Ministry of Education	Malaysia
	3	interview/questionnaire	14 middle schools in 9 cities	United Kingdom
41	1	interview	one local edu. administration office	Vietnam
	2	interview	selected edu. Offices and schools	New Zealand
	3	interview	selected institutes	Thailand
	3	interview	selected persons	Malawi
42	1	interview	selected countries	Asia
	2	observation	selected schools	Afghanistan
43	1	interview	selected Australian branch colleges	Vietnam
	2	interview/questionnaire	selected village schools	Cambodia
	3	interview	selected persons	Peru
44	1	interview	those related with Turkish immigrants	Germany
	2	interview	selected teachers	Guatemala
	3	interview	selected principals	New Zealand
	4	interview	selected teachers	Sweden
45	1	interview/observation	those related with supplemental edu.	United States
46	1	interview	one person	Vietnam
	2	questionnaire/interview	selected students and parents	Vietnam
	3	interview/observation/questionnaire	teachers, parents, adm. in 4 areas	Malawi
	4	interview/observation	teachers, parents in 2 schools	Senegal
	5	questionnaire	about 200 teachers, administrators	Thai and Japan
	6	questionnaire	4766 students	ASEAN
	7	questionnaire	697 students	Malaysia
	8	questionnaire	609 students	Burundi
	9	questionnaire	566 students	Cambodia
	10	questionnaire	628 students	Raas
47	1	interview/observation	11 education-related personnel	Cambodia
	2	interview	Principals and Teachers at 5 schools	China
	3	interview	Principals at 2 schools on several occasions	Germany
48	1	interview	selected persons	Korea
	2	interview	Teachers at 2 schools	Singapore
	3	interview	selected persons	Southeast Asia
49	1	interview	one person	United Kingdom
	2	interview	one person	Taiwan
	3	interview	selected persons	Russia
	4	interview	one person	Vietnam
	5	interview	one person	United Arab Emirates
50	1	interview	selected persons	Peru
	2	interview	Teachers and Students at 2 schools	Ethiopia
	3	interview	Teachers at 3 highschools	South Africa
	4	interview/observation	Teachers at 4 elementary schools	South Sudan

Whatever method may be used, how can representativeness and typicality of place, institution or respondent be ensured? Investigation areas where means of transportation are difficult to secure require an abundance of energy and self-initiative. Having said this, however, the value of research must be assessed rigorously; even if a study is worthy of a prize for effort, it may not be so useful in terms of building new theories, providing new knowledge, or contributing otherwise to the field of comparative education.

Moreover, in an educational science whose purpose is humanistic and whose core is to understand the human being, face-to-face communication, direct dialog and personal contextual experience are undeniably the most effective research methods. While questionnaire surveys are practical alternatives to meeting with respondents personally, comparative educationalists are obliged to strive to discern the 'heart of the matter' through personal engagement and involvement. It is the *field* that begs observation in order to obtain results which cannot be gained through considerations of literature alone. The field creates an image which can neither be trivialized nor exaggerated. Ethnographic investigation centering on long-term participant observation in the field is often considered antithetical to questionnaire survey. Of course, the former is only one survey method along with intensive interviews, scholastic aptitude and psychological tests, the collection and scrutiny of literature as well as statistical data and other materials. The importance of 'watching and listening' cannot be denied, however the danger of *having no choice* but to devote one's time to 'watching and listening' should not be forgotten. Ethnographic investigation is a proven method of recording observations of educational activity which are very individualized.

In this respect, studies based on 'participant observation' conducted by members of the Society should be open for discussion about whether researchers have indeed followed appropriate methodological rigors to justify this claim. Among the various available methods in fieldwork, the 'participant-observer' is perhaps the most misunderstood and therefore the most misreported in education literature. What can be said at present is that we will likely have to wait until more quality monographs and articles have been accumulated in order for this method to root in our field. A distinctive methodology of fieldwork cannot be established until such individual studies accumulate and achievements which cannot be reduced to any existing discipline are established.

There has been much concern in recent years that the increasingly achievement-oriented academic climate results in pressure to complete studies more quickly. In such circumstances, an environment is being established in which long and enduring field surveys with close linkages to investigation target sites, as is expressed by the phrase 'one person in one village for one year' in cultural anthropology, will be difficult to realize in our discipline in coming years. Hopefully this concern will prove unfounded.

Thirdly, regardless of whether a study is conducted on an individual or collaborative basis, human relations involved must be reexamined. Fieldwork performed by an individual researcher should be greatly encouraged when there appears to be a certain field or theme

of study that an individual can pursue. Of course, a major premise of individual fieldwork is that what an individual can and should do must be performed alone. In this respect, it is sometimes seen that an individual who is involved in a country's development in a professional capacity (hereafter referred to as a 'development practitioner') mobilizes local consultants and specialists to collect related data and information and utilizes results in creating a report. In order to grasp the complicated social relations in an area quickly and reflect results accurately in a publicized project, various know-how and techniques using mainly qualitative methods to complete an investigation in a short period of time must be worked out thoroughly in advance. However, 'problem-finding type' investigations often adopted by researchers deeply involved in a field generally do not fit in easily with the timeframe of the development practitioners. Are not comparative education researchers engaged in a task similar to that of the practitioners? To rephrase this question, does the successful collection of data negate any need to question the process? Indeed, it would also appear necessary to consider the internal changes and mental development of the researcher.

There are many circumstances in fieldwork whereby two or more researchers, including the researcher of the area concerned, are necessarily involved. It is certain that an investigation conducted by one person has an advantage in terms of simplicity and rapport with those surveyed with the provision that it is carried out well. While it is often said that 'two heads are better than one,' conducting fieldwork investigation on an individual basis can have considerable advantages over collective efforts. However, in terms of reliability and verifiability of survey results as well as falsifiability in the reverse, a group investigation is better than an individual investigation.

4. Field as 'Method'

In order to promote active research in comparative education by Japanese scholars, Toru Umakoshi pointed out that more 'area studies' (in this case, he seemed to use the term not as a discipline but as a synonym for 'fieldwork') should first of all be accumulated. He also proposed a concrete path (a reciprocating movement of 'area studies' and 'theorization') towards correcting existing theories rooted in each discipline (Umakoshi, 2007). When we confront various educational phenomena seen in each field by using existing disciplines and theories, we must recognize that most of these disciplines and theories have been created in the West. Edward Said's assertion that "Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978; 3) is in fact nothing but a reflection of Western ethnocentrism. His view is nevertheless extremely important for studies which consider non-Western areas as the field within comparative education research. Furthermore, Japanese scholars receive the benefit of using existing disciplines and theories as research tools in the process of academic training, regardless of whether we have internalized or merely superficially accepted them. Therefore, the suggestion by Yasushi Maehira that 'reverse ethnocentrism' (Maehira, 1991) be medially-located among Japanese scholars and should be recognized is important.

There is debate as to whether or not area studies can be considered an independent discipline by itself. It is not my wish here to side definitely in favor of one or the other, however whether we should place more emphasis on the 'field' or on 'existing theories' does seem to present a profound issue. What any approach must reflect is the understanding of the field not as a place for 'sample' extraction in order to verify or refute existing theories. It will not lead to the development of an original theory peculiar to the field starting with some holistic perception. It appears to this author to be high time to discard any attachment to the weak eclecticism of all-encompassing approaches, to dare to turn down the ambiguity of exploring the modifiability of the existing theories, and just to sense thoroughly what the field emits without interposing any prevision.

Regarding the unit of analysis or investigation target, a variety of units are analyzed in field-based studies, from cross-national perspectives of 8 countries, to one classroom and even to an individual scholar⁵). It seems to be a general tendency that researchers focus on rather smaller units such as one village and one school in fieldwork. In any case, compared with armchair speculation, researchers who enter into the field are pulled away from their own culture, and much more frequently encounter situations where they cannot but see their own cultures objectively and marginalize them. Criticism that there is "no comparison" (Ichikawa, 1990) in research results by the JCES members often proves justified and must be accepted with sincerity. Nevertheless, the researcher deeply committed to the field is always personally engaged in 'comparison,' and is continuously pressed to make value judgments from a comparative viewpoint in the process of investigation and reporting.

Here is the meaning of '*the field as method*,' which helps to contribute to character-building on the part of the researcher. In such daily, repeated 'comparison,' it is ideal for Japanese not only to put a pivoting foot of comparison on our own cultural setting, but hopefully to have more axes and consider things from different angles. It is not enough only to consider various phenomena occurring in the field with the inborn views and ways of thinking as Japanese. Junzo Kawada called this concept 'triangulation' (Nakajima, & Johnson, 1989; 170); Kazuko Tsurumi showed the same recognition in her works on Pearl Buck and John Dewey. (Tsurumi, 1997:129 – 149, 103 – 119) It is possible to consider more objectively and essentially the phenomenon seen in the field not by a simple comparison between two things but by adding more axes and analyzing within a somewhat more complicated framework. On this point, Chie Nakane once pointed out the importance of having concern and common sense in more than two research areas such as 'major' and 'minor' fields. She went on to say that those areas should be somewhere other than within the society where the researcher was born and raised, reasoning that "if we choose the area where we were born and grew up, our observation will be inevitably less rigorous in method." (Nakajima, 1989: 311). In general, in getting to know about a certain field, if we cling only to the field, we may not be able to understand it well. However, unfortunately we can find few works in the JCES journal written from a standpoint of compound, multifaceted eyes.

Thus, although the field is like 'a treasure mountain', neither is the mountain easily climbed nor are the treasures merely lying around. Even if physical and objective

conditions are all provided for, not everyone is necessarily able to capitalize upon them. Only those standing in the field, and having “a direct sensitivity to the material before them, and then a continual self-examination of their methodology and practice, a constant attempt to keep their work responsive to the material and not to a doctrinal preconception” (Said, 1978: 327) are successful in finding their treasures. Ultimately, the ideal fieldwork technique can be created only by researchers who continuously refine themselves in the field. In this way an original theory, not to say a new discipline, will be produced through persistent and close dialog with data and information⁶⁾ obtained and accumulated in the field; ‘an original theory’ in this case includes not only drawing conclusions from case studies, but also typifying the results obtained from two or more case studies and further interrelating them on a more advanced, abstract level. Some kind of ‘synthesis’ process is required, and eventually an achievement non-reducible to any existing discipline ought to be accumulated. There is no place for studies on a foreign country or comparative studies which merely reuse and rearrange original research results.

5. Conclusion

More and more fieldwork-based studies have been appearing in the JCES journal during the last almost half a century. While at the same time a divergent tendency of some researchers choosing to eschew fieldwork in favor of Internet-based secondary source research has been observed over the past couple years.

As described earlier, the researcher deeply committed to the field is always personally engaged in ‘comparison,’ and is continuously pressed to make value judgments from a comparative viewpoint in the process of investigation and reporting. Therefore, often repeated criticism that there is no or little comparison in the works by Japanese comparative educationists is not appropriate.

Not only has the rate of increase been accelerated, but also the quality of the fieldwork seems to have been improving gradually. Countries and areas selected to be the object of investigation have been diversifying. Focusing on the most recent 10 volumes (Nos. 41 – 50), only 6 out of 39 articles depend solely on questionnaire survey, which had been the typical technique used in fields in previous years. Five articles utilize observation, although the length of time varies from article to article. The remaining 31 articles utilize the interview method, of which 6 articles are based on composite methods of interview and questionnaire or observation. A particularly noteworthy phenomenon is that studies centering on Western advanced countries are also adopting fieldwork as their research method. The younger generations involved with those countries are trying to positively form their own data and information, as was the case for the studies of developing countries, instead of ‘borrowing’ or ‘consuming’ ready-made research results.

These recent academic trends may indicate that studies in Comparative Education in Japan are finally coming into their own: what was long considered a ‘peripheral’ or ‘consumer’⁷⁾ (Altbach, 1994) position in academia is now being replaced with true hope for making original and active contributions to research in the field.

NOTES

1. Typical works on Fieldwork are as follows; Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss, *Field Research: Strategies for Natural Sociology*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973. Roger Sanjek ed., *Fieldnotes: A Making of Anthropology*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990. Ikuya Sato, *Fieldwork*, Tokyo: Shinyosha, 1992. Robert Emerson, Rachel Frez and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995.
2. JCES is one of the largest educational societies besides the Japanese Educational Research Association, the comprehensive learned society of education in Japan with membership of approximately 3000.
3. Pre-history of comparative education refers to some cases, for example, a famous Buddhist monk named Kukai who was dispatched to Tang Dynasty in 9th century described about highly developed educational system in Tang, China and also Hakuseki Arai in 18th century compiled the hearsay statements from an Italian missionary during the period of national isolation in 18th century.
4. Considering the case of China, the present author's research area, the situation existed until approximately 15 years ago whereby sources of obtainable information were limited to general newspapers and magazines such as the People's Daily, Guangming Daily, the Red Flag, as well as a limited number of education-related books and magazines. Nowadays, although the objectivity and validity of reporting may remain questionable, voluminous books and magazines exclusively on educational-related topics are being published in China. No longer are visits to the Ministry of Education in Beijing necessary to obtain the most basic data such as school or enrolled student numbers.
5. This article analyzes the changes that happened after the unification of two Germanies through the life-history of an educator, Dr. Wendelin Szalai of former East Germany (Emi Kinoshita, "Tenkanki no Rekishi Kyoiku to Yoriyoi Shakai no Kikyū (History Education in Times of Social Changes and the Desire to Build a Better Society)", *Bulletin of JCES*, No.34, 2007, pp.3 – 19. [in Japanese])
6. As for the process of making continuous interaction with data and information and generating a theory, Glaser and Strauss's book (Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) is suggestive.
7. Altbach defined the Third world countries and their universities as 'periphery' and 'consumer of knowledge' contrasting the 'centers' and 'producers' in the industrialized countries (Philip G. Altbach, "The Universities as Center and Periphery" translated in as Chapter 2 in Toru Umakoshi ed. *Hikaku Koto Kyoikuron (Comparative Higher Education)*, Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press, 1994, pp.106 – 135.

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