

***Theory of Lesson Creation for Lower-grade Life Environment Studies in Japan:
Focusing on the Narratives and Practices of Social Studies Teacher Kazumasa Arita***

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Abstract

This study aims to clarify the theory of creating lessons for the lower grades on "life environment studies" in Japan, with a focus on the narrative and practice of social studies teacher, Kazumasa Arita (1935–2014). In this research, the following three points are explained. First, Arita's theory of creating "life environment studies" lessons during his tenure at the Aichi University of Education was different from his social studies lesson theory while he was associated with the elementary school affiliated to Tsukuba University, and he had changed to "zest for life" as a "new view of academic ability." Second, it became clear that during his tenure at the Aichi University of Education, Arita had his idea for an annual plan of the "life environment studies" and he was working on the practice of imparting lessons on "life environment studies" with an emphasis on "questioning." Thirdly, the development of teaching materials was emphasized in the theory and practice of making life science lessons in Arita during the time of Aichi University of Education. Based on the above theoretical characteristics of lesson-making for lower-grade "life environment studies" in Japan, I think that it will give suggestions for the theory and practice of lesson-making in lower-grade education in Asia.

Keywords: Life Environment Studies, The Theory Of Creating Lessons, Kazumasa Arita

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to clarify the theory of lesson creation for lower-grade life environment studies in Japan, focusing on the narratives and practices of the social studies teacher Kazumasa Arita (1935-2014).

In Japan, social studies is implemented as life environment studies in the lower grades of elementary schools. Following a revision to the Courses of Study, it was decided that life environment studies would be fully implemented in 1992. The trajectory of the birth of life environment studies as a new subject shows that there was a period of conception and development while the idea of social studies was applied to the lower grades of elementary schools (Yoshitomi, Tamura, 2014).

Kazumasa Arita, a representative social studies teacher in Japan, contributed to the concept and development of life environment studies. Arita's activities relating to the promotion of life environment studies are wide-ranging.

Arita's activities related to the promotion of life environment studies are detailed in a number of studies. For example Umai (2014) states that Arita "proposed the right direction based on his practice as a teacher" when life environment studies was born. Watanabe (2017) writes that Arita "created a university textbook as a single book and built the essence of life environment studies in line with the practice records at the elementary school site" in the early period of life environment studies. It has also been said, however, that the theory behind lesson creation for Arita's life environment studies has not been fully constructed. Therefore, this paper seeks to clarify the theory of lesson creation in life environment studies, focusing on Arita's narratives and practices.

2. Research Methods

The research methods involve organizing the narratives and practical materials related to the theory of lesson creation in life environment studies from the writings and treatises of Arita's time at Aichi University of Education.

There are three reasons for focusing on the narratives and practices of Arita's time at Aichi University of Education. The first is that, at the time, life environment studies was in its early stages and Arita had many opportunities to discuss life environment studies lessons by writing about it in relation to lower-grade social studies. The second is that, at the time, Arita was working energetically on the practice of training life environment studies teachers at Aichi University of Education. The third is that, at the time, Arita was involved in the practice of in-service training for life environment studies teachers at Aichi University of Education and had great influence on local life environment studies teachers. For the above reasons, Arita's Aichi University of Education era can be regarded as the time when he worked most vigorously on the conception and development of life environment studies as a social studies teacher.

Table 1: Major Works by Kazumasa Arita During His Time at Aichi University of Education

year	Main book	Life environment studies-related chronology
1992	"Arita-style teaching plan and lesson material" eight volumes, three separate volumes, Meiji Tosho	First year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1993	"Learning skills that you want to develop in the second grade" Meiji Tosho "Learning skills you want to develop in the first grade" Meiji Tosho	Second year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1994	"Textbook for creating life environment studies lessons seen in photos" Meiji Tosho	Third year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1995	"Creating a lesson to raise 'Research Demons'" Meiji Tosho "Q & A tips for teachers who raise children" Meiji Tosho	Fourth year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1996	"New academic abilities through life environment studies " Meiji Tosho	Fifth year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1997	"Ability and responsibility of first grade's homeroom teacher" Meiji Tosho "Ideas for life environment studies and teaching material development" Meiji Tosho "Basics of Life Environment Studies Lesson Creation" Meiji Tosho "Basics of creating lessons for children to live in" Meiji Tosho "Techniques for creating lessons for children to live in" Kyoiku Shuppan "Techniques for creating life environment studies lessons" Educational publication	Sixth year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies.
1998	"Methods to catch children with 'head chart'" Meiji Tosho	Seventh year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies. Notification to the Courses of Study.
1999	"Achievement and learning skills in the 21st century" Meiji Tosho "From life environment studies to comprehensive learning" Meiji Tosho "Technology for creating new lessons" Meiji Tosho "Teacher's purpose of life and how to learn" Meiji Tosho	Eighth year of the full-scale implementation of life environment studies. Comprehensive study begins in stages from 2000.

(Bold text relates to life environment studies; created by the author)

3. Theory Lesson Creation for Life Environment Studies During Arita's Time at Aichi University of Education

Arita wrote about excellent lower-grade social studies lesson practices, such as "creating a poster" and "driving a bus," when he was a teacher at Tsukuba University Elementary School (1976-1992), before he worked at Aichi University of Education. However, when Arita was at Aichi University of Education, he rarely talked about these practices as lesson practices for life environment studies. This is because Arita regarded life environment studies as different from lower-grade social studies. At that time, Arita talked about the practice of "creating a poster" as follows:

In second grade social studies, the unit of "creating a poster" is quite interesting and many good practices are undertaken. It seems that the practice of creating a poster with a piece of paper and making children aware that "there are many things that the poster does not understand" has been retested by many people and is still being practiced. By creating a poster, many "Hatena?" were drawn out, and we were forced to notice the "unknown" and investigate. No, the child will do it that way. Children will deepen the content and method of pursuing the secrets of the poster while learning. I have experienced that there is nothing more interesting than teaching. However, with the advent of life environment studies, there is concern that it will not be possible to raise children to pursue this.

(Kazumasa Arita (1994) "Textbook for creating life environment studies lessons in photographs" Meiji Toshō, p.190)

In this way, Arita seems to have regarded the practice of "creating a poster" in lower-grade social studies as different from the practice of life environment studies.

This also appears in Arita's views of the subjects. Arita's views of life environment studies and social studies are shown in Figure 1.

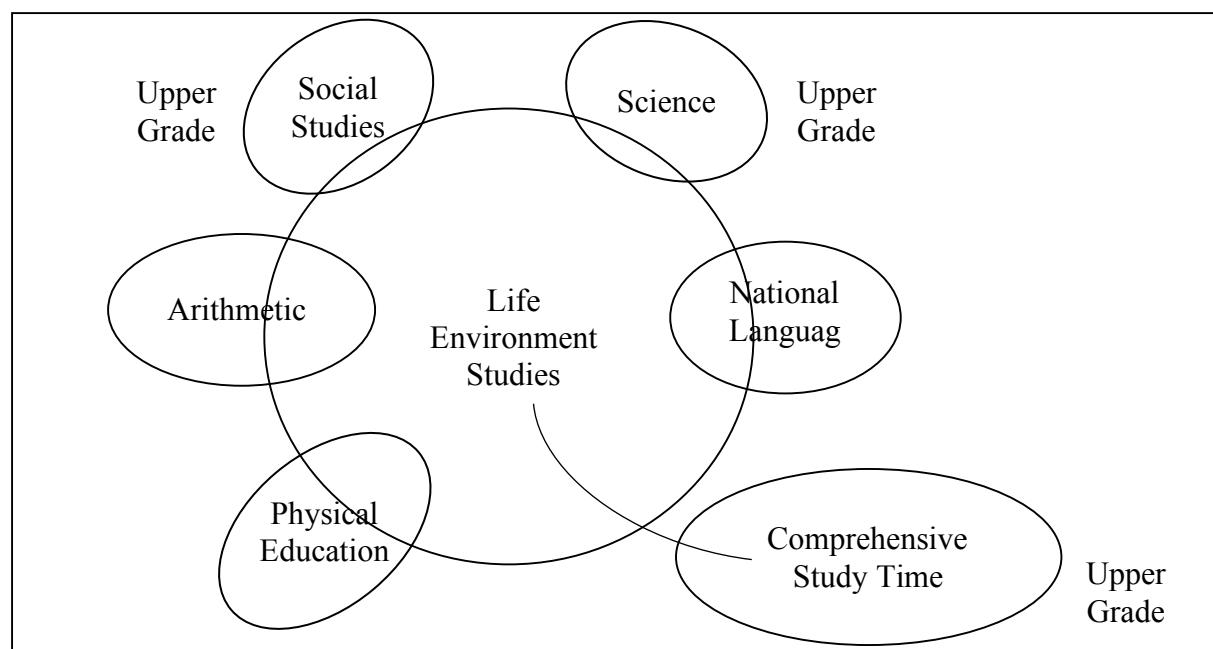


Figure 1. Relationship Between Social Studies and Life Environment Studies (Arita, 1997, p.132)

As shown in Figure 1, Arita positioned the lower grades of elementary school life environment studies as something different from social studies and seemed to regard it as being close to the "time for comprehensive study" in the upper grades of elementary school.

In addition, Arita thought about the ability to raise children in life environment studies as follows:

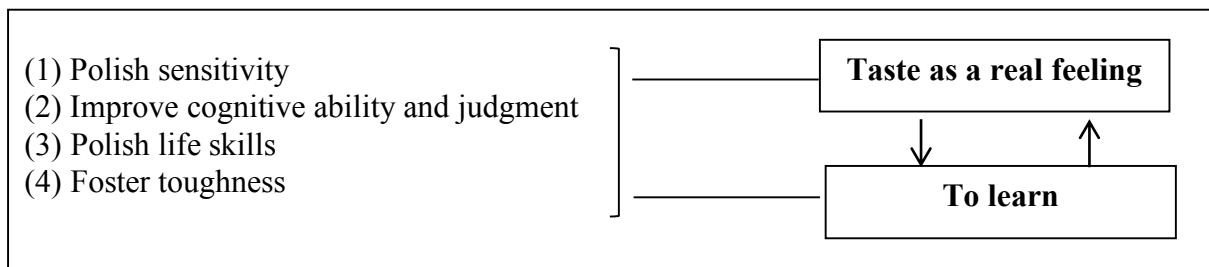


Figure 2. "New Academic Ability" Nurtured in Life Environment Studies (Arita, 1996, P.15)

As shown in Figure 2, abilities such as "Polish sensitivity," "Improve cognitive ability and judgment," "Polish life skills," and "Foster toughness" are "producing knowledge" from a practical standpoint. "Power" and "Social recognition, nature recognition, and self-recognition, which are the purposes of life environment studies," do not serve as the basis of the ability to produce new knowledge by oneself in response to changes in society. In other words, the power to produce knowledge is the power to learn, the power to keep asking questions, and the power to live. In "life environment studies, giving knowledge, we should abandon it and devote ourselves to developing academic ability" (Arita, 1996, pp.26-27).

As shown in Figure 3, Arita grasped the abilities that should be nurtured in life environment studies in line with the "skill for living" as the "new academic ability."

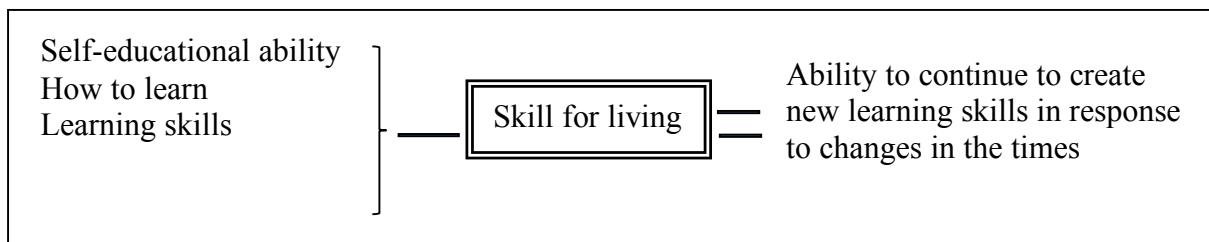


Figure 3. New Academic Ability (Arita, 1997, P.51)

From Figure 3, it can be seen that Arita focused on problem-based learning as the "skill for living" as a "new academic ability."

Based on this view of "new academic ability" centered on problem-based learning, Arita considered the lesson concept of life environment studies as follows.

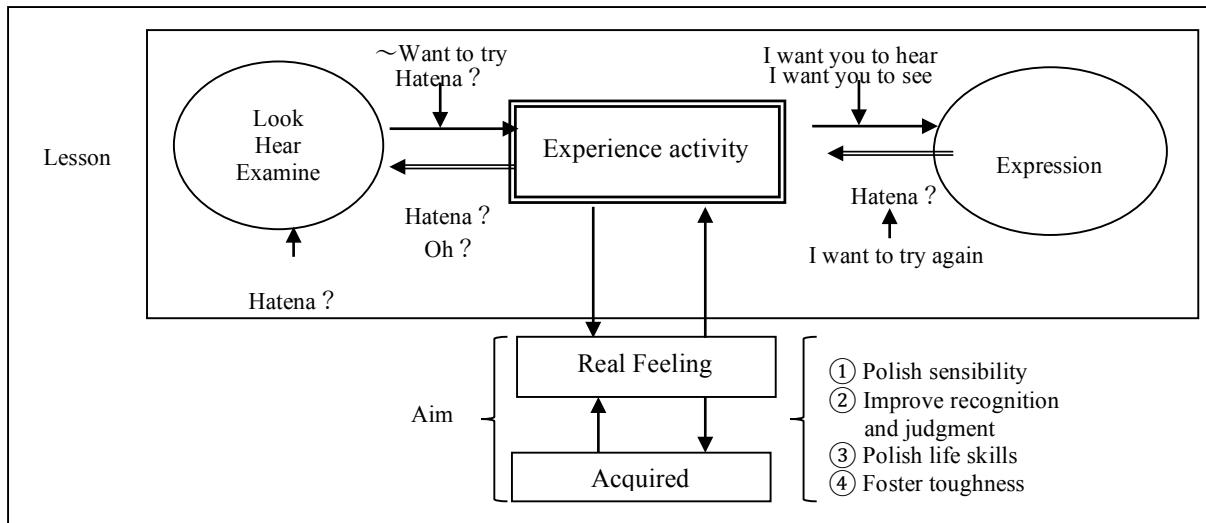


Figure 4: Life Environment Studies Lesson Concept (Arita, 1994, P.11)

Figure 4 shows children's awareness of the problem of "Hatena?" Accompanying hands-on activities were valued and they engaged in learning activities and expression activities, such as seeing, listening, and investigating. Therefore, Arita planned life environment studies lessons from the standpoint of emphasizing children's awareness of problems.

4. Practice of Lesson Creation for Life Environment Studies During Arita's Time at Aichi University of Education

a. Arita's Annual Life Environment Studies Plan

Arita had worked on the practice of life environment studies lessons by independently planning an annual guidance plan for life environment studies since his time as a teacher at Tsukuba University Elementary School before he was assigned to Aichi University of Education.

Table 2: Arita's Annual Plan for First Grade Elementary School and Life Environment Studies (1988 Version)

1 Let's do Akushu * The children naturally expanded lessons with senior students in the neighborhood and developed into grass, trees, insects, etc.	6 Let's look for "autumn" * Let's go to the autumn park to look for autumn * Let's create using leaves and nuts
2 Let's provoke Asagao * I have been observing since 5/17, narrowing down and creating interesting works.	7 My Kazoku * The content aimed to pursue the theme "What is a family?" * Developed from "Kazoku no Tokuchō (including play)", "My work" to "Kazoku no work"
3 School's return * Pursuing the fun and danger of Michikusa. I came to enjoy going to and from school.	8 Let's play with "winter" * Deepen contact by learning how to play with parents, grandfathers, and grandmothers as children.
4 Summer play * Added Tanabata Festival.	9 My year * "What I can do"
5 Let's play with autumn insects * We bred snails, crickets, grasshoppers, etc. and created a playground for them to play	

in. We also held an "insect concert".

* Summarize "my growth" in a story-like manner in essays, picture-story shows, cards, picture books, etc.

(Created by the author from Arita, 1994, p.244)

In this way, it becomes clear that Arita's annual guidance plan for life environment studies had characteristics, such as a pursuit-type annual guidance plan that values children's awareness of problems.

b. Arita's Annual Life Environment Studies Lesson Practice

In addition, the "Snail and Play" lesson is a typical example of one of Arita's life environment studies lessons during his time at Aichi University of Education. In particular, the proposal lesson given to first-year students at Okazaki Elementary School, attached to Aichi University of Education, at the Sixth National Convention of the Japan Society for Life Environment Studies Education (Aichi Convention) on June 21, 1997, attracted national attention. The outline of the learning activities is presented below.

Table 3. Lesson Practice of "Snail and Play" in the First-Grade Life Environment Studies

Learning activities	Points to keep in mind for guidance
1 . What do you know about snails?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be confident that you know about snails!
2 . I have drawn a picture of a snail. Are you good at it? Is something wrong? • No tail (short legs) • No vortex ... Right-handed or left-handed • Lack of tactile sensation ... how many? • No eyes ... How good is your eyesight? • No mouth ... How many teeth do you have? • It's not colored ... Sometimes it's red • There is no pattern ... Sometimes there is no pattern <↑ Yusaburi>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It may also be said that you can be a snail. At that time, let me do it. ○ While looking at the real snail, you should point out something strange. There should be new discoveries in this review. ○ Ask questions about deficiencies in your perspective and let them discover "Hatena?" If you cannot answer or have a conflict of opinions, leave it as "Hatena?"
3 . Please tell me what snails can do. • Can be connected • You can walk on bamboo sticks • You can walk on the blade of a knife • You can climb trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is a question for asking how much you play with snails. In other words, it asks about the experience so far. When you don't understand, proceed while asking questions and leave it as "Hatena?" ○ "Let's find out" - and so on.

- Climb the glass plate ? ?
- Can you swim ? ?
- Can you jump or foot race ? ?

(Created by the author from Arita, 1997, p.108)

Here, the "question" is emphasized in the lesson. Specifically, it is a question that puts "Yusaburi" into children's thoughts, such as "Which way does a whirlpool spin?", "Do snails have eyes?", and "Can you walk on gum tape?" Arita, at that time, said about "questions" that: "The questions that have been raised recently are for children to come up with the contents of the teaching materials on their own and to pursue them and make them their own.

I was thinking, it can be said that such a view of 'questioning' is rooted in the way of life environment studies lessons," as shown in Figure 5.

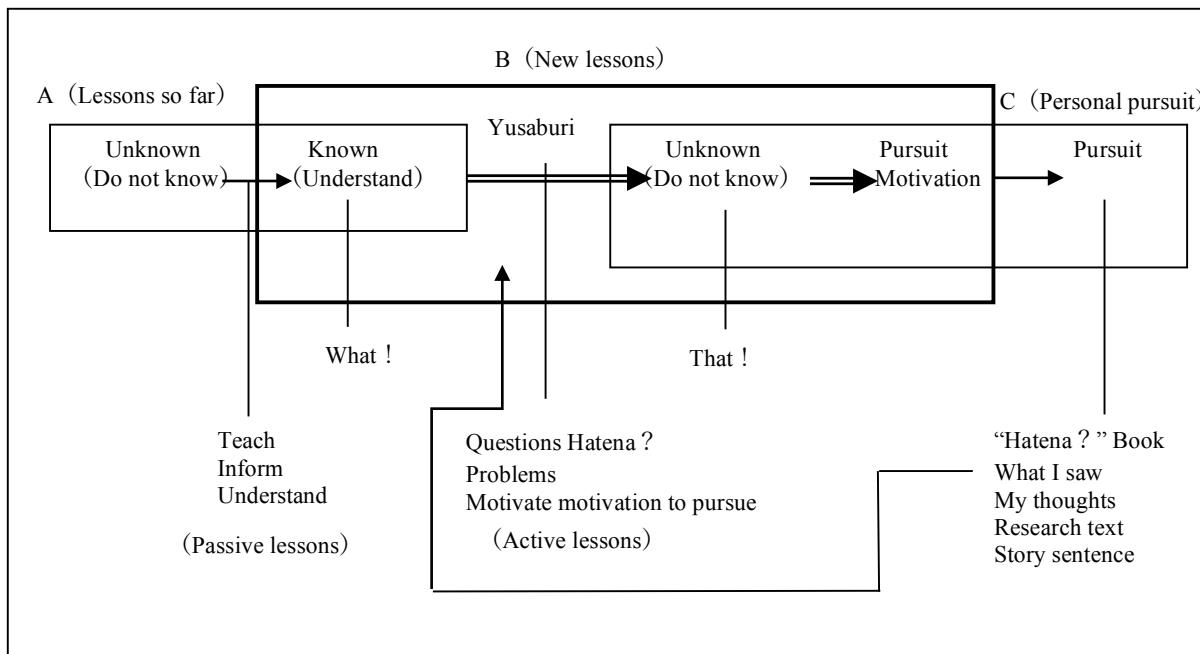


Figure 5. Life Environment Studies Lesson Practice (Arita, 1994, p.12)

From Figure 5, it can be seen that Arita focused on finding "Hatena?" In addition, he worked on life environment studies lessons. In other words, Arita aimed to change his perspective from "known" (understood) to "unknown" (unknown) through "questioning" in the life environment studies lessons.

5. Relationship between Arita's Life Environment Studies Lesson Planning and Teaching Material Development

Before Aichi University of Education, Arita had been working on the development of social studies teaching materials with an emphasis on "material teaching materials." Regarding the development of teaching materials for social studies, Arita stated that it is important for each child to create and organize teaching materials that are enthusiastically pursued with urgent problems. In the same way, the development of teaching materials for life environment studies was conceived to center on "material teaching materials." In addition, Arita showed

the ideal way of studying teaching materials in life environment studies, as shown in Figure 6.

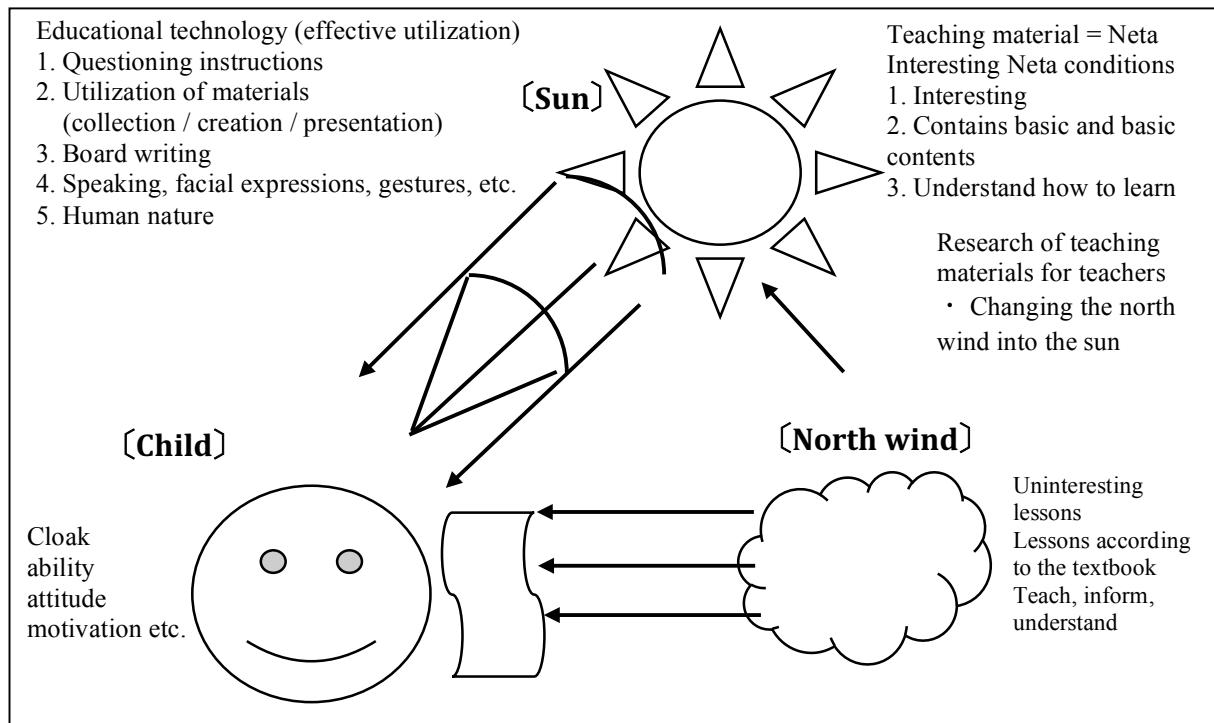


Figure 6: Research of Teaching Materials for Life Environment Studies (Arita, 1989, p.15)

Shown here is the importance of teaching material development in the research of teaching materials in life environment studies. Arita talked about the importance of developing teaching materials. In lessons that are not as interesting, as the north wind, children do not take cloaks, but by developing teaching materials with interesting material conditions, such as the sun, children take cloaks. This is said to develop abilities, attitudes, and motivation. Arita said, "Even in the life environment studies lesson, it is important to develop teaching materials (materials), in order for children to say 'It looks interesting. I want to do more.' It depends on the development of this teaching material whether or not it can be done."

Ikeno (2009) regards Arita's approach to developing teaching materials as "creating teaching materials from below," from the perspective of children's awareness of teaching materials. In addition, Seki (2009) positions it as "lesson composition theory by utilizing cognitively promoted teaching materials." In other words, it becomes clear that the development of teaching materials was emphasized in the theory of lesson creation in Arita's life environment studies during his time at Aichi University of Education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to clarify the theory of lesson creation in the lower grades of life environment studies in Japan, focusing on the narratives and practices of the social studies teacher Kazumasa Arita. In this study, the following three points were clarified:

First, Arita's theory of creating life environment studies lessons during his time at Aichi University of Education was different from his social studies lesson theory when he taught at an elementary school attached to Tsukuba University, and he turned "zest for life" into a

"new view of academic ability." Based on this, it had the characteristic of envisioning a life environment studies lesson. Specifically, Arita was able to clarify that he had envisioned a problem-solving life environment studies lesson that emphasized the child's awareness of the problem, "Hatena?"

Second, it became clear that during his time at Aichi University of Education, Arita had his own idea of an annual plan for life environment studies and was working on the practice of life environment studies lessons with an emphasis on "questioning." Specifically, Arita created an annual plan based on a pursuit by children and, in the first-grade lesson practices, the life course "Snail and Play" and from "known" (understood) to "unknown." It became clear that he was asking "questions" aimed at changing his perspective to something (I don't know).

Third, the development of teaching materials was emphasized in the theory and practice of making life science lessons during Arita's time at Aichi University of Education. Specifically, Arita once envisioned the development of teaching materials for life environment studies, focusing on "material teaching materials" that would make children "looks interesting. I want to do more."

Based on the above theoretical characteristics of lesson creation for lower-grade life environment studies in Japan, we believe that it provides suggestions for the theory and practice of lesson creation in lower-grade education across Asia. Specifically, the importance of envisioning a lesson that emphasizes the child's awareness of the problem of "Hatena?", the need to practice the lesson with an emphasis on "questioning," and "looks interesting" to the children when creating the lesson. The importance of "development of teaching materials" that make people want to do more is raised.

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