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A Study on Patriotism in Japanese Moral Education:
-Insights from John Dewey's Political Thought-

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Title

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Research Overview

In recent years, political and social conflicts surrounding nationalism and patriotism have intensified worldwide (Sakuma, 2025). This study reexamines patriotism in Japanese moral education through John Dewey's political thought and explores implications for contemporary civic education after recent educational reforms in Japan.

Purpose of Study

In recent years, political and social conflicts surrounding nationalism and patriotism have become increasingly prominent across the world. Alongside the advancement of globalization, questions concerning national identity and civic belonging have reemerged as important issues. In the field of education, citizenship education and democratic education have similarly gained increasing attention, raising debates over how patriotism and publicness should be positioned within education (Furukawa, 2018).

In Japan, debates concerning patriotism in education intensified following the 2006 revision of the Basic Act on Education, which introduced the phrase “an attitude to love our country and hometown,” as well as the implementation of moral education as a

formal subject beginning in 2018. Conservative perspectives have emphasized the importance of fostering public spirit and a sense of community, whereas liberal perspectives have expressed concern regarding nationalism, militarism, and state intervention in students' inner beliefs.

Recent studies, however, suggest that direct discussions of patriotism itself have gradually declined, while scholarly attention has shifted toward citizenship education and democratic participation. One example of this shift is the introduction of the compulsory high school civics subject *Public* in 2022. Nevertheless, the conceptual conflicts surrounding patriotism have not been fully resolved and continue to influence contemporary moral and citizenship education in Japan.

This study aims to reconsider debates concerning patriotism in Japanese moral education through the political thought of John Dewey. In particular, the study focuses on the relationship between patriotism and nationalism and examines how Dewey's conception of democratic community may provide theoretical insights for contemporary moral and citizenship education in Japan.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative and theoretical approach based primarily on literature analysis. First, it examines debates concerning patriotism in Japanese education, particularly discussions surrounding the revision of the Basic Act on Education and moral education as a formal subject. Previous studies on citizenship education and

democratic education are also reviewed in order to clarify how patriotism has been understood by both conservative and liberal perspectives.

Second, the study analyzes John Dewey's political thought through works such as *Democracy and Education* (1916) and "Nationalizing Education." (1916) Particular attention is given to Dewey's understanding of patriotism, nationalism, democracy, and "associated living."

Finally, through these analyses, this study examines the possibility that debates over patriotism in Japanese moral education have developed without sufficiently distinguishing patriotism from nationalism.

Results and Discussion

Debates concerning patriotism in Japanese moral education have often been framed as conflicts between conservative perspectives emphasizing social cohesion and liberal perspectives warning against nationalism and state intervention. However, previous studies have pointed out that the position of nationalism within citizenship education itself remains ambiguous and ambivalent (Ishida, 2020). In this sense, contemporary debates over patriotism in Japanese education cannot simply be understood as a dichotomy between support for or opposition to nationalism.

Dewey criticized exclusionary and militaristic nationalism while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of democratic community and social integration through education. In *Democracy and Education*, democracy was understood not merely as a

political system, but as “associated living” grounded in communication and shared experience (Dewey, 1916). At the same time, Dewey also recognized that public education inevitably possessed a national dimension connected to the formation of civic unity (Ishida, 2020).

From this perspective, patriotism in education should not be reduced either to unconditional loyalty to the nation-state or to a concept that must be entirely rejected because of its association with nationalism. Rather, Dewey’s political thought suggests the possibility of reconstructing patriotism as democratic participation in a pluralistic community.

Contemporary Japanese citizenship and moral education increasingly emphasize diversity, democratic participation, and public engagement. However, questions concerning national belonging and community formation remain insufficiently examined. Accordingly, this study argues that Dewey’s conception of democratic community provides an important theoretical perspective for reconsidering patriotism beyond the simple opposition between nationalism and anti-nationalism.

Keywords

- patriotism
- nationalism
- moral education
- citizenship education
- John Dewey