

The International Geography Olympiad and Geography Education in Japan

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In Japan, the national curriculum was revised in 2018, and geography will be compulsory subject for high schools from 2022. Less than 50% of high school students had taken geography for about 30 years in Japan. So it is hoped that high school geography will be restored. The impact of the International Geography Olympiad (iGeo) is one of reasons why geography will be compulsory subject in high school in Japan. Traditional geography education in Japan has focused on understanding the modern world, centered on regional geography and systematic geography. The geography education had been highly evaluated because all students acquire basic knowledge, but has been criticized as a memorable subject. The iGeo was one of the catalysts for curriculum change of school geography in Japan.

In 2006, Japan launched an organization to participate in iGeo. The number of students participating in geography olympiad in Japan has increased. The questions in iGeo test have been much different from those covered in geography education in Japan, following. At first, there are many questions for knowledge in Japan, but test of iGeo consists of questions for logical thinking. Second, fieldwork test is much important in iGeo. Regarding fieldwork, it has been recommended in Japan, but the implementation rate is low. Third, the proportion of asking for physical geography is high in iGeo. Because of difference of geography contents between iGeo and Japan, it is difficult for the Japanese team to rank high in iGeo test.

The major impact of iGeo on Japanese geography education is following; in new geography curriculum. the viewpoint, that is how to use geographical knowledge to think logically and consider about the future, is emphasis. The geography of new course of study in Japan incorporates theme learning and uses knowledge and skills to think logically, and aims at future-oriented geography. On the other hand, traditional processes of geography that is regional and systematic geography is emphasis on new curriculum. It is trying to build a new Japanese-style geography education.

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