

Food Education in Japan and Germany

Veranstalter: Graduate School of East Asian Studies (GEAS), Free University Berlin; Hokkaido University, Japan

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Food is far more than ingestion. Food is highly emotional, political, and shaped by ethnicity, social stratification and gender perceptions. Food security and the (re-)organisation of agriculture are as significant as questions of health, nutrition and diet. In light of rising obesity rates, food education initiatives that target children and adults are gaining relevance. Japan is a pioneer in the implementation of food education. It has addressed food education as a national policy in form of the „Fundamental Law of Food Education“ enacted in 2005 in order to promote a healthy and balanced nutrition and the ideals of a ‘traditional’ food culture and to ensure food security. In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, BMEL) has initiated a number of campaigns that promote healthy nutrition, improve food labeling policies and enact policies to reduce food waste. The growing significance of food education initiatives in both countries demands an analysis of their potential and achievements but also of the limitations of such initiatives.

This was the objective of the symposium „Food Education in Japan and Germany,“ which was hosted by the Japanese-German Center Berlin on December 6, 2016 and jointly organized by the Graduate School of East Asian Studies (GEAS) of the Free University Berlin and Hokkaido University, Japan. The symposium focused on a comparison of Japan and Germany with a multi-disciplinary approach. One novelty of the symposium was to bring together academics and practitioners and their specific insights on food education. Four speakers provided an introduction to the topic of food education. The first panel of the symposium consisted of presentations of scholars in various academic disciplines who examined food education initiatives in both

countries from a social science perspective. In the second panel, four practitioners offered their insights on food education and its implementation.

Food Education in Germany and Japan

FRIEDERIKE BOSSE (Berlin) welcomed all speakers and participants and highlighted the growing significance of food education in Japan and Germany.

In the opening speech, CORNELIA REIHER (Berlin), the main organizer of the symposium, stressed the significance of connecting scholars of different disciplines and practitioners and emphasized the need to move away from an eurocentrist perspective toward a comparative approach on food education. This includes Japan as a non-European country whose pioneering role in a comprehensive food education campaign on a national scale offers insights that can be helpful in improving campaigns in Germany.

Two keynote speakers pinpointed specific conditions and problems in approaching and implementing food education in Japan and Germany. In an insightful talk, AYA HIRATA KIMURA (Honolulu) examined food education –*shokuiku* in Japanese – from the feminist and food justice perspectives. Taking the example of school lunches (that are mandatory in Japan) Kimura stressed food education as a fluid concept, which is situated between tensions of responsabilization and nationalism. Whereas the objectives of the *shokuiku* campaign are to convey an appreciation of Japanese culinary culture and local foods, familial conviviality and discipline, Kimura argued that a particular understanding of food education as a means to ensure national food security has led to the neglect of another dimension of food security – hunger and malnutrition in private households. In this context, Kimura highlighted the need to consider food and nutrition from the perspective of food justice and pay more attention to the needs of the most marginalized in society.

In her talk on healthy eating for young people in Europe, INES HEINDL (Flensburg) pointed out regional and local food education campaigns across the German states. Heindl outlined the milestones of food education such as the European curriculum of nutrition

education in 2000 and the REVIS curriculum, a research project on a reform of a school-based nutrition consumer education in 2005. Apart from these milestones Heindl pointed out diverse nutrition education programs in the sixteen states in Germany as a positive effort but critically noted the absence of a unifying national platform of food education in Germany, which would enhance the implementation of food education programs.

Panel I: Food Education and the Role of the State, Civil Society, Families, Schools and Individuals

In the first panel chaired by STEPHANIE ASSMANN (Hokkaido), scholars of various disciplines examined the role of diverse actors in implementing food education in Germany and Japan.

A major difference between the two countries is the fact that school lunches in Japan are an integral part of the curriculum and compulsory for students, whereas school lunches in Germany have not been an integral part of the curriculum and are only gradually being implemented due to an increase of the *Ganztageschulen* (all-day schools). In her talk on school meals as a means of education for sustainable development, ANGELA HÄUSSLER (Heidelberg) showed that in Germany nutrition is perceived to be a private matter that should remain the responsibility of the family. A shift in responsibility for pupils' nutrition from the family toward public institutions such as schools and kindergartens is only gradually taking place, which poses an obstacle to a comprehensive implementation of food education.

JANA RÜCKERT-JOHN (Fulda) approached the behavioral aspect of eating as a social practice, which is shaped by habitualized patterns of behaviour that are difficult to change; this also poses an obstacle to implementing food education. Habitualized eating patterns rarely change through educational efforts, but often become only reflexive through explicit events such as illnesses and particular life-time events such as marriage and motherhood.

Gradually, the issue of the reduction of food waste is becoming an integral part of food education programs in Japan and Germany. Ac-

ording to data of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 89 million tons of food waste is generated in the European Union (EU) each year, which is why the European Parliament declared 2014 the *European Year Against Food Waste*. In this context, TOBIAS GUMBERT (Münster) discussed food waste policies in the European Union that aim to reduce food waste by 50 percent until 2020 and educate consumers on expiry date labels and smart packaging.

Taking the focus back to Japan, STEPHANIE ASSMANN discussed three food networks that are active in the realm of food education in Japan and pinned down their sociological definition: The national campaign *shokuiku* can be defined as a state initiative whereas the organization *Food Action Nippon*, which seeks to raise Japan's low food self-sufficiency of merely 39 percent through the promotion of local food products, defines itself as an NGO but was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). Finally, Assmann discussed *Slow Food*, which is active worldwide and can be defined as a transnational advocacy network.

HIROKO TAKEDA (Nagoya) examined the state *shokuiku* campaign in the historical trajectory of efforts of the Japanese state to govern its population and their everyday lives. Takeda argued that prior to the current *shokuiku* campaign the Japanese state has engaged in consumer education campaigns such as the *Everyday Life Improvement Movement* in the 1920s and the *New Life Movement* in the 1950s that encouraged individuals, in particular women as household managers, to become responsible food agents. Takeda's talk highlighted the historical dimension of food education as a governance system and emphasized the gendered dimension of food work, which is defined as women's work.

Panel II: Practitioners' Perspectives: Changing Individual Food Consumption Behavior through Food Education?

In the second panel, which was chaired by VERENA BLECHINGER-TALCOTT (Berlin) practitioners offered their insights on the implementation of food education.

HAGA MEGUMI (Ministry of Health, La-

bor and Welfare), provided an overview of the implementation of food education since the *Fundamental Law of Food Education* was enacted in 2005.

HORITA TAKAKO (City of Taketa, Ōita Prefecture) investigated food education on the local level, which is combined with a community vitalization approach and an emphasis on the appreciation of local foods. Cooking classes in school in Taketa City include a lunch-box day where pupils make their own lunch boxes and experience the efforts of preparing food. A *miso* (soybean paste) making workshop helps children to appreciate the local foods available in their town.

Taking the cooking oil brand Econa as an example, NISHIZAWA MARIKO (Litera Japan) argued that it is difficult to communicate accurate safety information if differences in risk evaluation and dietary cultures are not sufficiently taken into account. Nishizawa's talk raised a controversial discussion about how food risks should be communicated to stakeholders and to lay people who – as for example after the nuclear incident at Fukushima in 2011 – take the initiative to acquire knowledge and information on risks in response to the government's risk communication.

Taking the focus back to Germany, SELVIHAN KOÇ (Consumer School Project Schleswig-Holstein) outlined a food education curriculum for pupils, teachers and parents in schools as part of a four-fold consumer education framework, which addresses finances and consumer rights, nutrition and health, media and information, and sustainability. Cooking classes and lessons about food labels, food packaging and food waste which include visits to landfills seek to create educated citizens who make informed choices about nutrition and health. Since the implementation of food education as part of the curriculum in 2015, Koç has seen considerable progress: The number of pupils who participate in cooking classes has increased, and more pupils reduce food waste and their ecological footprint.

In Charge of Their Nutrition: Food Citizens

The event was concluded by a roundtable discussion, chaired by CORNELIA REIHER. The

participants took up the question of the second panel: is it possible to change individual behavior patterns through food education? Or in other words: Is food education possible? Differences in perceiving nutrition and the obstacles in implementing food education in Japan and Germany conveyed the fluidity of the concept of food education, which is not based on one source of authoritarian knowledge but can rather be seen as an interpretative concept that is shaped by cultural, socio-economic and gender dimensions as well as educational systems that are different in both countries. However, one unifying objective of food education in both countries could be to educate children and young people to become *food citizens* who have access to various sources to gain sufficient knowledge to make informed and responsible choices about their nutrition.

Conference overview:

Friederike BOSSE (JDZB): Welcome

Cornelia REIHER (FU Berlin): Introduction

Keynote Speeches

Kimura Aya Hirata (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): Food Education in Japan: From the Feminist and Food Justice Perspectives

Ines Heindl (Europa-Universität Flensburg): Food and Nutrition Education – Healthy Eating for Young People in Europe

Panel I: Food Education and the Role of the State, Civil Society, Families, Schools and Individuals

Chair: Stephanie Assmann (Hokkaido University)

Angela Häussler (Heidelberg University of Education): School Meals as Field for Education for Sustainable Development

Jana Rückert-John (Fulda University): The Change of Everyday Nutrition as a Challenge for Food Communication and Food Education

Tobias Gumbert (University of Münster): Practicing Alternative Reductions? Anti-Food Waste Initiatives and their Potential for Limiting Waste and Wasteful Behavior

Stephanie Assmann (Hokkaido University): A State Affair? Efforts of State Initiatives and

Civil Movements to Establish Food Literacy in Japan

Takeda Hiroko (Nagoya University): Everyday Food Practice as a Political Matter: Locating Shokuiku in the State Governance System in Japan

Panel II: Practitioners' Perspectives: Changing Individual Food Consumption Behavior through Food Education?

Chair: Verena Blechinger-Talcott (FU Berlin)

Haga Megumi (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare): Japan's Nutrition Education

Nishizawa Mariko (Litera Japan): Food Literacy – Additives, Contaminants, and Radioactive Materials

Horita Takako (City of Taketa, Ōita Prefecture): Prospects of Food Related Activities and Food Education in a Community in Rural Japan

Selvihan Koç (Consumer Schools Project, Deutsche Stiftung Verbraucherschutz / „German Foundation for Consumer Protection“): Consumer Schools and their Activities in the Field of Food Education

Roundtable Discussion

Chair: Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin)

Participants: Ines Heindl, Kimura Aya Hirata, Selvihan Koç, Nishizawa Mariko

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