Comparing Family-Friendly Policies in Japan and Lithuania

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Abstract. Accompanying to the society change after World War II, family relationship and neighbor’s relationship have undergone substantial changes in Japan and in Lithuanian. Family influence on educational performance, as well as moral attitudes of Japanese and Lithanians have been declining. One of reasons for that is losing a strict father because fathers do not have time at home due to overwork. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology fully revised the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006 and the preparedness for Moral Education and reinforcement of Family Education to improve the situation. In Lithuania Ministry of Education and Science in February, 2007 approved the Order No. ISAK-179 “On preparation for family life and sexual education Program“. There is no systematized form of Family Education yet in Japan, it is entrusted to each family. However, there is a general Japanese family education for obtaining benevolence that is influenced by Japanese religions. The Family-Friendly policies in Japan and Lithuania included some successful practical activities (case studies) on positive parenting policies on national and local levels. The interventions and discussions illustrated that, even though the priorities, resources and concrete measures in the field of family policy in Japan and Lithuania has similar trends and interruptions.

Keywords: family education, positive parenting, social changes.

Introduction

The search for a ‘Japanese model’ remains a long-standing and popular activity in social sciences’ scholarship. Many academic arguments have been put forward to date
concerning whether or not Japan’s social systems are unique, citing examples such as its corporate organizational structures and its policy-making processes (Nobutaka Fukuda, 2003). Some scholars claim that the fabric of society differs fundamentally between Japan and the West Country, for example Lithuania, maintain that such differences have ceased to exist. The family education is the starting point in Japan and all Western countries. It plays quite important part in the growth of children. There are many arguments surrounding the decline in the family education’s performance in Japan in the society’s situations change today. The European Committee considered three expert reports in the field of positive parenting, in which the authors linked the concept of positive parenting to the “Triple P Positive Parenting Programme”, based on the Australian experience (Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Family Affairs. Positive Parenting, 2009).

The objective of this paper is to introduce the present situation and problems of Japanese family education. The aim is to reveal which problems are peculiar to Japan and what kind of measures would be taken for it. The methods used are to study the authority’s data relating to family and family education and articles in family education. The article focus on Japanese society and relations with childcare, a peculiarity of Japanese family education especially the father’s role in family education, and provisions in child education of Japanese family. Japanese families are stable. Divorce rates have increased since the 1960’s, but remain relatively low. In 1980 the number of divorces was 1.2 per thousand people, while the comparable figure for the United States was 5.2 per thousand. Just 6 percent of all Japanese families are headed by a single parent (Hayakawa, Misao, 1986).

Family Friendly policy in Japanese and Lithuanian Societies

In this paper, we will compare family-friendly policies and family education tradition in Japan and Lithuania, with specific reference to their policies supporting childbearing and childrearing. In general, terms, family-related policies, which are partly designed to increase fertility, can be classified into two types. One type purposes to reduce the economic burden associated with raising children. Child allowance and family allowance fall into this category. The other type seeks to establish a social environment in which it is possible to reconcile childcare and employment. Maternity and parental leave schemes, and childcare services belong to this latter category (Nobutaka, Fukuda, 2003). Originally, these policies were not designed to promote the fertility rate. Child allowances were initially established as preventive measures to protect families with children from falling into positions of economic disadvantage, and were designed to increase the welfare of families and children. Likewise, maternity leave and parental leave programmes were created to protect employees, promote gender equity, or achieve the effective use of the labour force. The construction of a family-friendly society is nowadays an important policy target for industrialized countries with the blow-replacement level of fertility. In fact, the governments of Japan and in Lithuania like in all EU Member States have been making efforts to support parents’ childcare and positive parenting.
First, I would like to introduce a traditional Japanese society and childcare. The most family used to live three generations together. Adults other than children’s parents in a community used to attend and educate to the children instead of their parents as well. There was a strong connection with local people. Therefore, children naturally experienced to play with others in community of different ages, take care younger children, and learn from older children. In this way children were taken care not only by their parents but also by locals more than today. Lithuania is currently developing a network of children day care centres, which provide services for children from families at risk of social exclusion. These centres do not only provide various after school activities to develop the social skills of children, but also psychological, pedagogical and legal assistance to their parents. The establishment of these centres is seen as an important contribution to diminishing the number of socially dysfunctional families. Family therapy\(^1\) in Lithuanian practice traditionally addresses for the social disadvantages families together with for their relationships important persons in their lives and their social networks. Family therapy and systemic practice in Lithuania are pore, because, that we can use only 8 hour for that process. But we understood this process as a systemic arena; „some of the commonly shared goals of family therapy might be for example: improvement of family functioning on different levels, enhancement of mutual understanding and emotional support among family members, development of coping skills and problem-solving strategies in various life situations“. Systemic Family Counselling (SFC) programmes are about helping parents to better understand their child’s needs and behavior including smart socialization methods for happy and healthy life\(^2\). Positive Parenting through Smart Socialization (PPSS) programme are part of Systemic Family Counselling (SFC) module and designed to improve parenting and children social and creativity skills (Fig. 1) (Kvieskienė & Celiešienė, 2016).

However, after World War Second, especially in high economic growth period around the 1960\(^{\circ}\), it have spread that individualism, the resistance of having relationships to others owing to anxiety for regional security situation, and weakening of attachment to their living place in society. These are the reasons of weakening of local relationship and losing childcare support from neighbors today. Child welfare program and implementation of the program of measures in 2013–2018 and its plan does not include health, living conditions, uniform education (education), child participation, poverty risk prevention issues. Moreover, spreading the trend toward working comes before anything, the Japanese and in Lithuania employment environment is not supportive with childcare. It is also difficult to secure their time and mind for it. Different Lithuanian child welfare policy aspects of the analysis suggest that the child is pushed to the edge of socio-educational policy. Occasionally the policy of child welfare lacks consistency and political support.

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1 What is family therapy? Available online: http://www.europeanfamilytherapy.eu/what-is-family-therapy/
In order that the child welfare policy to move from the periphery of social policy, it is necessary to develop an integrated and holistic national strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the rights of children and to choose a child-oriented approach. Formulate clear evidence-based policy. Promote integrated and coordinated policy-making and implementation. Include children between the major social policy themes (Frazer & Marlier, 2012, p. 21, 22).

Because of the change, there are rising of the number of young generation couples who feel anxious about their childcare. In such circumstances, the number of Child Abuse has aggravated. The number of consultations about child abuse too surged in the 2000s, and climbed to 103,260 in fiscal 2015, about 3 times the figure 10 years previously.

To solve this problem, it is necessary that whole society such as communities and companies support making childcare friendly environment as well as individual effort. In social support for childcare in Japan, some problems are found such as an insufficient social security which is not able to accommodate with the social progress of women, a shortage of continuing service in regard to growth of children, an appropriateness of financial support to household economy, work styles with guarantee to keep childcare time including men and women. While enhancing the social support, it is necessary to reach a consensus on bearing a childcare with whole society. This is the activity to

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connect locals and communities through childcare, and in the end, this would lead to build an inclusive society. Therefore, it is required that family policy extending over a demographic policy, labor policy, and family welfare policy (Watanabe, 2008).

Investigation Committee in Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology reported about concrete promotion method of family education support on January 2017. As a policy to support family education including for parents, the Committee suggests a family education support focusing on family education support team, securing human resources for family education support and to construct a system that connect schools, family and community. There are several groups and programs that support family, like figure 2. However, it does not support enough for family with difficulty. They should be designed to meet specific conditions in each family. The Committee proposes functions to connect to educational institution, welfare centres and boards of education so that support execute more effectively.5

![Diagram of Japanese Family support system](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/04/03/1383700_01.pdf)

**Fig 2. A system of Japanese Family support**

*Source: concrete promotion method of family education support on January 2017
The figure was created by Chihiro Yamamoto in accordance with source.*

Peculiarity of Japanese Family Education

A systematized form of Family Education has not been fulfilled yet, even in the history of The Home Education Society of Japan which lasts more than 30 years (Satou, Sekijin, Nishinaka, & Taira, 2016). Its realization seems to be difficult because the most Japanese people regards family education is an individual family’s private issue or recognized synonymously with just teaching manners. As long as family education is a private issue, to hold up a systematized form as general Japanese Family Education might be leading to force specific ideologies, religions, or ideas. In 2006, although a cabinet tried to establish systematized form of a family education, it was not accepted.

Japanese education has influence by Confucianism (Arakawa, 2010). A philosopher in ancient China named Kong-Zi formulates it. It teaches ethics with an emphasis on ancestor worship and devotion to parents, family, and friends. After importing it in 6th century, Japanese education has been started. In Confucianism, Parents must have deep affection to their child, and ought to educate them to correct way. For that purpose, parents are also required to continue self-discipline. Children’s improvement is not only depends on children’s effort but also their parent’s own disciple. In many white-collar families, the father is a proverbial “guest” in his own house, returning home most evenings after the children have gone to bed. Although fathers provide children with certain role models and many take an active interest in education matters, the task of attending to the child’s upbringing and education is usually left to the mother. Mothers take that responsibility seriously. Research indicates that Japanese mothers place the subject of childrearing at the top of their worry list (Arakawa, 2010).

Mothers and their children are especially close. Japanese mothers seldom confront their preschool children. Rather, they attempt to appease the child and foster an intimate, dependent relationship. The purpose of this approach is to get the child to comply willingly with the mother’s wishes and to shape behavior gradually over the long term. Another goal of early training is to instill in the child a deep sense of responsibility to the mother and family. This becomes an important factor in developing motivation for school achievement in Japan. Some Japanese mothers have gained a reputation for extraordinary concern and involvement with their children’s education. Stories about overzealous mothers abound. In part, this phenomenon may stem from the sharply defined role distinction between spouses. Indeed, some Japanese note that fathers should shoulder a fair share of the blame for these maternal excesses, since the father’s typical preoccupation with matters outside the home forces the mother to bear near total responsibility for managing the education of the children.

The Japanese believe that the home should be a relaxed place where children are free of constricting requirements for emotional control and good behavior expected in formal social situations. Early childhood training includes attention to manners and proper

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social behavior required outside of the home, but there is little actual exposure to group situations beyond the family until the preschool experience.

Much of a mother’s sense of personal accomplishment is tied to the educational achievements of her children, and she expends great effort helping them. In addition, there is considerable peer pressure on the mother. The community’s perception of a woman’s success as a mother depends in large part on how well her children do in school.

The philosophy of Japanese education is to obtain knowledge, benevolence, and healthy body, three things together working for harmony. Specifically, family education is placed on an importance on obtaining benevolence.

According to 2005 White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, people feel the performance of family education in Japan have been declining. Change in the Japanese family structure, community structure, industrial structure, and employment structure after World War Second accounted big change for an environment surrounding children and family. Especially father’s role changed dramatically in the era of high economic growth around the 1960’s. Fathers could not have time at home because of a long hours of hard work including overwork, long commute, on a transfer away from family. Japanese family used to have a stern father, however, owing to the society change, it has been disappearing.

With the shift of Japanese society from agricultural to industrial, social standings by educational background was firmly established. Children became to struggle with the burden of fiercely competitive entrance examinations. This brought social problems like bullying, refusal to attend school, juvenile delinquency, the collapse of class-room discipline, and devastation of education. The falling of the performance of family education is not owed to only individual family’s issues but society’s. In response to this, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology fully revised the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006 and the preparedness for Moral Education and reinforcement of Family Education.

There is one of the reasons why the performance of family education in Japan has been declining; it is the change of father’s role. A Japanese psychologist Michiyoshi (Hayashi, 1996). Hayashi says in his book Fuseino Hukken (Restoration of Fatherhood) which is published in 1996: “Father has not been functioning as father. Father is losing his role. Father used to unite his family, declare family’s policy, hand down culture, and teach social rules strictly. This role has been disappearing. As a result, the family is collapsing. Family became a Hotel Family, children grew up without the knowledge of right and wrong, and many selfish and feckless people without perspective to care others are increasing.” According to Michiyoshi Hayashi, the vanishment of paternity has already been mentioned since 20 years ago. The father in Modern Japanese Family has relationship

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like a friend with his children. It has brought undesirable consequences mass-producing more selfish people, more feckless people, and more people without the knowledge of right and wrong. Also he says, above all, to recover paternity is sorely required.

This Hayashi’s suggestion about paternity has still argued when family education, child care and moral education are discussed until recent years (Satou et al., 2016).

**Provisions in Child Education of Japanese Family**

As mentioned above, it is not able to systematize provisions in child education in Japanese Family. However, I would like to generalize Japanese family education in this field to obtain knowledge, benevolence, and healthy body. Especially, it is required for family education to develop children’s benevolence through the training to acquire the healthy lifestyle habits, the ability necessary to live in society, the aesthetic sentiments, the integrity and ethical values, the self-reliance and self-control and good manners.

For benevolence, there is a great influence of three religions, Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It is natural for Japanese to have plural religion. Children are taught to appreciate to all things in universe. For example, before a meal Japanese say “Itadakimasu”8 by joining our palms together, and after a meal “Gochisosama”9 as well. These actions are meant to show our appreciation to life (in this case it’s ingredients), nature or a person who prepares a meal and so on. A rice is called by the title. Japanese learn from child that there is 88 sprits in one grain of rice. Children are disciplined to no leave any grain of rice on rice bowl. This sprit comes from Shintoism. As ideas from Buddhism, Children are admonished to eschew evil, to be willing to do virtuous acts, and to purify their own hearts. Because it is believed that the more they do virtuous acts, the better they will be. From Confucianism, there are ideas to respect for parents and elderly people. In fact, teachers at junior high schools in Japan work an average of 63 hours and 18 minutes per week – the longest hours among all OECD countries – and there is little overtime compensation. Not only are the hours long, but there can be as many as 40 students per class. And out of the 40 students, on average six students are from families of relative poverty, 2.5 students have a developmental disorder, six think that classes are too difficult and five think they are too easy. And all these kinds of students are taught by one teacher – a daunting task (Ikuko, Tsuboya-Newel, 2017).

It is surely the dedication of Japanese teachers as well as parental investment in education that has allowed Japan to maintain its high educational achievements.

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8 “Itadakimasu” The universal phrase which is said before a meal in Japan. It is a conjunctive form with words Itadaku and Masu. The meaning of Itadaku is to receive in modest form and with Masu after verb shows to do it in the future. Source: *The dictionary of word origin*, Look vise, inc.

9 “Gochisosama”: The universal phrase, which is said after a meal in Japan. The word consists Go, Chiso and Sama. Chiso means to make every effort to collect ingredients and to entertain guests. Go and Sama express gratitude to the effort. Source: *The dictionary of word origin*, Look vise, inc.
Generally, parent reinforces their children showing them an example, letting them try it and praising them when they make it. Usually, preschool children are not scolded unless they bad trick. That might be world’s common manners like respect for others. Japanese family education’s peculiarity is based on religions. There is no wonder that parents educate their children with actions influenced by their religious ideas.

**Conclusions**

Both countries Japanese and Lithuania in family education and positive parenting had big change after World War Second. Accompanying to the change, a family relationship and neighbor’s relationship and family education’s performance have undergone. Loosing strict father in family is having consequences of mass-producing selfish people, more feckless people, and more people without the knowledge of right and wrong. To solve these matters, Japan has to improve communities and companies supports making childcare friendly environment as well as individual effort and change minds.

The low birth rate has been one of the major policy concerns in Japan and Lithuania, as its shrinking workforce could affect its future economic growth.

There are researchers who insist that japan recover strict father, however, I suggest Japan have to grope another solution. Because only getting back strict father Japan cannot adapt to changes in the times. Moreover, there is many Japanese family regards family education is merely discipline. No matter how parents discipline strictly their child, it not lead to develop their benevolence. There is a great Japanese family education philosophy based on religions, it seems worth to reinforce this method. Otherwise, it is possibly to learn from other countries family education. I would like to research family education in Lithuania especially the division of labor by gender.

Actions to support positive parenting in bouth countries should be taken as close as municipalities or nongovernmental organisations deserve all necessary support.

It is important to ensure the active participation of both parents and children in all decision-making concerning them. Their views should be taken into account when new policies or programmes are designed.

The realisation of the child’s right to physical integrity goes hand in hand with the support to parents in bringing up their children in a non-violent manner.

Promoting positive parenting is of particular importance in the present time of economic crisis, where tensions within families may increase due to unemployment or general economic insecurity.
References


Lyginamoji Japonijos ir Lietuvos sumaniosios šeimos edukacijos analizė

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Santrauka

lemia japonų religijos, Lietuvoje – katalikybė. Draugišką šeimai politiką Japonijoje ir Lietuvoje analizuoja praktikai (atvejų studijos), vis daugiau vykdoma sisteminį tyrimų, atsiranda šeimos politikos bruožų nacionaliniu ir vietos lygmeniu. Intervencijos ir diskusijos atskleidžia, kad ir Japonijoje, ir Lietuvoje šeimos politikos srities prioritetai, ištekliai ir konkretios priemonės turi panašumo.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** šeimos ugdymas(sis), sumanioji pozityvi tėvystė, socialiniai pokyčiai.