



## GUEST LECTURE

### Unexpected diversity: Experience and difficulties of LGBTQ+ participants in the JET Programme

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**Date:** January 31, 12:15

**Venue:** Hittorfstr. 18, Villa, Lecture room

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme was started in 1987 to promote internationalisation (kokusaika) from a grass-roots level and has accepted thousands of college graduates from overseas every year. In addition to the official purpose of internationalization, the JET programme unintendedly contributed in creating spaces in Japanese society for diversity, as many LGBTQ+ individuals have participated in the programme and interacted with local communities. While the JET programme was considered highly attractive for young graduates, participants with minority backgrounds in particular often found Japanese social norms difficult to cope with. These issues are often underrepresented in public discussions on internationalization of Japanese society.

As such, based on the content analysis of interviews with 16 former and current LGBTQ+ JET participants, conducted between 2021 and 2024, we aim to shed a light on the experiences and difficulties that sexual and gender minorities have faced in Japanese schools and local government offices. We discuss four key issues that made their situation difficult: coming out issues in the workplace; how Japanese schools react deal with teachers; cultural differences on privacy and (mis)communication with Japanese colleagues; and Japanese law, which lacks same-sex marriage or recognition of a same-sex family.



Dr. Ami Kobayashi is the principal investigator of a DFG-funded project (from 2024 to 2027) at the Faculty of Education at the University of Kaiserslautern-Landau entitled: 'Makarenko's Collective Education Beyond the Iron Curtain - Debates on socialist competition and their practical consequences in the GDR, Japan and the Soviet Union' [KO 6856/1-1]. Her research interests are education transfer, comparative education, the cultural history of pedagogical practices, sexual minorities in schools and differentiation processes in the educational system.

Dr Kazuyoshi Kawasaka is an independent researcher. He was the principal investigator of the DFG-funded project at the Institute for Modern Japanese studies in Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany ('Sexual Diversity and Human Rights in 21st Century Japan: LGBTIQ Activisms and Resistance from a Transnational Perspective' [KA 5082/2-1]), from 2020 to 2024. His research interests include nationalism and queer politics in Japan, globalization of LGBTIQ politics, and transnational anti-gender/LGBTIQ movements. He is a co-editor of *Beyond Diversity: Queer Politics, Activism, and Representation in Contemporary Japan* (Düsseldorf University Press, 2024).

