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The teaching of intercultural communication in Japanese academia in comparison to Germany and the U.S.

- Presentation 30 mins -

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a rising debate in Japan about the basic definitions underlying the teaching of intercultural communication. One of the concerns is that some definitions might enforce students' stereotypes and bias towards people of different cultures.

This research, for which funding is received from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEXT), was conducted to understand the differences and similarities in the understanding of the concepts of 'culture', 'communication' and 'intercultural' by instructors at colleges/universities in Japan, as compared to Germany and the U.S. By comparing the content of ICC education in the three countries at present, it will become clear which concepts are lacking or are different in Japan's ICC education.

In each country, 11-14 professors, who teach intercultural communication courses at colleges/universities, were narratively interviewed regarding their definitions of the terms 'communication', 'culture' and 'intercultural'. They were also given questionnaires asking about their teaching methods, class sizes, what students should retain, etc. In addition, questionnaires were given to their students at the end of the course asking for their understandings of the terms mentioned above.

The findings will illustrate the differences and similarities of professors' understanding and perceptions of the three basic concepts. It will further show the differences and similarities in how these terms are perceived by students, as well as what the latter are expected by their professors to retain from the courses.

Participants might also be interested in further exploration of how the above points are related to the overall cultural values and social issues of the respective countries.

Learning outcomes for participants

- To understand the difference of how professors in Japan, Germany and the U.S. conceive the terms 'culture' and 'intercultural' and the impact they might have on students
- To understand the difference of how students in Japan, Germany and the U.S. perceive the term 'intercultural' and the impact it might have on their intercultural encounters.

Profile

Margit Krause-Ono is Associate Professor of German, European Culture, and Intercultural Communication at Muroran Institute of Technology, Japan. Born in Germany, she has been a translator/interpreter/lecturer in northern Japan since 1980. She holds degrees from France and Australia, and a Certificate as Intercultural trainer/coach from Friedrich Schiller University, Germany.