

# Resource-Free Parenting: The Not So Curious Absence of Money in Policy Discourses of Good Parenting in the UK and Japan

Esther Dermott\* and Junko Yamashita\*\*

\*School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol  
E-mail: [Esther.Dermott@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Esther.Dermott@bristol.ac.uk)

\*\*School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol  
E-mail: [J.Yamashita@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:J.Yamashita@bristol.ac.uk)

---

*This article examines recent Japanese and UK policy recommendations on parenting practices and highlights the absence of material resources in these discussions. Parenting has gained increased prominence in recent decades. In the realm of policy, there has been an expansive shift; from a narrowly focused concern with detecting neglect and abuse to the wider project of promoting ‘good’ parenting. Focusing on advice offered in relation to education and food, we note that in both Japan and the UK the relationship between money and the ability to perform idealised parenting practices is rarely mentioned. Our comparative analysis also highlights that this silence is handled differently in the two national contexts, and we suggest that this reflects different historical interests in poverty and inequality. In Japan, parents are encouraged to undertake activities that require financial resources, but the question of how poor parents should manage is left largely unanswered: in the UK, the parenting activities given greatest attention are those that do not rely on money, meaning that poverty can be left off the positive parenting agenda.*

**Key words:** Poverty, material inequality, parenting, education and food.

## Poverty, inequality and parenting

Both Japan and the UK are concerned with the problem of poverty. As has been explored in more detail elsewhere in this themed section, there has recently been growing awareness in Japan of the existence and consequences of inequality and poverty (Abe, 2010). Meanwhile, in the UK, poverty was foregrounded under the New Labour administration of the late 1990s as a response to poverty rates that had seen a marked increase over the previous two decades (Pantazis *et al.*, 2006). With a particular concern to alleviate poverty among children who are categorised as among the ‘deserving poor’, the role of parents has come to the fore. It is how linkages are made between material resources and parental activities within policy documents and political statements that is the focus of this article; we examine the extent to which disadvantage and inequality are recognised and addressed in pronouncements on achieving ‘good parenting’. One riposte to the premise of the article might be that the parenting activities given most attention in policy documents are simply those with the greatest evidence behind them regarding benefits to children. We start from the position that scientific evidence in this area is patchy and contested,<sup>1</sup> and therefore that policy documents and political declarations making

definitive statements as to the value of parental activities are influenced as much by ideological commitments and pragmatic political assessments as by robust analysis.

### Comparative analysis of parenting practices

The different political and economic histories of Japan and the UK mean that comparative analysis, which often works best when there are at least some significant commonalities, has often been difficult. This is exacerbated in relation to parenting and family policies, where not only do the distinctive differences in welfare delivery come into play (Izuhara, 2004), but discussions are based on contrasting cultural assumptions about gender roles, different models of employment and caring responsibilities (Yamashita *et al.*, 2013), and significant variations in the socio-demographic profile of the population.

In addition, there are different emphases in the two national arenas about the role of parents. The UK has often been concerned with reducing the welfare burden by reducing the support provided to families by the state. In the last two decades, governmental focus has shifted from coupledness to parenthood (Williams, 2004) and from family form to family practices. This means that it is *parenting*, rather than the characteristics of parents or families, which is the main focus of attention. As British Prime Minister David Cameron (2010) stated, it is ‘what parents do, not who they are’ that counts.<sup>2</sup> There has also been an expansion of interest in the actions of parents; from a concern with how they negatively impact on children in situations of extreme neglect and abuse to a focus on how to develop ‘positive parenting’ behaviour, such as through investing in parental education (Churchill and Clarke, 2010).<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, in Japan it is concern over the low birth rate that has set the tone for family-related policy; the Act for Measures to Cope with a Society with a Declining Birth Rate (2003) has the specific aim of ‘supporting families who nurture the next generation in order to respond to the declining childrearing capability of families and neighbourhoods’ (Cabinet Office, 2012: 5). In other words, the concern to engage with the historically private realm of familial caring responsibilities has been prompted by a desire to change dominant procreative habits. Yet, despite rather different origins, policies and discourses around the role of parents are increasingly prevalent in both Japan and the UK,<sup>4</sup> and in both national contexts ‘appropriate’ parental action is being promoted by government. This focus on positive parenting is, in both countries, explicitly concerned with improving outcomes for children and ensuring they become ‘responsible citizens’. In addition, the UK and Japan have the common feature of the global North of welfare retrenchment and privatisation reflecting the recent global economic crisis, the emergence of neoliberalism as the dominant economic and political discourse, and shifts in household composition. In this context, our interest is less in family policy per se, and more on if, when, and how references to poverty and social inequality exist alongside endorsements of particular forms of parent–child interactions.

We begin with the premise that different recent political influences will lead to different ways of discussing parenting activities in each national context. The UK has witnessed a dichotomous framing of poverty *or* parenting (Dermott, 2013) with the government positioning parenting as ‘the principle site for social renewal’ (Jensen, 2010: 1); ‘what matters most to a child’s life chances is not the wealth of their upbringing but the warmth of their parenting’ (Cameron, 2010). This political desire to play down the significance of financial inequalities as having a causal effect on outcomes for children could either lead to the invisibility of poverty in discussions of good parenting with the

issue simply ignored by policy makers, or to explicit efforts to undermine arguments as to the significance of financial resources. In the Japanese context, there are again two plausible scenarios arising from the primary concern around responsibility for childcare. Recently expressed concerns over the affordability of care may mean that the cost of parenting activities is taken seriously and so questions over some families' ability to be able to engage in positively viewed parent–child activities is addressed. Alternatively, the low rates of poverty experienced in Japan before the recession of the 1990s and the widely held view of Japan as an egalitarian society may mean that discussions of income tend to be deemed irrelevant.

### **Case studies: education and food practices**

In choosing to examine linkages between discussions of poverty and parenting, we examine two substantive topics. This narrowing of focus is necessary when operating within the limitations of a single academic article that presents a cross-national analysis and concentrates on drawing out key points for discussion rather than providing a descriptive overview. Education and food, our chosen foci, have been the subject of significant attention in Japan and the UK, albeit, as we shall see, with rather different emphases, thereby allowing us to make some meaningful comparisons. In addition, these are topics which are theoretically applicable for thinking about parenting across the age spectrum of childhood, and notably beyond the heavily researched early years of infancy. A further, and not inconsequential, benefit of this choice (given that the central aim of the article is examining when and how economic inequalities are referenced) is that these are arenas where it is possible to see finance at play while at the same time some activities are cost free. The final rationale for concentrating on education and food are that these are two relatively broad areas of activity with a range of associated initiatives, making it possible to explore what is distinctive about the prioritised forms of parental engagement.

### **Education**

In the UK, Michael Gove, the Minister for Education, has stated that the impetus behind recent changes to educational provision is that 'we simply cannot afford to let another generation of children down' (2011) and, according to Frank Field's government commissioned report, *The Foundation Years* (2010), it is educational attainment that offers children the best route out of poverty. However, the ultimate indicator of success is narrowly focussed on gaining employment, since involvement in paid work is a major requirement of good citizenship.<sup>5</sup> In a keynote speech, Gove (2011) stated that the problem with underachieving schools is that they prepare children badly for the world of paid work and therefore threaten the UK's economic competitiveness. In this context, education is very much seen in vocational terms as equipping children with useful skills for the future. In Japan, the effort to equalise opportunities through education policy and systems was considered to be successful until the 1990s (Kariya, 1995). Since that time, research indicates that the Japanese educational system has been reproducing or widening social stratification; for instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report shows that pupils' academic achievement is associated with economic, social and cultural capital (OECD, 2009). However, the government chooses

to emphasise that Japan still has relatively small differences in educational achievement among pupils from different social groups (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), 2004).

### *The role of parents*

In the UK, parents are viewed as having a considerable role to play in the education of children, primarily through preparation for and involvement with formal schooling. Parents are encouraged to adopt 'a positive approach to learning at home' (Field 2010: 16)<sup>6</sup> before children are even at school age in order that they are primed to begin formal education. The influential EPPE (Effective Provision of Preschool Education) review emphasised the importance of 'school-readiness' and concluded that the quality of the home learning environment was key for children's early social and academic development (Sylva *et al.*, 2004: 57). Activities associated with this positive home environment include talking and reading to children, singing songs, and learning through activities and play. The government commissioned report, *Early Intervention: The Next Steps* (Allen, 2011), argued strongly that inadequate parenting practices require early intervention in order to strengthen 'parenting competencies'. For example, the Parent Child Home Program, proposed by Allen for adoption in the UK, aims to improve children's cognitive and social-emotional development. It 'prepares children for academic success' (Allen, 2011: 126) through twice weekly home visits that are 'designed to stimulate the parent-child verbal interaction, reading and educational play' (Allen, 2011: 126).<sup>7</sup> In the UK context, the most high profile parental activity is reading to children, which has taken on an almost mythical status. Following the association made by the OECD (2011) between reading with children at primary school age and achievement at age fifteen, the government has made a causal link resulting in David Cameron's demand; 'However busy you are, read to your children' (2012).

Parents need to engage with learning that takes place in school; likewise schools must engage with parents and encourage them to support learning at home (Field, 2010: 85). Parents are important for ensuring that children get the most out of their school experience; 'if pupils are to maximise their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents' (Desforges, 2003: 7). Further, 'parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and the democratisation of school governance' (Desforges, 2003: 7). Parental choice in relation to the educational establishment their child attends has been enshrined in policy in England since the 1988 Education Reform Act. This means that parents are expected to express a preference with regard to their child's school.<sup>8</sup> This has been taken further by the current government which committed in its programme for government to 'give greater powers to parents and pupils to choose a good school' (Cabinet Office, 2010: 28). This statement has manifested itself through the introduction of 'free schools' which, although funded by the state, are set up by locally based groups, such as 'committed parents'.<sup>9</sup> The exemplar of good parenthood is then the parent who goes further than doing the minimum expected level of attending parents' evenings and school events, and does more even than volunteering to be part of a parents-teachers association that raises money for the school and is consulted on major changes; the epitome of engaged parenthood is now to set up and run your own school. This level of parental involvement also looks set to be extended

to the running of children's centres as the Government produced a discussion paper in 2012 stating at the outset a commitment to increase parents' say in how they should be run (Department for Education, 2012).

Although supporting children in their school endeavours is strongly promoted, for example taking an interest in homework, activities such as paying for private tutoring<sup>10</sup> and encouraging extra-curricular activities, for example involvement in music and sports, are not. This is worth noting both because of the contrast with Japan (discussed below) and because such activities are, in fact, quite widespread. Ireson and Rushforth (2004) have suggested that around a quarter of parents in the UK pay for their children to have additional tutoring (with maths the most common subject). Meanwhile, Vincent *et al.* argue that among black middle-class parents extra-curricular activities are often seen as a necessary educational strategy to nurture children through the education system as 'the home becomes a site of pedagogy' (2013: 430).

This level of prescribed involvement in formal education by parents is largely absent in Japan; government guidance on home education for both preschool and primary school children does not include advice on helping them with their formalised education (MEXT, 2012a, 2012b). Instead, parental engagement with their children's educational progression is focused on extra-curricular activities. The percentage of children who take on extra-curricular activities is very high (82 per cent in primary school and 76 per cent in secondary school (MEXT 2009), with the most popular activities education focused, such as Juku,<sup>11</sup> which 33 per cent of eleven to twelve year olds and 65 per cent of fourteen to fifteen year olds children attend. This focus also extends to pre-schoolers, with 47 per cent engaged in some fee-charged extra-curricular activities (Benesse, 2011).

Private responsibility for children's education is reflected in expenditure data on education; Japan is the second highest spending country on forms of private education in the OECD (OECD, 2012). The monthly average of spending on extra-curricular activities has increased two-fold in the last two decades.<sup>12</sup> Due to the economic recession and the deterioration of the labour market, the average household income has declined. As Japanese parents continue to commit to privately arrange their children's education (Shinoda, 2011), this means that educational expenditure takes up an even larger share of household income. Given the high cost of supplementary education,<sup>13</sup> some metropolitan city councils (Tokyo and Osaka) have implemented a public loan scheme so that money can be borrowed to pay Juku tuition in order to prepare for entrance examinations for higher education although these schemes do not exist at the national level.

Reading to and with children, particularly those of pre-school age, is also mentioned in Japanese policy. Government documents note a number of factors affecting children's achievement, including parental activities with children, such as ensuring a sleeping routine and taking children to museums, along with reading. Notably, however, the emphasis is more on the importance for children's emotional and social development, rather than the route to educational attainment and future employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

### Food practices

In Japan governments have developed extensive policies on food in relation to supply, safety, public health and people's diet, with the result that the role of families in food policy has been comparatively well researched (Takeda, 2009). Significantly, a concern with food is not only focused on ensuring a healthy diet for the population but relates

to a range of wider issues. The National Shokuiku Basic Plan [Shokuiku Kihon Hō], introduced in 2005, aims to promote a healthy lifestyle from infancy to old age. While maintaining good nutrition remains a high profile discussion point, co-eating – eating together as a family – is also at the centre of policy. Issues around food consumption in the UK tend to centre on nutrition. This is primarily constituted in relation to reducing numbers of the overweight and is centred on worries about increased levels of obesity and associated health problems, for example, ‘UK fat alert: 26 million will be obese by 2030’ (*The Independent*, 2011). In terms of public health priorities, obesity has a high profile; witness the Department of Health’s publication of *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* (2011).

### *Parenting and food*

Within the UK the role of parents is much less prominent in discussions of food than it is in relation to education. In Field’s report, food receives a single mention in his proposed new measure of child poverty and that refers to poor nutrition during pregnancy (2010: 90). Probably the most high profile and now somewhat longstanding priority is the promotion of breastfeeding,<sup>15</sup> in the light of statistics suggesting that the UK has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in Europe (and indeed the world) (Hamlyn *et al.*, 2002). The NHS website includes a page on ‘why breastfeed?’, which emphasises advantages for baby and the mother: the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) published a review in 2005 in order to assess the effectiveness of interventions encouraging longer breastfeeding, stating at the outset that ‘The government is fully committed to the promotion of breastfeeding’ (Renfrew *et al.*, 2005: iii); and the Department of Health similarly unambiguously states on its website that breast milk is the best form of nutrition for babies and, in *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* (2011), that breastfeeding will be supported through the Healthy Child Programme.

The role for parents once children are of school age is limited to ensuring they are not overweight, such as through preparing ‘healthy’ packed lunches; the government’s role is to support this by offering advice on what constitutes a varied and healthy diet through external organisations and initiatives. For the most part, this nutritional focus is narrowly concentrated on eating more fruit and vegetables, ‘5 a day’, and drinking and eating less fizzy drinks and ‘junk food’ (usually taken to mean high fat/high sugar foods, such as chocolate, biscuits, cake and crisps). For example, the School Food Trust, which was previously a quango and is now becoming an independent charity, offers a selection of packed lunch suggestions on its website (<http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/>). Similarly, the NHS sponsored ‘Change4Life’ campaign (<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/>), which operates under the slogan of ‘Eat Well, Move More, Live Longer’, has suggestions on how to include a range of different fruit and vegetables into meals. A more direct form of support for parents, Children’s Centres, offer parents cookery classes and advice on how to make healthy and frugal food purchases. Attention has also been directed towards the quality of school food. A high profile campaign ‘Feed Me Better’, led by the chef Jamie Oliver in 2005, resulted in a commitment by the then government to increase the amount that schools spent on providing dinners in schools, and parents (who signed a petition) were portrayed as wanting to raise standards.

Issues around children and food do, on occasion, hit the headlines in the UK; for example concerns are raised periodically in the media over families no longer eating together on a regular basis, despite indications that the decline of the family meal has been exaggerated (Jackson, 2008). However, these are more marginal to current governmental concerns than the issue of education,<sup>16</sup> and seemingly less closely tied to constructions of good parenting. In Japan, the situation is reversed, with policy initiatives associated with eating practices having a higher profile. Parents and families is the one of the 'agencies' involved in regulating and managing food (Lang *et al.*, 2001).

The Japanese government implemented a policy called The Shokuiku Basic Act [Shokuiku Kihon Hō] in 2005. Shokuiku is literally translated as 'nurturing through eating', and the Shokuiku campaign attempts to spread knowledge of food, nutrition and public health via healthy eating and cooking education for Japanese children and adults.<sup>17</sup> The Shokuiku Act features under the 'Policies on Cohesive Society' section of the Cabinet Office, which covers 'a wide range of important issues for future society, particularly the issues of people's lifestyle and safety'.<sup>18</sup> Conceiving of food policy in this way means that 'healthy' refers not only to the physical realm but also to having 'appropriate' discipline over daily life. Takeda (2008) points out that food is one of the main political arenas in which the Japanese government actively intervenes into people's everyday lives by promoting self-discipline and self-responsibility. The preface of The Shokuiku Basic Act states:

For our country's development in the 21st century, it is important that children have both sound minds and bodies so that they can play an active role in the future of global society.

The National Shokuiku Basic Plan enacted in 2006 set out seven areas of policy implementation, including ensuring the 'roles of guardians and educators for children's Shokuiku education'. 'Shokuiku promotion at home' is listed as essential for comprehensive promotion of Shokuiku (Cabinet Office, 2006). Food education for children is the main aspect of this policy: from the first White Paper on 'Nurturing through Eating' in 2006 to the latest in 2012, parents are located at the centre of the national Shokuiku campaign; 'Shokuiku activities undertaken by parents or other guardians at home are at the centre of the implementation of the national Shokuiku movement' (Cabinet Office, 2007: 20). Each White Paper since 2006 details examples of family practices, such as eating dinner together without watching TV to support parent-child communication (*ibid.*), providing children with a good breakfast (Cabinet Office, 2012: 54) and improving parents' knowledge of food and eating habits (Cabinet Office, 2008: 37). In practical terms, this has been translated into the launch of cooking schools for parents and children, the production of leaflets on appropriate eating and advice on nutrition during pregnancy and for infants (Cabinet Office, 2006).

In 2011, the second Shokuiku Basic Plan (2011–15) was implemented. While the basic structure did not change, three new agenda items were added: promoting Shokuiku across the life course, reducing lifestyle-related diseases and encouraging 'co-eating' with family members (Cabinet Office, 2011). Again an emphasis on both nutrition and social practices is evident. The 2011 White paper showed a positive association between educational achievement in year 6 pupils and having breakfast every morning (*ibid.*). In 2012, there was an emphasis on the importance of family co-eating for children, which

drew on research findings from the National Survey on Academic Achievement and Learning Environment,<sup>19</sup> to show that children who have breakfast on their own tend to feel more tired and annoyed than those who have breakfast with at least one of their parents (Cabinet Office, 2012).

Food policy delivers a message that children who do not eat well or with other family members do not develop healthy minds and bodies, nor do they achieve in educational terms. Food is not only about diet, it is also about keeping and teaching 'Japanese food culture' and maintaining strong family relationships. Perhaps because of the centrality of food to ideas of culture, there is no discussion regarding the difficulties some families may face in being able to perform these activities; rather, co-eating and nutritious meals are treated as something that can be achieved by parents' awareness and efforts. Despite evidence from sociological research arguing that exploring how families 'do' food offers insights into contemporary family life (see Jackson, 2009), this interest in the broader issue of *how* we eat rather than *what* we eat is largely absent from the UK policy agenda.

#### *Discussion: parenting not poverty*

Concerns about the role of parents in relation to children's current and future wellbeing are present in the policy discussions emerging from both Japan and the UK, with an expectation of engaged, knowledgeable parenting. Government statements show an awareness of the period of early and middle childhood as important in setting up or restricting opportunities for the future, but less willingness to acknowledge the role of financial resources in achieving this. Recent policies in both countries suggest that parents are increasingly the subject of heightened expectations in relation to *specific* activities even while governments, especially in Japan, remain wary of being seen as too interventionist in what is largely regarded as the private domain. Gillies argues that contemporary parenting has been 're-framed as a job requiring particular skills and expertise, which must be taught by formally qualified professionals' (2008: 1080). The story from the policies and initiatives discussed above is about parents themselves as *potential* experts. Those whose potential has not yet been realised can be 'helped' by being provided with the correct information and support. In this regard then, there is some degree of convergence around policy and political discourse. In the UK, parents are also, more explicitly, expected to work in tandem with the state, as partners (Williams, 2004); the onus is on parents to collaborate with government to bring up their children successfully.

The specific intention of the article was to examine the extent to which the resources of parents, in particular financial ones, are recognised in government statements about what parents should be doing and how they should be supported. The headline finding is that references to money are largely missing. Measures do exist to support those on the lowest incomes in both national contexts, such as the provision of means-tested free school meals. Yet discussions of how parents can be supported is addressed primarily in relation to advice and transmission of expertise (such as through parenting classes) rather than by providing additional financial resources. This is a notable absence because there is evidence that having a lower income is a barrier to parents being able to fulfil many of the outlined expectations of good parenting (for example Kiernan and



Mensah, 2011). And this means that cultural, and indeed moral, expectations of good parenthood will necessarily remain out of reach for at least a significant minority of parents. In the UK, it is working-class parents and those less well-off who are the primary targets of new initiatives and interventions. But their failure to perform good enough parenting is currently framed as a lack of will, knowledge or aspiration rather than resources: 'Many parents have a strong desire to do the best for their children but many, especially in low-income groups, are ill-informed or poorly motivated on how to achieve this' (Allen, 2011: 57). In Japan, parents in low-income groups are increasingly struggling to pay the basic costs of schooling but are still expected to fund children's extra-curricular activities; these costs are cited by parents as one of the most stressful aspects of raising children and a reason for having fewer children than they would prefer (MEXT, 2009).

Our comparative analysis has also drawn attention to the different ways that poverty and economic inequality can be left out of the picture. In the UK, it is low cost or free activities that have the greatest prominence alongside those with hidden resource implications. No-cost recommendations are promoted in relation to food (for example breastfeeding), and elsewhere invocations to better food consumption are generalised (for example, good nutrition). This avoids consideration of the problem that those on very low incomes face with regard to providing their children with sufficient food (Hirsch *et al.*, 2012) and addressing the issue that healthy goods cost more (Mooney, 1990). In relation to education, the most prominent activities emerge from discussion about the importance of the 'home learning environment' to ensure both 'school readiness' and ongoing support for school education. These emphasise daily activities with children – such as reading – which are low cost.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the role of poverty is ignored in favour of a focus on parental agency; any other approach would counter the position that it is parenting, not poverty, that counts (see Dermott, 2013). Taking into account the role of material resources would be incompatible with the strongly phrased mantra that 'It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development . . . that together matter more to children than money' (Field, 2010: 5). Within the UK, there is consistency between the general political message, the promotion of specific parental activities and interventions designed to promote 'positive parenting'. In Japan, some of the activities that are most high profile offer a similar narrative to the UK discourse, that parents can improve the lot of their children through small, simple steps that are available to all (for example through eating breakfast together). Further, the widespread condemnation of parents who fail to pay for their children's school meals reflects the invisibility of the cost of food.<sup>21</sup> However, in terms of education, Japanese policy statements are more comfortable with the expectation that individual parents will pay out money in order to buy in educational and social resources for their children. Rather than being ignored, the financial element is *downplayed*. The dominance of a historical and political narrative, which until very recently emphasised that poverty did not exist, was necessarily blind to the fact that not everyone can afford to pay. Due to this legacy, it is possible for parental expenditure on educational products and services to be expected, without an associated commitment to reduce inequality or provide the means at a national level. In the UK, there does appear to be some political sensitivity to the accusation of increasing social inequality. Finally, one of the prompts for this themed section was a sense that despite very different patterns of poverty and inequality in the latter half of the twentieth century, more recent economic events may now be

leading to some degree of convergence between the two countries. However, while policy statements suggest that views on parenting itself may be shifting into closer alignment, historical differences around poverty remain evident, albeit reproduced in a new context.

## Notes

1 O'Connor and Scott (2007) note that any causal relationship between parenting and outcomes for children remains controversial.

2 Quoting from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project Final Report (Sylvia *et al.*, 2004).

3 Daly (2013) argues that England has an extensive range of services geared towards parental education and in particular interventions to train parents, more so than either France, Germany or Italy.

4 Parenting policies are devolved within the UK to regions and there are differences between Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. Most parenting policy has been introduced in England (Daly, 2013). However, we use the term 'UK' as the policy discussion documents we refer to originate with the Westminster government and reflect recent UK governmental discourse.

5 Lewis (1992) argues that the universal adult worker has taken over as the model of good citizenship. See also Anderson (2012) for a recent discussion of how the unemployed 'benefit scrounger' fails to pass the test of 'good citizenship'.

6 The Review on Poverty and Life Chances led by Frank Field MP was commissioned by the government. It included within its remit an exploration of how a child's home environment affected their chances of being able to take advantage of their schooling.

7 Using trained 'paraprofessionals', this program works with 'families who have not had access to education and economic opportunities', [www.parent-child.org](http://www.parent-child.org).

8 Note however that choice may be more of an aspiration than a reality since parents only express a preference; as Burgess *et al.* (2005) describe, it a 'generalised but differential choice'.

9 See <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools/b0061428/free-schools> for more information.

10 In the UK, tutoring is usually on a one-to-one basis and takes place in the home of the tutor or student.

11 Juku translates as 'cram school' where children attend classes in private institutions in order to catch up with the school work or prepare for the entrance examinations for competitive schools.

12 Calculated from the Educational Cost Survey 2011 by MEXT.

13 Calculated from the Educational Cost Survey 2011 by MEXT, the cost of supplementary education is 1.6 to 1.7 times the cost involved in formal schooling (for example, school meals, uniforms and trips).

14 [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/045/shiryo/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2009/08/06/1282852\\_2.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/045/shiryo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2009/08/06/1282852_2.pdf).

15 It is worth noting at this juncture that the gender neutral term 'parenting' disguises the gendered nature of responsibility and the greater societal obligations placed on mothers.

16 Note that the nutritional standards to which state schools must adhere do not apply to the new 'free schools' introduced by the current government (Gillie and Long, 2011).

17 Curiously, as with the high profile campaign in the UK, which focused on improving the quality of school food, the Shokuiku campaign was also initiated by a celebrity chef, Hattori Yukio.

18 The explanation of cohesive society on the cabinet office website translated by the author (<http://www8.cao.go.jp/souki/index.html>).

19 MEXT conducts the National Survey on Academic Achievement and Learning Environment every year involving 30 per cent of pupils at year 6 (eleven to twelve years old) and year 9 (fourteen to fifteen years old).

20 It is worth noting that these activities do of course presume ownership of abilities, such as a level of competency in literacy and numeracy, that can support children with their learning.

21 One article in *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* (Japan Financial Times) is titled 'Not paying school dinner fees indicates broken-down moral of parents' (28 January 2007).

## References

- Abe, A. (2010) 'Poverty measurement and social exclusion in Japan', Second Townsend Memorial Conference, Measuring Poverty: The State of Art, 22–23 January, Bristol, [www.poverty.ac.uk/content/conference-programme](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/content/conference-programme).
- Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*, London: Cabinet Office.
- Anderson, B. (2012) 'What does "the migrant" tell us about the (good) citizen?', Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Papers, No. 94, University of Oxford, Oxford.
- Benesse (2011) *Kosodate Seikatsu Kiso Chosa [Basic Suvery on Childrearing and Life Styles]*, Tokyo: Benesse Corporation.
- Burgess, S., Propper, C. and Wilson, D. (2005) *Choice: Will More Choice Improve Outcomes in Education and Health Care? The Evidence from Economic Research*, Bristol: CMPO, University of Bristol.
- Cabinet Office (2006/2007/2008/2011/2012) *Shoikuiku Hakusyo* [White Paper on Nurturing through Eating], Tokyo: Shadan Hōjin Jiji Gahōsha.
- Cabinet Office (2010) *The Coalition: Our Programme for Government*, London: The Cabinet Office.
- Cameron, D. (2010) 'Supporting parents', 11 January [http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2010/01/David\\_Cameron\\_Supporting\\_parents.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2010/01/David_Cameron_Supporting_parents.aspx) (accessed 13 September 2012).
- Cameron, D. (2012) 'However busy you are, read to your children', *London Evening Standard*, 18 January, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/get-london-reading/however-busy-you-are-read-to-your-children-says-pm-7309100.html> (accessed 13 September 2012).
- Churchill, H. and Clarke, K. (2010) 'Investing in parenting education: a critical review of policy and provision in England', *Social Policy and Society*, 9, 1, 39–53.
- Daly, M. (2013) 'Parenting support policies in Europe', *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 2, 2, 159–74.
- Department for Education (2012) *Increasing Parental and Community Involvement in Sure Start Children's Centres*, Discussion Paper, London: Department for Education.
- Department of Health (2011) *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A Call to Action on Obesity in England*, London: Department of Health.
- Dermott, E. (2013) 'Poverty versus parenting: an emergent dichotomy', *Studies in the Maternal*, 4, 2, [http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk/back\\_issues/4\\_2/Dermott\\_SiM\\_4\\_2\\_2012.html](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk/back_issues/4_2/Dermott_SiM_4_2_2012.html).
- Desforges, C. with Abouchar, A. (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Department for Education and Skills Research Report No.433, Nottingham: DfES
- Field, F. (2010) *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults*, London: Cabinet Office.
- Gillies, V. (2008) 'Childbearing, class and the new politics of parenting', *Sociology Compass*, 2, 3, 1079–95.
- Gove, M. (2011) 'Speech to the policy exchange on free schools', 20 June, <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0077948/michael-goves-speech-to-the-policy-exchange-on-free-schools> (accessed 13 September 2012).
- Gillie, C. and Long, R. (2011) *School Meals and Nutritional Standards*, House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/SP/4195, London: House of Commons.
- Hamlyn, B., Brooker, S., Oleinikova, K. and Wands, S. (2002) *Infant feeding 2000*, Survey conducted on behalf of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland, London: The Stationery Office.
- Hirsch, D., Sutton, L. and Beckhelling, J. (2012) *The Cost of a Child in the Twenty-First Century*, London: Child Poverty Action Group.
- Ireson, J. and Rushforth, K. (2004) 'Mapping the nature and extent of private tutoring at transition points in education', British Educational Research Association Conference, UMIST, Manchester, 16–18 September.

- Izuhara, M. (2004) 'Negotiating family support? The "generational contract" between long-term care and inheritance', *Journal of Social Policy*, 33, 4, 649–65.
- Jackson, P. (ed.) (2009) *Changing families, Changing Food*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Jackson, P. (2008) *Summary of Research Findings: Changing Families, Changing Food*, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/familiesandfood>.
- Jensen, T. (2010) 'Warmth and wealth: re-imagining social class in taxonomies of good parenting', *Studies in the Maternal*, 2, 1–2, [http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk/back\\_issues/issue\\_three/jensen.html](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk/back_issues/issue_three/jensen.html).
- Kariya, M. (1995) *Taishū Kyōiku no Yukue [The Rise of Mass Education Society]*, Tokyo: Chuōkōronsha.
- Kiernan, K. and Mensah, F. K. (2011) 'Poverty, family resources and children's early educational attainment: the mediating role of parenting', *British Educational Research Journal*, 37, 2, 317–36.
- Lang, T., Barling, D. and Caraher, M. (2001) 'Food, social policy and the environment: towards a new model', *Social Policy and Administration*, 35, 5, 538–58.
- Lewis, J. (1992) 'Gender and the development of welfare regimes', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2, 3, 159–73
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2004) *Summary of Pisa Report 2003*, Tokyo: MEXT, [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/toukei/001/04120101.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/001/04120101.htm) last accessed 25/9/12
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2009) *White paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*, Tokyo: MEXT.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2012a) *Katei Kyōiku Techō; Nyūyōji hen [Home Education Notebook: Infant version]*, Tokyo: MEXT.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2012b) *Katei Kyōiku Techō; Shōgakkō Teigakunen hen [Home Education Notebook: Primary school version]*, Tokyo: MEXT.
- Mooney, C. (1990) 'Cost and availability of healthy food choices in a London health district', *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 3, 2, 111–20
- Nihon Keizai Shinbun [Japan Financial Times] (2007) 'Not paying school dinner fees indicates broken-down moral of parents', 28 January.
- Pantazis, C., Gordon, D. and Levitas, R. (2006) (eds.) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- O'Connor, T. G., and Scott, S. B. C. (2007) *Parenting and Outcomes for Children*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- OECD (2009) *PISA 2009 Key Findings*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2011) *PISA in Focus*, 10, Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2012) *Education at Glance*, Paris: OECD.
- Renfrew, M., Dyson, L., Wallace, L., D'Souza, L., McCormick, F. and Spiby, H. (2005) *The Effectiveness of Public Health Interventions to Promote the Duration of Breastfeeding: Systematic Review*, London: NICE.
- Shinoda, T. (2011) 'Hahaoya no Kodomo nitaishuru Kakawarikata ha dou Henka shitaka [How mothers attitudes toward their relationship have changed]', in T. Fukuda and R. Nishino (eds.), *Kazoku nitsuiteno Zenkoku Chosa 3: Kazoku Keisei to Ikuji [National Survey on Family 3 Family Formation and Childrearing]*, Tokyo: Committee on the National Family Research of Japan (NFRJ), the Japan Society of Family Sociology.
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report*, London: Institute of Education.
- Takeda, H. (2008) 'Structural reform of the family and the neoliberalisation of everyday life in Japan', *New Political Economy*, 13, 2, 153–72.
- Takeda, H. (2009) 'Family meals in the UK and Japan', in P. Jackson (ed.), *Changing Families, Changing Food*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- The Independent (2011) 'UK fat alert: 26 million will be obese by 2030', <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/uk-fat-alert-26-million-will-be-obese-by-2030-2344149.html> (accessed 13 September 2012).

- Vincent, C., Rollock, N., Ball, S. and Gillborn, D. (2013) 'Raising middle class black children: parenting priorities, actions and strategies', *Sociology*, 47, 3, 427–42.
- Williams, F. (2004) *Rethinking Families*, Leeds: CAVA, University of Leeds.
- Yamashita, J., Soma, N. and Chan, R. K. H. (2013) 'Re-examining family-centred care regimes in East Asia', in M. Izuhara (ed.), *Handbook on East Asian Social Policy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.