

The Ninth Child Science Exchange Program in East Asia

Playful Pedagogy — Child Science of Play and Learning

— The Second ECEC Research Conference

◆October 26- 27, 2013

◆Mita Campus, Keio University, Tokyo



Speakers and Presenters:

Noboru Kobayashi (Honorary Director, CRN; Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo)

Yoichi Sakakihara (Director, CRN; Professor, Graduate School of Ochanomizu University)

Kiyomi Akita (Professor, Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo)

Jiaxiong Zhu (Professor Emeritus, East China Normal University)

Shih-Tsung Chang (Professor, National Taipei University of Education)

Nianli Zhou (Professor, East China Normal University)

Lee-Fong Wong (Professor, National Taipei University of Education)

Reiko Irie (Professor, Kyoritsu Women's University)

Nobuyuki Ueda (Professor, Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts)

* In order of presentation; titles and affiliations as of September 2013

The two-day program held on Oct 26-27, 2013, focused on the concepts of early childhood education and care, Playful Pedagogy and Guided Play, with productive discussion among nine researchers from Japan, China and Taiwan.

Day 1

“Joie de Vivre” through Bio-Emotinemics

Noboru Kobayashi

Through demonstrated cases based on brain science, Professor Kobayashi lectured on how the emotion of joy is essential for children's development. He emphasized the importance of love and care by guardians and teachers in filling children's hearts with joy.

What is the Aim of Playful Pedagogy?

Yoichi Sakakihara

Professor Sakakihara presented Guided play as an

important method in implementing “Playful Pedagogy.” He positioned Guided play between “direct instruction” and “free play,” the two methods used in early childhood education. As its feature, Professor Sakakihara explained that while Guided play respects children's independence, the involvement of teachers is also considered important for establishing goals and environments that stimulate children's curiosity and inquiring spirit. Introducing the results of early childhood education and developmental psychology research carried out by American researchers, he emphasized the effectiveness of Guided play in children's development. He also mentioned how the benefits of traditional Japanese play-centered childcare are being widely recognized globally and encouraged guardians in the audience to be more confident in their child raising.

Preschool Teachers Foster Play: Diversity of Learning that Anticipates Growth

Kiyomi Akita

Professor Akita emphasized the importance of incorporating play into early childhood education. She started off by defining the role of the guardian in Guided play as “choosing the educational element for the child from the play he/she is experiencing.” Then explained that guardians need to be flexible toward children by varying the educational goals according to each child's surroundings.





Between Play and Education: Understanding Guided Play

Zhu Jiaxiong

Professor Zhu also talked about how creating a balance between play and learning is indispensable for a child's healthy development. The importance of Guided play was also emphasized. Using building blocks as an example, Professor Zhu stated that in many cases when a child playing alone is compared with one playing with a guardian, the latter builds better and this in turn adds to a sense of accomplishment and awareness.

Playful Pedagogy in Learning Sites: Designing Play Equipment and Toys

Shih-Tsung Chang

The creator of the term "Edu-tainment," coined from "education" and "entertainment," Professor Chang explained how to put this into action. Introducing interactive museum exhibitions where visitors can touch the articles, he also carried out a mini workshop showing the participants how to fold a moving origami bird to emphasize the joy of "Edu-tainment."

Day 2

Symposium 1 : On the Scene From East Asia

Researchers from China, Taiwan and Japan gave us insights into the current early childhood education scene in the respective countries and the concomitant challenges. Professor Zhou of China and Professor Wong of Taiwan stressed the importance of spreading Guided play as an educational method to promote development in children's social skills and autonomy. Professor Irie of Japan pointed out the gap between the ideal image of teachers and the actual childcare, and emphasized the need for on-the-job training

for prospective teachers as well as further practical training for in-service teachers.

The Vision of Playful Learning

Nobuyuki Ueda

"The inspiring and exciting feeling children experience when they are totally absorbed is the very proto-experience of learning, which is essential for the physical and mental development of children," explained Professor Ueda, an advocate of Playful Learning. He illustrated various forms of Playful Learning, such as learning through cooperative creation or dialogue, and learning that develops by directing enthusiasm towards a specific target.

Symposium 2 :

The program closed with an overall discussion by Professor Chang, Professor Ueda, Professor Zhu, Professor Zhou, and Professor Irie, with Professor Sakakihara serving as the moderator, followed by a Q&A session with the audience. The discussion focused on how to fully enhance Guided play, which led to an enthusiastic exchange of views. "It is essential for the teachers to face and enthusiastically deal with children on a day-to-day basis, observing each child carefully, in order to closely respond to their needs and feelings," commented Professor Zhu. Both panelists and the audience endorsed this conclusion; it was an agreement that transcended not only national boundaries but also the professional positions of researcher and teacher.

Medical scholars, developmental psychologists, designers and many others took advantage of the two days to discuss play and learning from their respective standpoints. CRN will continue to offer programs supporting child development.