



Early Childhood Education and Care



No. 01
ECEC
Newsletter

Pursuing a new vision of early childhood education and care

Starting up ECEC studies!

Launching a new ECEC Newsletter

Child care in Japan is currently undergoing a dramatic revolution. The debate over the integration of kindergartens and day-care centers, which once seemed to be settled with the introduction of a new type of integrated institution, Early Childhood Education and Care centers (*nintei kodomo en*), still wavers between the concepts of “education” and “child care.” First adopted by OECD, the acronym ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) includes both “education” and “care.” This implies that people around the world who are involved in early childhood education and care all recognize that children in early childhood require both education and care and passionately seek the best balance between these two essential factors. In other words, the above issue currently at the center of hot debates in Japan is not only Japan’s specific issue, but also the focus of attention of the world community.

Recently, I attended a forum of OMEP (meaning “World Organization for Early Childhood Education”), a pioneer in the study and practice of ECEC around the world. At the forum, I came to realize that “ECEC” has become the watchword of global standards in child education.

My humble wish is to offer opportunities to exchange and share valuable information that will contribute to ECEC study and practice in Japan through this Newsletter.



榑原洋一

Yoichi Sakakihara

Director, CRN
M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences, Ochanomizu University.
Born in 1951, specializes in pediatric neurology and developmental disorders.

Creating a new “form” of early childhood education and care

Since the enforcement of the “Equal Employment Opportunity Act for Men and Women,” women have come to participate more actively in society. As a result, women’s ways of working and children’s lifestyles have become diversified. This has been accompanied by increasing problems at institutions of early childhood education and care for such children; therefore, we must say that the current systems of early childhood education and care do not function sufficiently.

In order to break through the existing stalemate, I believe that it is necessary to innovate a new form of early childhood education and care. Every type of institution of early childhood education and care should cooperate with each other regardless of their different positions and roles to improve, among other issues, the “quality of child care” that will be beneficial to all children. I also suggest that a new framework be established under the concept of nursery education, combining the philosophy and practice of pedagogy for those involved in child care.

The term “ECEC” seems to represent this mindset. It is my goal that everyone involved in child development should accomplish the ideal ECEC setting so that they can function efficiently in today’s society.



小林 肇

Noboru Kobayashi

Honorary Director, CRN
M.D., Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo,
President Emeritus of the National Children’s Hospital.
Born in 1927.

What is ECEC?

ECEC stands for Early Childhood Education and Care. While the practice and quality of ECEC have drawn increasing attention from the world community, Japan’s early childhood education and care are also undergoing various reforms. Child Research Net (CRN) will continue to promote ECEC studies.

Note: ECEC is also referred by other terms such as ECCE and ECD.

Child Research Net (CRN) is an international and interdisciplinary internet-based child research institute, operated with the support of Benesse Corporation.



The 1st ECEC Research Conference Report

Child Research Net (CRN) hosted the 1st ECEC Research Conference on Sunday, June 30, 2013, which had about 160 participants. The following is a brief outline of the conference.

Program

Theme

The Challenges and Prospects of ECEC in Japan

Keynote address

"The Challenges and Prospects of ECEC in Japan in the Context of Globalization"

Kiyomi Akita

Panel discussion

Moderator: Yoichi Sakakihara

**Panelist: Kiyomi Akita
Mariko Ichimi
Hirotomo Omameuda
Noriko Goto**

Keynote address

Data and Evidence Collection Increases the Quality of ECEC

Speaker: Kiyomi Akita
Professor, Graduate School of the University of Tokyo.
Specializes in child care and education, developmental psychology, educational psychology, and teacher education.



Professor Akita pointed out the following three issues in the current practice of ECEC in Japan.

- 1 Lack of education and child care that will ensure that the individual child will lead a happy life in early childhood and beyond in a globalized, knowledge-based society in the 21st century
- 2 Lack of education and child care that responds to diverse needs amid widening disparity (economic and regional disparities, etc.)
- 3 Lack of facts and evidence to ensure the process of improvement in ECEC quality

Regarding the three issues, compared to other countries that increasingly invest resources in ECEC, Professor Akita pointed out that Japan's public funding for it remains low and emphasized the importance of discourse and evidence to ensure that the significance of ECEC is widely understood. Professor Akita further proposed the necessity of promoting data collection and monitoring to effectively increase the quality of early childhood care and education at the national level.

As the latest world trends, she introduced case studies from Taiwan and Korea as examples of the effective operation of the ECEC system through the integration of kindergartens and day-care centers and also showed a short movie from Singapore where the integration was put into practice in May, 2013. Professor Akita further referred to evaluation indicators for quality ECEC and ongoing international trends, providing examples from Australia and Canada.

Panel discussion

[Issue Proposal]

What is quality ECEC?

Moderator: Yoichi Sakakihara
Director, CRN; Professor, Graduate school of Ochanomizu University. Specializes in pediatric neurology, developmental disorder.



Five Challenges of ECEC in Japan

- 1 How can ECEC in Japan be positioned in the global context?
- 2 Do we have an overall picture of ECEC in Japan? What is the average ECEC in Japan?
- 3 What are the standards to measure the quality of ECEC? What is quality ECEC?
- 4 How can we improve the quality of ECEC? Specific facts rather than visions and philosophies are necessary.
- 5 What are the essential differences in care and education between day-care centers and kindergartens?

Specialists responded to the above questions. One of them noted that although ECEC in Japan has traditionally been based on the importance of proactive play by children themselves, this is little known outside Japan. As a result, even though Japan has been ahead in this field, it seems to have been too far ahead and ended up a step behind.



[Voices of Panelists]

The importance of mapping the current state of facilities

Ms. Ichimi's comment: A government framework is needed to manage early childhood data in an integrated fashion and map ECEC so that the positioning of Japanese ECEC can be highlighted in a global context.

Panelist: Mariko Ichimi
Senior Researcher, National Institute for Education Policy Research of Japan; Translation team coordinator for OECD "White Paper on Early Childhood Education and Care." Specializes in comparative education.



Professor Omameuda's comment: In light of worldwide trends, Japan should also collect data and apply it to ECEC. For example, changing actual ECEC activities based on the results of a recent athletic performance survey was a significant move.

Panelist: Hirotomo Omameuda
Associate Professor, Tamagawa University. Specializes in early childhood education and care, parenting support.



Ms. Goto's comment: I rediscovered the importance of relating the actual problems we face in child care to problems identified from the perspective of global trends in order to improve the quality of child care.

Panelist: Noriko Goto
Research Manager, Child Sciences and Parenting Research Office, Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute.



Professor Akita's comment: It is important to acknowledge your own facility's features. In that sense, visualizing the features of your facility and clarifying its position through mapping is very important.



[Floor Discussion]

In search of ECEC quality assessment standards

There were various opinions on the difficulty of qualitative measurement of child care. Professor Akita discussed the importance of improving quality education at the entire kindergarten level while ensuring the diversity of child care. Rather than considering this in terms of child care standards, she also suggested that it would be more effective to achieve quality education if every kindergarten could utilize their unique ideas and experience so long as they met minimum standards. In addition, she pointed out that observation of children's daily activities is also essential to gather convincing evidence, rather than relying solely on numerical evaluation.

During the open discussion, a variety of important issues were raised from the floor, such as collecting first-hand experience of teachers, or suggestions on how to draw up standards from cohort studies, all of which were highly suggestive for setting standards to assess the quality of Japanese ECEC activities. The ECEC Conference has taken a big step forward.



Voices of participants

I noticed that there are many common points at issue between the quality of child care and that of nursing care. (Midwife)

When discussing child care, I realized that talking about individual cases (rather than numerical data) can also be one approach. (Kindergarten assistant director)

I realized the necessity of numerical conversion in child care evaluation. (Day-care center director)

Knowing that we must consider differences in cultures and customs when comparing child care with that of other countries, I would like to know which factor we must emphasize the most. (Day-care center teacher)

I'm interested in the "measurement of quality." I found the lectures at today's conference were immensely timely. (Part-time instructor / health-center counselor)



Summary of discussions at the 1st ECEC Research Conference

Data and Evidence

Improving the quality of child care

Indicators to measure the quality of child care are necessary.

Solving problems at child care facilities

Child care facilities have original and diverse contents, as well as standardized contents.

For the future

CRN has designated ECEC research as one of its major research topics. We provide kindergarten and day-care center professionals with opportunities for discussion, and disseminate information from a global perspective.



For more details,
please visit:
<http://www.childresearch.net/events/ecec/>

Planned ECEC research activities

Introducing Early Childhood Education and Care through Photos

Send us photos recounting
your experiences and stories of your facilities

Relaxing and enjoying creative activity outdoors



Example
of photos



Learning the value of life through petting animals

CRN will start a new project, "Introducing Early Childhood Education and Care through Photos," as part of its ECEC research.

The diversity of kindergartens and day-care centers was one of the topics discussed at the first ECEC Research Conference.

The new project will collect and show photographs of actual facilities and their activities as a way of disseminating the best practices of early childhood education and care around the world. The photographs will be published on our website (Japanese, English and Chinese versions) to promote discussion on the quality of child care among researchers both in and outside Japan.

Kindergartens and day-care centers that are interested in our project are invited to contribute photographs. If interested in the project, please send an email with your general information including the name and address of your facility as well as the ages and number of children attending to the following email address, so we can contact you in return.

Contact: crninfo@crn.or.jp

Notification of the 2nd ECEC Research Conference



We plan to host the 2nd ECEC Research Conference under the 9th Child Science Exchange Program in East Asia, focusing on ECEC as the main theme.

Professionals in early childhood education and care will be invited across Japan and from China to give lectures on the current conditions and future outlook of child care.

■Schedule

Date: 10:00-17:00, October 26-27, 2013

Venue: Mita Campus at Keio University

Application: Applications accepted from September 20, 2013 through our website (<http://www.crn.or.jp>)

CRN Profile

Director: Yoichi Sakakihara (Professor, Graduate School, Ochanomizu University)

Honorary Director: Noboru Kobayashi (Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo; President Emeritus, National Children's Hospital)

Special Advisor: Takemochi Ishii (Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo)

Coordinators: Aiping Liu, Junko Ogawa (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute)

Location: c/o Benesse Corporation, 1-34, Ochiai, Tama-shi, Tokyo 206-8686, Japan

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