

Interdisciplinary Research is effective for Solving Child Issues –What We See from the 22 Years’ Activities of Child Research Net

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Child Research Net: Research Institute in Search for Solving Issues that Affect Children

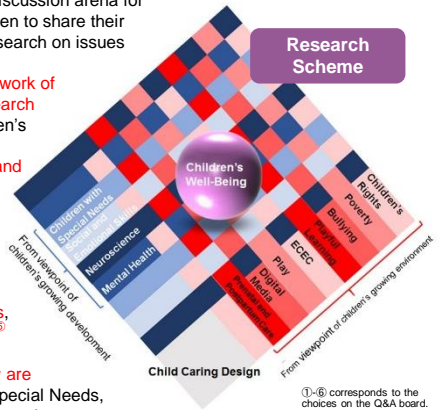
The future world will be sustained by children.

Child Research Net (CRN) is an internet-based research institute of interdisciplinary^① “child science,” founded in 1996. With the slogan of “Children are our future,”^② CRN provides an international discussion arena for everybody concerned with children to share their information and to implement research on issues that affect children.

CRN comprises a worldwide network of researchers^③, educators and research Institutes^④ who care about children’s issues. Our website in three languages, Japanese, English, and Chinese^⑤, introduces wide-ranging research from medicine and brain science to education, developmental psychology and sociology. Activities beyond the website include interdisciplinary activities, and conferences and symposia^⑥ on essential social issues.

Themes focused on up until now are diverse^⑥ such as Children with Special Needs, Social and Emotional Skills, Neuroscience,

Mental Health, Children’s Rights, Poverty, Bullying, Playful Learning, ECEC, Digital Media, Play, and Prenatal and Postpartum Care. In this paper, I would like to report a part of the findings from researches on ECEC and Playful learning.



Study Case 1: Research on ECEC

<Objective of Study>

The most greatly concerned issues worldwide in the field of ECEC at the moment are “sustainable ECEC” “quality of education” and “play.” CRN has been engaged in research in the field of ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) since 2013, by verifying the latest findings on the following themes in search for solutions to these issues.

①Where should ECEC in Japan be positioned in the world

②What are ECEC quality assessment standards

③What is needed to improve the quality of ECEC

<Method>

In search for solutions to the above issues, not only did we share information through the CRN website, but CRN hosted research conferences open to all participants, including researchers, teachers and parents and studied the themes below.

1. First Conference “The Challenges and Prospects of ECEC in Japan”
2. Second Conference “Playful Pedagogy: Child Science of Play and Learning”
3. Third Conference “Child Care that Improves the Quality of Play”
4. Fourth Conference “ECEC in Japan and around the World: Seeking Learning in Play”
5. Fifth Conference “ECEC in Japan and around the World (2): The Strength of ECEC in Japan from a Comparison of ECEC in Four Countries”

<Results and Discussion>

Based on the recognition that evaluating ECEC quality by qualitative depiction is less objective, we organized and compiled major ECEC practices in the world as “ECEC research report,” in collaboration with researchers of ECEC. Furthermore, we developed “Matrix of ECEC In Countries and Regions Worldwide” as a tool* to overview and assess the quality of ECEC of the relevant countries, which allows the readers to easily compare and analyze ECEC practices implemented in the countries introduced.



*available on request (Japanese only)

Study Case 2 : Playful Learning

<Objective of Study>

While the importance of social and emotional skills in children’s development or the effectivity of active learning is being disclosed these days, CRN has long been shedding light on Playful Learning which fully involves both mental and physical programs since 1999, and has conducted research and experiments.

<Method>

Hosted workshops on play and learning with researchers, practitioners from around the world as well as children and adults alike. We also established a place for experimental research (Nagayama Chi-kichi) where Playful Learning could be carried out, and conducted observational experiments with children.

<Results and Discussion>

In order to actualize Playful Learning, the following were found to be the required (environment) factors:

- ①**Group:** Consisting of loosely connected members
- ②**Tools:** Easier to talk with objects in front; theory of conjugate gaze
- ③**Program:** Non-rigid and flexible time schedule
- ④**Facilitator:** Moderates with explicit directions
- ⑤**Patio-like Environment:** Flexible boundary between “work” and “play.” Easy-to-drop-by environment.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary studies by researchers from various fields, proposing solutions that lead to practical activities, comprehensive involvement among researchers, practitioners, and parents are all useful to solve social issues surrounding children.

The 22 years of endeavor at CRN has proven the practicality of these activities. By expanding our activities at CRN, where researchers and practitioners who care about children take part, we can find pathways leading to solve children’s issues.