

Preschool Education and Care in Japan

Preschool education is called pre-primary education in the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education, designed by UNESCO) and classified as “level 0.” On the contrary, primary and secondary education are classified respectively as level 1 and level 2. This means that preschool education is counted as a preparatory stage of organized schooling. The ISCED definition of pre-primary education is, “center- or school-based programs designed to meet the educational and developmental needs of children at least 3 years of age, with staff adequately trained or qualified to provide educational programs for the children.”

Here, we see not only the pre-primary level of education, but also center-based care and education for ages zero to three. Recently, the age range for preschool education has been redefined as “from birth to compulsory school age.” This is partly because findings of the latest science show us that children begin to learn not from the age of three, but from or before their birth. Furthermore, a more integrated and consistent approach for the preschool level has become necessary because worldwide rapid social change, including increasing female labor participation, falling fertility rates, and poverty spreading among child-rearing families, has transformed traditional family life and how families function. Therefore, governments across countries have already esteemed education at the preschool stage as a public good and begun to invest more funding in related programs. To empower this trend, the OECD adopted the concept of ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) from the viewpoint of lifelong learning, UNESCO uses ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) in the context of EFA (Education for All), and UNICEF uses ECD (Early Childhood Development) protecting children.

In Japan, a very refined and holistic concept of “*hoiku*” (care and education) has been used for more than 130 years. It can be said that “*hoiku*” is originally almost equivalent to ECCE or ECEC, and it is strictly and carefully distinguished from “*gakko kyoiku*” (school education) because early childhood developmental needs are quite different from those of school-aged children.

1. History of Japanese Preschool Education and Care

In Japan, there are mainly two kinds of institutions involved in preschool education and care: kindergartens (*youchien*) and day nurseries (*hoikujo*). Historically, kindergartens and day nurseries have existed under the separate systems of the education sector and welfare sector, respectively. And very recently, both sectors have collaborated in the authorization of a new unified system, the centers for ECEC (*nintei kodomoen*).

1-(1) History of Kindergartens

The first Japanese kindergarten was established in 1876 as a kindergarten attached to the

Tokyo Women's Normal School (present-day Ochanomizu University). It served as a model preschool, and was well known by the adoption of "Fröbel's Gifts" into its curriculum. At the very beginning, kindergartens served upper-middle class families, just like in the famous image where every morning children came up to kindergarten with their attendants riding coaches.

At the end of the 19th century, the Ministry of Education, seeing the gradual quantitative growth of kindergartens, issued the first "Regulation on Kindergarten Contents and Facilities" in 1899. Later, in 1900, when the "Elementary School Order." was proclaimed, this regulation was integrated into the Order. According to these acts, kindergartens were established as pre-primary educational institutes to educate children ages three and above before they entered elementary school. They covered four subjects over the course of a five-hour school day: play, singing songs, hearing and speaking, and handicrafts. During this period, Fröbel's Gifts, which had dominated the early years of Japanese kindergarten education, were incorporated into the subject of handicrafts. Generally speaking, the education methods during this period were teacher-oriented, like those of elementary schools.

In the first half of the 20th century, Japanese kindergartens increased in number. There were, for example, 5,611 pupils in 665 institutions in 1916, and 94,421 pupils in 1,066 institutions in 1926. In the 1920's more child-centered education methods were practiced in the kindergartens, inspired by progressive educational philosophies from America and Europe. Sozo Kurahashi (1882-1955), a professor at Tokyo Women's Higher Normal School, was one of the most remarkable leaders of preschool education reform during this period. In accordance with this reform, the Ministry of Education promulgated the "Kindergarten Order" in 1926, which was the first independent ordinance specialized for kindergartens, and it generally specified the contents of kindergarten education as play, singing songs, observation, hearing and speaking, handicrafts, and so on, so that every kindergarten could decide its own educational content and practices.

During wartime, health education and exercises were emphasized and kindergarten's role of improving home education was required under the "Outline of Kindergarten Education," issued in 1937. Under this plan, the number of more simple kindergartens was to be expanded, and practitioners at that time requested the government to unify the kindergarten system and the day nursery system so that it could become the national kindergarten system, but these changes were not realized because of the wartime disasters. During this period, nationalist education content, such as worship of the imperial family, raising the national flag, singing the national anthem, and group training were introduced into the daily program. Near the end of the war, kindergartens in urban areas were destroyed or closed by attacks from the air, and kindergartens and day nurseries both became wartime daycare centers at temples, shrines, libraries, and schools.

After World War II, the role of kindergarten education was solidified in the school education system by the School Education Law, enacted in 1947. Article 77 of the law declared that kindergartens should provide a suitable environment that helps young children grow and develop their minds and bodies, and Article 80 prescribed that kindergarten was to be for young children from the time that they were three years of age until entering elementary school. Although kindergarten was not considered compulsory education, and enrollment was completely up to children's parents or guardians, it rapidly gained popularity in the 1960's. The enrollment rate of five-year olds increased annually, from 28.7% in 1960 to 53.7% in 1970. The Ministry of Education announced a plan for promoting kindergarten education in 1971. This plan entailed developing a kindergarten system that would provide kindergarten education to all four- and five-year olds whose parents desired to make their children go to kindergarten over the next decade. As a result of this, the average enrollment rate for five-year olds increased nationwide to 64.4%, and the ratio of five-year olds attending either kindergartens or day nurseries came to exceed 90%.

About the educational content and method, the Ministry of Education issued a guideline for kindergarten curriculum and revised it several times after World War II. The first "Nursing Guideline," issued in 1948, was applied not only to kindergartens, but also to day nurseries and home education, with many recommended activities, such as observation, rhythmic exercises, rest, free play, music, storytelling, pictures, handicrafts, nature study, pretended, dramatic, or puppet plays, healthcare, and events according to an annual calendar under the very free and progressive atmosphere just after the war. In 1956, the first guideline was revised more systematically, and renamed the "Guideline for Kindergarten Education (National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens)" in accordance with the revision of curriculum standards for primary and secondary schools ("Course of Studies"). This time kindergarten education content was divided into six areas: health, society, nature, language, drawing and handicrafts, and musical rhythm. They were treated like subjects in primary schools in some kindergartens. In the 1989 revision of standards, the areas of kindergarten education were revised into five categories: health, human relationships, environment, language, and expression. The emphasis was put on comprehensive education through play and every day activities. Although educational areas were remained as they were in the 1998 revision, how they were dealt with was changed to a method of education through one's environment, in accordance with the changes in society.

However, the recent falling birth rate and increasing labor participation of mothers has caused the enrollment numbers of kindergartens to fall, saddling many private kindergartens with an ongoing crisis. Indeed, competition among kindergartens has gotten fierce, with some adding additional educational programming (3R's, foreign languages, computers, etc), providing lunch, or offering school bus services. Nowadays 88% of private kindergartens also offer daycare service after their regular schooling.

1-(2) History of Day Nurseries

In Japan, day nurseries are the facilities that provide childcare for infants and young children who lack it at home. It was in the 1890's in the slums of Tokyo that the first group of day nurseries for impoverished children were established, and the most famous one of them was Futaba Day Nursery (at first it was called "Kindergarten"), founded by Yuki Tokunaga (1887-1973), who used to be a kindergarten teacher and was trained at Tokyo Women's Normal School.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the rise of Japanese capitalism needed a large number of women in the work force and day nurseries were set up one after another along with the rapid construction of manufacturing factories. In the 1920's, the Ministry of Home Affairs promoted establishment of day nurseries as a means of child protection within the social services program. Under this policy, public day nurseries were set up first in Osaka, then later in Kyoto, Kobe, Tokyo, and other urban areas. Generally, day nurseries were established for public safety, to help poor families, and to attract female workers as a cheap source of labor.

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, social services became part of wartime policy. In 1938, the Ministry of Health and Welfare was established and Social Work Law was enacted. Under this Law, day nurseries were legally positioned within a child protection activity, which was quite different from the educational purpose of kindergartens.

After World War II, day nurseries were legally regulated as child welfare institutions named *hoikujo* under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, on the basis of Child Welfare Law enacted in 1947. Article 39 of the law defined day nurseries as institutions with the purpose of taking care of infants and young children on the basis of daily contracts with their parents or guardians, and Article 24 clarified the responsibility of city mayors in placing children in need of childcare in day nurseries. Afterward, in 1951, Article 39 was amended to limit the coverage of day nurseries only to cases of "lacking childcare," which meant that parents or guardians could not look after children because of work, illness, etc.

About the substance and method of ECEC at day nurseries, there are both pedagogical aspects and daycare aspects. In the prewar era, pedagogy for day nurseries was modeled after those of kindergartens. After World War II, the areas covered in the first "Guideline for Nursery-Care at Day Nurseries" (1965) were: life and play for infants under the age of 2; health, society, and play for 3 year-olds; health, society, language, nature, music, and arts & crafts for 4 to 6 year-olds. The guideline was revised twice, in 1990 and 1999, changing the content to no fixed areas for ages 0 to 3, and health, human-relationships, environment, language, and expression for 4 to 6 year-olds.

From the 1960's to the 1970's, day nurseries multiplied at a remarkable rate due to increased demand for childcare in the rapid economic growth and social change. Since that time, day nurseries have come to play a greater role as the number of working women has increased and the Japanese family unit has shifted toward the nuclear family model. From that time, Japanese day nurseries have begun to provide not only regular childcare services but also extended their services to include infant daycare, extended hour daycare, nighttime childcare, and so on.

2. Current Situation and System of Japanese Preschool Education and Care

The table below indicates Japanese kindergarten and day nursery enrollment numbers and their rates according to the child age group.

Table 1: Enrollment number and rate of children in the same age group population (2008)

facilities age of children	Kindergartens	Day Nurseries
0	—	47,575 (4.3%)
1	—	231,316 (21.3%)
2	—	316,459 (29.4%)
3	427,135 (40.6%)	397,696 (37.8%)
4	602,105 (55.1%)	456,750 (41.9%)
5	644,923 (57.8%)	454,245 (40.7%)

Source: *Hoiku Hakusho* (White Paper on ECCE, year 2008) Soudobunka, 2009;

Table of statistical data on population by Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor, 2008

As shown above, daycare for children under the age of one is not so popular, and the service is mainly for working mothers who do not take the full amount of parental leave at home. The enrollment number and rate increase as the children get older, and more than 80% of three-year-olds, more than 90% of four-year-olds, and 98% of five-year-olds are enrolled either in kindergartens or day nurseries in Japan.

Other than the above, there are alternative types of ECEC services with public financial aid, such as family daycare (where a so-called “nursing mother” looks after infants at her home; municipal budgets have been allocated since 2002), and newly authorized “centers for ECEC” (explained below). Many parents/guardians and children under the age of three at home are taking part in various non-formal ECEC programs that local governments or NPOs provide at children’s centers, community centers (*kominkan*) or playparks.

Although most of the young children in Japan are enrolled in kindergartens or day nurseries, the location of each institution has not been necessarily suitable for the actual demographic situation of the children and their families. As in some areas kindergartens are playing the role of day nurseries, and in other areas day nurseries are functioning as kindergartens, substantial differences between the institutions have gradually diminished year by year. For this reason, unified or integrated facilities which can play both the roles of day nurseries and kindergartens have been put into practice locally. The new system of the “ECEC Centers (*nintei kodomoen*)” has been authorized by the central governments since 2006. Table 2 indicates differences among these three types of institutions and their statistical situation.

Table 2. Differences among the Three Types of ECEC Institutions

	Kindergartens	Day Nurseries	ECEC Centers
1. Governing Authority	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)	Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor (MHWL)	MEXT and MHWL
2. Legal Foundation	School Education Law Article 77 → Article 22 (2007)	Child Welfare Law Article 39	Law for the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care, and regulations issued by local governments
3. Target	From ages 3 to 5	From ages 0 to 5, lacking childcare at home	From ages 0 to 5, regardless of parents' labor participation
4. Enrollment Requirements and Procedures	When parents/guardians decide, directly apply to a kindergarten	Municipalities determine the enrollment of children. Parents /guardians select a day nursery and apply to the municipality	Parents directly apply to ECEC center. Municipalities look into the applicants, and determine which case is lacking in childcare
5. Childcare and Education Time	4 hours a day (standard service). Since 1997, “extra childcare service” has been possible.	8 hours a day (standard service). Longer childcare service within 11 hours has become possible by way of a municipal notice.	According to children's family situation, 4 hours a day, or 8 hours a day (in standard case).
6. Standards for Content and Method	“National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens (Guidelines for Kindergarten Education)”	“Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries”	Both “National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens” and “Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries”
7. Qualification for Teachers	Kindergarten teacher license on the basis of the Educational Personnel	Nursery teacher qualifications on the basis of the Child Welfare Law and Regulations	0 to 2 year-olds: nursery teacher qualifications; 3 to 5 year-olds: those who have both a

	Certification Law:	for its Enforcement	kindergarten teacher license and nursery teacher qualifications (desirable), holders of one or the other (possible).
8.Pupil-Teacher Ratio	35 (max.) :1 At least one teacher assigned exclusively to each class	Newborns 3:1 1-2 year-olds 6:1 3 year-olds 20:1 4-5 year-olds 30:1	Newborns 3:1 1-2 year-olds 6:1 3-5 year-olds: according to its type (unified type, kindergarten type, day nursery type, and locally discretionary type)
9. Statistical Situation	Number of enrolled children : 1,674,163 Public: 19.4% Private: 80.6% Number of institutions: 13,626 Public: 39.3 % Private: 60.7%	Number of enrolled children: 2,118,352 Public: 46.3% Private: 53.7% Number of institutions: 22,848 Public: 47.8% Private: 52.2%	Number of enrolled children: No data Number of institutions: 229 (2008) → 762 (2011) Public 24.5% → 19.6% Private 75.5% → 81.4%

3. Characteristics of Japanese Preschool Education and Care

Japanese preschool education has been influenced more or less by foreign educational philosophies and methods, such as the Fröbelian Method, since the latter half of the 19th century; child-centered education from America and Europe since the 1920's, including that of Dewey and Montessori; nursing theory from the Soviet Union from the 1930's to the 1950's; and the Reggio Emilia approach from Italy since the 1990's. In any case, they have been digested and adapted to conform with the Japanese climate and context, and are in the process of changing.

About the characteristics of Japanese preschool education and care, Muto (2006) stated the following:

(1) Emphasis is given to both intellectual development and emotional/social development. Moreover, both types of development are understood to be closely related. The special instruction aimed at the acquisition of literacy or numeracy is rarely seen, but such competencies are developed through play or activities with peers on the basis of the emotional stability of the group.

(2) Emphasis is also given to independence in basic and necessary life habits. Teachers give instruction not only for specific activities but also during children's playtime and in other

aspects of their lives. However, instruction is not provided in the form of order from above; rather, suggestions and advice are given in order to foster the children's initiative, and materials are placed in the room so that children will naturally want to play.

(3) Teacher expertise is considered to be developed in the cycle of planning, carrying out, recording, reflecting on, and again planning the content of instruction. Individual kindergartens and teachers directly involved in teaching children have a great deal of discretion in what is taught, while central government regulations are limited to setting the basic direction.

(4) The primary roles of national and local governments are to set standards for facilities, facilitate teacher's careers, and determine the direction of educational and care activities. Government bodies also provide support and advice in various forms; for example, they identify excellent practices in education and care, and they work to disseminate their essential points.

(5) There is a close connection between the practice of early childhood education and care and research on it. For example, more than a few researchers are doing research at sites directly involved in education and care for young children, and many instructors at training institutions used to be veteran teachers, who can collaborate with other colleagues whose discipline is psychology or other sciences concerning child study.

The comment in (1) and (2) is consistent with the observation made by J. Tobin (1991). However, Zhang Yan, who visited Japanese ECEC settings in 1996 as a researcher from China, described the characteristics of Japanese preschool education and care as follows:

(1) Free playtime is much longer than that of Chinese ECEC institutions, and teachers tend to play with children just like their peers, playing the hidden role of activating children's play. This approach is quite different from that used by Chinese ECEC teachers.

(2) Japanese ECEC does not overprotect young children, letting them wear less clothes with the feet often bare, experience small and slight injuries, etc. On the other hand, teachers keep contact with parents about children's daily health, behavior, and learning, using notebooks for two-way communication.

(3) On the playground there are slopes, small hills, some tall trees, various places where children can play with sand, water, and small animals and plants, and where children can enjoy trying and erring. Outdoor activities as well as indoor activities are very well facilitated.

(4) Educational content is greatly related to seasonal events or things. Some traditional

festivals, which were transported from China a long time ago but have already vanished, are still alive in Japanese kindergartens and day nurseries.

- (5) Kindergarten pupil's lunch boxes made by their mothers are beautiful like fine art. Many daily personal items used in kindergarten are mothers' handmade.

T. Yamamoto (2003) pointed out that Japanese ECEC teachers are good at understanding children's inner worlds; they can grasp what children want to do and put suitable materials in their environments before they request them. Accordingly, children sometimes lack experience fighting with adults and getting what they want through negotiation or arguments, and as a result strong and positive characters in confronting the outside world are difficult to cultivate in the Japanese cultural context. Yamamoto's cultural observation is reinforced by some research findings (Benesse, 2006). In Japan education from early childhood tends to strengthen the hidden attitude for harmonization with others and refraining from making strong assertions in public.

4. Social Change and Japanese Preschool Education

(1) Expanding function of supporting local child-rearing in kindergartens and day nurseries

In the 1980's Japanese traditional family life and its function were rapidly transformed and weakened because of rapid social change, including increasing female labor participation. After the so-called "1.57 birth rate shock" (the lowest birth-rate first hit in the postwar period) in 1989, the central government took action against this situation across ministries and launched policies for supporting child-rearing called the "Angel Plan (1994~2004)" and the "New Angel Plan (2000~2004)". Under these comprehensive policies, day nurseries increased in number and existent ECEC institutions began to bear the new role of helping child-rearing centers. They began providing advisory services and play group programs for young children and their parents, and they also took care of children at high risk. These days many local governments have made networks among ECEC institutions and local child consultation offices, social education facilities, health centers, hospitals, police offices, universities, NPOs, etc.

(2) Enhancement of further cooperation between Kindergartens and Day Nurseries, promotion of the Centers for ECEC

Although the above actions were taken, the falling of the birth rate did not stop, and facilities (mainly kindergartens) have been consolidated or abolished one by one. Meanwhile, demand for daytime childcare service is increasing. The promulgation of the "Basic Law for Measures to Cope with a Society with a Declining Birthrate" and the "Law on Advancement of Measures

to Support Raising Next-Generation Children” in 2003 meant that stronger action was taken by the central and local government as well as society as a whole.

Since 1997, co-use of a facility by a kindergarten and a day nursery has been recommended by the central government, but this practice was left up to local authorities under the policy of decentralization. In 2003, the central government, MEXT, and MHWL, started cooperating for the unification of kindergartens and day nurseries, and after three years of preparatory work, the “Law for the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care” was established and a new system was started in 2006. Centers for ECEC created by the new system are still small in number, but are to be promoted much more widely in the near future.

(3) Strengthening educational functions in every facility for children ages 3-5, and more smooth transition from ECEC to primary school

In Japan, educational content and teaching methods differ greatly in early childhood education and in primary school education. First grade children often have trouble coping with change and gaps at the beginning of their school life, cannot concentrate on learning, and have difficulty listening to instructions. It has been called the “first grader problem” in Japan, and primary schools, day nurseries, and kindergartens need to work together to ensure consistency in education, and need to gain a deeper understanding of teaching methods and the performance of preschoolers and school children.

The new “Fundamental Law of Education” (2006) stipulated the importance of ECEC and supporting parents, and the amendment of the “School Education Law” (2007) positioned ECEC at the first stage of organized national schooling for the first time. According to these laws, the Division of Kindergarten Education in MEXT was reorganized to be the Division of ECE (Early Childhood Education), for the purpose of bearing the responsibility of nationwide early childhood education from ages 3 to 5.

The new ECEC Curriculum Standards were also published after the overall coordination, at the same time in 2008 by MEXT and MHWL respectively (“National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens” and “Guidelines for Nursery Care at Daycare Centers”), guaranteeing that all preschoolers ages 3 to 5 shall enjoy the same quality of education in order to make good foundation for lifelong learning.

(4) Multicultural trends in Japanese preschool education

The multiculturalization of Japanese society has been progressing year by year, and in the 1990’s children from families of foreign origin (children of past immigrants and newcomers from South and North Korea, China, the Philippines, Brazil, Peru, Bangladesh, and so on)

increased in number at the ECEC settings. In 2008, the number of registered foreign residents was 2,217,426, accounting for 1.74% of the total population. International marriages accounted for 6.1% of the total number of marriages, or one out of sixteen pairs, in 2006. The number of babies with one or two non-Japanese parents/parent was 35,651, which was estimated to be 3.2% of the total baby births in Japan in a year, or one out of 31 babies. In urban areas, it was an even higher ratio; for example, it was 5.7%, or one out of 18 babies, in Tokyo.

Under this situation, how to accept these children in ECEC institutions and practice education for multicultural understanding or education for co-existence becomes very important. A language support system is also necessary for the parents who cannot speak Japanese. This topic is also included in the new child-raising support system, and active research for good solutions is required.

References

- Statistics from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor, 2008:
- Ochanomizu University Center for Women's Education and Development, *The History of Japan's Preschool Education and Care*, 2006.3
- Ochanomizu University Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education, *Early Childhood Education Handbook*, 2004
- Multicultural Child-rearing Network, *Multicultural Child-rearing Research (2000)*, revised 2006
- Zhang Yan, *Japanese ECEC from the Eyes of a Chinese Researcher*, Research Bulletin of ECEC vol.16, Institute for ECEC Research, 1998, (translated into Japanese)
- Toshiya Yamamoto, *What can be seen as "development as culture" through the comparison between Japan and China*, (a lecture given in Japanese), Report of East Asia Child Science Exchange Program 2007-2008, Child Research Net, 2008
- Joseph J. Tobin, David Y.H. Wu, Dana H. Davidson, *Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China, and the United States*, Yale University Press, 1991
- The Nationwide Network of ECCE-Related Bodies, *A Hoiku White Paper (2009)*, Hitonaru Shobo, 2009, (in Japanese)
- OECD, *Starting Strong II Early Childhood Education and Care*, 2006
- Early Childhood Education Association of Japan, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Japan*, Child Honsha, 1979

<Mariko Ichimi ABUMIYA>

日本の就学前教育（記述の要点）

就学前教育は、ユネスコの国際教育標準分類（ISCED）のレベル0に位置付けられていることから明らかなように、初等教育の前段階の教育として扱われている。がその始点を3歳とするか0歳とするかに関して今日見直しが必要となっている。それは、ひとつには、幼い子どもと親をめぐる社会情勢の変化、とりわけ、人口動態や家族構成の変化、女性の社会進出、家庭・地域の教育機能の低下、貧困と格差の増大が、ゼロ歳からの適切な子どもの発達支援を要請しているためである。また、近年の脳研究をはじめとした子ども研究によれば、子どもは3歳からではなく、誕生からいや母胎にいるときから発達することも明らかになっている。社会の持続的発展のために、乳幼児期からこそ政府が財政投入することの意義についての国際的な合意形成もなされている今日、ECEC（乳幼児期の教育とケア）の発展という観点からここでは、日本の就学前教育の歴史・現状・課題を概観する。

1. 就学前教育の歴史

日本の就学前教育は、19世紀後半の開始期より幼稚園と保育所という2つの異なった制度のもとにあった。両者の発展をここでは、法制・普及状況・教育の方法内容・カリキュラム基準といった観点から概観する。幼稚園は主として中産階級の子どもの教育機関として、保育所は母親も就労して家庭での保育者に欠ける子どものための福祉機関として発展し、それぞれの機能を果たしてきた。両者を一元化の必要性は戦前から唱えられながらも戦後に持ちこされ、今日ようやく幼保の一体化が制度化されつつあることが述べられる。

2. 就学前教育の現状

ここでは、幼稚園・保育所と新たに登場した「認定こども園」の3者について、管轄部門・法的根拠・対象・就園（入所）要件と手続・保育時間・内容方法の基準・教員資格・子どもと大人の人数比・機関数と在籍児童数の統計といった観点から一覧表の形に整理する。また3つの就学前機関のほかにも、乳児を預かる家庭福祉員（保育ママ）制度や、ノンフォーマルな子育て支援プログラムのあることが紹介される。

3. 日本の就学前教育の特色

ここでは、先行研究をもとに、日本の就学前教育の特色を考察する。日本では、子どもの知的発達のみならず社会的情緒的発達も重視され、特定の能力を育てるよりも日常生活や遊びを通して他者との調和的共存のできる力をはぐくみ、生涯学習の基礎をつくることが大切にされていること、ほかが述べられる。

4. 社会の変化と日本の就学前教育

ここでは、以下の4点について述べられる。

- (1) 幼稚園・保育所の地域子育て支援機能が強化されていること
- (2) 幼稚園と保育所の協働が推進され、両者の機能の一体化した認定子ども園が登場していること
- (3) あらゆる就学前機関における教育機能が強化され（とくに幼稚園・保育所の3-5歳の共通部分）、初等教育との円滑な接続がはかられていること
- (4) 日本の社会の多文化状況が進みつつあり、就学前段階からの教育支援が必要なこと。