

Transition Issues in Japanese ECEC Professional Development

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Background of this Research

Declining population of high school students and shortage of ECEC teachers

The present situation surrounding university and college of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Teacher Training Course in Japan is severe. In the past few years, many mass media have repeatedly reported on the nursery school workplace environment requiring improvements (working conditions, salary, etc.). As a result, apart from its significance and essence, "ECEC" has been attracting attention. Moreover, in the case a training school is located in an area where the population is already declining, it is difficult to secure students due to the serious decline in the high school student population.

Especially in Fukui Prefecture, the recent drop in the number of high school girls in this prefecture (Figure 1) and the increase in the number of people who outflow to neighboring prefectures when entering university (Ishikawa, Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Gifu, Aichi) is remarkable. As a result, the number of graduates that can be produced as ECEC Teacher to this prefecture has begun to decrease. On the other hand, many nursery schools in Fukui Prefecture have serious labor shortages. There is a vicious circle in which the working environment has deteriorated due to the lack of ECEC teachers, and this has also led to a decrease in the number of candidate for ECEC teacher by being covered by media reports.

If such a vicious circle continues, the image of the ECEC held by ECEC teacher will become worse, and this will cause additional situations such as loss of confidence and the spread of fatigue. What should we do to turn this situation into a virtuous cycle or sustainable cycle of aspiration - training - recruitment - career advancement? What should we do to turn this situation so that the wonderfulness of ECEC and the significance of ECEC are recognized?

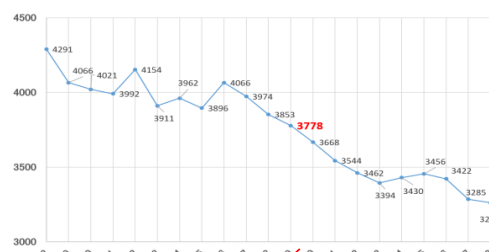
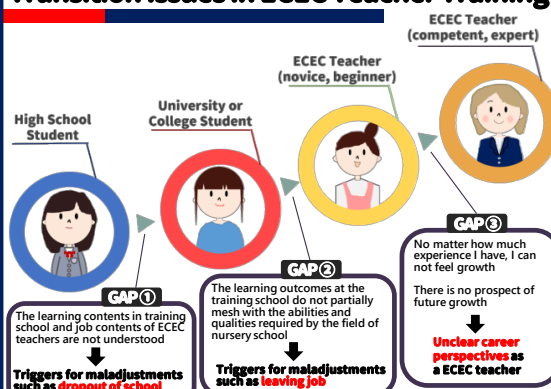


Figure 1: Changes in population of 18-year-old female in Fukui Prefecture
Source: Population by age in Fukui Prefecture (as of April 1, published in Fukui Prefecture)
※ For the population after 2020, the number of each age as of April 1, 2019 is entered.

Transition Issues in ECEC Teacher Training



Overlooking previous research, it can be said that there are three transitional periods in Japan's ECEC professional development environment: ① from high school to university or college, ② from university or college to beginner (ECEC teacher), and ③ from beginner to competent or master.

[GAP 1] from High School to University or College

My parent recommended for me to go to college in this prefecture area (due to parent can't cover the cost of living myself) ... I decided to become a ECEC teacher because I was most interested in children, but it was just the last remaining option. ※1

Having a love for child is a very important factor, but if she/he decides to go to the ECEC training school for only that reason, she/he will be confused by a large amount of learning contents and will likely make a mismatches. Another problem is that the job contents of the ECEC teachers are grasped as the simple image of only playing with children.

[GAP 2] from University or College to Beginner (ECEC Teacher)

There are many previous studies on the transition from training schools to the field of nursery school. For example, research that focuses on the difficulties and conflicts that beginner teacher have, research that examines the relation between learning outcomes at ECEC training schools and the abilities and qualities required by the field of nursery schools, etc. Previous studies have pointed out in common that there may be some gaps in the transition from the ECEC training school to the field of nursery school. At present, however, there is a tendency that the abilities and qualities necessary for ECEC teacher are shown by vague factors, such as "smile", "brightness", and "energy". Of course, this does not make it possible to achieve an appropriate transition.

[GAP 3] from Beginner to Competent or Expert

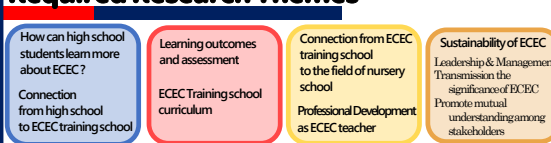
For example, according to Adachi and Shibasaki (2010) ※3, competent ECEC teacher have some conflicts such as "busy work", "difficult to both a work life and a private life to coexist", "gaps between the ideal ECEC and real ECEC", "low social status", etc. Under these situations, the prospects for the future will be uncertain in the course of developing a career as a ECEC teacher. Thus, many ECEC teacher have to continue to work without planning detail of Career prospect.

※1 Masako Iwata (2010): A consideration on career choice behavior in the nurses training junior college from the viewpoint of educational psychology, Journal of Suzuka Junior College. 30.

※2 Katsumi Nakamura (2000): A study on the image of nursery teachers and their training, Journal of Nishikyushu University & Saga Junior College. 36.

※3 Satomi Adachi & Masayuki Shibasaki (2010): Analysis of "Swaying" and Structure of Reformation in the Process of Obtaining a Nursery and Kindergarten Teacher Identity, Research on early childhood care and education in Japan. 48(2).

Required Research Themes



Please refer to the following about detailed background of this poster.
Tsubasa Masuda (2019): Constructing of childcare and teaching professional training by seamless transition, Research journal of Jin-ai women's college. 51.

Our Achievements and Future Plans

◆ "Experience Tour in the Field of ECEC"



Orientation and Simple Lecture 9:30 ~ Experience as ECEC teacher 10:00 ~ 12:00 Preparing for tomorrow 14:00 ~ 15:00

Date: Aug 6, 2019 Participants: 48 high school students (1st, 2nd, 3rd grade) in Fukui prefecture
A attempt that encourages high school students to think about what they need to learn in order to become a ECEC teacher. Through this experience, they were able to consider the significance of ECEC and the career path to try for become a ECEC teacher. The following is the impression of the participants in the newspaper.

Student A: It was interesting because each child had different characteristics.
Student B: It was difficult for me that how children can understand my instruction. I want to talk consciously with children who are closest to me from tomorrow.
"50 High School Students Become Kindergarten Teachers", The Fukui Editions of The Chunichi Newspaper, Aug 7, 2019
Student C: Every children were cute and fun. I learned a lot because the teacher was always taking care of choosing words so that children could easily understand or the teacher was thinking out a method inspiring children's play.
"Early Childhood Education, Experience and Understanding", The Fukui Newspaper, Aug 14, 2019

◆ Questionnaire Research for ECEC Teacher

Published: Mar 5, 2018 Purpose: Investigation of learning outcomes and curriculum at our college
In December 2016, we put the questionnaire survey into effect for all kindergartens and nursery schools (total of 337 institutions) in Fukui Prefecture (number of valid responses: 1831). The results were compiled as a "Survey Report On ECEC Teachers in Fukui Prefecture", and the characteristics and issues of the ECEC teacher training course at our college were quantified and analyzed. In particular, it has become clear that there are several GAPS between the learning outcomes acquired at the time of graduation from our college and the abilities required of the ECEC teacher in the field. The result was an opportunity to think about changing for the better the content of education for our students and improving the content of training for field ECEC teacher.

※ According to this survey, it has been clarified that nearly 60% of ECEC teacher in Fukui prefecture are graduates of our College.

◆ Research and Development of "Career Rubrics"

(Example design)

	High School Student	The Time of School Entering	The Time of School Graduating	Novice Beginner	Competent Beginner	Expert Beginner
The ability of A						
The ability of B						
The ability of C						
The ability of D						
The ability of E						
The ability of F						

※ Career rubrics will be a tool for realizing "seamless transition"

Future Directions

In the environment surrounding ECEC teacher professional development, it can be seen that high schools, training schools, and the field of nursery school are all operated by completely different systems. A person who want to be a ECEC teacher must transit through these three different cultures and have to overcome the distinctive conflicts and mismatches that arise from the differences in each culture. Here, it should be noted that there is a general tendency to consider these transition issues as problems of the ECEC teacher themselves or ECEC teacher candidate themselves (course choice motivation, learning motivation, occupational understanding, abilities and qualities, etc.). Instead, it must be regarded as a structural or system problem in the ECEC teacher professional development environment. This is because, without such a view, it will be difficult to secure and maintain ECEC teachers in the Japanese society where population decline will become more serious in the future. We, Jin-ai women's college, will continue to various trials to create the continuous professional development environment among the three parties (high school, ECEC teacher training school, and the field of nursery school). Furthermore, compared to the past, we want to realize that stable securing of candidates for ECEC teacher, improvement of training education, stabilization of the ECEC work force.

This poster summarizes the overview and progress of the Private University Research Branding Project that is being carried out at Jin-ai Women's College. Jin-ai Women's College was selected for the 2018 Private University Research Branding Project as announced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). For the 2018 Project, 20 universities (19 universities and 1 college) were selected from among 157 applying universities.

MEXT's Private University Research Branding Project aims to financially support private universities and colleges working toward school branding based on unique research.

