

The Meaning and the Effects of Cooperation between Kindergartens and Nursery schools, and Elementary Schools

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(Received 2013.2.11)

Educational practices are being implemented in Japan at kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools in order to ensure smooth transitions from kindergarten/nursery school to elementary schools. We propose the form and substance that such linkages between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools should take in order to provide for the healthy nurturing of children.

Key words: kindergarden, nursery school, elementary school, linkage

Introduction

Practical educational activities are performed in a cooperative manner between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools in Japan in order to provide smooth connections between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools (cf. Table 1).

This proposal aims to propose the significance and effects of cooperation between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools.

The main contents are as follows.

- 1) The purpose and significance of cooperation implemented in Japanese kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools.
- 2) Meaning of the cooperation as viewed from the perspective of the characteristics of infantile development.
- 3) Report on practical activities of cooperation

currently performed in kindergartens.

4) Report on practical activities of cooperation currently performed in elementary schools.

5) Evaluation of practical activities by a supervisor.

In this paper, we focused on two points. One is the purpose and significance of cooperation between kindergartens and nursery schools, and elementary schools as implemented in Japan. Another is an evaluation of practical activities by a supervisor.

I The Purpose and Significance of Cooperation between Kindergartens and Nursery Schools, and Elementary Schools as implemented in Japan.

1. The Purpose and Significance of Cooperation

In Japan, the smooth shift to elementary school from kindergarten/nursery school has become a subject of study due to the increase in the number

Table 1 Differences of facilities

	Children's age	Mother's situation	Open time	Management
Nursery School	0 to 5	Working	a.m.7:00-p.m.7:00	Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare
Kindergarten	3or4 to 5	Not working	a.m.8:30-p.m.2:00	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Elementary School	6 to 12	Both (compulsory)	a.m.8:30-p.m.3:30	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

1) Nobori-cho Elementary School, Vice President

of children who are maladapted to the first grade of elementary school. There are remarkable differences between Infant education and school education. Infant education is regarded as a play-centered education. In the other hand, school education is regarded as a learning-centered education.

It is difficult for small children to shift smoothly from kindergarten/nursery school to elementary school. From these points of view, something to support children is necessary in this process.

2. The Purpose and Significance of Cooperation

Cooperation between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools has been proposed as one solution.

This involves three main points.

(1) Exchange between kindergarten/ nursery school teachers and elementary school teachers

Firstly, kindergarten/ nursery school teachers and elementary school teachers exchange their experiences and viewpoints in order to create a common understanding regarding the education of children.

1) Exchange of educational contents and methods foster a mutual understanding between teachers who belong to different facilities. From these experiences, improvement of teaching methods is fostered.

2) Long-term perspective that covers until the end of compulsory education

Teachers can once again realize the role of each facility according to the development of the children. Kindergartens have their own social roles. Nursery schools and elementary schools have their own social roles. Teachers and parents images long span, and see their own children. What is needed in this term? This is one of the important questions for teachers and parents.

(2) Collaborative learning

Secondly, collaborative learning is carried out with small children and elementary students.

Collaborative learning will relieve anxieties before entering elementary school. And collaborative

learning provide composure for young children after entering elementary school

(3) Development of connective curriculum

Thirdly, connective curriculum between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools is developed.

Formation of connective curriculum through kindergarten/ nursery school to elementary school decrease in variations in the levels of education between preschoolers and elementary students

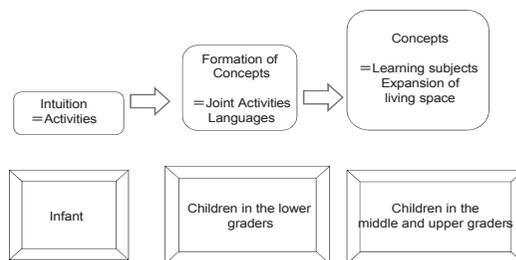


Fig.1 Model plan of connective curriculum

In this symposium, we focused on the collaborative activities between kindergartens/nursery schools and elementary schools. In this paper, through the evaluation of practical activities, the effects of these activities were shown.

(Yumiko Suzuki)

II Evaluation of Practical Activities

I would like to evaluate the cooperation between the kindergarten and elementary school as practiced at Misono kindergarten, Takeya elementary school, and Uchiko elementary school.

1. The status of corporation between the kindergartens, pre-schools, and elementary schools

First I will discuss the status of cooperation (Triangle Plan) between the kindergartens, pre-schools, and elementary schools in Hiroshima.

Implementation of this Triangle Plan was started in 2003 and rolled out school by school. From 2008, it has been implemented in all of the 140 elementary-school areas in Hiroshima.

Specifically, it consists of activities such as joint training sessions with teachers from

different school years, and round-table discussions with parents/guardians and members of the local community.

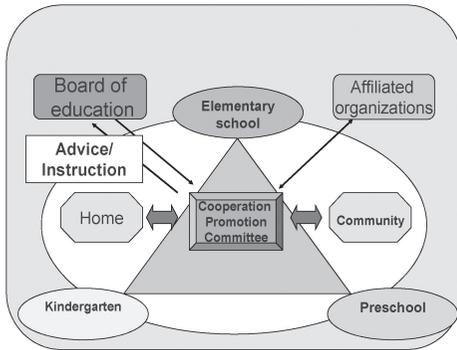


Fig. 2 Triangle Plan of Hiroshima Overall Concept

This figure shows the overall conception of the triangle plan in Hiroshima.

Activities in the Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education include instructions and advice being provided to the Cooperation Promotion Committee, and the distribution to each school of compilations of practical examples.

It is very important to properly evaluate this cooperation for the benefit first between kindergartens, pre-schools, and elementary schools in Hiroshima, and where actively performed throughout Japan, as a means to utilize these linkages in the future.

2. The cooperation between children and teachers as based on the practice of the exchange meetings of kindergartens and elementary schools

The purpose of this presentation is to clarify the significance and issues related to cooperation between children and teachers as based on the practice of the exchange meetings of kindergartens and elementary schools.

I will first describe the features of three practical activities.

(1) The practical activities of Misonou kindergarten

First, I describe two points of the features related to the practical activities of Misonou kindergarten. This involves the exchange between three schools: a kindergarten, pre-school, and

elementary school.

The first point in relation to the exchange sessions is that the teachers at each school devise keywords, such as the cultivation of “normative consciousness” and “consideration”. They also clearly define the purpose of cooperation, such as by clarifying the “capabilities that need to be cultivated”, and also provide for communication of the educational of the exchange session.

The second point is fully securing the scene of the exchange for cultivating “normative consciousness” and “consideration” in the children.

These are the points that can be evaluated as features of effective cooperation.

(2) The practical activities of Takeya elementary school

Next, I will describe two features of the practical activities of Takeya elementary school. This is an exchange meeting of small children and first graders. The first graders are the youngest students in an elementary school.

The first point is to deepen exchanges from before the children enter school by having them meet with first graders who, after entering school, they will be directly involved with in subjects such as “Life Environment Studies”.

The second point is that the first graders actively plan and manage this exchange session.

It is also wonderful that this exchange session functions as a measure in increase the autonomy of the first graders.

(3) The practical activities of Uchiko elementary school

Next, I will describe two points of the features of the practical activities of Uchiko elementary school.

This is an exchange between small children and the sixth graders of an elementary school. The sixth graders are the oldest students in an elementary school.

The first point is performing the exchange at a school sports day. The sports day is held not only in the elementary school but also in the kindergarten. In this way, performing the exchange at an event in which both the small children and the elementary students have previously experienced provides the

small children with a great sense of security.

The second point is that this deepens exchanges from before the children enter school by having them meet with sixth graders who they will be directly involved with in school life, such as going to school, school lunches and cleaning.

This can also be evaluated as cooperation that provides a great sense of security for small children when they enter school.

(4) The significance do these practical activities have for children and for teachers

What significance do these practical activities have for children and for teachers?

First, I will describe the significance for small children. The first point is that children are able to get used to the new environment of an elementary school and the upper-class students with whom they will interact with after entering school, that is, they become used to other persons.

The second point is that the upper-class students provide a model by their attitudes and aspects for the young children after entering a school. These aspects are very effective in order to reduce the confusion felt due to changes in the physical and human environment of the children, and to provide a smooth transition to elementary school life.

Next is the significance for the elementary schoolchildren. The first point is that “consideration” and “normative consciousness” are cultivated through such exchanges by the elementary students looking after the young children or provide them with model behaviors.

The second point is that self-reliance and leadership qualities are developed as upper-class students of the elementary school.

Finally, the significance for teachers and schools consists of the following two points.

The first is that by allowing the teachers of

both kindergarten and elementary school are able to understand the actual conditions of both the kindergarteners and elementary school’s students, as well as the mutual educational goals between the schools through such exchanges, it is possible to attain an education system that contains a long-term perspective on the development of the students.

The second is the ability to smoothly perform instruction before and after entrance to school.

3. Conclusion and issues

Next, I will present a conclusion. First, I would like to compare a case where there is no cooperation with one where there is such cooperation, and clarify the effects of cooperation (cf. Table 2).

When there is cooperation, a sense of security and composure is seen in the children after entrance into a school. However, when there is no cooperation, the individual differences between calm and composed children and the children lacking such aspects will grow increasingly larger.

When there is cooperation, communication between teachers is achieved. However, it is difficult when there is no cooperation.

When there is cooperation, teachers understand the actual conditions and educational targets for each child, making it possible to implement educational activities from a long-term perspective. However, when there is no cooperation, individuality becomes strong and it is difficult to implement educational activities from a long-term perspective.

Finally, I will describe three future issues. The first issue is that although such cooperation is important, it is also important to make sure that the unique advantages of being a kindergarten, pre-school, and elementary school are not lost.

The second issue is creating detailed information exchanges between elementary school areas, and even higher quality in such cooperation.

Table 2 Effects of cooperation

Cooperation	No Cooperation
Sense of security and composure are seen by the children after entrance into a school.	The individual differences of composed children and those who are not are magnified.
Communication between teachers is achieved.	It is difficult to achieve communication.
Viewing educational activities from a long-term perspective is possible.	Individuality becomes strong and it is difficult to view educational activities from a long-term perspective.

The third issue is thoroughly evaluating such measures not only from the perspective of how smoothly such exchange activities were implemented but in regards to “what kind of capabilities have been mastered” by the children, and feeding back the results and issues into the daily educational activities. For that purpose, it is necessary to introduce not only the observation of children’s actions and behaviors but also implement forms of quantitative evaluation such as opinion surveys.

(Atsuko Morikawa)

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<http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/0000000000/1213583889536/index.html>

(本論は、OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education) XXVI World Congress, August 11-13, 2010, Göteborg, Sweden において、2010年8月11日に行った自主シンポジウム The Meaning and the Effects of Cooperation between Kindergartens and Nursery schools, and Elementary Schools の内、鈴木と森川が口頭発表した内容に加筆修正したものである。)