

(ECCE as Foundation for Lifelong Development)

1. ECCE provides a foundation for lifelong development. It is an important domain that affects education, welfare, the economy, labor, and many other sectors, with significant ripple effects in many fields under SDGs.

2. Japan's Basic Act on Education considers ECCE as a basis for lifelong development, not just preschool preparation.

3. Major ECCE facilities in Japan include kindergartens, day care centres, and integrated centres for ECCE, each providing care and education to children. The enrollment ratio of children aged 0–2 years is lower than the OECD average, but that of children aged 3–5 is above the OECD average.

(ECCE and Non-Cognitive Skills)

4. Courses of Study as nationally-stipulated curricula for school education were revised in 2017. The Course of Study for Elementary Schools includes the development of non-cognitive skills (social and emotional skills).

5. Various empirical researches revealed that ECCE could increase children's non-cognitive skills, and that higher non-cognitive skills could affect academic achievement, employment, income, health, and crime prevention, thus having certain effects on the reduction of educational inequality.

(Overcoming Child Poverty)

6. The ratio of children living in relative poverty in Japan is high, consequently producing educational inequality. It is important to provide educational support by taking attentive care of children from their early days. Children who overcame disadvantages of home environment tend to have high non-cognitive skills. It is necessary to help them overcome disadvantages through proper support during childhood.

(Parent–Child Relation in Early Childhood)

7. Parent–child interaction is also important. Parents reading picture books to their children in early childhood is particularly effective for their academic ability. Children growing up in a sharing-style home discipline in which parents respect a child's feelings, value personal contact, and enjoy time together, are likely to have a rich vocabulary.

8. It was found that the parents of elites who cleared high hurdles in their academic and professional lives “let children in early childhood play hard and freely.”

(Characteristics of Japan's ECCE)

9. Japan's ECCE is characterized by its focus on self-motivating activities and play, driven by a child's inner feelings. It is also distinctive in the sense that it provides “childcare through environment” rather than word-based educational guidance. It values allowing children to act safely on their own initiative, giving support to their voluntary activities, and helping them to “concentrate on and devote themselves” to play and other activities.

10. Other characteristics of Japan's ECCE include caregivers' expertise, frontline discretion, closeness between governments and classrooms, and a close relation between research and practice.

(Policy Changes in Japan's ECCE)

11. In Japan, free ECCE, introduction of the “PDCA cycle” and “curriculum management”, cooperation between ECCE and primary education, and more detailed descriptions about caring for children aged 0–2 years have recently been promoted.

(Global Corporation to Achieve SDGs)

12. Japan's policy for educational cooperation presents the perception that “there is an increasing need to respond to diversified situations beyond the scope of school education, such as early childhood care and education, technical vocational education and training, environment and disaster risk reduction education, and health and hygiene education.” The importance of preschool education has been newly recognized.

13. Specific projects, including technological cooperation, training, and base construction, have been promoted already. It is expected that cooperative activities will be promoted with full consideration given to Japan's experiences, as well as to the status and needs of developing countries.

The characteristics and potentiality of ECCE in Japan: Challenges towards SDGs

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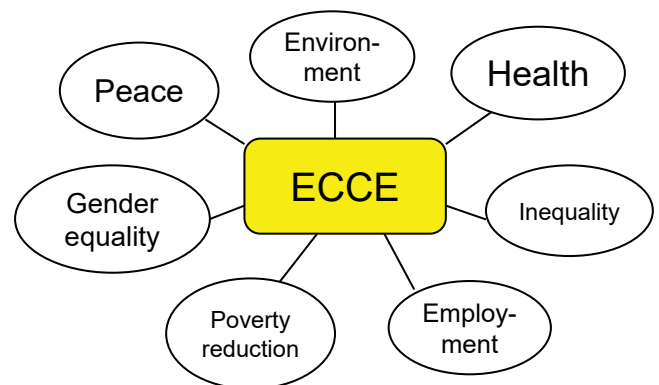
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1. ECCE as Foundation for Lifelong Development

- ECCE forms a basic foundation for lifelong development
- ECCE is an important domain that affects education, welfare, economy, labor, and many other sectors.
- ECCE causes significant ripple effects in various fields under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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ECCE is closely related to other SDGs



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Early Childhood Education

- Basic Act on Education (Act number 120 of 2006)
- Article 11: Considering the importance of early childhood education as a basis for the lifelong formation of one’s personality, the national and local governments shall endeavor to promote such education by providing an environment favorable to the healthy growth of young children, and other appropriate measures.

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ECCE = Providing a basis for the **lifelong** formation of a child’s personality

- More than preparation for primary school
- Focus on lifelong personality formation
- A public policy matter (national and local governments’ duty to promote)
- Formation of a “solid base” to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” under SDG 4

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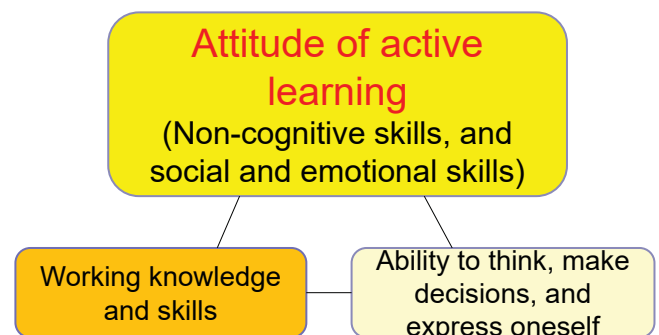
Major ECCE Facilities in Japan

- 1. Kindergartens (ages 3–5)
- 2. Day care centres (ages 0–5)
- 3. Integrated centres for ECCE (ages 0–5)
- [Enrollment status]
- ECCE enrollment ratio of children aged 0–2 is lower than the OECD average, but that of children aged 3–5 is above the OECD average (OECD 2012).

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2. ECCE and Non-Cognitive Skills

New Course of Study (Elementary School)



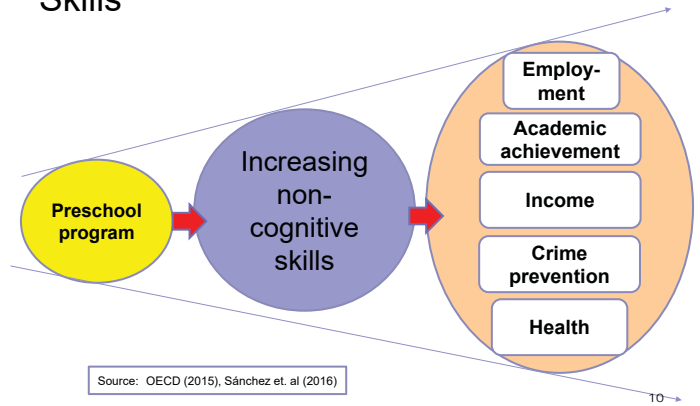
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Develop Creators for Sustainable Society

- In fostering a **zest for living** in children who are expected to **show a great deal of creativity and build a sustainable society**, it is necessary to further improve educational activities while clarifying what qualities and abilities should be developed through such activities, including overall school education as well as specific academic subjects, moral education, foreign language classes, integrated study, and special activities. Doing so requires the balanced implementation of the following while considering particular development stages or characteristics of children.
- (1) Having them acquire knowledge and skills.
- (2) Developing their ability to think, make decisions, and express themselves.
- (3) **Cultivating an attitude of active learning, humanity, etc.**

Source: MEXT (2017)

Preschool Program and Non-Cognitive Skills



Factors Increasing Social and Emotional Skills

- **Relations with persons who understand each other**
- **Constant presence of supportive persons**
- **Comfortable place to return to**
- **Heart-warming memories to be recalled during lifetime**
- "I have a vivid memory of various pleasant events during my kindergarten age. They still come to my mind by mere chance. I think that the starting point of my life was exactly in those days. Because they are such a warm memory, I think they remain for so long and are called up now and then."
- Yuichiro Anzai (2018) "Qualities and abilities that children will need in the future"
- (Keynote 1: For Children Towards Their Futures: Essentiality of Social and Emotional Skills: Lecture Texts of the Second International Conference of Child Research Network Asia (CRNA) 11

3. Overcoming "Child Poverty"

- The ratio of children living in relative poverty (the child poverty rate) is high in Japan.
- The child poverty issue requires multi-faceted measures, including financial support to families.
- Educational support is important; in particular, attentive care from early childhood.

Overcoming Disadvantages, and Non-Cognitive Skills

- The home environment on its own, including financial status, does not determine a child's development or academic ability.
- Children who overcame disadvantages of home environment tend to have highly developed non-cognitive skills (Ochanomizu University, 2018).
- It is necessary to increase their non-cognitive skills and help them overcome disadvantages through proper support during childhood.

Parental Involvement and Non-Cognitive Skills

- Parental involvement (as follows) improves children's non-cognitive skills, regardless of a family's financial status (Ochanomizu University, 2018):
- giving confidence by praising a child for his or her good points;
- teaching the importance of making an effort;
- teaching the importance of completing a task;
- teaching in early childhood: (1) the basic way of living → (2) attitude of active learning → (3) letters, numbers, languages → (4) learning attitude (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2015).

4. Parent-Child Relations Early in Life

- Little children spend most of their time at home.
- Parental involvement at home is important.
- National surveys in Japan reveal a relationship between parent-child interaction and a child's cognitive and non-cognitive skills.
- Parents reading picture books to their children in early childhood is particularly effective for their academic ability.
- Emotional support is required in picture book reading (Hamano, 2018).

"Sharing-Style Discipline" and Self-Approval and Vocabulary ability

- An established parent-child relationship of trust leads to higher self-esteem and self-approval.
- Study of "discipline style": sharing-style, authoritative-style, and self-sacrifice style.
- When parents respect a child's feelings, value personal contact, and enjoy time together (sharing-style discipline), the child is likely to have a rich vocabulary.
- When parents like reading, value sharing time at home, and enjoy conversation with a child, the child is likely to show spontaneous intellectual curiosity and search for environments in which to learn proactively (Uchida and Hamada, 2012).

Early Childhood of Persons who Cleared High Hurdles: **Parents Let a Child Play Hard and Freely**

- Parents of university graduates with 68 and higher deviation values and who obtained difficult qualifications (e.g., physician, lawyer, prosecutor, national public official (Class 1), family court investigator) → tendency to bring up a child through a sharing-style discipline
- What they did consciously to their preschool children:
 - Let them play hard and freely
 - Regularly spent time playing with them
 - Read picture books frequently
 - Got them engaged in their favorite things, including hobbies, with all their energies concentrated

Uchida (2014)

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5. Characteristics of Japan's ECCE

- Emphasize “self-motivating activities and play” driven by a child's inner feelings.
- Focus on “childcare through environment” rather than word-based educational guidance.
- Value allowing children to act safely on their own initiative, and help them to “concentrate on and devote themselves” to play and other activities.

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Play and Learning

- “Play – which is an activity initiated by children – is an important aspect of learning which cultivates a foundation for the balanced physical and mental development” (Course of Study for Kindergarten).
- “Play” itself is nothing less than “learning,” which is important for little children.
- Play gives children opportunities to discover and invent.
- Essence of learning: “Discovery and creation” to produce new insights rather than mere knowledge acquisition.

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Course of study for Kindergarten (National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens)

- “Education during early childhood is extremely important in cultivating a foundation for lifelong character building, and the fundamental aim of kindergarten education is to educate young children through their environment, taking into consideration their specific needs at this age”.

Source: MEXT(2017)

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1. To encourage children to **act on their initiative** and allow them to lead a life appropriate to early childhood, based on the idea that young children acquire experiences essential to their development through fully demonstrating their abilities in an emotionally stable condition.
2. To **educate children through play** to comprehensively achieve the aims outlined in Chapter 2, based on the idea that play, which is the activity initiated from children's initiative, is an important aspect of learning which cultivates a foundation for the balanced physical and mental development.
- 3 To provide instructions that meet **development needs of each child**, based on the idea that early childhood development is achieved through diverse processes in which various physical and mental aspects interact, and that the life experiences of each child are diverse.

Source: MEXT(2017)

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Chapter 2, Course of study for Kindergarten

- Five area of ECCE curriculum in Japan
 - (1) Health
 - (2) Human Relationships
 - (3) Environment
 - (4) Language
 - (5) Expression

Source: MEXT(2017)

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Five Noteworthy Characteristics of Early Childhood Care and Education in Japan

- (1) On the development side, emphasis is given to **both intellectual development and emotional/social development**. Moreover, both these types of development are understood to be closely related. **Activities with other children** are cultivated while giving priority to the children's **emotional stability**. This encourages intellectual development in a kind of embedded form.

Source:Ochanomizu University(2006)

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- (2) The Japanese system emphasizes independence and holds that children will develop through **playing** at kindergarten and **engaging in the activities of daily life**. Teachers provide instruction not only for specific activities but during the children's playtime and for other aspects of their lives. However, instruction is not provided in the form of orders from above; rather, suggestions and advice for activities are given in order to foster the children's initiative, and things are placed in the room that children naturally want to play with.

Source:Ochanomizu University(2006)

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- (3) Teacher expertise is considered to reside in the cycle of planning, carrying out, recording, reflecting on, and again planning the content of instruction. Teachers directly involved in teaching children have a **great deal of discretion** in what is taught—they do not simply faithfully carry out activities that have been decided on in detail by the central government or school administrators. Government regulations are limited to setting the basic direction, while actualization of this direction is up to individual kindergartens and individual teachers. Teachers however do not instruct the children entirely on their own; rather, they base their instruction on the spirit of governmental regulations.

Source:Ochanomizu University(2006)

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- (4) The primary roles of the national and local governments are to set standards for facilities, facilitate teacher careers, and determine the direction of educational and care activities. Government bodies also provide support and advice in a variety of forms. **People close to the frontlines of early childhood education or with experience as teachers frequently play an important role within the government.** The government identifies exceptional education and care practices and works to disseminate their essential points.

Source:Ochanomizu University(2006)

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- (5) There is a close **connection between the practice** of early childhood education and care and **research** on it.
- There are also **many instructors at training institutions who used to be kindergarten and nursery teachers.** Some researchers in instructional positions are fairly well-versed in actual teaching practices while also espousing Western theory. Others are versed in psychology or another academic discipline and try to incorporate them into education and childcare as it is actually practiced. These efforts have supported the establishment and development of a Japanese model of early childhood education and care.

Source:Ochanomizu University(2006)

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Mixed-Age Childcare and “Empathy”

- At one day care centre in Japan: senior class children carry younger children in their arms and help them to use the bathroom
- Nurturing a sense of empathy through multi-age childcare
- “While we might consider it dangerous for children to take care of each other, no accidents have occurred in this day care centre. The practice of older children taking care of younger children is an excellent way to cultivate empathy in children.” (Joseph Tobin)
- (Source) Yoichi Sakakibara, “Preschool with Mixed-Age Childcare Fosters Empathy”
- <https://www.blog.crn.or.jp/chief2/01/40.html>

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6. Policy Changes in Japan’s ECCE

- (1) Shift to free ECCE
- Little public spending on ECCE and heavy financial burdens on parents in Japan.
- In recent years, however, Japan has been shifting to free ECCE, gradually easing financial burdens on families.

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Quality of ECCE

- Free ECCE: Huge financial resources required
- It is important to improve the quality of education and raise the policy effects
- Quality of structure (class size, academic backgrounds of teaching staff, physical environments, etc.)
- Quality of process (relation between caregivers and children, child’s level of devotion, etc.)
- Quality of outcome (linguistic ability, arithmetical skills, cognitive skills, social and emotional development, non-cognitive skills, health, etc.)

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(2) PDCA Cycle of ECCE

- “PDCA cycle,” “curriculum management,” and other approaches have been adopted to improve the quality of ECCE
- Guidance plan (Plan)
- Guidance-based action (Do)
- Evaluation: Practice and review (Check)
- Improvement of staffing, responses, and environments (Act)

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(3) Connection between ECCE and Primary Education

- New Course of Study for Kindergarten and Nursery Childcare Guidance and Guidelines clarify “10 elements of the ideal image at the end of the early childhood period”.
- Caregivers are expected to consider the above elements in childcare.

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“10 elements of the ideal image at the end of the early childhood period”

- Link children in early childhood with them as elementary schoolers, which we formerly tended to see separately, and grasp that growth is a continuous process
- It is not an ideal image of how they should become
- Items to figure out “whether or not children are growing up” or “what kind of support is needed”

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Correspondence to 5 areas

- **1. Health:** (1) Healthy mind and body
- **2. Human Relationships:** (2) Self-reliance, (3) Cooperativeness, (4) Emergence of morality and normative consciousness, (5) Connection with social life
- **3. Environment:** (6) Emergence of thinking ability, (7) Connection with nature/Respect for life, (8) Interest/sense of quantities, geometrical figure, letters and others
- **4. Language:** (9) Communication by words
- **5. Expression:** (10) Rich sensibility and expression

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(4) ECCE for Children Aged 0–2: Infant Care

- 1. Raising a healthy and generous child (relation with body)
- 2. Communicating with familiar persons (relations with people)
- (Build a foundation for inter-personal skills by motivating a child to communicate and build trust with adults close to him/her through receptive and responsive engagement)
- 3. Relate oneself to something close or familiar and refine one’s sensitivity (relations with things)
- (Source) MHLW (2018)

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ECCE for Children Aged 1–2

- Same five areas as for those aged 3–5.
- Basic motor functions, physical functions and speaking become more precise and obvious.
- Value a child’s own motivation/initiative.

(Ex.) Area – “Health”	Descriptions (hygiene and excretion)
Infant	Experience a good feeling when they are clean, for example, after diaper change or removing clothes
Aged 1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn personal hygiene little by little through comfortableness brought by looking after oneself cleanly • Get used to sitting on the toilet and become able to excrete by oneself
Aged 3–5	Look after oneself in daily activities (removing clothes, eating, excreting, etc.) while keeping oneself neat and tidy

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Fundamental Sense of Trust and Attachment

- Quality of attachment in early childhood affects the development of various non-cognitive skills (social and emotional skills)
- Develop an attachment as an absolute foundation for non-cognitive skills
- Experiences of being accepted and loved unconditionally lead to self-esteem
- Different from “conditional love” (a child praised only when doing something well, or loved only when achieving a good result)
- Fundamental sense of trust → sociability, imagination, and sympathy

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7. Global Corporation to Achieve SDGs

- Japan’s educational cooperation policy “Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth” (2015)
- The policy clearly states its perception that “in terms of the roles and interventions required for educational cooperation, there is an increasing need to respond to diversified situations beyond the scope of school education, such as early childhood care and education, technical vocational education and training, environment and disaster risk reduction education, and health and hygiene education. As a result, the importance of improving the quality of education and strengthening cross-sector efforts increases”. Thus, the importance of preschool education has been newly recognized.

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Japan’s Cooperative Efforts

- Specific projects, including technological cooperation, training, and base construction, have been promoted already.
- At present, study on ECCE has been progressing globally, and the trends in developed countries will have prompt effects on the practices in developing countries.
- It is important to cooperate with full consideration to the status and needs of developing countries and by the best use of Japan’s experiences and characteristics.

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