

**A COMPARISON OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYSTEMS
IN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES**

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by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Rearing children was the responsibility of mothers several decades ago when many women in developed countries stayed with their children at home. In 1947, almost ninety percent of women who had children under six years old cared for their own children at home while husbands earned an income sufficient to support the family (Lombardi, 2003). Children thrived and learned the necessary knowledge and skills under their mother's care.

In late 20th century, women entered the labor force in response to changing economic trends (Chipty, 1995; Cohen, 1996; Hofferth, 1996; Scarr, 1998). The movement of women to the labor force created a problem for families of young children. Persons other than mother were needed to care and educate young children. Child care centers expanded greatly in response to the need.

Child care programs care for and educate young children in place of the mother. If children receive high quality care and education in a child care center, children learn and are ready both cognitively and socially for entering school. The higher the quality of care provided by the child care centers, the greater the gain in long term benefits (Gomby, Krantzler, Larner, Stevenson, Terman & Behrman, 1996). Therefore, two main purposes of having child care in the society are "mother's employment" and "children's development" (Scarr, 1998, p.95).

The development of child care centers raises many questions about the effect this change has on children and families. How do child care centers provide for children? Who provides child care services and what are the costs? How is nurturance and

education provided in these settings? Is child care meeting the needs of children and families?

These questions are important to explore. If child care centers are not accessible and affordable to families, does this prevent female employment and cause hardships on families in the current economy? Could the lack of child care centers actually impact the economy negatively? If child care centers do not do an adequate job in nurturing and educating young children, will there be an impact on the children's success in school and later life?

In order to study the potential impact of this change in the way children are reared on children and the economic well being of families, this thesis is comparing the child care systems of two industrialized nations with similar economic and female employment trends to determine if there are common problems and issues and to examine the responses as to effectiveness.

The United States and Japan

In a comparison of the United States and Japan, in late 20th century, increasingly in many countries including these two countries, women are entering the labor force (Boocock, 1995). The United States and Japan have now almost the same economic level, compared to the time before the Second World War (Boocock, 1987). They are both industrialized nations with a majority of the population in urban areas with similar economic status.

The U.S. Census (2002) statistically showed that the female employment and ratio of employment increased drastically since 1970 (p.368). At the same time, the United

States Census Bureau also reported that Japanese female labor force participation rates had been growing from 1980 to 1999 (p.841). These statistics revealed that many women in both the United States and Japan are involved in the labor force compared to twenty or thirty years ago. When both parents work, mothers are not available to their children to nurture and teach their young children.

Families both in the United States and Japan tend to have smaller size families than in the past, and many women are working outside of their homes. Both countries have a large population of nuclear families now (Boocock, 1995). Probably thirty years ago, there were more extended families in both the United States and Japan. Married couples used to live with their parents, so grandparents could take care of their grandchildren in Japan. However, recently grandparents do not live with or close to their grandchildren. In the United States, grandparents and other extended family members lived separately but nearby in the past. However, families are separated by greater distances now. Non-working mothers often stayed at home with their children in both countries.

Maternal employment has changed the way children are reared and this change raises issues and problems that must be addressed by families and communities. The use of center based child care has been a solution for many families in both the United States and Japan when mothers are employed rather than depending on relative care (Scarr, 1998).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) indicated that in 1991, 52.8 percent of American children who were three to five years old and had not entered kindergarten received care in a center based program. In 1999, the child care attendance rate increased by almost

sixty percent. Conversely, thirty-one percent of the children were taken care of by only their parents in 1991, but only 23.3 percent of the children were taken care of by their parents in 1999. The more the children's age increased, the rate of involvement in the center based programs also increased. About forty percent of three years olds, sixty-five percent of four years olds, and seventy-five percent of five years olds were in the center based programs by 1995 (Hofferth, 1996).

Holloway (2000) reported that the majority of Japanese preschoolers attend childcare for at least two years, and about half of them attend for a full three years. There are two kinds of child care in Japan. One of the differences between the two is the hours they are open. Families chose a child care that fits their needs based on hours of care. More than ninety percent of four and five years old Japanese children attend these child care programs (Japanese family and parental roles in education, 2003).

Correspondingly, now and in the future, the demand for non-parental child care both in the United States and Japan will most likely continue to increase. Typically, the parents spend about eight hours at work per day. Therefore, their children need to be taken care of at child care facilities or by other persons, either relatives or non-relatives for a similar amount of time. If it is calculated simply, almost one-third of the time children spend awake is spent in child care. Most parents in both the United States and Japan feel their children's education is important, even when they are young. When the parents choose schools for their children, they consider many different characteristics, such as curriculum, quality, safety, cost, and so on (Lewis, 1995).

Maternal Employment

The United States

A study of the marital status of women in the civilian labor force revealed that more than half of American women who were married stayed in the labor force in 2001 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003, p.372). The rate has increased drastically. In 1970, it showed that about only forty percent of women were in the labor force, and it increased up to almost fifty percent in 1980. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau (2002) expected that in 2010, more American women will join the labor force (p.367).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2003) had another study that showed how many American women in the labor force have children (p.372). The data were gathered from women who were sixteen and over and had children under six years old at that time. In 1980, 5.9 million women who had children under six years old were in the labor force. In 2000, 9.8 million women who had same aged children were in the labor force. The number of women who joined the labor force in a twenty-year span nearly doubled.

TABLE 1.1
MARITAL STATUS OF AMERICAN WOMEN
IN THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE

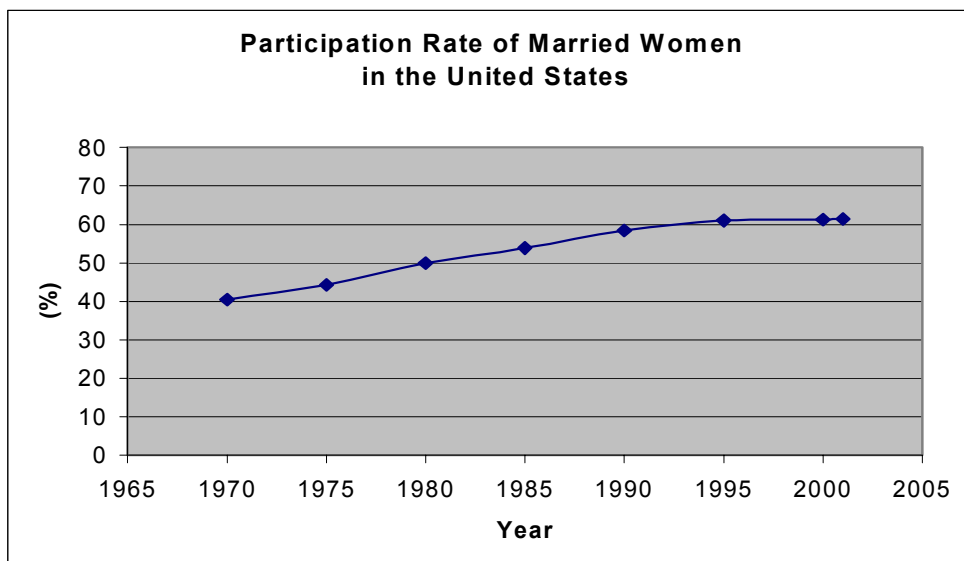
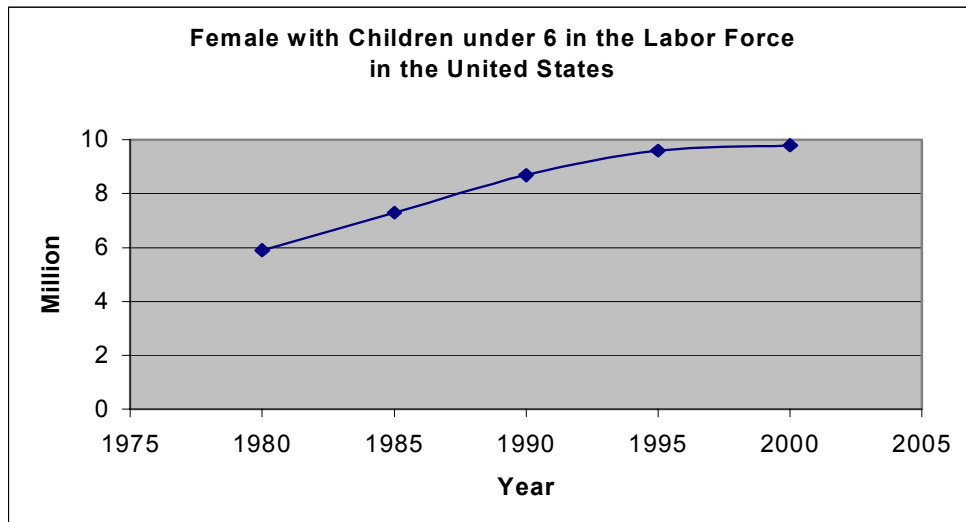


TABLE 1.2
RATE OF AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE
WITH CHILDREN UNDER SIX

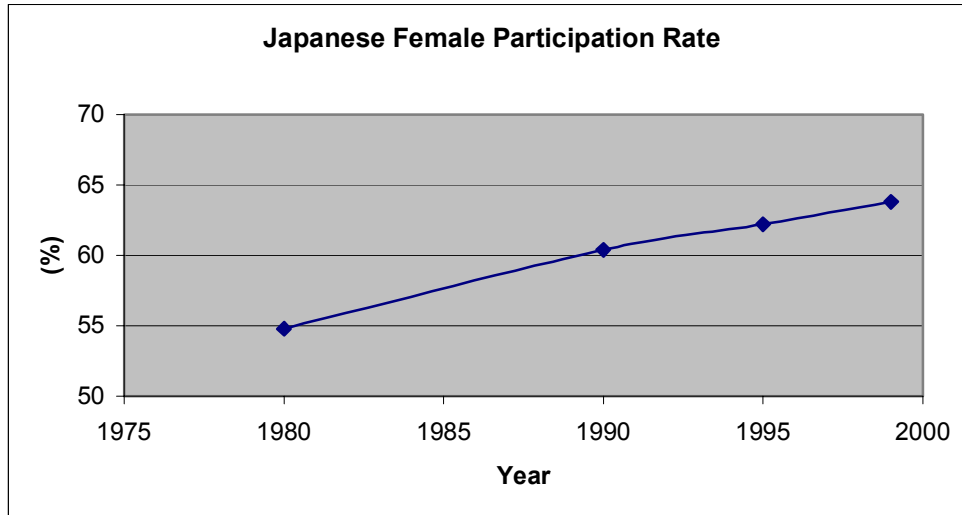


National surveys have shown that if child care expenses were more affordable, twenty percent more mothers would return to work after they had a baby (Scarr, 1988). Another study indicated that the more child care costs, fewer married women participate in the labor force (Han & Waldfogel, 2001). Obviously, there is a connection between the child care and the economy.

Japan

The United States Census Bureau gathered information from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and reported female labor force participation rates by country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). It showed that Japanese women's participation rate from 1980 to 1999 increased almost ten percent.

TABLE 1.3
RATE OF JAPANESE FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE
IN THE LABOR FORCE



The Japanese economy is dependent on native Japanese people for the country's economy (Johnston, 1991). Japan rejects increased employment of immigrant workers. In 1993, only 1.5 percent of total labor force included foreign workers in Japan (Okunishi, 1995). In addition, Japan is becoming an elderly society because of low fertility rate (Johnston, 1991). Therefore, its economy needs the female labor force.

The Japanese Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (2000) completed a study about family structure. In 1985, the number of families in which both the husband and wife had jobs was 12,756,000 families. Then, it increased until 1995 when it reached 13,474,000 families. However, in 2000, it decreased by almost 300,000 families. The same study revealed that the number of families in which both parents worked and had children under six years old decreased in 2000. This decrease can be partially attributed to some Japanese social trends such as low child fertility rate and late marriage. The more women join the labor force and

pursue their careers, the less they have children due to child rearing burdens and cost. At the same time, both Japanese men and women's ages when they get married for the first time is higher. Moreover, because Japan has a different work environment, it is difficult for women to find another job if they quit their current job. This is especially true when they are thirty years old or older. This is another reason women try to stay in their career as long as they can. In order to solve these problems, the Japanese government views the low child fertility rate as a problem and is trying to establish programs to help working parents who have children. On December 19, 1999, the plan for increasing the fertility rate was enacted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (The New Angel Plan, January, 2003). It is called the New Angel Plan. According to this new plan (2003), the Japanese government is trying to extend services by prolonging the nursery school's hours, and also increasing the number of nursery schools, especially schools that take infants (The New Angel Plan).

Research Question

Such a major change in the way children are reared is bound to raise problems and issues that face families and society as a whole. This thesis examines trends in the use of child care between American and Japanese families to discover similarities and differences in the way the need for child care outside the home is met and to discover the problems and issues that are raised by the use of child care.

More specifically, the way in which each country met the need for child care was compared.

1. How is each country's government involved in the child care system?

2. Is child care affordable to the families?
3. How is child care financed?
4. How is child care regulated?
5. What kind of quality issues do child care providers have?
6. What are their curricula?

This study is important because each country has responded to the need for child care in its own way. Different ways of meeting families' needs for child care raise different issues and problems that must be solved. By identifying the way in which each country has responded to the increased need for child care and comparing the effects of this increased use, it might be possible to identify alternative solutions to shared problems.

It can be beneficial for the American and Japanese government officials and other leaders to study other child care systems to identify additional ways that are advantageous for them. Not only leadership, but also child care providers, directors, and even parents can redesign child care systems and work to improve them. Hopefully, this research paper helps others to know what kind of child care systems exist in the United States and Japan.

Research Method

The method of study is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative methods included observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The researcher's experience growing up in Japan and attending preschool, observations in both Japanese and American child care centers and interviews with teachers from both countries influenced

this study. Quantitative methods included analysis of existing literature, governmental census statistics and regulatory requirement. All of these approaches, both qualitative and quantitative, were important and supported the analysis.

The American child care centers and teachers observed were located in Huntington, WV and the Japanese child care centers and teachers had observed were located in Nagoya, Japan.

Limitations

Through emails and Internet access to international literature and demographic data, it is possible to identify some of the similarities and differences that exist between child care in two cities. More extensive and detailed comparisons would necessitate more extensive study of other communities. This is an initial comparative exploration.

It was a little difficult to compare Japanese schools for young children with American child care centers. Mostly, Japanese children attend very similar type of schools. On the other hand, many different types of child care centers exist in the United States. There are no typical child care centers. The researcher picked two child care centers in West Virginia. These two centers were of average size and nationally accredited by NAEYC, so it was easy to compare these centers with Japanese schools.

Definitions of Terms

Child Care - Programs that serve children who are from birth through 5 years old before they enter kindergarten who have working families.

Nuclear Family – Family that includes parent(s) and their children.

Extended Family – Family that includes members of nuclear family and other relatives, such as grandparents, aunt, uncle, and others.

Female Labor Force Participation – Presence of women who join the labor market.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many women have been entering the labor force in both the United States and Japan (Boocock, 1995), and at the same time, each country's families have been changing. Both countries have radically altered family organization and child rearing practices compared to thirty years ago.

These major changes in both the United States and Japan, have raised many questions about the needs for child care. Where do parents take their children? Is the child care close to their home? What kinds of child care centers are available in the United States and Japan? Is that child care private or public? What is the quality of care? Are there any regulations in each country and if so, who regulates the child care system?

Literature that compared early childhood education both in the United States and Japan was explored. Resources existed about American and Japanese education were found separately, but no comparisons existed. However, these resources were very useful to obtain basic ideas about each country's education system.

One research study compared early childhood education in several countries. Boocock (1995) compared early childhood education in thirteen different countries in her study: Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. She reviewed the literature and summarized the characteristics of early childhood education in each country. At the end of her research paper, she compared the characteristics of the other countries and the United States, and she suggested what American early childhood education could learn from other nations. She indicated that the French *ecole maternelle*, Japanese preschools,

and Reggio Emilia, were considered high quality programs by other countries, yet have class sizes and child-staff ratios that are considered low quality in the United States. According to Mulligan and Hoffman (1998), the French *ecole maternelle* teacher-child ratio is 1:22.

Family Size

The United States

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's study (2003), American family size is becoming slightly smaller (p.52). In 1980, thirty-nine percent of American people said that they had only two people in their family. The percentage increased over twenty years to forty-four percent in 2000. It also showed the percentage of families that had between three and seven or more members in each family. Only two person families increased, and the others showed a slight decrease. In the United States, at present, almost half of the people live in a nuclear family.

Japan

The Japanese government also did a study about family structure. A study of household members showed that the number of families that have one through three people is growing, but families that have more than four people are decreasing (The Statistics Bureau, August, 2003). Especially, families that have more than five members have been dramatically decreasing. According to another study conducted by the Japanese government between 1994 and 1999, the average family size became a little smaller (The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2001). In

1999, it was 2.9 people in one family, and it was 3.1 people in 1994. The same research showed that populations of nuclear families in Japan increased almost two percent overall. Therefore, Japanese families no longer live with their extended family members.

Another study of nuclear families (The Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2000) showed that in 1985, 20,401,000 families lived as nuclear families. By 2000 the number gradually increased to 23,754,000 nuclear families in Japan. Obviously the percentage of Japanese nuclear families is growing.

In Japan, it has been a tradition that the first son lived with his parents after he got married. However, because of many reasons, fewer people live with their parents after they get married. First, people do not get married in their early twenties anymore (Japanese Unmarried Rate, May, 2003). Fifty-four percent of Japanese women between twenty-five and twenty-nine were still single in 2000. In 1980, it was only twenty-four percent. Almost seventy percent of men between twenty-five and twenty-nine were single in 2000. It was fifty-five percent in 1980. So, Japanese people tend to postpone getting married, and many of them, especially males, do not marry. Because of the late marriages, people tend to have children when they are in their thirty's or even forty's, therefore the number of children per family declines (Retherford, Ogawa & Sakamoto, 1996). Fewer people currently have more than two children, so they tend to have a small family. Increased unmarried people reduces the number of extended families.

TABLE 2.1

RATE OF UNMARRIED WOMEN IN JAPAN

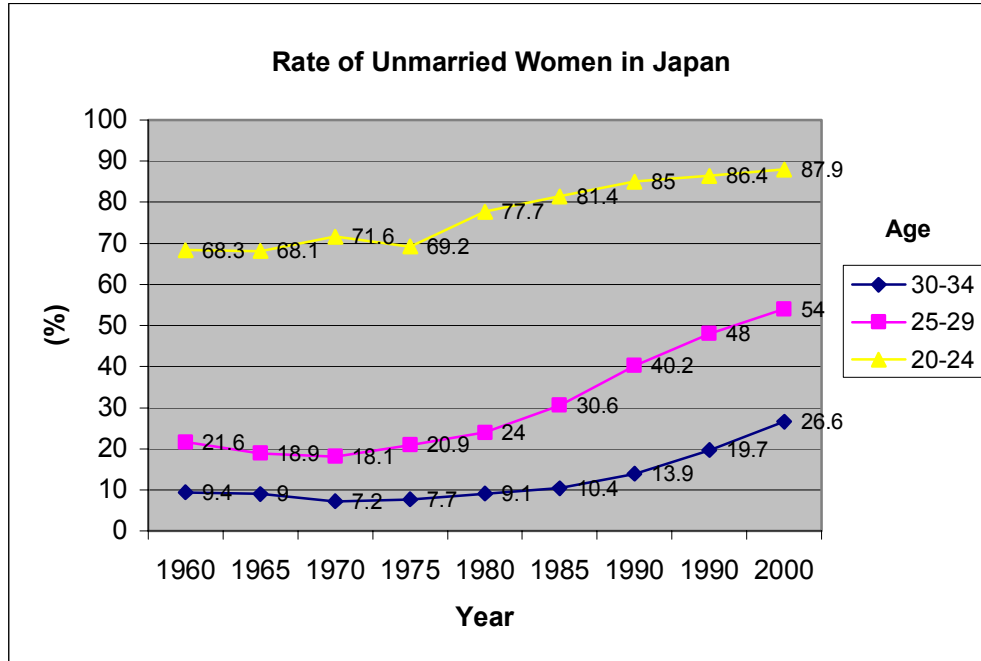
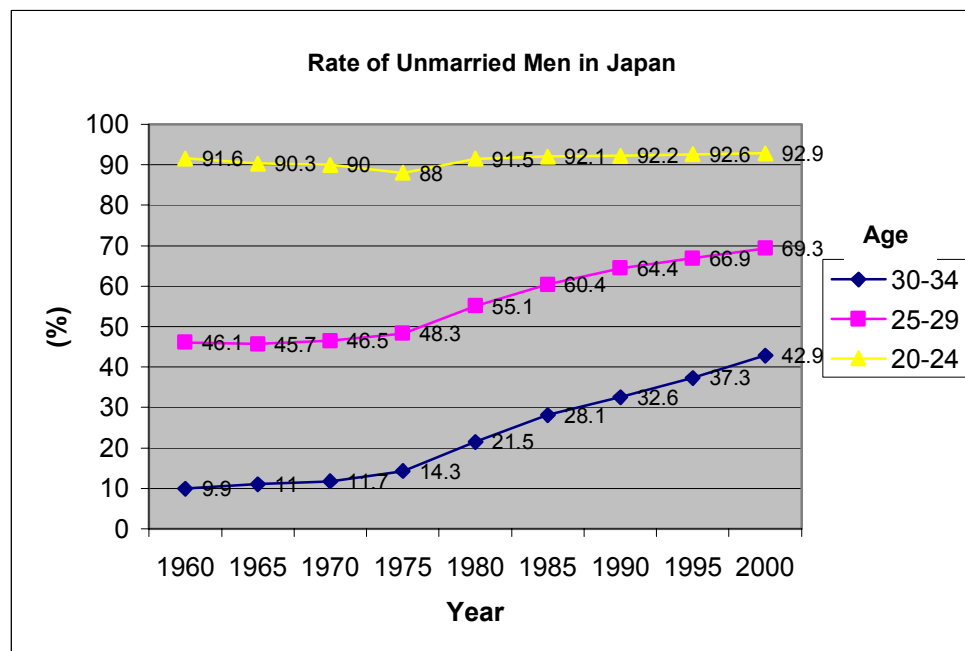


TABLE 2.2

RATE OF UNMARRIED MEN IN JAPAN



Overview of Child Care

In America, there are several different types of child care. On the other hand, in Japan, there are mainly two types of child care centers for children who are under school age (Boocock, 1995). Following is a brief description of child care in Japan and the United States.

Types of American Child Care Centers

There are chiefly relative care, babysitter, family child care, and center based child care in the U.S. Relative care describes children cared for by their relatives at either the relative's house or the child's house. A babysitter is a person who individually watches children who need to be cared for while their parents are not available. The babysitters usually go to the children's house, but there are always exceptions. This type of care is informal. Family day care is home based child care and for a certain number of children that varies by state although typically limited to six or fewer children. Center based care is typically conducted in larger facilities than family child care. It includes equipped playground and is available for a larger number of children. According to Mulligan and Hoffman (1998), almost half of preschoolers who have working mothers attend center-based child care in the U.S.

There is no federal form of licensing child care in the United States (Morgan, 2003). So, Childcare centers in the United States are licensed by each state government (Scarr, 1998; Katz, 2003).

Two types of center-based childcare exist. One is a non-profit center, and the other type is a for-profit center.

Non-Profit Child Care Centers

A study about American center-based child care programs was conducted in 1990. As a result of the study, almost seventy percent of children age three or older were attending at non-profit centers (Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002). Moreover, sixty-five percent of child care centers were non-profit centers in 1990 (Hofferth, 1996).

Some child care centers are run by churches or community centers and fall in the category of non-profit child care centers. They often use their own facilities that they did not plan to use for child care centers, so there are some limitations, such as small rooms or no playgrounds. In 1990, a study showed that there were roughly 80,000 center-based child care centers in the United States. About two third of the centers providing services for three years old children or older age children were non-profit child care centers (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002)

Some centers are owned by corporations, factories, hospitals, and universities. These child care centers regularly take children whose parents work at the organization that owns the child care centers. It is one of the benefits offered to the workers. As a whole, they are well equipped and have better facilities.

About ten percent of American child care centers are given funds from the United States government (Clarke-Stewart, 1993). One well-known program that receives funds is the Head Start program. While in the past, Head Start was a part day preschool, the increasing number of women in the workforce has necessitated the increase to full day

child care in these programs. Head Start programs are intervention service for low-income families. These centers offer many different kinds of services to the families, such as nutrition and medical services. They also have good facilities, materials, and teachers.

For-Profit Child Care Centers

There are mainly two types of for-profit child care centers in the U.S. The for-profit center is referred to as a “Proprietary center” (Clarke-Stewart, 1993). They are often located in the places where other businesses used to be. Thus, they do not have many recreational rooms for children’s activities. In addition, they do not provide social and health services. According to Clarke-Stewart (1993), almost thirty percent of the child care centers in the United States are independent for-profit centers.

The other type for-profit centers are run as franchise or chain businesses. As successful examples, there are Kinder-Care, Mary Moppet, and Children’s World.

Types of Japanese Child Care

There are mainly two types of schools for young children in Japan; kindergartens (Yochien) and nursery schools (Hoikuen) (Boocock, 1995). At present, there are 14,174 kindergartens and 22,355 nursery schools in Japan (Yoji kyoiku gyosei johou, May, 2003).

One important difference between kindergartens and nursery schools is governance. The Ministry of Education regulates kindergartens, and nursery schools are regulated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Boocock, 1987).

Kindergartens serve children who are age three through six and usually provide care for up to five hours a day (Holloway, 2000).

Nursery schools are designed for the needs of working families. Like kindergartens, nursery schools provide their care mainly for children who are three to six. However, now many nursery schools accept younger children, such as infants who are eight weeks old or younger than one year old because one of the main purposes of nursery schools is to help working parents. Therefore, nursery schools usually give care eight hours a day, six days a week, and some of them offer additional hours.

Because of their main characteristics, such as age and hours of availability, children of families who have unemployed or part time working mothers are more likely to attend the kindergarten. Children of families who have full time employed mothers are more likely to attend nursery schools (Boocock, 1987).

Child Care History

The United States

The first child care was established in 1838 in the U.S. It was in Boston and was taking care of the children of seamen's working wives and widows (Clarke-Stewart, 1993). In 1854, the Nurses and Children's Hospital in New York City opened a child care center for their patients. By 1898, approximately 175 child care centers opened throughout the country. Ten years later, the number of child care centers opening increased. At that time, they offered their services six days a week, twelve hours a day. Mainly, parents who did not have anyone who could watch their children took their

children to the child care centers. In the early 1890's, some child care centers were interested in providing children academic programs.

In 1900, the female population in the workforce was only twenty percent (Childcareaction, 2003). Many married women stayed at home and took care of their children. In between 1901 and 1909, Theodore Roosevelt was the president. In 1909, he stated that "mothers should raise their own children" at the White House Conference on Care of Dependent Children (Childcareaction, 2003). In 1933, because of the great depression, President F. D. Roosevelt was trying to supply jobs for unemployed people. When those people started working, they needed a place where they could take their children. By 1937, almost 1,900 child care centers were open and 40,000 children were staying there while their parents were working (Clarke-Stewart, 1993).

Although the population of children in child care centers started to decrease after 1938, again the population went up because many women started working at war-related industries. In 1940, the Lanham Act was enacted for working women. The Lanham Act helped all mothers financially, such as bills for child care and water and sewer systems. There were more than 1.5 million children in child care by 1945 (Clarke-Stewart, 1993, p.32; Cohen, 1996). After the war ended, the Lanham Act was withdrawn. Many child care centers closed, and until 1965, child care centers were considered as facilities for poor or problem families.

American early childhood education programs were viewed as two types. One was the day nursery, and the other one was nursery schools. The day nursery was mainly provided for poor families. On the other hand, the nursery schools were viewed as

providing better programs, and were popular with middle class families who could afford to pay.

During the 1970's and 1980's, although American people tried to get better child care service and quality, the government did not cooperate. The federal government cut the budget for child care centers and did not to set federal requirements for child care centers (Clarke-Stewart, 1993). During this time, each state's requirements for child care were inconsistent. By 1985, over half the population of American women was in the workforce with children attending centers of widely varying quality (Childcareaction, 2003).

In the 1990's congress once again considered a law to improve the American childcare system. According to Clarke-Stewart (1993), Congress considered over a hundred childcare bills in 1990. In October 1990, the Child Care and Development Block Grant passed Congress (Clarke-Stewart, 1993; Cohen, 1996) . The bill allowed low-income, single, working parents to get refundable tax credits. It increased the accessibility of childcare, but it did not try to increase its quality.

Former President Clinton expanded the American government's role in child care, by increasing federal child care subsidies to each state and increasing tax credits for American families who pay for child care (Family Research Council of America, Inc., 1998).

Japan

Japanese kindergartens' history can be divided into six stages focused on curriculum. As the first stage, in 1876, the first kindergarten was founded. It was

attached to the Tokyo Women's Normal School (Ishigaki, 1992). In those days, the Tokyo Women's Normal School accepted children who were three to six years old for four or five hours per day (Landerholm, 1996).

As in the United States, the first kindergarten was opened based upon Froebel's ideas. Froebel was a German who established the first kindergarten in the world in 1837. He believed in child-centeredness, and free self expression, creativity, social participation, and motor expression (Froebelweb, 2002). Actually, this type of kindergarten still exists, and it is the principal type of kindergartens in Japan (Landerholm, 1996).

In 1899, in the second stage of development, the Japanese government added four educational purposes to the guidelines for kindergartens; play, song, speech and handicrafts. For the third stage, the government added observation and it was used from 1926 to 1947. In the fourth stage the government added multiple forms: field trip, rhythm, rest, free play, music, story telling, drawing, handicraft, observation of nature, playing house, drama, playing dolls, health education, and annual events. The fifth stage was used in between 1956 and 1989, and it created six areas for educational content: health, society, nature, language, music and rhythm, and art and craft. The sixth stage produced the New Guidelines for Kindergarten Education in November 1989. It includes health, human relationship, environment, language, and expression.

Nursery schools were first opened in 1890. At first, they were built for children who were from poor families and were only in big cities. At that time, the children who went to the nursery schools presented problems for learning, so the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (in those days, it was the Ministry of Home Affairs) decided to

organize the schools and give them a national grant (Ishigaki, 1992). The contents of education were equivalent to the kindergartens even in the 1930's. It included daily life, human development, and health development. In 1947, after the Second World War, the nursery schools started organizing for the first time through the Child Welfare Law. However, compared to the kindergartens' guidelines, the nursery schools' guidelines did not really exist until 1990. In 1990, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare revised and established a new guideline as the New Syllabus for Care and Education for the nursery schools (Ishigaki, 1992).

Objectives of Child Care Programs

The United States

In the United States, each state government, regulates child care centers. These regulations are the minimum standard for operation. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is national professional organization that supports early childhood education and offers voluntary guidelines at the national level. The federal government provides regulations for Head Start only. Many center based child care centers in the United States are voluntarily validated by the accreditation process that NAEYC offers. Some states have unique regulations, but generally the regulations are similar. In this paper, the West Virginia State government's regulations for child care centers are used.

The State of West Virginia adopted its newest licensing regulations for child care centers in 2003 (WV Department of Health and Human Resources). According to the licensing regulations (2003), each child care center shall prepare and follow a written

daily schedule that reflects the goals and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. In addition, the licensing regulations state that “a center shall ensure that each program includes flexible program activities that are appropriate to a child’s age and developmental level” (p.39). The regulations also mention that a balance of six different subjects be offered. These subjects are as follow: indoor and outdoor activities, activities that use both large and small muscles, quiet and active play periods, active and passive learning experiences, individual and several types of group activities, and teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities (WV Department of Health and Human Resources, 2003). In addition to state licensing, the national voluntary system of accreditation to promote higher quality standards is sponsored by NAEYC.

Japan

Each ministry sets objectives for kindergartens and nursery schools. These are the five objectives for kindergarten set by the Ministry of Education.

1. To foster the basic habits of daily life and the attitudes needed for a healthy, safe, and happy life and to build the foundation for a sound mind and body.
2. To foster affection and trust toward others and to cultivate attitudes of autonomy and cooperation and the awakening of morality.
3. To foster interest and concern about nature and other things close at hand and to cultivate the awakening of a wealth of feelings and the power to think about these things.
4. To foster, in daily life, interest and concern about language and to cultivate enjoyment in talking and listening and a sense of language.

5. To foster a richness of emotion through diverse experiences and to foster creativity (The Ministry of Education, 1989).

The Japanese Ministry of Education (1989) stated detailed descriptions for the objectives as well as five main objectives. They are separated into five sections - health, human relationships, environment, language, and expression. In the language section, there are three purposes identified and ten descriptions to achieve the purposes. For example, one of the descriptions is that the children can express how they feel or what they do correctly by using their language skills. They add recommendations for teachers to accomplish the objectives.

Likewise, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare proclaims the main goals for the nursery schools in the New Syllabus for Care and Education.

1. To preserve the children from danger, to enable the child to cultivate his or her emotional stability in an environment carefully arranged and in a relaxed atmosphere to satisfy various needs.
2. Have the child cultivate the habit of health and safety, basic to the healthy mind and body.
3. Cultivate in the child love, trust, respect for human rights, and attitude of independence and cooperation, and moral sentiments.
4. Have the child take an interest in nature and social phenomena, and lay the foundation of rich sentiments and mental development.
5. Have the child take an interest in language and acquire rich language and the attitudes to speak and listen to others willingly.

6. Cultivate in the child, by means of different aspects of life, rich sentiments and imagination (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 1990).

These are the main objectives for the nursery schools. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare put more specific goals in other chapters dependent on the child's age. It is separated by seven age sections, under six-month-old, six-month-old to fifteen-month-old, fifteen-month-old to two-year-old, two-year-old, three, four, and five-year-old (Hoikujo hoiku shishin, November 2002).

Public kindergartens and nursery schools also pursue objectives that are fixed by their municipal government. Commonly, the municipal government adds a few more details to the ministry's objectives. According to Nagoya City government (Nyuusyo no tetsuzuki, March, 2003), nursery schools in Nagoya intend to be a pleasant place for children and a safe place for parents based on following regulations of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Curriculum

American Child Care

Commonly, each child care center chooses its own curriculum in the United States. Most American child care centers are regulated by the state governments, some states have a recommendation for the curriculum. In the United States, national curriculum for child care centers does not exist (Katz, 2003). NAEYC includes a section for curriculum in their accreditation procedures. As a rationale:

The curriculum includes the goals of the program (the content that children are learning) and the planned activities as well as the daily schedule, the availability

and use of materials, transitions between activities, and the way in which routine tasks of living are used as learning experiences. Criteria for curriculum implementation reflect the knowledge that young children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their understanding of the world around them (NAEYC, 1998, p.22).

Several controversial issues center on the curriculum of early childhood education, such as “Constructivist” or “Instructivist” (Katz, 2003, p.109). “Constructivist” is child centered, and “Instructivist” is teacher centered. The NAEYC encourages that *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* which is a “Constructivist” approach (p.109).

The state of West Virginia (2003) also has a statement about programs in their regulation. They listed very basic things, such as the program and schedule should be posted in a public place. In addition, they recommended that the curriculum has an appropriate balance of several activities, such as indoor and outdoor activities, quiet and active play periods, and so on.

Likewise, neither NAEYC nor the State of West Virginia gave an order to carry out a specific curriculum for child care centers. Both of them stated only basic ideas for forming curricula. If child care centers want to use a specific curriculum, they can decide what to use.

Actually, there are many preschools in the U.S using unique specific curriculum. For example, there are Montessori schools all over the U.S. They use the Montessori method established by Dr. Maria Montessori. Recently, not only the Montessori method,

but also High Scope, Creative Curriculum, and Reggio Emilia approach are popular in the U.S. It depends on the preschools and the teachers as to the kind of curriculum they use. None of these curricula encourage academic counting such as learning letters and numbers. Child care centers or preschools use a structured curriculum, including academic activities, such as alphabet letters and numbers. According to a survey, more than fifty percent of American parents and educators who responded to the survey answered that having preschools gives children a good start academically (Lewis, 1995). American parents want preschools to focus on their children's academic skills, independence, and self-reliance (Hess & Azuma, 1991). Therefore, many American child care centers and preschools tend to try to include at least some academic activities in the curriculum for preschoolers.

Japanese Child Care

Strictly speaking, nursery schools are focused more on children's safety and cleanliness because they were started as a place where working parents can take their children in order to go to work. Therefore, nursery schools were not created for educating young children in the first place. At the very beginning, nursery schools took care of only infants who were under three years old because kindergartens did not take infants. However, gradually, nursery schools have been changing their purposes and curriculum contents because of their demands. Hence, recently the nursery schools' curriculum is not so different from the kindergartens' curriculum.

On the other hand, kindergartens are basically designed to provide stimulation cognitively and socially (Holloway, 2000; Peach, 1994) and actually they belong to the

Ministry of Education, which regulates the Japanese education system. Their curriculum includes a little more educational focus compared to nursery schools. However, as a matter of fact, neither the Ministry of Education nor the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare force kindergartens and nursery schools to include curriculum that teach the children Japanese letters or numbers. The Ministry of Education even forbids direct instruction in writing. It says “Systematic instruction about the alphabet begins in elementary school; so at preschool, direct instruction in this area should not be concluded. Rather, each individual child’s interest, concern, and feeling about the alphabet should be fostered naturally” (Lewis, 1995). According to a personal communication from a person who works at the Ministry of Education, they try to include curricula that indirectly foster a child’s interest towards Japanese letters or numbers. He mentioned that in kindergarten, they try not to force children to memorize or to teach how to write and read Japanese letters or numbers (The Ministry of Education, personal communication, March 2, 2003). They believe that the children’s interest may be adversely affected.

A survey showed eighty percent of Japanese parents and educators chose “Sympathy, empathy, and concern for others” for one of the most important things for their children to learn in preschool (Lewis, 1995, p.32). Unlike Americans, less than one percent of Japanese chose “To give children a good start academically” for a reason why society should have preschools (p.32). Lewis (1995) stated that Japanese preschool education focuses on free play and social development, not on academic development.

Unless each school carries out a specific curriculum, the children will rarely engage in an academic program exclusively in Japan. The children tend to engage in free

play most of the time in their schools. The free play is organized by teachers. Lewis (1995) observed fifteen kindergartens in Japan. According to her study, the children in the kindergartens spent half of their time in free play and the other half in whole-class activities, for instance listening to a story, singing, dancing, and so fourth. However, during the free play, excluding outside play, teachers usually give the children two or three choices.

In nursery schools, they might allow for children to spend more time in free play. Because they take care of children for longer hours, they have almost the same amount of activities as kindergartens. In addition, unlike kindergartens, nursery schools have naptime because of their long hours.

Teacher Requirements

American Child Care Center

In the United States, the teacher requirements for child care centers vary state by state. However, according to a study in 1990 about child care settings, forty-seven percent of teachers of child care centers had a four-year college degree (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). Thirteen percent had a two-year college degree. So, over fifty percent of the teachers had either a two or four year college degree. On the other hand, a different study found that only thirty-six percent of child care teachers had a four years college degree or higher (Love, 1998). These studies did not specify their majors.

More teachers in non-profit centers tend to have a college degree than teachers in for-profit centers (Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002). Slightly over thirty percent of for-

profit center teachers had a college degree while fifty percent of non-profit center teachers had a college degree.

Teacher's education requirement vary state by state. For example, Georgia and Alabama do not require any college education for child care teachers (Scarr, 1998; Blau, 2001). In fact, thirty out of fifty states and District of Columbia do not require any pre-service education, experience, or training for child care teachers (Blau, 2001, chap.9). The State of West Virginia promulgates regulations for child care centers in the licensing regulations (2003). As general "Staff Requirements", they state several things.

A center shall use staff members with:

1. A good reputation and character;
2. Sufficient education, training and experience to provide the skills necessary for carrying out the essential functions of his or her job with or without reasonable accommodation;
3. Sound judgment, emotional maturity, and an understanding of children;
4. A demonstrated ability to perform assigned tasks;
5. The ability to correct hazards that might harm the health, safety and well-being of the children;
6. The ability to work with children without mistreatment or abuse;
7. The ability to encourage children and to provide them with a variety of learning and social experiences appropriate to the age of the children;
8. The ability to support children's physical, emotional, psychological, social and personal development; and

9. The ability to communicate effectively and to respect confidentiality (WV Department of Health and Human Resources, 2003, p.17).

Then, it includes sections that are for a lead teacher, teacher, and assistant teacher.

A lead teacher shall:

1. Plan and adopt programming that conforms to the core competencies of early childhood educators in Appendix 78-1 A of this rule and may implement daily program activities;
2. Coordinate the activities of teachers, assistant teachers, teaching assistants, and assist the director with designated activities;
3. Be at least twenty-one years of age and have a minimum of one year of relevant work experience and one of the following additional qualification:
 - A. A CDA (Child Development Associate) credential and three hundred hours of relevant work experience working with young children or twelve college credits in an early care and education field and three hundred hours of relevant work experience working with young children.
 - B. A total of two years of relevant work experience.
 - C. A registered Apprenticeship Certificate for Child Development Specialist, or twenty-eight college credits, with at least nine credit hours in early childhood development (WV Department of Health and Human Resources, 2003, p.24).

A teacher shall:

1. Have responsibility for the supervision, care and education of children and be regularly assigned to a group of children.

2. Be at least eighteen years of age and have a minimum of one year of relevant work experience and have one of the following additional qualifications:
 - A. A West Virginia Training Certificate in Early Care and Education (WVTCECE) or its equivalent;
 - B. A CDA credential and three hundred hours of relevant work experience working with young children or twelve college credits in an early care and education field and three hundred hours of relevant work experience working with young children; or
 - C. A total of two years of relevant work experience (WV Department of Health and Human Resources, 2003, p.25).

An assistant teacher shall:

1. Work with young children with guidance from a qualified staff member who qualifies, at minimum, as a teacher;
2. Have the following qualifications:
 - A. Be at least eighteen years of age and have a minimum of one year of relevant work experience;
 - B. Have a high school diploma or a GED; and
 - C. Have a WVTCECE or its equivalent (WV Department of Health and Human Resources, 2003, p.25).

Japanese Kindergartens/Nursery Schools

Teachers for kindergartens and nursery schools are certified under different governmental agencies. It is either by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of

Health, Labour and Welfare. According to Takeuchi (1997), kindergarten teachers need to attend two or four years of college in order to obtain their teaching certificate. Then, he mentioned that “day care center (nursery schools) teachers, on the other hand, need only to have graduated from middle school (nine years of schooling), now the upper limit of compulsory education in Japan” (p.6). However, most nursery school teachers have completed junior college, and many go on to higher education. Currently, almost all of the kindergartens and certified nursery schools hire graduates who have a degree in early childhood and have a teaching certificate.

In Japan, the curricula of early childhood education in junior colleges and universities is more concentrated than the curricula in American colleges. Most students will choose the major because they want to be teachers of either kindergartens or nursery schools. After they finish the entire curriculum, they earn the teaching certificate for both kindergarten and nursery school.

For example, Nagoya Ryuujo Junior College (<http://www.ryujo.ac.jp>, June) is mainly for students who want to be a kindergarten or nursery school teacher. They have many useful classes for future teachers of young children. Some of them are very practical. They have classes for art (<http://www.ryujo.ac.jp/cull.htm>, June). The students can learn how to decorate in the classroom, how to play with clay, and so on. They also have a music class (<http://www.ryujo.ac.jp/cull.htm>, June). One of the requirements for kindergarten and nursery school teachers is the ability to play the piano or electric organ. Usually junior colleges or four-year colleges for kindergarten or nursery school teachers have a music class. Lastly, all of the students are required to have supervised practice at either a kindergarten or nursery school (<http://www.ryujo.ac.jp/cull.htm>, June).

Over ninety percent of the teachers are graduated from a junior college or other special school (Takeuchi, 1997). The other teachers are at a graduate or four-year university level.

Teacher/Child Ratio

American Child Care Center

Commonly each state government regulates child care centers' teacher/child ratio, and the child care centers have to follow the regulation. For example, twenty-eight states require teacher-child ratios of 1:5 or lower for children up to age 1.5 years. On the other hand, twelve states allow more than 1:7 for the same age children (Mulligan & Hoffman, 1998). Saluja, Early, and Clifford (2002) stated that high quality centers tend to have more teachers per child than low quality centers. The State of West Virginia (2003) noted that "When children are on the premises, a center shall ensure that at least two staff members are on duty at all times" (p.27). Then, they listed the teacher/child ratio.

6 weeks - 1 year:	1 qualified staff member to 4 children
1 year - 2 years:	1 qualified staff member to 4 children
2 years:	1 qualified staff member to 8 children
3 years:	1 qualified staff member to 10 children
4 years:	1 qualified staff member to 12 children
5 years – school age:	1 qualified staff member to 12 children
School Age:	1 qualified staff member to 16 children

(State of West Virginia, 2003, p88).

The regulations also stated exceptions. There were mainly three exceptions. During nap time, for children who are over twelve months of age each center must make sure that at least one qualified staff member stays in each classroom (State of West Virginia, 2003). In addition, when children participate in a water activity, the staff-child ratio changes drastically. For example, children who are between twenty-five months and fifty-nine months of age, a qualified teacher can have only four children at a time. For children who are sixty months or older, a qualified teacher can have eight of them. Lastly, when children have a field trip, “a center shall ensure that when a child is participating in a field trip, at least two qualified staff members are present at all times” (State of West Virginia, 2003, p.29).

Japanese Kindergartens/Nursery Schools

Compared to the American teacher-child ratio, the Japanese ratio is much higher. The Ministry of Education enacted regulations for kindergartens in 1956. It said that a teacher can have up to thirty-five children in a classroom (The Ministry of Education, 1956). The teacher does not have to have an assistant.

On the other hand, the nursery schools follow a regulation that was established by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. They set a little different ratio from the Ministry of Education. 1:30 ratio is for four and five years old children, and 1:20 is for three year old children. For children under two years old, the ratio is lower.

For two years olds and one year old, the ratio is 1:6. Below one year old, it is 1:3

(<http://www.ans.co.jp/kis/diffe.htm>, May 2003).

Quality

The United States

Quality of care is one of the key factors when parents choose child care for their children. In the United States, criteria for checking child care quality are health and safety requirements, interaction between teacher and children, developmentally appropriate curricula, group size, teacher-child ratio, and teacher training (Scarr, 1998).

Compared to other developed nations, the quality of American child care is considered as generally mediocre (Blau & Mocan, 2002). One study researched child care quality in four states, California, Colorado, Connecticut, and North Carolina (Helburn et al., 1995). Fifty non profits and fifty for profit child care centers joined the study from each state. The study rated each program according to three levels; poor, mediocre, and developmentally appropriate. Sixty-six percent of the child care centers were in the mediocre quality, and ten percent were in the poor. Therefore, only twenty-four percent were considered child care centers that have a developmentally appropriate quality.

This study also found that the more states have stringent licensing standards, the fewer the standards, the greater the number of poor quality child care centers (Helburn et al., 1995). If the child care centers have additional standards beyond the state's requirements, they tend to provide high quality service. In addition, if the centers were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), they tend to provide higher quality care than non-accredited centers do.

About forty percent of child care centers in the U.S are for-profit; for profit centers tend to have a lower level of quality than the other types of child care. In 1990,

teacher turnover rate was much higher at for-profit centers than non-profit centers. Teachers who are paid more tend to stay at the same child care centers longer than teachers who are paid less (Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002; Hofferth, 1996). Actually, Blau and Mocan (2002) found that teachers at non-profit centers earned a nine to eighteen percent higher wage than teachers at for-profit centers. Average teacher turn over rate was twenty-five percent in 1990 and was increasing since mid-1970s (Hofferth, 1996). If the teacher turn over rate is high, children cannot develop trusting and stable relationships with their caregiver (Scarr, 1998), so quality of care is considered low.

Teacher's salary and benefits are good predictors of quality of care at the center for both toddlers and preschoolers (Ghazvini and Mullis, 2002). Teacher's salaries have been decreased by twenty-five percent since 1970s. The average annual salary in child care was \$12,390 in 1990, and it was \$14,180 in 1976 (Hofferth, 1996; Gomby, Krantzler, Lerner, Stevenson, Terman & Behrman, 1996).

Not only are teachers' qualifications related to child care quality. High quality child care centers tend to have a good director who knows how to guide and motivate teachers (Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Textor, 1998). The director's education and role is an important contributor to quality.

Compared to relative care, babysitter or family child care, center-based child cares provide a more stable schedule. They do not close because of a teacher's absence. Usually they have substitute teachers when needed. Center-based child care typically serves larger numbers of children, on the average sixty children for a center (Clarke-Stewart, 1993). Therefore, more equipment and materials are generally available for the

children. In addition, many center-based child care centers have large outside playgrounds.

On the other hand, the center-based child care centers have a less flexible schedule. In general, they set the time that parents should pick up their children. If the parents are late, many child care centers charge a late fee. The child care centers also do not keep children who are sick or have a fever. When compared to babysitters or family child care, the center-based child-teacher ratio is quite large, especially for preschoolers.

Japan

More than ninety percent of Japanese children attend either kindergarten or nursery school (Boocock, 1995), and both child cares are regulated by Japanese government agencies. As described earlier, almost all of the teachers were educated and held teacher licenses. The teacher's status is not as low as most American child care providers who earn minimum wage. According to Nagoya City, a public nursery school teacher's first year salary is about \$1,780 a month if teacher has a bachelor degree with teaching certificate. If a teacher has an associate degree with teaching certificate, the salary is about \$1,560 a month. They are also able to get bonuses twice a year (Nagoya City Hoiku). In Japan, the teachers' status are protected by the Japanese government. Therefore, not as many teachers quit in a short period of time. A former teacher who worked at both Japanese kindergarten and nursery schools mentioned that all of the teachers had a meeting with the principal once a year and had to tell if they wanted to continue working next year (S. Fukazawa, personal communication, February 10, 2002).

She added that it was very difficult to quit in the middle of the school year if you did not have a good reason, such as moving far away.

Japanese kindergarten and nursery schools are regulated and partly funded by the government. Therefore, they rarely have difficulties financially. Usually, their buildings are very similar, and also the room structures are similar. They have moderate sized playgrounds and equipment. The curricula are also controlled by the government. It would be difficult to find a child care center that did not provide the same level quality care that the other centers did. As an exception, there are a few child care facilities that are not regulated by the government.

Cost

American Child Care Center

In the U.S., child care costs vary tremendously. Especially, if a child care center carries out a specific curriculum, such as Montessori method, the cost will become much higher than child care centers that do not carry out a specific curriculum. It also depends on the location of the child care centers. If the child care center is in a big city, needless to say the cost is higher. If the child care center is in rural area, the cost is less. Likewise, normally each child care center will decide how much they will charge. In the state of West Virginia (1982), one of the regulations includes “Fees charged” as a written policy that child care facilities have to establish before they open (p.8). As a unique example, the State of Georgia uses the lottery as the state income for statewide programs for four-year-old children (Bernett & Masse, 2003).

Moreover, when a child's age becomes higher, the child care cost usually declines (Walter & Goldsmith, 1996). As an example, the average family that had an employed mother and child under age five spent about \$79 per week for child care in 1993 (Hofferth, 1996), and full-time child care arrangement for children three to five years old cost about \$4,600 per year on average in 1993 (Gomby, Krantzler, Larner, Stevenson, Terman & Behrman, 1996).

It is rare for child care centers to get monetary support from the U.S. government. The federal government has supported and provided funding for American child care and early childhood education with small amounts during the past sixty years (Cohen, 1996). Economists have suggested that the United States does not invest enough money on young children (Gomby, Krantzler, Larner, Stevenson, Terman & Behrman, 1996). According to Clarke-Stewart (1993), only ten percent of the American child care centers obtain government funding. After more women entered the workforce, federal support for child care was increased. The governmental support was provided through the tax credit rather than subsidies or direct support for child care centers (Cohen, 1996).

Federal expenditures for early childhood education increased \$8.8 billion to \$16.3 billion between 1992 and 2001 (Kagan & Neuman, 2003). However, American parents are still paying about sixty percent of the expense for their children's child care while parents who are in other developed countries commonly cover only twenty-five to thirty percent of the expense for child care (Kagan & Neuman, 2002; Bernett & Masse, 2003). One research study revealed that the quality of child care program is higher in programs supported by subsidies, compared to program supported by parental fees (Fuller & Holloway, 2003). Researchers suggested that annually about \$40 billion is spent on child

care programs for children from birth through school age. Fifty percent of the funds come from parents, and forty-five percent are from federal, state, and local government. The rest of the percentage is from business, philanthropy, and other donations (Gomby, Krantzler, Larner, Stevenson, Terman & Behrman, 1996).

Japanese Kindergartens/Nursery Schools

Most Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools receive governmental and municipal support for their expenses (Boocock, 1987). Parents usually pay tuition in accordance with their income. There is a big difference between public and private. For public kindergarten, the fee was \$616 per year. For private, it was \$2,291 per year (Yoji kyoiku gyosei johou, May, 2003). If siblings go to the same school, the fee for the siblings is reduced.

Differences exist between kindergartens or nursery schools. The nursery schools set the fee by the amount of tax paid by each household. The fee is not set by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. It is set by each municipal government. In addition, unlike the kindergarten, if families live on welfare, they do not have to pay at all for the nursery school (Hoikuryo, March, 2003).

Summary

Similarities exist between Japanese and American child care systems. Both have evolved over the twentieth century in response to economic change. In both countries family size has decreased due to economic change. Japanese and American adults are getting married later and having fewer children. In both nations, women are increasingly

entering the workforce while rearing very young children. However, each nation has developed its own unique approach to child care.

American child care centers are mainly divided to two kinds of centers; non-profit and for-profit centers. American child care centers are regulated by each state government, not the federal government. Japanese child care is divided mainly into either kindergarten or nursery school. The main difference between the kindergarten and nursery school is the agency that govern them. Kindergartens are regulated and assisted financially by the Japanese Ministry of Education; on the other hand nursery schools are regulated and assisted financially by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Differences exist. In both types of Japanese schools, objectives seemed to be more detailed and were provided by the government. American child care centers established objectives at each center, with guidance from state government. Curriculum cannot be described as a whole because each American and Japanese child care center is different. Some centers use very effective educational curricula, and some centers do not have established educational curricula.

Teacher requirements and teacher/child ratio were especially different. American child care center teachers tend to have only high school diplomas, but most Japanese teachers now have at least an associate degree with a teaching certificate. In addition, the American teacher/child ratio is low. On the other hand Japanese teacher/child ratio still remains high in comparison.

Quality of programs is an issues of great concern in the United States, while Japanese programs seem to offer more consistent quality. Japanese schools are more extensively funded by the government so that cost is minimal for families. American

child care centers receive minimal government funding with most of the cost falling to families.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA COLLECTION

Information was gathered using primarily qualitative methods and was augmented by statistical data available in library documents to pursue an understanding of the issues presented by the use of child care. The qualitative methods included some documents, observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The quantitative method only included demographic data, such as census data. The study relied on multiple methods, including government documents, observations, interviews and questionnaires.

Each method has strengths and weaknesses. Documents provide demographic data and other general information, but such data is not specific to a particular setting. Observations are useful in learning about operations and behaviors but are limited to a specific time. Yin (1984) stated, "Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied" (p.85). Interviews and questionnaires are convenient to use, and it is usually unproblematic to obtain answers from participants. However, the respondents may target their responses to what they believe the researcher wants to know. Each method by itself is subject to bias. By combining these methods to search for information, it is possible to reduce bias and develop more accurate answers to questions.

Using multiple methods is called triangulation (Brewer & Hunter, 1989), a strategy that "tries to pinpoint the values of a phenomenon more accurately by sighting in on it from different methodological viewpoints" (p.17). In addition, multiple methods are useful to gain each method's individual strength but also to compensate for the particular fault and limitation. "Its fundamental strategy is to attack a research problem with an

arsenal of methods that have nonoverlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths” (p.17).

Observations and interviews fall under the category of ethnographic methods, also called field research, naturalistic inquiry, or participant observation (Prus, 1996). This research is identified as an ethnographic study augmented by documents. The word “ethnography” was originally a Greek word and means “the description of a people and its way of life” (Angrosino, 2002, p.1). At present, this method is used for many different kinds of research, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education (Tedlock, 2000). Ethnographic researchers frequently use multiple techniques to triangulate or view phenomena from different perspectives (Angrosino, 2002).

Methods

Documents

Documents are very useful and helpful for most research. Documents offer answers for questions and also can confirm information. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) mentioned that using documents can be “both substantively valuable and an economical way for researchers to expend scarce research resources” (p.217). Especially, in order to obtain both American and Japanese governmental information about child care systems, documents were very useful and trustworthy. Using a wide variety of documents increases the reliability of the information.

An extensive search for written materials was conducted to obtain considerable information about both American and Japanese schools. Since living in the United States during the research phase of the study, using available literature was very useful

information especially about Japanese early childhood education. Likewise, American census data and Japanese governmental data from documents were very useful.

Observations

There are mainly two types of observation. One is participant observation; the other is nonparticipant observation (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). Participant observation, like the name itself, “observers watch what people do, listen to what people say, and interact with participants” (p.196). For example, when a researcher goes to a child care center to observe a classroom, she does not only observe what children do in the class but also talks and plays with the children during the participant observation. On the other hand, “nonparticipant observation requires a detached, neutral, and unobtrusive observer” (p.205). Nonparticipant observation should avoid interaction with participants or minimize involvement because the interaction distracts their recording. In this type of observation, a researcher tries not to talk or play with the children. She tries to concentrate on her observation. The non-participant type of observation was used in the study.

In order to understand actual practices at each child care center both in the United States and Japan, classrooms were observed. Nonparticipant observation worked well since the focus was on the children and teachers in the classroom without any disturbances even though the children and teachers knew the observer’s existence in the classrooms.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted at the Japanese schools only. Each school principal provided only a short amount of time for the interview.

The interviews can be called “focused interview” (Yin, 1984, p.83) and “key-informant interview” (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p.166). The focused interview is usually conducted for a short period of time. “The interviews may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner”, according to Yin (1984, p.83). Key-informant interviews are conducted with an individual, called a key informant, who is willing to share their information and knowledge with the interviewer (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). Key informants are often selected because they have valuable information for the researcher, such as time, space, or perspective. The principals at each Japanese school were key informants. They shared valuable information with me, and they had more time to talk with me than the teachers in the classrooms. As a matter of fact, key-informant interviews have been used for many different kinds of ethnographic studies in education.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. Particularly in quantitative studies, the researcher has specific questions and limits responses to several possibilities. These questionnaires are easily quantified. However, some questionnaires are more open ended. While the questions are planned in advance, the responses are up to the respondent. These types of surveys most often are used in qualitative research.

Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers of the two American child care centers. They included very basic questions and were not difficult to answer. The questionnaires were used to gain additional information for this research.

Procedures

This study began in July 2002. Documents were gathered mainly either by Internet or library resources. Especially for the Japanese schools, the Internet was used extensively. It was difficult to get a lot of information about the Japanese child care system while conducting the research in the U.S. However, considerable information was available from the Japanese government homepages. The American government's information was available from both the Internet and the library. Demographic data was easily obtained from census reports.

Observations were conducted in both the United States and Japan. In Japan, I visited one kindergarten and one nursery school was visited in the summer of 2002. Appointments were made with the schools prior to observing classrooms. Then, in the summer of 2003, two nationally accredited licensed child care centers in West Virginia were visited.

Each observation was conducted for about two and a half hours. Notes were taken during the observation. The objective was to observe in the classrooms, but not to be involved in any activities that the children were doing. I was seen by the children and teacher in the classroom, so strictly speaking it was not totally non- participant observation because the presence of an observer has the potential to alter behavior of the individuals being observed.

In the Japanese schools, pictures of the children and classrooms were taken. Permission to take pictures was obtained in advance. In one of the American child care centers, permission was granted to take pictures of facilities but not the children. At the other center, permission was granted to take pictures of classrooms and the children whose parents had given permission. The pictures were used as a reference for additional notes that were made after existing the centers.

Short interviews were conducted at the Japanese kindergarten and nursery school. Principals were interviewed, and it was conducted in Japanese. Interview were conducted with ease since they were in Japanese. Classroom teachers were too busy to talk, but the principals had the time for the interviews. Before the classes started, the researcher was given about thirty minutes to talk to them. The researcher made notes for the questions during this very casual meeting.

For the American child care centers, instead of the interviews, questionnaires (Appendix A and B) were used. This method was used because English is a second language for the researcher and the teachers might have had difficulty understanding questions and their responses could have been easily misinterpreted without time to study them.

Different questions for the lead teachers and assistant teachers were developed in each child care center. They were distributed to them after the classroom was observed. The all the questionnaires were returned later. Sample questionnaires are in Appendix A and B.

In order to gather more information about American child care centers, telephone calls were made. The State of West Virginia Department of Human Services, the Fire

Marshal's Office, and the Department of Health were called. Individuals interested in starting a child care center contact these places first. These agencies provided the information for child care centers. A booklet of Childcare Center Licensing Regulations was especially useful.

The researcher requested of both the Japanese schools and the American child care centers to receive a copy of their school brochures. With the exception of the Japanese kindergarten, brochures were provided. According to the principal of the Japanese kindergarten, the kindergarten does not make a brochure in order to save on their budget. They give information only to parents who consider bringing their children to the kindergarten. For American child care centers, a copy of the tuition schedule was also provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the study and analyses of the findings. This research investigates two different countries' early childhood education systems, their differences and similarities. In the sections first, each school's observation is described separately, along with information that was gained from interviews with principals. Each section has details from the observation. This chapter includes questionnaire's results also. After reviewing in each section the literature from the last chapter, some key understandings are reviewed. Several recent news articles related to Japanese early childhood education are included in this chapter as additional information.

Observation and Interview Findings

Japanese Kindergarten

In the summer 2003, a Japanese kindergarten was visited. This kindergarten belongs to a university that has a department of early childhood education where students can earn teaching certification for kindergartens and nursery schools. This kindergarten had ten classes for children who are three to five years of age. They had four three year old classes, three four year old classes and three five year old classes. Typically, Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools name their classrooms with names of flowers, trees, or animals. Likewise, at this kindergarten, the three year old classrooms used names of small animals, such as squirrel or rabbit. The four-year-old classrooms had the names of flowers. The five-year-old classes used the names of trees. The children in each group are called by the classroom name.

The school principal was a male who had experience working at elementary schools and the other public schools. Therefore, he had the teaching certificate for elementary education. Several years ago before he came to the kindergarten as a principal, he was a principal of a school for children with special needs.

According to the principal, the kindergarten had two hundred eighty-six children at that time. He said that it is full and he could not take any more children in that school year. Japanese kindergartens are allowed to have up to thirty-five children in one class for one teacher, but they put two teachers in the three years old classrooms. Therefore, they had fourteen teachers. They are open from nine o'clock to two o'clock, five days a week.

The principal also reported about recruiting teachers for the kindergarten. During the visit, each class had about two college students who were observing. During the two week period of observation, they made teaching plans and played with the children. The kindergarten was a part of a university and located on the campus. The university had a teacher education major for kindergartens and nursery schools. According to the principal, some students who take the course were sent to the kindergarten for their credits while the other students were sent to other kindergartens or nursery schools. Then, usually the kindergarten hired the students who graduated from the university for their teachers.

This kindergarten had a big playground. There were several kinds of playsets on which the children could play. The center of the playground was open, so the children were using it for many things, such as running and playing with a big jump rope. Each classroom was a big square shape and was surrounded by large tall windows. Each room

had a connecting bathroom. Commonly, most Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools have either a piano or an electric organ in each classroom. This kindergarten had pianos for each classroom. The floor was wood and no carpet. It was summer time, so they put bamboo mats which tend to be cooler than carpeting on part of the floor. On one of the walls, were storage spaces for children, and a shoe shelf was outside of each classroom. Each classroom had low tables and chairs. Toys were unavailable to the children until a teacher retrieved them from boxes on shelves.

The visit to the kindergarten was scheduled for nine o'clock in the morning. There were already many children in the school, but according to the vice-principal, by ten o'clock all the children were scheduled to be there. Before nine o'clock, the teachers had a morning meeting everyday. Then, at ten o'clock, the teachers started the day. The vice-principal added that half of the children are dropped off by their parents or relatives, and the other half come by school bus which was free to all students.

On this particular day, a child arrived, took off her shoes outside of the classroom and put them into the shoe shelf that had her name on it. Each child had room shoes to change to. Then, she went to her storage space and started to take off her school uniform and openly changed to a swimsuit without apparent embarrassment. This kindergarten had two kinds of school uniforms, every child had to wear them daily. One was for when they came, and the other was for when they played. Boys wore pants, and girls wore skirts when they came to the school. After they came to the school, usually they changed to the other uniform that looked more casual and comfortable for playing. The children change uniforms openly. On the day I visited, they had water activities, so instead of the casual uniform, the children wore swimsuits. The children brought the swimsuits with

them and took them home at the end of the day. When the children changed to swimsuits, the classroom teachers helped the children. However, usually the children put their clothes in a bag and hung it in their storage space.

When the children arrived, they got a note from their school bag and took it to the teacher. It was what is called a “Communication notebook” between parents and the teacher. The teacher would write down something if she wanted to or needed to let the parents know something about the child on a daily basis. Likewise, the parents could write down anything freely if they had any concerns. Therefore, teachers check the notebook every morning.

After the children changed to their swimsuits, they either played with clay, blocks, or stuffed animals. These were the choices that the teacher gave them. The blocks and stuffed animals belonged to the school, but each child had their own clay and clay board. The children had a box for the things that they use, for example, clay, crayons, a pair of scissors, etc. After they finished playing with these, they cleaned up their own things and put the box in their storage spaces.

At 10:20 a.m., the teacher told the children to sit down on the floor around the piano and she started playing the piano. They sang a couple of songs about summer. For the last song, the children were told to stand up and make a circle. They sang and danced for the song. Most children seemed to remember how to dance and danced very cheerfully. Around ten thirty, the children were told to sit down again. The teacher got a book and started reading to them. Even though there were more than thirty children, all of the children were sitting down listening to the teacher. After the teacher read each

page, she asked questions of the children related to the book. The children spontaneously gave answers.

The vice-principal had indicated earlier that the objective of the school for the week was “water activity”. The classes for three year olds, played in a big sandbox with water. The four and five year olds played in a small wading pool that was a permanent structure at the school.

While the four years old classes were playing at the pool, the five years old children were singing and dancing. Around 11:00am, one of the five years old classes went to the pool. The teachers appeared to be following a set schedule for the pool. The pool was three meters by five meters and about waist deep on the children. Each class had about fifteen minutes to play. The vice-principal was at the pool and helped the teacher. In order to use time effectively, the next class was waiting beside the pool. While waiting the children stood around several tables, and on the tables were little cups that had colored water. The teacher explained about colors. After they finished playing at the pool, they went back to their classroom and changed to their casual uniforms.

While the older children were playing at the pool, the teacher took the three-year-olds to a big sand box outside. The sandbox had a roof and was approximately five meters by three meters. There were two three-year-old classes in the sand box at one time. They took turns with the other two classes. The teacher had the children sit around the sandbox and told them the rules and what they could not do. The teacher set out a couple of big tubs and added water to them. She also splashed water in the sandbox. Thus, the children could play with the mud. The children started playing by themselves and were playing freely. Some of the girls tried to make balls and seemed to pretend they

were food. They played at the sandbox for about twenty minutes. After that, the teacher started washing each child off outside. The children who were cleaned went inside the classroom and changed to their casual uniforms.

The kindergarten did not have their own kitchen, so a catering company brought them lunch. Before lunch, every child washed his hands. Every child also had a cup and towel with him or her. The cup was for gargling, and the towel for wiping their hands and face. When they washed their hands, they also gargled with their own cups. The children also brought chopsticks. After everyone was seated, the teacher distributed the lunchboxes. The lunchbox had everything in it. The teacher also distributed Japanese tea for everyone. When everyone got their lunchbox and tea, they said “Itadakimasu!” this means “thank you for preparing the food”. Then, they started eating lunch.

After the children finished lunch, they went outside and started playing. The children had to change to their outdoor shoes. They chose whatever they wanted to play. The teachers also came outside and played with the children. Each child had to wear a cap that had each classroom’s color. Therefore, each classroom teacher could find her children easily. The children played outside about thirty minutes, and then went back inside.

Next in the curriculum was inside play. In five year old classrooms, the teacher gave them three choices, drawing, playing with puzzles, and playing house. They were not allowed to play with other things. For inside play, the children were divided into groups. According to the teacher, the groups were changed monthly, sometimes weekly. It depends how well they worked together. The grouping helped the children to learn how to cooperate with other children.

About thirty minutes before two o'clock, the children started cleaning and were told to sit down on the floor. The teacher asked them questions, such as what they did today and what they thought about it. She also mentioned what they were going to do tomorrow. The children usually raised their hands if they wanted to say something. After talking, the teacher picked up a "Kamishibai" which is very similar to a book, but it is not bound together. It has about ten or fifteen pages. One side has a picture, and the other side has a story to read. The teacher read a story and sometimes asked the children questions.

At the very end of the day, the teacher started playing the piano, and everyone sang a good-bye song. It was only two o'clock when the children were saying good-bye. The children at the kindergarten did not have a naptime because they finished at two o'clock. Some of the children left for the school bus right away. If the children needed to wait to be picked up, they were allowed to play outside until their parents or a relative came. After the teacher cleaned the classroom, she went back to the teachers' room. All of the teachers met at the end of the day.

Japanese Nursery School

The nursery school was a private school that used the Montessori method for four and five year olds. The school principal, who was also owner, indicated that she was impressed by the Montessori school in the United States. This nursery school was private, so the principal's family managed the school. She was the principal for a long time and would be the principal until she retired. She started the use of the Montessori program at her school. The school opened from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., however as extended time

they allowed the parents to bring the children at 7:30 a.m. and pick them up as late as 6:15 p.m. if needed. The principal said that more than fifty percent of the children normally stay after 3:30 p.m. The school also opened half a day on Saturday.

The principal also mentioned teacher recruiting for the nursery school. Usually they post openings to two and four years universities that offer teacher education. She said that like other Japanese kindergartens or nursery schools, they hire teachers only if she or he has a teaching certificate. After new teachers started working, the other experienced teachers taught them about the Montessori method.

The nursery school accepted babies from eight weeks old to children up to five years old. They had a total of six classes. The nursery school used the names of the colors for each class; for example the five year old class was white. The five year old and four year old classes were combined. There were two teachers for almost sixty children in one big classroom. Sometimes when they needed to separate, they divided the children by classes or smaller groups.

The school visit was scheduled at nine o'clock on a Wednesday in July 2002. Many children in the four and five year old preschool class had already arrived. This nursery school did not have a school bus, so usually people who lived near the school took their children to the school. Like the Japanese kindergarten, they had two kinds of school uniforms. When the children arrived at school, they changed to the casual uniform. The teachers did not have to help preschool children change their clothes. The children also had to take off their shoes and become bare foot. It was one of the school policies. Every morning, the teachers had a morning meeting and discussed what they were going to do.

This nursery school did not have a huge playground compared to the kindergarten. The ground was rubber. The principal said that the rubber ground would prevent severe injury if the children fell down or hit their heads on the ground. The school had a gymnasium and a kitchen. Each classroom was surrounded by big windows, like the kindergarten. Its floor was wood. They did not have carpet for the preschool classroom. The preschool children had one big room, but it was separated into several centers, a writing center, coloring center, sewing center, and so on.

The nursery school's program was based on the Montessori method. They also stated their objectives, such as to nurture a child's independence, to develop basic physical capabilities, to help develop sociability, and to nurture creativity. As a morning activity, they had a special activity beginning at 9:20 a.m. On Monday, they had a swimming lesson, Tuesday was for physical activities, Wednesday was music, and Friday was drawing. Each day except Thursday and Saturday, they had special teachers for each class. On Thursday and Saturday, they do classroom activities based on the Montessori method.

During the visit on Wednesday, they were having the music activity. The children went to the gym for the activity. There were two music instructors for the class and one teacher. The preschoolers were divided into two groups of thirty children. The children were told to find a partner. When one of the music instructors started playing the piano, the other music instructor told the children what to do. The children sang and danced and seemed to have done this activity before.

After the children sang and danced, the music instructor brought tambourines. She drew the music notes on the white board for the next song, "Twinkle Twinkle Little

Star”. She put dots on several places. She gave the tambourines to five children and explained to them that they could hit the tambourines on the dotted places. The other children sang, and the five children were concentrating on when they were supposed to hit the tambourines. The music instructor pointed out where the notes as they were singing, but for the five children it seemed to be a little difficult to get the timing right. According to the teacher, it was the first time for them to do this activity.

The next activity was playing the hand bells. Six children were chosen by the music instructor and given one hand bell. Each student had a different note from ‘do’ to ‘la’. The music instructor wrote down the note for the song and tried to explain to the children how to play the music. The other music instructor played the piano a little, and then the children had to play the hand bells with the piano sound. All the children had turns. Some of them could play the hand bell when they needed, but most children seemed to not be sure when they needed to play their bells. Therefore, when the music instructor gave the children signs, they played correctly.

Around 10:20 a.m. the children who did the music activity moved back to their classroom. The other half of the preschool children came to the gym and started doing the activity. After all the children went back to the classroom, they separated spontaneously into multiple small groups. One group worked on math, writing up to one hundred; another did addition, or another group did subtraction. Another group worked on Japanese letters. As a note, this school was a nursery school, so it was regulated by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Strictly speaking, the Ministry of Education prohibited teaching children Japanese letters and numbers, but the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare does not. And still another group sewed on papers. On

each paper were lines and numbers. The children could follow the lines and numbers when they sewed. They used yarn and big needles for sewing. In the middle of the room, a teacher and several children were sitting down on the floor. The teacher had two pyramids shaped cones and appeared to be teaching the children something with them. It was a part of the Montessori method.

The children worked not as a group, but did this as an individual task. After the child mastered the task, he or she moved to the next task. Each group did not have the same number of children nor did they work together. Before observing, the principal showed me a task book for the children. It listed tasks that the children should complete. Everyday, the classroom teachers checked the book and noted what each child achieved. The children took the book home, so parents could also look at what the children did at school. The book is returned the next day.

The children were working on their tasks for one hour until lunch time. Around 11:30 a.m., the teachers told the children to start cleaning up. Each child cleaned up the place they worked. After they cleaned up, they were told to use the bathroom and wash their hands. At this school, the children had to set the table for lunch by themselves.

According to the classroom teacher, after lunch, the children have a nap time until two o'clock. Then, they have a snack time. After that, usually they go out to the playground and play. They also have caps for everyone, and each classroom uses a different color. Before 3:30 p.m. the teacher usually gathered all of the children and discuss the day. Then after some of the children leave, the other children usually work on their tasks or just played with their classmates until their parents come to pick them up.

American Child Care

Center A

The Center A visit was scheduled for Friday, May 9th. Upon arrival at nine in the morning, the researcher found that the front door was locked. After ringing the doorbell and verbally indicating who was at the door, the researcher was admitted. The director escorted the researcher to a classroom for four and five years olds. It was mixed aged group. One lead teacher, an assistant teacher, and a foster grandparent were in the room.

The classroom was one big room and connected to the bathroom. They had a house-keeping center, a reading center, and carpet space. There were several low tables and chairs for the children. Several shelves contained toys and blocks and a separate unit provided storage spaces for personal belongings. They also had two computers that the children could use. Unlike Japanese schools, the classroom had only one window to the outside. There were additional windows to the hall. The room was very cool because of air conditioning.

Upon entering the classroom, the children were eating their breakfast. After the children finished eating, they took their plates and cleaned up by themselves. After breakfast, the lead teacher told the children to go to the carpet and sit down. They started singing a morning song. The teacher sang with the children. She did not play any instruments. After they sang the song, the teacher read a book. While the lead teacher and the children were doing these things, the assistant teacher cleaned the tables. There was a boy who did not sit with the other children; he was walking around. Both the lead and assistant teacher told him to sit down, but he did not obey. The teachers told him several times, but they did not actually make him sit down with the other children.

The next activity was free play. Basically, the children could choose what they did. However, there were several activities that the teachers set out. One of them was painting their mothers' faces. May 10th was Mother's Day, so the teachers wanted the children to draw their mothers' faces. At the big table, the lead teacher put white papers, paints, brushes and cups of water. Whoever wanted to do paint could come to the table and start painting. On the other table, the assistant teacher set Lego blocks. On the carpet, a box of dinosaur toys were laid. Three boys were playing with the dinosaurs. The computers were located near the carpet. Two children played computer games, and several children were watching them. In the house-keeping area, three girls were playing together. Each of them had a baby doll. They packed toy food in a backpack and then moved to the carpet place with the baby dolls and the backpack. They pretended to have a picnic. The lead teacher, assistant teacher and foster grandparent played with the children. The teachers tried to visit each play groups and become involved in the play.

During this play time, the children did not clean up when they finished playing at one place. For example, after a child drew her mother's face on a paper, she put the drawing away to let it dry. She did not have to clean the brush or change the water. At that time, there were nineteen children in the room. According to the lead teacher, it was the usual number of the children. Before the teachers told the children to clean up, they started putting sunscreen on each child one by one. After they finished it for all the children, the children started cleaning up.

After the children cleaned up, they were told to sit on the carpet. Even though the lead teacher told them to be quiet, the children were still talking. The teacher planned to do a special activity. However, the children did not become quiet, so the teacher told

them that she would not do the activity at that time. She told them that she might do it later if they would listen. She called each child's name who was being quiet and told him or her to line up near the door. If the children did not stop talking, she did not pick them. It took a little time to have all of them line up. After they lined up, the lead teacher took the children to the hall. In the hallway, they started singing; some children sat on the floor while the other children stood. Not all of the children were singing. However, the teacher seemed unconcerned.

Finally, the teacher took them to the playground. The playground was a little small compared to the Japanese schools, about 10 meters by 10 meters. At the center of the playground was a big playset. The teachers took some bicycles and balls for them. They did not have a sand box on the playground. Only the children of one class used the playground at any one time. The children played freely. If they had a problem, usually they came to the teachers and told them. Several times, the lead teacher and assistant teacher were talking about topics that were not related to the job.

After the outside playtime, the children and teachers went back to the classroom. The lead teacher told the children to go to the carpet and sit down. The assistant teacher called several children to help set tables for lunch. They did not wash their hands. The assistant teacher did not tell them to wash their hands either. They just started distributing cups and silverwares.

On the carpet, each child was sitting with an object that she or he brought from home. The lead teacher called the children's names one by one. The child who was called went to the front of the group and showed everyone what she brought. The child also explained what s/he brought. According to the lead teacher, they do that activity

every Friday. After every child had a turn, they were told to wash their hands and have a seat. The children had a nap time after lunch.

Center B

This center was visited on May 13th, 2003. This child care center also did not let people enter inside freely. The front door was locked. Visitors were required to ring the doorbell. Upon arrival in the classroom, the children were having a free play time. The lead teacher indicated that the assistant teacher was off for the day. There was a graduate student present from Marshall University. She was earning course credit, so she was helping the lead teacher. The lead teacher told me that a substitute teacher was supposed to come around ten o'clock to assist her.

The class was for only preschool children who were going to Kindergarten after this summer. They had two connected rooms. One room had a computer, books, house keeping, and a drawing section. The other room had wooden blocks, board games, other toys, and the children's storage spaces. The room also had a carpeted space. Each room had a big low table and chairs. The children usually ate at the tables or sometimes worked on their activities at these tables. When they were not using the tables, the chairs were stacked in one place.

At 9:10 a.m., the lead teacher told the children to start cleaning up. Then, the children were told to sit down on the carpet. At 9:15 a.m., the teacher started singing a morning song with the children. Unlike Japanese schools, she did not play the piano or any instruments. The activities on the carpet seemed to have an order. After the song, the teacher asked the children about the date. On the wall, there was a helper list. It had

ten different categories for the children's roles, such as line leader, door holder, snack helper, and so on. Every week, the lead teacher changed the children's names. Fourteen children's names were on the board, so not everyone had a task. One child's task was to tell everyone the date. The lead teacher pointed him out, and he answered. Likewise, there was also a child who reported about the weather for the day and a child who counted how many children were in the class.

According to the lead teacher, each week has a special topic for the group time. The topic for the week was baby. Each child had to bring several pictures of her or himself from when she or he was a baby to a recent picture. The teacher showed the pictures one by one starting from when they were babies. Then, the children had to guess who it was. It seemed to be a lot of fun. The children were excited to guess who the baby was. The teacher had pictures for five children.

After the guessing game, the lead teacher started reading a book. The book was about feelings. The story seemed to be familiar to the children. Before the teacher went to the next page, she asked questions about the next page. The children tried to remember and answer the questions. The children were excited to answer. Reading the book was the last activity for the group time. The group time was more than thirty minutes. There were twelve children at that time. All of the children joined the activities.

Around 9:50a.m., the children went outside with the lead teacher. The playground was much bigger than the Center A's playground. It had a big playset, three colored tires, a sand box, climbers, basketball net, and so on. There were children who were from other classes, too. There were bicycles that the children could ride on bike paths. The children were allowed to ride the bicycles only on the bike paths.

The playground was separated into two parts. One was for older children, and the other was for younger children. Center B had another separated playground for toddlers. The children in the class for five years olds went to the big playground. The children chose what to play by themselves. They were playing freely with their classmates and children from other classes. The lead teacher walked around and watched the children. Around 10 a.m., the substitute teacher arrived. The lead teacher left the playground, and fifteen minutes later she came back outside.

At 10:35 a.m., the lead teacher told the children to go inside. When they went back to the classroom, the children were told to sit on the carpet. On the tables in each room, art activities were already set. While the children were playing outside, the lead teacher had set out the art activities and other activities. A dinosaur puzzle was on the carpet. The lead teacher told the children that they could play on the computer, but they could only play a new alphabet game. At last, at the writing center, there were papers and markers with alphabet tracers. During this playtime, the children could choose whatever they wanted from the choices that were given.

After the lead teacher explained about the activities and their rules, the children left for whatever they wanted to play. One of the art activities was using alphabet stamps. The lead teacher stayed and helped the children at the table. Some children were spelling their names or words with the stamps while the other children were playing with them freely.

The other art activity was painting with a cotton ball. The substitute teacher was helping the children at the table. At first, when the lead teacher explained the rules, she told them to use only the cotton ball. However, a child started using her hands. Then, the

other children at the table started using their hands, too. Therefore, the substitute teacher allowed them to use their hands. The children seemed to have a lot of fun with it. After they finished painting, they had to wash their hands. Each teacher was responsible for each room until the play time was over.

Around 11:30 a.m., the lead teacher told the children to clean up and wash their hands. After the children washed their hands, they chose their seats and sat down for lunch. There were several children who wanted to help set the table for lunch. The lead teacher let them help set tables. Like Center A, the children took a nap after lunch.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed to the lead teacher and assistant teacher of each American child care center. Four completed questionnaires were returned. Five of the questions were the same for both the lead teacher and assistant teacher.

At center B, both the lead teacher and assistant teacher hold bachelor's degrees, however the assistant teacher's major was social work. On the other hand, neither teacher at center A had a bachelor's degree. The lead teacher at center A is now attending Marshall University. The lead teacher and assistant teacher at center A have a meeting daily, but the teachers at center B have a meeting only once a month. At both centers, the lead teacher and assistant teacher were involved in planning curriculum for the classroom. According to center A's assistant teacher, she has to report what she did in the class to the lead teacher everyday or every week. However, center B's assistant teacher answered that he does not have to report that to anyone at all. Both the lead teachers at center A and B answered that they have an official meeting with the director

once a month. In addition, according to center A lead teacher, they have a regular meeting with children's parents two times per year. At center B, they have a regular meeting with parents once every three months. At center A, the lead teacher has to report what they did in the class to the director every week, but at center B, the lead teacher does not have to. At last, three out of four teachers answered that the most difficult thing while they were working with the preschool children was dealing with children's behaviors. I saw at least one child from each center who could not sit with the other children when everyone was supposed to sit on the carpet and engage in activities together.

Documents

After reviewing many resources about both American and Japanese early childhood education, I found some similarities and differences. As time passed, each country tried to adjust its education system to needs of the society.

In the United States, mainly each state government regulates child care centers, not the federal government. On the other hand, the Japanese government regulates schools for children who are under school age which is six. The Japanese government seems to be more involved in the early childhood education system than American state governments. The Japanese government establishes the main objectives for the both kindergartens and nursery schools and controls teacher requirements. American child care centers usually make their own objectives and hire teachers who match their needs, not governmental needs. However, states provide general guidelines in their regulations for child care centers. When people want to open a child care center in the United States,

they have to follow the very basic rules that the state governments set up. They are minimum standards for operation designed for the safety of children..

Both American federal and state governments are not involved much in the details of early childhood education system, so they do not invest money in child care. Usually, in the United States, if you want to open a child care center, you have to have money to begin and have to develop your own curriculum, policies and procedure. In Japan, the government regulates and becomes involved in many different ways, so they also take responsibility financially, too. Each kindergarten and nursery school gets a budget from the government every year. The money goes to the teachers' salaries, maintenance of the building, buying school materials, and so fourth. Because of the governmental support, Japanese teachers tend to earn respectable salaries while many American child care center teachers are earning close to the minimum wage. Mainly because of this wage difference, American child care teachers' turn over rate is much higher than Japanese teachers'. Funding of child care is a major difference between the American and Japanese early childhood education systems.

Teachers' requirements are also different. Japanese kindergarten or nursery school teachers' requirements are strict; they must have degrees; On the other hand requirements for American child care teachers are not so stringent. In Japan, currently people who want to be teachers at either kindergarten or nursery school have to gain a teaching certificate. In order to gain that, they have to attend either a four-year college, two-year college, or special school and choose a major in early childhood education. Having the teaching certificate is a minimum requirement for Japanese kindergarten and nursery school teachers. However, in the United States, state governments establish

minimum requirement for teachers, often only a high school diploma for assistant teachers, occasionally even for lead teachers.

Teacher and child ratios are very different between American child care centers and Japanese schools. American child care centers have much smaller class sizes compared to Japanese schools. For example, for three year old children, one teacher can have ten children in American child care center. At Japanese nursery schools, one teacher can have twenty children ages three, and one teacher can have thirty-five children ages three at Japanese kindergartens. It is a big difference. For five years old children, one American child care center teacher can have twelve children. Japanese nursery school teachers can have thirty children ages five, and kindergarten teachers can have thirty five children ages five. Therefore, Japanese schools allow two times and more children per teacher.

Most American child care centers use the schedule that were used by the child care centers in West Virginia. Normally, American children who go to the child care centers were given more choices for their activities, compared to the children who go to the Japanese schools. Japanese curricula are more structured. Japanese teachers plan each activity and each day specifically and give children more direct instructions. On the other hand, the NAEYC suggests to American early childhood educators that Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs is child centered instruction. Child centered instruction give each child developmentally age appropriate choices in which she/he can engage.

These two developed countries have some similar social characteristics; high percentage of female labor force participation and high numbers of nuclear families.

These are two essential reasons that people will use child care services for their children. Every year, more women join the labor force and have work responsibilities. The number of nuclear family are increasing, and many of them have dual incomes because of female participation in the labor force. Both in the United States and Japan, people's demands for child care services are getting higher, and people who need the services consider the quality of care as important.

Recent Trends

As for future plans, the Japanese government announced a new type of school last year and the media released the information to the public. In June, 2003. Both the Japanese Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare decided to consider establishing a new type of total facility jointly for under school age children (New facility part one, July, 2003). The new facility is going to be distinguished from the kindergartens and nursery schools. Both ministries will finish making the actual plan for the new facility by 2006. If this plan comes true, many flexible child care services can be available for parents. The Japanese government is hoping that this flexible services helps many parents who want that kind of child care services. In November, officially the Japanese government started introducing this new facility plan for 2006 (New facility part two, November, 2003). They will develop all the ideas and details for the plan next year, and then it will be started in some cities in 2005 as a trial.

The next article on the future plans was released in August. It was about service for the Japanese kindergartens. Many kindergartens now have extended time service. According to the article (2003), six years ago, forty-six percent of private kindergartens

had the extended time service while only five percent of public kindergartens had extended time service. Because of increasing women's employment, recently the rate of using this service at kindergartens increased drastically. In 2003, almost eighty-five percent of private and nearly forty percent of public kindergarten have the extended time service. The needs are growing, so the Ministry of Education decided to extend more hours starting in 2004. Usually, kindergartens have four extra hours for the service, but this plan adds two more hours, totally six hours.

Lastly, another article mentioned that the number of children on waiting lists for nursery schools has reached a total of 26,400 children in 2003. Unfortunately, the need has been growing recently and year the 2003 record was the highest number in the past, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Waiting list, August, 2003). Seventy percent of children on the list are between zero to two years old. Since 2002, the Japanese government has urged each nursery school to admit more children, but obviously more people need child care than the government offers.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Six basic research questions were introduced in Chapter one. The questions were very functional for comparing American and Japanese early childhood educations.

How is each country's government involved in the child care system?

Overall, the United States government is not involved as much as the Japanese government in childcare. The main two Japanese schools for under school age children are actually regulated by different government ministries; The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools have to follow their regulations, such as recruiting new teachers, curricula, and so on. The Japanese government also supports kindergartens and nursery schools financially. The Japanese government is involved in the kindergartens and nursery schools to help each school and keep the quality of Japanese early childhood education system for its society.

On the other hand, in the United States, only about ten percent of child care centers are supported by the government financially. Most of them, they are the Head Start programs. Each state government is involved in the child care system a little more than the federal government. Usually, before a child care center is established, the state government inspects the center and continues to monitor it every few years.

Is child care affordable to the families?

In the United States, most child care centers rarely obtain financial support from either the federal or state government. The centers usually run their businesses by the fees that are paid by the children's parents. When child care centers are run inexpensively so that parents are better able to afford them the quality is usually low. However, if parents want the children to attend a good quality child care center, the cost is much greater. It really depends on each child care center and the location. Research stated that most American parents spend much more on their child care compared to other developed countries' parents (Kagan & Neuman, 2002; Bennett & Masse, 2003).

Japanese parents whose children attend either kindergarten or nursery school have to pay tuition depending on their income. However, it depends on whether the school is public or private. Public schools are much cheaper than private schools. Even the private schools are still affordable. If the parents live on welfare, for nursery schools, they do not have to pay at all. This is very helpful for low income Japanese families, especially for working single parents.

How is child care financed?

Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools are supported by the national government and municipal government financially. They set a certain amount of budget for early childhood education for every year. Each school gets the school budget every year. The budget is used for anything, such as maintaining their facility, buying school materials, paying teachers and so fourth. Fees from children's parents help the school budget also.

Most American child care centers do not acquire financial support from the federal and state government. Usually the owner or director gathers money for opening a child care center and starts the business. They continue running their business with money from children's parents. Financially, American parents are basically supporting American child care centers.

How is child care regulated?

American child care centers are regulated by each state government. Each state government has regulations for child care centers, and the centers have to follow them. However, state requirements are the minimum standards for operation and are below standards consider high quality. For example, the West Virginia government lists very basic rules for child care centers. Teacher and child ratios that are set by each state varies also. Organizations, such as NAEYC, provide centers suggestions for good quality care and also evaluate the actual quality for the centers through an accreditation process.

The Japanese government does regulate both kindergartens and nursery schools. They set qualifications for teachers, salaries, objectives, basic curricula and so on. Kindergartens and nursery schools have to follow the government guidelines, so basically their contents are very similar even though different Ministries regulate. In addition, there is a movement urging kindergartens and nursery schools to collaborate.

What kind of quality issues do child care providers have?

Almost all Japanese teachers have at least associate degrees and teaching certificate for early childhood education. American child care system needs to change teachers' qualifications. This is likely to continue until better funding exists. Good

quality child care centers exist in the United States which are usually expensive.

American child care centers need more support and more strict regulation to create a better quality child care system in the United States.

One point was very different: the teacher and child ratio. At the Japanese schools, teacher and child ratio is very high. Especially kindergartens, a teacher can have up to thirty-five children in the classroom. Having thirty-five children for one teacher makes it difficult to give individual attention to each child. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare are working to minimize their differences about kindergartens and nursery schools. One of the objectives is changing teacher and child ratios.

It might not be the issue, but I had the impression that the children at the school were more energetic compared to the children at the kindergarten. As a matter of fact, in Japan, many people say that children who go to kindergartens tend to be more polite and well behaved. On the other hand, children who go to nursery schools tend to be active and not as well mannered. It was considered a reflection of the nurturing at home. Likewise, in the United States, it was considered that children who attend preschools tend to be better behaved than children who go to child care centers. The difference was considered to be caused by the fact that nursery school children have working parents who have less time to spend with them.

What are their curricula?

Each State government sets child care regulations and makes general recommendations for curricula in the United States. Each child care center decides what kind of a curricula they use. Types of curricula varies from very simple to specific ones.

Normally, if a child care center does not use any specific curriculum, the children engage in free play most of their time at center. However, some child care centers use unique and effective curriculum in the United States.

Basic ideas for Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools are slightly different. The nursery schools were originally established for taking care of children in a safe and clean environment; on the other hand the kindergartens were established for providing children stimulation cognitively and socially. However, both the Ministries do not include in their objectives teaching Japanese letters or numbers because neither Ministry does not want to force children to learn these things before entering elementary schools. The Japanese government sets objectives that kindergartens and nursery schools follow. The objectives are very basic ideas. Keeping the objectives as the foundations, each school decides details of their curricula.

Governmental funding of early childhood programs has benefited the Japanese system. Quality is much less an issue. It allows for the hiring of certified teachers. While the teacher child ratios need adjustment, families are able to afford good care for their children. Early childhood education in the United States promotes better funding of child care. Because both countries have similar economics and changing family organization, better funding for American child care should be possible.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Center Name

Lead Teacher's Name

*If you do not work in the preschoolers' classroom now, please remember when you did.

1. When did you start working at the center?(Month/Year) [/]

2. What kind of degree do you have? (High school diploma, Bachelor, Master's)

If you have a college degree, please write down your major.

[] [Major:]

3. Your center is accredited by []

4. How often do (did) you have an official meeting with parents?

[Once]

5. How often do (did) you have an official meeting with your assistant teacher?

[Once]

6. How often do (did) you have an official meeting with the director?

[Once]

7. Do (Did) you use specific theories of learning or of instruction for your classroom? If you do (did), please list the name(s).

[Yes No] []

8. Do (Did) you have to report what you did in the class to the director everyday/week?

[Yes No]

9. Do (Did) you make a curriculum for the class or make it with somebody (the assistant or director)?

[]

10. What is (was) the goal for the class?

[]

11. What is (was) the most difficult thing while you are (were) working with the preschoolers?

[]

Thank you for your cooperation and time.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Center Name

Assistant Teacher's Name

*If you do not work in the preschoolers' classroom now, please remember when you did.

1. When did you start working at the center? (Month/Year) [/]

2. What kind of degree do you have? (High school diploma, Bachelor, Master's)

If you have a college degree, please write down your major.

[] [Major:]

3. How often do (did) you have an official meeting with your lead teacher?

[Once]

4. Do (Did) you make a curriculum for the classroom with the lead teacher?

[Yes No]

5. Do (Did) you have to report what you did in the class to the director or lead teacher everyday/week?

[Yes No]

6. What is (was) the most difficult thing while you are (were) working in the preschooler's classroom?

[]

Thank you for your cooperation and time.

APPENDIX C

Dear Teachers,

Hello.

Thank you for letting me observe your preschoolers' classroom in May.

As I asked you before, this time I sent you and your assistant teacher questionnaire sheets. I would like you to answer the questions. Your answers will be used as reference for my thesis. (If you are not teaching in the preschoolers' class any more, please remember when you were working in the class.)

If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone or e-mail.
Thank you for your collaboration.
I hope you have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

Shizue Niwano (York)