

An Outline of Mimamoru Childcare

1. Childcare Ideals

Catch Phrases: Coexistence and Contribution

■ Coexistence

Build a society where children accept and coexist with others, realize that they live in a diverse environment, learn to deepen their understanding about others' existence and enrich it.

■ Contribution

Children who are pleased to aim at (contribute to) better coexistence by using wisdom and knowledge acquired through various experiences.

2. Childcare Policies

Catch Phrase: Childcare that Nurtures Children's Independence

Childcare that secures a life where children-driven activities are the key (nurtures such a life).

Childcare that secures play where voluntary activities by children are the key (nurtures independence).

Childcare in line with each child's individuality (nurtures individuality).

Childcare that values relationship with people (nurtures social skills).

3. The Objectives of Childcare

Catch Phrase: A Child Who is Natural, Enthusiastic and Considerate

A child who identifies a topic, thinks and acts by itself (child who acts independently).

A child who can do whatever he wants (motivated child).

A child who likes itself (child who has self-esteem).

A child who can share the happiness of others.

4. Method of Childcare

Catch Phrase: Mimamoru Childcare

Multi-age childcare without vertical divisions.

Children-driven childcare.

Childcare with choice according to aim.

Childcare that values relationships.

Team childcare (staff group).

Concept Diagram of a Childcare Curriculum

Ideals for Operation of a Nursery School	Propose a new pre-school education in view of the declining birth rate and changes in the perception of future academic ability			
Childcare Ideals	Coexistence and contribution			
Key concepts for Childcare	Independence	Initiative	Individuality	Relationships
Childcare Policy	Childcare that promotes independent activities of children	Childcare that ensures play for children's initiative	Childcare in line with the attributes of each child	Childcare that values relationships with people
Context	Life	Play	Each individual	Others
Objectives of Childcare	A child who is always natural, motivated and considerate			
Characteristics to be Nurtured	Foster Life	Nurture independence	Nurture individuality	Nurture involvement
Image of the Child	A child who identifies a topic, thinks and acts by itself (independent child)	A child who can do whatever he/she wants (motivated child)	A child who likes itself (a child who has self-esteem)	A child who can share others' happiness (considerate child)
Words that denote a child's image	Independence	Enthusiasm	Natural	Gentle with others
The Ideals of the Method of Childcare	Mimamoru childcare			
Methods of Childcare	A Multi-age childcare without vertical divisions B Child-driven childcare C Selective childcare according to aim D Selective childcare values relationships E Team childcare (staff group)			

The Aims & Contents of Mimamoru Childcare

A Multi-Age Childcare Without Vertical Divisions

Important Points	Direction of Practice	Aims	Contents	Reference Materials
Importance of experiencing children's society	Experience of urban community by children	With the declining population, Children's groups at school have assumed importance as there are traits that cannot be nurtured at home. For children, children's groups are vital, as there are many things that cannot be nurtured in life based on age-specific childcare. The significance of multi-age childcare is enormous.	For children up to one year, childcare based on the stage of development and not the age will be carried out. For children between three and five years, multi-age childcare based on individual choices will be carried out. Activities according to each child's development are possible as children are in a multi-age group.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21st Century Type Childcare, Multi-age Children's Group Without Vertical Divisions (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.)
Experiencing from various standpoints	Ensure self-discovery	For self-independence in the future, it is indispensable to experience diverse relationships. This happens because children are in a group, and each child can learn about itself based on these experiences.	Children can understand their ways by experiencing 'assisting-type childcare', such as an older child experiencing life in the infants' room	
Unification of care and education	The actual practice of the principles of childcare and education	Through the suitable gratification of various desires, children become emotionally stable, and are able to indulge in play and activities in line with issues of development. In my opinion, the backbone of care in childcare is emotional stability.	All the contents of Kindergarten Instruction Procedure and Guidelines for Centre-Based Care will be taken care of.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21 st Century-type Childcare 3. Children of age 2 class (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.)

B Child-Driven Childcare

Important Points	Direction of Practice	Aims	Contents	Reference Materials
Childcare through self motivated play	Play Museum	Instead of regular 'en masse childcare (school-type method of teaching), guarantee an environment where children can do whatever they want, whenever they want to. Playing equipment, environment, layout in line with development issues are to be planned.	Zones for creative activities are to be arranged. Children can select and carry out the activities they want to (with an inquiring mind).	Book: From Hands-on to Mimamoru Childcare (Published by Gakken Kyoiku)
From passive to participative childcare	Workshop type of childcare	The modality of set childcare is that the caregiver needs to ingenuously develop suitable games instead of giving the children a free choice and they participate in several activities arranged by the caregiver.	In the play zone, mouldings, picture books, puzzles, blocks, etc. are to be arranged. From free choice by the children, subject matters and materials as well as diverse plays will be born.	
Childcare where motherhood & fatherhood are balanced	Deepen the contents of support	From the normal childcare which tended to be 'hands-on', proactive shift to Mimamoru childcare from the viewpoint of ensuring independence.	It becomes possible to give children the required experiences through the ideal support and basic stance of the caregiver. (Not do things for children but watch over them doing things independently).	

C Selective Childcare According to the Aims

Important Points	Direction of Practice	Aims	Contents	Reference Materials
Accommodate differences among individuals	Independent playing, eating and sleeping	It is desirable that to guarantee the lifestyle rhythm and to suitably carry out each of the activities, places for playing, eating and sleeping are separate. By dividing these spaces, there can be play with a sense of attainment, pleasant meals with less likes and dislikes and afternoon naps maintaining each individual's pace.	Based on an efficient layout and flexibility in the nursery, each place is effective and children's activities are also guaranteed.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21 st Century-type Childcare, Multi-Age Children's Group Without Vertical Divisions (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.)
From age-based classification to development-based classification	Use of development process record software 'Mimamoru Childcare'	In order to carry out childcare based on each individual's development and not based on age, first of all it is necessary to grasp the development issues of each child precisely. For that, the check-type 'development record software' based on the Guidelines for Centre-Based Care and Kindergarten Instruction Procedure is to be used and several caregivers will try to grasp each child's multi-directional development precisely.	By using the latest 'Development Process Record Sheet', not just for infants, the annual plan of each young child can be prepared. Such records are indispensable to continuously and objectively watch over the growth of children.	Development Process Record Software 'Mimamoru Childcare' (Developed by the Childcare Environment Research Centre Giving Tree/Caguya Production)
Objective-based childcare groups	Proposal for a new form of childcare	Creatively use different forms of childcare depending on the objectives, such as 'selective childcare' aimed at the proficiency of the mind; 'proficiency-dependent childcare' aimed at the proficiency of the body; 'order selection type of childcare' aimed at physical experience; 'age-specific childcare' where age-specific activities are necessary; and 'general childcare' needed when the caregiver shows the model, etc.	By creatively using diverse forms of childcare such as selective childcare, proficiency-dependent childcare, order selection type of childcare, age specific childcare, general childcare, etc., development issues can be suitably provided.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21 st Century Type Childcare, Multi-Age Children's Group Without Vertical Divisions (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.)

D Childcare that Values Relationships

E Team Childcare (Staff Group)

Important Points	Direction of Practice	Objectives	Contents	Reference Materials
Four co-relational axes	Development of a new lifestyle	Child rearing is originally carried out by four co-relational axes, namely child and child, child and adult, adult and adult, and facility (nursery school) and local society. It is the nursery school's role to design the correlation between these four axes.	The concept shares a common base with childcare as a whole and eventually with support for the child and child rearing. The fact that it is already practised at our nursery school to good effect evidences the superiority of this concept.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21 st Century Type Childcare, Nurturing the Power to Live from Involvement (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.) Support for Child Rearing Based on Information (Published by Tsutsui Shobo)
The child and the caregiver	Practice of the team childcare theory	Among the above mentioned four relationships, if it is narrowed down to the relationship between the child and caregiver, several caregivers in charge can form a team and share responsibility with respect to not just infants but young children. This is vital for the realization of the type of childcare aimed at.	For the development of a child, it is desirable that the child has the involvement of several teachers. The child can grow through diverse interpersonal relationships.	Book, DVD: Advocacy of 21 st Century Type Childcare 4. Concept and Procedure for Team Childcare (Published by Sekai Bunka Co.)
The relationship between the nursery school and local society	Building the node for the relationship	In the relationship between the nursery school and the guardian, support is extended to the parent for child rearing. In addition to explaining the concepts and contents of childcare, the shape of the desirable parent-child relationship is communicated. In the relationship with local society, support is given to make people grow from guests to staff by getting involved in the activities of the nursery school. Further, with regard to support for child rearing, support is extended to make them grow from recipients to support givers.	Amidst diverse value systems, it will be possible to promote community building where everyone accepts one another and everyone can raise children with a relaxed mind.	Book: Urban Community (Published by Tsutsui Shobo)

Materials: The Complete

Childcare Curriculum: Shinjuku Seiga Nursery School

Childcare curriculum (hereafter, the curriculum) implies the curriculum formulated to achieve the childcare objectives specified in Chapter 1 (General Rules) of the *Guidelines for Centre-Based Care* announced in 2008 through childcare ideals, policy, objectives and methods set up by the Shinjuku Seiga Nursery, Social Welfare Corporation Seigakai (hereafter, this nursery) keeping the needs of the times and region in mind. Moreover, the curriculum also takes into consideration the actual situation in a region, the status of children and their families, childcare time, etc. as well as long-term perspectives concerning the upbringing of children, continuity of life, the development of children and the originality and ingenuity of this nursery.

The Times and Regional Background to Prepare a Childcare Curriculum

Educational and Childcare Reforms Across the World

Educational circles across the world are undergoing turmoil on account of countermeasures resulting from the survey of scholastic performance of PISA carried out by the OECD. However, a move in the same direction has already started in the 1970s. The reform process in particular had started in the advanced nations of the West. There are two major reasons behind this:

1. The Declining Birth Rate in the Advanced Countries of the West
Relationships between children undergo a change as birth rates decline. There is no spontaneous children's group. Therefore, it becomes difficult to nurture children's abilities based on children's groups.

Besides, the relationships between adults and children also undergo changes. Earlier, each child could not be attended to individually but now it is possible and for children too, there is unnecessary interference by adults which at times becomes excessive. Adults restraining or instructing children's actions robs children of their initiative and results in loss of creative thinking and judgement powers. Moreover, the motivation for children to do things on their own, i.e. independence, does not get nurtured. Such excessive interference by adults makes children dependent.

2. Changes in the Abilities Required of Children in the Future

One of the major changes in recent years is that the abilities expected of children has undergone change. To be more precise, it is the change in the so-called 'perception of academic achievement'. Earlier, remembering topics was the main priority of learning and the criteria for measuring the capability of a student was how much that child remembered. Even examinations were about testing the child's memory. In other words, high academic achievement meant memorizing and the ability to do many things. However, with the emergence of the computer, merely cramming knowledge lost its meaning.

Thus, when trying to shift from memorizing to ensuring proper development, the key words for the creation of a new education and childcare scheme is to eliminate general and uniform childcare and education.

For the transfer of knowledge, childcare has to change to one where the caregiver can guide children to more effective, and make groups that are easy to control. Hereafter, the objectives of childcare are to create an environment that promotes independent activities by children and ensures that play too, is an independent activity, which is in line with the characteristics of each child; to provide guidance on how to build relationships with people, enhance their inquiring minds and strive for cooperative study within children's groups.

Childcare Ideals (Coexistence and Contribution)

The aim is to nurture children who can coexist, contribute and have civic sense, i.e. that they are members of society. Further, the image of the ideal child is also the image of the ideal adult as a human being.

(1) Coexistence

The Japanese are good at group formation because they are said to have excellent 'receptiveness' and 'empathy'. On the other hand, they are often criticized for not asserting themselves. However, in the Japanese method of self-assertion, the opponent is not pushed aside or conquered, the self-assertion is made only after empathizing with and accepting the other person. This is a communication skill of a predominantly agrarian race nurtured in the transient Japanese climate, which Japan can be proud of.

However, groups formed by the Japanese functioned by maintaining self-existence and cannot always be called good. Groups meant for maintaining the self, excluded those which were different from it.

Today we are aiming at a society that deepens the self. We want to form groups where children accept and coexist with others, while at the same time deepen and enrich their lives as well as that of others.

(2) Contribution

If you ask a parent 'What kind of person do you want your child to become?' He/she would often say 'A gentle person' or 'someone who does not cause trouble to others', etc. But is there a child who does not cause any trouble to others?

However independent a person may be, no one can do everything by themselves.

There is no one who does not cause some trouble to others.

Asking others to do what one cannot do or which is beyond one's capability, is also self-reliance or independence. And in the process, the

person who helps out, makes up for the trouble he/she caused others by contributing what he/she can do.

The meaning of acquiring wisdom and knowledge through diverse experiences does not lie in remembering things. It has meaning if that wisdom and knowledge are used for coexistence and contributing to others. We are aiming at a child who is happy to be useful to others.

Educational Policy: Childcare that Nurtures Children's Independence

For Children to recognize one another amidst diverse values and make a shift from belonging to a group that denies the 'individual' to one that creates 'individuals'.

In the past, the 'community' was a group whose aim was that all individuals maintained an identical set of values. There is a common notion that a group ignores or suppresses individuals. However, a person cannot live alone. At present, it is strongly demanded that children should learn self-reliance and self-discipline through interpersonal relationships. This is because an individual cannot be established unless he/she lives in a group. Interpersonal relationships are similar for adults as well. Relationships are not born in an isolated family or workplace. People have spoken about the loss of local societies for some time and what is demanded today is not the community of the past but an aggregate where everyone comes together and recognizes each other to form a society.

(1) Childcare that Ensures Children-Driven Activities

A child who carries out independent activities is one who identifies an issue, thinks about it and acts on its own accord. (This is a transition from others carrying out activities or getting them done by someone

else to the child performing the activities on its own.) For that, the child has to interact with the environment on his own accord. Naturally, the environment here does not mean only the spaces; it includes people – the caregivers (team), multi-age groups, the community, objects (from playing implements prescribed by specific activities to those conceived by the child) and spaces (outdoor space – nature – and indoor space such as different zones, etc.). Amidst such environments, in order to change to childcare that gives children realistic choices, self-determination and assured mastery of the development process, childcare based on an age-based curriculum that sacrifices individual and personality developments needs to be reviewed. And an environment that ensures individual and group development (from individual and group together, to interaction between the two) has to be created in the nursery school.

(2) Childcare that Ensures Children-Driven Play Activities

The nursery is treated as a games museum and for voluntary activities by children and environment in which children get involved independently is arranged. Thus children transform from being passive to participative and the approach changes from ‘teaching-type childcare’ to ‘childcare in which children act on their own’. Here, caregivers are not teachers, they are facilitators. They do not teach but perform the role of extracting or promoting. From hands-on childcare, they change to *Mimamoru* childcare, whereby they recognize the differences between children and respond to these while adopting a hands-off approach. Further, considering the different types of children’s groups, such as groups in line with the aims, groups which are places for lively activities for children, groups which guarantee children’s development, class groups and childcare activity groups are considered flexibly.

(3) Childcare Matching the Attributes of Each Individual

When changing from hands-on education and childcare to childcare where each child acts on its own, the task naturally alters from ‘what

to give’ to ‘what they can accept’. Therefore, naturally the concept of ‘equal’ also undergoes a change from giving everyone the same thing equally to everyone accepting the same thing equally. Here, the concept of ‘inclusion’ is vital. It is one step ahead of ‘integration’.

Upbringing during pre-schooling is not necessarily important for the next schooling stage. It is important to equip children with the necessary powers needed for life in the future. For that, it must be ensured that children live the present in the best way possible and thus build a desirable future. Under such prospects, one should not just think of only one time slot or phase, one needs to realize that children’s lives are continuous, and the continuity of their development is vital for them to live the present in a better manner.

(4) Childcare that Values Relationships

The concept of the group has also undergone a change. For example, for reasons of efficiency, in a group in a large factory in an industrial society it has changed from ‘to everyone at one go’, to ‘cooperative learning’ in the ‘urban community’ where everyone recognizes each other’s differences and coexists. Here, we need a shift from the concept of ‘inclusion’ where individuals recognize one another to ‘cohesion’ where individuals are linked to one another.

Freedom and Self-Discipline

The concept of freedom has been discussed for a long while. It is said that children should be left to make their own choices. However, there is considerable misunderstanding about the term freedom. This is because there are similar terms such as: ‘leave a person to do what he likes’, ‘arbitrary’, ‘selfish’, etc. However, every person has freedom and that must be guaranteed, but there are some rules. It is necessary to reaffirm that rules are not meant to rob people of freedom but to ensure everyone’s freedom. The concept of coexistence is essential in this case. Moreover, if these rules are followed when instructed by others, it is no longer freedom. Here, the power of self-discipline becomes necessary. This is learnt from children’s groups.

Objectives of Childcare: Children Who are Their Natural Selves, Motivated and Considerate

- (1) Cultivate sentiment, enthusiasm and the attitude to search out the issue; think and act on one's own within an environment equipped with the elements of childcare and education.
(An environment that encourages children-driven activities.)

Children's lives can be broadly divided into 3 elements, namely, playing, eating and sleeping. By providing independent space for these in a nursery school, in addition to accommodating differences in the time taken by each child for eating and sleeping, each one can play to its heart's content. Thus, independent spaces for playing, eating and sleeping, while ensuring the rhythm of lifestyle of each child, would encourage independent activities accompanied by a sense of security, satisfaction and attainment. In turn, children would develop a feeling of consideration and responsibility for others and it would be possible to raise children who have both freedom as well as responsibility (independence and self discipline).

- (2) Cultivate sentiment, enthusiasm and the attitude to carry out independent, creative activities, satisfy one's desires fully and develop freedom and responsibility in an environment equipped with the elements of childcare and education.
(An environment that encourages children-driven play.)

Children thinking on their own and deciding to 'do' or 'know' something is an important desire that is linked to independent and creative play, and each child has an indigenous desire to do so. In order to suitably satisfy this desire, in addition to providing the space for these activities, in task childcare, the children are given a 'choice' to select their own activities. There are three types of 'choice systems': 'selective childcare' where children select the game they are interested

in; 'development-based choice' where the level of games is chosen based on the children's development so that support for playing it better can be provided; and 'order-based choice' where the order is fixed for the children to play the games. In each case, children think, select and play the games themselves. By making the selection, they satisfy their desires sufficiently, develop the requisite judgement power and acquire freedom and responsibility. At each stage of play, by providing the support matching each child's development, caregivers can provide guidance where children are able to respond to it.

- (3) Cultivate sentiment, enthusiasm and attitude so that children are healthy, both physically and mentally, and have self-esteem, under an environment equipped with the elements of childcare and education.
(An environment that matches the attributes of each child.)

Development varies from child to child. Especially in the age group of three to five years, spontaneous individual activities and relationships with friends develop conspicuously. In order to watch over this development (depending on each individual), in the class of children aged three to five, with multi-age classes as the base, team childcare is introduced so that children can have valuable experiences in a multi-age group.

- (4) Cultivate sentiment, enthusiasm and attitude to nurture the sentiment of sharing other people's happiness and enjoy a relationship with other people, under an environment equipped with the elements of childcare and education.
(An environment that values relationships between people.)

Child-raising is not just based on the relationship between the parent and child; it is based on diverse relationships. Naturally, relationships between adults are also included in this and both children and adults grow in the process. A nursery school designs such diverse relationships and there must be a group that builds individuals. Even with regard to

relationships with the community, people from the community develop 'from guest to staff' based on their involvement in the nursery's activities. And even with regard to support for child rearing, in my opinion development from 'recipient of support' to 'support giver' is important. Based on such interactive relationships between people and between people and the facility, people acquire the power to have relationship with other people, the power to live and the group can have the power to raise children.

Methods of Childcare: Mimamoru Childcare

(1) Multi-Age Childcare Without Vertical Divisions: Inclusive Childcare

When a shift is made from hands-on childcare, i.e. the teaching approach or doing things for children, to hands-off childcare, where children-driven activities are guaranteed, i.e. children interact with the environment and act on their own accord while support is extended, the aims of the curriculum need to be revised in part. Departing from established notions about children and the preconceived notions of adults, a plan has to be made giving topmost priority to the development and individuality of the child and its environment. Each person has several established notions and the average preconceived notions depend on the country, economic status, sex, disability, etc. Today in Japan, the largest established notion is about age. Age in the Childcare Guidelines is part of the process of development and is no more than a criterion. We need to take into account continuity of the individual's development and alter the childcare that carefully guarantees it.

(2) Children-Driven Childcare = Mimamoru Childcare

Mimamoru is a common word one often hears or comes across. I began using this word in childcare which is at the opposite end of 'do it for someone' when I felt the need to shift from 'infant care which was getting closer to the model called mother' or from 'childcare that gave priority to the perception to teach something to children' to 'childcare that builds the environment for the natural development of children'.

This is because children develop on their own and their development is not based on teaching. Leaving aside what is good or bad, it is possible to educate children at an early stage. If taught, even an infant can remember tables and speak English. However, we cannot advance or delay the process of development.

An infant cannot suddenly start walking without experiencing crawling. It is widely known that if there is no adequate environment for an infant to crawl, the duration for crawling becomes shorter and if the infant starts standing and walking faster, there may be problems with its subsequent growth. Hence, the caregiver does not need to lend a helping hand or hold the infant from behind so that it can stand faster, but build an environment where the infant can crawl sufficiently during the period when it must crawl. This ensures the continuity of development.

One of the stages of development is the progression from crawling to holding a support and standing, to standing independently and then walking. Instead of just preparing a large place to let the child crawl on its own, the caregiver should stand at a place slightly beyond the point up to which the child can crawl, and in case child gives out some sign, the caregiver must notice it and respond suitably.

To do this, it is crucial that the caregiver is not very close to the child but is 'watching' the child from a distance. He/she should not 'do' what the child wants but at the same time should not be just a spectator. 'Observing' the process of development of each child closely, the caregiver must 'watch' and provide suitable 'assistance'.

And that is *Mimamoru* Childcare.

(3) Selective Childcare in Line With the Aims

A group has many positive forces. Group education is an extremely efficient method particularly when imparting knowledge. However, at the same time, in group education, the individual's will and individuality and difference in development are ignored.

Group education or education as imparted a decade ago can be compared to tōfu. It was similar to boiling various types of beans, crushing them and baking them to give them the shape and texture of tōfu, a completely different item. If any extraneous material was present, it was eliminated.

It was likely to receive power from the group but in the process the objective became to make a good group (clean, soft tōfu). It was like putting the cart before the horse.

Therefore, the trend changed to respecting each child's individuality and values and while attaching importance to each child's will, to enhance the individuality. However, if this individuality proceeds in the wrong direction, the group will not function well. It is like classroom chaos. Self-assertion at the cost of others or actions neglecting the rules of coexistence should never be respected. Children can never receive any power from a dysfunctional group with rampant individuality.

(4) Childcare that Values Involvement

The concept of a group has also undergone a change. From 'to everyone at one go' in a group in the large factory in an industrial society for reasons of efficiency, it has changed to 'cooperative learning' in the 'urban Community' where everyone recognizes each other's differences and coexists.

Cohesive Childcare: The Nattō (Fermented beans) Theory

Along with recognizing and attaching importance to the individual, it is necessary to link individuals and build a new group. I have given it the name 'Nattō Theory'. Even in the West, which led the way for individualism, the concept of 'cohesion' is being pursued in right earnest. To be more precise, large and small beans are boiled together, not to make tōfu but nattō. The beans are not crushed and solidified but are fermented and mixed and are linked by a sticky thread. The beans are mixed well to produce more threads. They are held together by this

thread and they do not separate from each other. It is not an indistinct combination, but at the same time, they are not loose.

Similarly, while recognizing each individual's differences and expanding their respective individuality and competence, we want to link them closely. As Japanese, who are good at extracting taste from stickiness, I think we can create a new group which is not uniform but like nattō, where each individual is held together closely. And this is the so called social cohesion.

Childcare for Physically Challenged Children = Pleiades

Each time mankind has faced a major crisis, it is said to have evolved itself in order to survive. If all human beings had the same genes, in the event of a major problem or disorder, all mankind would have been destroyed. To perform the roles of man and woman, the structure of their brains differ and in order to survive, the structure and capabilities of their bodies have also developed differently. In this regard, children with physical or developmental disabilities also have their respective roles to play, which are different. Children understand this not through their brains, but naturally.

Of course, children with disabilities have to be trained to acquire social skills. If a child who cannot sit on a chair is left in a group, he cannot learn to sit. To enable such a child to live a basic social life, training as a part of the basic academic skills is needed.

Developmental disabilities (they should be called developmental biases instead of developmental disabilities), are disorders acquired during the formative period, and so cannot be cured, nor can it worsen. Therefore, instead of focusing only on the part which has a low capability and correcting it, it would be beneficial for the child as well as for society if the superior part in that child is discovered. Instead of focusing on supplementing the weak part, we should develop the part that can be enhanced so as to convert it into a power that can contribute elsewhere.

When everyone is creating things with a pair of scissors, we caregivers will teach the child who cannot use them properly. The purpose is not to make the child dexterous in using the scissors but to make that child enjoy the craftwork and be able to exhibit its strength.

If that child is made to practise using scissors till he is able to use them properly, it will lose the creative fire. Using scissors easily is simply a tool and not the purpose. Support to challenged children is not much different from this.

I think of Pleiades when I think of educating challenged children. Pleiades is a star cluster. The word Pleiades means to 'bring together'. Each star in the cluster emits its own light and a big beautiful light is emitted from the cluster. Each of these stars emitting light is a challenged child, a normal child, a male, a female and children of different ages.

The Development Process of Children

In the light of eight development processes mentioned in the *Guidelines for Centre-Based Care*, Chapter 2, 'Development of Children', notified in 2008, we understand the attributes for children's development and carry out childcare paying attention to their development and continuity of life. Here, caregivers implement *Mimamoru* childcare that provides support for development while grasping the physical and mental status of the children.

Childcare Time, Number of Children and Number of Employees

In principle, childcare time is for eight hours a day. (Individual childcare timings within the working hours of the nursery school depend on the guardian's working hours.)

Starting time: Normal Time: 0700AM -0630PM (11 hours)
Extended Time 0630PM-0830PM (2 hours)

Number of children : Below one year: 15 children One-year-old children: 20
Two-year-old children: 20 Three-year-old children: 20
Four-year-old children: 20 Five-year-old children: 20

Number of employees : Principal: 1 Vice-Principal: 1 Administrative Head: 1
Nurses: 26 or more Part-time helpers: Very few
Clinical nurse: 1 Dieticians: 2 Cooks: 2 Janitor: 1

Long-Term Prospects of Childcare

(1) Transition to Primary School

In the book entitled *Starting Strong* various socio-economic factors, concepts, research, etc. which have a bearing on policies on infancy have been described for twenty OECD countries. At present, thinking about preschool education and how to make a smooth transition from preschool to formal education seems to be a policy issue in every country. This transition generally becomes a stimulus for growth and development, but if children are suddenly put into formal education without proper thought, the book warns that it runs the risk of resulting in regression or

failure among children.

In *Starting Strong*, cases of successful transitions to schools have been explained. It recommends that during the transition to formal schooling, instead of 'preparation at the school', the years at the nursery should be the preparatory stage for life in the wider sense and the basic stage for life-long learning, as it is practised in countries that have an in-built tradition of social education. Its main objective is that instead of all children acquiring specific knowledge or levels of proficiency in advance, their motivation, interest and self-confidence in learning should be enhanced.

Japan has been gradually falling behind in the survey of academic performance by OECD. For this reason, Japan reviewed its education to introduce Yutori (education without cramming) and 'interdisciplinary learning' was curtailed. However, symptoms of decline were already visible from much before. 'Motivation for learning' the main objective was the lowest in Japan among all the countries surveyed. Moreover, Japanese children are said to lack self-confidence. On the other hand, they have plenty of specific knowledge and their level of proficiency is also high. It has become the main objective in Japan.

Further, as for the form of learning, the method recommended by ECEC is the active education method where guidance is not given by adults but is based on mutual learning and group projects.

(2) Upbringing in Establishment-Type Childcare

If we observe the upbringing of present-day children, during early childhood it has become difficult for children to grow in society and the task on hand is to provide children with the opportunity to make them members of society. Another problem is that the transition from infancy, i.e. forming children's groups and learning from them has become difficult to carry out at home and in local society. To do this, centre-based care, to develop the power to interact with people and nurture the base for independence through proper development from infancy has assumed greater importance. It is essential that childcare is changed in line with the times to nurture children who can observe the times properly and are ahead of their times.