

Designing the Guideline Booklet to Improve the Quality of Japanese Playgrounds

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Outline

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- 2 Research Aim
- 3 Methods
- 4 Results
- 5 Discussion and Issues for Future Research



1 Background and Context



1) Importance of playgrounds as physical environments

- Many studies have noted the importance of physical environments for children.
 - The environment is a 'third teacher' (Malagucchi, 1992).
 - The environment is related to children's socio-emotional and cognitive development (Giudici, 2013).
- In recent years, there has been increasing interest in creating new settings in the outdoor environment. Playground settings are very important in the development of young children (Fjortoft, 2001; Tortella et al., 2016).
- Japanese national curriculum guidelines also emphasize 'Education through the physical environment' (MEXT, 2016),

2) Functions of a playground

- Playgrounds serve many functions for young children.
- Playgrounds are **the place for children's movement play**. Archer and Siraj (2015) showed the relationship between the environment and young children's physical development.
- They are also **a place for motivating children's inquiries about nature and places for encounters with natural phenomena** (White, 2004; White and Stocklin, 1998).
- Malone and Toaster (2003) pointed to **playgrounds as sites for learning about the environment**.

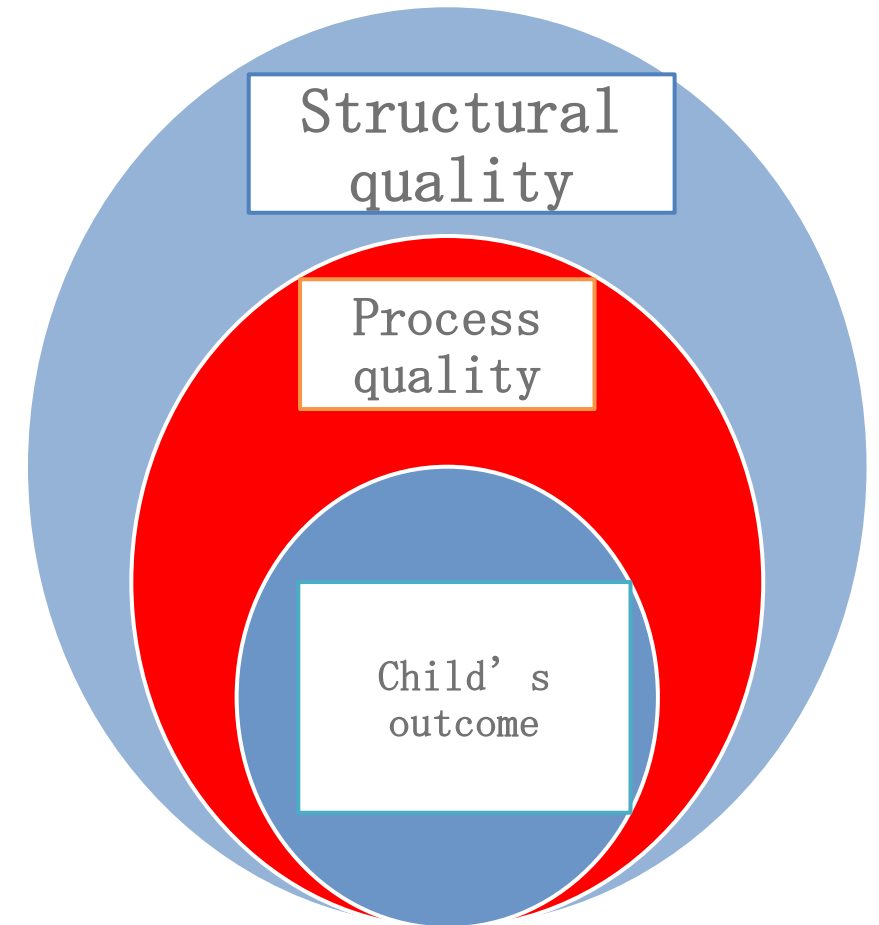


3) Guidelines for playgrounds

- Some local governments have made guidelines for playgrounds .
 - North Carolina, USA: *Outdoor Learning Environment Toolkit* (Natural Learning Initiative Staff, 2014)
 - Toronto, Canada: *Landscape and Child Development ~ A Design Guide for Early Years: Kindergarten Play-Learning Environments* (Campbell, 2013)
 - Berlin, Germany: 'Grün für die gute gesunde Kita' (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft Berlin, 2013)
 - Umeå, Sweden: 'Funktionsprogram Förskola' (Umeå Kommun, 2011)
- In Japan, there are **national guidelines on facility installation standards**, including items on playgrounds, but these are not popular among practitioners because they are only standards, not practical guideline for practitioners.
- **How can we make a guidebook for practical use that is applicable for each local area?**

4) Quality of playgrounds

- The OECD (2012) set the dimensions of quality for ECEC to include: **orientation, structural quality, process quality and monitoring quality**. These cover ECEC settings.
- The physical environment in everyday settings affords the children's involvement in outdoor activities and is one of the important factors of structural and process quality.
- However, **there are only a few studies to date that have focussed on how to improve the quality of playgrounds.**



5) Our previous study: Nationwide Survey of Playgrounds in Japan (Tsujitani & Miyata,2017,Miyamoto & et als,2016.)

- Our centre (Cedep) conducted the first nation wide survey of playgrounds.
- Questionnaire was sent to 1,740 ECEC centers
- (**1448 integrated centres** across Japan and **292 daycare** centres and kindergartens in five districts in Tokyo)

The numbers of centres with playgrounds was 1657 (95.2%); those without playgrounds numbered 83 (4.8%).

- The questionnaire consisted of three parts:
 1. Situation of the playground or outdoor environment in neighborhood
 2. Children's play and activities
 3. Staff members' practices and what they think is important.
- We also asked centres to send photos of their playgrounds.**
- We analysed data and tabulated the results and findings for each item.

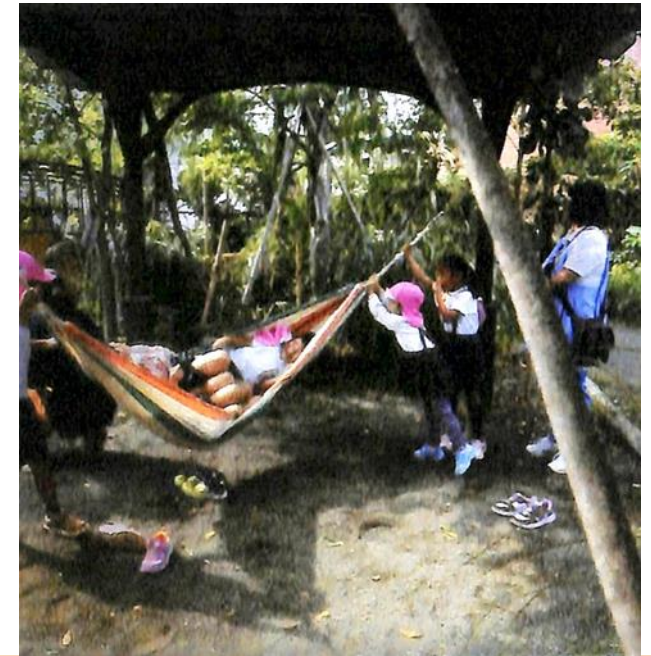
Photos of play grounds sent by centers



Nature and Geographical Nature



2 Research Question and Aim



Design of action research

Setting the research question

How can we use the survey results to improve the quality of playgrounds? We want these data not only for academic purposes, but also to support the improvement of practices.



Developing materials to use the results of the survey

Setting the seven steps for quality improvement, focusing on playgrounds and designing a guideline booklet



Examining the usefulness of the materials developed

Collecting data on evaluating the seven steps in the guideline booklet

Tool guide of 7 steps from 6 viewpoints to improve quality of playgrounds

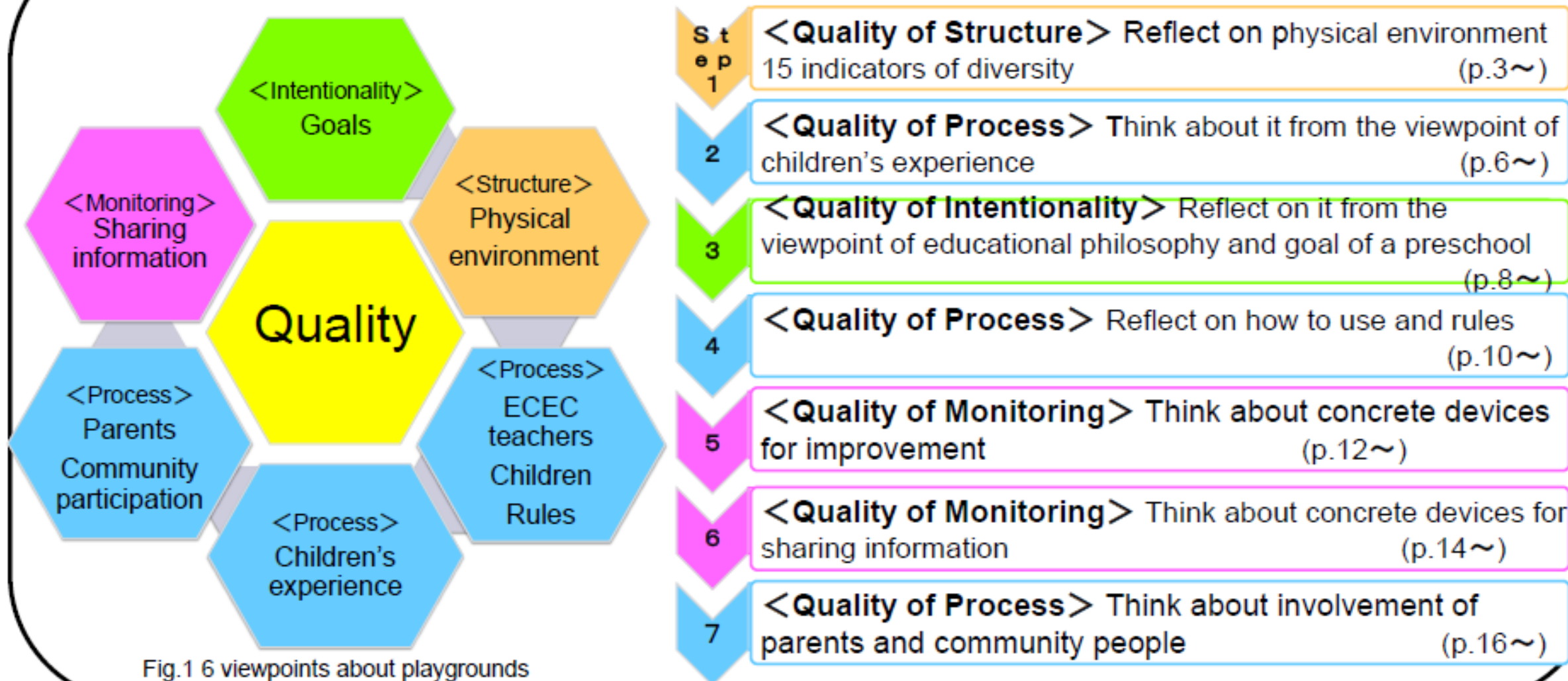


Fig.1 6 viewpoints about playgrounds

Developing materials for using the survey results

Three points are contrived to design the guideline booklet.

- 1 We show **a reflective perspective and checklists** from each of **the seven steps** to make a booklet for teachers' professional development in each centre.
- 2 We try to **relate the results of the survey to a reflective perspective in each step**, to help practitioners grasp the meaning of the data and position their playground's situation compared to other centres.
- 3 **Photographs sent by many centres are used as cases** in the booklet. Practitioners do not typically know the possible variety found among of playgrounds and how to improve their playgrounds. Photos of various cases are useful for them.

Research Aims

- 1) To examine **the usefulness of the booklet** using the responses from the practitioners' questionnaire.
- 2) To analyse **which steps of quality improvement** are most useful among the seven steps
- 3) To clarify **the differences in the recognition of usefulness among different types of centres** (kindergartens, daycare centres, integrated centres)
- 4) To analyse **the differences in the recognition of usefulness between groups with high diversity and low diversity of playgrounds**

3 Method



- Method: Questionnaire
- Participants: The centres that participated in our previous survey and researchers who had a copy of the booklet.
- The booklets were sent to the participant centres as feedback on the survey. We asked them to evaluate the usefulness of each step in the booklet and to write down their comments about the booklet.



Number of respondents: 328

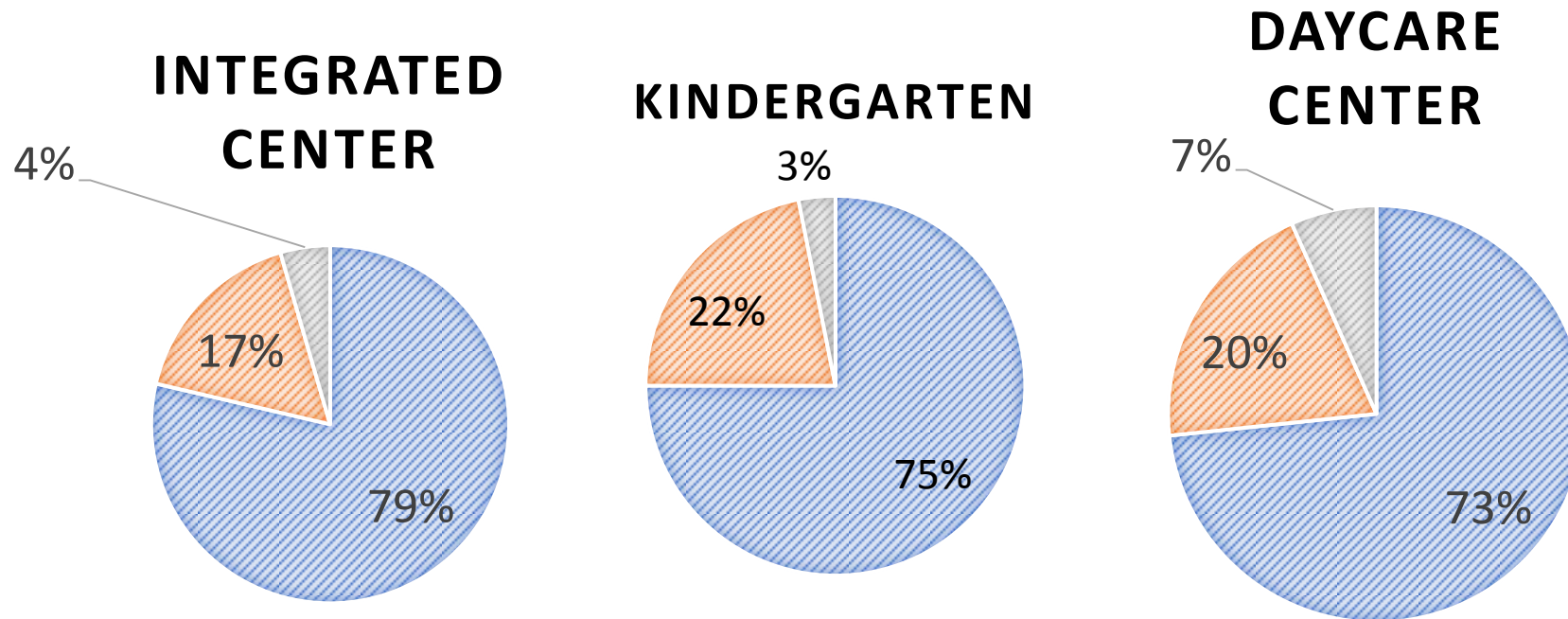
Integrated centres: 177/ Kindergartens: 32/ Daycare centre: 31/ Others (researchers): 88

4 Results



Result 1: Recognition of Usefulness

Q To what degree do you think this booklet is useful for your centre?

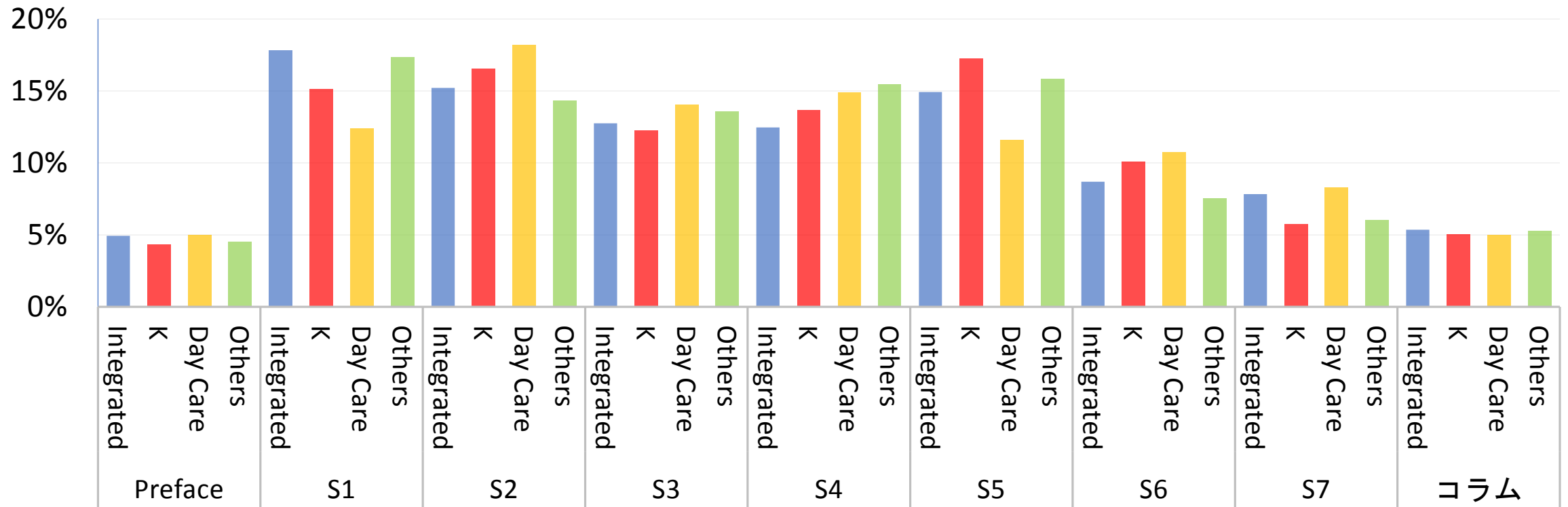


Most centers recognised the usefulness of the booklet.

Blue : Very useful Pink: A bit useful Grey: Not sure

Result 2: Usefulness of Each Step

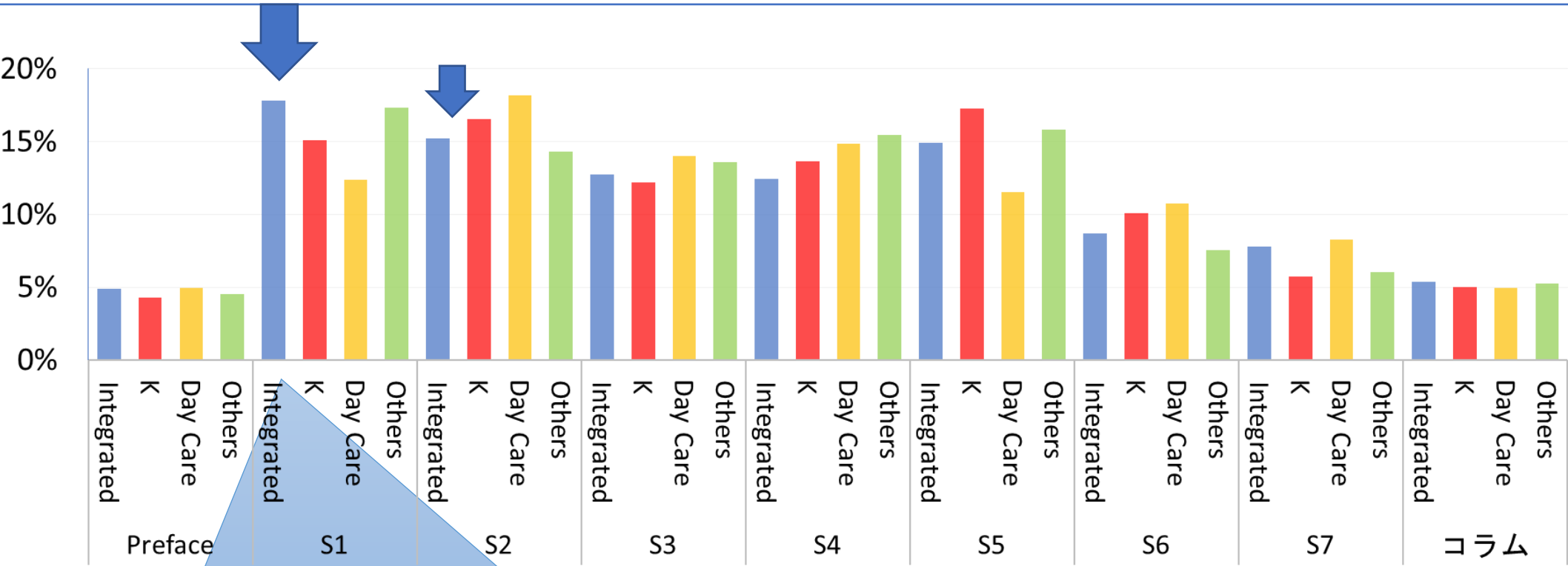
Q Please mark which steps you recognise as useful.



Step 2 was the most highly rated in terms of usefulness.

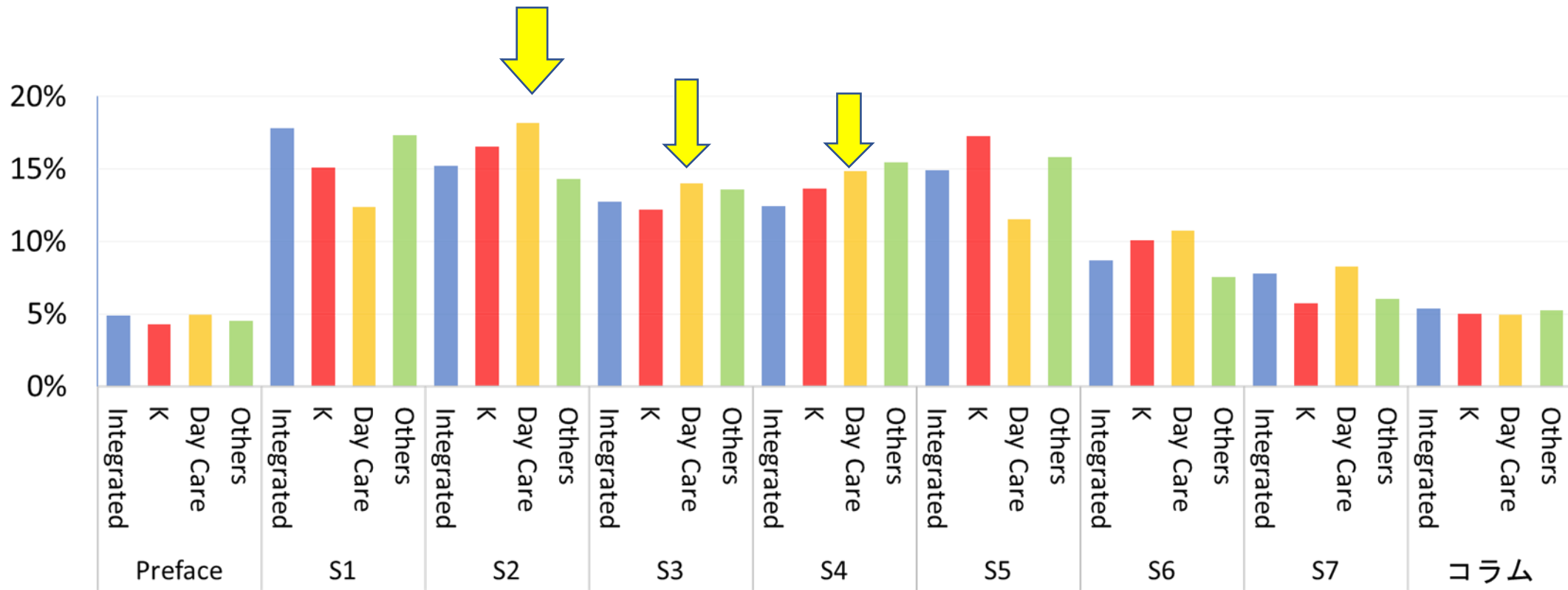
Result 3: Differences among Types of Centres

Many integrated centres recognise Steps 1 and 2 as useful.

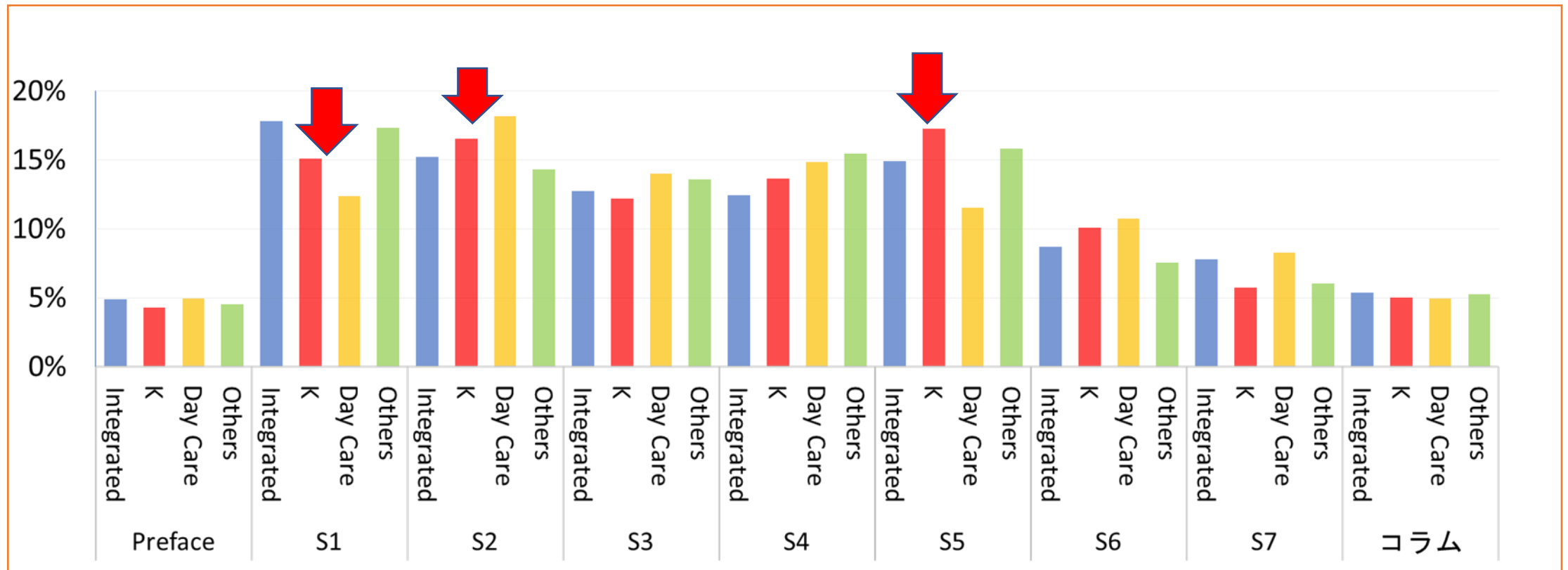


Step 1 Let's reflect on the physical environment

Many daycare centres recognise Steps 2, 3 & 4 as useful.



Many kindergartens recognise Steps 1, 2 & 5 as useful.

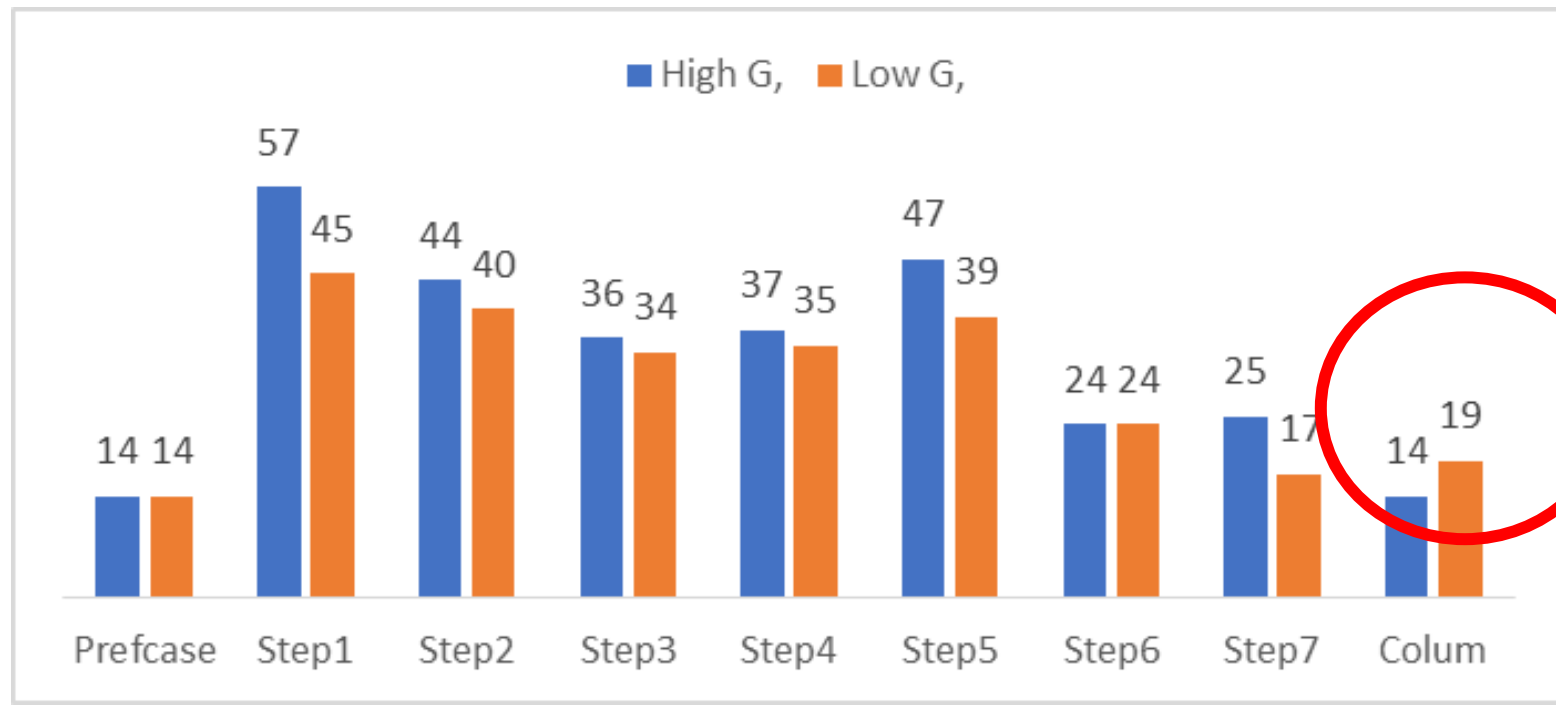


Step 5 Think about specific devices for improvement

There are differences about useful steps among the types of centers.

Result 3: Differences between centers with high – group and low score on diversity of playgrounds

There are differences of usefulness between proportion of choices between the High group on score of diversity and Low group. Just only Colum is recognised as more useful by High-G than by Low-G.



Result 4: Comments from the Centres

◆ Positive comments

It is convenient **to check the items and write the ideas down into spaces directly.**

We can learn about **many cases of playgrounds in other centers vividly with these pictures.**

We did not read through all seven steps at once, but **we can use each step one by one.**

It will be useful for us **to reflect on and redesign our playground in the future.**



◆ Requests and other comments.

It is necessary to think about **each local context**.

It seems that there are many good cases in the booklet. However, there are **physical and financial constraints** at my centre.

We wish to improve the playground, but **the director is not actively willing to change the playground**.

The letters on the pages are too small. We do not need so much spaces to write in.

It is difficult for my centre to improve the playgrounds because **there is no playground at my centre**.

It would be better to include the cases of **playgrounds for infants and toddlers**.

It would be better to include **information about financial support**.



5 Discussion and Issues for Future Research

- 1 The guideline booklet is **recognised as useful by many centres**.
- 2 **The steps recognised as useful differ among types of centres**, and there are difference between centers' conditions, e.g. area of playgrounds and diversity of playgrounds. This suggests that the need for information about playgrounds is context-specific. So we think the centres need to see more of our research findings to use our results.
- 3 It is **just recognition** of usefulness. It is necessary to trace and to **examine how this booklet is used and take effects on quality improvement**.
- 4 The booklet should be **updated and revised based on practitioners' needs and depending on local contexts**.

- Contact information

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- The booklet (English version, Chinese version, Korean version, Tiwanese version)

Please downloaded as below URL.

<http://www.cedep.p.u-tokyo.ac.jp/event/15206/>



Thank you for paying your attention!

