



Challenging process quality in Japanese ECEC settings (1): Results from the CEDEP large-scale staff survey

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About Cedep

- Established in July 2015
- The first academic organization for studying ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) from infancy in Japan

発達保育実践政策学センター
The Center for Early Childhood Development, Education, and Policy Research

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What is quality early childhood environment? We will conduct interdisciplinary research for improvement in early childhood environment quality.

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Introduction:

Aim of the study

□ The study aims

- 1) to develop a self-report questionnaire on “process quality” in Japanese ECEC settings
- 2) to conduct a large-scale survey to examine the basic features of process quality based on practitioners’ responses.

Introduction: Background

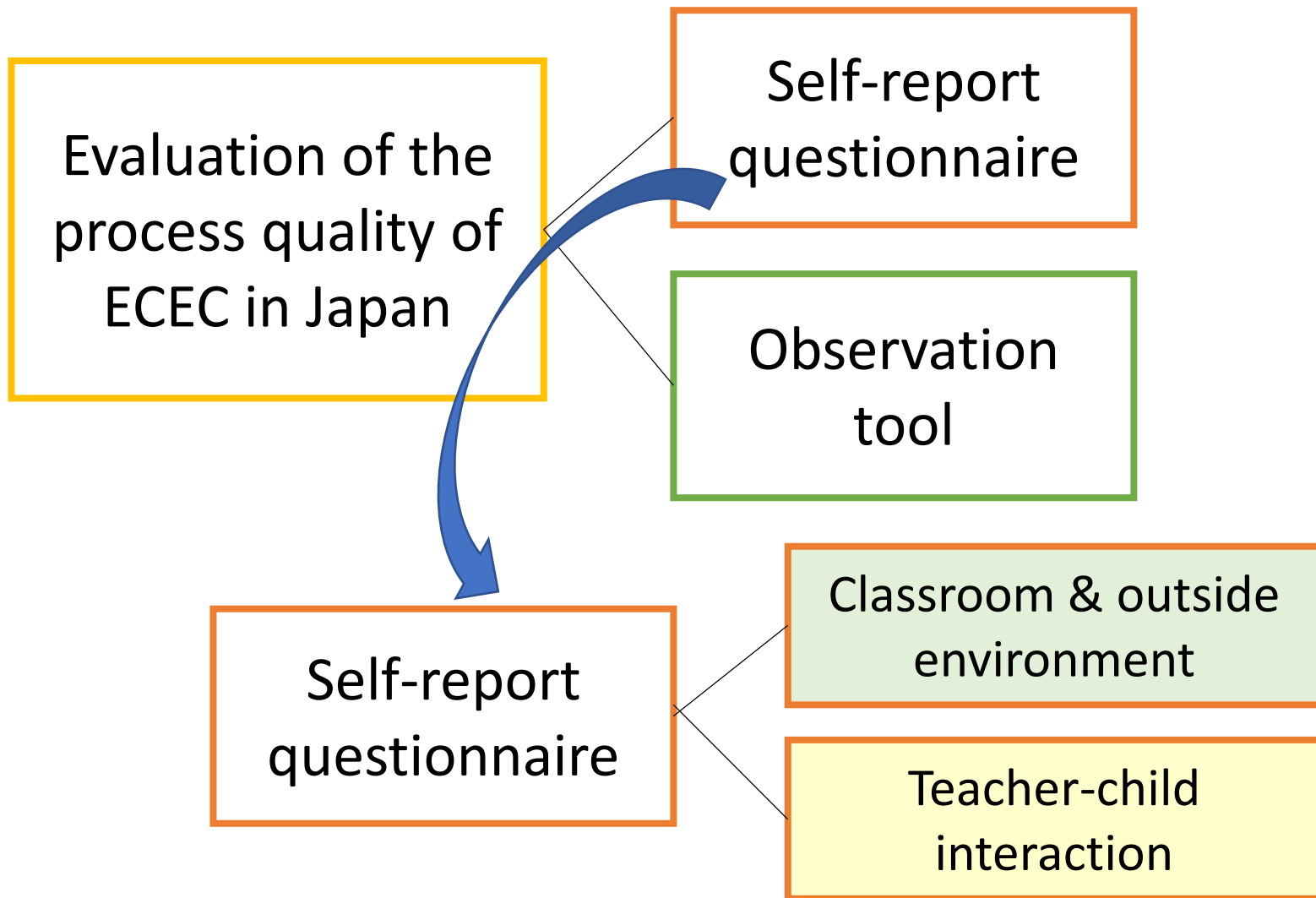
- Process quality focuses on children's interaction with practitioners, peers and materials which form their daily experiences in their classrooms (Howes et al., 2008).
- Classroom processes are considered a main promoter of children's development and learning (Hamre et al., 2013).
- Process quality is evaluated by a number of tools such as ECERS-R(Harms, et al., 1998), CLASS(Pianta et al., 2008), SICS(Laevers et al., 2005), SSTEWS(Siraj et al.,2015) and so on.

Introduction: Background

- Although some tools have been used worldwide, ECEC practice and the concept of quality are embedded in social and cultural contexts (Tobin et al., 2009) and the development of **culturally appropriate tools** for quality assessment is necessary (Hu et al., 2015).
- In a research project at our center (CEDEP), process quality assessment tools have been developed keeping in mind **cultural values** that are considered to be important by Japanese ECEC practitioners and researchers.

Introduction: Background

- Two kinds of assessment tools:



Introduction:

Japanese ECEC context

- A new ECEC system, the “Comprehensive Support System for Children and Childrearing,” has been introduced in Japan in 2015.
- “**QUANTITY vs. QUALITY**” is one of the big challenges in ECEC provision.
- The number of children wait-listed for childcare centers keeps rising because of the increase in the number of working mothers.



Introduction:

Japanese ECEC context

Classroom and outside environment

- In Japanese ECEC curricula, the arrangement and utilization of the classroom environment to promote the well-being and development of children is given special importance.
- Japan has a relatively **small indoor space requirement** in child care (OECD, 2012). Indoor and outdoor spaces are particularly limited in bigger cities.
- Making better use of limited spaces may be one of the challenges in ECEC settings.

What efforts are made by Japanese ECEC teachers to better arrange the classroom environment?

Introduction:

Japanese ECEC context

Teacher-child interaction

- Japanese teachers/carers traditionally emphasize **“child-centeredness,” “showing empathy to children,” “accepting children,”** and **“encouraging children’s motivation”** in ECEC (Kaneda et al., 2000).
- Showing empathy to children is the Ideal image of ECEC teachers in Japan (Suwa et al., 2011).
- Revised ECEC curricula will be implemented in 2018. Specifically, the **role of teachers in supporting children to think and learn deeply** is given more importance.

What aspects of teacher-child interaction are emphasized by Japanese ECEC teachers in their practice?

Introduction:

Research questions

1. What are the basic characteristics of ECEC process quality in Japan?

-Classroom environment

What efforts are made by Japanese ECEC teachers to better arrange the classroom environment?

-Teacher-child interaction

What aspects of teacher-child interaction are emphasized by Japanese ECEC teachers in their practice?

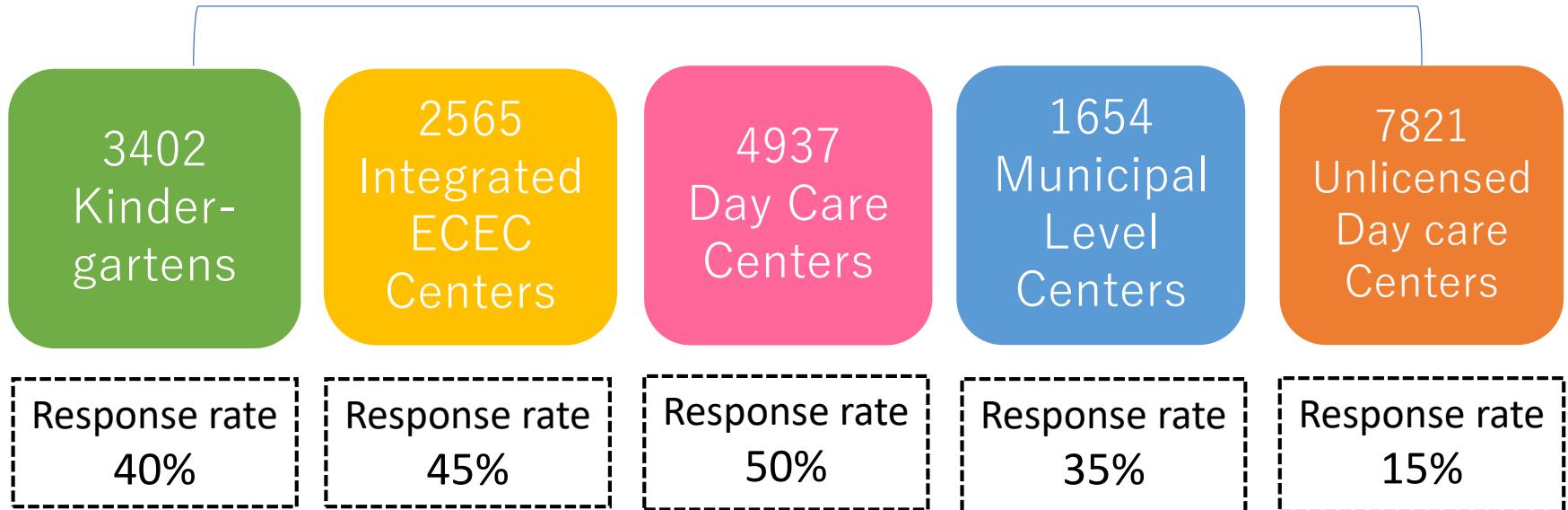
2. Which factors contribute to classroom process quality?

Methods:

Participants of the large-scale survey in 2015

- Directors, chiefs, and practitioners in 1, 3, 5-year-old classes in ECEC settings responded to our questionnaire. The total number of participants was 30,700 and average response rate was about 35%.

The number of settings where the questionnaires were delivered



Methods:

Topics in the questionnaire

Director	Senior staff	Classroom staff (1, 3, & 5-year-old)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical environment Safety Center issues Support for disabled children Number of staff, children, classes Staff qualifications In-service training Self evaluation etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication among staff Communication between staff and parents Curriculum Digital devices(i.e. music and movies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom and outside environment Interaction between staff and children Curriculum and practice
Leadership		
Job burden, health, job satisfaction		Evaluation of own quality

Methods:

Development of a self-report questionnaire on process quality

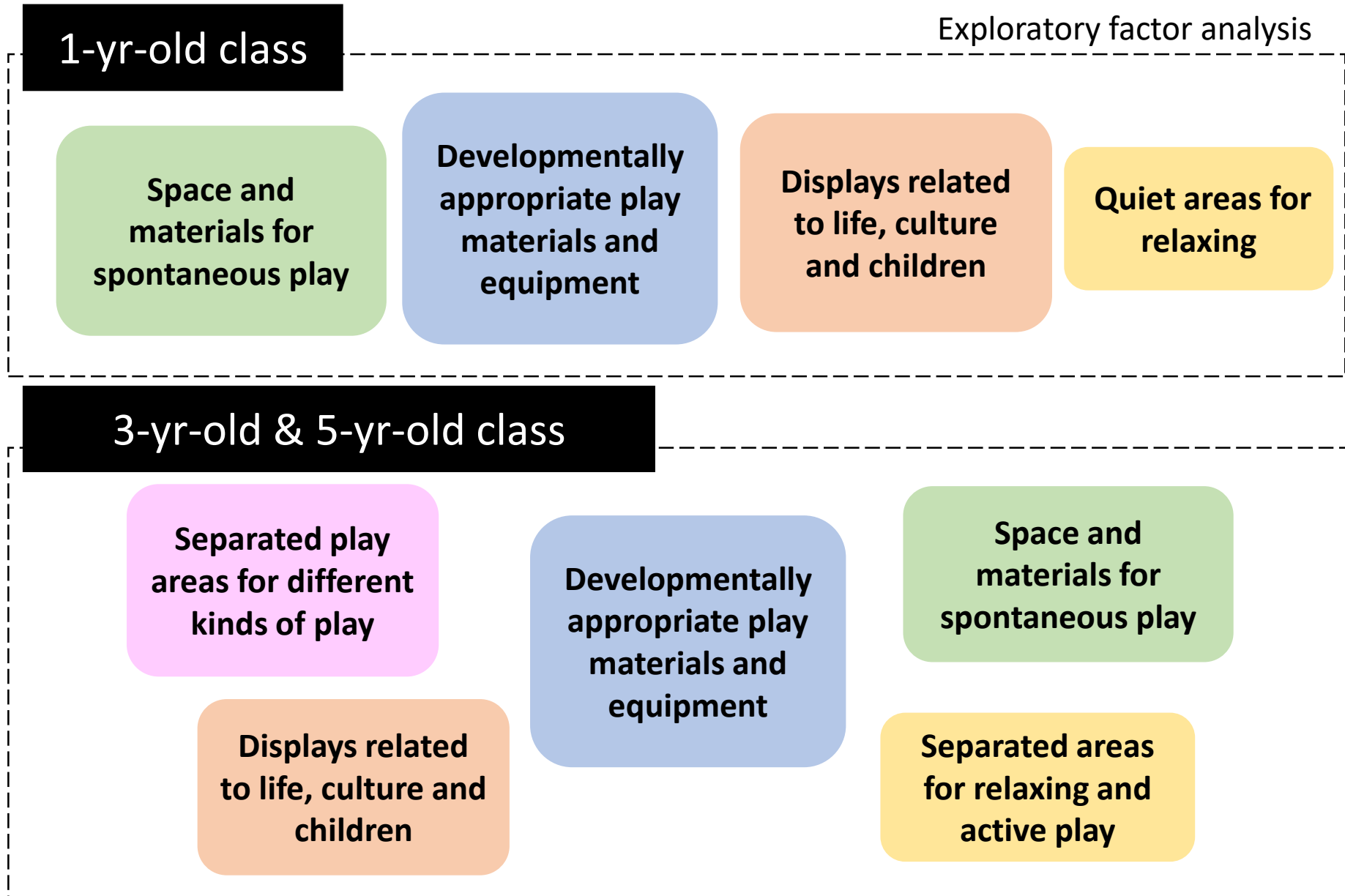
- A self-report questionnaire on classroom practice was developed (5-point scale) .
- Two domains of process quality i.e. “classroom and outside environment” and “teacher-child interaction” were included.
- The items were developed following the concepts of widely used scales such as ECERS-R (Harms, et al., 1998), CLASS (Pianta et al., 2008), SICS (Laevers et al., 2005), SSTEW (Siraj et al.,2015) .
- Some items were modified according to suggestions by Japanese expert ECEC researchers in terms of cultural appropriateness of content and expression.

Results on RQ1: Classroom environment

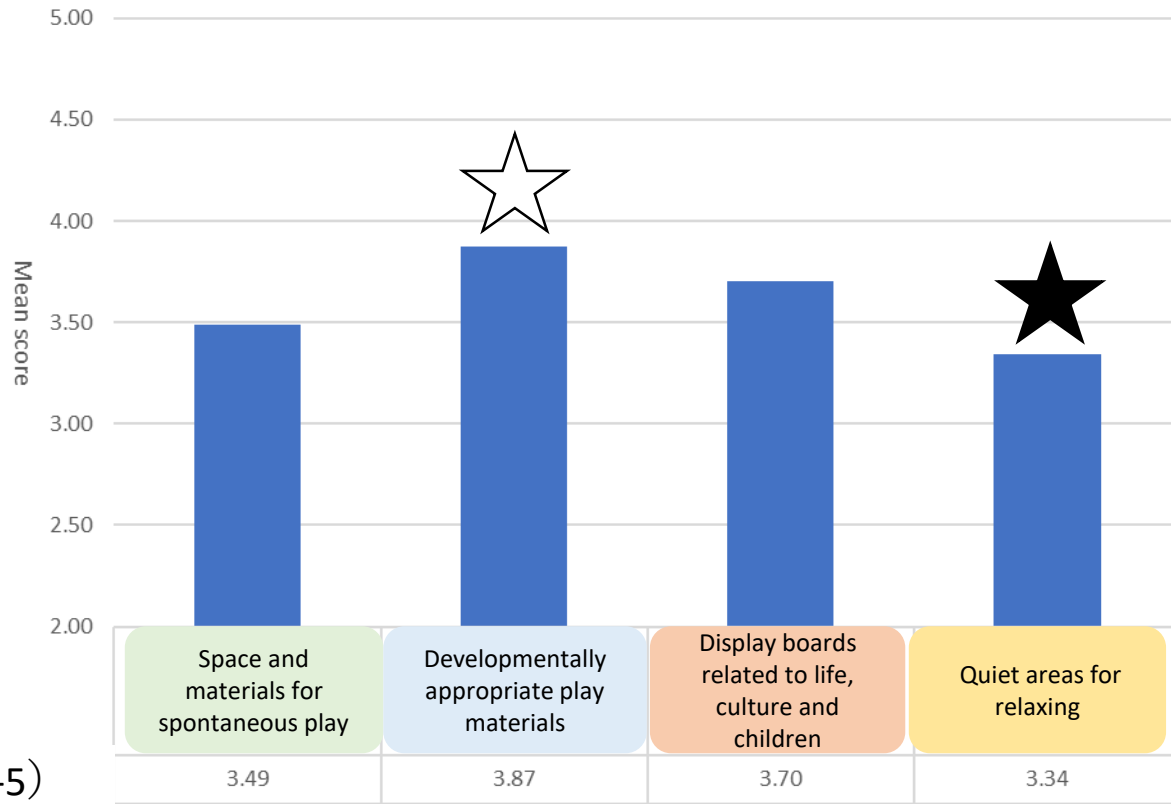
(1) What are the basic characteristics of classroom process quality in Japanese ECEC?

- Classroom environment
- Teacher-child interaction

Factor structure of classroom environment



Classroom environment in 1-yr-old class



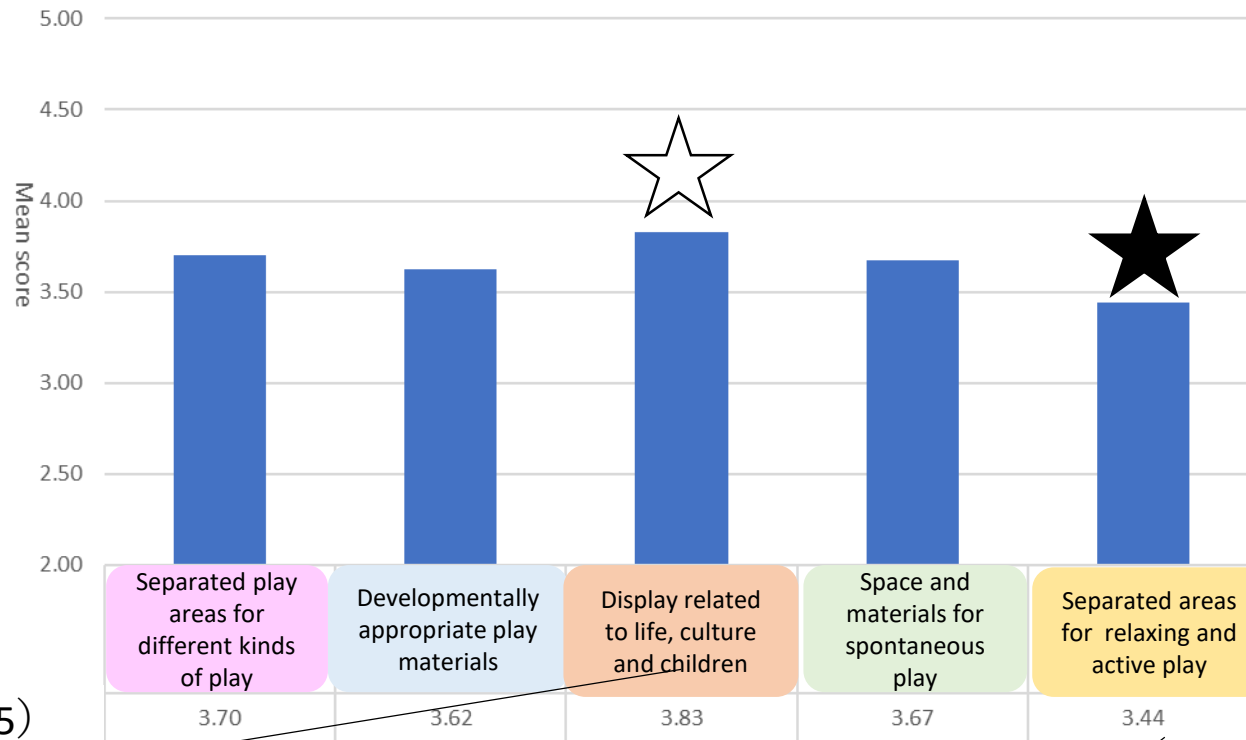
5 point-scale (1-5)

I prepare developmentally appropriate play materials in play areas.
I prepare play materials for enhancing children's experiences.

There is space for relaxing in the classroom
The relaxing space is not disturbed by other children.

Classroom environment in 3-yr-old class

*Similar results were found on classroom environment in 5-yr-old class



5 point-scale (1-5)

I display something related to life and culture familiar to children in the classroom.

I display something indicating the season in the classroom.

There is space for relaxing in the classroom.

The relaxing space is not disturbed by other children's active play.

What the results imply about Japanese ECEC

- Relatively high score on
“Developmentally appropriate play materials” (1) and
“Display related to life, culture and children” (3 & 5)
- Relatively low score on
“Quiet areas for relaxing (1) “ and
“Separated areas for relaxing and active play” (3 & 5)



Indoor space is limited and it may be difficult to ensure enough space for relaxing in the classroom.

Result on RQ1: Teacher-child interaction

(1) What are the basic characteristics of classroom process quality in Japanese ECEC?

- Classroom environment
- Teacher-child interaction

Factor structure of teacher-child interaction

Exploratory factor analysis

1-yr-old class

**Acceptance,
empathy, listening**

**Supporting
autonomous play
and activities**

**Clarifying daily
regulations and
play rules**

3-yr-old class & 5-yr-old class

**Supporting children's
interest and exploration
through play and activities**

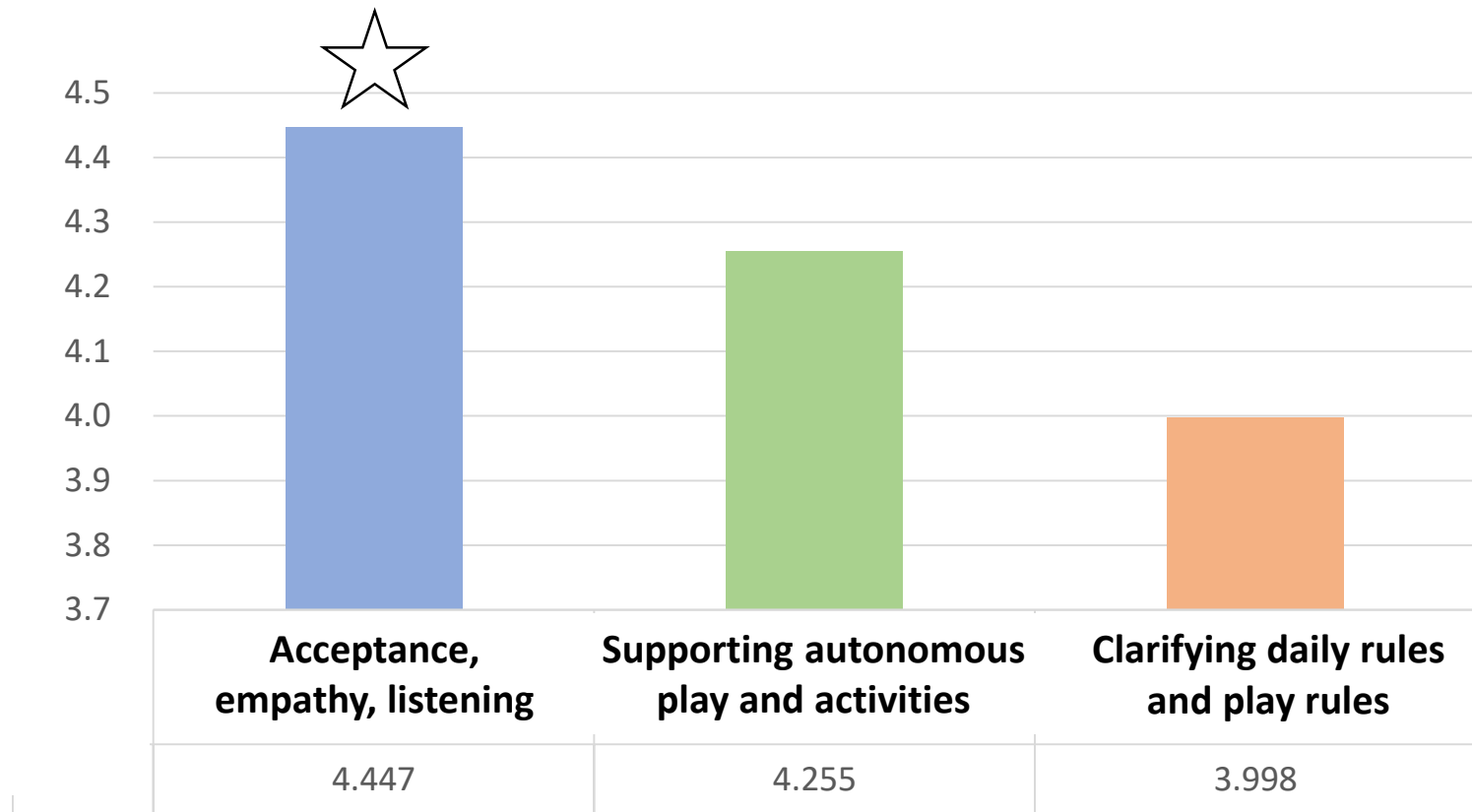
**Acceptance,
empathy, listening**

**Supporting group
play and activities**

**Warm and
accepting climate**

**Clarifying daily
regulations and
play rules**

Teacher-child interaction in 1-yr-old class



I accept children's expression of feelings, e.g. sadness, anger etc.

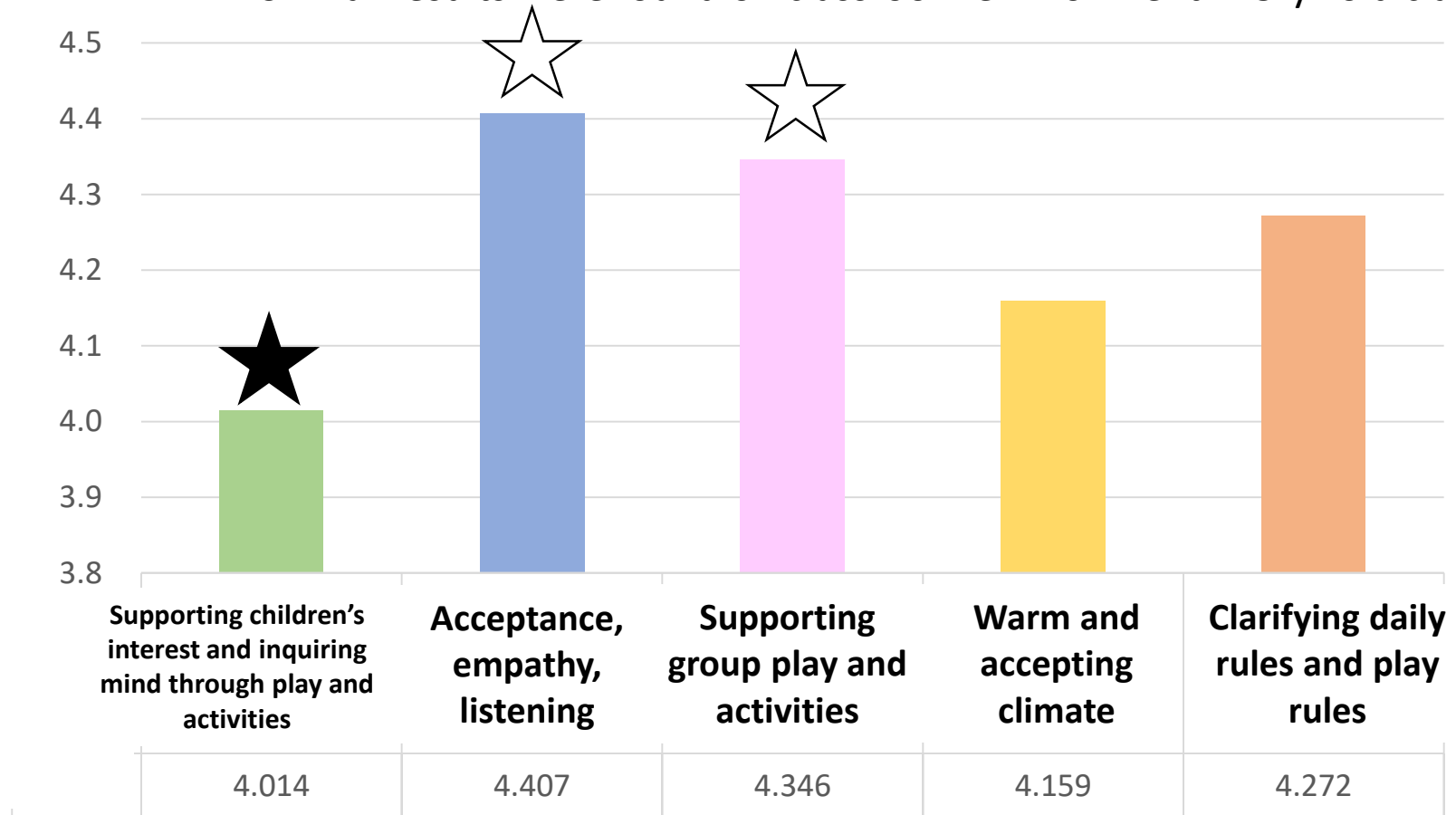
I respond positively to children's expression of joy and excitement.

I talk to children at their eye-level and so on

5 point-scale (1-5)

Teacher-child interaction in 3-yr-old class

*Similar results were found on classroom environment in 5-yr-old class



5 point-scale (1-5)


I encourage children to be interested in surrounding things.

I observe children's interest s and inquiring minds carefully and include their interests into their play.

I discuss children's interests and inquiring minds with children and parents.

What the results imply about Japanese ECEC

- High score on
“Acceptance, empathy, listening” (all ages) and
“Supporting group play and activities” (3 & 5)
- Relatively low score on
“Supporting children’s interests and inquiring minds through
play and activities” (3 & 5)



The government is now emphasizing the importance of
supporting sparks of children’s interests and inquiring minds
in ECEC provision and practice.

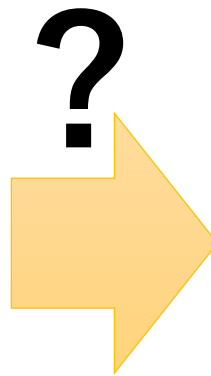
Result on RQ2:

(2) What factors contribute to classroom process quality?

- The contribution of other variables to process quality was analyzed by multiple regression analyses.
- Multiple regression analyses were conducted for each age of the class in each kind of setting.

Independent variables

- **teacher related variables** (age, education, years of experience, job burden etc.)
- **settings related variables** (director's leadership, chief teacher's leadership, in-service training etc.)



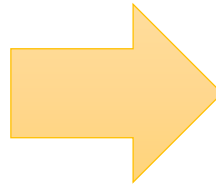
Dependent variables

Classroom & outside environment

Teacher-child interaction

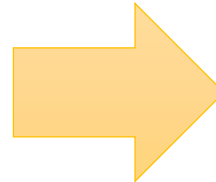
Summary of the results of multiple regression analyses

- Enough resources (materials, time)
- Good relationship with parents and children



Classroom & outside environment

- Leadership provided by chief teachers
- Good relationship with parents and children



Teacher-child interaction

➤ The strengths of Japanese ECEC process quality:

- Teachers tend to take care in preparing **developmentally appropriate play materials** and **displays related to life, culture and children** in the classroom.
- Teachers tend to show **acceptance and empathy**, to **listen** to children, and **support group play and activities** especially for 3-5 years old children.

➤ The challenges of Japanese ECEC process quality:

- Teachers tend to feel that it is difficult to **ensure relaxing space** in classrooms.
- The scores on **supporting children's interests and inquiring minds through play and activities** are relatively low.

➤ The factors related to classroom environment:

- Enough resources (materials, time) and good relationship with parents and children might be important for the quality of classroom environment.

➤ The factors related to teacher-child interaction:

- Leadership provided by chief teachers and good relationship with parents and children might be important for the quality of teacher-child interaction.

Enough resources, leadership, good relationship with parents and children might be the important factors which encourage practitioners to improve process quality in their classroom.

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