

Japanese ECEC practices regarding playground rules and their relation to values shared in each centre

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Introduction

Introduction 1: Outdoor Environment in Japanese ECEC centres



Introduction 2: Japanese guidelines regarding outdoor environments

(1) Establishment of yards and area standards (Cabinet Office, 2014)

	Establishment of yard areas and standards
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A 'playground' is essential, and should, in principle, be in the same area as, or next to, the kindergarten building○ A standard area is required according to the size of the class: 330m² for one class, 360m² for two, 400m² for three, and adding 80m² per class when there are more than four classes
Day care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ An 'outdoor play space' is required, in principle, for all centres that accept children older than age 2○ When there are difficulties in adding area, the alternative space does not have to be next to the centre, if the space has enough area to meet requirements, if the distance from the centre is close enough to use daily and it can be used and reached safely○ Required area for one user: more than 3.3m² per child over the age of 2
Integrated centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ An 'outdoor play space' is required, in principle; alternative spaces can be used by integrated, daycare-based, district-discretionary centres, if necessary conditions like safety, enough time for daily use, appropriate provision of education and care, some space, etc. are satisfied○ The following two standards are required:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than 3.3m² per child over the age of 2• Sum of area required for children older than age 3 is required as a part of kindergartens' standards, and 3.3m² per child is required if they are over the age of 2

Introduction 2: Japanese guidelines regarding outdoor environments

(1) Establishment of yards and area standards (Cabinet Office, 2014)

Establishment of yard areas and standards	
Kindergarten	<p>○ A 'playground' is essential, and should, in principle, be in the same area as, or next to, the kindergarten</p> <p>➤ Standards only refer to area</p> <p>○ Required area for one user: more than 360m² for two, or more</p>
Day care	<p>➤ There are also unauthorised nurseries that do not have any outdoor spaces</p> <p>○ Required area for one user: more than 3.3m² per child over the age of 2</p>
Integrated centre	<p>○ An 'outdoor play space' is required, in principle; alternative spaces can be used by integrated, daycare-based, district-discretionary centres, if necessary conditions like safety, enough time for daily use, appropriate provision of education and care, some space, etc. are satisfied</p> <p>○ The following two standards are required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than 3.3m² per child over the age of 2• Sum of area required for children older than age 3 is required as a part of kindergartens' standards, and 3.3m² per child is required if they are over the age of 2

Introduction 2: Japanese guidelines regarding outdoor environments

(2) Purpose of Japanese early childhood education, in terms of the environment

- Children have peace of mind and form bases of rich emotion, curiosity, thinking skills and expression through direct experience with nature and feeling its largeness, beauty and wonder (Cabinet Office 2018, in Instruction of Content in Area 'Environment' *Course of Study for Integrated Center*).
- 'Care and education through environment' has been a focus of Japanese ECEC for a long time

Introduction 2: Japanese guidelines regarding outdoor environments

(3) Kindergarten Standards for Facility Equipment (not compulsory)

- Standard policy: Improving the environment to guide children flexibly through play, contact with nature, people and objects/ gaining a rich environment where they can be healthy and safe/ improving centres' cooperative relationships with their neighbourhoods and be in balance with neighbouring environment

- Environments related to nature that are picked up practically:
 - rolling on a small hill or a slope/ spaces for playing with sand or mud/ spaces to play with water/ trees/ fields, planters, vegetable gardens, flower beds/ lawns/ weeds/ shrubs or bushes/ spaces for animals/ biotopes/ sunlight and wind

Research Background & Aim

Research Background 1

Children's needs for experiences in outdoor environments

- Health problems like obesity (OECD, 2016)
- Experiences in outdoor environments can provide children not only with physical development from movement play, but also wellbeing from interactions with nature and other people
- Lack of outdoor environment where children can play comfortably (Koizumi et al., 2003; Sadayuki & Koike, 2016)
- There is a growing need for care and education for young children, because of the growing number of working parents, but Japanese ECEC centres do not have enough outdoor environments, due to a lack of space

Research Background 2

Lack of general guidelines

- Guidelines for Equipment in Kindergartens are only for kindergartens and include neither daycares nor integrated centres
- There are no guidelines for of quality, other than regarding the quality of structures used

Need for research about the quality of processes

- How do Japanese ECEC staff members interpret and support children's outdoor play?
- How are the rules in outdoor environments decided?
- As background, what do Japanese ECEC staff members think is important for children's experiences in outdoor environments and their development?

Research Background 3

Need for research about rules in ECEC outdoor environments

- There are conflicts between children's needs for play experiences and adults' intentions to protect their safety (Lindon, 2011)
- Rules can be restrictions on variations of children's play (Kaneko et al., 2013)

Variations in staff viewpoints among centres (Tsujitani et al., 2018)

- Two factors, direct and indirect guidance for children, were found as a result of a confirmatory factor analysis
- Differences among centres were revealed when evaluating the value of 'Building strength and acquiring athletic skills' when ranking five items

Research Background 3

Need for research about rules in ECEC outdoor environments

- There are conflicts between children's needs for play experiences and adults' intentions to protect their safety (Lindon, 2011)
- Rules can be restrictions on variations of children's play (Kaneko et al., 2013)

Variations in staff viewpoints among centres (Tsujitani et al., 2018)

- Two factors are a result of a
 - Differences in 'Building strategies' for five items
- We need to consider the quality of processes **based on each centre's viewpoint, not neglecting diversity** produced from differences in history, district, staff experiences, and so on, even within the same country.

Research Aim:

To know the relationship between ‘practice about rules’ and ‘belief’

Practice about rules:

How are the rules in outdoor environments decided?

- Each child or all children decide
- Each staff or all staff decides
- Decided through discussions among staff and children
- Staff prohibits this, as a rule



Belief:

What do the staff members in each centre think is important about children's experiences or development?

Growing stamina or physical skills...

Experience many things with nature...

.....

Of course, there are many important beliefs, but they may be related to rules that show how the staff guide children directly or not, and what children can experience.

Methodology

Methodology

- Questionnaire sent to 1,740 ECEC centres
- Mainly integrated centres
- Three parts, 16 pages total
 1. Situation of playground or outdoor environment in neighborhood
 2. Children's play and activities
 3. Staff members' practices and what they think is important



Picked-up items:

- Questions about **rules** in outdoor environments (Part 2)
- Questions about **beliefs**; what the staff members do and think is important for the children's experiences and development (Part 3)

園庭に関する調査

2016年11月

このたびは本調査にご協力いただきありがとうございます。

本調査は園庭（屋外環境）の状況や活用について調べるために行うものです。調査は3つのパート（「1. 園庭の状況について」「2. 子どもの活動について」「3. 取り組みや大切にしたいことについて」）で構成されています。

本調査は東京大学の倫理規定に則り、情報の漏洩防止とプライバシーの保護を徹底した上、学術的な目的のみに使用させていただきます。データを入力後、施設可能な場所にて厳重に保管するなど、個人情報の保護に最大限の配慮をいたします。回答は全て調査者の厳重な管理のもとで、コンピュータにより統計的に分析されますので、個人や園が特定されることはありません。また、回答は一人でも、分担して複数人でご回答いただいても結構です。園庭の有無により答え方の異なる箇所がございますので、指示に沿ってお進みください。

お忙しいところ大変恐縮に存じますが、ご理解とご協力のほど何卒よろしくお願い申し上げます。

12月16日（金）までにご返願いただければ幸いです。

《本件に関するご意見・お問い合わせ先》
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※選択肢については、「該当するもの全て」「複数選択可」とある項目を除き、該当するもの1つに○をつけてください。

※以下の欄へのご記入をお願いいたします。

1. 施設開設年（西暦）年（ ）月
2. 記入者（複数選択可） (1) 園長 (2) 理事長 (3) 副園長 (4) 主任 (5) クラス担任 (6) 事務員 (7) その他
3. 総園児数 (1) 50名以下 (2) 51～100名 (3) 101～200名 (4) 201～300名 (5) 301名以上
4. 在園児の年齢（該当するもの全てに○をつけてください） (1) 0歳 (2) 1歳 (3) 2歳 (4) 3歳 (5) 4歳 (6) 5歳 (7) 6歳
5. 年齢別の内訳 0～2歳児クラス（2016年4月時点で3歳未満）（ ）名 3～5歳児クラス（2016年4月時点で3歳以上）（ ）名

次頁へお進みください。

Methodology

■ Questions about rules in outdoor environments:

Who decides the following rules?



- ❑ Going outside when it is raining
- ❑ Going outside after it has rained
- ❑ When children want to place what they made
- ❑ When children do what they want to try
- ❑ How to use tools and play equipment
- ❑ Take sand or dirt away from where they were found

- ❑ The amount of water used
- ❑ Climbing trees
- ❑ Picking fruit
- ❑ Eating fruit from the trees
- ❑ Collecting branches, leaves and flowers
- ❑ Picking grasses and flowers from flowerbeds and planters
- ❑ Interacting with animals that are being raised

● Each child or all decide

● Decided through discussions between staff and children

● Each staff or all staff decides

● Staff prohibits this, as a rule

(For each rule, respondents selected one of the above four patterns)

Methodology

- Questions about **beliefs**: What do staff members do and think is important for the children's experiences and development?

Number according to your perceived order of importance

- Feeling the beauty and wonder of nature
- Building strength and acquiring athletic skills
- Developing skills to predict and deal with danger
- Trying and making expressions regarding what children wonder about or are interested in
- Having a scientific viewpoint and being conscious of literacy

Methodology

■ Questions about **beliefs**: What do staff members do and think is important for the children's experiences and development?

Score of direct and indirect guidance (Tsujitani et al., 2018)

Factors derived from the question 'How important do you think the following things are?' using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 'not important at all' to 5 'very important' and confirmative factor analysis

Factor I : Important-direct

- ❑ Guide children in activities that need a high level of skills
- ❑ Invite children to play with activities the staff start
- ❑ Use outdoor environments to events or instructing sports
- ❑ Hold activities that can improve the children's physical skills
- ❑ Conduct activities by directing children what to do

Ranking
high

The centres ranked 1st
'Children can build strength
and acquire athletic skills'

Ranking
low

The centres ranked 1st
'Children can try or express
something that they wonder
about or want to try'

Factor II : Important-indirect

- ❑ Go around to see how children are playing
- ❑ Make opportunities in which children interact with each other
- ❑ Plan activities connected to nature

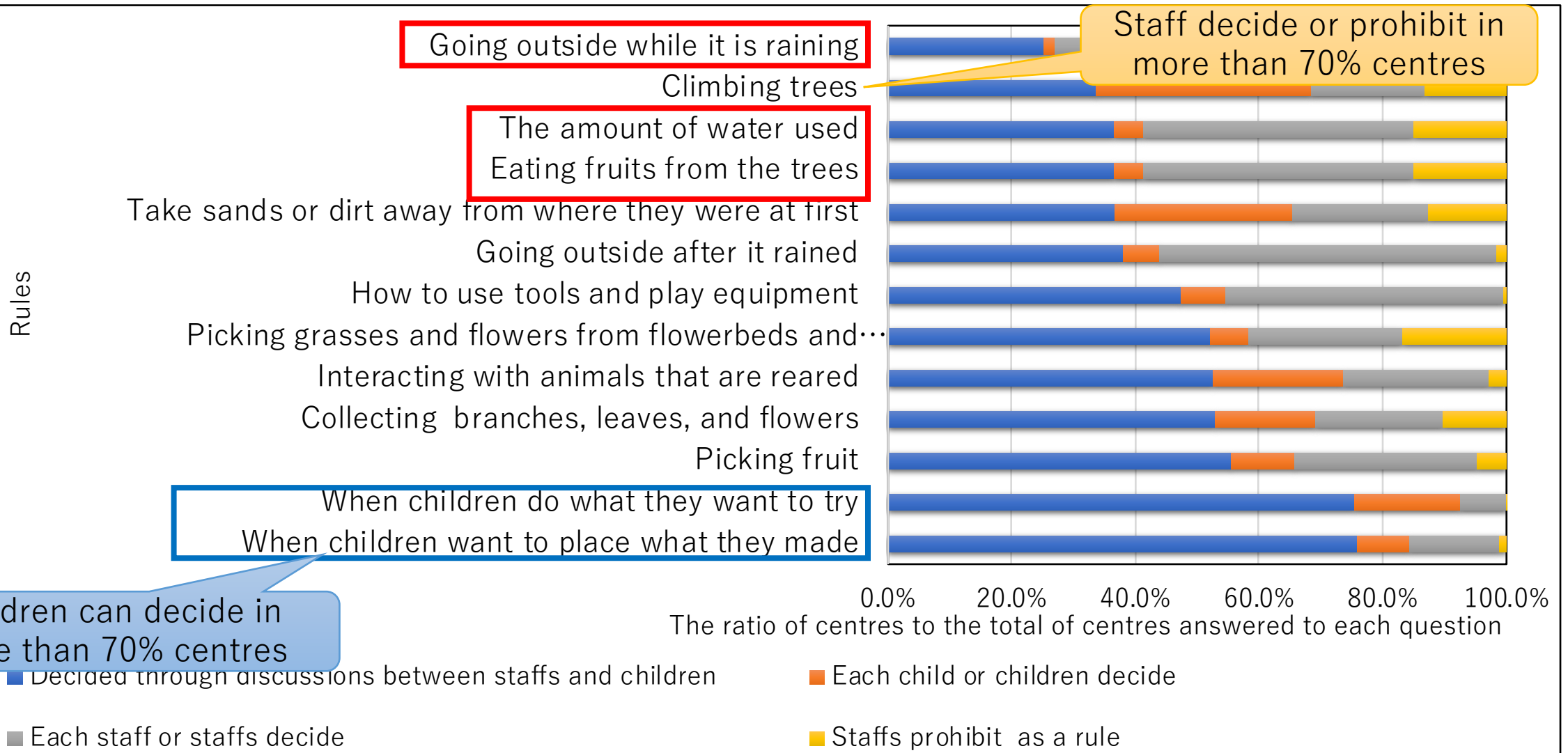


Many centres ranked high

Results

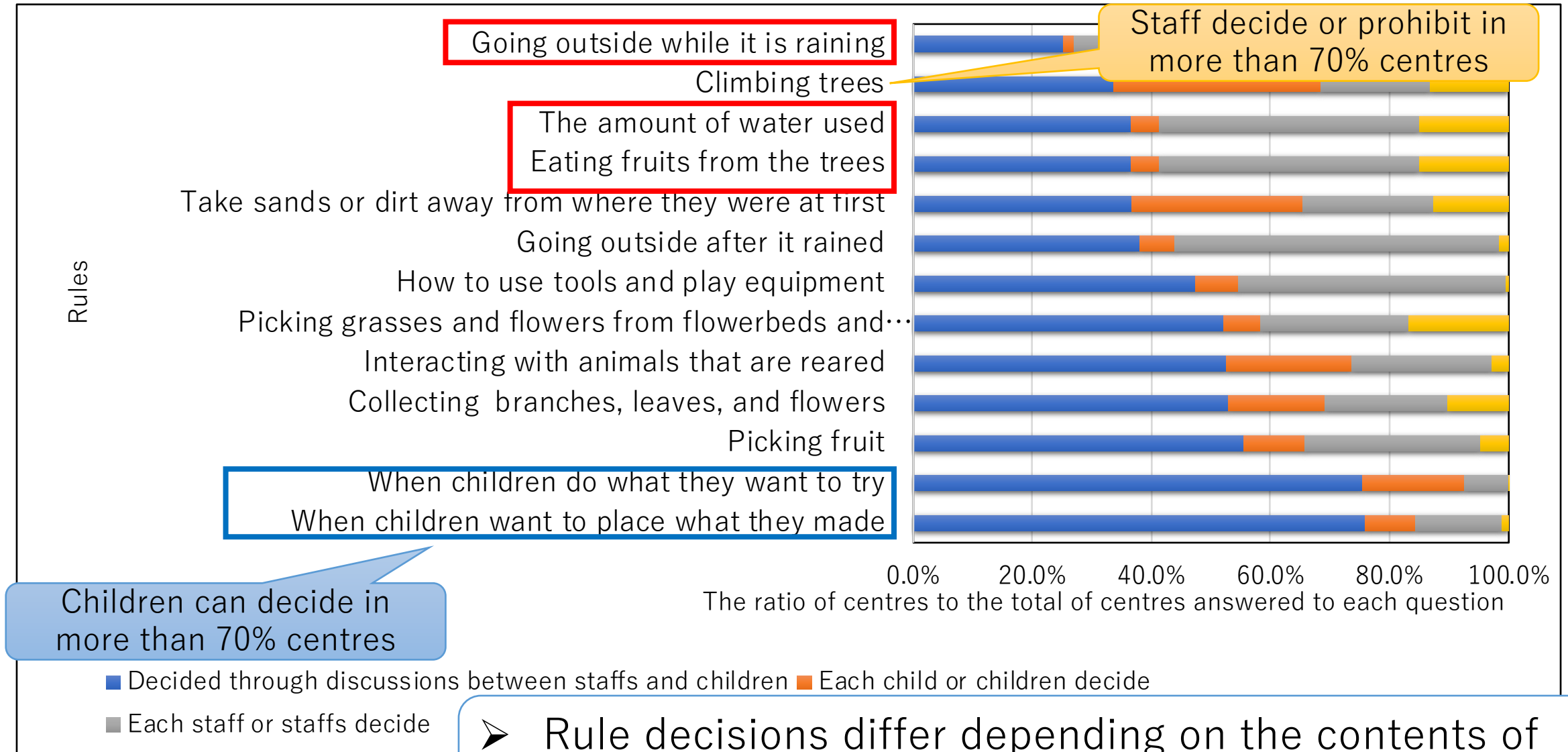
Results

How are rules decided?



Results

How are rules decided?

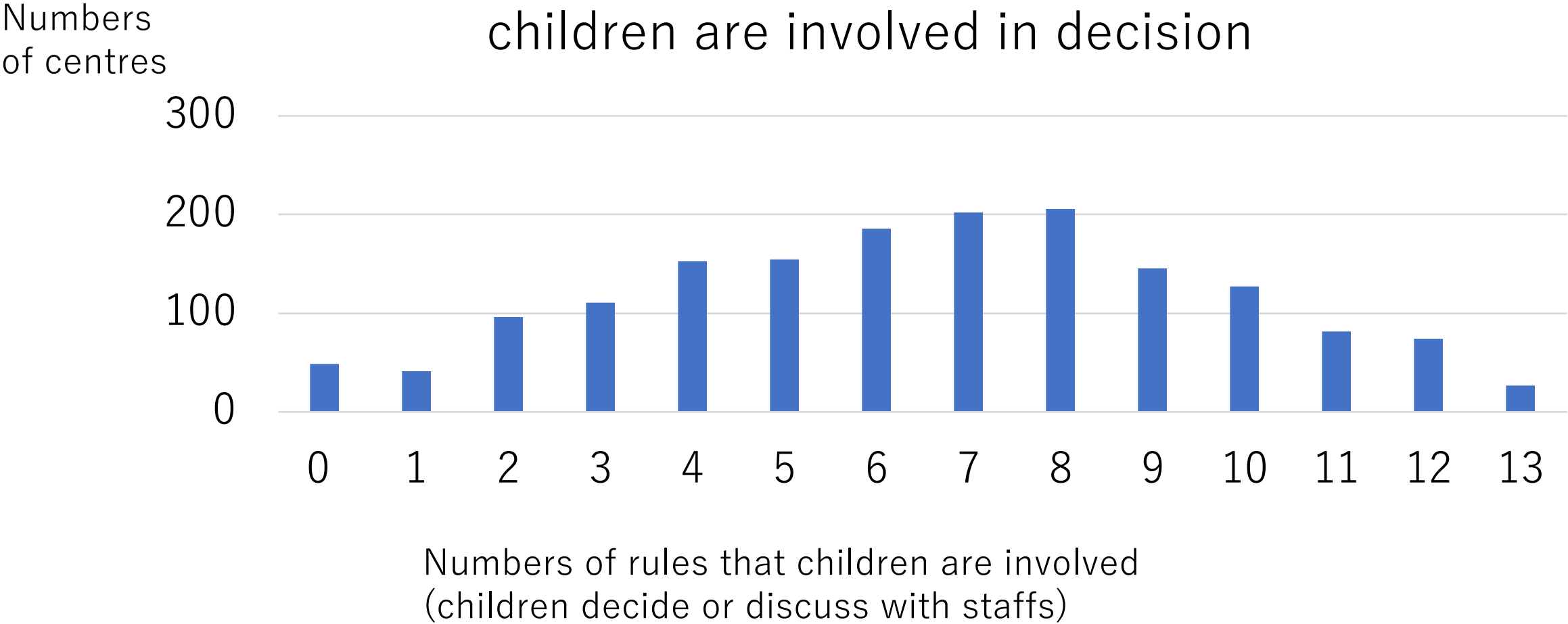


➤ Rule decisions differ depending on the contents of rules, and may relate to safety or protecting nature

Results

How are rules decided?

Number of centres by numbers of rules that children are involved in decision

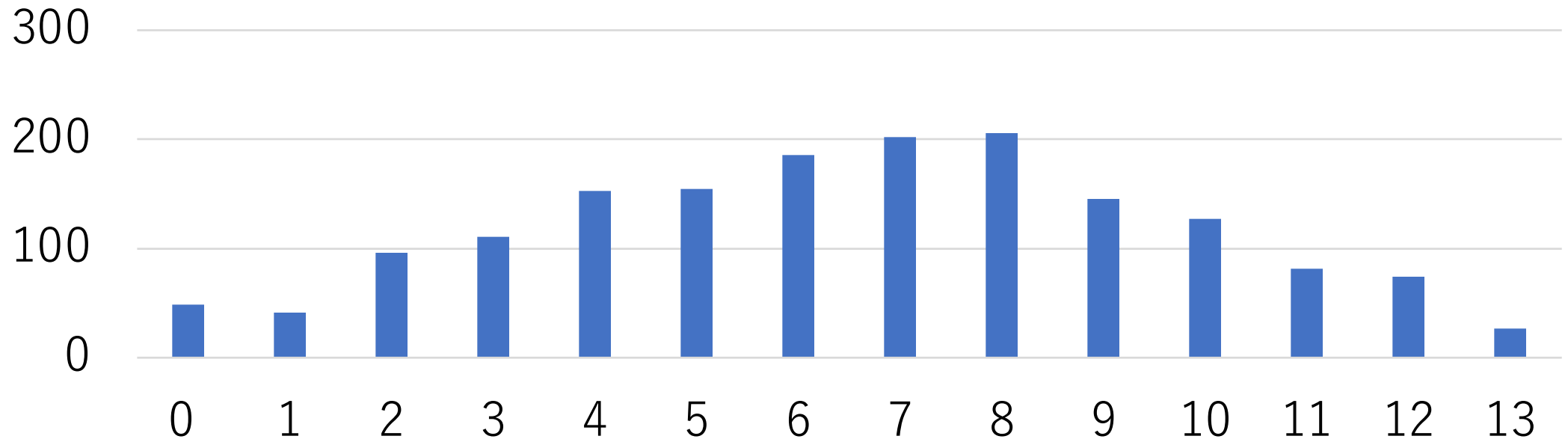


Results

How are rules decided?

Number of centres by numbers of rules that children are involved in decision

Numbers
of centres



Number
(centres)

➤ The ratio (numbers) of rules that children can affect vary among centres

Results

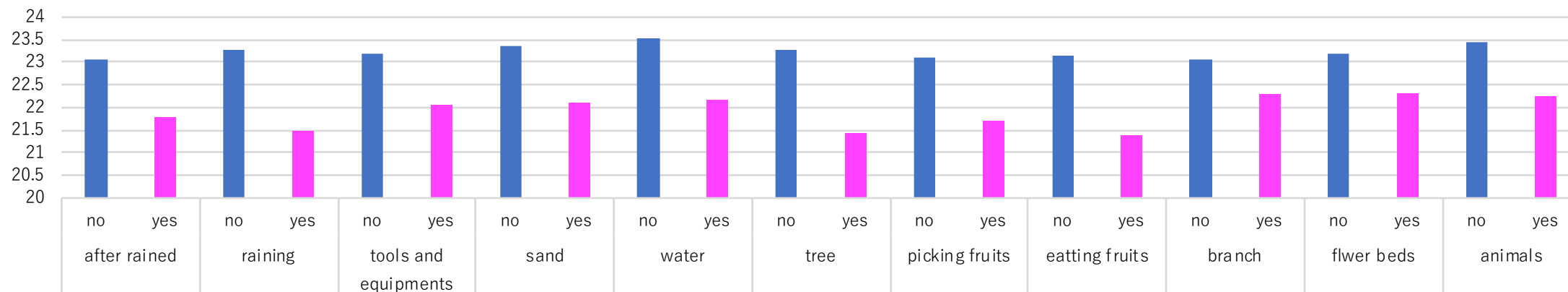
Are the rule decisions related to the beliefs, that is what the staff members think is important?

- 1) For each 'rule', centres were separated to two groups; **one where children are involved in rule decisions** ('children or each child decides' and 'the children and staff(s) discuss'), and **those where children are not involved in rule decisions** ('staff(s) decides' or 'staff prohibits this, as a rule')
- 2) To compare the scores of 'important-direct', t -tests comparing groups were conducted.



In rules except 'When children do what they want to try' and 'When children want to place what they have made', **the mean scores of 'important-direct' were higher in the group where children are not involved in rule decisions.**

Mean scores of 'important-direct', according to children's involvement in rule decisions (no/yes)



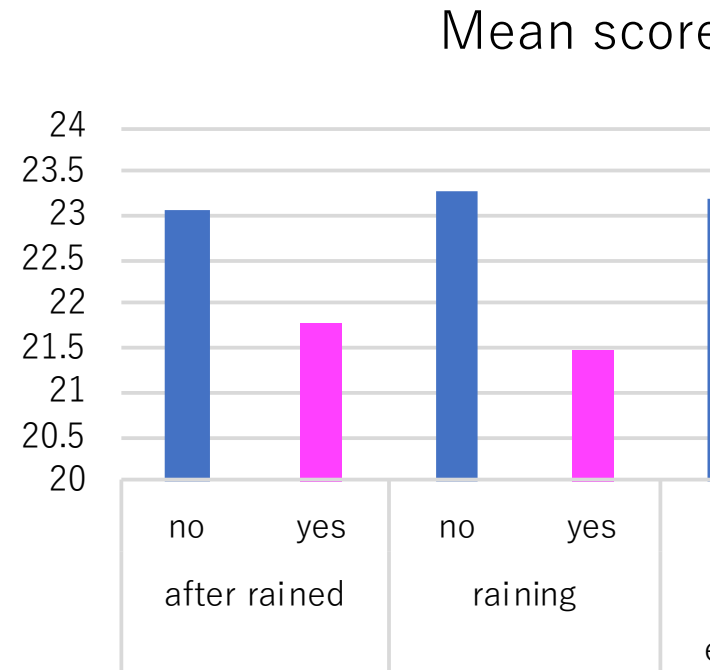
Results

Are the rule decisions related to the beliefs, that is what the staff think is important?

- 1) For each 'rule', centres were **involved in rule decisions** ('centres staff(s) discuss'), and **those not involved** ('staff(s) decides' or 'staff provide rule').
- 2) To compare the scores of 'important- direct' and 'important- indirect' rule decisions were conducted.



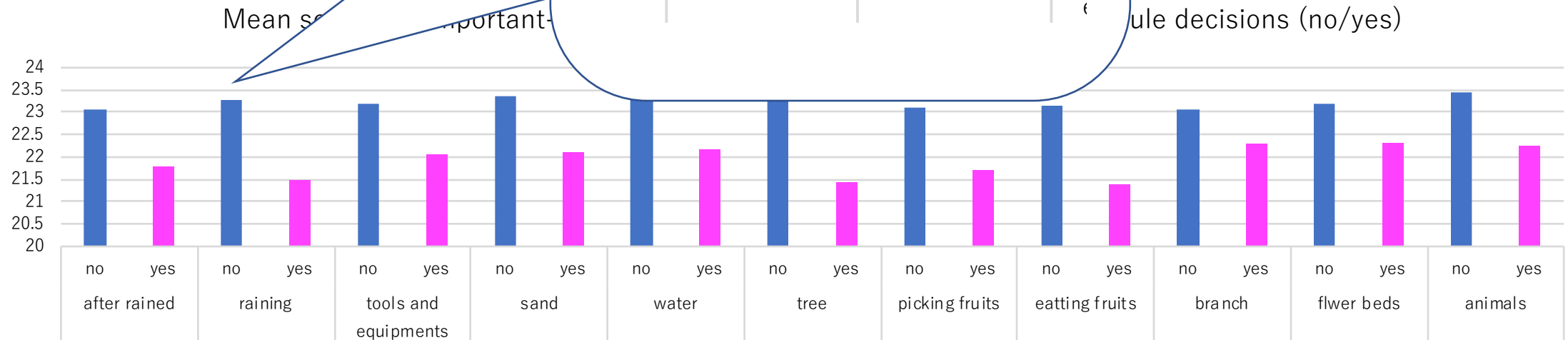
In rules except 'important- direct' want to place rule decisions **were high**



Where children are involved in rule decisions

Two groups were

to try' and 'When children scores of 'important- direct' rule decisions (no/yes)



Results

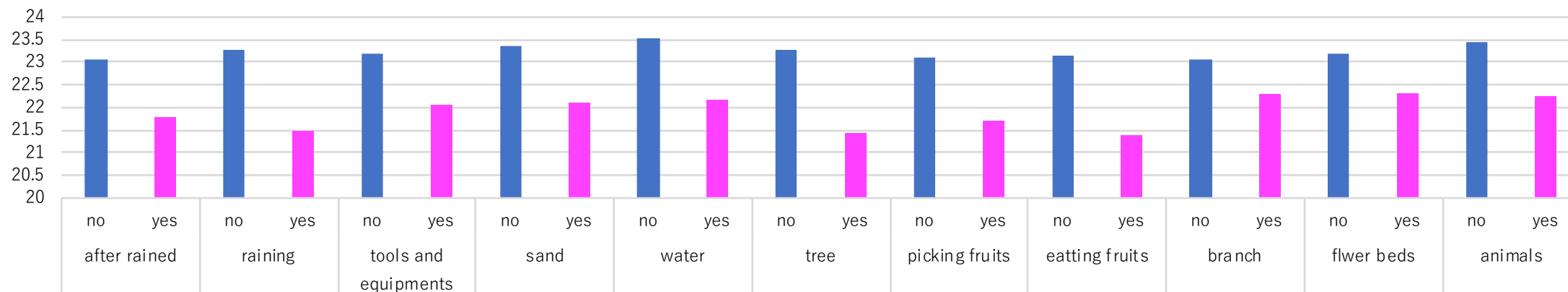
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Mean scores of 'important-direct', according to children's involvement in rule decisions (no/yes)



Results

Trying to reach a
consensus

Examples of rule-related practices from free responses:

- **Staff discuss rules** about the ways to play on the playground and with equipment, and come to a common understanding about how and when to watch out and inform children about rules.
- Use of **playground equipment** that is up high is **partly restricted according to the ages of children**, and staff members are always near children using them.
- After rain, there are puddles here and there on the playgrounds, and children can play with mud there. It makes the ground bumpy, **and land leveling afterwards is difficult**. On these days, children think about how to use the playground and **enjoy playing as they choose after the rain**.

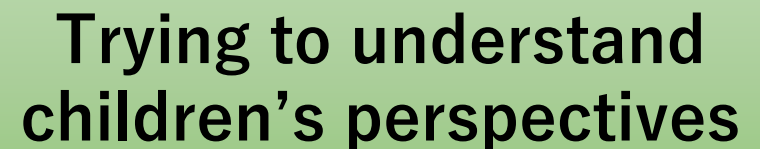
Making rules

Trying to decrease restrictions

Results

Examples of rule-related practices from free responses:

- We go for a walk even if it is raining, wearing raincoats and rain shoes. / Biotope is used for activities through all four seasons, to **let children learn both the joy and danger of water.**
- We are trying to let them (children) **play freely without many restrictions** in a playground rich in nature, **making sure that there are no suspicious characters** on the mountain behind the playground.
- **Children often generate their own rules for play** in play areas, ECEC teachers join them and enjoy the children's sense and ideas for play.



**Trying to understand
children's perspectives**

Discussion/
Limitations of the
study and
possibilities for
future research

Discussion

1. Rule decision processes

Who decides each rule is different, depending on what the rule is concerning. It seems that rules regarding safety tend to be decided by adults. However, **the ratio of rules that children can affect varies among centres**. It may be related to the thoughts and practices of each centre.

2. Relationship between rule decisions and beliefs

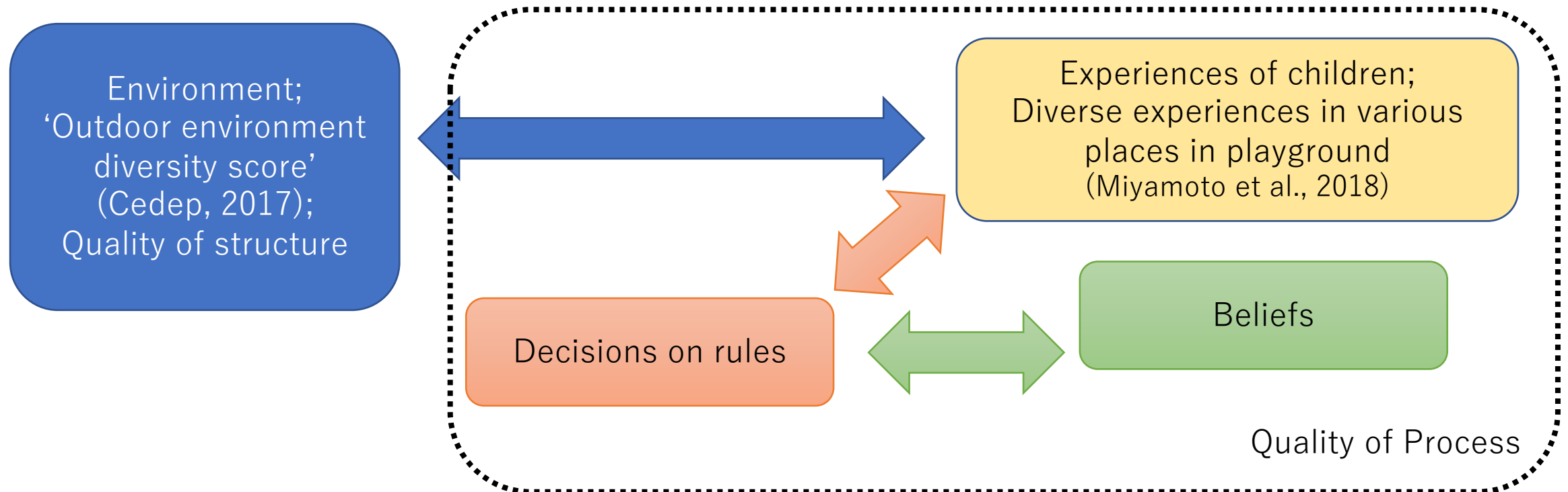
These results indicate that, in centres that place importance on direct guidance—in other words **centres that have a belief in making children do what staff members decide—children tend not to be involved in rule decisions**.

In other words, beliefs on adult guidance can relate to rule-making or decision processes. This is closely related to what the staff members in each centre think is important, so **we cannot discuss quality without considering the values or thoughts shared in centres**.

Discussion

3. Rules, beliefs and environments → features of centres

In our previous study, these process qualities were also related to the outdoor environment (Cedep, 2017). Comprehensive consideration of quality in outdoor environments is needed, including the centres' beliefs.



Limitations of the study and possibilities for future research

Processes of change in each centre

- This time, the questionnaire was distributed only once, so the processes of how each centre's environment, rules and shared beliefs changed need to be considered

Children's ages

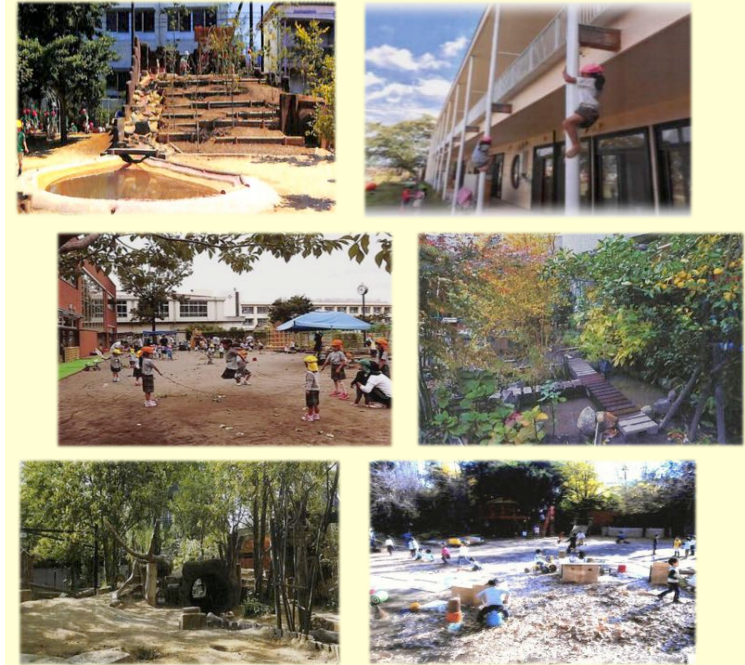
- Studies of rules are mainly focused on children older than 2 or 3, but children under 2 are already exploring the environment and need outdoor experiences. So, how the staff accepts or prohibits infants' and toddlers' conduct needs to be considered in the future, considering the growing needs for care and education at this level

Thank you!

If you need a PPT file of this slide or more information, please contact us:

entei.asobi2016@gmail.com

To Enrich Children's Experiences: The Introduction of Devices for Improving the Quality of Playgrounds



The Center for Early Childhood Development, Education, and
Policy Research, The University of Tokyo
The Cedep Research Group of ECEC Outdoor Environment

