

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

How can mental health develop through early childhood learning activities in Japan?

Wimontip Musikaphan¹ and Nanthanat Songsiri²

¹ Ph.D., National Institute for Child and Family Development, Mahidol University, Thailand

² M.Sc., National Institute for Child and Family Development, Mahidol University, Thailand

Corresponding Author: Nanthanat Songsiri E-mail: nanthanat.son@mahidol.edu

Received: 12 January 2019 Revised: 29 March 2019 Accepted: 4 April 2019

Available online: April 2019

Abstract

Musikaphan W and Songsiri N. How can mental health develop through early childhood learning activities in Japan? J Pub Health Dev. 2019;17(1):61-73

This qualitative case study investigates concepts on mental health development through early childhood learning concept and activities of Japan. The study sites were an elementary school and a kindergarten in Tokyo, Japan. Data were primarily collected by document research, narrative interviews with sixteen participants and observation with forty five students. Content analysis was used to analyze the data.

The key findings are: 1) Japan has encouraged positive attitude as the first step of mental health firmness, following with physical fitness development. 2) Team-based playing is applied as a way to generate personal self-esteem, cooperation and social readiness. 3) Learning by playing is continually promoted. 4) Public mind is embedded in the way of life 5) Learning curriculum is designed and adjusted based on research 6) Simple but delicate education area is focused and 7) Arrangement of mental health educational environment is strongly focused.

These finding can be adapted to early childhood and primary education in Thailand since it would help kindergarten, school and parents to hit into the most important point of mental health development as a smart way to “strengthening at heart” of children since they were young. Early childhood education policy for Thailand should be promoted to be based on play-based learning.

Keywords: mental health development, early childhood learning activities, early childhood education in Japan

ประเทศญี่ปุ่นพัฒนาสุขภาพจิตใจ ผ่านกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ในเด็กปฐมวัยอย่างไร

วิมลทิพย์ มุสิกพันธ์¹ และ นันทนัช สงศิริ²

¹ ปร.ด. (ประชากรศาสตร์) สถาบันแห่งชาติเพื่อการพัฒนาเด็กและครอบครัว มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

² วท.ม. (พัฒนาการมนุษย์) สถาบันแห่งชาติเพื่อการพัฒนาเด็กและครอบครัว มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

บทคัดย่อ

วิมลทิพย์ มุสิกพันธ์ และ นันทนัช สงศิริ ประเทศญี่ปุ่นพัฒนาสุขภาพจิตใจ ผ่านกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ในเด็กปฐมวัยอย่างไร ว. สาธารณสุขและการพัฒนา 2562;17(1):61-73

การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาแนวทางการพัฒนาสุขภาพจิตใจของเด็กปฐมวัยผ่านการจัดกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ในประเทศญี่ปุ่น งานวิจัยเก็บข้อมูลในโรงเรียนประถมศึกษาและโรงเรียนอนุบาลในกรุงโตเกียว ประเทศญี่ปุ่น การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลในเบื้องต้นเริ่มจากผู้วิจัยทำการศึกษาเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องก่อน หลังจากนั้นจึงเก็บข้อมูลจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักชาวญี่ปุ่นจำนวน 16 คนและทำการสังเกตกับนักเรียนระดับปฐมวัยทั้งหมด 45 คน ใช้การวิเคราะห์เชิงคุณภาพในการวิเคราะห์แนวคิด กระบวนการ การจัดจำแนกและการสรุปผล

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า 1) นักการศึกษาญี่ปุ่นได้ดำเนินการปลูกฝังสิ่งที่เรียกว่า “การคิดบวก” ให้กับเด็กเป็นสิ่งแรกบนความเชื่อที่มั่นคงว่าความคิดบวกจะเป็นคุณสมบัติพื้นฐานที่สำคัญของการสร้างจิตใจให้มีสุขภาพดี เมื่อมีเรื่องคิดบวกแล้ว การออกกำลังกายเพื่อคุณสมบัติที่แข็งแรงทางกายจะต้องดำเนินไปคู่กัน 2) การเล่นเกมเป็นทีมจัดเป็นเครื่องมือสร้างสุขภาพจิตใจที่ดีของเด็กเพราะสิ่งนี้จะสอนเรื่องหลัก 3 เรื่องให้กับเด็กๆ คือ การเคารพนับถือตนเอง การมีนิสัยของการทำงานร่วมกับคนอื่นได้และความพร้อมในการเข้าสังคมเมื่อพวกเขาเติบโตขึ้น 3) การเรียนรู้ผ่านการเล่นเกมเป็นเรื่องที่ต้องทำอย่างจริงจังต่อเนื่องในเด็กวัยนี้ 4) การสร้างคุณสมบัติทางจิตใจให้เข้มแข็งด้วย “จิตสาธารณะ” ต้องทำให้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชีวิตปกติของเด็กทุกๆ วัน 5) หลักสูตรของเด็กจะต้องผ่านการวิจัยมาแล้วอย่างดีและมีมาตรฐานเดียวกัน 6) หลักสูตรการสอนต้อง “เรียบง่ายแต่อ่อนโยน” และ 7) การสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมเพื่อการสร้างสุขภาพจิตใจที่ดีเป็นเรื่องจำเป็น สำคัญและต้องทำ

ข้อค้นพบเหล่านี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อพ่อแม่ โรงเรียนอนุบาล และโรงเรียนประถมศึกษาในประเทศไทยเพราะสิ่งนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า “สุขภาพจิตใจที่ดี” เป็นพื้นฐานของการพัฒนามนุษย์ในระยะยาว นโยบายการศึกษาปฐมวัยสำหรับประเทศไทยควรได้รับการส่งเสริมให้มีพื้นฐานมาจากการเรียนรู้ด้วยการเล่น

คำสำคัญ: การพัฒนาสุขภาพจิตใจ กิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ในเด็กปฐมวัย การศึกษาปฐมวัยในประเทศญี่ปุ่น

Introduction

Fertility has declined in most of the low and middle-income countries, including Thailand. The shrunk number of children because of declined fertility leads countries having to prepare themselves for many aspects including labor force planning in the nearest future. In order to serve labor force demand in any country, children in 21st century have to be prepared for serving some unpredictable needs for driving the country.¹ Based on societal and family changes in size, the need for “strong in mind” children will increase as it is believed throughout the world that mentally strong kids can grow up to be effective labors in the world of change in the nearest future.²

Interestingly, mentally strong mind in kids directly relates with self-esteem. Whenever a kid realizes that he can act as he wants while he is a center adults care for and feel proud of, he is more likely to believe on being valuable and important. This leads to mentally strong mind that makes good decision about himself which enhances his value rather than break it down. Various studies have confirmed that self-esteem has a direct relationship with our overall well-being.³⁻⁶ A study of Trautwein et al (2006)⁷ revealed that learning environment acts as potential moderator for generating self-esteem and self-concept. Supporting bottom-up learning was proved among primary students as a smart way leading meritocratic learning environment.

At present, Thailand’s early childhood learning activities needs much development. Several studies indicated some relevant necessities that the children aged between 3-5 years have the great physical and brain development. A study has confirmed that children aged 3-6 years who participated in effective

pre-primary education program are more likely to be healthier and perform better than those without kindergarten experience.⁸ The effective learning activities for kids should be play-based learning by own design. Amazing sensory experiences outdoor is strongly needed for childhood learning activities but in Thailand, early childhood learning in kindergartens focuses on writing, reading and memorizing contents⁹ which is not the right way for childhood learning development.¹⁰

Future Innovation Thailand Institute (FIT)¹¹ (2017) mentioned a research result about Thai early childhood education that intelligent quotient of Thai early childhood children had reduced from 98.99 in 2011 to be 93.1 in 2014 while the international standard is equal 100. Furthermore, a quality assessment survey conducted by the Department of Health in 2013 revealed that only 67 percent of some 20,000 early childhood development centers nationwide passed the quality assessment.¹²

World Health Organization strongly mentioned that positive mental health is linked to a range of development outcomes, including better health status, higher educational achievement, enhanced productivity and earning as well as improved quality of life.¹³ The science of child development shows that the foundation for mental health is built early in life as early experiences. Children’s relationships with parents, teachers, peers, and relatives shape the architecture of their mental development.¹⁴ Several studies indicated some relevant necessities that the children aged between 3-5 years have the great physical emotion, and brain development.¹⁵⁻¹⁶ A study has confirmed that children aged 3- 6 years who participated in pre-primary education program are

more likely to be healthier in both physical and mental and perform better than those without kindergarten experience.¹⁷ Thus efficient early childhood learning activities in school means the building of mental and physical health that is so important for being human capital of countries where the birth rate has been reducing like Thailand.

Japan is an outstanding country in many aspects including early childhood development with strong mental health under a firm belief that every child has learning abilities, attempts, diligence and self-discipline. Every elementary in Japan has a health center (hoKenshitsu). In this health center, children find the yoyo, or “health education teacher” who takes responsibility on helping children growing up with full mental and physical health by supporting main teachers in class to provide supportive activities related to health promotion. This is a special position requiring training, and acquisition of a license.¹⁸ In Japan, health care and education for children are mainly prioritized in kindergartens and daycare centers. Kindergartens (Yochien) provide three years of care and education for children three years of age or older, who go on to enter elementary school after finishing kindergartens. Daycare centers accept infants and children under elementary school age. More than 90 percent of children at the pre-elementary school stage attend either a kindergarten or a daycare center.¹⁹ While the general directional framework for early childhood education is indicated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, the details of early childhood education are left up to each kindergarten or daycare center, with a resulting diversity of forms.²⁰ A form of early child-

hood care and education that is based on nurturing children to fulfill mental health through the human relationships within the group, extends the child’s ability to perform functions, and child-centered.²¹ These qualifications determine their educational achievements, and these could be trained. Therefore, the early childhood education management in Japan focuses on children’s freedom and mentally strong health as much as possible, and promotes the special skill development. Early childhood teaching aims at the discipline rooting, what can or cannot be done, and etiquette. The Japanese children were trained for social readiness. They were taught to pay respect and focus on treating other people, salute, humility, and guardians’ participation with the schools.²² By these reasons, it is worthwhile to study Japan’s early childhood education concept.

This study is intended to obtain Japanese perspectives on early childhood education concept to strengthen children’s mentally strong health which is useful for Thai educators and policy makers. It draws upon a board perspective of human development to provide a meaningful socializing and learning activity track for early children at local and national levels. Within this perspective, the main prepare of this study is to understand the concept and preschool way of early childhood education and activities to fulfill strongly mental health in kindergarten and primary school in Japan.

Methods

This study used qualitative data from narrative interviews with Japanese educators and concerned persons supplemented by documentary data and observation with forty-five students in sites. A

kindergarten and a primary school in Tokyo of Japan were purposively chosen as the study site. With approval of the directors of the schools, the primary researcher of this study was able to access data from teachers and directors and from activity observation. Also, data were gathered from educators and scholars in a university where has Faculty of Education. There, lectures and undergraduate students who nearly become kindergarten teachers were interviewed. Furthermore, responsible officers in Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) were interviewed for educational policy in Japan.

For interviews, the interviewees who participated in the study were informed about the study purpose. The data collection in Japan took place in January 2014 and documentary study was done in September 2014 to February 2015. The guideline of the question covers

- What are Japanese early childhood education policies?
- Japanese people are known for their intelligence, strong health, politeness and wellness so how the country does for generating something unique?
- How to generate “manners before knowledge” among Japanese kids?
- How Japanese kids and students learn to be generous, compassionate and empathetic?
- How Japanese kids are taught qualities like grit, self-control and justice?

- What are benefits of play-based learning in Japan?

- We heard that most Japanese schools do not employ janitors but students clean their school themselves. What is rationale behind this way of practice?

The validity of data was triangulated by: 1) a study of teachers and concerned scholars using narrative interviews and participatory observation with the students; 2) in-depth interviews with university scholars, policy officers who implemented policies and teachers in the school, regulations and guidelines for the application of early childhood education; and 3) a study of related documents.

Sixteen participants were included for interview. These participants were selected purposively. Two out of sixteen are directors of a kindergarten and a primary school. Six are kindergarten teachers. Three of them are undergraduate students of early childhood education. Three participants are policy officers dealing directly with national early childhood education policy. Two participants are lecturers in Faculty of education in a university. Most of participants (ten cases) are male; their age from 23 – 52 years. All of them deal with early childhood education for at least three years in various aspects. Background information of the study participants is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Selected characteristics of participants in the study

Participant no.	Sex	Age	Working position	Working organizations
1	Male	52	School director	An elementary school
2	Female	48	School director	An elementary school
3	Male	24	Undergraduate student	A university in Tokyo
4	Male	23	Undergraduate student	A university in Tokyo
5	Male	24	Undergraduate student	A university in Tokyo
6	Female	32	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
7	Female	26	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
8	Female	29	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
9	Female	30	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
10	Male	31	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
11	Male	32	Kindergarten teacher	A kindergarten school
12	Male	36	Policy analyst	MEXT
13	Male	39	Policy analyst	MEXT
14	Male	48	Policy analyst	MEXT
15	Female	33	Lecturer	A university in Tokyo
16	Male	41	Lecturer	A university in Tokyo

Ethical consideration

This study was undertaken after the proposal had been scrutinized and approved by Mahidol University's Human Research Ethics Committee for Social Science in license No.2013/300.2810 and obtained permission from the administrators of concerned ministry and studied sites. After setting email back from all participants agreeing to take part in this study, the primary researcher arranged meetings with them in Japan introducing her and the purpose of the study

and the data collection process. The participants were informed that their information given through interviews would be publicly disseminated for the benefit of education and policy formulation only.

Data analysis

The narrative was analyzed based on the main points of analysis. The data analysis went through the following steps: transcribing the audio-taped interviews, data verification, indexing, analyzing,

concluding and writing down as a paper. The findings were presented in a way that early conveys concept of early childhood education for fulfilling good mental health in Japan in 7 aspects.

Results

The analysis of human development since being young through early childhood education produced 7 aspects of following finding:

1. Positive attitude as the first step of mental health firmness.

Japan has put much emphasis on the social and emotional development. Childhood development in Japan is considered as a process for a child to acquire competences or positive attitudes needed in everyday lives, through child's active and spontaneous interaction with objects, people, or events. These are the foundations of positive attitude and mental health firmness which is very important for being civic citizen in the 21 century.

Except positive thinking ability and emotional development, Japan also gives importance on the physical fitness development. Under the Japanese education philosophy, the children will not be over-protected. In the winter, it is uncommon for children to wear thick clothes even for outdoor play. In some kindergarten, the children take off their shoes and are barefooted in a classroom. The embedded concept on these acts is to make the children's physical body strong, and not to fear any minor injuries. These events were found in every Japanese kindergarten including the study sites.

2. Team-based playing is applied as a way to generate self-esteem, cooperation and social readiness. Japan encourages the team-based play or activities with

peers. This kind of play will include mixed-age and mixed-gender children while the single play is not much promoted. In the mixed-age play, the children will learn some important issues as follows:

2.1 Learning for being a role model, raising up their self-esteem – older children must manage the play efficiently because in mixed-age playing, they have to take care of younger children in their play, and plan for achieving the enjoyed playing among all ages in the group. This step leads them being good planners and organizers. At the same time, younger children always feel that their seniors are “smart”, they admire them and wish to be like them. This helps root the seniority habit simultaneously and facilitate younger children's development.

2.2 Learning for responsibility – playing as a routine activity of every child will provoke the responsibility in children.²³ Each of them will know what he must be responsible for, starting from team management, caring for younger children in the team, designing appropriate to play and protecting any accident and injury occurring along the playing game. When an unexpected event occurs, either good or bad side, the teacher has to request for the responsibility. If a child has good performance, the teacher will praise him/her in front of others. On the other hand, if any improper unexpected event occurs, the teacher will not blame anyone but give it as a warning and bring it as example for future protection.

2.3 Learning for team-based working – a joyful of life playing can provoke the team-based working because, in the joyful group playing, the players must allocate it in terms of age and gender. Senior children must know how to set up the team so that their play is joyful, and there are the winners

and losers as per the determined criteria. The works are allocated in order to attain the overall objectives of each play. Children's interactions and imperfect group cause the children to seek for solutions, interact and learn how to overcome the playing obstacles together. These lead to the creativity, flexibility and familiarity with problems.²⁴ These children are not afraid of any problems because they feel that the problems urge them to think to tackle them.

3. Learning by playing is continually promoted.

The promotion of learning by playing presents the educators' comprehensive understanding to the preschool children. Japanese educators understand that playing is the single matter on which the children focus and feel happy. Thus, learning is caused by happiness and happiness from learning is an important step to build the inquisitive people.²⁵

Besides, Japanese playing materials are made in various pieces as normally in the free-form pieces which creativity and delicate playing are needed to play with while huge fixed toy facilities in a classroom is rare (e.g., real-sized pretend house). After playing finished, every child must clean-up and keep all toys and playing facilities by themselves in order to root self-discipline. Small-piece materials shape rules in children because their containers are designed based on right specific places concept. If the children are careless in keeping each piece of toy by putting it wrong position, it cannot. This is to root the discipline, mutual responsibility and public thinking for children.²⁶

4. Public mind is embedded in the way of life

Another issue reflecting the different concept on the building of people between Thailand and Japan is the "public mind". The Japanese education philosophy

evidently values the public mind as this matter is mentioned in the early childhood development curriculum where almost all issues clearly specifies that the children must be concerned about public interests before personal benefits. The public mind is studied by and found that the frequent use of false-belief tasks can prove development of children's ability to understand mental states and moral development. Actually, early childhood children can understand true and false and public mind can be cultivated gradually when they were young.²⁷ From interviewing some Japanese experts, there is one important issue that the consideration for public interests helps everyone in the society survive on the land frequently facing natural disasters like Japan. If the Japanese people first consider the personal interests and wait until such personal interests are attained before turning to the public; this will not be possible because need of person is not possible to fulfill. Therefore, when understanding this fact and wishing to create the supportive society, the Japanese educators put this matter in the early children curricula and learning activities in both preschooler and school aged children, and cultivate the Japanese people to have this thought since they were young.

5. Learning curriculum is designed and adjusted based on research – The practical early childhood education management of Japan shall be always coupled with the research conducted in real situations. The research results will be tested and revised many times before applying with kids. New experiments must be guided by the research results, and those studies must be multi-disciplinary regarding child study (Sakakibara, personal communication, September 24, 2014). The research giving new findings will be

passed to the teachers and guardians. This reflects the knowledge management of Japan.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Government has duties of determining the central standard, and strictly governing all kindergartens to meet such standard. This central standard covers the materials, education direction, childcare and career path of teachers (Sugimori, personal communication, September 26, 2014). For the academic and research matters, the Government is ready to respect to those academic issue and benefits as well as new findings that will be useful for children. Unlike elementary school, kindergarten activity varies a lot, especially in private kindergarten. Public kindergarten usually follows “Course of study for kindergarten”, whereas private kindergartens tend to add uniqueness.

6. Simple education area is focused – the Japanese scope of early childhood development in school is not complicated. Only 6 areas are selected for Japanese students; namely, 1) health education covering both physical and mental to encourage the children to pay attention to doing exercises and socializing so that they have the good health and positive attitude that are necessary for the secure, complete and healthy life; 2) social studies to encourage the children to be enthusiastic and interested in the society and surroundings, and to develop the children’s desirable habits and attitude for their personal life and social life in the future; 3) nature study to help children understand and feel familiar with animals, plants and natural phenomena, to support the children to observe, analyze and handle any events by themselves, to have necessary skills for their daily life, and to know and pay attention to digits; 4) language to develop children’s listening skill, listening to tales

and stories with good understanding, to promote the children to express opinions independently by using the language correctly, and support the children to read the pictorial books and tales to promote their intuitiveness and imagination; 5) music and rhythm to make the children enjoy listening to music, to promote singing and playing musical instruments, to free the children for their opinions and feelings through music and expression of manners; and 6) drawing and handicraft to develop the children’s aesthetics so that the children will have the joyful experience through drawing or handicraft.²⁸

Except some academic matters mentioned above, the Japanese curriculum also contains the cultural rules, sport games, picnics, community surveys, rites and festivals, e.g. Children Day, HinaMatsuri Festival, Otsukimi, Tanabata or Star Festival or the day celebrating the kindergarten founder, etc. These learning contents deal with or involve various seasonal events/traditions, and tie the children with their surroundings while emphasizing on the nation and existence of the country. In addition, the “volunteer” activities are also put in the educational activities every week in order to root Japanese youth to have the public mind and mentally strong consideration towards public interests.

7. Arrangement of educational environment is strongly focused– the arrangement of environment promoting the Japanese competent people appears in various miscellaneous matters, e.g. clothes, playing materials, meal instruments, which comprise several pieces. The children in kindergartens often change several clothes a day, for example, from student uniform to sport suit, swim suit, etc. Each child must change several suits a day and the teacher guide

children to change those clothes by themselves. The suits and materials containing many details practice the children to have the concentration, patience, attention to tiny points, and refinement so that they will not ignore tiny points in their future working.

Discussion

Population development through early childhood education in Japan can build the competent people by the following advantages. 1) Positive attitude as the first step of mental health firmness, following by physical firmness. Childhood development in Japan is considered as a process for a child to acquire positive attitudes toward objects, people or events. Japan also gives importance on the physical fitness and let children's physical body strong and not to fear any minor injuries. 2) Team-based on playing is always focused since Japanese educators point out that teamwork is very important for self-esteem rising, socializing and being effective labor force among them when they grow up.²⁹ Travis et.al³⁰ (2016) pointed out that even in students of undergraduate level, team-based learning is more effective than lecture in contributing to learning without negatively impacting course satisfaction. Team-based is a smart way of students to learn for socializing. 3) Learning by playing concept is strongly promoted through playing materials that need to do uniquely by themselves. This is a smart way of children formulate knowledge learnt with happiness. 4) Public-mind concept is always promoted since public-mind is a way any society needs. Srijumnong et al³¹ (2015) pointed out that public-mind is the pattern of meanings embedded in the objective structure of social, economic and political life and it begins in early children.

Public-mind leads a sense of belonging, partnership and owners. 5) Research-based curriculum designed is applied in practical way of Japanese' early childhood education. This leads up-to-date lessons available for Japanese Children. 6) Education – scope is focused only 6 aspects of teaching and learning. This leads teacher paying attention only focused- related points of learning needed for early childhood development. 7) Arrangement of educational environment – the arrangement of environment promoting the Japanese competent people appears in various miscellaneous matters, e.g. clothes, playing materials, meal instruments, which comprise several pieces. The children in kindergartens often change several clothes a day. The suits and materials containing many details practice the children to have the concentration, patience, attention to tiny points, and refinement so that they will not ignore tiny points in their future working.

Conclusions

Childhood development through mental health strengthening is very important to bring kids growing up to be strengthening mind persons. As far as one concerns, Japanese model of early childhood education is acceptable worldwide as a smart way to completely prepare children based on the fact of the real life. Team-base playing is acquired as a working simulation while embedded public mind in everyday life is attached as a “must” activity which finally leads Japanese people having sense of public-first. Mental health development through various designed-playing leads children would like to go to school and let them learn automatically and freely.

The seven fact finding from this research can be applied in daycare center and kindergarten since they can be included in everyday-activities. Team-based playing can be designed to let them play together and whenever conflict happening along the process of playing, teacher can teach them to think positively on that unpleasant situation and let them learn to find positive angle from any situation occurred. Also, voluntary mind can be included in everyday activity through giving, sharing and providing others with the best thing kid has.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policies

1. Early childhood education policy for Thailand should be adjusted to be based on play-based learning. Finding from Japan clearly pointed out that sensory development through team-based and free playing is very important and be fundamental step for human development.

2. Policy of “manners before knowledge” should be launched as appropriate age for building good manners are 0-8 years old. This manner is a basement of mentally strong health and well-being when the kids growing up.

Recommendation for future research

1. Research in details about appropriate early childhood learning’s activities and curriculum applied from Japan is needed since curriculum & activities which are suited to Thai context are something needed to be found.

2. Playing in a team should be studied further as a longitudinal study about its benefits to kids when they grow up. Finding from Japanese society strongly

mentioned that “teamwork” should be taught since children but there is no longitudinal study on benefit of teamwork teaching in kids and their schools in Thailand.

Acknowledgments

The researcher wishes to acknowledge with our gratitude to the Wisdom Society for Public Opinion Research of Thailand for giving us the most important chance to do the research of Early Childhood Education Management in Japan. The researcher thanks two Japanese scholars: Prof. Dr. Sugimori and Prof. Dr. Sakakibara for the data collection in Japan.

References

1. Chareonwongsak, K. Childhood Development Partnerships. Today Education Magazine [Internet]. 2008 [Cited 2015 Jul 22]. Available from: <http://www.kriengsak.com/node/1243>
2. Amy N. Strong in mind and body with help from psychologists, a new U.S. Army program puts psychological well-being on par with physical fitness. Monitor on Psychology [Internet]. 2009; 40(11): 40. [Cited 2015 Jul 22] Available from: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/12/army-program.aspx>
3. Allegiance Health. 8 health benefits of a health self-esteem. Health & Wellness Blog [Internet]. 2015. [Cited 2015 Jul 22] Available from: <https://www.allegiancehealth.org/blog/women/8-health-benefits-healthy-self-esteem>.
4. Adler, N., Stewart, J. Self-esteem. Psychosocial Working Group [Internet]. 2014. [Cited 2015 Jul 22] Available from: <http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/research/psychosocial/selfesteem.php>.

5. Burton, N. Self-confidence versus self-esteem. *Psychology Today* [Internet]. 2015. [Cited 2015 Jul 23] Available from: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-peek/201510/self-confidence-versus-self-esteem>.
6. Chang, H.J., Suttikun, C. The examination of psychological factors and social norms affecting body satisfaction and self-esteem for college students. *Family and consumer sciences research Journal*, 2017; 45. Doi: 10.1111/fcsr.12220.
7. Trautwein U1, Lüdtke O, Köller O, Baumert J. Self-esteem, academic self-concept, and achievement: How the learning environment moderates the dynamics of self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2006; 90(2):334-49
8. Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education. Early childhood care and education in Thailand (Global monitoring report: Goal 1). Bangkok: Ministry of Education; 2013.
9. Kayankij, S. Early childhood: A fundamental step of human development [Internet]. [Cited 2015 Jul 24] Available from: <http://www.qlf.or.th/Mobile/Details>.
10. Rodthong, Y. A study on comparative self-esteem in pathom 6 students. Thesis. Srinakarinwirot University; 2013. (in Thai)
11. Future Innovation Thailand Institutes. Policy for Thai early children support. Bangkok: Future Innovation Thailand Institutes; 2017. (in Thai)
12. UNICEF Thailand. Early childhood development. UNICEF Thailand website [Internet]. 2018 [Cited 2018 Jul 5]. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/thailand/education_14938.html (in Thai)
13. World Health Organization. Mental health and development: targeting people with mental health conditions as a vulnerable group. WHO Press, Geneva. [Internet] 2010 [Cited 2018 November 19]. Available from: http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/development/en/index.html
14. Center on the developing child. In brief: Early childhood Mental health. Harvard University; 2016. [Cited 2018 November 20] Available from: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-early-childhood-mental-health/>
15. Lightfoot, Cynthia. *The Development of Children*. New York: Worth Publishers; 2009.
16. Gaskins, Suzanne; Miller, Peggy J. The Cultural Roles of Emotions in Pretend Play. *Play and Culture Studies*. 9 (Transactions at Play) 2009; 5-21.
17. Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education. Early childhood care and education in Thailand (Global monitoring report: Goal 1). Bangkok: Ministry of Education; 2013.
18. Akiyama Chaika. A view from the school health center: supporting Japanese children's physical and mental wellbeing. [Internet] 2018. [Cited 2018 November 20] Available from: <http://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00396/>
19. Jeffrey Heys. Preschools and day care in Japan: facts and details. [Internet] 2010 [Cited 2018 Nov 19]. Available from: factsanddetails.com/japan/cat23/sub150/entry-2797.html
20. Hayashi, A. The Japanese hands-off approach to curriculum guidelines for early childhood education as a form of cultural practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education* 2011;5(2): 107-23.

21. Research center for child and adolescent development and education, Ochanomizu University. Early Childhood Education Handbook. Tokyo: Ochanomizu University; [date unknown].
22. Huo, L., B. Neuman, S., Nanakida, A. Early childhood education in three cultures: China, Japan and the United States. 2015 [Cited 2018 November 16]. Available from: <http://www.springer.com/978-3-662-44985-1>
23. Linda Bennett. Expectations for Japanese Children 2001. [Cited 2018 November 16]. Available from: <http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/>
24. Whitebread, D., Coltman, P., Jameson, H., Lander, R. Play, cognition and self-regulation: What exactly are children learning when they learn through play? *Educational & Child Psychology* 2009;26(2), 40-52.
25. Gmitrova, V., Gmitrov, G. The impact of teacher-directed and child-directed pretend play on cognitive competence in kindergarten children. *Early Childhood Education Journal* 2003; 30(4), 241-46.
26. Lane, J. D., Wellman, H. M., Olson, S. L., LaBounty, J., Kerr, D. C. R. Theory of mind and emotion understanding predict moral development. *Early Childhood British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 2010;28(4), 871-89.
27. Perner, J., Leekam, S. R., Wimmer, H. Three-year old's difficulty with false belief. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 1987;5(2): 125-37.
28. Hayashi A. The Japanese hands-off approach to curriculum guidelines for early childhood education as a form of cultural practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education* 2011;5(2): 107-23.
29. Martlew, J., Stephen, C., Ellis, J. Play in the primary school classroom? The experience of teachers supporting children's learning through a new pedagogy. *Early Years* 2011;31(1): 71-83.
30. Travis LL, Nathan W. Genevieve HM. Henricks-Lepp, Street WS, Weidenbenner J. Team-based learning improves course outcomes in introductory psychology. *Teaching of Psychology Journal* 2016;43(2): 99-107.
31. Srijumnong S, Sri-ampai P, Chano J. Developing public mind curriculum for lower secondary school classes using contemplative education methods. *Educational Research and Reviews Journal* 2015;10(16): 2387-399.