

## Abstract

### The Politics of the Reorganisation of Public and Intimate Spheres of Childrearing : An Analysis of the Interpretation of Kindergarten After-Hours Childcare

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This study examined the social structural shift towards childrearing within boundaries that are separately classified as ‘public’ or ‘intimate’ spheres. In particular, this study investigated this shift from the perspective of “the politics of need interpretation” (Fraser 1989) to demonstrate the political context in which it has occurred, as Fraser (1989) argued that needs are both “interpreted” and highly political. This examination was conducted via the following methods: (1) A discourse analysis of the Central Council for Education’s reports and discussions, (2) A questionnaire survey for 334 teachers and 674 parents in Tokyo, and (3) Semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 12 parents in Tokyo. The results were as follows.

#### (1) The Transition of the Policy Discourse on After-Hours Childcare in Kindergartens

Utilising the Central Council for Education’s reports and discussions (beginning in the 1990s), this study demonstrated how the need for kindergarten-based after-hours childcare has been analysed. Additionally, the discourse on kindergarten-based after-hours childcare was transformed. Initially, around 2000, childcare support was interpreted as a form of ‘work support for women’, and was considered ‘a countermeasure against a declining birth rate’. However, the Central Council gradually re-interpreted it as ‘supplementary of household educational capabilities’; the re-interpretation implicitly emphasised the role played by the ‘intimate’ spheres in childrearing.

#### (2) The Current Situation of After-Hours Childcare in Kindergartens

The data for this research was based on questionnaires administered to kindergarten teachers and parents in Tokyo in 2012 and 2016. According to the survey, the percentage of kindergartens providing after-hours childcare was 70.7 percent (29 kindergartens); moreover, 80 percent of kindergartens provided childcare five days a week. Based on the responses of teachers, 80 percent considered after-hours childcare to be necessary for parents. Meanwhile, 70 percent confirmed their agreement that children should return to their homes at a fixed time. Conversely, 84.6 percent of the parents have utilised childcare support. Most parents supported the idea that childrearing should be treated as a social issue; meanwhile 50 percent stood by the idea that mothers should devote themselves to childrearing.

### (3) Teachers' and Parents' Narrative of After-Hours Childcare in Kindergartens

The data was based on semi-structured narrative interviews with kindergarten teachers and parents in Tokyo in 2013 and 2017. Teachers interpreted after-hours childcare as 'the time between kindergarten and home', so they made efforts to establish an environment characterised by a home-like atmosphere. In addition, most parents indicated that they had no concerns when leaving their children with care providers of after-hours childcare services in kindergartens. In particular, parents who had transferred their children from nurseries to kindergarten and worked full-time willingly chose to use the childcare support. However, some teachers were hesitant to provide childcare support for an extended period of time. Similarly, some parents were conflicted with regard to their decision to utilise childcare support, as they believed that parents must raise their children themselves.

In summary, these results suggest that the macro- and micro-politics related to the reorganisation of childrearing developed in a different phase, since "the responsibility" of intimate spheres was one of the main issues in the policy discourse; meanwhile "the performance" of intimate spheres was a point of contention in the narratives of both teachers and parents.