

外国語要旨

Study on the Meaning of Peer Conflicts Among Kindergarten Children: From the Perspective of Sozo Kurahashi's Philosophy and Nel Noddings' Caring

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This dissertation is an attempt to discover new aspects of peer conflicts of kindergarten children. In previous studies based on Piaget's theory of moral judgment and the theory of mind, peer conflicts have been regarded as an impetus toward development of understanding social competence and the minds of others. In Japan's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), it has been assumed that such development can lead to morality in the future. Therefore, peer conflicts in early childhood have been considered as an essential opportunity for developing morality. However, other studies have concluded that infants or three-year-olds are able to understand each other's perspectives when put in situations that are close to their nature. These results lead us to the possibility that children perceive and feel each other's feelings through interaction in everyday life, rather than interpreting them. Furthermore, case studies in ECEC have suggested that children do not necessarily resolve conflict and that they maintain relationships with peers with whom they have conflicts. Practitioners support the whole life of the child, which contains peer conflicts as a part. Thus, it is necessary to determine a new meaning of peer conflicts from the practical perspective of supporting the whole life of the child.

In order to accomplish this, this dissertation is based on the theoretical framework of Sozo Kurahashi's Philosophy and Nel Noddings' Caring. Kurahashi and Noddings have not discussed conflicts related to morality. Kurahashi criticized moral education. Instead, he emphasized cultivation of humanity and natural emotions toward morality through interaction in everyday life. Moreover, his philosophy about morality has a common basis with Nel Noddings' Caring. Regarding peer conflicts, Kurahashi did not consider them as an opportunity for development of morality, but instead as an expression of self-initiated activity; namely, peer conflicts are collisions between one's self and the other's self. Based on the above, this dissertation considers peer conflicts in kindergarten as events of building self in the child's life with others, rather than as an opportunity for developing morality.

On the basis of the theoretical framework, I conducted field research in the kindergarten setting; in particular, I conducted participant observation in a classroom for four-year-olds over a

period of two years. During the first half of the time frame (April–July), children started a new term and encountered new classmates, and their teacher supported them by building caring relationships among children. Moreover, when peer conflicts occurred, the teacher devoted her attention to finding out how the child felt, relieved the child's suffering, and responded to the child's needs, instead of judging the child's actions as right or wrong. Thus, in peer conflicts among children, both the conflicting group and onlookers considered the child as a person, without judgement. Furthermore, the teacher focused on creating a fulfilling life for each child in terms of self-initiated activity. During the latter half (October onwards), when peer conflict occurred, children reconciled it through several interactions; in particular, they kept a distance from the conflict and each child played with something they chose for themselves. Through this, each child created a fulfilling life for themselves and retied various relationships with someone they had conflicted with or others.

From the results obtained through the fieldwork, the following three conclusions were reached. First, peer conflicts were considered as an expression of self-initiated activity; therefore, children felt and knew each other's human existence through conflicts and explored the self in relationships with others. Second, children engaged in peer conflicts depending on the situation and relationships based on caring, rather than moral rules and principles. Third, playing was essential in the whole of children's lives, which include peer conflicts; therefore, playing led to creating a fulfilling life and the possibility of various interactions between children. In conclusion, peer conflicts can be redefined as opportunities for exploring the self in relationships with others and for building various relationships.