

# A Basic Study of Giftedness in Japanese Childcare Settings

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, children with various different developmental characteristics have become apparent in Japanese kindergartens and daycare centers. Among these children, almost none are described as "gifted," which refers to children who are born with a combination of advanced intellectual abilities. In addition, there is no clear definition of the term "gifted" in Japan.

However, kindergartens and daycare centers teachers should pay attention to the presence of minority groups of children in the educational setting. They also have a responsibility to establish an environment that is comfortable for those considered gifted. Therefore, my aim was to conduct a survey on the perceptions of kindergarten and daycare center teachers regarding gifted children and explore ways to support such children in the future.

## 2. Methods

### (1) Research design

Fact-finding study using a self-administered questionnaire.

### (2) Target

Kindergartens and daycare center teachers in seven cities and towns in Japan (Chubu/Hokuriku, Kinki, Kyushu/Okinawa), selected based on the researcher's acquaintances.

### (3) Survey period

September 1 to September 30, 2022

### (4) Survey method

The survey was conducted on the web using a self-administered, unmarked questionnaire developed with reference to previous studies and the "Questionnaire for children with unique talents in specific fields" conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2021.

### (5) Survey Contents

The survey asked participants to respond to multiple choice questions related to their role/position, place of residence, gender, age, length of employment, and other attributes, as well as to provide a free description regarding the kind of support they need for gifted children and what they expect from the government and the local community.

All participants were also asked to provide free-text responses regarding support measures for the gifted that are needed in the educational field and what they expect from the government and local communities in the future. A total of 27 items were covered. The survey took approximately 10

minutes to complete. The validity of the survey items was thoroughly reviewed by both researchers and medical professionals in the field of education for children with disabilities.

#### (5) Analysis Method

All the selection type data results, including the respondents' attributes, were converted into numerical values, and simple totals such as frequencies and percentages were entered on an Excel sheet, followed by the creation of graphs and tables. In addition, the responses to the free-response statements were categorized with a code after repeatedly reading the content of individual statements, combining them into one sentence, and then giving each extracted unit a code name that accurately expressed its semantic content.

### 3. Result

Only some of the survey results are described here. First, 40.9% of the 367 persons surveyed were aware of the term "gifted". Of these, only 6.3% were aware of Japan's efforts to address the issue of "gifted" children. In addition, only 26% of the teachers had worked with gifted children in the past.

On the other hand, 74% of respondents said that there were no gifted children in their class or that they did not know if there were.

All 367 respondents were also asked, "What support do you think is needed in preschools and daycare centers for gifted children?" The results were divided into eight categories: "Training system provided by specialists" (44%), "Acquisition of knowledge related to gifted children" (21%), "Case review meetings among colleagues" (18%), "Collaboration among colleagues" (8%), "Environment in which gifted children can fully play." (8%), "Patrol by specialists" (8%), "Assignment of additional staff" (7%), and "Collaboration with parents" (7%).

### 4. Consideration

Based on the above survey results, less than half of all kindergarten and day-care center teachers knew about gifted children. In addition, less than 10% of the respondents were aware of the current status of gifted children in Japan. This clearly indicates that the term "gifted" has not yet become established in the education and childcare field in Japan.

However, kindergarten and day-care center teachers were motivated to acquire specialized knowledge about gifted children and to participate in training and case conferences, as indicated by the content of their free descriptions.

#### Limitations of the Study

Because this research study was conducted on only a subset of teachers at kindergartens and daycare centers in seven cities across the country, there are limitations as regards generalizing the results.