

Examination of a Class Program on “Child-centered Events” in the Childcare Worker Training Course

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1. Introduction

In Japan, events are viewed as important opportunities to celebrate children's growth and deepen ties with their families and communities. In many nursery schools and kindergartens, the events are conducted with great care and in accordance with tradition. However, preparing and running an event takes a lot of time and effort. It has been pointed out that this can make it difficult to balance daily activities and the individual needs of children in actual preschools¹⁾. Therefore, it is necessary to implement a program for students who will become childcare workers in the future to learn about child-centered events.

2. Purpose of Research

The purpose of this project is to plan and practice a class program to think about how a child-centered event should be through the Tanabata event, and to study the effects of the program, in collaboration with the subject teachers of "Children and the Environment" and "Children and Human Relations," which are subjects of specialized matters related to the area. Specifically, the goal is to enable caregivers to understand the historical background and origin of the event, and to provide developmentally appropriate materials that enable children to experience events on their own initiative.

3. Research Methods

Subjects: 38 students enrolled in “Children and the Environment” and “Children and Human Relations” (first-year students + non-degree students at T Junior College). Methods: The following two surveys were conducted, and the results were analyzed to examine the effectiveness of the classes. 1) “About Events”, to increase understanding of and interest in the overall events held in preschools, etc. 2) “About Tanabata Event”, to increase understanding and interest especially in Tanabata event.

4. Results & Discussion

1) About Events

Regarding “Q1: Events that I know about”, most students answered “yes” (100%) for most of these events. Of all the three questions, “Q1: Events I know about”, “Q2: Events held in preschools”, and “Q3: Events I would like to participate in”, 100% of students answered yes to “Entrance Ceremony” and "Sports Day". For “Q2: Events held at preschool”, and “Q3: Events I would like to participate in”, the events which approximately 90% of respondents answered yes were: “Pool opening”, “Tanabata”, “Summer Festival”, “Halloween”, “Christmas”, “Mochitsuki (New Year celebration)”, "Mamemaki (Setsubun)", “Graduation ceremony (Farewell party)”, “Birthday party”, and “Excursion”.

2) About Tanabata Event

Views on events in the field: The analysis of the free comments by category showed that before the program most of students believed that the event brings “fun”, but after the program, an increasing number of students thought that the event provide experiences and learning for children. In particular, the number of students who cited “children's learning (cooperation)” increased. What is a child-centered event? After categorizing and analyzing the free-text descriptions, we found a shift from only mentioning the activities to describing the child's own initiative in the activities. We believe that this indicates an increased awareness of what children are thinking

and doing, rather than simply doing something. However, “finding something they want to do on their own, thinking about how to do it, and achieving it” was not present either before or after the implementation of the program. This might be because the students were in their first year and it was difficult to imagine them achieving this goal through their own initiative. From this point on, we believe that learning to deepen understanding in this area is necessary. What do you know about the historical background and origin of Tanabata? The students seem to have become more knowledgeable about Tanabata because they worked on research assignments about Tanabata on their own, and because their subject teachers introduced it to them in picture books. What is the best developmentally appropriate way to make Tanabata (bamboo) decorations? The students' understanding of developmentally-appropriate Tanabata decorations seems to have been solidified by the fact that there are various types of decorations other than tanzaku strips and by listening to explanations while actually making specific decorations in the class. The students understood that when the direction of development and the content of the activity are connected, the children will actively engage in the activity and feel a sense of accomplishment. Your previous experiences with Tanabata event: After the implementation of the program, the students recalled more of their experiences, including meals (preschool lunches). We believe that the examples introduced in the class triggered their recalling more. The overlap with real-life experiences will help to deepen the understanding of the on-site activities.

5. Conclusion

As a result of taking up Tanabata as the main topic and conducting the class, we believe that the students have come to think about the event in a child-centered manner. We believe that the students acquire basic knowledge through their own research on the historical background and origin of the event, and that the multifaceted class study on this basis led to this change. In particular, we believe that by imagining the children's appearance while making specific bamboo branch decorations, the students were able to understand the importance of conducting activities according to the children's development. Since students themselves have experienced traditional seasonal events like Tanabata from their early age, so they can easily become common topics for students to learn from each other. Activities based on seasons, regions, and traditions are easy to connect to one's own experiences and to imagine children taking the initiative in their own activities. Furthermore, it is easy to examine what the children are experiencing through their activities. As described above, when we planned and implemented a class program to think about how a child-centered event should be through the Tanabata event, we observed a change in the students' willingness to consider the significance of the event and their intentions when holding the event at the school. The classes were conducted collaboratively in two subjects, and it can be said that continuous learning progressed in the flow of the program.

6. Future Issues

Students who have taken “Children and the Environment” and “Children and Human Relationships” will take “Teaching Methods of Childcare Content (Environment)” and “Teaching Methods of Childcare Content (Human Relationships)” in the second semester of their first year. In this course, students will have the opportunity to think about child-centered childcare while preparing instructional plans and other activities again.

<References>

- 1) Junko Igarashi and Yuina Kitami, “Problems Concerning the Transition to New Qualified Integrated Institutions: Examples from Childcare Situations”, *Hakuoh Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 2014, 8 (2), 333-347
- 2) Hirotoyo Omameuda, “Changing preschool events to ‘child-centered’!” Real practice records from 11 kindergartens”, *Child Book*