

Exploring the Relationship Between an ECEC Teacher and Children from the Perspective of E-series Time: Focusing on the “Slide and Mud Play”

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Abstract

This is a case study of an ECEC teacher's narrative of her subjective world, relative to “slide and mud play” at an ECEC center. The purpose of this study was to reconstruct the teacher's understanding of play based on her own narratives of interactive time with young children, to examine the narratives from the perspective of living through E-series time, and to approach the meaning of play describing the experienced reality of the teacher. This study is based on an interview with the ECEC teacher Kana, who was involved with children's play as an assistant teacher at the ECEC center. Kana's five narratives were qualitatively analyzed. This study concluded that the rise of meaningful play occurs from the perspective of intersubjectivity between the relationship between the ECEC teacher and the child who creates the actual time. Kana's narratives in this study are likely to lead to the creation of companionship between them, which, in turn, leads to the ECEC teacher's realization of meaningful play.

Keywords: Intersubjectivity, E-series time, companionship, meaningful play

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to reconstruct the “meaningful play” relationship among Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) teachers and children. The narratives obtained from the interviews about a teacher’s perceptions of play were analyzed using the “E-series time” theoretical framework (Nomura, Hashimoto & Akashi, 2015).

Play is an important factor when considering the development and learning of young children in kindergartens and nursery schools. For example, Bush, Nell, and Drew (2013) described the five elements of meaningful play, and many previous studies have shown that play makes a significant contribution to the development and learning of young children. In recent years, the importance of early childhood education has been reaffirmed by the research of Heckman (2013), who revealed the high contribution rate of policy investment in early childhood.

In Japan, about 97% of preschool children aged four years and older attend kindergarten or daycare centers (National Federation of Child Care Organizations and Child Care Research Institutes, 2018). The national curriculum is different in kindergartens and daycare centers. Although kindergartens and daycare centers have different hours of attendance, their educational functions for young children are the same. An increasing number of studies has been conducted in recent years that describe Japan’s early childhood education system and views on education (Holloway, 2000; Burke, 2008; Chesky, 2011; Burke & Duncan, 2014). For example, Guo and Kuramochi (2019) revealed the educational views of kindergarten teachers in Japan through an interview survey. According to this literature, that young children are experiential learners, guided learners, social learners, responsible learners, respected learners, and staged learners. Within this view of education, it has been reported that Japanese teachers take a *mimamoru* approach, rather than a direct one, when teaching children (Hayashi, 2011; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015).

In the Japanese context, young children’s play is important for their development and learning, and the Japanese National Curriculum for young children includes “Learning through the Environment.” Therefore, to enrich meaningful play in kindergartens and nursery schools, ECEC teachers use a variety of environmental configurations and devices (Takayama, 2017; Japan Foundation for Educational and Cultural Research, 2016).

"Learning through the Environment" is an educational method that is based on the independence of young children, which is an important and fundamental concept, especially in Japan. For purposes of professionalism, ECEC teachers are required to construct an environment for meaningful play and to enhance children's relationships in play. To support this meaningful play, it is important to understand the children's condition (moods, stages of play, friendships, etc.).

Teachers should appreciate the condition of young children to understand their development and learning. Prior research on the professionalism of Japanese ECEC teachers indicates that the "understanding of young children" is an important key frame of reference. For example, Okada and Nakatsubo (2008) used auto-ethnography to reveal how caregivers understood infants. In addition, many required textbooks for ECEC teachers in colleges and universities contain numerous references to "understanding of young children" (Watton, Collings & Moon, 2001; Nakatsubo, 2012).

However, the key ideas of "understanding of young children" are based on a one-way design of ECEC teachers' understanding of children. From this perspective, recent research in Japan has focused on how the relationship between ECEC teachers and young children is constructed based on social constructivism (e.g., (Uemura, 2016; Katsuno, 2019; Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2012; Colliver, 2015), whereby teachers attempt to take an objective and observational view of young children's play. While it is a scientific approach, it lacks a constitutive understanding of young children's play.

As Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) note, the "understanding of young children" should be reconstructed as an ECEC practice with fundamental values based on a dialogue that goes beyond the quality of ECEC. Therefore, this study examined how one teacher attempted to observe young children's play from an intersubjective perspective by adopting "E-series time" as a theoretical framework.

One study that looks at human relationships from the perspective of time is by Nomura and Matsuno (2016), who developed McTaggart's time series. This series proposed A-series time as subjective time, B-series time as objective time, and C-series time and D-series time as design times. In addition to these designations, Nomura added an E-series time based on synchronicity, in which time occurs in an interactive manner. We consider that by using the theoretical framework of "E-series time," the socially constructed relationships between

teachers and children can be clarified.

When children put all their energy into their play, how do teachers understand it and recognize it to be “meaningful play”? The purpose of this study was to reconstruct one teacher’s understanding of play, based on her own narratives about interactive time with young children. The results of E-series time throughout the process of play between the ECEC teacher and the children will be discussed in this paper.

Methods

Participant and ECEC center

In this study, activities related to “slide and mud play” in an ECEC center were reconstructed based on the narrative of ECEC teacher Kana (female, 23 years of experience as an ECEC teacher). The ECEC center is located on the outskirts of the city and is surrounded by rice fields. Kana had been working at the ECEC center for 15 years since it opened and had worked in the resource rooms for preschool children with speech impairment and developmental disabilities for eight years.

In 2019, she was involved with children’s play as an assistant teacher at the ECEC center, which has a play-based curriculum. In the summer of 2019, five-year-old children (class size of 21 people) created a large mud puddle in the playground. The teacher was involved in this play and worked with the children to use a tin plate as a slide. The children and the teacher were so involved that they continued to play for a month. Therefore, the authors decided that this was the type of play worth considering as “meaningful play.” The authors asked the ECEC center and Kana for an interview to tell us what she thought and how she became involved in this play series.

The interviews were conducted in September 2019 at the ECEC center shortly after the “slide and mud play” had ended. While looking at some pictures of the play, the second and third authors interviewed Kana for 90 minutes and recorded with permission. When the authors transcribed the interview, it amounted to 12,000 Japanese characters. The narratives necessary for this study were extracted from the transcriptions and translated into English.

Method of analysis

In the analysis, the authors emphasized the narrative perspective. Narrative is a verbal form of thinking that conveys the meaning of an individual's experience and is considered effective for conveying the realities of ECEC teachers (Laevers, 2005). Moreover, the importance of narrative inquiry when examining the quality and experience of play has been pointed out (Tanaka, 2011). Regarding narrative inquiry, the three-dimensional narrative space of "continuity, interaction, and situation" should fulfil the need to comprehend the person who lived the story (Clandinin & Connely, 2000). It has evolved into a way of describing the experiences of both children and researchers living in a place as a process of interrelated stories whereby their identities are constructed (Clandinin & Connely, 1999). Based on these perspectives, the analysis of ECEC teachers' narratives is a unique childcare approach that only exists in their practice, which reveals its value. Together, the children's experiences with one another and the ECEC teacher's own inner experiences create a never-ending story at the childcare facility; spinning it out and sharing it will be important.

Ricoeur (1985) discussed the relationship between narrative and time and emphasized the structural harmony of the plot as a narrative structure, involving the selection and arrangement of the events and actions to be recounted. Harmony is characterized by three factors: completeness, wholeness, and moderate size. In terms of wholeness, it is important to have a beginning, middle, and end. Thus, in the classical analysis of narrative texts, the compositional basis of the narrative is in the form of "beginning-middle-end" (Wells, 2011). Based on these features, five narratives were qualitatively analyzed. We repeatedly read the teacher Kana's text according to this narrative approach and determined a construct of the following five narratives of "slide and mud play." Narrative 1 is the "beginning" (i.e., orientation), when Kana is orienting the four-year-old children's mud play toward building a slide. Narratives 2, 3, and 4 represent the middle (i.e., complications). In Narratives 2 and 3, we read that Kana is trying to build a slide, but she feels conflicted about her interaction with the children. After much trial and error, Kana achieves a sense of intersubjectivity with the children in Narrative 4. Finally, Narrative 5 is the "end" (i.e., evaluation), when Kana realizes that the children are proceeding with their play autonomously. For each of the narratives, the authors added supplementary commentary on the ECEC teacher's thoughts about the "slide

and mud play,” as understood by the authors, from dialogue with Kana. In addition, the background and an epilogue were added to the narratives.

We underlined the text that was considered to show E-series time, that is, when there was a sense of unity between the teacher and child. In addition, wavy lines were placed on what could be considered A-series time, that is, the subjective time of the teacher. In addition to these, the objective, B-series time flowed continuously. The aim of the research was to examine the narratives from the perspective of living through these multiple times and to approach the meaning of play in a real sense for teachers.

Based on E-series time and A-series time perspectives (Nomura, Hashimoto & Akashi, 2015), all the authors re-read the teacher’s narrative multiple times and reconstructed the activity related to “slide and mud play.” We used photographs and documentation to complement the narrative. With respect to the mud and slide activity, we discussed the children’s involvement and the teacher’s understanding of the children as well as the types of time-series Kana experienced.

Ethical considerations

Before conducting this study, the purpose of the study and ethical considerations were explained to the ECEC center. The research was consented to by Kana, the research collaborator, and the director of the ECEC center where she worked. To protect their privacy, all names (the teacher and children who appear in the narratives) are fictitious. In addition, this study was approved by the ethics review committee of the author’s university.

Results

Background of the narratives

When it was time for the swimming pool opening, the ECEC center had a truckload of dirt delivered to the playground. At first, when playing in the mud, the children simply made mud pies and played house with them. Kana felt that this cozy way of playing was unfolding

because she preferred to play actively. This type of play is also important, so she was watching over them and looking for children who wished to play more based on their physical feelings, since there was so much dirt-oriented play going on.

Narrative 1: The beginning of "slide and mud play" at the ECEC center's play area

In the beginning, two four-year-old boys, Hinata (boy's name) and Riku (boy's name), were digging holes. When they could not enter the pool, they started digging holes together in a place where they could see the pool. The soil was still soft and had not yet hardened, so they had a lot of fun digging, and soon big holes started to form. I said, "If you pile up the dirt on top of all that you've dug up, you could turn it into a big slide, a mountain." I was a little inductive, but when I told them that, Hinata said, "That's good." Then, they started to pile the dirt they had dug up like a mountain.

That was the end of it, and the day was over. They could not go in the pool the next day either, so I decided to see if they would go to the dirt area. They seemed to have a hard time continuing the previous day's work unless the teacher did it, so I asked Hinata if he would like to continue with yesterday's story. It was like they were doing it because I was there. Just as I started playing with Hinata, Halma (boy's name) came in and said, "That's interesting. I will do it too," and we started digging together.

While doing this, I was happy to see the children come and go for a few days, one after the other. In the beginning, a three-year-old would come in, and a five-year-old would see the hole that had been made and jump into it to play, rather than playing on the mud slide.

Comment 1

Kana was watching how the children would develop their play as they poured soil into the ECEC center's play area. They gradually built up to digging in the dirt and jumping into the holes that had been created. However, the play did not continue after that, and Kana was not satisfied. Sometimes, her ideas may have been inductive, but she was thinking about how the play would develop.

Narrative 2: The ECEC teacher leading the way to “slide and mud play”

I thought it would be fun to jump into the mud hole, but then I started to think that I did not want to do only that. I had an interesting image of a slide in my mind, and there was a yellow bench, so I thought it would be interesting to hang it at an angle. I put it up against the hole and made one end higher than the other.

I set up the bench, so that the children could slide on it, and then Rikuto (boy’s name), who is three years old, sat down there and slowly got off with his feet with a clattering, clattering. He started to enjoy himself and said, “Wow, that’s interesting.” I replied, “It’s like a slide, isn’t it? Well, it would be nice if there was something for our safety.” Then, a four-year-old boy approached and said to me, “Well, you should put a sheet or something like that over here,” so I brought out a sheet, but he wasn’t going to slide even if I put it over the muddy place.



Figure 1. Children repeat one trial and error after another

Bringing out a thin board, I said, "There's this, but I'm not sure about it." I put it down, but the board didn't slide very well, and the children were only able to move and slide while propelling themselves forward with their feet. The boards were fun, but I thought it would be nice to have something a little more slippery, so I prepared a piece of galvanized corrugated iron sheet to make the children's ideas a little more fun and to allow for trial and error.

At first, I did not fasten it but just put the sheet metal on the ground. However, the water got under the sheet, and the soil underneath began to erode. After slipping a few times, the sheet would flow away, so, I tried hard to think of something for the children to fasten the sheet with. Finally, we ended up with what we have now.

Comment 2

In this narrative, the authors were able to understand Kana's trial and error process. She tried various things that the children might find interesting, such as benches and sheets, thin boards, and sheet metal. The authors noted that a variety of interactions and relationships emerged between Kana and the children. However, at this point, Kana was being inductive, and it was difficult to obtain suggestions from the children.

Narrative 3: The ECEC teacher becoming too involved with the children

Since Riona (girl's name) was sliding alone, I thought it would be nice to have someone go and bring her plenty of water for sliding, so I called out, "Wako (girl's name), if you're going to do this, please go and take water in a bucket." I thought this would be a good idea, but when I said, "Let's try to slide on it," Wako said, "No, it's fine." When I said again, "Well, do you want me to slide with you?" Wako answered, "No, I will take the water."

So, I said to Riona, "It's good that you have been sliding. Next time, you go and take the water." Then, I said to Wako, "If you do that, you might slide," so we switched roles. Riona said, "That's right" and tried her best to get water, but Wako did not like it being put on the slide. I had gone too far, so she said, "It's over, and I'm going away," and Wako left. I thought to myself, "I've been making all this effort with Riona and Wako, but I've often gotten myself too involved." I think it would be good to have the opportunity to challenge the child who occasionally says he or she does not like something, but I think I am going too far.

Children around three or four years old enjoy it when the ECEC teacher is with them. When the ECEC teacher is gone, they stop doing the task because it's "boring." That is part of it, so I try to go out with them if I think they're interested. However, I don't think it worked well. My intentions were strong when I entered the playground, and I probably overwhelmed the children's feelings.

Comment 3

Kana's narrative was a reflection on the scene: she tried to talk to two girls in various ways to get them to enjoy the slide, but it was unintentional and resulted in her getting too involved and stopping the children from playing. What may have seemed right from the ECEC teacher's subjective view was not necessarily good in the child's subjective view, which suggests the importance of distance between the ECEC teacher and the child.

Narrative 4: A moment of children playing with each other

I think it's best not to interfere when children are already playing with one another. I think that children enjoy this in their own way.

For example, at the beginning of play, if a child is working hard on his or her own, but his or her friends are feeling that they want a little more fun, I try to join in with the child who is a little bored and build a relationship with him or her. For example, if you dig by yourself, you can dig a little bit, but with the help of the teacher, you can dig a lot. With the addition of a teacher, there is a sense of accomplishment. I think that ECEC teachers are needed in such situations.

In the process of building the mudslide, I felt it would be more interesting with the addition of the children in the surrounding area. For example, when they try to slide on the seat, some children thought of it as a grass slide. When someone said, "I'm going to put it on my butt and try it like this," it didn't really slide but just turned over at the end. It did not slide at all, so the child tried laying down on his stomach, or someone would try to pull the seat from underneath, so that they could each enjoy it in their own way.



Figure 2. A moment of children playing with one another

Comment 4

Kana's narrative about how play among the children was established and when it was all right for the ECEC teacher to separate from them was very impressive. On the other hand, she indicated that the ECEC teacher was needed only in situations in which it was difficult to feel achievement. Children are themselves responsible for a variety of attempts to establish play. It was suggested that there is a time for the ECEC teacher to become involved in the process naturally.

Narrative 5: Play is alive and well in children

Some children say, "You can't do it as a teacher," or "Only children can do it," and I feel their emotions and happiness from being able to play at the same level as me. I really get this message from the children, and it becomes even more interesting for me, so I say, "Try again,

try again,” and repeat it over and over.

Originally, I had the idea in my mind that it would be interesting if the children could slide, but I did not have any desire to let it happen. Basically, I like to play in the mud, so the idea came from the idea of playing with the sensation of mud. A slide is an option, and I see myself getting muddy by jumping in the mud pile. There’s a side of me that expects to play in the mud, and even more so, in a child’s way, something different than I ever imagined. Even if they do not end up on the slide, I am OK with that, as long as the children share the slippery play. There is an intention, but it is not intended to be one.

The children are always saying, “Let’s do it again tomorrow, teacher, I want to do it again.” When that kind of impulse comes out in children, I feel that this type of play is very much alive in them.



Figure 3. The children enriching the “slide and mud play”

Comment 5

When play was animated in the children, they had the desire to play again the next day, and that is what supported Kana's ideas. Kana herself had the intention of playing, but it was not her ultimate goal. It was understood that Kana became naturally involved in and fascinated by the play, based on the interest that was shared among the children beyond her intentions.

Epilogue

Kana concluded her narrative by saying that when an ECEC teacher is really playing with a child, there are times when she physically forgets the time. She thinks that if the play continues tomorrow, it will change again, and the children who join in will change it more and more. She seemed to feel that if a fun atmosphere was created among the children, the children would be more interested in the activity.

General Discussion

Up to this point, we have examined how "slide and mud play" in the ECEC center's play area was conducted from the perspective of time, based on the narratives of one ECEC teacher. From the point of view of B-series time, which is the objective passage of time, we can first state that the idea of digging a hole and jumping into it was born when the soil was dumped in the play area. By attaching sheets, using thin boards, and placing sheet metal, the mountain formed from the excavated soil turned into the "slide and mud play." Finally, water was poured down the hill to complete the play with the small artificial mountain. It can be said that the play environment developed in a variety of forms.

Second, looking back at the narrative in terms of the flow of her subjectivity related to this play in terms of A-series time, Kana felt that the game of jumping into the hole created by digging in the soil at the beginning was unsatisfactory. Therefore, she thought of making various devices by trial and error that the children would find interesting and engaging.

However, Kana reflected on some aspects and realized that she was leading the children too much in their play. She found that when the children were playing with one another, she had the desire as an ECEC teacher to move away from them. In other words, while Kana herself had the intention to play, she did not think that acting on that intention should be her goal.

Many previous studies have shown the transformation of the environment as it relates to child-directed play (Epstein, 2007; David, 2013) and how child-centered play leads to child-directed play through the deliberate involvement of a child-centered ECEC teacher's efforts to establish child-directed play. For example, one study showed the child's subjective process of building up to play over time (LEGO Learning Institute, 2010). From the perspective of an excited mind and the quality of play, the cycle is: "Immersion" → "Attention" → "Care" → "Mastery" → "Mindfulness" → "Provocation." It has also been argued that this guided play by an ECEC teacher, rather than free play, encourages children to learn (Lillard et al, 2013). Certainly, Kana's Narratives 1 and 2 can almost be taken as A-series time. Therefore, although it can be said that many previous studies have examined the process of play as captured in terms of A-series or B-series time, the relationship between the ECEC teacher and the children in the play process has not been sufficiently questioned.

This study suggests that there is a time when the ECEC teacher can become involved in play that has already been established among children, as in Kana's Narrative 4. There is a possibility that an actual time- E series time-is born in this relationship in childcare. It is understood here that the ECEC teacher herself was drawn in and fascinated by the interestingness of the play shared among the children, which went beyond her intentions. At that point, the play was alive and well among the children, as in Kana's Narrative 5. Previous studies have not sufficiently captured the rise of meaningful play from the perspective of intersubjectivity and the relationship between the ECEC teacher and the child who creates the actual time.

Of course, there is not always actual time between the ECEC teacher and children. As previously mentioned, the subjective A-series time flows simultaneously with the objective B-series time. In contrast, depending on the distance between the child and the ECEC teacher, it may be difficult to create the actual time, as in Kana's Narrative 3. Moreover, in view of the importance of the production of actual time, it is necessary to ask whether an intersubjective relationship with the child is formed.

One of the aspects considered to be nurtured in this intersubjective relationship is companionship (Trevvarthen, Aitken, Papoudi & Robert, 1998, which refers to doing and sharing fun things with others (Nakano, 2005). Here, companionship is not limited to equal relationships such as friendships but applies in the broader sense of the word of a “close other,” including foster care relationships such as parents and family. It is said that when ECEC teachers and children become familiar others and act together, they develop a communal orientation, share an interest in various topics, and are motivated to cooperate (Trevvarthen, 2001). From this perspective, Kana’s narratives in this study are likely to lead to the creation of companionship between the children and the ECEC teacher, which leads, in turn, to the ECEC teacher’s meaningful play and realization of childcare. Therefore, it would be helpful to take up the actual time that is created in the context of relationships to improve the quality of childcare.

Conclusion

In our study, we reconstructed the relationship of “meaningful play” among an ECEC teacher and children, based on the teacher’s narratives, using the “E-series time” theoretical framework. The results revealed the following three points. First, from the framework of B-series time, the changing environment of “meaningful play” is important. Second, from the framework of A-series time, the teacher constructs the environment with a purpose, but the play does not proceed according to that purpose. Instead, the teacher seeks a variety of developments through the establishment of companionship and an intersubjective relationship between the teacher and child. From the above, the quality of “meaningful play” in Japanese ECEC practice was clarified.

Limitations

This study was limited to one ECEC teacher’s narrative, and there was no mention of the views of other ECEC teachers at the ECEC center concerning the “slide and mud play.” By

analyzing the narratives, some aspects of actual time that arises in a relationship will be revealed. In childcare, it is necessary to examine how playtime, which is created through relationships, is developed based on a variety of narratives. The challenge for the future is to clarify how to evaluate the quality of childcare in terms of the accumulated actual time.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript.

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Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Kana and the ECEC center for their cooperation in this study.
We would like to thank Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.

Appendix: The Narratives in Japanese version

Narrative 1 : A 子ども園での築山遊びのはじまり

ちょうど一番初めのきっかけは、砂場で穴掘りをしていった 4 歳児の子、ヒナタ君とリク君。二人がプールが入れないときに、プールの様子も見てもらえるといいし、せっかく泥んこ山のほうが掘りやすいから、プールが見える場所で一緒に穴を掘り始めました。すごい軟らかいまだ固まっていない土なので、結構、楽しく掘り進めていったら、大きなだんだん穴が掘れてきました。「そのせっかく掘ったの上にどんどん積み上げたら、大きい滑り台、お山になって滑り台になるかもよ」って、ちょっと私が誘導的だったんですけども、そういうふう言葉に掛けたら、ヒナタ君が「それいいね」って言って、その掘った土を山みたいに上に上げ始めたんです。

でも、それはその場面で終わり。1 日終わってしまって。次の日もその子たちもプールまたバツだったので、やれるかなと思って様子を見てたんだけど、また、なかなか先生がやらないと続きがうまく作れないという風であったので、「ちょっと昨日の続き、なんか楽しそうだけどやらない」って声掛けしたら、私がいたからやるっていう感じではあったんですけど、ヒナタ君と一緒にやり始めたら、今度はハルマ君が入ってきて、「それ、面白いね。僕もやる」って言って、一緒に掘り始めました。

数日間、人が入れ替わり立ち代わりくるのを楽しんでいました。その入れ替わりの中に 3 歳の子も入ってきたり、5 歳の子もそのできた穴を見て、そこにジャンプして遊んだりっていう、そういう感じで最初はなっていて、子どもたちの中で、なかなか滑り台よりも穴ができればジャンプして飛び込むみたいなの。

Narrative 2 : 保育者による築山遊びへの誘導

そっちの遊びになっていったので、それもそれで面白いかなと思ってしばらくやってたんですけど、なんかそればかりも私の中で、多分、滑り台っていうイメージが、あると面白いなっていうイメージがあったので、黄色いベンチがあったので、泥んこ山に斜めに掛けてみたらどうかと思って、穴の所と高い所と立てかけるみたいな。

ベンチを立てかけて、ガタガタの滑れるようにやってみたら、そうしたら3歳のリクト君が、そこに座ってみて、ガタガタガタガタってゆっくり足で降りる。それを、楽しみ始めて、「わっ、面白い」って言ったので、「なんか滑り台みたいだね」って、「でも、これ、ちょっと危ないそうだからな、なんかいいのあればいいだろうけどな」なんて言いながら、4歳の子も来て、「じゃ、なんかここにシートみたいなのを敷いたほうがいいんじゃない」って言って、シートを持ってきたんだけど、全然、ドロドロの所にシート敷いても滑るわけがなくて。

木の薄い板を探してきて、「こんなのもあったんだけど、どうかな」って言って、それを置いてみたんだけど、それもあんまり滑らなくて。子どもたちも、足でこうやってこいで動きながら滑る感じができてきて。板も面白いけど、もうちょっと滑りやすいものはないかなと思って、子どもたちの発想がもうちょっと楽しめて、試行錯誤できてから出せるといいなっていう気持ちで、このトタン板みたいなのを買ってきて、いつでも出せるように用意しながら。

そのトタン板も最初は留めずにただ載せるだけでやってみたら、水がトタン板の下に入り込んでやって、下が削れちゃう。何回か滑るとトタン板も流れていったり。私もなんか留めるものがないかなと思って、子どもたちといろいろ考えていったら、最終的には今みたいな形に収まったっていう経過があるんです。

Narrative 3：誘導しすぎてしまった保育者

リオナちゃんが1人で滑ってたから、お水、汲んでくる人がいるといいかなと思ったので、「ワコちゃんもやるなら水、汲んできてよ」って言ったら、ワコちゃんはお水汲みで参加していたんです。これはこれでいいかって思ったんですけど、ワコちゃん汲んでばかりで、「滑ったら」って言ったら、「いい、いい」って。「でも、じゃ、先生も一緒に滑ってあげよっか」っても、「いい。水、汲んでくる」って言って。

今度、「リオナちゃん、ずっと滑っていいね。今度、リオナちゃん、水、汲んできたら。そうしたら、ワコちゃん滑るかもよ」って言って、役を交代して、リオナちゃんも「そうだね」って言いながら一生懸命、水、汲んできただけど、ワコちゃんいざとなったら嫌みたいで。私がグイグイいき過ぎたので、

「もうおしまいにしてあっちやってくる」って言って。せっかく 2 人でやっていたのになんか思いながら、よく私はこういうことがあって、自分でいき過ぎちゃって。嫌って言う子にも、たまにはそうやってチャレンジするようなきっかけがあるといいのかなと思いながら、ちょっと私はやり過ぎ。

3 歳、4 歳ぐらいだと先生と一緒にだと楽しめる。先生がいなくなると、つまなくて止めちゃうっていう。そういうところもあるので、なるべく、ここ面白そうだなと思ったら、付き合うようにはしてるんですけど。なんか・・・よくなかったなと。入ったことで私の意図のほうが強くなって、多分、シューっと止めていった。

Narrative 4 : 遊びの成立するとき

子ども同士で、もう遊びが成立しているときは、余分な口出しはしないほうが、遊びとしては子どもなりに楽しめていたんじゃないかなってすごく思っている。

例えば、遊び始めのときとか、1 人で一生懸命やってるんだけど、お友だちがもうちょっと欲しいなって感じてるような場面だと、ちょっとフラフラしてる子と一緒に参加して、その子と関わり作ってあげたりとか。一緒に手伝うことで、例えば、掘ることが自分 1 人だとちょっとしか掘れないんだけど、先生も手伝ってくれたからいっぱい掘れるとか。先生が加わることで、またいっぱいできていく。そういう場面は、大人が必要なのかなっていうふうに思っている。

泥んこ遊びの滑り台を作るという過程では、子どもたちが少し加わることで面白いていうふうになってくかというのを感じてましたね。例えば、シートで滑ってみるっていうときにも、草滑りのようなイメージで子どもは。「お尻に敷いてこうやってみる」って言ったら、本当に滑らないもんだから、グキグキって最後だけズテってひっくり返るとか、全然滑らないから、お腹でこうやって寝そべってみたりとか、誰かがシートを下からビツて引っ張ってみたりとか、なんかそれなりに楽しんでいて。

Narrative 5 : 遊びが子どもの中で生きている

「先生ではできないんだよ」って、「子どもしか駄目なんだよ」って言う子もいたり、そういう子どもの、何ていうのかな、自分と同じレベルで遊んでもらえるみたい、そういううれしさみたいなもの

ういうところには伝わって、子どもたちからすごく伝わってくるので、私もそれが余計に面白くなって、「もう 1 回、もう 1 回、挑戦して」って言って、何回もそれを繰り返してしまったりとか、そういうところはありますね。

もともと、滑ったら面白いのってというのはこの辺にあるんだけど、それをやらせようって気持ちはさらさらなくて、基本的に私は泥んこで遊ぶのが好きなので、泥んこの感触遊びっていうか、せっかくいい土があるんだから、ここでいっぱい遊んでよう的なところから発想がいつているので、滑り台は選択肢の一つであって、ジャンプでドロドロになったりするのも私の中では良しだし、泥んこを、またさらに子どもなりに、私の想像を超えた何か違う遊び方をするのも期待しているというか、そういうところはあって、滑り台に最終的に行きつかなくても、そこで子どもたちがヌルヌルとかドロドロとかを、1 人じゃなくていろんな子と共有して遊びが成立していれば、それは私の中ではオツケーかなっていう。意図はあるんだけど、それを目的とはしていません。

子どもって面白いと明日もやろう、先生、またあれやりたいとか、必ず言ってくるんです。やめられない衝動というか、そういう子どもたちの中からそういうのが出てくると、これは遊びとしてすごく子どもたちの中で生きてるんだってというのは、感じてますね。