

**Reforms and Issues in Special Education in Japan and Hokkaido:**

**The Distance to Inclusion**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide information for use in discussing the problems and reforms of special education in Japan and Hokkaido. Reforms under the name of “Special Support Education” have been introduced in recent years in special education in Japan, mainly in regular schools and special education schools.

First, there is ongoing integration of resource rooms and special education at regular schools; expansion of disability categories including learning disability (LD), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and pervasive developmental disorder (PDD); and establishment of school committees and appointment of Special Support Education Coordinators to support children with special needs in regular classes. ADHD, LD, and PDD children who did not traditionally receive special education services have been included in the revised regulations that went into effect in April 2006.

Second, the three types of traditional special education schools (schools for the visually, hearing, and intellectually disabled; schools for the physically disabled; and schools for the health impaired) are being integrated, and will serve as new “special support education schools” and resource centers in the community. The new special support education schools will have various departments, such as a department for the visually impaired and a department for the intellectually disabled.

Special education in Japan has traditionally targeted about 1.5% of all children, but children with special needs including those with the special needs that will be served by special support education are estimated to be 5-6% of all children. Expansion of these

categories and support for children with special needs in regular classes are key policies.

However, while it may appear at a glance that these reforms are bringing us closer to inclusion, national and local education budgets are beginning to be cut. Regional differences and differences between schools are a serious problem in Japan and Hokkaido, and many educators and researchers have begun critical examination of the cuts in special education resources, and the contradictions in government policies.

The second half of this report will introduce the practices of elementary schools in Hokkaido that are trying to incorporate inclusive education, and the support systems within these schools

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**1. Recent Reform of Special Education in Japan**

**1994. Salamanca Statement on principles, policy and practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action**

⇒Inclusive Education and Education for All

**2001. International Classification of Function in Disability and Health. (ICF) by WHO**

⇒Environmental Factors (medical, social welfare and education)

**<Challenge to creating inclusive school for children with various needs>**

Segregation to Integration: toward inclusion

Situation:

School A with 400 children.

→Many children with disabilities are learning in regular classes, special classes and resource rooms.

School B with 300 children.

→There are only regular classes. tion to Integration: toward inclusion

*Is this inclusive education?*

If you stay few months in Japan, you will find certain school culture...

<Key words of Japanese school culture>

- more generalist than specialist
- bureaucratic system
- working for whole class rather than the individual
- hiding problems than sharing and solving them together
- homogeneity over diversity

Some differences of educational conditions between Japan and OECD countries

Average expenditure on education in 30 countries (as a percentage of GDP)

⇒ 3.8% (increasing)

Class size of compulsory education (23 countries)

⇒ Elementary School: 21 Junior High School: 23.6

Public expenditure on education of Japan (as a percentage of GDP)

⇒ 3% (26th / 30 countries) Elementary :28.6

⇒ Over 25 is only Korea, Japan and Turkey Junior High: 33.9

⇒ Over 30 is only Korea, Japan and Mexico

(Japanese legal maximum size: 40)

OECD (2000) *Special Needs Education: Statistics and Indicators*.

Percentage of children who have special educational needs

National categories of SEN as % of compulsory school age population

⇒ Spain 2.56%, Hungary 5.1%, Finland 14.3%, USA 14.1% (OECD,2000)

Japan 1.6% (2004)

*What does this gap between Japan and other OECD countries suggest?*

Regular and Special Educational System in Japan.

School education is regulated by the School of Education Law.

Compulsory Education

Elementary (6 years) Junior High (3 years)

Secondary Education

High School (3 years) (98% of all school age population)

Special Schools

→ Kindergarten to high school

Special classes and resource rooms

→ elementary and junior high schools

Overview of Special Education:Special School

Special Schools(2004):①Blind and low vision:71 ②Deaf and hearing impaired :106

③ Mental retardation:528 ④Physically handicapped:202

⑤Health impaired :92

→98,796 pupils are in these special schools.

For the Children who cant learn in regular schools.

Every prefecture must have one or more special schools.

Many special schools have a dormitory.

Special education is organized by each category of disability.

Overview of Special Education in regular schools

Special Class : 90,851 pupils (0.08% of all compulsory school age population).

Class size: 1-8 for each disability category

Formal system is full time.

Informal system involves part time (integration).

Categories: mental retardation, emotional disorder, hearing impaired, speech and language disability, physical impaired, low vision and health impaired.

Resource room system from 1993

35,757 pupils in elementary and junior high schools

0.3% of all school age population

Individual instruction :10 children - one teacher

One to three hours a week.

Categories:Speech and language disability ,emotional disorder, hearing impaired, physical impaired, low vision and health impaired.

Where are the children with a high incidence of disabilities?

→It just started in April 2006!

Many children with LD, ADHD and PDD have been in regular classes without additional support.

The resource room expanded support system for those children in 2006.

### **Recent policy of Japanese government 2001-03'**

2001. Future Directions for Special Education in the 21st Century (Final Report)」 (Advisory Committee of Ministry of Education)

⇒ an appropriate special educational support meeting for the individual needs of each child, regardless of the nature of the disability

2002.Nation wide survey of children with special educational needs in regular classes

⇒6.3% of children presented serious difficulties with learning and behavior

2003. Future Directions for Special Support Education (Final Report)

⇒new categories of disability, “LD, ADHD and other mild disabilities” are added to traditional special education

### **Institutional Change in 2005-2007.**

December 2005: Direction of system for promotion of Special Support Education (Report)  
(Central Education Committee)

January 2006: Discussion of revision of School Education Law at National Congress

1st April 2006. Revision of detailed regulations of School Education Law

⇒Resource rooms for LD,ADHD and PDD

21st June 2006 : Enacted amendment to School Education Law

⇒1st April 2007 :Enforcement

### **Revision of the School of Education Law (2007.Apr.)**

① Chapter 6 Special Education ⇒Special Support Education

② Three kinds of special schools ⇒Special Support School

③ Special Class ⇒Special Support Class

New Special Support School according to several categories of disability

→to help and supervise elementary and junior high schools in the neighborhood

→new function as a center

### **New category of “Special Support Education”**

<previous special education>

Educational settings according to disability(blind, deaf,mental retardation, emotional disorder),  
in Special Schools,Special Class and Resource Room

Percentage of pupils receiving special education in compulsory education

⇒1.6% (2004) (Must be higher percentage than incidence of disabilities)

<Special Support Education>

Traditional disabilities

+

Mild developmental disabilities (LD,ADHD and Pervasive Developmental Disorder)

Incidence of LD and ADHD→ 4 ~ 6 % PDD→ 1 . 0 ~ 1 . 5 %

⇒ 7 – 8 % of all school age children

### **Support system in a school**

Each school must have the School Committee for Special Support Education

Special Support Coordinator

Support from Specialist team and supervisor organized by Board of Education

### **School based team approach for children with various needs**

Who will pay for additional expenditures?

Japanese government cut down 16.6% of public expenditures for compulsory education

Integration of national treasury between compulsory and special schools

⇒Increasing financial pressure on municipalities

## 2. Special Support Education in Hokkaido

Characteristics of Hokkaido

Statistical Information

(1)Area: 83,455 k m<sup>2</sup> →22% of Japanese

(2)Population: 5.63 million

→ 4.4% of Japanese population

(3) Climate: long winter( 6 months) and many depopulated areas

(4) School Education

1401 Public Elementary Schools with 295,450 children

719 Public Junior High Schools with 159, 708 pupils

Special Education in Hokkaido

(1) Special Schools:63 special schools with 4,340 pupils

42 % of these pupils have multi-disabilities

(2) Special classes in compulsory schools:

5,114 pupils: 1.1% of all compulsory school age population

(3)Resource rooms in compulsory schools

2,325 pupils: 0.5% of all compulsory school age population

(Reported by Hokkaido Board of Education,2005)

### Progress of Special Support Education in Hokkaido(2006)

#### ① Establishment of Special Support Partnership Committee

( Cooperation with educational, medical and social-welfare specialists for children with disabilities) ⇒Established in 18 of 196 municipalities(9.2%).

#### ②Establishment of Specialist Team by Board of Education

⇒Already organized in 8 of 196 municipalities(4.1%) .

Serious gap between communities

**Cities with many special resources ← → no resources**

System of Special Support Education in Hokkaido

How can we give special support service including depopulated areas ?

- ①The Team of Special Support Education Team by Hokkaido Special Education Center  
 ↓ ↑  
 ②Special Support system by 14 officers (with Specialist Team, Supervisor, Special Support Partnership Committee)  
 ↓ ↑  
 ③School Committee in elementary and junior high schools, special coordinators

School support system in Hokkaido Elementary and Junior High Schools

	Elementary school		Junior high school	
	National Average	Hokkaido	National Average	Hokkaido
Percentage of School Committee for special support	84.4%	67.1%	84.3%	67.0%
Percentage of carried out actual condition of LD	76.0%	59.6%	63.7%	48.3%
Special support coordinator	79.1%	33.0%	75.3%	33.7%

Sep.2005 (except Sapporo City): Hokkaido Board of Education.

**3. Attempt by Iwamizawa City**

Population: 80,000. 13 elementary schools.  
 10 junior high schools. 1 special school

<City project of special support education2003-2006>

Each school has one or more special classes  
 2 resource rooms: for 89 children  
 Specialist Team and 2 supervisors

Flexible informal support

- ① Chuo Elementary School : Resource room with 6 teachers  
 Infants (Preschool)Program for 39  
 11 children from Chuo Elementary School.  
 43 children from other schools from Iwamizawa City.  
 16 infants and children for observation (assessment every3-6 months)

- ②Koryo Junior High school

There is one special class for pupils with language disorder.

→Special teacher cares 6 pupils informally

How many children are receiving special support in regular schools?

Total number of cases in School Support Committee at elementary schools : 61 children

⇒children who received special support :25

Total number of cases in School Support Committee at junior high schools :11 children

⇒ children who received special support :3.

Class teachers and School Support

Committee are now trying to provide actual support.

#### **4 . Whole School and Individual Support**

⇒Kurisawa Elementary School

Established in 1899. 252 Children (2006) . 19 Teachers

11 regular classes. 3 Special classes. Resource room for 28 children

Practice toward inclusive school

11.1% children receive special support.

3 special class children are learning in regular class with special teacher (part time)

A natural science teacher, who does not have own class, works as a assistant teacher too.

After-school program for children by university students and teachers

→to help with one's homework

→an informal practice of compensatory education

Video and Photos.

#### **A long road to inclusion**

Changing school culture for various children

Modifying curriculum, subject matter and environment for all children in regular schools

More resource rooms for high incidence of disability.

Developing an IEP for children in special classes and resource rooms

More special classes and resource rooms in high schools