

Introduction

1. Preface

This was the fourth Asia-Pacific International Seminar on Special Education held by NISE after its name was changed from "APEID Regional Seminar on Special Education" that started out in 1981. Additionally, this year marked the final year of the first activity period (5 years) after NISE became an independent administrative institution.

Given such circumstances, this time's Seminar was planned and held based on the following policy, by taking into account the new activities to be started by NISE from next year.

- (1) For Japan to take more initiatives as the Seminar hosting country.
- (2) To make the Seminar more practical and beneficial for both Japan and the participating countries.
- (3) For NISE to set up a small executive group for planning purposes, for the entire NISE staff to participate in the planning and holding of the Seminar.

In holding this time's Seminar, a questionnaire survey on the Seminar theme was conducted covering the participating countries. NISE distributed the findings from this survey to the delegates.

2. The 25th Seminar

1) Theme

Improvement of Educational Practice and Environment for Students with Intellectual Disabilities –for active participation in society through employment

2) Hosting organizations

The National Institute of Special Education
Japanese National Commission for UNESCO

3) Schedule and Venue

Period: 7-10 November, 2005

Venue: Yokohama Symposia

7 Nov. Opening ceremony, Keynote speech and Country report from Japan
8 Nov. Country report
9 Nov. Country report
10 Nov. Study visit (Yokohama city upper secondary school for students with Intellectual Disabilities)

4) Keynote speech

After the Opening Ceremony on November 7, a keynote address was given by Mr. Hiroyuki Seki, Representative Director, Osaka Employment Support Network for Persons with Disabilities (NPO), which was titled "Independence and Social Participation by Persons with Intellectual Disabilities – The Meaning of Working". He started out his address with anecdotes of Ms. Helen Keller when she visited Japan, the concept of the welfare society she worked for, and her ideas about convivial society, by rendering these topics into a popular anime series (*ChibiMaruko*, tales of an 8 year old girl and her trials and tribulations at home and at school). He then talked about things full of suggestions regarding the measures being taken and issues related with employment support aiming at welfare society and convivial society, from a broad perspective and based on his on-site experiences.

5) Country report

The keynote address was followed by a country report on Japan presented by NISE Research Director Mr. Chikamori Oshio. In this time's Seminar, more time was set up for the country report by Japan than those by other countries. This was to first present a country report on Japan in meeting with the Seminar theme, and to follow up on the contents of the keynote address. This was to have the delegates better understand the situation in Japan, and also to emphasize Japan's initiatives as the Seminar holding country.

The delegates made their country reports from the 8th to the morning of the 9th. Below are the country reporters. (Titles omitted)

AUSTRALIA

Ms Jennifer Christmass

Acting Director,
Special Education and Early Childhood Section,
Department of Education, Science and Training

- BANGLADESH** **Mr Khandaker Jahurul Alam**
President,
National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled
(NFOWD)
- CHINA** **Ms Lixia Qian**
Deputy Director,
Research Center for Education for Sustainable Development,
Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences
- INDIA** **Ms Neerja Shukla**
Professor and Head,
Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs,
National Council of Educational Research and Training
- INDONESIA** **Mr Rochmat Wahab**
Consultant for Directorate of Special Education,
Ministry of Education
- JAPAN** **Mr Chikamori Oshio**
Research Director,
Department for Educational Support Research,
The National Institute of Special Education
- MALAYSIA** **Ms Norsham BT Harman Shah**
Assistant Director,
Special Education Department, Ministry of Education
- NEW ZEALAND** **Mr Garth Bennie**
District Manager, Special Education, Ministry of Education
- PAKISTAN** **Mr Muhammad Mahmood Hussain Awan**
Chairman,
Department of Special Education, Allama Iqbal Open University
- PHILIPPINES** **Mr Edilbert Imson Dizon**
Professor of Special Education,
College of Education, University of the Philippines
- KOREA** **Ms In-Suk Jeong**
Educational Researcher,
Korea Institute for Special Education (KISE)
- SRI LANKA** **Ms D.A.K. Rathnawathie**
Assistant Director of Education,
Non-formal and Special Education Branch, Ministry of
Education
- THAILAND** **Mr Sujin Swangsi**
School Director,
Lopburi Punyanukun School

6) General discussions

The country reports were followed by a general discussion. A proposal was made that the country reports, questions and answers, and the contents of the discussions be prepared into a summary form which follows.

1. Increasing awareness on the education for children and youth with intellectual disabilities is needed. Compulsory education for all children and youth with intellectual disabilities should be realized targeting toward inclusive society.
2. Ensuring appropriate employment for children and youth with intellectual disabilities needs to be supported by the development of vocational education policies and the effective implementation of appropriate legislation. Monitoring mechanism needs to be defined through legislation.
3. Ensuring appropriate compulsory education that meets individual needs and responsive curriculum development that includes work experiences in community settings for children and youth with intellectual disabilities.
4. Providing community-based employment for youth with intellectual disabilities and creating new vocational options that make use of community resources. Formation of social environment that accepts the employment of youth with intellectual disabilities is necessary - fostered by the creation of occupations that take good account of the strengths and merits of youth with intellectual disabilities.
5. Taking essential measures to foster changes in the awareness and attitudes of society including business and industrial companies toward the potentials and employability of youth with intellectual disabilities.
6. Utilizing assistive technology and distance education as teaching/learning modes for the training of youths with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers.
7. Recognizing the importance of sharing information and good practices about transition strategies of vocational training for children and youths with intellectual disabilities to improve their employment situation.

7) Study Visit

On the 10th, the delegates visited Yokohama City Upper Secondary School for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. Principal Yoshino and the related staff provided an outline of the school using a video tape. The delegates visited workshop classes such as for assembly of electric parts and components for delivery, making of picture book appendages and making of ceramics. The school staff commented that owing to such a curriculum, the rate of employment of the graduates of the school exceeded 80%, and that the school was making efforts to further increase this rate. Such a high rate of employment seemed to be something of a surprise for the delegates. They were also highly interested in the roles played by upper secondary education special schools in Japan. The school visit seemed an enjoyable and informative experience for the delegates.

8) Participants

The participants in this Seminar totaled 243 persons.

- 1) 12 delegates invited based on recommendations by their respective countries' UNESCO National Committees
- 2) NISE staff, and participants from MEXT
- 3) Other persons concerned, from education centers, Prefectural boards of education, special schools, universities, etc.

Ken Sasamoto

Research Director,

Department for Policy & Planning,

The National Institute of Special Education