

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Support for teachers of education for children with multiple disabilities through school consultation

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**Abstract:** An important issue in the education of children with disabilities in contemporary Japan is the enhancement of measures to deal with the severity, pluralization, and diversification of disabilities. This requires an improvement in teachers' expertise at schools for children with disabilities. As part of the effort to support such an improvement in the expertise of teachers, we addressed the issue of school consultation, organized this concept, reported the actual situation in schools for children with disabilities, and assessed the significance of school consultation. Specifically, the following items were assessed and discussed: 1) whether school consultation is a cooperative effort with teachers and teachers' organizations to make the best use of shared expertise in resolving problems; 2) the effectiveness of consultation in specialized training through practical efforts; and 3) the importance of on-site training (training in the classroom) based on school consultation in improving teachers' expertise.

**Key Words:** Multiple disabilities, School consultation, Teacher's expertise, On-site training, Collaboration

## I. Introduction

A transition from conventional "special education" to "special-needs education" has recently begun to be implemented. In this transition, schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled that have conventionally played a leading role in the education of children with disabilities have been expected to continue their role in accordance not only with the types of disabilities in which they previously specialized, but also in a flexible manner according to local situations and the state of children's disabilities. The severity and pluralization of disabilities in schoolchildren attending these schools have increased. For this reason, the schools should take leading roles in educating schoolchildren with severe and pluralized disabilities with substantial needs for educational support including high-level expert guidance, facilities, and equipment. The schools are also expected to play other supportive roles such as providing consultation and advice regarding education and guidance for schoolchildren as well as for students in regular elementary schools and junior high schools who require special educational support. Particularly in special-needs education, the provision of special educational support according to individual educational needs is advocated. To achieve this, teachers in charge will be

required to have greater expertise.

It has been reported that the expertise of teachers in charge of children with disabilities has been ensured, to a certain degree, by the licensing system. However, the ratio of teachers having special education licenses remains insufficient, and since the types of disabilities covered by the licensing system are specified, it does not accommodate the diversification and pluralization of disabilities. Regarding teachers who provide special educational support in regular elementary schools and junior high schools, the ratio of those who have special education licenses is much lower. Consequently, it can hardly be said that adequate expertise has been ensured.<sup>1,2</sup>

The improvement of teachers' expertise can be achieved through training. National and local government training sessions, original activities planned and held by individual schools, and seminars and workshops held by private research organizations have been provided so far. It has been pointed out, however, that unsatisfactory results have been obtained from such training sessions and workshops. For example, the Third Report (1999) from the Educational Personnel Training Council under the former Ministry of Education acknowledges the inadequacy of training for in-service teachers and the necessity of introducing a training selection system and participatory training. Indeed, many

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training sessions/workshops/seminars have focused on lectures or skill exercises for specific disabilities and specific teaching methods, while there have been few that have directly focused on the resolution of problems faced by individual children. The subject matter of most training has been general and abstract, and concrete application has been left to the individual teachers who attended the courses. In terms of style, the training mainly comprises reports and lectures. Inagaki & Sato (1996)<sup>3</sup> reported that such training should be modified into one based on the "case study" method, in which practical cases are studied. In addition, Inagaki (1998)<sup>4</sup> indicated the need to introduce "training on the basis of teachers' needs and self-initiative" and the "vitalization of practice and exchange by adopting case studies" rather than depending solely on administrative training. For training to become effective, many hurdles, mainly inappropriate methodology and content, must be overcome.

## II. Teachers' Needs and Problems in the Classroom

What teachers need most in the classroom is to resolve individual, specific problems and to deal with the problems of individual students by incorporating an expert's viewpoint. In a nationwide survey on the conditions of deafblind children with multiple disabilities conducted by the author and coworkers (Department of Education for Multiply Disabled, National Institute of Special Education, 2000),<sup>5</sup> teachers in charge of deafblind children in schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled were asked about the content of training they would like to receive. Many teachers cited items such as "having experts visit the school or facility to consider and deal with educational issues together" and "training in the use of educational materials and supportive devices," more often than items such as "lectures by experts" and "receiving training at a specialized institution." These results showed that training focused on specific subjects was strongly desired. Simply attending a lecture away from the classroom is insufficient for resolving specific individual problems. Rather, it is necessary for training in the classroom to be further developed. What contribution can researchers and experts outside school make? The author believes that one contribution can be their participation in resolving individual and specific issues in cooperation with the school. Outside experts have been intervening in school teaching for quite some time. However, in many cases, only temporary advice was given or objective observation was made for theoretical validation, and few experts have conducted collaborative studies with schools to resolve routine issues in the classroom. However, in an era when school education is facing many difficulties with the changing times and new efforts are required to solve individual and specific problems, it is necessary for external experts and investigators to

participate in educational studies, not as conventional objective observers or researchers, but as problem-solving partners who work in collaboration with the school to solve issues faced by the school. It is necessary to establish a direction toward problem resolution by sharing resources and influences.

To develop this level of collaboration, "school consultation" is considered effective. An outside researcher and expert (consultant) works with the teachers' organization (consultee) at a school that educates and leads schoolchildren with problems (clients) and participates in problem solving in the classroom.

## III. Concept and Characteristics of School Consultation

It is said that Caplan established the consultation method (1970). He stated that "Consultation is a process of interactions between two professional persons, the consultant, who is a specialist and the consultee, who invokes his help in regard to a current work problem with which the latter is having some difficulty, and which he has decided is within the former's area of specialized competence"<sup>1</sup> In other words, consultation and support are provided to the consultee who has a direct relationship with the clients instead of dealing directly with the clients. This is unlike counseling, which is the main method of conventional consultation. Consultations offered at schools are referred to as "school consultation," and in this case, consultees are teachers, assistant principals, principals, and teachers in charge of children with disabilities. Many consultants are researchers and psychologists having educational and psychological expertise. Consultants may also be professionals in the medical, healthcare, or social welfare areas. In general, consultation and support offered by persons with experience to those with less experience is referred to as supervision. In school consultation, many consultants have teaching experience, and hence, school consultation may take on a supervisory nature in some cases. The consultation relationship is basically the relationship among a variety of professionals.

Erchul & Martens (1997) stated, "School consultation is a process for providing psychological and educational services in which a specialist (Consultant) works cooperatively with a staff member (consultee) to improve the learning and adjustment of a student (client) or group of students. During face to face interactions, the consultant helps the consultee through systematic problem solving, social influence, and professional support. In turn, the consultee helps the client(s) through selecting and implementing effective school-based interventions. In all cases, school consultation serves a remedial function and has the potential to serve a preventive function."<sup>2</sup> Consultations are generally classified into four types (Caplan, 1970).<sup>1</sup>

They are listed as follows, incorporating Yamamoto's comments (2000a).<sup>9</sup> 1) Client-focused case consultation: the most common type of consultation, in which a consultee's problem with a client is assessed in order to understand it and to seek a method of resolving it. The consultee is responsible for handling the problem with the client, while the consultant provides support. 2) Consultee-centered case consultation: a consultant works in collaboration with a consultee to objectively analyze, clarify, and solve the consultee's particular problem. The ultimate goal is to correct insufficiencies in the consultee's expertise. 3) Administrative consultation centered on remedial measures: although resembling consultant-centered case consultation, this consultation concerns the measures themselves. A consultant offers specific opinions and expertise with regard to the approach to a new program and organizational functions. 4) Administrative consultation centered on the consultee: consultation aimed at improving the professional role of organizational administrators. School consultation is thought to consist of these four categories. However, Takahashi & Tokunaga (2002)<sup>6</sup> separately classified school consultations into two types according to who requests the consultation. In case-induced consultation, the client and the parents request consultation at the school, and the consultant, as one of the case supporters, has information for clarifying the case and meets with the consultee at the parents' request to provide consultation. In school-driven consultation, school officials, not the client's parents, request consultation. The consultant clarifies the case on the basis of indirect information from the classroom teacher and other sources and provides consultation.

Yamamoto (2000b)<sup>10</sup> cited the following four characteristics of consultation: 1) The consultation relationship is based on mutual free will. 2) Consultants are outsiders, and they are impartial towards consultees. 3) The consultation relationship has a time restriction. The consultant should prevent the consultee from becoming dependent and provide assistance while maintaining a certain distance. 4) The formation of the consultation relationship is centered on the problem to be solved. Consultation is undertaken with the main aim of understanding the case objectively and without touching on the emotions of the consultee regarding the case.

The above four characteristics are also appropriate for school consultation. In a relationship based on mutual free will, however, consultation may, in some cases, begin with a principal's or study leader's request and is thus not always initially based only on free will, although it may take on that nature in the course of development.

#### IV . Special-needs Education and School Consultation

As described earlier, the circumstances of education for children with disabilities are undergoing great changes. In particular, schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled are expected to serve as local centers, which is predicated on schoolteachers for the blind, the deaf, and people with other disabilities having a certain level of expertise. Therefore, it is important to maintain and develop the knowledge and experience accumulated thus far at schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled. No previous proposals or reports have presented adequate methods for improving teachers' expertise.

School consultation can lead to an improvement in teachers' expertise in special-needs education. There have not been many studies that deal directly with consultation in this field. This is probably because, although joint studies with outside investigators have already been conducted, no framework incorporating consultation has been established. In 1996, a study aimed at the construction of a "consultation system supporting education for the developmentally disabled" was compiled by a research team from Tokyo Gakugei (Arts and Sciences) University as a specific research project supported by the Ministry of Education. The need for the "construction of a consultation system directly supporting the classroom"<sup>7</sup> was pointed out. More recently, Hamatani (2002),<sup>8</sup> from the Tokyo Research Association of Development Consultation, reported on the practical side of developmental clinical consultation at nursery schools and kindergartens. The report covered various practical issues, including training-type consultation. Symposia on consultation have been held at congresses of special education associations and those of educational psychology during the past few years.

#### V . Actual State of Consultation at Schools Providing Special-needs Education

##### 1. Efforts by schools for the physically disabled

In 2001, it was agreed that our institute would cooperate with the Research Department and Activity for independent Department of K School for the Physically Disabled by establishing a cooperative research organization, wherein they would report on the details of teaching practices and our institute would support the school in its efforts focused on activities for independent. This cooperative relationship was based on the research project, "Practical study on educational activities under the new education guidelines at schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled; focusing on self-care activity" and on "Study on expert training support to teachers in education of the multiply disabled through school consultation," supported by a grant-in-aid for Scientific Research, for which the author (H. Sugai) was the study leader. K School is a large school with more

than 1,000 students and around 100 teachers with an annual personnel transfer of more than 10 teachers. This school consists of elementary, junior, and senior high schools, with each school divided into three to four guidance groups depending on the educational curriculum. The subjects of consultation were limited to those of a guidance group (about 30 teachers) based on an educational curriculum consisting chiefly of activities for independent in the elementary division. The author participated as a training consultant concentrating on classroom study at K School to collaboratively substantiate training and to compile a report on the results of the efforts directed at training-based activities for independent. In each training session, a specified person (teacher) from K School served as the intermediary to maintain close contact between the Institute and K School in writing, by telephone, and by e-mail, and the details of the activity were reported to the principal as well as to the entire school staff.

## 2. Consultees' initial problems

During the four years starting from 1998, school building renovation coincided with an increase in the number of students. Because of the limited space, a situation continued in which there was little chance of observing students in other classrooms and grades and in which there was little exchange of information on teaching content and methods. In the target guidance group, in which the teachers served as the consultees, the condition of the children's disabilities had become increasingly severe, pluralized, and diversified as each year passed, and it had become urgently necessary to cope with this situation. In addition, since K School was large, the rate of personnel transfer was high; nearly 10 of the approximately 30 teachers in this group were transferred. Under such circumstances, it was difficult for the consultant and consultees to continue a dialogue.

It was therefore decided, during talks with the consultant, to clarify the problems and difficulties in daily teaching in order to develop a common understanding of these problems among group members, and to set up occasions to discuss problem solving. Specifically, the class study should progress on the basis of the following three points: 1) daily teaching practices with the children should be reflected upon, 2) many opportunities to observe other teachers' teaching practices should be taken, and 3) views on the relationship with the children should be exchanged by many teachers and reflected upon.

Two actual cases were taken up and teachers available to observe the class did so in every class study. The class was videotaped, and all the teachers in the group discussed the presenter's class while watching the videotape.

## 3. Progress of the efforts

### (1) Activities in the first year (2001)

Practices in classes taught by 16 teachers were individually reviewed and discussed using VTRs from May 2001 to February 2002.

The author attended approximately half of these classes and participated directly in group workshops, gave advice at the workshops, and provided consultation for the teachers in charge before and after the workshops. The main topics during the discussions were the teachers' stance in getting involved with the children and how to view children's behavior (Table 1). Discussions were held from the following five central viewpoints in the class study.

- a. Respect children's autonomy in self-determination and initiative (decision making and taking action on their own) and expand involvement starting with children's voluntary activity.
- b. Start with each child's needs and extemporaneously develop activity case by case in line with the child's situation.
- c. Place importance on the creation of mutuality (interactions).
- d. Look at children's needs multilaterally.
- e. Implement class activities from events arising from the flow (context) of children's behavior.

In addition, "communication" was frequently raised as a case study subject. In relation to this subject, since "all children possess their own language and communication mode that they can use," we tried to establish common viewpoints to create an environment in which each child's "language" is sufficiently developed and to ensure a means for each child to communicate what they want to say.

Consultation activities were assessed by asking all teachers who participated in the training to fill out a questionnaire. Comments made by the participants included the following: "Training with the VTR allowed me to understand even the things that were not understandable by only reading documents." "I could learn about the various practices of other teachers." "I could learn from consultation with the consultant concerning the methods of solving various problems." Reflective comments were also expressed: "There were so many teachers in the group that I found it difficult to express my views." At the end of the fiscal year, all teachers in the group filed a case report for each person (or a case report for each class) and compiled a collection of practice reports. The author presented lectures at a local teachers' workshop held at K School. Nearly all the teachers from K School participated in this workshop to learn directly about the author and his views. This contributed to promoting deeper understanding of the efforts of the group.

**TABLE 1** Content of group training, fiscal year 2001

| Month | Content of Training (Details that served as the basis of consultations)   |
|-------|---|
| Apr.  | Discussion of this year's study.  |
| May.  | Respect individual children's independent-minded movement and bring out this movement. Pay attention to things together with the children and share thoughts with them. How to view, regard, and interpret the children's behavior. |
| Jun.  | Come into contact with and understand children's interests. Conduct search activities with the children.  |
| Jul.  | Sharing the emotion with children and two way communication. Communication methods other than the spoken language.  |
| Sep.  | Guide the walking of children who can walk with support. Provision of information understandable to children. The way to pay attention.   |
| Oct.  | Link children's words to their movement. Use of object cues. How to handle children's actions or expressions and to respond to them.  |
| Nov.  | Develop learning activities based on the spread of children's interest, receiving "Yes" and "No" signs and children's needs.  |
| Dec.  | Concept of total communication.   |
| Jan.  | How to handle signs from children and to deal with them; limiting and switching activities.   |
| Feb.  | Children's positions in which they can act with ease.   |
| Mar.  | Reflection on this year's activities and confirmation of the course of activities in the next year.   |

## (2) Activities in the second year (fiscal year 2002) and the third year (fiscal year 2003)

In the second year, a class study was established as in-school training. In addition, workshops in small groups were proposed by those actively promoting the study at K School. The workshops were aimed at improving the teachers' understanding of the course of guidance and changes in the children by having them give a presentation twice yearly. Specifically, the teachers organized three small groups for every theme they were interested in, separate from the overall workshops in which the author participated. Each small group underwent training, and records of the discussions held for the three groups were compiled with other data prepared by the presenter, kept in a file, and circulated; thus the teachers were able to confirm the details of discussions held by other groups.

The items listed below were selected as the new main points in the second-year training.

- a. "Expansion of exploratory activity" and "Structuration of space:" how children perceive the learning environment, i.e., school and classrooms. "Importance of the environment," that is, how teachers can improve the environment.
- b. "Selection of activity" and "Children's initiative:" what steps should be taken to promote children's initiative, self-selection, and self-determination.
- c. "Children's eyesight (vision)" and "Color of teaching materials:" to insure that children can see the materials clearly; the provision of information and educational material on the basis of children's seeing function.

Aiming at the mutual sharing of feelings with children, the discussions became increasingly focused on devising ways to improve the learning environment and learning steps so that children's initiative could be further promoted. The author continued to observe the classes and to provide consultation by citing specific scenes related to ways of

looking at and understanding children's behavior, and holding discussions on improving teaching materials and tools and the setting of scenes.

In addition, the author organized a conference of the Committee of Institute Project Study at K School. This was helpful for the consultees in that K School's efforts could be viewed relative to the practices at other schools after listening to the reports. The author asked the teacher who served as a K School contact to make a presentation at a nationwide conference. This experience gave K School an occasion to hear the comments and observations of researchers other than this author and of teachers from other schools.

In the third year, the training style employed in the previous fiscal year was continued. The author continued to participate in the class study and assisted K School teachers in visiting and observing class studies held at other schools, provided information, and accepted visitors for educational consultation provided by the author at the Institute.

## 4. Assessment and discussion of consultation at K School

To summarize the overall activities, the teachers involved in this study over the three years were asked to make comments on the class-study-centered training and consultation. The responses are summarized as follows.

### (1) Training using VTR

Few teachers had had any experience of a class study conducted regularly using VTRs every month. In this situation, the following responses were received: "Because the class was being videotaped, I initially assumed a defensive attitude and worried about what scenes should be videotaped." "I had a sense of resistance to presenting my practices and receiving other teachers' comments." With

regard to undergoing the training course, however, many teachers said “It allowed me to review my own involvement objectively” and “Having discussions made me aware of the children’s expressions and representations that I had previously missed and made me recognize the need to further improve my way of relating to them; therefore, the class study was useful for my practice.”

Many positive responses concerning the use of VTRs were received since they contributed to information sharing and expansion of the range of practices: “I could learn about children other than those in my charge and started to share information about the children in my group and to relate to them more carefully.” “Seeing other teachers’ practices allowed me to incorporate their ideas into my practices.” In addition, changes in teachers’ attitude were also reported: “I started to pay attention to even the slightest movement of children, not only in actual contact with them but also when watching the VTRs. In an effort to understand the meaning of the children’s movements, I even asked the group to feature me in a discussion.”

## (2) Changes in the consultees (teachers)

### a. Consultees’ view of children

The teachers who participated in the training exhibited the following changes in their view of the children. Regarding the discussions using VTRs, teachers gave many responses: “I noticed, for the first time, children’s actions and expressions which I had missed or which I had viewed in a narrow sense, and found other ways of interpreting them. This has enabled me to develop my relationship with the children.” “I have come to consider the meaning of even the slightest movement of children and to place importance on each movement.” “I used to read children’s thoughts from their spoken language and facial expressions, but came to realize that their hand, finger, and leg (foot) movements also had meaning. I now relate better to the children because of this realization.”

The discussion results indicated that the teachers in the group were able to confirm that “Every child has his/her words,” “Children’s actions and expressions are always meaningful,” “Interaction with children by carefully watching the slight movements of their hands, fingers, legs (feet), and line of sight is the key to further activating the children’s actions and expressions and developing interactions while encouraging the children’s initiative.”

### b. Teachers’ stance

Some teachers gave the following opinions: “Since we teachers are on the teaching side, I contemplated whether we thought of only “making” the children do things, disregarding their thoughts, under the idea that we must first prepare teaching materials and tools in order to relate to

the children,” and “Perhaps we teachers related to children by giving priority not to the child’s words but to our own spoken words.” Another opinion was also expressed by many teachers, “I came to repeat the interactive process of being attentively receptive to children’s actions and expressions after confirming and interpreting them, and then responding to the children, although not yet adequately, and to interact with the children in consideration of a children-led relationship.” The teachers’ outlook towards the interaction with the children changed to the following: “I would like to aim for interaction with the children in which their initiative is demonstrated,” and “I will make efforts to perform not unidirectional communication from the teacher but interactive communication between the children and the teacher.”

## (3) Consultation and cooperation with the Institute

Teachers’ views on the advantages of consultation included the following:

“Receiving expert advice on routine guidance (interaction with the children) is thought to have been very effective in reviewing the teacher’s guidance based on his/her own ideas. Receiving advice that even the slightest movements of the children, which I had previously missed, has its own meaning provided me with an opportunity to substantially change my views on the children.” “It was good to get an objective view different from that of schoolteachers.” “I learned a lot from the expert advice. It was useful to carry out educational activities with a keen sense of consciousness brought about by the presence of an outsider.” “It was useful to be able to visit an advanced school through the Institute.” “It was helpful that I could directly ask the consultant for advice on teaching and that points raised in discussion could be used immediately in practice.” “It was possible to learn what practice and theories are currently dominant and being developed independent of personal and in-school views. Undertaking training sessions using VTR, which is an orthodox technique but difficult to actually do, on a regular basis, and receiving advice from the Institute staff allowed me to reflect humbly on my practices. The advice was always appropriate, and it was a valuable experience that improved my expertise.”

Problems that must be reviewed upon included the following: “After the confirmation and adjustment of mutual schedules, training was arranged for a busy period of work such as at the end of term, and this added to the teachers’ workload.” “I could not always ask what I wanted to, partly because of the time restriction. I sometimes wanted to ask something after I had received advice, but I couldn’t from time to time.” “In this class study, the teacher who acted as the liaison and took great pains to promote smooth communication among the teachers in the group was a major influence in the group. A teacher who can

take on such a leadership role will probably be necessary in collaborations with specialized facilities in the future.” In summary, it was indicated that there was the possibility that some consultees (teachers) were placed under an excessive burden because of their role as a liaison or a coordinator and because of the timing of meetings. Furthermore, some consultees (teachers) failed to receive sufficient consultation due to time constraints.

## VI . Conclusions and Issues for the Future

### 1. Effectiveness of on-site training

Pursuing continuous reflection on daily interactions with children and considering the steps to take in the future are thought to lead to an improvement in the accuracy of reading the signals sent out by the children and to the development of interactions in which the children’s initiative can be promoted, as demonstrated in the group training at K School. With regard to teachers’ views on the children, the outlook of teachers changed, as indicated by answers to the questionnaire, such as “I should interact with the children by paying attention to even the slightest movement of the children.” The consciousness of this fundamental relationship with the children became apparent in their practices and training activities. The effect of the training that covered practical daily situations is thought to be behind the incorporation of this viewpoint. Merely learning about communication methods of children with multiple disabilities as knowledge does not lead to the development of practices, and knowledge gained in this manner is rarely shared among teachers. When teachers jointly consider specific practical issues, it is thought that such issues will then be used in practice and will contribute to a common understanding among teachers.

As training to improve the teachers’ expertise, not only training such as attending lectures where general information are imparted, but also practical training that allows teachers to tackle assignments on solving problems concerning the children that they actually confront every day is required. The activities at K School provided such training. Problems actually faced at the school every day were directly addressed, and the consultees (teachers) worked on solving them together with an outside expert. Such training that is set in the school deals with issues familiar to the trainees and provides a high incentive to participate fully. I propose to refer to such training as on-site training.

The objective of on-site training is to solve specific, practical problems by a case study approach. The method described in this study, with the involvement of an outside expert in case studies on practical issues, is that of school consultation. The teachers, namely, the consultees,

individually or as a team, make voluntary efforts to solve problems in the course of consultation and can expect to improve their practical ability as a result. School consultation, which functions as on-site training, can lead to the improvement of teachers’ practical skills.

### 2. Education for children with multiple disabilities and on-site training

As described in the introduction, the increased severity and pluralization of disabilities in recent years necessitates competent teachers with greater expertise. Up to now, training to improve the expertise of teachers has failed to have an adequate effect. Some possible reasons are given below.

First, this type of education is targeted at children with a wide variety of disabilities, and therefore requires the exploration of content and methods of education appropriate for individual situations. Since many children with multiple disabilities are not only mentally but also physically disabled, it is impossible to consider their condition in only one way. In many cases, results from not only educational research but also from related sciences are necessary. Measures must be taken to implement the educational content and methods appropriate for the actual individual situation. Adaptability to the conditions of each individual is a unique feature of this education, and it cannot be fulfilled by the coursework-centered teaching program of conventional training or by the training for daily living that has been provided from the viewpoint of helping the children to become socially well adjusted. The pursuit of educational content and methods adapted to the conditions of each individual requires methods different from those in studies of group learning based on a certain level of intellectual and physical development. However, class studies thus far have pursued general methods and skills applicable to any class. Particularly in ordinary schools, class studies are completely group-centered, although case studies are sometimes conducted. Special education also exhibits this tendency. In many cases, coursework and daily-life learning depend on group-based teaching methods, and the key element of such class studies has been groups even if consideration was also given to individuals. There has been a strong connection between class studies and medical treatment, as demonstrated by the use of the expression “treatment and education (rehabilitation)” from the outset. Partly because of this, class studies have been systematized according to disabilities and diagnoses, for example, a teaching program for children with Down’s syndrome and cognitive learning for children with physical disabilities. Here too, methods applicable to the majority of children with a given disability and diagnosis have been pursued. As a matter of fact, the benefits of these methods

and techniques cannot be denied, but what is needed in practical classes is the in-depth practical recognition of “individual and specific events and experiences” that can be established only through regular involvement with individuals. The “reflective practice” of class studies to deepen practical recognition is contraposed to the traditional “technical practice” (Inagaki & Sato, 1996),<sup>3</sup> but it has not yet become established.

Second, up to now, class studies and training have been mainly coursework and unit learning programs. Educational interaction with children with severe multiple disabilities starts with the establishment of a communicative relationship with the educator on the basis of individual differences and the characteristics of the disability. The establishment of such a communicative relationship is often the main issue to be solved. It is necessary to work on initial communication issues including the recognition of subtle signals sent out by a child, distinguishing voluntary behavior, and developing mutuality through responses to the signals. When such a relationship is taken up as an issue, conventional training involving coursework and unit learning is inapplicable, and the promotion of general methods results in difficulties in learning for some children. Neither the application of the existing methods nor the production of teachers’ manuals is feasible. For many teachers who have long been engaged in ordinary education and those who have worked in conventional programs or curriculum development, the concept of education for children with multiple disabilities requires thinking from a fundamentally different angle. Therefore, training focusing on changing the methodological thinking and on adapting educational content and methods to individual cases is needed rather than lectures on established methodologies. Studies in special education have not been without individual case studies. Indeed, many of the studies of children with severe multiple disabilities have been individual case studies. However, the failure of such studies to be applied at schools is attributable to the following reasons: 1) the incomplete detachment from subject-based and program-related ideas; 2) the paucity of long-term efforts because of frequent personnel changes, even though long (several-year) involvement in education for children with multiple disabilities is considered to be necessary before a certain degree of significance in the results becomes apparent; and 3) the fact that a hypothetical system supporting individual studies among practitioners is not sufficiently established.

Under this status of education for children with multiple disabilities, new training in pursuit of the practical recognition of individual cases is considered necessary in addition to conventional training. It is advisable that this

training be focused on studies of class teaching practices at school in view of the need to take up individual cases and to deal with events occurring during routine practice. In other words, training should be on-site.

### 3. Issues for the future

From experience in school consultation with teachers in charge of education for children with multiple disabilities, the author has realized that these teachers feel a need to build relationships with the children they teach and to practically recognize/understand actual events. Now that a large number of students with multiple disabilities is enrolled in schools for the blind, deaf, and other disabled and that teaching with expertise is requested, it has become difficult to meet these demands. The author proposes on-site training as a measure to respond to this problem of teacher training. The use of outside resources for on-site training is effective in enhancing expertise. Cooperation with other institutions has attracted attention in the movement toward the formulation of an “individual educational support plan,” and school consultation is one form of cooperation with external institutions. School consultation in cooperation with local universities, education centers, or other institutes is a promising measure to improve the expertise of teachers.

In addition, on-site training can fulfill the function of consultation. More specifically, a teacher explores his/her own methodology and insight as a subject of research and training, sometimes using outside resources, not through one-sided guidance given from an experienced person to a less experienced person as in the case of general supervision. In schools, the practice of receiving guidance from an invited outside lecturer is already established. Actually, some responses to the questionnaire concerning consultation assessment in this study indicated that some teachers considered the author’s intervention to be supervisory. It will be possible for consultation to focus on joint studies with teachers to develop theories adapted to the classroom, even if guidance intervention cannot be completely eliminated. As this is realized, the issue in the future will be not to apply established theories or techniques, but to analyze and pursue the theories that are already effective in practice to achieve further practical development.

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