

# Lifelong Support through Education, Welfare, Healthcare, Labor and Medical Care

## — Consideration from the viewpoint of the Support System for Individuals with Special Needs by a Local Government —

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on ways in which the lifelong support concerns of people with special needs could be better delivered by examining the support system provided through the collaboration of specialists in the fields of education, welfare, healthcare, labor, etc. in Konan City, a city with a population of 50,000 people located in Shiga Prefecture. Support for each life stage is delivered effectively on an individual basis through coordination among related institutions and services as the core of a support system for individuals with special needs.

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**Keywords:** Support system for individuals with special needs, Collaboration, Lifelong, Local government.

### 1. Introduction

In 2006, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised to require central and local governments to act in order to enable children with special needs to receive high-quality education in accordance with the conditions of their disabilities. In April, 2007, special needs education in Japan embarked on a new start. As a result of the partial revision of the School Education Law, for example, the *special schools* that were once categorized by type of disability have become *schools for special needs education*, where education is made available for children with any kind of disabilities, as well as taking on the central role of providing guidance and support to elementary and junior high schools in the community to enhance the education of children with special needs. On the other hand, elementary and junior high schools more than ever before have been tasked with providing high-quality education to a full range of children with special needs, including developmental disabilities.


Special needs education is the establishment of individual educational support plans and the provision of appropriate support for children and students with special needs, based on the

consideration of lifelong support in cooperation with dedicated specialists in the fields of welfare, healthcare, labor, medical care, etc. Special needs education is, in other words, the coordinated collaboration of educators and related institutions aimed at addressing the individual problems of children and students with special needs.

In 2002, Konan City, a city with a population of 50,000 located in Shiga Prefecture, established a collaborative support system involving education, healthcare, welfare, labor and medical care to provide consistent lifelong support to individuals with special needs. I would like to describe this system and discuss consistent lifelong support for individuals with special needs by examining actual solutions for problems faced by such individuals through the cooperation of related institutions.

### 2. The Konan City Support System for Individuals with Special Needs

The Konan City support system for individuals with special needs provides services through both lateral cooperation among related institutions in the fields of education, welfare, healthcare, labor and medical care, and vertical cooperation through



Support Organizations	Department of Disabled Support	General control	Focus of Support	Transition
Employment	Department of Industry and Tourist Department of Social Welfare	Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs	Support for work	Individualized Transition Plan
High Schools/ Schools for Special Needs Education	Cooperation with the Prefectural Board of Education		Special Needs Education	
Junior High Schools Elementary Schools Kindergartens Nursery School	City Board of Education Department of School Education Department of School Education Department of Child Care Support			Support for Individuals with Special Needs
Therapeutic Education	Department of Social Welfare			
Infant Physical Examination	Department of Health Planning			

**Fig. 1 Support System and Core Policy**

**Note) In this system, the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs serves as an umbrella institution providing support for the finding of disabilities, early-stage developmental support, special needs education and employment assistance, in cooperation with departments related to healthcare, welfare, education, and labor at the City Hall.**

individual teaching and transition plans (Fig.1). This system was instituted in 2002 with the establishment of the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs, which acts as the umbrella institution for support, under the municipal government's Department of Health and Welfare, and the opening of a Support Center for Individuals with Special Needs at Elementary School A as a special support location. In order to stabilize this system, Konan City enacted the *Ordinance regarding Self-reliance Support to allow Individuals with Special Needs to Live Actively in the Community* in June, 2006.

(1) Konan City, Ordinance regarding Self-reliance Support to allow Individuals with Special Needs to Live Actively in the Community

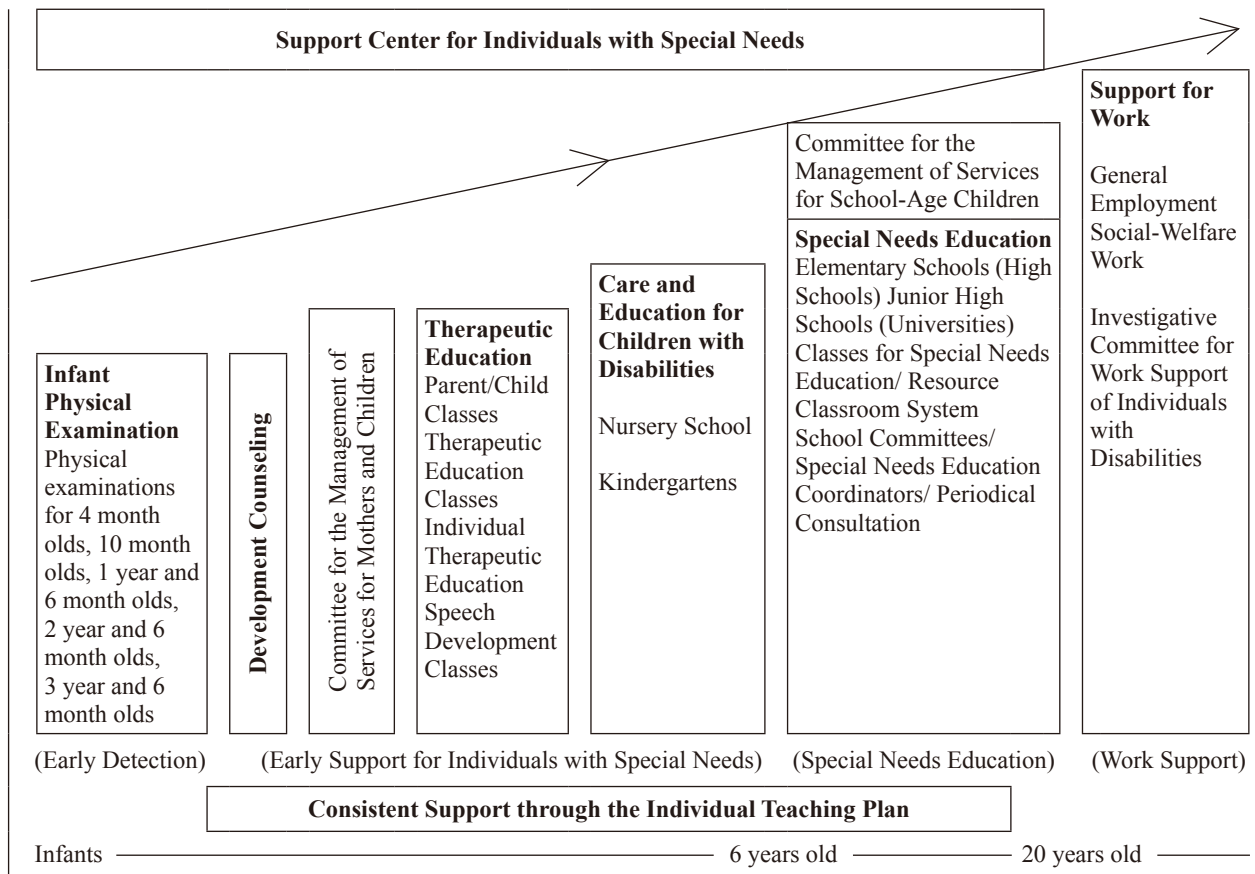
Chapter 1 General  
[Purpose] Article 1

This ordinance shall be stipulated for the purpose of promoting, systematically and in a cross-sectional manner, the progress of measures regarding healthcare, welfare, medical care, education and labor in accordance with the

ability, aptitude, developmental stage and social environment of each individual with disabilities, and for the purpose of contributing to the realization of self-reliance of such individuals and the continued development of a local community in which individuals with disabilities are able to live actively and safely, by determining basic measures to be taken by the city and clarifying the responsibilities of the city, residents and businesses related to support for the development and self-reliance of individuals with disabilities.

[Municipal Responsibilities] Article 3

Konan City, in conformity with the provisions in each item of Article 3 of the Act for the Support of Individuals with Special Needs, shall take measures required for finding developmental disabilities at an early stage, providing developmental support, and providing support for the employment and livelihood of individuals with special needs. For the implementation of these measures, the city shall secure the close cooperation and coordination of departments and divisions in charge of operations related to healthcare, medical



**Fig. 2 Konan City, Support for Individuals with Special Needs at Each Life Stage**

**Note) This figure shows the content of the project for each life stage. Consistency in support will be ensured through the individual teaching plans.**

care, education and employment.

[Basic Plan regarding support for individuals with disabilities] Article 7: Konan City, Support System for Individuals with Special Needs

Konan City, in collaboration with related institutions in the fields of healthcare, welfare, medical care, education and labor, shall develop a comprehensive structure to provide the necessary support for individuals with disabilities and other special needs in accordance with their developmental stage, age, living conditions and social environment (hereinafter referred to as Konan City Support System for Individuals with Special Needs), and address the management of its smooth operation.

Support for Individuals with Special Needs in each life stage implemented by Konan City based on the above-mentioned ordinance is shown in Fig.2. This support for each life stage is specifically

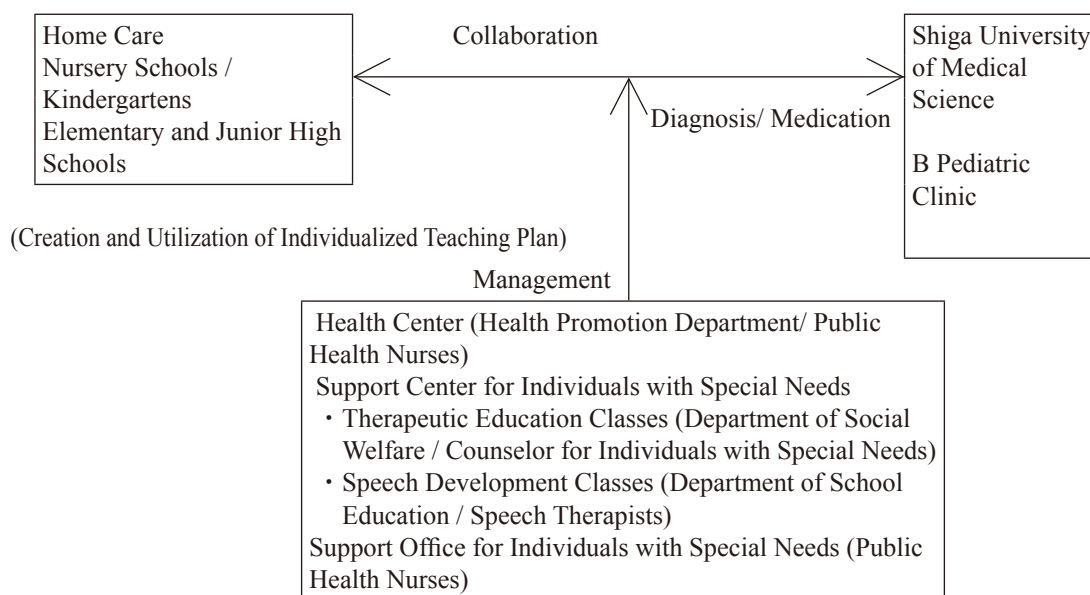
stipulated in the ordinance, and the contents of the project will be described in relation to the ordinance.

Chapter 2 Early Detection and Support for Individuals with Special Needs

[Medical Care] Article 8

Konan City shall make efforts to cooperate with medical institutions which facilitate the professional diagnosis of disabilities and provide support for individuals with special needs.

A specific example of this is the city's cooperation with the Shiga University of Medical Science Department of Pediatrics and B Pediatric Clinic, cooperation that focuses on the diagnosis of developmental disabilities and the provision of medication. This is cooperation in which the role of medical care in the support of individuals with



**Fig. 3 Collaboration with Medical Care**

**Note) The Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs coordinates the collaboration of medical institutions with parents, nursery schools, kindergartens and schools.**

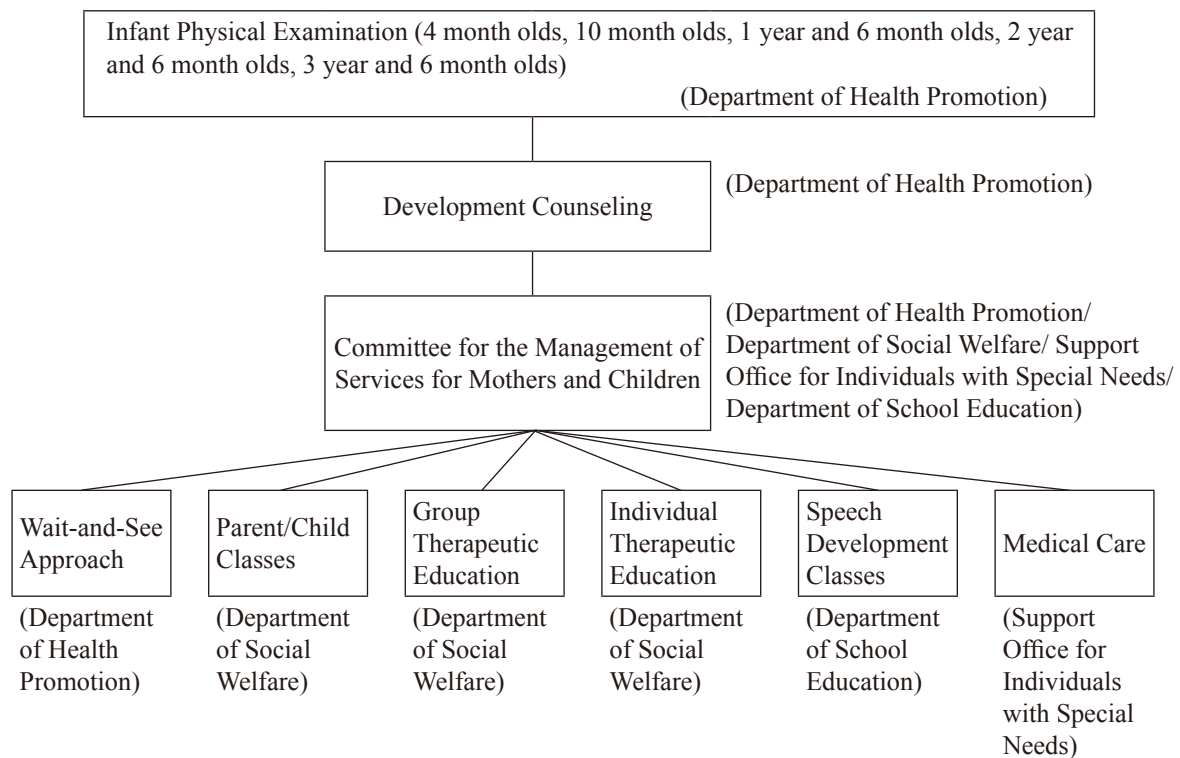
special needs in therapeutic education and speech development classes is clarified. The individual teaching plan is used as a tool for cooperation. Cooperation with the medical institutions is shown in Fig.3. An important basis of this cooperation is the sufficient consideration of the feelings of the individuals with special needs and their parents. In order to accomplish this, in Konan City, a high value is placed on public health nurses to play a role in connecting the individuals with special needs, their parents and the staff at related medical institutions, as seen, for example, when public health nurses accompany patients on their visits to doctors, and in their attendance at case meetings held at medical institutions.

[Early Detection] Article 9

Konan City shall take appropriate measures when performing the physical examinations stipulated in Articles 12 and 13 of the Maternal and Child Health Law in order to facilitate the early detection of disabilities in infants.

The Maternal and Child Health Law stipulates that the physical examinations be provided for children at 1 year and 6 months and

3 years; however, the Konan City Health Center (Department of Health Promotion) provides the stipulated examinations for children at 4 months old, 10 month, 1 year and 6 months, 2 years and 6 months, and 3 years and 6 months. In the event that disabilities are detected, specialists in psychology provide consultation related to child development (with public health nurse involvement), and support is discussed by representatives of related departments at the Committee for the Management of Services for Mothers and Children (Individuals involved include public health nurses assigned to maternal and child healthcare, psychological specialists for therapeutic education, speech therapists who provide speech development classes, and public health nurses at the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs). The purpose of this committee is to comprehensively review individual cases and assign responsibility for treatment and support to specialized institutions in the city. Public health nurses at the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs are in charge of the management of this meeting. Procedures for the early detection and support of individuals with special needs are shown in Fig.4.



**Fig.4 Early Detection and Support for Individuals with Special Needs**

**Note) This shows the flow of detection of disabilities at physical examinations for infants and Committee for the Management of Services for Mothers and Children where support is discussed.**

[Early Support for Individuals with Special Needs]  
Article 10

Konan City shall counsel and give advice to the parents of children requiring special needs support, and carry out other appropriate measures that facilitate early support for children with disabilities and other special needs.

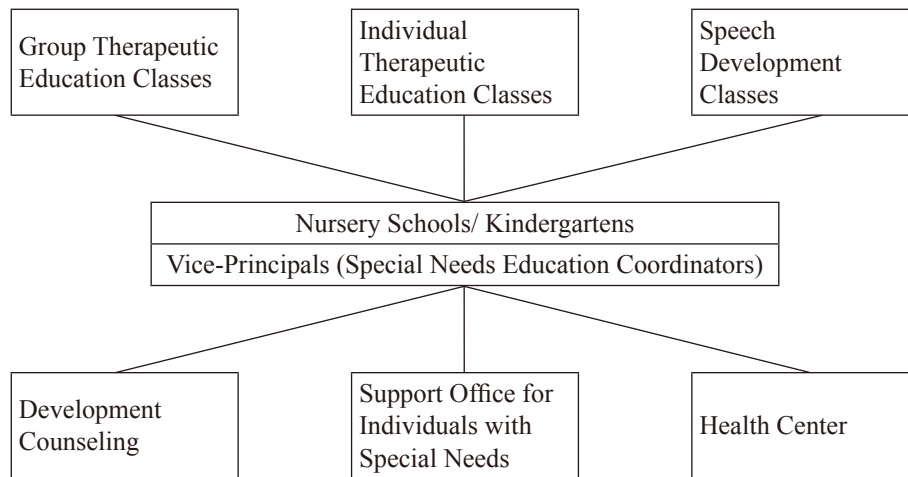
Early support for individuals with special needs is provided in therapeutic education classes (parent/child classes, individual therapeutic education classes, group therapeutic education classes) and speech development classes (for kindergarten students) at the Support Center for Children with Special Needs. In consideration of the development status of each child and support for parents, early support for individuals with special needs is offered both in the form of group and individual support. At sites where support services are rendered, projects in education, healthcare and welfare are integrated. The content of projects is verified and individual cases are examined at Committee for the Management of Services for Mothers and Children.

Individual teaching plans are created and utilized to facilitate a common understanding of the content of support for each case and the monitoring of the status of children.

[Child Care] Article 11

Konan City and the nursery school in the city shall carry out necessary measures for the development of support systems that allow children with disabilities and other special needs support to grow healthily through the experience of learning and playing with other children.

Konan City provides consultation to both public and private nursery schools through municipal specialists in order to create individual teaching plans to support children. Konan City stations additional child care professionals to support children with special needs based on the content of individual teaching plans. Children with special needs can be enrolled in nursery school and attend therapeutic education and speech development classes concurrently, and nursery



**Fig.5 Organizations Supporting Nursery Schools and Kindergartens**

**Note) This shows the support system for nursery schools and kindergartens through the implementation of periodical consultations by specialists.**

school and kindergarten facilities are assisted in observing children and providing appropriate support through periodical visits by persons in charge of therapeutic education and speech development classes (psychological specialists, etc.). The support system for individuals with special needs should provide fundamental support for nursery schools, kindergartens, and elementary and junior high schools. Therefore, support for nursery schools and kindergartens is provided not only through visits by specialists but also through the periodical visits by counselors responsible for elementary and junior high schools, specialists at the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs and child care professionals. The structure of support for nursery schools and kindergartens is shown in Fig.5.

[Education] Article 12

Konan City and the board of education shall carry out measures required for the development of special needs education and support in order to facilitate the development of support for children with disabilities and other special needs and assure that sufficient and appropriate education is provided in accordance with the severity of disabilities at schools under municipal control, and they shall also work on promoting the carrying out of similar

measures by private schools in the city.

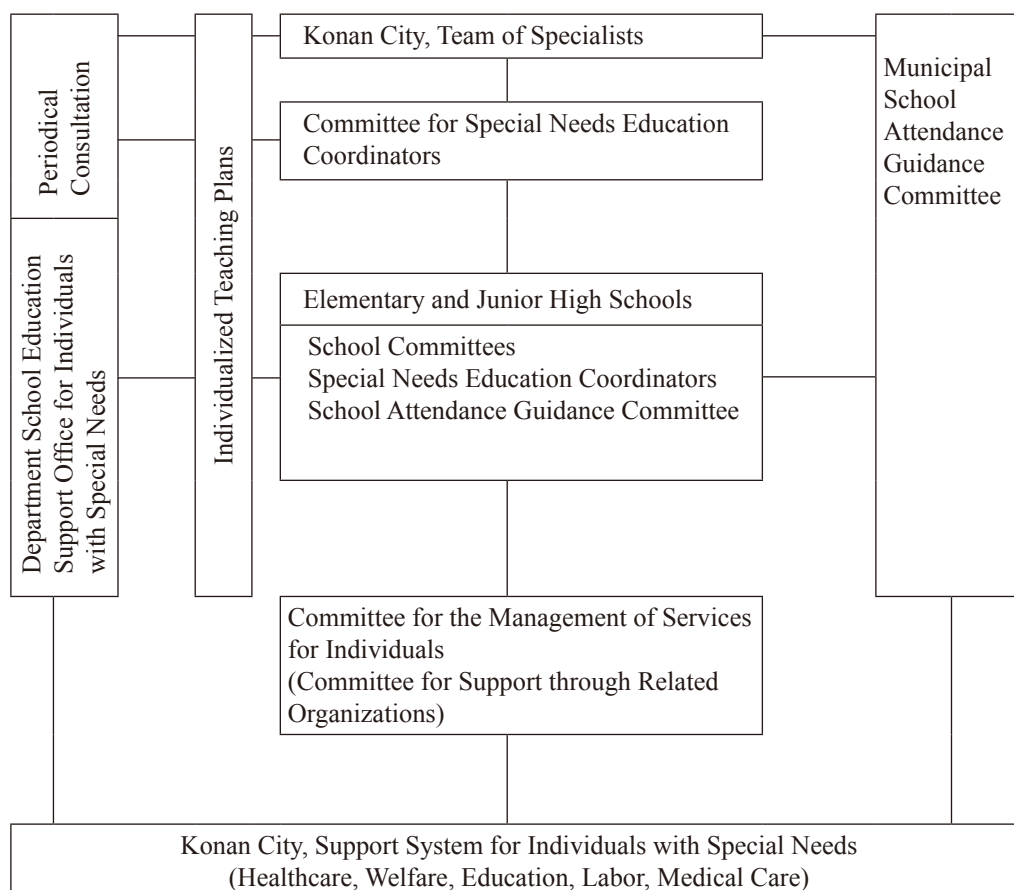
The city, mainly led by a team of specialists, has progressively approached special needs education by providing periodical consultations, which is an independent municipal project, and individual teaching plans within the support system for individuals with special needs. The municipal support system for special needs education is shown in Fig.6. In this support system, each elementary and junior high school in the city develops a school-wide support system and provides support to students in accordance with their individual needs through the support of specialized institutions.

[Facilities Providing Specialized Support for Individuals with Special Needs] Article 14

Konan City shall establish facilities to provide specialized consultation, guidance, therapeutic education and other necessary assistance in order to render comprehensive support for the physical and mental development of the children with disabilities and other special needs.

Upon merger of municipalities in 2004, Konan City decided to independently carry out therapeutic educational projects which had been carried out by a broader-based administrative affairs association and established a comprehensive support center for individuals with special needs that would





**Fig.6 Konan City, Special Needs Education System**

**Note) This shows the relationship between the Konan City Support System for Individuals with Special Needs and special needs education provided at elementary and junior high schools.**

combine existing therapeutic education classes and speech development classes organized by the board of education to provide sufficient support as a specialized institution.

### Chapter 3 Support for Work

[Development of Employment Environment] Article 15

Konan City shall carry out investigations regarding the various types and categories of jobs at institutions within the city in accordance with the characteristics of individuals with disabilities, make efforts to cultivate work places, endeavor to promote employment through which individuals with disabilities can engage in appropriate employment in accordance with their individual abilities, and support their smooth employment in cooperation with related institutions.

[Support for Employment] Article 16

- (1) Konan City shall establish an organization to consider mutual collaboration and supportive measures in cooperation with industrial and commercial organizations, institutions for employment support, welfare service providers for individuals with disabilities, schools and associations of individuals with disabilities, and strive to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities through such cooperation.
- (2) Konan City shall promote cooperation among the organization stipulated in Paragraph 1, related institutions participating in the municipal support system for individuals with special needs, and other institutions in order to implement proper consultative administration regarding employment in the community.

Measures for employment support were at one time insufficient in the support system for individuals with special needs. In 2005, therefore, Konan City established the investigative committee for work support for individuals with disabilities stipulated in Paragraph 1 of Article 16. Industrial and commercial associations, organizations related to welfare, municipality and parents' associations in the city gathered together to discuss a system of employment support for individuals with disabilities. In FY 2008, a confectionery company will establish a designated affiliate company that will provide jobs for individuals with disabilities. Although each step is small, general employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities are being realized.

### 3. Coordinating Functions and Appropriate Support for Individuality

The following is an examination of measures for the solving of problems faced by individuals with special needs from the viewpoint of support

through the cooperation of related institutions and coordinating functions of the support system for individuals with special needs.

Support that meets with individual needs requires a multidimensional understanding of individuality and the combining of several support functions. Konan City assigns specialists to combine and adjust support (local Coordinators) for each life stage. Public health nurses are responsible for preschool children, supervisors at the board of education are responsible for school-age children, and the person in charge of the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs is responsible for individuals during their active working age (Table 1). Such local coordinators will support individuals with special needs along with related institutions in cooperation with coordinators at institutions such as nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary and junior high schools (organizational coordinators). In other words, the city has developed a structure to support nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary and junior high schools.

**Table 1 Local Coordinators and Cooperative Organizations**

	Preschool-Age	School-Age	Active-Work Period
Local Coordinators	Public Health Nurses	Supervisors of School Education	Staff from the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs
Division/ Department	Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs	Board of Education	Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs
Specialized Field	Healthcare/ Child Welfare	Education	Welfare and Work Support for Individuals with Disabilities
Cooperative Organizations	Nursery Schools/ Kindergartens	Elementary and Junior High Schools/ High Schools/ Schools for Special Needs Education	Work and Livelihood Support Center, Livelihood Support Center for Individuals with Three Major Disabilities
Organizational Coordinators	Vice-Principals	Special Needs Education Coordinators	Coordinators for Individuals with the Three Major Disabilities, Work Support Workers

**Note) This shows the relationship between local and organizational coordinators for each life stage. The three major disabilities are defined as physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities and mental disabilities.**



#### (1) Support system for school-age children

Support for individuals with special needs enrolled in the school system is available from the pre-school level and rendered according to education plans created for each individual who has been identified as requiring support. Support is provided through therapeutic education institutions, nursery schools, kindergartens and elementary schools as the individual progresses through the school system, with supervisors at the board of education being responsible for overall coordination. The special needs education coordinator serves as the contact person responsible for managing contact and coordination with specialized external and administrative organizations. In addition, the special needs education coordinator takes a leading role in school committees to identify children with developmental disabilities in all grades at schools and establish a support system involving all school officials. For all children and students identified as having developmental disabilities, individual teaching plans are created so that support may be effectively carried out.

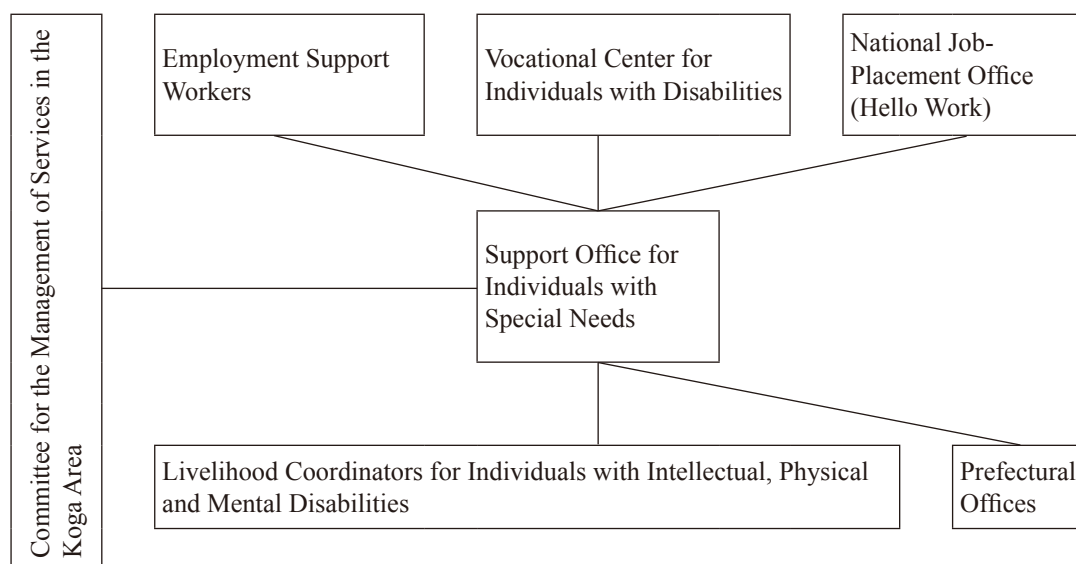
To facilitate support, a structure is established that allows teachers to share information regarding the conditions of children and students on an ongoing basis. Within this structure, teacher-staffed support teams at each school site discuss support for children with special needs based on an understanding of each child's psychological assessment, reported by counselors, behaviors and learning achievements, reported by teachers, and family situation, reported by homeroom teachers. After discussion, individual teaching plans are drawn up for use in classroom management, lesson planning and group guidance. Individuals in charge of children with special needs at specialized organizations periodically visit elementary and junior high schools to implement support in cooperation with the support teams at schools. For children requiring medical care, public health nurses at the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs cooperate with medical institutions to provide the required support.

#### (2) Support system for active-work period

Under the supervision of staff from the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs and Welfare for Individuals with Disabilities, support is provided through Hello Work, the national job-placement office, and the Vocational Center for Individuals with Disabilities. Social-welfare work support is coordinated by the Committee for the Management of Services in the Koga Area, made up of directors of facilities for individuals with disabilities, coordinators of livelihood support for individuals with intellectual, physical and mental disabilities, employment support workers, livelihood support workers, administrative officers, and officials from schools for special needs education, in cooperation with Konan City, Koga City and the prefectural branch offices in each city. The work support network is shown in Fig.7. Support for work is basically a project to be organized by the national government, and only a few years have passed since local governments began participating in the service. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has begun aggressively developing support for work for individuals with developmental disabilities; therefore, Konan City is also working on carrying out measures for work support for individuals with disabilities in cooperation with Hello Work and the prefectural government and the establishment of a systematic organization is under consideration.

### 4. Conclusion

Although support for each life stage, preschool-age, the school-age, and the active working age, was provided before the establishment of this support system for individuals with special needs, support content at each stage was not properly communicated to the next stage, so the parents had to provide information regarding the support. For such parents, the lack of support made it difficult to face the challenges confronting them on a daily basis. The Konan City support system for individuals with special needs facilitates the



**Fig.7 Work Support Network**

**Note) This shows the relationship between the Support Office for Individuals with Special Needs and the organizations supporting work for individuals with disabilities.**

communication of individual teaching plans to the individuals in charge of each stage through local coordinators. In other words, the continuity of support is maintained. In addition, through cooperation among related organizations, various services are provided to support individuals with disabilities and other special needs based on decisions made by the Committee for Individual Service Coordination. This system contains the mechanism for successfully combining consistent support throughout life with support provided in cooperation with healthcare, welfare, education, labor, and medical care.

The establishment of this system has enhanced support for individuals with disabilities and other special needs and has made it possible for them to lead active lives at nursery school, kindergartens, elementary and junior high schools. Furthermore, this system has helped parents of children with disabilities and other special needs to envision a positive future of their children and be engaged in their growth with a view to development, which has enabled parents to raise their children with a sense of security.

Beyond the existence of the system, however, it is the people involved in the development of children with disabilities and special needs who maintain their strong commitment to providing support from these children's perspective at all times that ensure the successful continuation of this system even as personnel change.

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# The Leap towards Inclusive education: experiences from Nepal

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*“Nepalese community, greatly known for its rich diversity, is a suitable example of inclusionary practice that the school should learn to be inclusionary. As inclusion is both a concept and a strategy, a welcoming and celebrating community of diversities can set an example for the school usually to avoid the notion that the child is for the school, not the either way”*

- Stubbs, 2002 as cited from Kafle, 2007.

## **Meaning of inclusion**

Inclusion is a term that is familiar to most people in their everyday lives. We feel included, or excluded, from family, neighbourhood, or community activities. Inclusion and exclusion have also been recognized as social issues in Europe since the 1970s, where it has become a central feature of public policies. In Atlantic Canada, social and economic exclusion and inclusion have recently become the focus of attention among those who are concerned about poverty and its many negative effects on people:

Those who are excluded, whether because of poverty, ill health, gender, race or lack of education, do not have the opportunity for full participation in the economic and social benefits of society. Inclusion is celebrating diversities, reconstructs lives, recognizing the enterprising women, promote dignity, protect livelihood and listen to all voices (Shookner, 2002).

## **Major elements of inclusion**

Shookner (2002) highlighted the major elements of inclusion are adequate income, reduced disparities, Human Rights, access, ability to participate, valued contribution, belonging and empowerment. In addition to this,

➤ Valuing contributions of women and men to society, recognition of differences, valuing

diversity, positive identity, anti-racist education.

- Adequate income for basic needs and participation in society, poverty eradication, employment, capability for personal development, personal security, sustainable development, reducing disparities, value and support caregiving.
- Ability to participate, opportunities for personal development, valued social roles, recognizing competence.
- Empowerment, freedom to choose, contribution to community, access to programs, resources and capacity to support participation, involved in decision making, social action.
- Access to public places and community resources, physical proximity and opportunities for interaction, healthy/supportive environments, access to transportation, sustainability.
- Affirmation of human rights, enabling policies and legislation, social protection for vulnerable groups, removing systemic barriers, will to take action, long-term view, multi-dimensional, citizen participation, transparent decision making.
- Belonging, social proximity, respect, recognition, cooperation, solidarity, family support, access to resources.
- Entitlements, access to programs, transparent pathways to access, affirmative action, community capacity building, inter-departmental links, inter-governmental links, accountability, open channels of communication, options for change, flexibility.

## ***Meaning of inclusive education***

The concept of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ are used to derive the meaning of both. The term ‘exclusion’ is covering wide range of social and economic problems (Sen, 2001). Simply, inclusion means those who are not excluded from any reason. Nowadays, the concept of inclusion is also used in education and termed as inclusive education. It is an approach, which secure the right of all children to relevant education by promoting the educational system that celebrates the rich cultural differences of the country upholding non-discriminatory environments. It also believes that all children can learn given the appropriate environment and support. The five year strategic planning document, Education for All 2004-09, defines Inclusive education as an approach or strategy which incorporates learning needs of socially marginalized groups, children with disabilities, indigenous children and children living in difficult circumstances with special needs (MoES, 2004).

Many people are misinformed about Inclusive education they confuse it with Special education which only focuses on children with disabilities. Inclusive education is a strategy which identifies children who, for any reasons, are excluded from schooling in particular context. It is a discipline that promotes a process of social and academic inclusion of ALL children within the school.

### ***Who are excluded?***

The concept of exclusion also makes easy to define the meaning of inclusion. Literally, those are not in system often termed as exclusion. Inclusion is a strategy of pulling children in schooling that identifies children who for any reason are excluded or who are at risk of dropping out from schooling in a particular context. These potential groups living in risk likely to be excluded are as follows in the context of Nepal;

- Girls/women,

- Dalits (so called low caste groups),
- Janajati (ethnic and linguistic groups),
- Children with disabilities,
- Street children,
- Child laborers,
- Children affected by conflict,
- Children trafficked for sexual and other purposes,
- Children without parents/guardians,
- Sick children e.g. HIV/Aids, leprosy,
- Children in poverty.

### ***Context: National and International***

The Government of Nepal has ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), and is a signatory of the declaration Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca Declaration (1994). These documents call for the provision of public education to all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistics or other conditions.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, Department of Education had taken up the challenges of initiating inclusive education in Nepal. In line with the Education for All National Plan of Action 2001-2015, the Education for All programs 2004-09 has taken inclusive education as one of the major strategies and education for children with disabilities and marginalized groups has high priority. Government’s other agencies such as the National Planning Commission Secretariat, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Local Development and the Social Welfare Council are working for disability in various ways. Several initiatives to provide integrated and inclusive education for children with disabilities have also been taken by charity organizations, religious institutions, local NGOs and International organizations.

The Government of Nepal has adopted the inclusive education as an approach developed and

applied for students in formal education system as well as in the non-formal education system to respond to special educational needs of different target groups (like language and ethnic minorities, social caste, person with disability etc.). It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus of those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. In this way, Inclusive education is an approach to ensure the right to education to all through preparing appropriate learning environment and treating them in a social justice manner.

The UN has played an important role in changing the concept of the society towards disable people. Declaration of the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) 1981 was an important step taken by UN General Assembly in the field of disability under the theme of "Full Participation and Equality". The root of the movement emanates from a paradigm shift from segregation to integration and finally to inclusion. In line with the international and national commitment to Education for All the government initiated different programs for children with disabilities in the Right- based approach.

### ***Development towards inclusive education***

The concept of inclusive education was evolved from the concept of Special Education. The history of special education is not long, it is started in 1964 after the establishment of the integrated program for blind students in Kathmandu. Later on, in 1966, a school for deaf and hearing impaired was opened under Children's Organization.

The National Education System Plan (NSEP) 1971, for the first time in the education history of Nepal, mentioned about Special Education. In 1973, a Special Education Council (SEC) was established within Ministry of Education as per the recommendation of NSEP with the objectives of starting and promoting special education for children with disabilities all over the country. SEC

brought the concept of mainstreaming all special schools under its umbrella since that time.

The Government has accelerated initiatives to expand special education to children with disabilities during different projects and programs. During the Basic and Primary Education Project (1992-1997), the concept of integrated school was introduced in school education. Subsequently, emphasis was laid down in the later projects and programs. However, it has been realized that the present strategies and interventions are not sufficient to achieve the goals of education for all. Hence, government has taken steps on developing special and integrated schools in an inclusive setting to ensure the equitable access for all the children including children with disabilities.

Nepal's experience with inclusive education starts with the piloting of this concept in 4 districts in 1999/2000 with Danish assistance under the Ministry of Education. Based on the experience gained from the piloted activities, the Department of Education has expanded inclusive education in other areas (schools) and now reached 210 schools of the country with the aim of establishing 500 inclusive schools by 2009.

### ***Strategies adopted to implement the inclusive education***

In the context of Nepal, the education policies and programs are in line to develop responsive education system to ensure equitable access and enhance good quality education. In order to make basic and primary education free and accessible, parents of deprived and disadvantaged children are addressed by reducing direct and indirect cost of education. Hence, disadvantaged communities are targeted for assistance in addressing the opportunity cost for schooling through various affirmative actions taken by the school education system.

Inclusive education is further developed



and scaled up to increase access of children from marginalized groups.

The current emphasis laid by the government on school based management within a decentralized framework is to operate schools by involving and empowering parents and communities by making the most of human and material resources at the local level. The following activities have been carried out to meet the learning needs of indigenous and linguistic minority children in order to ensure their access to quality education;

- Practical and relevant school curricula to the lives of children, youths and adults developed.
- The rights-based approach to education emphasized in the curriculum through civic education.
- Use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for expanding learning opportunities and diversifying ways of learning encouraged.
- All children, youths and adults are encouraged to live safer, healthier and economically and socially active and productive lives.
- Learning of generic skills such as information gathering, problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, negotiation, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, assertiveness, handling emotions, conflict resolution, living in harmony and peace with neighbors encouraged.
- Information on HIV/AIDS in the curriculum integrated and extra-curricular activities to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS organized.
- Alternative and flexible schooling opportunities provided.
- Partnership built on a broad basis at local, national and international levels with local bodies, CBOs, I/NGOs, and other private agencies with the main strategy for bringing additional resources, capacity, expertise for implementing programs targeted towards indigenous peoples and linguistic minority children.
- Bilingual education, use of mother tongue as the subject and medium of instruction, special

programs for endangered languages and cultures to ensure rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities emphasized.

- Disability focused programs in integrated resource class and inclusive approach implemented.

In line with the above mentioned policies and strategies, the government has implemented several initiatives such as scholarships to girls, Dalit students, Disabled students, awareness campaign, focused programs to disabled students (assessment centers, resource classes, provision of Brail books, extra curricular activities, skill training, library establishment, etc.), non-formal educational programs, bi/multi-lingual education programs.

### ***Challenges for the development and expansion of inclusive education***

Inclusive education in Nepal has implemented with the aim of ensuring the school and classrooms environment more conducive for learning to all irrespective of race, language, caste and creed of the students by welcoming them with least restrictive environment. The services to the child/student are based on individual needs, not on labels and pointers. Theoretically, the concept of inclusive education relates to the right based approach in education. To ensure the right based education fully implemented, it is necessary to create education and school system more responsive to all children regardless of their differences, which is very difficult tasks demanding more resources, time and efforts. Pigozzi (2001) has also realized this scenario;

*“Efforts to make education more inclusive have been somewhat “spotty”, with greater progress in some areas and virtually no progress in other.”*

Research studies have also explored the situation of inclusive education in Nepal. A recent study on Situation of Inclusive Classroom in Nepal (CERID, 2006) revealed that the true concepts of



the inclusive education have not been translated in classroom practices.

Another study conducted by CERID in 2004, found that the school environment was not favorable for inclusion. The children in the resource class schools were not prepared to go to the regular school as if the children were there for the resource class school only.

In this way, the research studies, to some extent, indicate that the inclusion can simply turn out to be rhetoric, much talked but little practiced. It is obvious that many children do not yet enjoy their right to a good quality education, in a supportive, protective and un-discriminatory environment. Poverty, gender inequality and social exclusion are reflected in marked educational disparities between the most advantaged and disadvantaged groups and individuals. Any children may suffer exclusion to some degree. The following are the main factors for exclusion still prevalent in the Nepalese society.

- Poverty, vulnerable livelihoods and geographical location
- Gender discrimination
- Discrimination on the basis of caste, social or occupational status
- Language, ethnicity or race
- Disability: children with disability now constitute the group of children most likely never to have attended school.
- Inadequate care and protection
- Conflict: Children affected by conflict are at high risk of an undermining of their rights to education.
- HIV/AIDS: It is another factor that has seriously undermined children's right to education in many countries.

Several challenges encounter while implementing inclusive education. In most cases, school itself creates barriers for some children and deny all children to enjoy their rights of receiving good quality education in an atmosphere of

protection and non- discrimination. The following issues are pertinent in the context of Nepalese Inclusive Education development;

- Conceptual clarity: inclusive education - special needs education
- Debate on the regular and inclusive education in terms of resources, management, effectiveness, efficiency, meritocracy,
- Disability dominant inclusive practice,
- Resistance to inclusion: backtracking toward segregation,
- Community awareness, parental education and training
- Teacher training: training on inclusion or regular teaching
- Trained human resources and support services: separate cadre or regular staff
- Inclusive school management: high operating costs.

### ***Role of government, non-government and community for expanding and developing inclusive education***

Working Government, non-governmental organizations along with the community people/groups can make a difference to address the above mentioned challenges.

Governments at all levels can analyze legislation, policies, and programs to determine whether these exclude or include people who are marginalized, disadvantaged, impoverished, or discriminated against and work towards improvement.

Non-government organizations can find out if the policies, programs, and practices they use exclude or include people in vulnerable situations and make people more aware to put pressure on the government.

Community groups can work together for planning, development, and social action to address

the sources of exclusion in communities and in public policies, and pointing toward solutions that will be inclusive.

### ***Conclusion***

All the way from the World Conference on Education for All (1990) to World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) to World Forum on Education (2000), the participation, equity and freedom of children with special needs, in particular has been at the core of the educational efforts to bring these disadvantaged, vulnerable and underprivileged children in the mainstream of education. Access to exclusionary settings and practices is possible only when School Management Committee (SMC) is inclusive in nature, structural adjustment is attempted and teachers are trained along the line of inclusive strategies and approaches.

Nepal is in the process of reformation. In this context decentralization and social inclusion are vital issues. For promoting social inclusion, right based education need to be ensured, and the government is committed and has already initiated various programs in line with inclusion.

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# Employing the Participatory Process to Develop Standards and Indicators Appropriate for Internal Quality Assurance System in Special Education Schools

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**Abstract:** Employing the participatory process to develop standards and indicators appropriate for internal quality assurance system in special education schools is a study of the concurrent and needs of standards and indicators for internal quality assurance system in special education schools which are coherent with the Basic Educational Standards and the National Educational Standards.

To study the concurrent and needs, data was collected from the 36- target group consisted of Deputy Director of Academic Division, the Deputy Director of Student Affairs, Head of Quality Assurance Department, Head of Information and Planning Department and students' parents in 4 special Educational Schools in Chiang Mai and document analysis was included. The constructing and developing the standards and Indicators was conducted with the 48 – member staff which consisted of the Deputy Director of Academic Division, the Deputy Director of Student Affairs, Head of Quality Assurance Department, Head of Information and Planning Department and Heads of 8 subjects from 4 special Educational Schools in Chiang Mai. The constructed standards and indicators were testified for the first time with 117 - member target group from 39 Special Educational Schools. The second time, they were verified by 7 scholars who are the external evaluators of the Office of Standard Accreditation and Quality of Education Assessment.

The constructed standards and indicators were composed into 3 domains, i.e. student characters (8 standards and 28 indicators), curriculum and instruction (4 Standards and 16 indicators) and educational management (5 standards and 15 indicators). They were aligned with the Standards of Basic Education, but varied in indicators determined by the laws, the principle of special education and special educational schooling.

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**Key words:** Educational standards, Standard Indicators, Quality Assurance, Participatory and Special Educational School

## Introduction

Employing the quality assurance in Education, the mean to develop human resources aimed to get high quality human resources. The 1999 Education Act and the amended one (2002) inscribed the usage of quality assurance system in order to develop the quality and educational standards include internal and external quality assurance systems. Every school has to manage internal quality assurance and take this as a part of the education administration for continuous operation. Then every school must be external evaluated at least once every 5 year.(Ministry of Education,2003:23) It is expected

that the quality assurance system will develop other systems in the school to have high standards and achieve the expected quality. It means that the school and related organizations must cooperate their accountability. After the 25 basic educational standards and 91 indicators were first launched and implemented for a period of time, there was a follow ups.(The Office of National Education Committee, 2000) It was found that both the general schools and special educational schools could not manage self –assessment systematically. There was no participation by inner personnel and no using of the results in development planning or

improving.(Wongwanich,2000:18) It was found that 4 years after the educational reform, there was a gap between the quality of students with disabilities and that of normal students; some of teachers and educators lacked of knowledge and understanding in quality assurance, and did not use the outcomes to improve the school; and it was found that the input which affected the learning reform for the quality of education consisted of teachers, teaching materials, quality assurance and educational management. (The Office of Secretary of National Education Council, 2003: viii-xi) In special educational schools, there were many problems in using standards and indicators for development of internal quality assurance. These were the burdens of the school and the usage did not enhance the doers' understanding, especially the assessment with indicators of the learners' standards; some specific aspects of standards and indicators were not appropriate with the real condition of the students with disabilities. (Choomporn punyanukul,2003:58;Songkhla Patana Punya,2003:30; Nakornsawan Punyanukul,2003:11 and Petchburi Punyanukul,2003:54)

After the new basic educational standards and indicators for external evaluation were regulated by the Office of Standard Accreditation and Educational Quality Evaluation and the 18 internal basic education standards were regulated in 2005(The Bureau of Academic and Educational Standard, 2005), it was necessary to develop the standards and indicators for internal quality assurance of special educational schools which provided early intervention to grade 12 for the visually impaired, the deaf or hard of hearing, physically impaired, intellectual disabilities and autistics etc. To make the internal quality assurance system consist to the educational reform, the important aspects of special educational school should include, with participation by involved persons. There were learners' quality, teaching and learning system, curriculum, supportive system, managing system and student transferring system. In international level, there was an emphasis of standard development with participatory persons and usage with main goals

and directions on curriculum reform on various strands.(Lachat,1994:11) Additionally, there were indicators from research that to integrated the children with special needs with accountability system can encourage the teachers to recognize their responsibilities and have high expectations on children. (Roach, ; Daily and Goertz, 1997 :16) Therefore, development of standards and indicators for internal quality assurance system in special education schools with participation of involved persons was an appropriate method and coherent with the goal of educational quality assurance which would make them learn, develop and be responsible in learners' accountability and can lift up the standard of their students.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the concurrent and needs of the usage of standards and indicators in internal quality assurance of the Special Educational School.
2. To develop standards and indicators for internal quality assurance of the Special Educational School which are congruent with basic Educational and National Education standards.

### **Theories and Principles**

Educators stated that, for practitioners, the important keys of development of education quality were accountability to management, the results and having benchmarking to be referred to at national level, school districts and schools. (McLaughlin and Others,2002:4 ;Wattanachai,2002:34) They pointed out the roles of the schools and communities in developing educational quality that they were related with expectation of continuous improvement set by the school standards for evaluation of services if the qualities of children's educational experiences were improved; local education authorities would also evaluate their roles in transferring strategies, services and initiatives to strengthen organizations and being references for quality accreditation.(The Scottish Office Development Department, 1997:2) It can be stated that educational standards were qualification

of quality assurance to pin educational quality information because they assured the communities and societies that the schools were responsible and were able to achieve the quality with community cooperation according to the standard.(Academic Department,2000:2) According to the 1999 Education Act and the amended one(2002),the ideas and activities of quality assurance can be explained as follows (Pithiyanuwattana,2004:84-85)

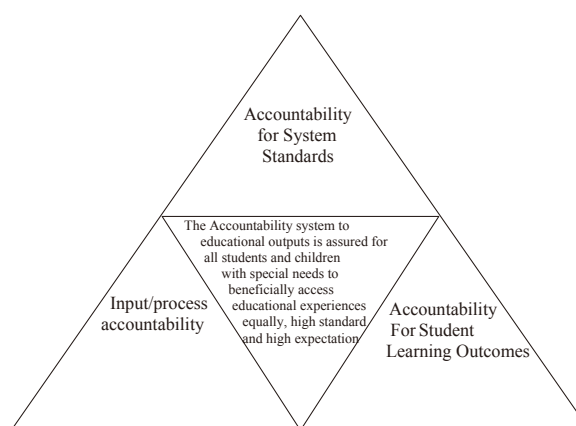
1. Quality assurance is the tool for effective decentralization to school districts, schools and local educational authorities and the effectiveness of education reform;
2. The goals of quality assurance are follow-ups, inspections and using results to improve the management efficiency in order to have good quality education due to standard administration;
3. Educational quality assurance must cover all the 3 parts: development of quality, follow-ups and internal assessment. These are school obligations with community cooperation and authoritative supports;
4. Quality evaluation is the beginning of development and it is for standardizing the administration.

Therefore, the information for educational quality assurance with standards and indicators, are so important that involved persons of all levels must use to improve the quality of education, especially administration. In USA., there are 3 levels of information in quality assurance system. (McLaughlin and Others, 2002:9-10)

1. School and district accountability. It emphasized the achievement of the students (local and National tests), rates of admission, rates of graduation and other sample facts;
2. Teacher accountability. The teachers were expected to be directly responsible to students' learning achievements;
3. Student accountability. In high school, the students must be responsible in several subjects.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (cited by Ysseldyke, J. et al, 1998:1-3) developed the accountability balanced

model for outputs of inclusive education with basic principles of balancing with dynamics among the 3 key components of system as expected to be triangle society.



Source: Ysseldyke, J. et al,1998:2

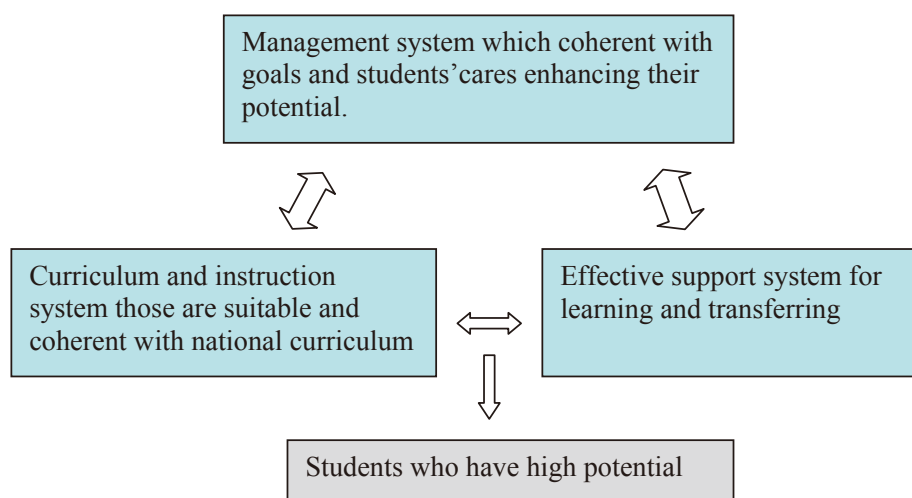
This model focuses on system accountability; student individual accountability and input/process accountability. There are different models of developing standards, according to its' belief, as follows (The office of National Commission of Elementary Education, 1998 cited by Wongsilpapirom and others,2002:20-21):

**Table 1 Model of Standard Development and Beliefs**

Model	Beliefs
1. Goal Model	Qualitative schools are those which qualify the students as determined goals.
2. Resources-Input Model	If get rid rare inputs and valued as school's needs, it will lift up high standard.
3. Process Model	As the quality of process is the principal component which effects the students' quality, the quality school must have the good and effective practices.
4. Satisfaction Model	Stakeholders' satisfaction is the most important factor in developing the school quality.
5. Legitimacy Model	The school will be effective if it is recognized by the community.
6. Ineffective Model	Analyses and identification of criteria of school ineffectiveness is good for setting strategies for school development.



**Chart 1 Content Framework for Constructing Standards and indicators for Internal quality assurance of Special Education School**



- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 7. Total Quality Management Model | Total management of environment and process of the school to achieve the target groups' needs is the important key for the long-term success.   |
| 8. Organization Learning Model    | The rapid affects of economics, society and existing problems are not avoidable. To be effective the school must be able to learn how to improve itself to encounter economics and society. |

**Table 2 Procedure Framework of Constructing Standards and indicators for Internal quality assurance of Special Education School**

Procedures	Tools
1. Constructing Knowledge and studying the concurrent and needs of the related persons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Document analysis</li> <li>- Focus group discussion with school administrators and teachers</li> <li>- Parents' interviews</li> </ul>
2. Constructing standards and indicators for internal quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data Synthesis</li> <li>- Making the first draft with small working group</li> <li>- Revising and adapting the first draft and constructing handbook</li> <li>- The first testifying with school administrator and teachers</li> <li>- The second testifying with the external evaluator</li> </ul>

## The Results

1. The conditions and needs of standards and indicators in internal quality assurance system of special educational school: As attained from focus – group discussions with teachers and vice directors and interviewing the parents, there were needs of improvement of the standards and indicators for the students of every level with the presence of expected Thai characteristics, but social and living skills should be emphasized. For the instructional standards and indicators, proposed was the special education principle such as Individual Educational Plan (IEP), specific rehabilitations for different groups needed to clarify in specific programs. For teachers' specification, good attitude to special students and skillful teaching were needed. For management, needed was the knowledge of special education in the administrators, the services which aligned with students' needs of all level, and adequacy of learning medias, technologies, assistive technologies and infrastructures and parents' participatory in developing the students. These were consistent with the synthesis of the documents which signified the qualities of the outputs and outcomes obtained from education management of the schools and emphasis on participation with communities by means of



system approach. The numbers of standards and indicators should not be more, but cover key component and group into areas.

2. There were 2 phases in construction of standards and indicators in internal quality assurance system of special educational school:

**Phases 1** Holding workshops with the group of 5 members from 4 special education schools in Chiang Mai Province to construct the standards and indicators through system approach by coping areas with mind mapping and using questions to clarify extended ideas as well as writing the handbook for the usage of standards and indicators in quality assurance.

**Phases 2** Holding workshop with a bigger group of 48 members from 4 special education schools in Chiang Mai Province with the drafts of standards and handbook for them to criticize and revise; then the drafts were testified by target group with rating scale questionnaire ( $\alpha = .99$ ) to examine the appropriateness of the standards and indicators, the ones with  $\bar{x} = 3.50$  were accepted. The standards were composed into 3 areas as follows:

### The Qualities of the Students

1. The students had good habits, physical and mental health (4 indicators);
2. The students had acquired knowledge and life skills (4 indicators);
3. The students had expected moral, ethics and values (4 indicators);
4. The students had aesthetic characteristics in arts, music and sports (3 indicators);
5. The students had working skills and good attitude to legal occupations (4 indicators);
6. The students had conservative and developing conscious for the environments (2 indicators);
7. The students had searched for knowledge, loved learning and continuously developed themselves (3 indicators);
8. The students were able to have critical thinking, synthesizing, creativity, imagination and vision. (4 indicators)

### Curriculum and Instruction

9. There were school curricula for specific disabilities which enhance the students to develop their capacities (6 indicators);
10. The school had the instruction system which supports the students' capacities (3 indicators);
11. The teachers had expected qualifications and attributes (4 indicators);
12. The teachers had knowledge and abilities to conduct the learning for students with special needs (3 indicators);

### Educational management

13. The administrators had moral, ethics, attitude and specific knowledge in special education (2 indicators);
14. The administrators had leadership and management competency (4 indicators);
15. The school provided learning aids and support students' qualities (3 indicators);
16. The school improved the teachers and educational staffs systematically (3 indicators);
17. The school enhanced relationship and cooperative with communities in educational development. (3 indicators)

The handbook for the usage of standard and indicators was with questions for information and criteria with indicators as in the examples:

Standard 1 The students had good habits, physical and mental health.

Indicator 1.1 Taking good care in health and constant work-out

What to look for	Documents/tools
How good the students do to develop?	1. Health check-up record 2. Daily schedule of the students 3. Information of school nursing and dormitories 4. Checklist on students' exercise etc.

Issues for consideration:

1. Percentage of healthy students;
2. Percentage of good habits students;
3. Percentage of the students with constant playing sports/work-out.

Quality criteria at indicator level

Excellent	good	fair	poor
90 % or more with all 3 attributes above	75-89 % all 3 attributes above	50-74 % with 1-2 attributes	Lower than 50 % with the first attribute

## Conclusion

Employing the participatory process to develop standards and indicators appropriate for internal quality assurance system in special education schools is consistent with the ideas of quality assurance system which emphasize on decentralization and participation of stakeholders in working and learning together, understanding and recognizing the important of implementation in order to solve the problems of lacking knowledge and insight in teacher and staff quality assurance and using the outcomes to improve the school. The developed standards and indicators were linked with basic educational standards and national standards although they were set into 3 areas and priority difference but key components were set forth. The details of developed standards and indicators were adjusted by the law and the principles of special education especially specific programs for special needs, supportive services for individual learning and being at boarding schools. Although the process of standards and indicators developing was not finished, it had to try out in 4 special

educational schools in Chiang Mai, but it can say that these methods assisted the concurrent system and conceptualized the related persons to assure themselves and students. The lesson learned from participatory fulfilled school staffs to strengthen teamwork and built up their channels to be quality school.

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