

The history of the movement by the teachers with disabilities in Japan

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1 The background and the purpose

The teachers with disabilities have been rare in Japan with only few exceptions. In the 1970s the movement of the teachers with disabilities started, and they gradually have increased. The teachers with disabilities organized their own groups, and developed the movement. But previous research has overlooked their movement, and teachers with disabilities have slipped in the gaps among studies about disabilities, education, or labour. This report reveals the history of the movement by the teachers with disabilities, believing it is an important social problem for the inclusive education and the employment of the persons with disabilities. This report divides the history into four periods according to the time when major groups were established and to their opinions.

2 The history of the teachers with disabilities and their social movement

(1) Pre-history (before the 1970s)

- in the Medieval Period: Teachers of music, acupuncture, and moxibustion existed. They belonged to Todoza, the professional group of blind persons.
- modern Modern era: Teachers of music, acupuncture, and moxibustion in schools for the blind.
- after World War II: many teachers had been injured in the war.
← they were the exception. There was no teacher with disabilities in general schools. It was a social agreement that the teachers should resign from their job when they became disabled.
- in the 1970s: The movement by the teachers with disabilities started. They demanded the employment opportunity and the continuance of employment.
→ Examination by the braille started, and the blind teachers of general subject appeared.

(2) The Beginning (1980s)

Japan Visually-impaired Teachers' Association was established in 1981. It was the first group of the teachers with disabilities by themselves.
Japan Association of Deaf Teachers was established in 1994.
← each group was organized according to each impairment.
The members exchange their experience, conducted study and training together, and they sought the identity of the teachers with disabilities and tried to prove their ability of teaching with impairment.

(3) The Transition (since the 1990s to the first half of 2000s)

As the number of the teachers with disabilities increased, and their presence became notable, the employers faced the problems of how to manage the teachers with disabilities in school.
• In 1990, the board of education in Tokyo made the system that excluded the teachers with some "problems". The teachers with disabilities were excluded from the school, by the reason that they didn't have enough ability to teach.

Counter Movement:

The Association of the Teachers with Disabilities (ATD) was established in 1991, as the first movement group organized in Japan to include people with every impairments.
Their slogans were "Let's begin normalization from education," "Let's secure the right to work with reasonable accommodation for the teachers with disabilities."
→ they submitted the signatures that requested the Ministry of Education and Tokyo Metropolitan Congress to make the system to secure the right to work with reasonable accommodation.
Tokyo Metropolitan Congress partially agreed to the petition.

The requested system included:

- 1) the working assistants should be allocated according to disabilities.
- 2) the work of teachers with disabilities should be reduced, and the supporting teachers should be allocated.
- 3) the supporting instrument should be installed, and the accessibility to the buildings and the instrument should be improved.
- 4) the employer should permit the teachers regularly going hospital during the working hours.
- 5) the employer should consider the convenience on the commuting to school and their hospital when they re-allocate the teachers to another school.

The conflicts:

Some teachers with disabilities claimed 'We need to have the workload reduced, in addition to the support for the disabilities.'
⇔ another group of teachers with disabilities says 'we can work enough same as other teachers as long as there are proper support for the disabilities.'

In 1996, ATD was divided into two groups, because they conflicted among ATD members over the policies on how to support the teachers with disabilities. As a result, the movement was stagnated.

(4) New Development (after 2006)

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established in 2006. In Japan, it became the problem to adjust the domestic legal system according to the Convention.
→ the issues of the teachers with disabilities became to be included in the educational policy and the labour policy of Japan.
When the government began taking action, there had been many separated groups of the teachers with disabilities, and each group acted separately.
Thus, in 2014, Japan Teachers Union organized the Network of the Teachers with Disabilities.

3 Conclusion

This study reveals that the number of the teachers with disabilities have increased in Japan since the 1970s, and they have developed their social movement by establishing their own groups, demanding the system so that they can continue their occupation. Their appeals deals with many issues in the educational fields, educational government, and the labour policy, that have excluded the teachers with disabilities. The further study on these points should help to create the inclusive society and schools including the teachers with disabilities.