

About Teacher Training Programmes for Kindergarten and Nursery School Teachers who work with Handicapped people

(What educational philosophy can do for the teacher-education of handicapped people ?)

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1 The purpose and process of this presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to investigate the practice of Teacher Training Programmes, mainly for Kindergarten and Nursery School , (in Japan , students who want to work with young children and handicapped people, have to attend the university or the training school to get a diploma , and my school is permitted to give it to the student by the public administration)and to propose an analysis of the educational importance in such programmes. For this purpose, I will explain the current teacher training programmes in the Japanese college where I am working now .

In the first part, I will introduce the training programmes which my school has adopted in order to cultivate the ability of the students to handle difficult situations regarding teaching handicapped people which is necessary to be a capable teacher for Kindergarten and Nursery schools . In these programmes, the disciplines about daily activities are regarded as an important educational method, such as polite salutation, modest attitude and sympathetic view towards the young children and handicapped people. In order to cultivate these characteristics, the school adopts two methods . First , the students are required to participate in group activities. For example , students are required to attend a school excursion together and stay overnight and live together . Second , students are encouraged to be involved with handicapped people . Students have the opportunity to learn the needs of handicapped people by the practical studying which is obligatory in order to get the diploma . Through these , students can understand the needs of others intimately . Therefore, this educational method concerns itself not only with book-studies or the subject-matters , such as educational psychology , or educational sociology , etc., which are required for the kindergarten and nursery school teacher to learn , but also with an application , a *modus vivendi*.

Through this explanation , I will make it clear that by this method the students can embrace compassion and develop the receptive attitude

towards others, and that this also encourages an understanding of what kinds of needs the young children and handicapped people have. This understanding is meaningful and indispensable in order to enhance the quality of life of handicapped people. At the same time, the students are required to have various knowledges of rational judgements about the needs of others and an adequate moral understanding of others. These knowledges are useful when student-teacher will begin to work in a institution with the young children and handicapped people.

2 The method of teaching in the teacher-training school

First I will explain the way of the on-going teacher-training course in my school. Student-teachers have to participate in the practical studies in the special school for handicapped people in order to get a diploma during the registration in the school. Before student-teachers participate, the school-instructor gives a preparatory course --the orientation programme. And after practical studies, student-teachers review their activity in the class again --the wrap-up. In both, they reflect on their activity and get various new viewpoints. I will introduce some of them here.

First case

The first example is one practice in the institution. By understanding this example, student-teachers can get adequate interpretation of the behaviour of handicapped people. One severely handicapped person who cannot speak and cannot move his arms and legs, but he moves his torso slightly every time his care-giver tries to change his diaper. At first, the care-giver interprets this movement as his denial of getting his diaper changed by another person because the client may feel shame to be taken care of in such a manner. So the care-giver is slightly irritated, because this movement prevents the care-giver from changing the diaper easily and instantly. But after some time, the care-giver understands the true intention of the handicapped person when the care-giver sees the eyes of the client. He understands that the client wants to help the carer by moving his torso to make it easier to change the diaper.

This example shows us that one case can be understood differently depending on the viewpoints of each care-giver. And even in the same individual, the interpretation can be different. If so, it is really important to learn suitable understanding and interpretation of the behaviour of handicapped people. By comprehending this example, student-teachers can get a different viewpoint from which they can interpret the true intention of handicapped people correctly.

Second case

This case has occurred in an institution where one student-teacher

attended a practical studies . Sometimes during practical-studies , student-teachers attend a small feild-trip with handicapped people . In this case one of the clients in charge , who was over thirty years old , began to read a book in coffee shop, but she opened the book upside down . The student-teacher felt a little bit embarassed when she noticed the error of her client because the student-teacher suspected that many customers in that coffee shop thought this behavbour funny and extraordinary , and at the same time samewhat shameful . So that student-teacher felt some anxexity about her future job because she hated to be seen by other people when she could not correct the humiliating mistake of her client .

When the student-teacher returned to my school , she appealed the school-instructor about her anxiety . The school-instructor gave some tips for dealing with this behaviour . That is , even handicapped people wants to behave in the same way as unhandicapped people in society . The student-teacher thought about this tip for a while , and came back to the client and asked the reason why the client wanted to read a book in a coffee shop . She answerd that to read a book in a coffee-shop is what adult do in a public place . Then the student-teacher understood the tip given by the school-instructor .

This case shows us that one activity can be interpreted differntly by the way of thinking . To read the book upside down is humiliating and undignified as the former viewpoint of the student-teacher according to her framework of social beaviour . But from another viewpoint which was indicated by the school-instructor , that same behaviour can be interpreted as an effort of that client to be normal .

Third case

This case is an example which was reported by my wife about the behaviour of my sister . My sister is mentally handicapped , and she attends to the special institution for handicapped . Every weekends she returns to our home and my wife accompanys with her from the institution to home because my sister can not come home alone . Many years ago she would say goodbye to her friends when she left the institution to come back to our home , and she would a kind of preach , in other word , ' rant and rave ' , in every occarsion when she met her friends before leaving the institution . At first my wife felt the embarassment that her mentally handicapped sister in law would act in such a way as meddlesome busybody because she could not take care of herself . In the years before my wife took care of my sister , my wife worked in a business office , and at that time she took it for granted that handicapped people behave passively because of their disabilities .

But this experience brought to my wife another interpretation which is opposite to her interpretation beforehand . In a new interpretation that my sister's preaching could be interpreted as her endeavour to behave in the same way as her teachers in that institution do towards other handicapped people in that institution . So my sister imitated the teaching style of her teachers , because she could relate to them , because my sister understand it as a model which she should imitate . In this later interpretation , my wife changed her way of thinking from the former one in which the behaviour of handicapped is observed as passive , to the new one in which their behaviour is observed as active .

From these three examples , it is suggested that these show us the importance of different viewpoint to interpret the behaviour or the activity of handicapped people . The student teachers have to face various problems in practical studied which are not easy to understand the reason why the handicapped people behave in such a manner . The student-teacher losses their self-confidence in practical-studies if they can not understand the needs of handicapped people because it is one of the aims of practical-studies to lend the hand to handicapped people and to help them . If the student teacher can not understand what handicapped-people wants , then it becomes difficult to satisfy the needs of handicapped people differently .

To achieve this task , the student-teachers have to understand deeply what handicapped people thinks and demands . Then ,the student-teachers need to acquire the method or a kind of the tool for it . That is , to acquire the moral language which describes the way how to define the meaning of life for each individual , and the framework from which we interpret our life . And also this moral language include the vocabulary which define the moral activities and includes the structure of our judgement about how to decide to do . As for the vocabulary , it includes such terms as , justice , freedom , respect for person , equality , self-reliance , realization of one's own interest and so on . As for the structure of our judgement , it includes the logical understanding , such as the moral syllogism , or the system of moral judgement in each cultures .

In these preparatory lectures and wrap-ups for practical-studies , student-teachers acquire a clear understanding how to interpret the needs of handicapped people . In that method , students are introduced into the topics which is before mentioned , and are required how to interpret the behaviour of handicapped people . This exercise brings them the various understanding of meaning of the behaviour of handicapped people , and correspondingly the significance of the education for handicapped people .

For the student-teachers it is not easy to learn the meaning of the education for handicapped people in a specific situation . Because the needs of each handicapped people is different in each individual , and especially the mentally handicapped people can not express what they want by language or by phrase , then their needs is speculated with by the judgement of teacher . And also teacher should judge for handicapped people with mentioning the benefit for their future . This requires to the student-teachers to consider the meaning of life for human-being in general , and to conjecture what is important now and here for the handicapped people in charge .

This teacher training programmes are efficient in other aspect . The student-teachers have to report the record of handicapped people when they go to in the institution not only during the practical studies but also when they start to work in any institution . Sometimes mentally handicapped people tends to behave in a different and strange way such as reading a book upside down . So it is important to report such kind of behaviour of handicapped people exactly and warmly by standing at the side of the client . The student teachers will have an occasion to be asked about the strangeness of such a behaviour by the parents when they work in future . Then the student-teachers will have to answer to the question of the parents according to their interpretation . The parents , or the family members , will be able to have a hope for their children . if the teachers can interpret it in a positive way and also if the teachers can express their opinion and interpretation theoretically , that is , from the viewpoint of the meaning of the life for human-being in general .

This method is important not only for teacher education but also for parents education . Especially for parents , it is not easy to accept the fact that their child is mentally handicapped . In many case the parents want to deny this fact at first , or even in better case they accept this fact not with a positive feeling but with a negative feeling . So if parents can understand the behaviour and the intention of their handicapped child , they will be able to accept the existence of their child . The different interpretation of the teacher is effective to construct the positive understanding for parents . Parents will be able to establish the position of their child in society . Through these , parents will be able to confirm the meaning of life for their child . Then teacher's role is not only to educate the handicapped people but also to conduct the parents of mentally handicapped child .

3 Philosophical Background of this Teacher Training Programme

Theoretically also , we need an abstract frame-work for interpreting a behaviour of the handicapped people when we conduct not only

student-teachers but also the parents . Without theoretical framework , teacher-students would embarrass what to do because of the lack of their experience , then they would tend to rely directly on what the clients require in order to decide what to do for them during the practical-studying . To understand the needs rightly and appropriately , I introduce the term of ' interdependency ' here in this presentation . By this term , teacher-students can interpret the needs adequately and suitably .

The term of interdependency concerns itself with a fact of human life and with an existence as moral and political agent . All humans are dependent , largely because we are variously vulnerable and disabled at more than one stage in our lives . When we are young , we depend on the care of the parents . When we become in our old age , we depend on the care of the younger generation . This dependant state of our own should feature in accounts of how we learn , and of relations between learner and teacher . The dependency is best conceived in relation to reciprocal condition of human-being . We depend upon and receive more from other people than is commonly acknowledged .

In common-sense usage , dependency implies an inability to do things for oneself and consequently the reliance upon others to carry out some or all the affairs of everyday life . The student-teachers have these kind of interpretation 'dependency` as inability in common without any critical assessment . Even though what is said here about the dependency may be true , in the context of education dependency can be interpreted in a different way such as a reciprocal relationship between persons . An act of reciprocity may involve the receiving of some goods , but also a person in receipt of care for their basic needs may and can reciprocate with acts of appreciation and personal affection etc. , alternatively . We are also all of us more or less disabled at various stages in our lives , and in moving from one stage to another we may require the assistance of others who know us . During the infancy we are all in the hands of help-givers , which is also a condition many of us are destined to return to in our old age . We also learn about what it is for a life to be in the hands of another , by understanding of the condition of a person who entrusts to the care of others . These dependency require to the help-giver the hard labour such as lifting the body , carrying them , and the other forms of physical assistance and sometimes mental and moral assistance . The student-teachers learn what it means to be physically and mentally dependent upon another in practical studies , and also they learn too of their limitations as help-giver , for example , how much or how little they are prepared to offer . Through these experiences of offering , struggling or failing to offer , they learn

what dependent human being needs , and at the same time they learn of their moral and physical limitations . These are same for all of us , not only for the students who want to become a teacher .

These experiences bring us a responsibility to understand , interpret and advocate the needs of handicapped people . It is the responsibility to represent the interests of the entrusted and to be accountable for their welfare . This responsibility requires us to consider how to promote an individual expectation and also requires us to have the knowledge about the needs of handicapped people . And at the same time , this requires us to think of a social relevance of handicapped people . Sometimes the dependency is the product of social practice and ideology . e.g. prejudice , over-protecting or underestimation of ability of handicapped people . As I show precedently in this presentation , it is possible for profoundly disabled people to exercise a degree of choice and control over their lives in such way as are manifest only as a result of the slightest efforts which only a teacher with high and insightful expectation can find . And this requires a sensitive and supportive learning environment .

If we conceive dependency as a normal human condition and quality , that is an inescapable feature of human condition , it is justified to allocate social resources to the person who need it . Then also the concept of independence as a educational aim is interpreted in a different way . To be independent supposes to be interdependent . Under the concept of independence , sometimes, we understand it as suggesting that the individual needs no assistance whatever from anyone else , then we interpret it mistakenly that the concept of independence implies 'all or nothing concept ' just like ' I can do all the things I need to live without any help' . A concept admits of degrees . Independency is compatible with a need for some assistance .

Dependence and independence are matters of degree and co-exist in almost all human-beings . And as the first example shows , even a profoundly dependent person can achieve significant independence in a caring environment . We , as human-beings , live in a helping relationship . Sometimes we accept assistance , and sometimes we offer assistance . Even the profoundly dependent person offers assistance for the teacher-students to learn what they have to do during their practical studies . The decision how to help will be determined not only by the judgement of help-giver but also by the circumstance help-taker is faced with and by her preference . Help-takers have views about how their needs are best catered for , often expressed with ardency and dignity .

These acknowledgement of dependency is often necessary to apprehend

our whole life because all of us are in a transition from one stage of life to the other. Even in adulthood there remain matters of importance about which the judgement of another person is more reliable than my own. In the first example in which care-giver changes a diaper, the care-taker tried to help the care-giver in that situation. And care-taker decides to help the care-giver by turning his torso. This judgement of care-taker to help the job of the care-giver is the independent decision of the care-taker. This means the freedom and decision-making to choose their own behaviours in each instances. The second example shows us that the handicapped people tried to behave in the same way as non-handicapped behave. This shows the will to live in the conformity with the world which encircles them. And this behaviour also supposes an ability to judge what is good or bad in that situation.

Through these instances, the student-teachers can respect the decision of the client. Respect may also include appraisal from both sides. The positive appraisal is not possible until we have an all-things-considered relationship between equal partners. Inequality in one place can be compensated by a reverse inequality elsewhere.

4 Conclusion

Dependency is a part of human nature. Reflection on dependency forces us to look again at our presumed status as rational agents, so as to better understand its significance in the context of some fundamental facts of human life. Dependency is nothing to be ashamed of; it is, in any case, unavoidable, and an understanding of dependent states and dependent relationships brings an insight into the capabilities of handicapped people and expectations of the student-teacher. Their give and take relationships provide a faithful and sincere account of the nature of education for handicapped people. From the first example which I have cited previously, the teacher-students can find two different interpretations from a single incident. One interpretation sees the behaviour of the client as niggling and irritating. The behaviour of the client in the first example tends to be interpreted as disturbing the job of the student-teacher. But another interpretation gives the understanding of this behavior as the effort of client to live well. Under this interpretation, the student-teacher can comprehend the intention of client. The same interpretation can be applied to the second and third examples. The behaviour of handicapped people is understood not as insufficient and incapable, but as meaningful and informative.

At the same time, in practical studies the student-teachers are encouraged to see the needs from a critical point of view. In general the

wants of young people might be socially unacceptable . But in the fact that student-teachers tend to follow the needs of clients to decide what to do and tend to conform to it , they lose sight of their personal judgement . Japanese schools have an atmosphere of conformism which cause students to tend to conform to the rule of authority which in tern hinders their individual judgement ; accordingly , their attitude becomes heteronomical . Especially in Japanese schools , obedience is highly valued and considered a virtue . Then, the task of mentors of the teacher student is to reconcile the two conflicting requirement , if these student-teachers must develop these abilities to interpret the situation with autonomy . (I took the concept of the interdependency as one example and showed that the student-teacher can interpret the situation with her/his own assesment in using this concept as a foundation , or clue .) Such an ability would explain the behaviour of the handicapped people when student-teachers are required to explain it in the front of parents . Such explanation should help for parents and for the family to understand the meaning of the life of handicapped people . There is much that we can learn only by attending to people with disabilities

For the final suggestion it is concluded that it is important for the student teachers (1) to nurture the compassion and the sympathetic understanding of others, (subjectivity)and also (2) to develop an autonomy and rationality in order to make a inference what is good for handicapped people. (objectivity)And also these capacities , first , the capability of judgement to infer which is based on the concept of interdependency as one example , and second , the receptive attitude , bring a suitable difinition of well-designed enviroment for handicapped people, (which is one of the agenda in this conference)because teachers themselves are the one of the most important enviromental factor for handicapped people. This difinition brings us the positive way of thinking about the teacher existance , there teacher can work in the interdependent relation with handicapped people . I argued this from the view point not only of the mentors but also of parent and custodian, as my sister is mentally retarded .

Keyword

Teacher Training Program in Infant School. Teachers as Well-designed Enviroment.

Receptive Attitude. Moral Understanding. Interdependency .