

REPORT ON THE GROUP TRAINING COURSE

"MENTAL RETARDATION"

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Comments on group training in general.

With the cooperation of a number of dedicated people, the group training course on Mental retardation goes on with a flow till the end, I am impressed with the punctuality and responsibility of the people who give lecture to us. None of them failed to turn up on the arranged date. Many are kind enough to send materials required to us after the lecture. Our co-ordinator is quite efficient in attending to our routine needs and work constantly with us over six months' time which is incredible. Our program co-ordinator is sensitive to our requests and tries hard to provide us with the program that is beneficial to all. Being new to the work, a lot of hardship and confusion occurs sometimes. Anyhow, we appreciate your great effort in trying all possible avenues in doing a lot of things for us.

In general, our course is on a low key; it simply goes on in a modest way. There is no fun and glamour like some of the training courses that get a VIP treatment most of the time. Perhaps it is because the course members are not ⁱⁿ the position of having much purchasing power so we do not get much attention from JICA. Not much is spent on us compared to some other courses. Most of our requests were declined just for the simple reason of having limited funds. However, the course is now coming to the end and it is parting time for us as we are leaving for our countries shortly. At this stage, I wish to express my opinion concerning this course.

From my point of view, some problems that occurred were both from the participants and from the course arrangement.

The problems occurring from participants are as follows:

1. Diversification of background and personal interests. The participants have different backgrounds and widely different interests. This issue renders different attitudes towards subject areas and different needs to be met.

2. Difference in current designation. With a big difference in the work responsible in their own area, it is hard to organize activities that will suit each participant. Things that are interesting for some might be useless for others. Naturally, each participant is enthusiastic to obtain more information in the area he/she needs in everyday's work. The program catered for a smaller group would be more effective.

3. Language difficulties. The language here refers to both English and Japanese. While English serves as the medium of instruction and means of communication in class, ^{Japanese is vital in everyday use.} few participants have difficulties understanding questions and statements whereas others have trouble in expressing themselves. When we have an observation trip, Nihongo is the problem for most of us. It is interesting to guess to what extent the language is a barrier in our everyday life.

Problems occurred from the course arrangement

1. Irrelevant lectures. Some lectures conducted did not cover the topics others lack figures and records to supplement the content. Above all the non-English speaking speakers seem to have hard time getting constant attention from the participants in class since it is time-consuming to speak few sentences and wait to be translated. The same thing applies when the questions are asked. It is not interesting at all to attend such lectures. Normally, the speakers never finish what they want to say when they run out of time and have to leave. In addition, when the content is translated into English often times the mistakes are made as the translator might not have understanding in the subject matter. Another thing is there is much chance of omitting some part or adding own opinion accidentally.

2. Irrelevant reading materials most of the reading materials give in the course are not relevant. In fact, they are not worth making and distributing to the participants. The translation is of a low standard. There are lot of mistakes both in the usage of words and sentence patterns and in giving different meaning or idea from what it should be.

There is also something peculiar about these materials in that there are no reference (with an exception of one or two). This practice does not encourage the readers to do further reading in that area and it misleads them about the origin of the content.

3. All work and no break. The course does not provide any break during the period of six months. It carries on day in and day out which is quite hard for us to go along without being exhausted physically and mentally considering the situation of living in a new environment in a foreign country. This causes a lot of tension and burn-out sometimes.

4. prior to making a decision about the practicum, all of us should have an opportunity to see all the venues. This will create the feeling of having a fair share of experiences and information among the participants.

Suggestion

I believe the course on mental retardation will continue to train participants from different countries in many years to come. I have some suggestion for the course organization in the future.

1. Guest speakers should be invited to give talk to the class occasionally. Here I means speaker who have reputation in the area of special education and mental retardation from other countries. For example, Bank Micheison for the topic of Normalization.

2. There should be more emphasis on principles and services of other countries in from of comparative studies. Otherwise the majority of the contents are local provisions and the course is more or less about mental retardation in Japan not in general.

3. Instead of contemplating the after-course evaluation, the participants

should be given a pre - test at the beginning of the course to explore their basic understanding and professional background so the program could be designed accordingly.

4. The Japanese lessons offered prior to the course are necessary but the contents should be geared towards the use of everyday language: ming at the ability to communicate with the Japanese and emphasizing less on the language structure.

Finally , I wish to thank JICA for it's sponsorship and JLMR for organizing the course which has successfully catered a practical session for personnely from recipient countries in different partj of the world. Thailand is one of those countries that benefit from this program. My thanks also go to the course training officer, the lecturers, and the people I met during the trip to various places. Whithout them, I would not have learned much about the availability of services and techniques used in Japan. Iwill remember those kind people always. Thank you once again and Good bye.

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Report on Practicum in Specific Areas

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**Presented to the Group Training Course
on Mental Retardation
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My practicum was divided into three phases; the first period was spent at the special school for children with mental retardation attached to Tokyo Gakugei University, the second period was done at the Research Center for Mental Retardation in Tokyo Gakugei University, and the third period was in form of visits to the National Research Institute in Special Education and the National Ability Development Center in Kanagawa.

The time spent at the Special School proved to be worthwhile in that it enabled me to observe what actually takes place in a day's life of a special school child. I was assigned to be in the second elementary class named TAKE (meaning=bamboo) with seven special children and three teachers. Physical fitness is emphasized in everyday activity to a great extent. Seeing is believing how each child is encouraged to perform the marathon without toil. In fact, most of the children seemed to be enjoying the task and do it voluntarily.

Self-care skill training is given first priority in the daily routine. The children practice the skills through changing cloths twice a day, being on roster setting table and serving food to classmates at lunch time and coming to school and leaving home by public transportation. All these activities seem to co-relate well. What remains in my memory of this school is that it is the place where children grow develop at their own pace while they lead their life in the fullest and have hope for the future.

The practicum at the Research Center consisted mainly of the observation of training of Down's syndrome and autistic children and visits to educational facilities and workshops. The latter activities were later supplemented to the schedule per kind thought of B of Idaka of the Research Center who took trouble in driving us to different places, sometimes in bad weather. The training of the Down's syndrome was conducted through music therapy by Ms.Suzuki whom we had met and learned a lot from her. The session at the Research Center was a successful one and we were fortunate to have an opportunity to participate in the after-session conference with other staff members in the team.

The visit to the National Research Institute in Special Education was of great interest to me. Three main functions operated by this institute include; conducting of research in various aspects of special education, offering in-service training to personnel from special schools and guidance centers, and running the school for severely and multiply handicapped children.

In a very short time of about 9 working hours spent there, I only managed to grasp a very brief overview of services provided at the institute. What I missed is the chance to have a close look at training and caring of the children with multiple

handicap, the well-equipped classrooms and play grounds, and the teachers' preparation and their principle (the ratio of teachers and students is 1:1.2). However, this institute is the place I would like to recommend to be included in other years' programme.

The last part of my practicum was a visit to the National Ability Development Center where male and female youths who finish junior and senior high schools are trained working skills required for employment. The center, established in 1986, is funded jointly by the Department of Labour and Kanagawa Prefectural government.

With the capacity of about sixty bounding students, the center caters a two year course concentrating on mechanical and electrical work. The selection procedure is quite demanding as there are a great number of applicants each year. To meet the criteria, successful applicants must pass certain physical and ability tests to prove that they can endure the rigorous training offered here. The course is so well-arranged with cooperation from local private companies that the students are ensured of employment right after graduation. Additionally, each trainee is entitled to the pension in form of living allowances all though the training time. This center is the first one of the kind that I had an observation. Since the beginning of the course on mental retardation, I have longed to see a place that offers formal training to students finishing secondary schools, who have a desire to work. The place serves as a pacing stone for young people to get ready before entering the workplace. This transition period has been demonstrated to be critical to their lives. Therefore, it is essential to prepare these youths to be able to cope with all aspects of possible demands they might encounter in the world of employment.

To conclude, the practicum in specific area arranged in the final stage of the course is valuable to me in providing an insight of the services for the disabled in Japan. This report has presented a summary of the experiences and understanding gained accordingly.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance and hospitality of the people I met, staff members, students, and clients alike including those who arrange and facilitate my traveling from one place to another and my communication with others. My thanks go to them all.

S. Tiangtrong
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