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Japanese Students with Disabilities' Accounts on Reasonable Accomodation and Support: An Exploratory Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities took effect in April 2016. Consequentially, an urgent obligation of higher education institutions is the creation of an environment for supporting students with disabilities. Nevertheless, one finds no report regarding how students with disabilities actually feel about what has hitherto constituted "reasonable accommodation" which has been made available during their schooling. The present study therefore aims to gather, in an exploratory manner, the viewpoints of students with disabilities concerning support. The seven (7) persons who participated in this study were interviewed for an exploratory survey so as to ascertain the perspectives of students with disabilities regarding support. The results obtained enabled us to clarify factors for student determiners regarding the contents of support, the kinds of content students sought in support, and the roles expected to be fulfilled by a university support office.

Keywords: Support, higher education, students, disabilities, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

The Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities took effect in April 2016. As provisions of this Act became law, including stipulations regarding aspects such as "reasonable accommodation," support requirements for students with disabilities at Japan's institutions of higher education faced a major turning point. All of these institutions became obligated to prohibit discriminatory treatment of all persons with disabilities, including students. The requirement of providing reasonable accommodation became a legal obligation for public universities, while private universities were obligated to make similar efforts. Public universities were also required to create response policies to promote the elimination of discrimination on the basis of disability. Private universitieswere asked to implement appropriate policies based on the Response Guidelines Concerning the Promotion of the Elimination of Discrimination on the Basis of Disability, published in November 2015 for enterprises in fields under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports,

Science and Technology. This signified a major paradigm shift toward support for students with disabilities at universities and included measuressuch as the provision of guided instruction under a special teacher in accordance with the extent of disability, as well as the performance of "special support education" throughout the university, via the collaboration of teachers at sites where other students studied (Takaishi & Iwata, 2012).

The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), an independent administrative agency,which performs an annual survey regarding school attendance-related support for students with disabilities. Of the students who participated in the 2017 academic year (AY) survey 31,204 were students with disabilitiesfrom universities, junior colleges, and technical colleges, an increase of 3,948 students from the previous AY. The 2017 AY survey of universities included 28,430 students with disabilities, an increase of 3,743 students over the previous AY. Students with disabilities accounted for 0.98% of all students (3,198,451 persons), an increase of 0.12 points over the previous AY (0.86%) (Japan Student Services Organization, 2018).

As for trends from AY 2005 through AY 2013, the number of students attending universities, junior colleges, and technical colleges in AY 2014 was 3,189,744 persons, with numbers staying about the same from AY 2006 onwards. Meanwhile, the number of students with disabilities increased continuously, from 14,127 in AY 2006

to a threefold increase over an 8-year period. The number of students with disabilities receiving support in AY 2013 was 7,482, which represented 53.0% of all students with disabilities and indicated an increase of 0.16 points from AY 2006 (0.07%). As for the types of disabilities that students had, the highest number,at 3,144 persons, reported "Other". "Infirm/frail" followed next at 3,037 individuals, and "developmental disability"at 2,722 persons. The number of all disability types increased from AY 2006 on, with "Other,""Developmental Disability,"and "Infirm/frail" showing the largest increases among numbers of students with disabilities. Since AY 2006, the "Other"category increased by 2,765 persons, "Developmental Disability"increased by 2,595 individuals, and "Infirm/frail" increased by 2,160 persons. Among "Other"disabilities, 89.9% (2,826 persons) had "Mental Illness/Mental Disorder."These latter numbers were first made public in AY 2012, when there were 1,941 individuals with "Mental Illness/Mental Disorder." The number increased to 2,637 persons in AY 2013 and to 2,826 in AY 2014. Among "Developmental Disability," high-functioning autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)showed an especiallyconspicuous rise. There were 1,956 persons with high-functioning autism, up 1,823 individuals from AY 2007, and 363 persons with ADHD, an increase of 337 persons since AY 2007.

Next, I focused on responses by schools. In AY 2014, there were 889 schools that had an organizational policy regarding support for students with disabilities (e.g.,schools that had established a specialist committee for this purpose, or schools where another committee was in charge of said policy), which represented 75.0% of all schools. That was an increase of 5 points from AY 2007 (70.0%). In AY 2014, there were 1,048 schools that had an organizational division or section in charge of support for students with disabilities(e.g.,schools that had established a division, institution in charge of support, or schools where another divisionor institution was in charge of said support), representing 88.4% of all schools. That was an increase of 3.7 points from AY 2007 (84.7%). Further, in AY 2014, there were 1,015 schools that had full-time or concurrent staff in charge of support for students with disabilities, representing 85.6% of all schools. This was a major increase of 842 schools and 71.6 points from AY 2007 (173 schools, 14.0%). As for the percentage of schools having dedicated staff in place in AY 2014, this increased 3.75-fold from AY 2007, while schools having concurrent staff in place increased 6.7-fold in the same period. This meant that in this seven-year period, there was almost a complete reversal in the number of schools with support persons in charge versus schools without support persons in charge (Japan Student Services Organization, 2015)

Next, I will discuss the number of schools supplying support for courses/classes. In the AY 2013 survey, of the 621 schools that were providing course/class support, the following represents the number of schools providing said support for each disability type: visual disability, 171 schools; hearing and language disability, 276 schools;motor disability, 351 schools; infirm/frail, 145 schools; multiple, 88 schools; developmental disability, 280 schools; and other, 207 schools. Thus, the highest number was for motor disability, followed by a developmental disability. While the number of schools that provide support for courses/classes has risen along with the increased number of students with disabilities attending schools, the increase for said support type has shown a somewhat gradual trend (Japan Student Services Organization, 2018).

Against the backdrop described above, prior research on support for students with disabilities has focused on students with impaired hearing, as support initially began for students with a hearing impairment (Suginaka, 2017; Watanabe et al., 2016). With the implementation of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, in addition to conventional studies regarding persons withmotor, hearing or visual disabilities, recent years have also seen much research on students with developmental disabilities (Nishimura, 2018). Yet, despite the fact that issues related to supportingfor students with disabilities have been explained and made visible by persons connected with universities (Japan Student Services Organization 2015), almost no research existsexploring what university students with disabilities - with no regard to disability type - expect from their schools. With the implementation of the Act for Eliminating DiscriminationAgainst Persons with Disabilities, universities are faced with the responsibility of responding, and numerous engagements at different universities have been reported (e.g., Okada, 2016; Yagi, 2016; Ito, 2018). No research was found concerning how students with disabilitiesfrom several different universities felt about "reasonable accommodation." Therefore, the present study aimed to gather, as an exploratory, qualitative study via interviews, the perspectives of students with disabilities regarding reasonable accommodation and the assistance they are receiving from support offices for students with disabilities at each of their universities.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The network comprised of the author and persons cooperating in this study searched for candidates meeting eligibility criteria to participate in the study, with data collected via semi-structured interviews. Prior to the interviews, a written document was used to explain survey details and, upon receiving oral consent from each candidate, interviews were conducted using a digital (IC) recorder. The author interviewed the participants in separate, individual rooms, with sufficient consideration given to maintaining the privacy of all involved.

The theme analysis was utilized for the present research. The procedure is shown below.

1. Creating transcripts from the recorded interview data in addition to the nonverbal data observed during the interviews.

2. Coding by writing down the first impression and idea in the transcripts and by marking the remarks related to the themes, such as meaning and feelings of the interviewees. Since this study was explanatory, a data-driven approach was used, rather than a concept-driven approach, which uses predetermined codes (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

3. Categorization and integrating of codes into generating themesby examining relationships between codes.

Throughout the above processes, the author carefully examined generated categories to confirm whether there is consistency between research purpose and analysis theme.

RESULTS

Several themes emerged from the days analysis regarding support for students with disabilities, with six (6) of the participants who had different types of disabilities such as a hearing impairment, visual impairment, dysosteogenesis, or spinal cord injury, and one person who was a "coordinator." Three (3) of the participants were females and four were males. Five (5) were undergraduates, while one (1) person was a graduate student.All six students were in their twenties and the coordinator was in her thirties.

The path to support

The period before the university entrance exam

Some students with disabilities visited universities before their entrance exam (especially those with severe disabilities, who realized their strong need for support even before taking the exam). A certain number of these students reported that they encountered university support offices that made them not want to attend that university.

I visited some universities, and there were support offices for supporting students with disabilities, that I felt I could not fully rely on. When I went to find out more it felt like they might be "holding something back" [and were] not fully positive about the prospect of support me, for example, regarding assistance using toilets or eating. I realize that this is a difficult issue for them, and when I was talking to them, they said things like "Um, er, we're not sure about that . . ." I watched how different people reacted, and I sensed during some visits that "I'm not welcomed here."

In this way, students with disabilities expressed their sensitivities regarding a "response of rejection" unconsciously expressed in the looks and actions of support office staff. The students' impressions of the atmosphere of the support office or regarding the reactions of staff proved to be one factor in their choice of whether to take the entrance exam of that particular university.

After passing the entrance exam: The first awareness of the difficulties in studying

Even when students with disabilities have passed an entrance exam, they may experience difficulties in the interval leading up to their receiving the support they need.

For example, the very existence of a support office was not generally known at many universities, and persons who had temporary disabilities and are entitled to receive supports, were sometimes not aware that a support office could help them. In such cases, assistance might be sought too late, or even not at all.

I had a friend who was hit by a car and needed to use crutches. He had no idea that he could use the support from the university and I wanted to tell my friend to use the support facilities, but I didn't because I thought that it was really not my place to do so. If only more efforts were made to inform students about support, that would have made it a lot easier for a person like my friend. (Male student)

Another student reflected how she became aware of the existence of a support office.

During the first few months, first-year students like myself might not know that a support office exists at the university, but during the second term of the first year, I happened to know about the office because I have seen a flyer or something. (Female student)

Students with disabilities often turn to support when they find their disabilities impacted upon their learning by the differences they encounter between their high school and university experiences (for example, university courses where textbooks are mostly unused, or courses that are centered on group work or discussions when hearing impairment can impede students' learning).

I was taking a Spanish class, and it was difficult for me to follow the class because of my hearing impairment; that's when I first requested support. (Female student with hearing impairment)

Factors that determine the kinds of support received

Even after first knocking on the door of the support office, interviews made it clear that even though students were aware of the challenges that stemmed from their disabilities, they continued to be concerned about certain factors regarding solving their difficulties.

Psychological burdens

Several of the students with disabilities described that the "psychological burdens" that they felt resulted from being with a supporter, or regarded the work required to support them.

When a supporter was assigned to me, I stayed with the supporter, and that the others were in a separate group, all of them friends. I felt like I stood out, and that wasn't comfortable. (Male student with dysosteogenesis)

Let me see, yes, I was worried about (the reaction of others around me). I wanted to feel like we were together in the same situation, and although I need special help because of my hearing, I didn't want others to feel burdened by my needs, and I never wanted to interfere with their studies. [. ..] So, that made me kind of hesitate in saying things like, "Could you please repeat that, as I didn't quite hear you?" (Female student with a hearing impairment)

When deciding on the details regarding the support they would receive, students with disabilities were not only concerned that the contents would meet their own needs, but also considered how others would view their support.

Study support, and disability support

Several of the students also worry that they had received more than "reasonable accommodation" in their disability support, which was originally intended to eliminate the disadvantages said students had in learning because of their disabilities. As a result, they felt a division between said "disability support" and any "study support" that they received which put them in a more advantageous situation than other students. In fact, it was extremely difficult for them to mark a definite borderline dividing "disability support" from "learning support."

So, let's say, someone, who was assigned to me as a supporter and was also knowledgeable of the subject matter, could change the content from what the teacher actually taught in class. Like, the supporter offered his or her personal interpretation, for the sake of an easier understanding. That was a kind of learning support, I guess. I sometimes felt I had received information that differed somewhat from that available to other students. I suppose the goal of disability support is to allow me to be in the same situation as others around me, and I thought that anything over that, something that made my study easier, was a little different than disability support. (Female student)

If I had a supporter who, say, was good in science, and that person went ahead and did everything I was supposed to do, then, if that was graded work and it should have been my own work, the grade I ended up receiving would not really be for me. So, I had them assign me a supporter whose major was completely unrelated to mine. (Male student with dysosteogenesis)

From the exerts above, students with disabilities who were concerned that the support they received would go beyond "reasonable accommodation," and which would put them at an advantage in comparison with other students with no disability, were careful to receive assistance that did not cross the line into "study-related support."

How disabilities were overcome before university attendance, and the motto of "If I try hard enough, I can do it"

Students with disabilities were asked in the interviews to describe the reasons why they chose not to receive assistance, and about hindering factors that made them hesitate to ask for needed support. Responses included the fact that they decided to simply "continue doing things the way they had done before.", or indicated their confidence that "if they made an effort, they could do what needed to be done."

The big thing for me is the fact that, if I try my best, I can do it. In high school, I had written using my hand holding a pen. Well, when I started going to my university, I was advised to use a personal computer. Since then, although if I made an extra effort, I still can write with my hand, but with a PC, it makes my learning a lot easier. (Female student with limb paralysis)

The important thing is that a long time has passed up to now, and I feel that as long as I have this (hearing aid), there shouldn't be any problem. I made it through high school, and so I think I can do the same at the university. (Male student with a hearing impairment)

My study style up to now has been that although sometimes I can't hear clearly, I have managed without using any hearing devices. To completely change that style requires a total transformation, and it will take some time before I can get used to that. (Female student with a hearing impairment)

From the above data, one observes a change in thinking regarding how there are multiple ways to achieve the simple goal of "taking notes"; one also observes that the students themselves feel a burden about changing things that they have done up to the present.

The courage to "communicate the kind of support that is necessary," and the kind that is not needed

Even while a student with a disability is receiving advice and/or the assistance of a coordinator, it is the student herself/himself who makes the final decisions regarding support details. Therefore, a student needs to know the kind of support she/he needs (or does not need), as well as the skills to communicate such with others.

I think of it as my "personal training," learning how to communicate what I cannot do to another person, in a polite and easy-to-understand way. This is the key to success. For example, if I want someone to put my shoe on my feet and I need to instruct him how to do it, simply putting a shoe on someone's feet, I would start thinking about and observing how everyone else puts on their shoes—as I think that is the best way for me to find words to make my desires easily understood. So, really, even when I fail repeatedly, I gain more experience (I eventually will be able to do it). (Male student with paralysis on limbs)

A student support coordinator too felt it was extremely important on the support-provision side that students with disabilities gain "the skills for communicating necessary support," since otherwise coordinators jobs would be difficult to do.

So, what I want my students who use their services is they can express clearly just what support they need [. . .], for example, the places where help is needed, the places where it is not, and help to which extent is necessary versus what is not...when all this is unclear, it makes it really hard for me to help them as a coordinator.

An acceptance of one's own disability requires recognition that one cannot do something that other students are able to do. This is a vital point in support provision, both for the coordinator and student with a disability who receive needed support in the learning environment.

The support room as the "site" of support

A "waypoint" (intermediary space) or a "place where one feels comfortable"

When asked "What kind of a place is the support office for you?" and "What kind of place would you like it to be?," students with disabilities described their image of such a place as "a waypoint," or "a place where one feels comfortable."

In high school, I myself had to negotiate with a teacher when I had a special need, as well as think for myself about what I needed. The support room for me now is a "relay point" (a "way-stop") - they act as a consultant, communicating for me with my university professors. So, I really, really appreciate that, as I don't have to make my own requests and spend the energy required to do so.

Other students, however, considered that the support officewas "interposed" between the student and his professors, and this fostered in the students a kind of "psychological distance" between his professors and the student.

My high school teacher, who was to begin with my homeroom teacher, was also the teacher in charge of my support, so I felt close to him for a variety of reasons. That made it a lot easier for me. But in university, I have a lot of professors who only teach courses, [. . .] and I feel somewhat distant from (them) because I need to go through the support office to send accommodation requests. (Male student with a hearing impairment)

The two students quoted above were both first-year university students. While both received the same kind of support such that the support office served as a "go-between," the students did not grant the same significance to their experiences.

The students with disabilities also felt it difficult to make friends at university because it was different from their high school experience, where the same students would move together from classroom to classroom.

(Because I have difficulty hearing), I cannot be as talkative and lively as other students, and then it seems inevitable (that I cannot make friends easily). [. . .] So, during my first two university terms, well, I really came to dislike K-city. (Male student with a hearing impairment)

Probably, if you took away my sign language, I would have had nothing left at all. Being able to sign has turned my life around. If I had no sign language, I would probably have dropped out of university. It was very tough when I was a freshman. I met with my senior classmates and people my age who knew sign language, and I talked about my worries; things became a little easier when I found that others felt the same as me. I felt that I was only able to do that because my sign language connected me with others. (Female student with a hearing impairment)

The above comments were uttered by students with hearing impairments whose disabilities were invisible to others unless they disclosed their disability. Although some students with disabilities preferred to choose a disability to live with based on "visibility" to others (Gilson &Dymond, 2011), this "invisibleness" of disability puts students between a rock and hard place because the issue of self-disclosure rests on the shoulders of students on when, how, and to whom they would disclose their disability to others.

The university is a broad community, and it is difficult to make friends without exerting deliberate effort. There were several students with disabilities who felt that the support office was "a place where I feel comfortable."

In high school, my classmates and I moved together between designated classrooms for classes. [. . .] (However), even if I could make friends at university, it was not like we went together to each and every class. I often had to spend time in places where we didn't know each other. So, when I ate lunch or whatever, I would come here (to the support room), because I felt more comfortable here. (Male student with dysosteogenesis)

Similarly, a study by Sachs (2011) reveals that when comparing educational achievements and social participation of students with and without disabilities, although academic achievements of students with disabilities were as high as their non-disabled peers, their social life participation suffered.

What students sought in support: "Standardizedversus customized support," and an attitude of "thinking through things together"

When asked "What do you desire from support?", one heard from students with disabilities the need for a balance between "standardized" and "customized" support, plus an attitude of "thinking through things together."

Without customizing to meet different needs, they would say things like, "This is how things are done for people in wheelchairs; this is how things are done for people with hearing disabilities, etc."—despite the fact that there are differences, for example, between types of hearing disabilities, since some can hear to a certain extent…(For example, responses at JR train stations) are not flexible: [. . .] "People in wheelchairs are to do this," and so on. (Male student with dysosteogenesis)

Well, if all support for disabled students is to be customized, that would be too much for the university when there are a lot of students with disabilities. Also, in times manualized support menu could be helpful for someone who needs a quicker response. (Female student with hearing impairment)

Here (at that student's university support office), they say things like "Oh, that must be hard for you (when I hit the problem)" which makes me feel little easy.they (support staff) think it through together in order to make it easier for me to attend classes. That would be a kind of mental support, I guess. I'd be happy if they said things like, "Hey, you don't have to think about this just by yourself," or "You seem to be having trouble here; let's think together about what we can do about it." (Female student with paralysis)

Yet, even as some students expressed their desire for more thorough support from the university, other students expressed their fears of the gap that would occur between their support at school and the situation they would face after they had graduated and gone out into wider society.

At my university, they have provided thorough support right from the start, which I call it "heavy-handed." When I graduate from the university where everything has been provided, it's not going to be the same(i.e., there won't be the same kind of support) out there… So, because there's this huge gap between my university and outside society that

is difficult to fill, I worry that this kind of support is "a given," and that I will suffer because of this gap once I graduate. (Male student with paralysis)

Thus, students seek a kind of "vertical and horizontal" support not only in the limited "timepoint" of their university days, but in the local community as a whole to enable them to enjoy a smooth and easier lifestyle.

The importance of having a good physical environment in the support office

Comments were made several times in the interviews regarding the importance of having a good physical, built environment in the support office.

So, as for support for students with disabilities, it's going to be quite hard if there are physical barriers in communication. [. . .] The support office staff will have a lot more chances for close contact with students compared with faculty teachers, so it is really important to create a site where students feel comfortable coming and being present in. [. . .] At my previous university, there were tables set in a common space and books or manga comic books for anyone to swing by. They had made a good effort to make it a welcome place for students to visit. (Male student with paralysis)

A coordinator at the university this student attended also expressed her/his awareness of the importance of creating an environment in the support office where "students can easily come to visit."

I don't think students feel at ease to come here, compared to the branch school where students always hang out on sofas and chairs at the support office. They have physically created such a room which welcomes students to come. However, at (our university's) support office, we have no space like that. So, students only come to us when they have to. Or, we request that they come when we need to talk with them—only in one of those two cases. [. . .] So, I think it is extremely important to set things up and create this environment that makes it easy for students to visit, or students are going to distance themselves from the support staff. A physical distance can create a mental distance between the student and staff. (Female support coordinator)

In this way, support coordinators at universities realize the connections between physical environment such as the layout of the support office, and students' feelings of psychological "distance." That means that universities which are thinking of establishing a support office must consider the creation of "a support office where students want to visit even if they have no specific task in mind." (Female coordinator)

DISCUSSION

The claim that disability is a social and cultural construction has been well known in Disability Studies (e.g., Levitt, 2017; Oliver, 2013; Wendell, 1996). Yet, research pertaining to disability construction in non-Western countries available in English is severely limited (e.g., Chan et al, 1988; Gilson & Dymond, 2011). Education attainment,

higher education in particular, is a good predictor for meaningful occupational employment, career development, and quality of life (ex., Duta, Scguri-Geist, & Kundu, 2009; Sachs, 2011). In addition, many assert that compared to their peers without disabilities, educational attainment has more significance for students with disabilities, especially for those physical or sensory impairments, because their choice of occupations is more likely to be limited to those which are not so physically demanding (e.g., McGeary, Mayer, Gatchel, et al, 2003; Sachs, 2011). In Japan, as mentioned previously, the number of students with disabilities entering universities is steadily increasing (Japan Student Services Organization, 2015). Therefore, this study intersects those important and/or understudied areas in disability studies: educational environments for students with disabilities in a non-western culture of Japan.

Methodologically, the present research employs a qualitative analysis which enabled the researcher to provide rich and nuanced experiences of participants with disabilities, such as hindering or promoting factors in deciding to receive the necessary support.Interviewees spoke about the importance of ensuring that it be wellknown that a support office exists. It is also important to share with the public information about aspects such as the support system, the support organization, and processes for the provision of reasonable accommodation. Yet in this study, there were students with slight or temporary disabilities who had not received disability support at university or up through high school; some of these persons believed that support at university was not intended for or aimed at them. This suggests the possibility that not enough efforts are being made to provide chances for students to learn more about the support office's existence and mission. On the other hand, students with severe disabilities are aware of their need for support before entering a university, and they consider beforehand the support services available for them when making their choices about matters such as which university to choose. In the future, it will be necessary to consider the diverse nature of students with disabilities, and to provide not only visual information such as printed materials, but also to use social networking systems (SNS), email news, and a broad variety of public information/relations media and channels, to provide information.

This study found that many students encountered difficulties to study (in many cases, for the first time) when attending university. Thus, when determining support contents and details, considerations need to be made for students who, although they desire disability support, do not want such to involve conflicts with their study-related assistance, and for students who are also concerned about the effects their support will have on other students. This study suggested the possibility that some students are even avoiding receiving necessary disability support due to the psychological burdens they believe such assistance would entail. Further, in receiving support, students with disabilities are sometimes forced to recognize (often for the

first time) that their disability entails "study-related handicaps." The need is especially keen for students with slight disabilities, as they go through the process of becoming aware of things they were not previously conscious of, and of learning to accept their own disability. Students with disabilities will then need to explain "what they cannot do (or can do)" to coordinators. In the present study, both students and coordinators pointed out that psychological burdens(by accepting his or her disability)were indispensable in enabling students to receive the support they required.

In the study, interviewed students also have an image of support offices as "waypoints" (intermediary spaces) or as "places where one can feel comfortable."Interview statements include the need for a perspective such that, when a support office receives a request for support from a student, even if the details of that request involve difficulties and hurdles, there must be repeated constructive dialogs, with an effort to search for better methods of resolving the issue. Interviewees also raised the need for a balance between "doing things by the manual" and providing "customized" support. When seeking mutual agreement, consultations should never be "confrontational," but rather proceed in an "interactive" manner, through dialog. Support details that have been determined as a result of such consultations must be continuous, but flexibility for revision of said details is also indispensable (Nishii, 2013). Listening to student needs must not be a one-sided process consisting solely of requests from students with disabilities; the university must also provide a variety of related information. It is important that institutions such as universities consider disabilities as a "socially-created handicap" (based on the social model of disability). Efforts to reduce or eliminate such"socially-created handicap" must involve not only support for individual students with disabilities, but also requires coordination and negotiation with the university bureaucracy (Matsuda, 2012). Also, because any student will eventually graduate and enter the broader society, it was stated in interviews that university assistance must not be "overdone"; rather, there should be a keen awareness of any gaps that might be involved between university support and students' situations after they graduate. Thus, the university does not have to be a "kind and gentle" place where persons with disabilities are treated specially; rather, universities must strive to serve as a starting point for community-wide recognition of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

The present study reported perspectives about reasonable accommodation and support offices, on the basis of interview data from students with disabilities from multiple schools who discussed things that are normally not talked about openly in Japan. There were certain limitations to this study, however. First, the number of participants was low, with only nine (9) persons participating at this time. Also,

since the recruiting method for participants was introduced by support coordinators, it is unknown whether these study participants were "average university students with a disability" in Japan, or perhaps represented a more non-standard group of disabled individuals. As the researcher analyzed the data, she encountered portions (especially from students with severe disabilities) which suggested that these students who had, in their lives prior to the interview, undergone some "training" (experience) in communicating about their disabilities to others. As for the two universities where the researcher collected the data, these are universities in Japan that, comparatively speaking, have made considerable efforts regarding the support of students with disabilities. For example, the level of awareness among the university staff (professors, etc.) is high, and a supportive environment is firmly in place compared with many other universities in Japan. From the reasons above, the interview data may not represent "typical" voices of students with disabilities in Japan.

Regarding prospects for future research, to supplement the limitations of the present endeavor, I plan to incorporate cases from other universities wherein support resources are severely limited or disability accommodations are rarely done.I believe that such studies will be essential in providing more depth and detail to an overview of the assistance provided to students with disabilities who require support.

Finally, Iemphasize that students with disabilities are not attending university for the specific purpose of receiving support. Obviously, their purpose is the same as many of their fellow students: to study what they want to, at a place they like. The key to providing support for students with disabilities is to create an environment that makes such study possible. Implementation of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities provides a "tailwind"stimulatingthe creation of this environment. Society requires diversity, and the existence of students with disabilities within universities - which represent "miniaturized scale models" of the general society - is indispensable. By taking up their perspectives in the present study, it is my strong desire to urge universities and newly appointed support coordinators to incorporate support contents and details desired by students with disabilities, and to encourage universities in this era after the implementation of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities to appropriately and smoothly introduce and serve students with disabilities in their university life.

Ethical issues:

The study was in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional review board of Kyoto University and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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