'Inclusive' Accommodation Between Campus and Community

Yoshimi Matsuzaki, Ph.D., *Tsuda University*, Tokyo, Japan

Chikae Kaihara, *Inclusive Education Support Division*, Tokyo, Japan

Wakaba Hamamatsu, *Inclusive Education Support Division*, Tokyo, Japan

Kuniomi Shibata, Ph.D., *Tsuda University*, Tokyo, Japan

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Abstract: This study introduces Tsuda University's Inclusive Education Support Division (IES) programs, demonstrating a Japanese example of supporting students with disabilities. Our purpose is to promote 'inclusive' accommodation. We argue that IES would provide an alternative model for disabled student service (DSS) in higher education. Further, this study explores steps for creating 'inclusive' accommodation through IES's two projects— *Scene Description* and *Community Event*s in light of the current situation. We will describe the future of 'inclusive' accommodation with a consideration of all stakeholders in the community.

Introduction

Inclusive Education Support Division (IES), a service provider for students with disabilities in Tsuda University, has a unique and challenging mission for contributing 'inclusive' accommodation as a Disabled Student Service (IES, n.d.). There are two notable programs for discussing 'inclusive' accommodation in higher education. The Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against People with Disabilities—Disabilities Discrimination Act—has provided services for university students with disabilities (Japan Student Support Organization, n.d.). However, it took 10 years to enforce the Act since Japan adopted CRPD (United Nations-Disability, n.d.). Japan is relatively behind in this field; higher education lacks support initiatives.

There are two kinds of institutions of higher education that serve as practical examples in Japan. The first kind is that of universities attended by independent disabled students. The other consists of institutions of higher learning developing human resources that can actively work in

the field of social welfare. Therefore, it is difficult for us to learn from the experiments and cases that they have reported, because Tsuda University does not match the profile of either of them. Most higher education organizations hardly receive the model cases that would allow them to provide a proper service in such situations. IES would provide an alternative model of disabled student service (DSS) in higher education. Our own program will serve as an example of a situation at an ordinary university.

Tsuda University is a private institution of higher education for women with a history of over 110 years (Tsuda University, n.d.). It contains two colleges and the Graduate School across two campuses. With six departments (English, international and cultural studies, international cooperation and multicultural studies, mathematics, computer science, and policy studies), Tsuda is a small university of around 2,800 students. IES, which opened at Tsuda in 2015, consists of a director, two advisors (clinical psychologist and sign language specialist), a coordinator, an office staffer, teaching assistants, and supporting student volunteers. IES' general focus is the development of a favorable studying environment for all students on campus regardless of disability. IES provides the services that students with disabilities need for academic learning in the following ways: copying text into data format, Scene Description, assistance with taking notes, and so on. IES is located in Kodaira City, which has many disability-related organizations, and where events for community residents are held.

Our mission for IES is to promote 'inclusive' society and share the concept of 'inclusion.' The uniqueness of IES is that its aim is not only to provide educational support but to contribute for all stakeholders at Tsuda University. That is why we named our organization 'Inclusive Education Support Division.' Here, we present the challenges faced by IES with regard to promoting 'inclusive' accommodation from the point of view of *Scene Description* and inclusive events.

Scene Description

Technology is commonly assumed to be one of the most important factors for improving support for students with disabilities. IES provides some assistive technology services such as copying text into data format, an accessibility map, and a navigating system using mobile devices and beacon signals. *Scene Description* is one of the information technology services for students with visual disabilities. *Scene Description* is a unique support for lectures featuring video material, with IES assistants describing the scenes to the students. The assistant students describe angles of the scene, the number of characters, and their actions and settings on screen. It is almost similar to an audio description, with a narrator describing what is happening on TV, in movies, and other performance arts for persons with visual disabilities.

Our unique support, *Scene Description* differs from it by being more interactive and collaborative with the students with visual disabilities. Lectures that rely on video are common at Tsuda University. While using visual material is essential for all students to learn the curriculum,

most lecturers are inclined to omit visual materials. It is because they take the way as 'accommodation' for the students with visual disabilities. However, visual materials are also essential for students with visual disabilities to understand the contents of the lectures. Therefore, IES considers it is 'inclusive' accommodation and how to make visual materials understandable for them. That is why IES provides *Scene Description*, which is a new way of support.

The *Scene Description* project is coordinated by teaching assistants. The process of *Scene Description* is as follows: after we receive a request, the teaching assistant and volunteer staff student will prepare for a scene description. They share the significant points in the video and provide the description to the student before or during the lecture.

This type of accommodation support is greatly influenced by Cinema Access Partners (CAP) (Cinema Access Partners, n.d.), which provides movies with audio guides and mentored our service. In movie-description, it is important to give just as much information as is needed for understanding the action. For example, during a rainy scene, it is too much for service users to have it described as "it is raining," because they can hear the rain. From CAP, we learned an appropriate way of conducting and improving *Scene Description*. We also focus on more important aspects of providing *Scene Description*. Students with a visual disability and student volunteers discuss what they learned from the videos which helps deepen their understanding of the curriculum from various perspectives. *Scene Description* becomes more 'inclusive' as a result. In addition, we find another effect of *Scene Description* for all students with or without disabilities. The *Scene Description* gives a clear explanation of the story's structure. This approach also positively affects both foreign students and students with a developmental disorder.

Community Events as 'Inclusive'

The other role of IES is to create opportunities to think about 'inclusion.' Most of these opportunities are in the form of workshops, lectures, and events. The targets of these opportunities are not only university students but also people of the community with or without disabilities; in short, the events welcome people in their diversity.

At first, in 2015, our main goal was to organize IES as a new functional division of the university. Then from 2016, we gradually held open events, and in 2017, we started holding larger projects to make participants 'meet' and 'connect.' Both large-projects in 2017 and 2018 were held within the University Festival Events. Subsidized by the Nomura Foundation, many events were held in the IES room, which has a capacity of 120 guests. University Festival Events are well-attended every year, and it was a good opportunity to introduce ourselves to them. Our event aimed to allow participants to meet, enjoy one another's company, and collaborate. To that end we designed engaging content for all participants, including children.

In 2017, the first year of this large project, we held two daylong events. The first day focused on activities and performances mainly for children with or without disabilities. On the second day, we held lectures and a panel discussion by Tsuda University alumnae. The speakers were actors in the world of disabilities, such as the chairperson of Japan National Assembly of Disabled People's International, Midori Hirano (DPI-Japan, n.d.).

In 2018, we held more programs mainly focusing on children, as compared to the previous year. Our project continued to make participants 'meet' and 'connect,' in addition, children were made to 'play,' 'learn,' 'strike and touch,' and 'connect.' The contents were as follows: Barrier-Free Mask Coloring Workshop, Sound Table Tennis (table tennis for people with visual disabilities), an 'inclusive' concert with sign language performance, a workshop for learning math and English with digital projection, a Simulations Workshop for solving a riddle, and so on. Dr. Jean Johnson, associate director of the Center on Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, also gave a lecture. The event was enjoyed by all, from small children to elderly people.

This project was actually designed with other stakeholders outside of campus who also aimed to promote an 'inclusive' society. We also discovered a few alumnae were working for people with disabilities, this type of perspective is based on a view of deep understanding. The alumnae also contributed to our network and gave us a chance to make new contacts. For example, we learned about CHOCOLABO, an organization founded as a welfare-oriented chocolate maker in Japan whose vision is to create a sustainable business offering employment opportunities and higher wages to people with disabilities (CHOCO LABO, n.d.). Our collaboration with CHOCOLABO in 2017 and 2018 made the people involved in the project question what 'inclusive,' and 'inclusive society,' meant.

Moreover, it brought about other connections between high school students who were interested in the concept of 'inclusion' and visited our workshop. They reported that they could spend fulfilling time not only playing or having fun but also learning and studying through our workshop. Attendees also met new people, and our IES programs can be a good place to network for all participants. Spending time with them encouraged and inspired us to promote 'inclusion.' Thus, our projects are not designed as one-off events but as a networking pool for all stakeholders and people in the community. They are meant to serve as the beginning of a series that will last for years, progressively accumulating experiences.

Conclusion

The previous sections have shown that IES projects could gradually contribute to 'inclusion' in small steps. Although there is still a long way to go, we should now focus on two points of these IES projects. The first is to consider that IES could make an impact not only on students with or without disabilities but also on all stakeholders at the university. Focusing on all students at Tsuda, our service is provided to students regardless of disability. We aim to

encourage students with disabilities to request educational support. We lack the expertise to determine what to provide students with based on the degree of disability. Consequently, students with disabilities cannot find the case that matches their needs. It means that they tend not to request what they need for their educational support confidently because they do not have role models. It makes it difficult for them to have self-advocacy. IES focuses on 'inclusion' and all students regardless of disabilities have the potential to create better 'inclusive' surroundings for common academic learning. For example, by describing the scenes clearly for students with visual disabilities, their classmates could also benefit their description to better understand the lecture themselves. Accommodating for students with disabilities has potential to promote 'inclusive' accommodation for all. IES focuses on this better-than-expected effect. The second point is networking with people with disabilities to share and discuss the issue. We originally had little knowledge and expertise in higher education, which led us to persist in trying to accommodate special needs dedicated to students with disabilities. Thus, we make an effort to foster discussion with students with disabilities, such as in the case of *Scene Description* as mentioned above. Now, we will use the term "inclusive" accommodation in a new way.

We consider 'inclusive' accommodation flexibly, by studying past experiences. The process of exploring and studying how to increase inclusion is not always successful. The 'inclusive' co-working style aims to make our university a better academic and educational place to learn and research. IES, through understanding the concept of 'inclusion' could provide 'new educational support' for students with disabilities. We have never seen any similar challenges in the field of higher educational support in Japan. Our focus on 'inclusion' presents a real and worthwhile challenge. Lastly, we will try to compile the features of our programs and discuss 'inclusion.'

Finally, we would like to introduce three key words: The Three Cs (3Cs). These stand for: 1) co-working; 2) connectedness; and 3) creativity. First, *co-working* stands for the fact that our programs are based on co-working with people with disabilities. Co-workers are not only students but also activists, community work professionals and alumnae. One participant, for instance, is well-known for transcribing textbooks of mathematics into Braille on a volunteer basis. The second "C" is *connectedness*, and means that people in various situations should have opportunities to share the concept of 'inclusive' and connect with co-workers. Finally, "C" is *creativity*. The process of acquiring knowledge and attitude from other, new people and places make us creative. We cannot stay in a conventional style because if we are to face a challenge and make the University 'inclusive.' An 'inclusive' university would enable people from diverse backgrounds to feel at ease and encouraged, and this challenge drives us on. That is, trying to improve cannot help creative thinking.

IES programs are examples of an 'inclusive' education, and they can be interpreted as programs with the *3Cs* features. Programs including the concept of 'inclusion' would be another way to open up to the frontier of disability and diversity. For example, that style would turn the dynamics between supporter and supported into a partnership between two people who study and

learn from each other. We have yet to consider how to create a more 'inclusive' university and hope to present our results again in the future.

Authors

Yoshimi Matsuzaki, Ph.D., is an associate lecturer at Tsuda University, specializing in social epidemiology of youth with special emphasis on mental health. She received her PhD from Tsuda University in 2018 and has begun research for reasonable accommodation of reading accessibility (RARA), that aims to examine and consider better accommodation to learn and understand reading material deeper. Employed at the Inclusive Education Support Division she was a Teaching Assistant from 2015 to 2016, and Community Coordinator from 2017. Her role in IES is to connect actors in communities and make opportunities of co-working. *Image Description: Photo of Yoshimi Matsuzaki*

Chikae Kaihara is employed by Inclusive Education Support Division as a Teaching Assistant and has held several events and workshops of inclusive education and reasonable accommodation. Her research interest is how children who are deaf or hard of hearing study English as a second language. *Image Description: Photo of Chikae Kaihara*

Wakaba Hamamatsu graduated from Tsuda University in 2017. She majored in Media Studies and focused her studies on how media and technology influenced the support for people with disabilities and practiced it through 'Scene Description' for students with visual disabilities. *Image Description: Photo of Wakaba Hamamatsu*

Kuniomi Shibata, Ph.D., is an associate professor at Tsuda University and specializes in Assistive Technology, especially focusing on Information Technology for persons with disabilities. Currently, he is in charge of support programs for students with disabilities, through the Yes of the Parent of a Student with Disabilities. *Image Description: Photo of Kuniomi Shibata*

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