

Impressions of my visit to the Yokohama Integral Rehabilitation Center

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1. Introduction

I had the opportunity to visit the Integral Rehabilitation Center in the city of Yokohama. I had visited the Yokohama Pole and the community pool, but didn't know this center was located in the neighboring buildings. Neither did I know the center's functions. I will therefore describe my impressions during this visit.

2. About the "Integral Rehabilitation Center" name.

When I heard the name "Integral Rehabilitation" I imagined a center for the rehabilitation of mobility-impaired individuals, not for intellectually impaired individuals.

While entering the center I noticed an elder man who seemed to have no impairment, talking to the receptionist (maybe a patient's relative). On the other hand, as I imagined, I noticed people in wheel chairs and smoking cigarettes in the cafeteria. The informative plate (map) at the center's entrance states the center was established as a hospital. Thus the real center was a little different from what I imagined.

3. What the center rehabilitates.

Just as we started the tour, our guide (a chief clerk Mr. Takahashi), suggested we should define the terms "handicapped people and children" and "people and children with

intellectual disabilities"; as if we were explaining it to a 10-year-old child. I answered the following: Regarding handicapped people and children, they are people and children who cannot do certain things, but depending on the type of care they receive, they may do them, or not being able to do them, their problems can be eased. As for people and children with intellectual disabilities, they are people and children who think slowly, understand things thinking slowly or don't understand things even when thinking slowly; some can't even think slowly, but depending on the type of care they receive, they can do things they weren't able to do, or if this change cannot be accomplished, their problems can be eased. Defining "disability" proved to be harder than it seemed. New questions emerged: what kinds of people come to this center for rehabilitation? What can this center rehabilitate?

4. Tasks determine disability

Mr. T, our guide during this tour, used to work in City Hall developing welfare programs. Therefore, what he commented during our visit came from a welfare and administrative point of view. This was very interesting since it is very different from what we hear everyday at the university. The single phrase that impressed me the most was "When dealing with people and

children with disabilities, medicine, psychology, sociology, and administration are mutually related, but they are not related to education". For those of us in the field of education it is normal to think of things revolving around education. But listening to Mr. T's speech, medicine, psychology, sociology, and administration are given much more importance in the real world. We in the field of education, ignoring the outside world, tend to think that we are closer to people and children with disabilities, but this is an illusion. This speech made me notice that care for people and children with disabilities has to be thought of in terms of an integral social system.

We are aware of the relation between welfare, medicine, and psychology in the field of education, but sociology and administration are left aside. According to Mr. T's speech this is a common point of view in the fields of welfare and administration. I felt a little embarrassed noticing this point of view is lacking in the field of education. I am currently working on an investigation that involves sociology and confirmed the importance it will have in the future.

Back to the issue of defining "disability", according to Mr. T's speech, a dividing line must be drawn when measuring the degree of disability and providing welfare services. For example, regarding intellectual disability, a point must be defined from which an impediment is considered as intellectual disability. While treating individuals with disabilities we cannot state it is too hard to define "disability", we have to link the results of

investigations from different fields. I can't yet imagine a tangible way to link these different fields, but it will be important to have this in mind when conducting future studies.

5. Rehabilitation Practices

After the speech, we visited different areas within the facilities where actual rehabilitation is carried out. There are specific areas for children and adults, and people with mobility disabilities or intellectual disabilities.

I didn't have time to find answers to some questions: What type of relation exists between individuals requiring and providing the service? Is rehabilitation the service they require? What is the meaning of rehabilitation? This question is closely related to the initial matter: **"What is a disability?"**

6. Conclusions

We spent more time listening to a speech than visiting the facilities.

As a result I couldn't fully understand the center's functions. However, this visit helped me notice the importance of appropriately defining disabilities and visiting places different from education centers. If possible, I would like to visit the Yokohama Early Education and Medical Treatment(Early Intervention)Centers. We would be able to learn from their early intervention in educational and medical system for children with disabilities, which deals with cases similar to those we treat every day in special schools.