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# Investigation of the Current State of Special Needs Education in High School in Japan; Investigation in Yamaguchi Prefecture

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to reveal the present condition of special needs education in high schools in Japan. A total of 58 high schools in Yamaguchi Prefecture in Japan participated in this study. The results show that students with some difficulty in school life were enrolled in most high schools, and students diagnosed with mental illness and students needing support for foreign nationality were enrolled in some high schools. Furthermore, the following four characteristics of the current status of special support for students with special educational needs in high school in Japan were found. First, teachers in high school tend not to assess the characteristics and difficulties of students with objective indicators. Second, many high schools have not had sufficient cooperation with organizations outside the school. Third, many high schools did not fully consider accommodation for students with special educational needs in entrance and regular examinations and evaluations. Fourth, many high schools did not perform special-needs-understanding education for other students.

<Key-words>

students with special educational needs, special needs education, high school

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## I. Introduction

The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education endorsed the idea of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). Inclusive education is an education policy and have been promoted in major developed countries. Inclusive education is defined as equal and comprehensive education that takes place in a common place, regardless of disabilities (Han, Kohara, Yano, & Aoki, 2013). The transition from segregated education to inclusive education have been in progress in many countries, such as Denmark and Italy (Han et al., 2013). In such a global trend, inclusive education have been promoted in Japan as special education since the implementation of special education in 2007.

Recently, the important challenge of diffusing special education in Japanese high school has arisen since the necessity of special education was mentioned by Central Council for Education in Japan (Tabe, 2011). In this background, there are two circumstances surrounding high school students with developmental disabilities in Japan. First, the number of high school students with developmental disabilities has been increasing (Uchino & Takahashi, 2006). Uchino and Takahashi (2006) investigated the present condition of special needs education for high school students with mild developmental disabilities in Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan. Results showed that students with mild developmental disabilities were enrolled at 26.3% of the high schools and the number of students with mild developmental disabilities has been increasing each year. Therefore, special needs education in high school in Japan will be required in the future. Second, high school students with developmental disabilities have various difficulties in their daily school life (Hendricks & Wehman, 2009; Kent, Pelham, Molina, Sibley, Waschbusch, Yu, Gnagy, Biswas, Babinski, & Karch, 2011). Kent et al. (2011) found that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) had more difficulty with academic achievement than students without ADHD. Hendricks and Wehman (2009) pointed out that students with autism spectrum disorders had difficulty with social interaction and needed to improve their social skills in preparation for successfully transitioning. Therefore, special needs education in high schools in Japan would need to deal with various difficulties in students with developmental disabilities. These trends suggest further enhancements of special needs education in high school in Japan.

In light of these circumstances, Tabe (2011) pointed out that the special educational support system of high schools in Japan has gradually been implemented. However, Tabe (2011) revealed some problems with the support system. First, support for the transition from junior high schools to high schools for students with special educational needs could not be implemented. In Japan, many parents of students with special educational needs and many junior high schools of these students would not convey information about their disabilities and special educational needs to avoid disadvantaging them in enrolling in high school because students had to pass an entrance examination for enroll in high school. Therefore, the transition might be one of the challenges facing special needs education in

high schools in Japan. Second, special support for students with special educational needs have had insufficient experience in high schools in Japan. As special support for students with special educational needs in high school, Uchino and Takahashi (2006) pointed out supplementary lessons, special teaching materials, and structuring needs for the classroom. However, high schools in Japan were not able to provide these special supports for students with special educational needs. Therefore, these practices were also challenges. Third, the human resources and the facilities needed in special needs education were insufficient. In Japan, the preliminary conditions of human resources and facilities have varied by high school, so the concept of special needs education has penetrated them only recently. Tabé (2011) insisted on the importance of solving these problems to promote special needs education in high school in Japan.

Shimonakamura and Furuta (2014) also found three major characteristics and problems in special needs education in high school in Japan in a review of the literature on practical reports of special needs education. First, this review showed that most high schools engaged in similar methods and content of special needs education, while other schools developed original methods and content. This suggested that the current state of special needs education in high schools is different in each high school in Japan. Second, it revealed that high school teachers had received knowledge of special needs education through special needs education/training including seminars, but most of them had only limited experience teaching students with disabilities. This suggested that there was a need to increase the opportunities for education/training about special needs education or engaging with students with special educational needs. Third, it revealed that some students with disabilities recognized their needs, enabling teachers to teach effectively by keeping these students' needs in mind. This suggested that there was a need to improve skills to support students with special educational needs in high school teachers in Japan. Thus, this review revealed that many high schools tried to practice special needs education and tried to ensure the quality of the special needs education of teachers in special needs education in high school. However, this review could not examine the current state of special needs education in high schools in Japan quantitatively, such as how many students with special educational needs were enrolled or how much a particular support has been implemented. Therefore, we consider it important to examine current state of special needs education in high schools in Japan quantitatively.

Based on these reviews, Seki, Himeno, Adachi, and Kondo (2017) investigated the current state of special needs education in high schools in Japan quantitatively, by such measures as the broad outline of high schools (departments, scale, and course graduates), the enrollment situation of students with special educational needs, and the support conditions for students with special educational needs (assessment of difficulties, support system in high schools, support in learning, arrangements in regular examinations and entrance examinations, cooperation with junior high schools, and cooperation with medical facilities and welfare institutions). The results showed that many students with

special educational needs are enrolled in high schools with very few students and in high schools most of whose graduates received employment. The results also showed that high schools that had a large number of special needs students tend to have implemented more varied supports for them than did high schools with only a small number of them. These results suggest that special needs education and special support for students with special educational needs in high schools depend on the characteristics of high schools and the numbers of students with special educational needs. This study is very useful for our general understanding of the situation of special needs education in high school in Japan.

However, their review had two problems. First, they did not examine the current state of truants or students who refuse to go to school, students needing support for foreign nationality, and students diagnosed with mental illness. For example, foreign students have difficulty in learning using Japanese and in communicating with other students, and students with mental illness feel pressured in school life. Therefore, these students need special support to have an enjoyable and satisfying school life. Second, the review did not examine the special support exhaustively. It examined the implementation status of special support, such as assessments of students with special support, support systems in high schools, support of learning for students with special educational needs, special support in regular tests and evaluations, exchange of information about students with special educational needs with junior high schools, and special support in entrance examinations. However, it is also necessary to exchange information about these students with their parents, medical agencies, and social service agencies, provide appropriate career guidance based on their assessments, and promote special-needs-understanding education for other students. Therefore, these issues of special support and special needs education need to be examined.

Based on these two points, the aim of this study is to examine the actual conditions of special needs education in high schools in Japan. In particular, we consider the following two points. First, we examine the current status of the numbers of students with special educational needs in each high school, including students who refuse to go to school, students needing support for foreign nationality, and students diagnosed with mental illness. Second, we examine the current status of the special educational support in each high school, including exchanges of information about these students with their parents, medical agencies, and social service agencies, provisions of appropriate career guidance based on their assessment, and promotion of special needs understanding education for other students.

## II. Method

### 1. Participant Schools and Procedure

A total of 58 high schools in Yamaguchi prefecture in Japan participated in this study. The questionnaire was sent to each high school by mail in March 2018. Teachers belonging to each of high schools who understood the respective conditions of special needs education completed and returned the questionnaire by mail.

On the first page of the questionnaire, it was written that all the participants' personal information would be strictly protected, and that their decision whether or not to participate would not be disadvantaged. It was also written that participation was voluntary and that they could quit at any time.

### 2. Questionnaire

To measure the current status of special needs education in high schools in Japan, we created an original questionnaire by consultation between the authors. The items in the questionnaire in this study were created by the authors with reference to the study of Seki et al. (2017). The reason why the items of Seki et al. (2017) were included is that these items would be able to comprehensively grasp the condition of implementation of special support necessary for special needs education at high school. This questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section asked the enrollment status of students with special educational needs. High school teachers participating in this investigation were asked to answer "not enrolled," "1-4 students are enrolled," "5-9 students are enrolled," "10-14 students are enrolled," "15-19 students are enrolled," and "over 20 students are enrolled" regarding the enrollment status of these students. We investigated the current status of the number of "students with some difficulty in school life (without diagnosis)," "students who have an individualized educational plan," "students diagnosed with developmental disabilities," "students diagnosed with mental illness," "students needing support for foreign nationality," "truants or students who refuse to go to school," "students who have difficulty with social interaction," "students with behavioral problems," and "students diagnosed with physical disabilities" as students with special educational needs. The second section asked the implementation status of special needs education and special support in high schools. This section has 46 items in eight sub-parts: "Assessments of students with special support," "Support systems in high schools," "Support of learning for students with special educational needs," "Special support in entrance and regular tests and evaluation," "Exchange of information about students with special educational needs with junior high schools and parents," "Exchange of information about students with special educational needs with medical agencies or social service agencies," "Appropriate career guidance based on their assessment," and "Special-needs-understanding education for other students." High school teachers participating in this study were asked to rate the current status of the implementation of measures for each

item in their high school. All items were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much).

### **3. Data Analysis**

To examine the current status of the numbers of students with special educational needs and the current status of the special educational support in each high school, we calculated the frequency distribution for each of the items. Data analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0.

## **III. Results**

### **1. Profile of the Teachers Who Answered the Questionnaire**

The participants who answered the questionnaire were 58 high school teachers (32 female and 25 male; 1 person did not answer). The mean age of these teachers was 48.59 years ( $SD = 11.56$ ), ranging from 23 to 65.

### **2. Current Status of the Number of Students with Special Educational Needs**

Table 1 shows data on the number of high schools whose students need special support. It showed that students having difficulty in school life had enrolled in most of the high schools (96.4%). It also showed that students with individualized educational plans (81%), those diagnosed with developmental disabilities (79.2%), truants or students who refuse to go to school (82.7%), those with difficulty in social interaction (91%), and those with behavioral problems (81%) have enrolled in most of the high schools. In particular, it also showed that more than 20 students with difficulty in social interaction (7.1%) or with behavioral problems (3.4%) are enrolled in some of the high schools. Although there were few such instances, it showed that students diagnosed with mental illness (24.1%) and students needing support for foreign nationality (19.3%) were enrolled in some of the high schools.

<Table 1> Profile of students with special educational needs in responding high schools

Number of students	0	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	over 20
students with some difficulty in school life (without diagnosis)	2 (3.5)	24 (42.1)	15 (26.3)	6 (10.5)	4 (7.0)	6 (10.5)
students who have individualized educational plans	11 (19.0)	34 (58.6)	7 (12.1)	5 (8.6)	0 (0)	1 (1.7)
students diagnosed with developmental disabilities	12 (20.7)	30 (51.7)	13 (22.4)	2 (3.4)	0 (0)	1 (1.7)
students diagnosed with mental illness	43 (74.1)	13 (22.4)	1 (1.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
students needing support for foreign nationality	46 (80.7)	11 (19.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
truants or students who refuse to go to school	10 (17.2)	37 (63.8)	6 (10.3)	3 (5.2)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)
students with difficulty in social interaction	5 (8.9)	31 (55.4)	5 (8.9)	7 (12.5)	4 (7.1)	4 (7.1)
students with behavioral problems	11 (19.0)	32 (55.2)	7 (12.1)	4 (6.9)	2 (3.4)	2 (3.4)
students diagnosed with physical disabilities	25 (43.9)	31 (54.4)	1 (1.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

## 2. Current Status of the Special Support for Students with Special Educational Needs

Table 2 shows the current status of the assessment of students with special educational needs in each high school. It was found that many high schools frequently assess the characteristics and difficulties of students by observing their learning and living conditions (56.9%). It was also found that many high schools frequently share information about the characteristics of students between teachers (44.8%). On the other hand, it was also found that the numbers of high schools that frequently assess the characteristics and difficulties of students using an intelligence scale, developmental scale (5.2%), or checklist for behavioral evaluation (3.4%) were small.

<Table 2> The current status of the assessment of students with special educational needs in respondent high schools

Items about student assessment	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We assess the characteristics and difficulties of students by observing their learning and living conditions.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	24 (41.4)	33 (56.9)
We share information about the characteristics of students between teachers.	1 (1.7)	4 (6.9)	27 (46.6)	26 (44.8)
We obtain information about students from their parents.	3 (5.2)	14 (24.1)	25 (43.1)	16 (27.6)
We assess the characteristics of students using an intelligence scale or developmental scale like WISC-IV.	27 (46.6)	16 (27.6)	12 (20.7)	3 (5.2)
We assess the characteristics of students using a checklist for behavioral evaluation.	28 (48.3)	15 (25.9)	13 (22.4)	2 (3.4)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.



Table 3 shows the current status of the support systems in high schools. It was found that some high schools frequently hold case meetings to understand the characteristics of students with special educational needs and examine ways to support them (15.5%). It was also found that teachers frequently cooperate with other teachers by accepting other duties as needed in some high schools (17.2%). However, there were not so many high schools that had patrol consultations of an expert team, such as a region coordinator (1.7%), or that hold workshops about special needs education (3.4%).

<Table 3> The current status of the support systems for special needs education in high schools

Items about the school support system	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We hold case meetings to understanding the characteristics of students with special educational needs and examining ways to support them.	4 (6.9)	9 (15.5)	36 (62.1)	9 (15.5)
We cooperate with teachers by allocating other duties as needed.	3 (5.2)	5 (8.6)	40 (69.0)	10 (17.2)
Cooperation between items about the support system with outside	0 per year	1 per year	2-5 per year	6 per year
We utilize patrol consultation of an expert team, such as region coordinator.	13 (22.4)	30 (51.7)	14 (24.1)	1 (1.7)
We hold workshops about special needs education.	6 (10.3)	31 (53.4)	21 (36.2)	2 (3.4)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 4 shows the current status of the support of learning for students with special educational needs. It was found that some high schools frequently implement reasonable accommodation for students with special educational needs (19.6%), and implement life skill support for students with difficulty in their daily life (19.6%). On the other hand, it was found that many high schools did not use audio-visual materials in teaching students with special educational needs (47.4 %).

<Table 4> The current status of the support of learning for students with special educational needs

Items about special support	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We implement individualized learning support after school.	16 (27.6)	4 (6.9)	33 (56.9)	4 (6.9)
We implement co-teaching for students with special educational needs.	30 (52.6)	13 (22.8)	10 (17.5)	4 (7.0)
We use audio-visual materials in teaching students with special educational needs.	27 (47.4)	10 (17.5)	17 (29.8)	3 (5.3)
We implement reasonable accommodation for students with special educational needs.	5 (8.8)	10 (17.5)	31 (54.4)	11 (19.3)
We implement special support for students with special educational needs based on their strength.	6 (10.5)	12 (21.1)	34 (59.6)	5 (8.8)
We teach lessons following a universal design for students with special educational needs.	9 (15.8)	12 (21.1)	31 (54.4)	5 (8.8)
We implement social skill support for students with difficulty in social interaction.	9 (16.1)	11 (19.6)	28 (50.0)	8 (14.3)
We implement life skill support for students with difficulty in their daily life.	10 (17.9)	12 (21.4)	23 (41.1)	11 (19.6)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 5 shows the current status of special support in entrance and regular tests and evaluations. It was found that most high schools did not extend the period of entrance and regular tests beyond the general period for students with special educational needs (98.2%), or read the contents of examination questions aloud for students with special educational needs (98.2%). It was also found that many high schools did not make arrangements for students with special educational needs to take examinations in another room (68.4%), or change the size of the answer column of examination questions for students with special educational needs (66.7%).

<Table 5> The current status of special support in entrance and regular examination and evaluation

Items about special support	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We extend the set period of entrance and regular test time beyond the general period for students with special educational needs.	56 (98.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.8)
We allow a student with special educational needs to take an examination in a separate room.	39 (68.4)	5 (8.8)	9 (15.8)	4 (7.0)
We change the size of the answer column of examination questions for students with special educational needs.	38 (66.7)	7 (12.3)	7 (12.3)	5 (8.6)
We read the contents of examination questions aloud for students with special educational needs.	56 (98.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.8)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 6 shows the current status of the exchange of information about students with special educational needs with junior high schools and parents. It was found that many

high schools frequently have interviews with the junior high school teachers of students with special educational needs in the period between the passing announcement and enrollment in high school (42.1%). It was also found that some high schools frequently have an interview with the teachers of the student with special educational needs before the entrance examination for high school (12.3%), after high school entrance (12.1%), and when they notice their maladaptive behavior (10.5%). On the other hand, it was found that most high schools did not have interviews with the parents of students with special educational needs before the entrance examination of the high school (98.2%) or when they notice their maladaptive behavior (98.2%). In addition, many high schools did not have interviews with the parents in the period between passing announcement and enrollment in high school (68.4%) or after high school entrance (66.7%).

<Table 6> The current status of the exchange of information about students with special educational needs with junior high schools and parents

Items about exchange of information	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We have interviews with the parents of students with special educational needs before the entrance examination for high school.	56 (98.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.8)
We have interviews with the parents of students with special educational needs in the interval between the passing announcement and enrollment in high school.	39 (68.4)	5 (8.8)	9 (15.8)	4 (7.0)
We have an interview with the parents of the student with special educational needs after high school entrance to school.	38 (66.7)	7 (12.3)	7 (12.3)	5 (8.6)
We have an interview with the parents of students with special educational needs when we notice their maladaptive behavior.	56 (98.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.8)
We have an interview with the teachers of students with special educational needs before the entrance examination of high school.	34 (59.6)	8 (14.0)	8 (14.0)	7 (12.3)
We have an interview with the junior high school teachers of students with special educational needs in the period between the passing announcement and enrollment in high school.	10 (17.5)	2 (3.5)	21 (36.8)	24 (42.1)
We have an interview with the junior high school teachers of students with special educational needs after high school entrance.	17 (29.3)	6 (10.3)	27 (46.6)	7 (12.1)
We have an interview with the junior high school teachers of students with special educational needs when we notice their maladaptive behavior	15 (26.3)	16 (28.1)	20 (35.1)	6 (10.5)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 7 shows the current status of the exchange of information about students with special educational needs with medical agencies or social service agencies. It was found that many high schools frequently carry out consultations between students with special educational needs and the school counsellor (47.4%). However, it was also found that many schools did not cooperate with special educational schools (35.1%), medical agencies (66.7%), support centers for individuals with developmental disabilities (66.7%), welfare

facilities such as day services after school (78.9%), or consultation facilities, such as employment support centers for individuals with disabilities (70.2%). In particular, it was found that most high schools did not cooperate with child consultation centers (98.2%).

<Table 7> The current status of the exchange of information about students with special educational needs with medical agencies or social service agencies

the items about special support	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We carry out consultations between students with special educational needs and the school counsellor.	7 (12.3)	1 (1.8)	22 (38.6)	27 (47.4)
We cooperate with special educational schools.	20 (35.1)	15 (26.3)	18 (31.6)	4 (7.0)
We cooperate with medical agencies.	38 (66.7)	7 (12.3)	7 (12.3)	5 (8.6)
We cooperate with child consultation centers.	56 (98.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.8)
We cooperate with support centers for individuals with developmental disabilities.	38 (66.7)	11 (19.3)	7 (12.3)	1 (1.8)
We cooperate with welfare facilities, such as day services after school.	45 (78.9)	8 (14.0)	3 (5.3)	1 (1.8)
We cooperate with consultation facilities, such as employment support centers for individuals with disabilities.	40 (70.2)	8 (14.0)	7 (12.3)	2 (3.5)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 8 shows the current status of appropriate career guidance based on their assessment. It was found that many high schools were looking for workplaces suited to the characteristics of students with special educational needs (35.7%) and institutions at the next stage of education suited to the characteristics of students with special educational needs (38.6%), deciding courses based on the consent of students with special educational needs (73.7%) and the consent of parents of students with special educational needs (66.7%), and courses based on the consensus of students with special educational needs and the people around them (66.7%), as well as deepening the self-understanding of students with special educational needs in career guidance (49.1%) frequently. On the other hand, it was also found that the number of schools implementing individual carrier support for students with special educational needs (22.8%) and those that do not (24.6%) showed little difference.

<Table 8> The current status of appropriate career guidance based on their assessment

Items about special support	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We implement individual carrier support for students with special educational needs.	14 (24.6)	12 (21.1)	18 (31.6)	13 (22.8)
We are looking for workplaces suited to the characteristics of students with special educational needs.	14 (25.0)	5 (8.9)	17 (30.4)	20 (35.7)
We are looking for institutions at the next stage of education suited to the characteristics of students with special educational needs.	9 (15.8)	7 (12.3)	19 (33.3)	22 (38.6)
We decide courses based on the consent of students with special educational needs	0 (0)	1 (1.8)	14 (24.6)	42 (73.7)
We decide courses based on the consent of the parents of students with special educational needs.	0 (0)	1 (1.8)	18 (31.6)	38 (66.7)
We decide courses based on the consensus of students with special educational needs and the people around them.	0 (0)	4 (7.0)	15 (26.3)	38 (66.7)
We deepen the self-understanding of students with special educational needs in career guidance.	1 (1.8)	4 (7.0)	24 (42.1)	28 (49.1)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

Table 9 shows the current status of special needs understanding education for other students. It was found that most high schools did not conduct education about disabilities and the handicapped to the students around students with special educational needs (8.8%), invite outside lecturers to perform special needs understanding education (3.5%), hold instructional activities or classes that feature the theme of social welfare (7.0%), or hold interchanges with individuals with disabilities in special schools or welfare facilities (0%) frequently. However, it was also found that some high schools conduct education about disabilities and the handicapped to the students around students with special educational needs (38.6%), invite outside lecturers to perform special needs understanding education (30.4%), hold instructional activities or classes that feature the theme of social welfare (45.6%), and hold interchanges with individuals with disabilities in special schools or welfare facilities (24.6%) to a certain extent.

<Table 9> The current status of special needs understanding education for other students

Items about special support	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Very much
We conduct education about disabilities and the handicapped to the students around students with special educational needs.	11 (19.3)	19 (33.3)	22 (38.6)	5 (8.8)
We invite outside lecturers to perform special needs understanding education.	25 (43.1)	16 (8.9)	14 (30.4)	2 (3.5)
We hold instructional activities or classes that feature the theme of social welfare.	15 (26.3)	12 (21.1)	26 (45.6)	4 (7.0)
We hold interchanges with individuals with disabilities in special schools or welfare facilities.	34 (59.6)	9 (15.8)	14 (24.6)	0 (0)

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

#### IV. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we examined the present condition of special needs education in high schools in Japan. In particular, we examined the current status of the numbers of students with special educational needs in each high schools and the current status of the special educational support in each high schools. We describe and discuss these results in detail below.

##### 1. Current Status of the Number of Students with Special Educational Needs

Regarding the current status of the number of students with special educational needs in Japanese high schools in this research, we found the following two features. First, the results of this study show that students with some difficulty in school life entered most high schools. In particular, it showed that students who have individualized educational plans, those diagnosed with developmental disabilities, truants or students who refuse to go to school, those with difficulty in social interaction, and those with behavioral problems are enrolled in most high schools. These results are similar to those of Seki et al. (2017). In other words, students with special educational needs are enrolled in most high schools in Japan, which provide special support or special accommodation for these students. In addition, our results also show that the number of high schools where students with developmental disabilities are enrolled has increased greatly over the figures found by Uchino and Takahashi (2006) about 10 years ago. This result suggests that inclusive education in high school in Japan has been changing. Inclusive educational systems have become a central global issue in education measures since “special needs education” was positioned in the framework of “Education for All” in the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice in Special Needs Education (Han et al., 2013; Han, Yano, Kohara, & Okuzumi, 2015). Han et al. (2013) pointed out that the environment for realizing inclusive education has not been sufficiently developed while the philosophy of inclusive education is slowly penetrating Japanese society. In this regard, many high school students with special educational needs or students diagnosed with developmental disabilities were probably able to enter ordinary high schools because the philosophy of inclusive education has spread (Seki et al., 2017). However, penetration of the philosophy of inclusive education does not mean that special support for the students with special educational needs has been sufficiently implemented or is adequate, as Han et al. (2013) pointed out. Therefore, as will be described below, it is important to prepare a special educational support system for ordinary high schools. In particular, it is important to provide opportunities to improve students’ social skill and appropriate classroom environment for students with behavioral problems in high school because it was also shown that more than 20 students with difficulty in social interaction or with behavioral problems have been enrolled in some high schools. Second, this study showed that students diagnosed with mental illness and students needing support for foreign

nationality were enrolled in some high schools. Many studies have pointed out that the number of individuals with psychiatric disorders or with mental illness and immigrants or individuals whose native language is not Japanese have been increasing in Japan (Ishimaru, 2017; Uehara, 2005, 2009). For this reason, students diagnosed with mental illness and students needing support for foreign nationality have enrolled in some high schools, suggesting the need for support for students diagnosed with mental illness and students needing support for foreign nationality.

## **2. Current Status of the Special Support for Students with Special Educational Needs**

As characteristics of the current status of the special support for students with special educational needs studied in this research, the following four broad characteristics have been found.

First, teachers in high school tend not to assess the characteristics and difficulties of students with objective indicators, such as intelligence scales, developmental scales, or checklists for behavioral evaluation, but assess these characteristics and difficulties by observing students' learning and living conditions. This tendency is likely due to a lack of instruments with objective indicators to assess psychological and social characteristics of adolescents in Japan. Currently, various scales for assessing the psychological and social characteristics of infants and children, including the Wechsler Intelligent Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV) and Tanaka-Binet Intelligence Scale V, are frequently used. Moreover, many checklists that can assess the psychological and social characteristics of infants and children more easily have been developed and used in the field of special needs education (Hongo, Iijima, Takahashi, Koizumi, Hirakawa, & Kamiya, 2015; Miyazaki, Nishimura, Murakawa, Mori, & Hashimoto, 2014; Ozaki, Kobayashi, Mizuuchi, & Abe, 2013). On the other hand, attempts to develop a checklist to assess psychological and social characteristics in adolescents have been proceeding apace in recent years (Funabiki & Murai, 2017), but these checklists have not sufficiently penetrated the educational system of high schools. Therefore, it is important to promote to use the development of scales and checklists for assessing psychological and social characteristics in adolescence and disseminate them to high school teachers. In addition, it is also important to develop these development of scales and checklists which is more easy to use.

Second, many high schools were trying to collaborate with faculty members in the school to support students with special educational needs. However, these high schools have not been able to obtain sufficient cooperation with organizations outside the school to support these students. This result showed that many high schools frequently hold case meetings to understand the characteristics of students with special educational needs and examine ways to support them. On the other hand, it also showed that many high schools had not utilized patrol consultations with the expert team, such as region coordinators, or held workshops about special needs education. Moreover, we found that many schools did not

cooperate with special educational schools, medical agencies, support centers for individuals with developmental disabilities, welfare facilities such as day services after school, or consultation facilities such as employment support centers for individuals with disabilities. As the background of these results, it is likely that the consciousness of collaboration with organizations outside school is sparse in many high school teachers. In other words, many high school teachers tend to think that all special support for students with special educational needs must be done by themselves. Currently, some research has reported that teachers in Japan did not have the consciousness of collaboration with organizations outside school sufficiently (Yano & Yonemizu, 2016), and high school teachers in Japan did not have enough knowledge about organizations outside school (Himeno, Seki, Adachi, & Kondo, 2017). This suggests that the consciousness of collaboration with organizations outside school is sparse in high schools in Japan. Therefore, it is important for high school teachers in Japan to provide information about various institutions outside the school and to hold training on cooperation with organizations outside the school, such as medical institution or development support centers.

Third, many high schools did not fully consider accommodation for students with special educational needs in entrance and regular examination and evaluation, while they did provide a variety of support, including appropriate career guidance based on their assessments. In recent years, research on test accommodations for students with disabilities and special educational needs has been accumulating (Lovett & Leja, 2015; Sireci, Scarpati, & Li, 2005). Also, in Japan, the provision of reasonable accommodation is now obligatory in local public organizations. Nevertheless, this result suggests that it was difficult for high schools in Japan to implement a reasonable test accommodation. One of the reasons for the difficulty in implementing a reasonable test accommodation is probably that high school teachers assume that it is unfair for other students to implement reasonable accommodation in examination and evaluation. Some research pointed to the possibility that other students felt it was unfair to see a particular student with special educational needs receiving reasonable accommodation in examinations and evaluations or hearing about it from someone else (Kajiwara, Asakawa, Tanaka, & Fukui, 2012; Kanetsuki, 2017). Therefore, high school teachers could not implement reasonable accommodation in examinations and evaluations due to concerns about other students' feelings of unfairness. Based on this possibility, it is necessary to provide appropriate information about methods of reasonable accommodation in examinations and evaluations to high school teachers through holding workshops.

Fourth, many high schools did not hold special-needs-understanding education for other students. In Japan, many elementary schools and junior high schools perform special needs understanding education for other students, and studies of these practice have accumulated (Fujita, Oishi, Tsunoda, & Nagase, 2018; Kanamori, Imaeda, & Kusunoki, 2016; Nishidate, 2009). In addition, some colleges and universities hold special-needs-



understanding education for other students, and studies of these practice have also accumulated (Hondo, Kawaguchi, Wakamatsu, Hayashida, Mutaguchi, Kawai, & Chikurinji, 2017; Tsunoda, Oishi, Nagase, & Fujita, 2018). These studies showed that many children and students acquired knowledge of various disabilities and positive attitudes towards people with disabilities through lecture on various disabilities, disability simulations, and exchange activities with people with disabilities. However, the results of this study show that the characteristics of special-needs-understanding education in high schools are different from those in elementary schools, junior high schools, colleges, and universities. Therefore, it is considered necessary to promote special needs understanding education for other students in high schools in Japan through lecture on various disabilities, disability simulations, and exchange activities with people with disabilities.

To reiterate, there is sufficient special needs education and special support provision at all the high schools despite the enrollment of students with special educational needs. Therefore, it is necessary to provide substantial support for students with special educational needs at high school based on the findings of this research. In particular, it is necessary to introduce an assessment tool to high schools to delineate student characteristics, to ensure sufficient cooperation with organizations outside the school, to consider accommodations in entrance and regular examinations and evaluations, and to conduct special-needs-understanding education.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include the following two points. First, the high schools targeted in this study were limited to high schools in one prefecture. Educational policies in Japan are known to differ in each prefecture. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to high schools throughout Japan. Thus, it will be necessary to conduct similar surveys nationwide in future research. Second, the validity of the questionnaire used in this study has not been sufficiently ascertained, because we created this questionnaire independently for this study. Recently, other questionnaires, such as the Inclusive Education Assessment Indicator (IEAI), have been developed to evaluate the implementation of special education at high schools (Han et al., 2015). Based on this, it will be necessary to confirm the validity of the questionnaire used in this research by performing a correlation analysis of this questionnaire and IEAI in future research.

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