

Introduction

Since Tokyo Gakugei University's selection to participate in the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)'s Model Project for Inclusive Education System Development in 2014, its Department of Special Needs Education has taken the lead in implementing and studying inclusive education in partnership with our affiliated institution, Koganei Elementary School.

In particular, since 2018 the university has aimed to bring about inclusive education that makes use of ICT, and has been proactive in disseminating information on this topic. Its implementation and study of inclusive education has taken advantage of the opportunities offered by MEXT projects such as the Research Project to Assess Use of Learning Support Devices and Other Educational Materials (2018–2019) and the Research Project on Methods of Course Instruction for Schoolchildren and Others Who May Have Developmental Disabilities (2019–2020).

For this year's International Collaborative Program for Education in a New Era (a program administered annually by MEXT), the plan was to implement a research project focused on sending teachers to Northern Europe as a means of learning about practices there. The project was to be entitled An Investigation of Inclusive Education through Comparison with Learning Support Implemented in Countries Overseas. Unfortunately, however, as a result of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, plans had to be changed substantially.

Under these circumstances, opportunities were created for children in Japan and Denmark to interact online, and by collaborating to implement this online project, teachers in the two countries were able to learn from each other about inclusive education and other educational issues. Just at that time, use of ICT in educational settings within schools had become a pressing issue ahead of Japan's implementation of its GIGA School Project; I believe that this project with Denmark contributed greatly to addressing that issue as well.

I hope that the outcomes of this project can offer a coronavirus-stricken world the courage and hope to believe that use of ICT can achieve a tremendous amount, even through online interaction alone, and that it is possible to pursue inclusive education by leveraging ICT.

I would like to close by expressing my sincere appreciation to MEXT and everybody else involved in giving this valuable opportunity to Tokyo Gakugei University and our affiliated institution, Koganei Elementary School.

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