



Sociocultural Barriers and the "High-Context" Challenge to Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the sociocultural dimensions of disability in 21st-century Japan, focusing on the impact of "high-context" communication and societal stigma. In Japan's high-context culture, meaning is often conveyed through implicit cues, silence, and social harmony (wa). For children with developmental or intellectual disabilities who may struggle with subtle interpersonal dynamics, this communication style poses a significant barrier to social integration. Through a thematic content analysis of existing literature, this article identifies deep-seated prejudices, such as the perception of disability as a sign of a "spoiled child," which contribute to the marginalization of nearly 356,000 special-needs children. Social isolation is further exacerbated by serious bullying incidents and a lack of community awareness. The study examines how these cultural patterns influence family dynamics, often forcing families into a cycle of secrecy to avoid social shame. Findings suggest that while inclusive education policies exist, they are frequently undermined by traditional norms that prioritize collective conformity over individual difference. The paper argues for a paradigm shift in social awareness, moving from sympathy to empowerment. Recommendations include large-scale advocacy campaigns and the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to foster empathy and bridge the gap between "regular" and "special" societal tracks.



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Introduction

One of the recent developments that Japan has achieved, is setting up certain kinds of medical institutions specifically to handle medical requirements of children with special needs. These specialized types of medical institutions strive to provide high quality medical services that are custom made for the group they serve. Another way this has happened is through specially set up medical facilities and having so-called *sowaifukushi-in* who are trained as coordinators in matters concerning medicine and welfare among other things. Based on this, their dedication ensures that all the needs of special needs kids at all levels- from health to security are met.

In addition to this, there are also various developmental disabilities that require support for their children which is why a detailed five-tiered support structure has been developed. At the government level, a particular developmental consultation support center is set up to offer important first step advices to families. This center plays an important role in alerting families on the services of the support organizations which hence will solve most of their children's problems and needs developmentally. On the other hand, development was made on carrying out more effectively internal consultative services within schools, with provision of essential in-campus medical care outright. This helps not only in improving educational environment but also in creating better partnership with municipal authorities even before formal school entry. Additionally, this initiative was established recently in 2020 so that early group activities may be enhanced and prompt interventions given towards meeting specific needs of children individually. (Ministry of Health L. a., 2020). In Japan, the focus of mental health care for children with special needs often leans more towards general childcare and preventing abuse, rather than specialized support. This is because the systems and structures needed for targeted care are still quite underdeveloped. This situation is especially worrying for children with developmental disabilities, like autism, as they

really struggle because they don't have easy access to the crucial support offered by child and adolescent mental health services.

As a result, parents, particularly mothers, frequently find themselves dealing with significant emotional stress and often experience symptoms of depression. This is closely tied to the constant and demanding nature of their caregiving roles. On top of this, the availability of psychiatric services for people with intellectual disabilities, along with support for their families, is alarmingly scarce. This means it simply doesn't have the proper means to effectively treat their complex needs in mental health. Further, a shortfall of competent professionals in this field stagnates developing and delivering specialized treatment for patient children and their families, without which they can hardly make a success-of-life (Wahab, R., Ramli, F. F. A., 2022). Child welfare workers are facing so much difficulty trying to help vulnerable children, since child welfare seems to be coming from quite different directions from mental health. This challenge is compounded by the stigma surrounding mental health issues and the clear distrust many people feel towards psychiatric care, which really disheartens caseworkers. On top of this, there's a persistent scarcity of qualified child and adolescent mental health professionals, and they aren't evenly distributed geographically. This means the mental health services available are often not great in quality and hard to get to. These difficulties seemed to become compounded by the fact that the many misconceptions around what these practitioners do impede the very possibility of creating effective support systems that could help these young ones. (Tateno, M., Inagaki, T., Saito, T.; Guerrero, A. P. S., & Skokauskas, N., 2017).

For years, attention was heavily placed on special education systems, but now there's a greater focus on integrating people with special needs into society. While some steps have been taken towards this integration, individuals with special needs and their families continue to face ongoing societal challenges. These difficulties indirectly impact the educational system as well. Certain areas have put forward different plans for

integration based on what they can manage, but there isn't yet a well-developed, nationwide system in place to carry out these efforts comprehensively.

Support programs are available to help children with special needs feel more included. For instance, since the 1950s, parents of deaf children have created groups to champion the use of sign language and help their kids integrate better. This led to the formation of a national group, the Federation of Parents' Associations for the Deaf, way back in 1970. Then, the Foundation for the Promotion of Education on Deafness started in 1995. This foundation shares information and offers sign language interpreting services, all aimed at boosting social inclusion, helping with job training, and supporting expertise in deaf education. As education for these children has improved, job prospects have also grown. Some companies are really stepping up, actively hiring people with special needs. They don't just offer supportive workplaces; they also set a great example for what inclusive employment can look like.

You know, community programs and job opportunities really play a crucial role in helping children with special needs feel included in Japan (Nurullayevna, I. S.; Maxmud, X. Z., & Jaloliddin, M. S., 2025). Lately, there's been a noticeable increase in support for students facing developmental challenges. This shift seems to be tied to various social and economic struggles that families are dealing with, along with a growing awareness of disabilities and better training for professionals.

Literature Review

Historically, folks with disabilities in Japan have faced some serious hurdles when it comes to finding stable jobs. It's been tough, to say the least. Back in 1960, the Japanese government made a significant move by introducing the Employment Quota System. You know, it's pretty surprising that, despite all the tweaks and changes this law has gone through over the years, the minimum requirement to hire at least 1.8% of individuals with disabilities hasn't budged an inch. I mean, really? It's kind of hard to believe.

Research shows that with the right focus on education, skills, and building confidence, people with mild disabilities can really boost their job prospects. Take Michiko Noboriguchi, for instance. So, she's a social worker, right? Plus, she actually lives with cerebral palsy and gets around in a wheelchair. I mean, that's pretty inspiring, don't you think? Before she could even think about college, she had to figure out her own transportation and make sure she could access essential facilities like restrooms—because, believe it or not, universities didn't have systems in place for personal assistance. (Sorensen, 2018).

Then there's Mark Bookman, a research fellow who also uses a wheelchair. He pointed out that many Japanese universities don't offer centralized resources for students with disabilities. Sure, there are laws like the Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities that say "reasonable accommodation" is a must, but the law doesn't really clarify what that means.

These stories really bring to light a frustrating truth, don't they? Even though there are laws meant to help, students with disabilities still face all kinds of challenges when trying to access higher education. It's just not fair. It's clear there's a pressing need for more proactive measures to support these students. (Sorensen, 2018).

You know, there are quite a few programs out there focused on helping individuals with disabilities who are already in the workforce. They offer crucial employment counseling and tailored training to really support these folks in their careers.

Now, if we take a step back in time, formal special needs education kicked off way back in 1879. It specifically aimed at children dealing with blindness and deafness. Can you image that? That was a huge leap forward for organized education for kids with significant disabilities. It truly laid the groundwork for a society that's more inclusive.

Then, in 1947, we saw the introduction of the Fundamental Law of Education. This was a big deal because it laid down the rules for ensuring that children with disabilities could access compulsory education. Honestly, it was a game-

changer. This legislation was all about making sure that kids, regardless of their impairments, could get a basic education just like their peers. It was a big step towards promoting equality and inclusion in schools.

So, here's the deal: under this Fundamental Law, kids with visual or hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, or physical disabilities are actually provided with a formal education through the compulsory education system. Pretty important, right? And let's not overlook the ones who might have multiple disabilities or different developmental challenges. They're not left behind either; they get a whole lot of care and support, all thanks to child welfare services. It's all about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Furthermore, there is important legislation, which focuses on the rights and needs of the children. This is known as the Special Child Welfare Act. This Act allows for these children to have access to the help and protection that is required. It used to be known as the Handicapped Children's Protection Act. This Act really symbolizes a commitment to protecting and empowering children with disabilities.

And let's not overlook the Services and Supports for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, established back in 1988. It's been updated many times to keep up with the changing needs of individuals with disabilities. You can really see how our understanding of disability has evolved over time through these changes in legislation. It's kind of fascinating, isn't it? It does seem, honestly, like society is becoming aware and conscious of awareness and inclusion as of late. There are signs of a change in thinking about disability, no? It feels like we are beginning to think about things differently, and this is worthy of praise.

It's all about enhancing the quality of life and educational opportunities for every child, making sure they have the chance to thrive—not just in school, but beyond that too. You know, when you really stop and think about it, it's quite inspiring.

Bureaucracy and administrative hurdles are big challenges for kids with special needs in Japan. To be honest, there continues to be some BIG

STUMPS to getting access to that resources, they are really that resource. Frustrating, isn't it? Education for these children is, in many ways, pretty organized, but when it comes to finding proper medical and mental health services? That's where things get tricky. Sure, the government makes all these thoughtful statements about supporting kids with special needs, but the reality is there's a lot of uncertainty about how best to help this vulnerable group.

Now, Japan's approach to special needs education is quite unique. They use a multi-track system that separates kids with disabilities from their peers. This is a real contrast to the inclusive models that the United Nations recommends. It definitely creates a divide and really shows how much we need to work towards a more unified society. To make that happen, we've got to get regular and special education systems to collaborate more. But, oh boy, one of the biggest challenges we face is figuring out how to allocate resources. The money spent on welfare services for students with disabilities is getting close to what's spent on public assistance, and that raises some serious questions about how sustainable and effective this is.

The Comprehensive Measures for Promoting Children's Growth, which is the present framework, does call for capital investments in core areas such as education, childcare, and community support. The thing is, it doesn't really cater to the specific needs of kids with disabilities.

Analysis

Then there's this cultural perception that disabilities are somehow just a sign of a "spoiled child," which is a huge barrier in society. Plus, bullying is a real issue for students with disabilities. Take this heartbreaking example from Mie Prefecture: a 17-year-old boy with an intellectual disability was filmed in a school restroom by two high school students, and that video ended up on social media. Can you imagine? This led him to miss school for quite a while, and the school had to classify it as serious bullying. His mom really stressed the importance of having effective preventive measures and safer environments at school. That is a fair point—

having legislation or policy is no guarantee of well-being/inclusion of this child. (Peckitt, 2025).

You know, the stigma and discrimination that parents of kids with disabilities face can actually keep so many families in a cycle of secrecy and isolation. Not easy! This deep-rooted bias against people with disabilities makes it super hard for these parents to come together and form groups based on their children's specific needs.

It's a shame, really, because disability still feels like this taboo subject that people shy away from in everyday conversations. It kinda echoes those dark days in history when ignorance reigned supreme. Often families hesitate to access support services or community programs, afraid of being stigmatized or feeling like outsiders in their own neighborhoods. (Ito, H.; Chang-Leung, C.; & Poudyal, H., 2022).

Now, on a brighter note, inclusion is a key strategy we see for bringing students with special needs into regular classrooms. There are some interesting case studies that showcase positive results from this approach. In one instance, teachers who were purposely trained in special education directly provided support, while the other three cases had indicated support in a more indirect manner. What's fascinating is that the first two cases show how important it is for special education and regular teachers to communicate effectively. Even in the lower grades, when direct support isn't always possible, just having those special educators and classroom teachers working together consistently can really keep inclusive education alive and well. (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012).

Let's dive into how we can successfully bring children with special needs into mainstream schools by looking at three interesting case studies. First up, we have a strategy that came about five years ago in a Japanese elementary school. They've taken the Universal Design for Learning principles and applied them to an early math class. It's pretty cool—seven teachers, both regular and special education, teamed up to help one student who has both developmental and learning disabilities. Together, they're not just hitting the national curriculum goals; they're also working on social skills and daily living skills.

Next, we shift our focus to some inspiring stories from the United States and the United Kingdom. Over there, inclusive education has really taken off, moving away from those old segregated systems for kids with developmental disabilities. Isn't it fantastic to see that momentum towards inclusive practices?

Finally, let's discuss Transition Theory. It relates to how we can support children through significant transitions, like beginning primary or secondary school. You know, it really comes down to making careful choices that help bring kids with special needs into mainstream classrooms. It's not just about policies or rules; it's about creating an environment where all children can learn together, right? So, there you have it—a blend of theory and practice that can really make a difference. (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012).

You know, when we look at the education and living conditions for kids with special needs in Japan, it's clear that things have gotten better over the past few years. To be fair, there are so many hurdles still to jump over, and Japan, well, it's not there yet in terms of it timely helping everybody, right?

People are starting to understand that children with disabilities can be educated and social serviced the same as children without disabilities, which is a start, and it can merely grow from there, but there's still a long way to go before it all settles in.

And it's interesting the number of kids needing specialized help is on the rise. In fact, more than a third of these children have intellectual disabilities, and then you have those with physical challenges and sensory issues right behind them. Moreover, let us not overlook children with combinations of these disabilities or children who may have developmental disabilities in addition to their disabilities. There's a lot to unpack here. (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012).

So, the Education Ministry has this system where disabilities are grouped into six categories. You know, a big chunk of students falls under intellectual disabilities, but there are also four other groups: physical disabilities, deafness or

hard-of-hearing, blindness and visual impairments, and then, multiple disabilities. The sixth group is all about developmental disorders. Since April 2016, special needs education has been available for kids with disabilities aged four to 20.

The whole point of the Special Needs Education System? It's really about helping kids with disabilities go to school with their friends and get a decent education along with the social services they need. Special schools focus on students facing intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, deafness, blindness, and multiple disabilities. And for those kids who struggle to keep up in regular classes due to specific disabilities or health issues, there are specialized classes. Additionally, typical classrooms may be established with enhanced scaffolding for children exhibiting potential learning, behavioral, or developmental disorders.

Now, let's talk about healthcare. Providing medical services is super important for supporting children with special needs. This group includes kids with physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as developmental disabilities that show up early in life. Recently, there has been a focus on scrutinizing social indicators, access to healthcare, and inpatient services for children and the geography of pediatric providers. For example, it is critical to place children with serious conditions into pediatric intensive care units so that they can receive timely and appropriate care. (Ehara, 2018).

In regard to children receiving health care assistance, it ultimately boils down to the access to available services. For real, children with special needs will always be the most vulnerable. So, issues about accessibility are a big deal – both practically speaking and in terms of understanding. You can break these concerns down into two main questions: First, how accessible are the services? And second, how good are the services once you manage to access them? They're different, but both are often wrapped up in the broader idea of access. This encompasses not just the physical presence of doctors and facilities but also whether families have the means to actually use those services.

That brings us to the importance of resources, knowing how to navigate the system, and the ability to judge whether the services received are up to par. Each of these factors contributes to a sense of having enough power to utilize health care when they made it through the door. (Hiroyuki Ariyasu, & Takashi Akamizu, 2018).

Children who need a little more help still have many impediments as they engage the school and society. There is a movement towards inclusive education in accordance with the values of the Basic Act of Education - policymakers are moving toward that objective. For students who struggle in general classrooms, there are special-education schools which serve as an option. (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012).

In fact, advocates no longer center their movement on "special education" as we have traditionally known it; rather, the focus has moved toward a more expansive, inclusive, and understandable idea of special needs education. This change really aims to meet the educational needs of kids with mild developmental disabilities. So, the government has been working on creating "special support classes" in regular schools. This is a big deal, especially since we've seen a noticeable rise in the number of students joining these classes over the last decade. At the same time, more kids are attending other institutions designed for those who might struggle to learn alongside their peers. (Yoneda, 2020).

But here's the thing: we really need to dig deeper into research about social integration and employment. Recognizing the particular needs of these children is vital in order to find solutions and responsive support. Plus, we can't forget about researching how stigma forms and how we can set up social support systems. Gaining an understanding of these issues will also assist us in creating strategic anti-discrimination policy which all children with special needs can feel part of.

Honestly, if we want to improve the standing of these kids in society, we need a more proactive approach to policy advocacy. Think about it—strategically campaigning to highlight the support these children need and spreading the word about successful government policies that usually only

experts know about could really engage the public and politicians alike. Bringing in civil society organizations for advocacy, like what other developed countries do, could also make a big difference in collaboration and effectiveness.

Looking ahead, it's super important for ongoing research initiatives to keep moving forward. Pairing that with a strong push to implement the recommendations from the Last Special Needs Education Promotion Council report over the next couple of decades is key. All of these steps will help create a stronger, fairer future for kids with special needs, ensuring they get to fully participate and feel included in Japanese society. (Inoue, Y.; Umebayashi, H.; Matsui, T.; Nishiyama, S.; Sakurai, I.; Maru, M.; Takeda, T.; Tanigawa, K.; Miyamae, T., 2022).

You know, there's been more focus on children with special needs in Japan lately. Research in special education shows how support is being tailored to meet individual needs (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012). A recent national survey even pinpointed students who need special educational support in regular classrooms. Plus, another report talks about the future of special-needs education, detailing support systems for kids with learning disabilities, ADHD, and high-functioning autism. You know, there are actually a lot of exciting possibilities when it comes to creating a framework for educational support systems. You know, it really comes down to figuring out the best combination of resources and strategies to help students succeed. To be honest, it's pretty incredible when you stop to think about it—how a good support system can be such a game changer in education. It's like we have the tools and resources to make such a significant impact.

In Japan, advocacy for children with special needs fundamentally depends upon reconciling the realities of past practices with current advocacy efforts. As we advocate, we stand on the shoulders of those in the past - who have both modeled and attempted to secure better conditions for children with special needs. We are all in the business of connecting the past and what worked then, and what is still required for kids moving forward. Many public interest groups advocate for laws

that not only make things more physically accessible for these children but create pathways for children with special needs to transition and shine in such areas.

It's not just the nonprofits and social workers—private companies and public organizations are getting in on the act too, advocating for better job opportunities. And let's not forget the vital role that social workers and nonprofit organizations play; they offer the technical support needed to help these children maintain their jobs.

What's interesting is that community-based support is really taking off, especially in rural areas. It's becoming a real lifeline. And overall, the approach championed by the United Nations and other international banks focuses on education for special needs kids through a human-centered lens. This means putting dignity at the forefront, which is such an important theme for fostering development. It's all about inclusion and value, isn't it?

Major Findings

As of the year 2013, Japan was reported to have a striking total of nearly 361,696 children with disabilities enrolled in both elementary and junior high schools spread across the entirety of the nation. According to comprehensive data sourced from the Education Support Section, an impressive 429,657 of these children required specific, individualized, and highly tailored instruction to effectively meet their distinctive and unique educational needs throughout that same time period. Notably, among this considerable population of children with disabilities, those diagnosed with developmental disabilities constituted a remarkable portion, accounting for around 60% of the total, which reflects a significant challenge faced in various educational settings throughout the country. So, here's the thing: there were around 69,933 kids attending special needs schools. These schools are really crafted to fit their unique educational needs, which is super important for their growth and learning. You know, they provide crucial support that helps these kids develop overall.

Now, when we look at the types of disabilities,

about 17% of the kids have sensory disabilities. That's a significant portion, showing just how varied the challenges these children face can be. And then there's intellectual disabilities, which make up around 34.9 % of the kids with disabilities. Lastly, it is noteworthy that physical disabilities made up approximately 8% of this diverse spectrum of disabilities represented among children. With such a wide range of disabilities, it really highlights how essential it is to have educational approaches that are tailored to each child. We need effective support systems in place to help every single one of them thrive. It's all about meeting them where they are, right? (Special Needs Education Division, 2017).

As of February 2020, Japan has officially documented a total of 4,360,000 individuals living with physical disabilities, in addition to 1,082,000 individuals who are classified as having intellectual disabilities, and an additional 4,193,000 individuals who are living with mental disabilities. Collectively, this represents a significant portion of the population, totaling approximately 7.6 % of the entire populace residing in the country. These figures serve to illustrate the extensive scope over which special assistance is both medically and economically mandated. Furthermore, they allow for a comprehensive assessment of how effectively these critical services have been implemented at both the national and local levels throughout the country, ensuring that all individuals with special needs can receive the support and education they require to thrive. (Ministry of Health L. a, 2020).

The designation of provides additional status for individuals with certain disabilities. Welfare services extend support to those with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or mental health conditions requiring assistance with daily activities. A considerable number of children with special needs also benefit from these services due to welfare certificates.

You know, this goal really pops up in a lot of education policy statements and reforms these days. They're all about encouraging collaboration between special schools and mainstream ones. The idea? To boost educational opportunities for

everyone — and create a space where diversity is not just accepted but really celebrated.

One cool way to really make a difference, especially in those early elementary classrooms, is by using Universal Design for Learning principles. Honestly, it's a smart and practical approach that aims to ensure every kid—regardless of where they come from or what unique needs they have—has a fair chance to learn, grow, and truly thrive in their educational journey.

But here's the thing that's kind of worrying: about 3.2 % of junior high students end up missing school for over a year. Can you believe that? It really makes you think about what we can do to help those kids.

that time, many miss out on the mental health treatment they desperately need. It's alarming, right? Over 65% of schools have counselors whose main job is to link students with community health services. Yet, despite this, a lot of withdrawn students and those who are bullied—like, there were 681,948 reported incidents—don't get the support they truly need. And what's even more frustrating is that interventions aimed at the bullies themselves are pretty few and far between.

Take Shiga Prefecture, for example. Small proportion of young people there managed to get professional mental health services, and just another 2% were nudged to see healthcare providers. That really highlights a major gap in outreach. And even with these efforts in place, only a minority of those referred for care saw any improvement in their mental health. Meanwhile, a significant portion didn't notice any change or, worse, saw their mental well-being decline. It's definitely something we need to think about more seriously.

The number of students enrolled in integrated placement programs has grown approximately threefold in the past decade, presently encompassing some 90,270 individuals (2015), while specialized support classes have doubled to about 201,493 (2015), approximately 17,000 of whom have severe disabilities comparable to those in special schools. Educational support for

children with special needs has increased two- to threefold over ten years, now including roughly 137,894 students. Among regular classroom placements, approximately 2,400 students have severe disabilities. (Special Needs Education Division, 2017).

The proportion of children receiving special-support services has fluctuated since the 1970s, declining through the early 1990s before increasing and ultimately tripling between 1993 and 2013.

Alarmingly, only around 2.41% of these individuals succeed in obtaining jobs, whether they be regular, full-time positions or non-regular, part-time jobs. However, in the wake of the amendments made in April 2008 to the Law Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Disabled Persons, companies that fail to appropriately place disabled personnel in suitable positions aligned with their unique abilities, or that create work environments that are humiliating or detrimental to their dignity, or that subject them to substandard working conditions or excessive mental or physical burdens, face serious consequences, including fines and penalties. Unfortunately, many small- and medium-sized private enterprises in Japan struggle to enforce these critical legal provisions due to a severe scarcity of positions that are capable of offering meaningful and fulfilling work to individuals with disabilities. (Ministry of Health L.a, 2018).

The 1979 National Census of Schools for the Physically Handicapped played a critical role in assessing the needs of this demographic, providing essential data that influenced the planning and implementation of facilities and policies across the nation. It served not only as a tool for understanding the landscape of special needs education but also as a guiding force for future improvements and adaptations within the system.

Services that operate beyond the hardware notion of belonging remain more difficult to map. Therefore, focusing on the question of the provision of services in terms of physical and economic access, the type and quality of the health

services put in place, and finally the way those services translate into realizable opportunities, the boundaries of communal infrastructures can be assessed. The spatial resolution of access-related injustice can vary greatly from one part of a country to the other. The inability of one group to invest in a particular service necessary for their well-being nevertheless points to a more general situation of exclusion. Linking insights on the spatial scale at which exclusion is embodied might provide directions for a new mapping of social exclusion.

Additional surveys assess the development of support systems in schools and municipalities; data on the status of special-needs education and instruction for students requiring special educational support have been collected. Research points to the significance of instruction for students with LD and ADHD; an entry discusses the application of self-determination theory in Japanese special education contexts.

Educational programs adopt an innovative, enriched approach that acknowledges the diversity of human potential while building on the principle of universal design for learning. The World Federation of the Deaf has shared some really important recommendations aimed at enhancing the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of deaf people. You know, it's not just about making sure they're heard; it's about ensuring their voices are genuinely respected in every aspect of life. You know, it's essential for their inclusion and recognition. (Maebara, K.; & Yamaguchi, K.; & Ikeda, K.; & Takahashi, h., 2025).

Conclusion and Discussion

It is essential and urgent to ensure that all children, regardless of circumstances or prevailing difficulties, have the opportunity to learn, develop, and thrive in ways that are sensitive to the capacities and context of the child (Yoneda, 2020). In this regard, the need to serve students who need special-education services in regular education facilities is an important and urgent goal in social policy and is prized by many advocates and policymakers.

Moreover, ensuring equal opportunities for

children with special needs is not only a matter of policy but also of social justice, affecting families and communities at large.

Research indicates a strong trend where parents tend to hold markedly more positive perceptions of the educational experience when their children have the enriching opportunity to attend mainstream classrooms rather than being placed in separate, often more isolating, special-education settings. Consequently, parents often engage in vigorous lobbying efforts that aim to broaden their children's access to these inclusive educational environments, advocating tirelessly for policies that work to preclude any forms of exclusion from the mainstream educational experience.

However, you know that while we may feel that progress is made, in reality, families experience many hurdles - even some pretty intense stigma from society. It is unfortunate because it does ultimately diminish some of the benefit of inclusive education. Nonetheless, this is a proactive strategy that benefits not only the student requiring special education services but also enhances the learning environment for all children and builds community, empathy, and understanding.

In fact, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (2023) recognizes stigma and discrimination as one of the most serious societal challenges that many families continuously face in various areas of their lives. This emphasis highlights the inadequacy of available support within the community for those who are in dire need of assistance and guidance. Thus, these compounding issues lead to a range of societal challenges that provide powerful obstacles and barriers for children with special needs. They bring considerable attention to the critical areas that require dedicated efforts, vital resources, and improvements to enhance their integration, social acceptance, and overall well-being in society at large. It is vital and fundamental to address these imminent concerns to develop an inclusive space for children to thrive and fulfill their potential without the burden of stigma and bias.

Equally important, "Understanding the diverse

types of disabilities is crucial to designing effective educational and social support systems for children who require specialized care. "Physical disability encompasses a wide array of conditions that cause significant and lasting impairment to a limb or the trunk of the body, affecting individuals in numerous ways. This includes various health issues such as paralysis, joint dysfunction, amputations, cranial nerve disorders, as well as chronic respiratory diseases and heart conditions, along with other related medical issues that seriously affect physical functionality, mobility, and overall daily life.

Similarly, Intellectual disability is characterized as a significant intellectual or psychological impairment that originates before the individual reaches adulthood, often leading to challenges that are pronounced in nature. This type of disability frequently hinders the individual's ability to adapt socially and may notably impact their day-to-day functioning across various environments, both familial and societal. Conversely, mental impairment is meant to mean substantial and serious dysfunction caused by severe illness, such as schizophrenia, psychoneurotic disorders, or other comparable mental impairments, that can be a reservoir for day-to-day living. Generally, there may also be attached cognitive impairments and complications that highlight the urgent need for additional legislative clarification and specificity. Therefore, Legislative measures are vital in meeting those impacted with their various and individual needs to ensure that rights and support systems are in place.

At the same time, you know, when it comes to the variety of disabilities out there and all the unique challenges they bring, families really tend to think hard about their educational options. It's often about finding the best support they can get, right? Quality matters a lot in those decisions. Indeed, you know, the reality is that not all schools offer the same level of quality when it comes to special education. This inconsistency often leads parents to look for specialized schools instead. It's a tough choice, but many feel it's necessary to ensure their kids get the support they truly need. These schools generally have very capable teachers and the

appropriate and adequate facilities that can meet the specific needs of their children.

Consequently, this emphasis demonstrates the strong need to support and maintain existing special education schools, and to expand the special education school provision. Expansion of provision will ensure that all students with special needs receive the supported learning environment that is both robust and well-rounded. (Saito-Kitanosako, 2012).

“These educational frameworks directly impact how children with special needs integrate into society and influence the level of support families require at home.”

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Meanwhile, Mainstream schools are fundamentally designed to prepare students for their successful entry into various higher-education institutions. The academic goals set forth and the assessments conducted all conform meticulously to the established national curriculum. In a different vein, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Science takes charge in defining what constitutes an optimal learning environment specifically tailored for children with special needs. This is particularly true within dedicated special-education institutions that cater specifically to those needs.

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