



Research Regarding Human Resource Education Programs Using Social Skills Training (SST) —Workplace Communication Skill-up Seminar (Draft) Development—

(Research reports #113) Summary

[Keywords]

Human resource education, SST, Communication skills, Support skills for persons with disabilities, Instructional design, Work engagement

[Usage of this report]

In this research, a human resource education program (draft), aiming at supporting both employees with disabilities and employees who support those with disabilities in the workplace, has been developed to expand human resource education within companies. This draft is subject to further change and improvement. During the development process, basic structure and design of the program have been suggested to be effective in improving communication skills. This material is expected to be used in considering human resource education at companies employing persons with disabilities and support for employers at vocational support institutions.

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1 Author (In writing order)

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2 Research Period

FY2011 to 2012

3 Composition of the research report

Introduction: Scope of the research

Chapter 1: Summary of workplace communication skills improvement seminar

Chapter 2: Actual workplace communication skills improvement seminar

Chapter 3: Summary and future issues

4 Background and Purpose of Research

Human resource education is an important issue that many companies have in common. At companies employing persons with disabilities, human resource education is required for both employees with disabilities (Herein referred to as "Disabled employees") and employees that support those with disabilities in the workplace (Herein referred to as "Support employees"). For these two types of human resource education, communication skills are one of the most important skills; however, know-how and information regarding concrete education methods, etc. is limited and sufficient efforts are not currently being made.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to human resource education at companies employing persons with disabilities and support for employers at vocational support institutions. To this end, this research uses SST (Social Skills Training), one of the techniques that help acquire and improve communication skills, develop drafts for human resource education programs aiming at simultaneously supporting two types of human resource education for disabled employees and support employees, compiles trial results, and provides information.

5 Method

(1)Development of Workplace Communication Skills Improvement Seminar (Draft)

Through an employer needs survey and results of information gathering activities related to various training, a workplace communication skills improvement seminar (Draft) composed of two trainings, namely SST training with the main aim of improving communication skills of individuals and in the overall workplace, and partner training with the aim of improving skills for supporting persons with disabilities, has been developed. The draft has been developed with the aim of designing a training program where combinations of existing techniques and training strengthen their respective effects and where the program is enhanced through synergy effect in the learning process at which disabled employees and support employees are simultaneously educated (Fig. 1, Table 1).



Fig. 1 Purposes of the program

Table 1: Outline of workplace communication skills improvement seminar (basic plan)

	SST training	Partner training
Persons eligible for training	Disabled employees	Support employees
No. of trainings	Once a month Approx. 60 min x 7 times (Orientation x 1 time + 6 times)	Twice a month (1) Approx. 60 min x 8 times (Orientation x 1 time + 7 times) (2) Approx. 30 to 60 min x 7 times (Performed right after SST training)
Contents	SST sessions (Step-by-step method)	(1) Lectures on theory of cognitive behavioral therapy and disability traits, etc., SST member experience, etc. (2) Explanations of daily SST sessions

* Employment managers, etc. also participate in both. Support employees also participate in SST training as observers. If persons with disabilities are employed as support employees, they participate as support employees.

(2) Trial Implementation of Workplace Communication Skills Improvement Seminar (Draft)

In order to consider effects, etc. of the developed program, six offices from three companies in FY 2011 and five offices from four companies in FY 2012 cooperated in a trial.

6 Summarized Results of the Study

(1) Development process of workplace communication skills improvement seminar (Trial)

The program consisted of two parts: SST training based on a step-by-step method with the main purpose of improving communication skills of individuals and the whole workplace; and partner training whose purposes are to create a supporting environment that increases the effects of the SST training and to improve skills for supporting persons with disabilities.

SST training was implemented one to two times a month based on the curriculum menu created from the results of assessment interviews of disabled employees by support employees. Partner training was implemented once a month, separate from the SST training, with lectures on SST background theories, disability traits, etc. and with training on SST member experience, etc. in FY2011. In FY2012, lectures, etc. on the SST training right after the SST training was added to complement the training.

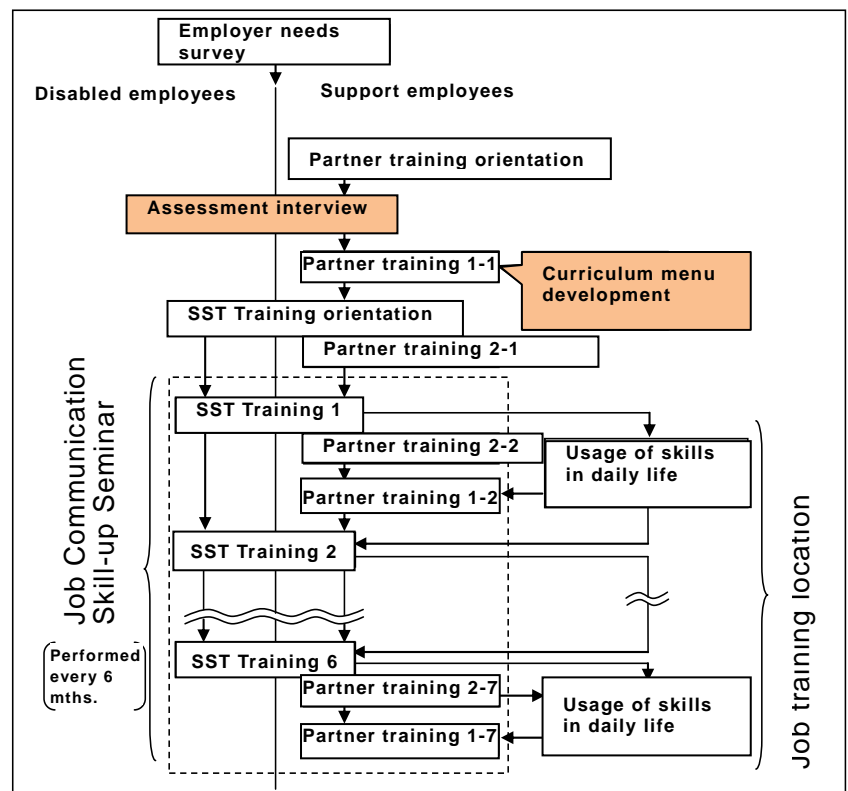


Fig. 2: Program flow

As for the flow of the program, after orientation and partner training to support personnel were implemented once, orientation of SST training was conducted, and SST training and partner training were implemented alternately for half a year (Fig. 2).

Table 2 A list of persons eligible for training in FY2011

	Company A				Company B	Company C
	Office a	Office b	Office c	Office d		
Disabled employees	16	16	5	5	15	19
Intellectual disability	5	5	5	4	2	2
Developmental Disability	10	3	0	1	2	1
Mental Disability	1	7	0	0	7	13
Physical Disability	0	1	0	0	4	3
Support employees	6	3	1	1	4	4

* The numbers in the table indicated the number of persons at the beginning of training.

One support employee at Office b of Company A and four support employees at Company B have disabilities.

A few other persons, such as employment managers, also participated.

(2) Trial Results of the Program

a. Trial Results of FY2011

In FY 2011, a trial was performed in cooperation with 76 disabled employees and 19 support employees from six offices of three companies (Table 2). In the trial, effects of the program were mainly considered based on self-assessment and assessment by others regarding skill utilization. Self-assessment of skill utilization was performed three times in total. Skills to be acquired in SST training were assessed before and after training and approximately one month after the program. The question, "How well do you think you can use those skills where needed?", was answered on a scale of one to five and the variation was measured. The assessment by others of skill utilization was used to measure assessment of support employees to behaviors of disabled employees and changes in recognition. Changes were measured before and after the program.

As a result, in almost all the skills in the self-assessment of skill utilization, significant increases have been observed in the rating scale values of skill utilization after SST training and one month after the whole program, compared with the values before the SST training (Fig.3). From the changes in the self-assessment of skill utilization before and after the SST training, it has been suggested that this training has immediate effects on many participants to improve confidence against skill utilization.

This improvement in confidence seems to have resulted from direct and immediate learning effects of SST training; namely, participants learned steps and practiced them on the spot and received positive feedback. Furthermore, from the changes in self-assessment before and after SST training and one month after the program, it has been suggested that this program has a long-term effect on many participants to maintain and improve confidence against skill utilization. This is a practice effect in living scenes other than SST training. The purpose of this program to strengthen effects of SST training by the synergy

Change in self-assessment of skill utilization (Company A)

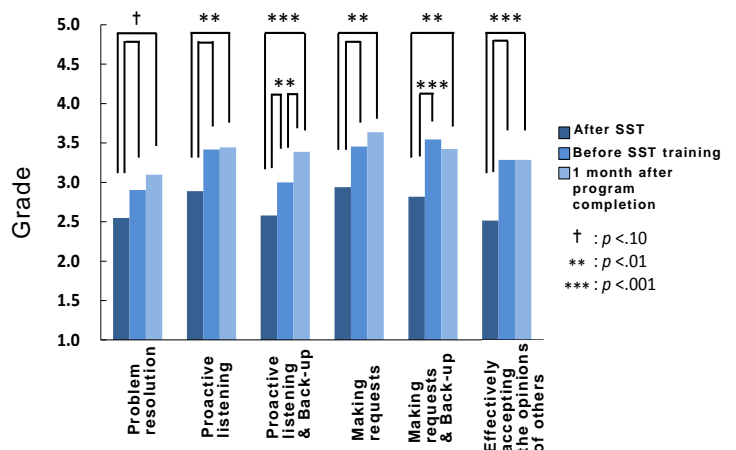


Fig. 3 Example of results of trial implementation in FY2011 (Self-assessment)

effects of SST training as a "Learning" place and workplace as a place to "Use skills" is considered to have been achieved.

Significant increases in rating scale values have been observed in many skills in the assessment by others from before the program to one month after the program (Fig. 4). There are two possible factors that have caused this result. One factor is changes in skills and behaviors of disabled employees; namely, generalization of the skill acquired in SST training has been promoted, and the skills are being well-used in the workplace. The other factor is the possibility that changes of recognition in support employees who performed assessment of others have occurred. Namely, there is a possibility that the ability to assess based on a strengths model where participants notice and acknowledge what they can do has been improved.

In either case, both self-assessment and assessment by others have improved. It is considered that these assessments interacted with each other and desirable changes were brought into the workplace.

Changes in self-assessment of skill utilization (Company A)

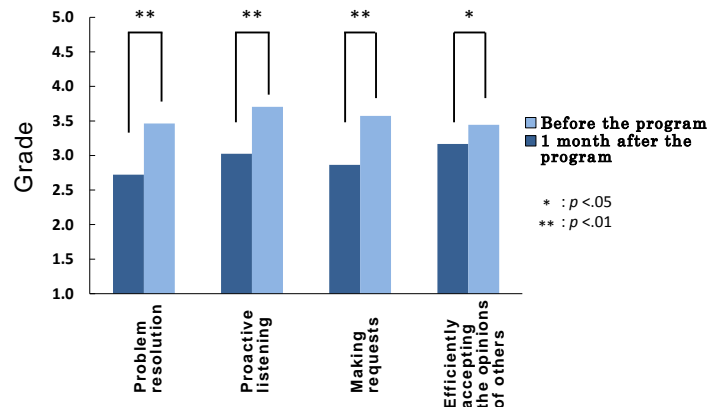


Fig. 4 Example of results of trial implementation in FY2011 (Assessment by others)

b. Trial Results of FY2012

Table 3 A list of persons eligible for training in FY2012

In FY2012, a trial was performed in cooperation with 26 disabled employees and 18 support employees from five offices of four companies (Table 3). In light of the trial results of FY 2011, the three kinds of trails have been implemented in FY2012: Basic plan which is an enhanced program of the partner training; follow-up training at the two companies where trials were completed in the last FY; and individual training at offices where one disabled employee and one support employee are employed respectively. The results have been compiled into a case report and effects of the programs have been reviewed based on behavioral changes and recognition of participants.

	Basic plan		Follow-up		Individual
	Company D	Company E	Company A Office d	Company C	Company A Office e
Disabled employees	8	7	5	5	1
Intellectual Disability	7	7	4	0	1
Developmental Disability	1	0	1	0	0
Mental Disability	0	0	0	5	0
Physical Disability	0	0	0	0	0
Support employees	11	3	1	2	1

* The numbers in the table indicate the number of persons at the beginning of training. Classification of disabled employees is based on types of disability certificates. Three of the persons counted in the mental disabilities column are prone to developmental disabilities. One support employee of Company D has a physical disability. A few other persons, such as employment managers, also participated.

In order to enhance partner training in the basic plan, lectures, etc. on SST were conducted after SST training, in addition to the lectures and SST experiences that have been performed

since the previous FY. Moreover, questions and concerns that support employees have in their daily supporting activities have been assessed using methods of behavior analysis and task analysis.

Cognitive behavioral therapy and SST structures have been integrated into partner training in such a way that the goal and the plan for realistic behavior were set, implementation of the plan in daily scenes was set as the homework, and review of the plan was carried out in the following training. From time to time, homework by disabled employees and concrete support to put communication skills into practice were set as homework for support employees. Efforts were made so that support employees putting support skills into practice became a trigger and enhancement of communication skills of disabled employees.

In light of the questionnaire results of the previous FY, SST training was performed as training with the aim of educating leaders among disabled employees. As a result, all persons eligible for training were persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities whose participation satisfaction was lower than those of persons with other disabilities in the previous FY's trial. Therefore, the training was conducted with efforts such as simplification of the language and description of the textbook, and provision of numerous opportunities for role-playing and practice in simpler contexts.

Since training of the skills acquired in SST training was effectively implemented with support from support employees, many cases of disabled employees who were able to generalize changes of behaviors seen in SST training into daily life have been reported. In order to support employees themselves, changes not only in their behaviors, but also in their recognition have been reported.

In the follow-up training, the textbook used in the previous FY's trial was used. In the first half, communication skills learned in the previous FY's trial were reviewed and, in the second half, problem-solving skills training which focuses on problems they currently have in their daily lives, was mainly performed in order to brush up skills. The period was half a year, which is the same as the basic plan. As a result of conducting SST training for more than one year in total, various changes in behaviors and recognition of disabled employees and support employees have been reported. In the follow-up training for four persons with mental disabilities at Company C, "General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)" and "Depression and Anxiety Cognition Scale (DACS)" were implemented. As a result of reviewing changes in automatic thoughts that provoke recognition of general self-efficacy of individuals, depression and anxiety, a possibility that the program has effects of changing automatic thoughts of participants into adaptive thoughts and of improving self-efficacy (Fig. 5, Fig. 6).

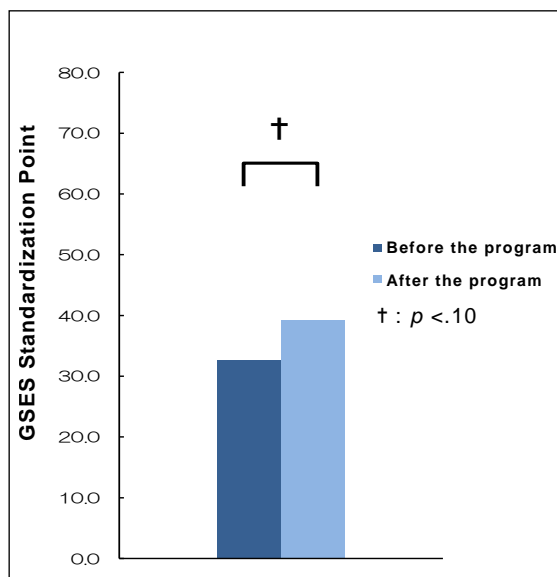


Fig. 5 Change of GSES before and after the program

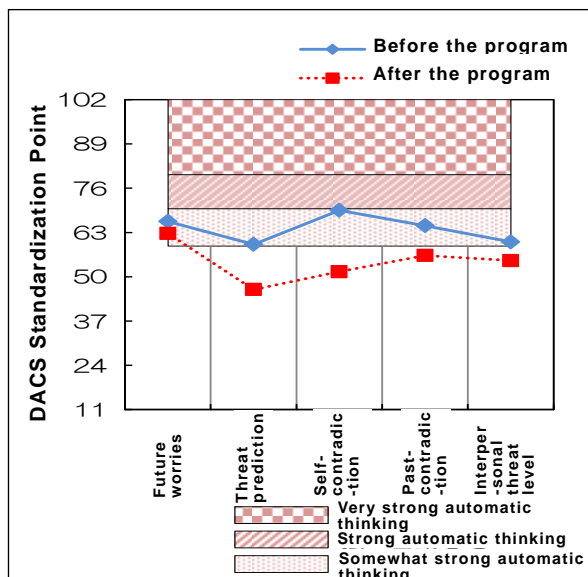


Fig. 6 Change of DACS before and after the program

Individual training was performed on one disabled employee with a support employee as a co-leader. In the first half, training was performed based on the textbook used in the trial at the other office of the same company. In the second half, as with the follow-up training, problem-solving skills were addressed. In the implementation of individual training, contrary to the fact that effects of group dynamics among members cannot be obtained is a weak point, significantly-meticulous, highly-individualized support is possible, and this effect was sufficiently demonstrated in this trial. In the workplace with one support employee, it is not rare for the employee to carry all concerns and problems by him/herself. However, monthly partner training is said to have an effect on solving this problem and it is pointed out that such support is necessary for support employees in small workplaces.

(3) General Discussion

According to the trial results from two years, it has been suggested that this program has the effect of improving communication skills and self-efficacy of disabled employees and of promoting changes in support skills and recognition of support employees. From a number of cases, not only recovery of disabled employees, but also attitudes of support employees who believe in the recovery and support the disabled employees and promotion of recovery of the whole workplace have been reported as outstanding achievements. Consequently, the purpose of this research to design an effective training program for educating disabled employees, and to support employees simultaneously is determined to have been achieved. Three major factors contributing to this achievement may be summarized as follows.

a. Team Efforts

Since the program was geared not toward individuals, but toward entire workplaces, the structure of the program was set to allow all those involved, mainly disabled employees, to share the training goal/purpose, support each other toward the same direction, and work on the program. It is considered that this enabled continuous support in SST training as a "Learning" place and in partner training as a place to "use skills," which generated a synergy effect between OJT and OFF-JT, and that this program has been able to demonstrate its effects.

b. Support with Two Wheels of SST Training and Partner Training

In this program, alongside SST training for disabled employees, partner training for support employees was also implemented. It is considered that this enabled improvement of understanding and support skills of support employees to disabled employees, that "Generalization as a place" where the same structure as the one of communication guaranteed in SST was consistently maintained for disabled employees was encouraged, and that generalization, one of the important indicators of SST effects, was promoted.

c. Training Design Incorporating "Learning" and "Practice"

In both trainings, the skills "learned" in the training are encouraged to be "Used" in the workplace on a regular basis. Behavior of both disabled employees and support employees became a trigger and enhancement, and the training was designed to create a positive spiral which helps both employees to improve their skills. Creating a system where participants can use what they learned in training is a considerable amount of time outside the training is considered to be extremely important in designing a training program.

(4) Future Issues

It is suggested that this program helps to improve communication skills and self-efficacy of disabled employees and has the effect of encouraging changes in support skills and

recognition of support employees. Therefore, the purpose of this research to design a training program is considered to have been achieved.

However, in consideration of the statement that "Instructional design does not focus only on how instructors teach; rather, it aims to design a whole system where instruction comes into effect without existence of instructors" (Kougo, 2012), it is difficult to say that the program has sufficiently achieved this goal and further enhancement of the program contents is considered to be required. Issues such as, meeting various needs and creating a system for implementation, are also being pointed out.