



Research on the knowledge and skills that contribute to the expertise and support capacity of employment support professionals

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[Keywords]

Employment support professionals
Employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities
Work transition support providers
Employment retention support providers
Training of personnel
Effective employment support
Knowledge and skills
Employee training
On-the-job training (OJT)
Information exchange

[Abstract]

The results of employment support for persons with disabilities in regional areas are related to initiatives pertaining to the acquisition of a wide range of skills and knowledge, as well as initiatives taken by organizations regarding personnel training. However, these initiatives have not necessarily been verbalized or systematized as a common consensus held by stakeholders in the field of employment and welfare.

This study aims to contribute to the effective evaluation of the contents of employee training and enable employment support professionals and parties in charge of personnel training to strive toward a higher degree of expertise by having a common consensus. To this end, the study sheds light on the following: the verbalization and systematization of knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support; the balance regarding on-the-job and employee training, as well as priorities related to the knowledge and skills required during the training of personnel that considers diverse conditions occurring in regional areas; specific details regarding initiatives taken at the organizational level with regard to personnel training.

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2 Research period

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3 Structure of the report

Chapter 1. Background and aims

Chapter 2. Verbalization and systemization of knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support

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4 Background and purpose of the research

The results of employment support for persons with disabilities in regional areas are related to initiatives pertaining to the acquisition of a wide range of skills and knowledge, as well as initiatives taken by organizations regarding personnel training. However, these initiatives have not necessarily been verbalized or systematized as a common consensus held by stakeholders in employment and welfare. Consequently, specific details regarding what is required in evaluating the contents of employee training at organizations where such training is offered, as well as what is needed by employment support professionals and parties in charge of personnel training working at employment support organizations to strive for higher levels of expertise through a common consensus, have not been sufficiently gathered. Thus, this study sheds light on the contents of the knowledge and skills (including initiatives taken toward obtaining the aforesaid knowledge and skills) required by various employment support professionals working at employment support organizations in the effective provision of support.

In particular, the results of this study are compiled in a way that would allow for the effective use of the results of this research by employment support professionals and parties in charge of personnel training who work in the fields of employment and welfare. Specifically, the findings of this study would allow for a common consensus to be established regarding the necessary knowledge and skills so that a foundational level, as well as steps for further growth, could be outlined. These results are also compiled in a way that would highlight the ways of acquiring the said knowledge and skills (including employee training, on-the-job training, and information exchange).

5 Method

(1) Verbalization and systemization of knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support

A comprehensive list of knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support was created based on prior research. Accordingly, the opinions of employment support professionals in charge of providing effective employment support in regional areas were gathered alongside those of 10 leading experts in the field of employment support in Japan (including academic experts, employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities, work transition support providers, employment retention support providers, and administrators of local vocational centers for persons with disabilities). Thus, specific details regarding the knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support were verbalized and compiled in the form of a systematized list.

(2) Verification of the balance regarding employee training, on-the-job training, and priorities related to knowledge and skills with regard to personnel training

Using the abovementioned list of knowledge and skills, a questionnaire survey was conducted on a national scale, targeting numerous staff members in charge of personnel training who worked at employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities, work transition support providers, and employment retention support providers. This survey was conducted within the fields of employment and welfare, irrespective of the outcomes of employment support provided. Respondents were asked to provide information regarding priorities surrounding the acquisition of skills with regard to personnel training (the extent to which said skills or knowledge would be prioritized, considering current conditions surrounding restrictions on time and human resources, as well as workload). Accordingly, the researchers endeavored to elucidate what would be necessary to establish a common consensus regarding personnel training as it is conducted within these organizations. Additionally, the researchers verified the balance surrounding employee training, on-the-job training, and information exchange in practice regarding the various methods of obtaining various forms of knowledge and skills within the aforesaid organizations.

(3) Understanding and organization of details regarding specific initiatives taken at the organizational level regarding personnel training

Regarding initiatives concerning personnel training conducted at the organizational level (employee training, on-the-job training, case study reviews, and information exchange for obtaining the knowledge and skills required for effective employment support) that have not been sufficiently systematized and have yet to be recognized in the form of a common consensus held by stakeholders, parties in charge of personnel training who worked at eight organizations where such initiatives were conducted were interviewed on specific details of initiatives taken. These included employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities and work transition support providers. Cases of initiatives taken in the form of employee training, on-the-job training, and information exchange in practice, which would inform the effective promotion of the acquisition of the knowledge and skills related to employment support at local employment support organizations, were summarized.

(4) Multifaceted organization of knowledge and skills that contribute to the expertise and support capacity of employment support professionals

Knowledge and skills that would contribute to the expertise and support capacity of employment support professionals were comprehensively examined based on the research results. Accordingly, to contribute to the formation of a common consensus among stakeholders for evaluating the contents of employee training, moving forward, as well as raising the levels of expertise, the following materials have been summarized in the form of endnotes herein: a list of the knowledge and skills required for the effective provision of employment support, a checklist that allows for the evaluation of needs regarding training, advice and support that consider the conditions of employment support organizations from various regions, and a list of points to note that can serve as reference material in the implementation of initiatives related to personnel training that occurs at an organizational level in employment support organizations.

6 Summarized results of the study

(1) Verbalization and systemization of necessary knowledge and skills for effective employment support

A. Creation of a list (draft) of knowledge and skills following a literature review and interviews with experts

Based on the results of a literature review conducted on Japanese and international research published over 2003–2023, where information regarding knowledge and skills was organized, a comprehensive list regarding the knowledge and skills required for effective employment support was created. Interviews were conducted with 10 experts in the field of vocational support for persons with disabilities during the creation of this comprehensive list. In the case of inappropriate content, revisions were conducted while considering the opinions of the aforementioned experts; supplementary information

was provided with reference to these opinions where information was sufficient. Thus, a list (draft) of knowledge and skills was created.

B. Compilation of opinions gathered from local employment support organizations regarding the list of knowledge and skills

Based on the information provided by interviewees—experts and local vocational support centers for persons with disabilities (including branches) in Japan—questionnaires were administered to experienced employment support professionals working at 154 support organizations, where effective employment support was provided in regional areas. In evaluating this list (draft), respondents were asked to rate the importance of each skill- or knowledge-related item; where revisions were necessary, participants were asked to provide their opinion on the underlying reasons, suggestions for revisions, as well as information that could be added.

Following responses gathered from 111 employment support professionals (response rate: 72.1%), it was found that specific details related to knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support spanned a wide range, as outlined in the 16 areas below. These 16 areas were further divided into 65 items; the researchers could further identify 201 detailed items that allowed for specific descriptions to be provided.

- ① Significance of employment support for persons with disabilities: basic understanding of disabilities and understanding of the significance of employment for persons with disabilities, as well as of the protection of their rights and the realization of a society of coexistence.
- ② Fundamental stance taken by support providers in providing employment support: a mindset and sense of ethical awareness that should be present in support providers, attitudes that should be taken by support providers in the provision of employment support, personal understanding and evaluation of supports that one can provide conducted by support providers, personal development and collection of up-to-date information, and physical and psychological care for support providers.
- ③ Laws, regulations, systems, and services related to employment support for persons with disabilities: the prevention and prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities, an understanding of and measures taken toward abuse prevention, knowledge regarding the Act on Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities and related services, and knowledge regarding welfare services for persons with disabilities and the social security system.
- ④ Business administration and employment management: knowledge on trends related to business administration and the labor market and an understanding of employment management as well as laws and regulations related to labor.
- ⑤ Provision of explanations to and consultations with various parties (persons with disabilities, business owners, related institutions, and family members): basic attitudes when performing consultations, simple explanations that consider the other party's circumstances and needs, and consultations that take account of the situation and characteristics of the other party.

- ⑥ Communication and records transpiring between support providers: records and communication that are easy to understand and appropriate handling of personal information.
- ⑦ Supporting persons with disabilities regarding self-understanding, self-selection, and self-determination: supporting persons with disabilities in regaining self-esteem, support that encourages self-discovery in individuals with disabilities, support that enables a deepening of self-understanding while working, and support related to self-selection and self-determination in persons with disabilities.
- ⑧ Assessments for persons with disabilities regarding employment support: drawing out and meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities by understanding individual strengths and abilities; organization and analysis related to task completion, as well as social and daily life aspects; organization and analysis of psychological aspects and the background of individuals with disabilities; acquisition of knowledge based on medical and psychological knowledge and regarding life within society as well as aspects related to workplace environment; collection of information verbally and through the use of materials; behavioral observation; usage of specialized assessment tools.
- ⑨ Planning related to employment support: sharing of goals and plans that have been drafted based on assessments and drafting and regular monitoring of employment support plans.
- ⑩ Support regarding obtaining skills necessary for employment: support in learning selected skills or actions, support regarding the establishment of basic lifestyle habits as well as self-management, support in obtaining social and problem-solving skills, and support regarding commuting to work.
- ⑪ Support regarding job selection, seeking employment, and transitioning to the workplace: support related to job selection in persons with disabilities, support concerning decision-making on whether to disclose details of one's disability, information collection regarding workplaces to match persons with disabilities to job opportunities based on specific job requirements and workplace conditions, supporting employment seeking conducted by persons with disabilities, provision of information that allows for the perusal of institutions that develop vocational skills, support that meets the needs of persons with disabilities that allows them to observe and participate in practical training at workplaces, and support that allows for the provision of reasonable accommodations after employment.
- ⑫ Support in adapting to the workplace (including the training period): support that allows for adaptation to the workplace and an increased ability to complete tasks, support in learning actions that allow for adaptation to the workplace, support in adapting to the workplace that allows for the formation of natural support in the workplace, follow-ups, support for employees on leave of absence to return to the workplace, and support toward resignation and re-employment.
- ⑬ Support related to health management and daily life that allows for a fulfilling working life: support related to health management regarding working life, consultations and provision of information

that allows for good work-life balance and a fulfilling life, consultations related to life planning, and support that considers various life stages.

- ⑭ Assessments and support for corporations that strive toward the employment of persons with disabilities: having an understanding of and providing information on the situation surrounding the employment of persons with disabilities at corporations, understanding the needs of and providing support in relation to initiatives taken by business owners related to the employment of persons with disabilities, general explanations regarding points to note concerning the characteristics of disabilities as well as employment management, support in making adjustments in the workplace or in relation to tasks at work, restructuring and creation support regarding tasks at work as well as assessments related to the workplace or tasks at work, and analysis of challenges faced and suggestions for solutions.
- ⑮ Collaboration with related institutions and family members: the creation of networks as well as collection and exchange of information related to social resources in regional areas, evaluation of and introductions related to the importance of collaborating with related institutions, provision of information to and establishment of a collaborative stance with related institutions regarding individual cases, team support provided alongside related institutions, and collaboration with parties such as family members.
- ⑯ Raising awareness regarding the employment of persons with disabilities and training personnel in support provision.

(2) Verification of the balance regarding employee training, on-the-job training, and priorities related to knowledge and skills regarding personnel training

The questionnaire targeted parties in charge of the training of personnel working at 1,476 institutions, with 337 being employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities (all institutions) and the other 1,139 being work transition support providers or employment retention support providers. The responses obtained from 652 institutions (response rate: 44.2%) were used in the analysis to highlight realistic priorities related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as usable methods. The analysis also expounded the initiatives taken and challenges faced regarding personnel training.

A. Prioritization of knowledge and skills related to personnel training

Perceptions related to realistic prioritization regarding the training of personnel at employment support organizations, in relation to the knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support, varied across the nation. Following factor analysis of the contents related to knowledge and skills from the perspective of improving expertise and support capacity, the contents were organized into the following four domains:

- ① Support related to working life that occurs through multidisciplinary collaboration, focusing on individuals with disabilities: a fundamental stance taken in the provision of support and handling of personal information, human rights, explanations that consider the other party's circumstances

and needs, assessments that focus on the needs of the individual with disability, teamwork, as well as support in relation to self-selection, self-determination, records, planning, and monitoring.

- ② Building relationships with local corporations and related institutions, as well as the dissemination of knowledge and raising of awareness related to the employment of persons with disabilities: raising awareness related to the employment of persons with disabilities, having knowledge related to trends in business administration and the labor market, training of support personnel in regional areas, regulations such as the Act on Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, establishing social resource networks in regional areas, having a knowledge of the situation surrounding the employment of persons with disabilities, facilitating knowledge related to labor-related laws and regulations, as well as employment management.
- ③ Supporting persons with disabilities as well as corporations for adapting to the workplace and employment retention: support that allows for the completion of tasks and adaptation to the workplace, observation and practical training in the workplace, explanations regarding points to note in relation to the characteristics of disabilities as well as employment management, support related to resignation and re-employment, construction of a system where continuous follow-ups can be provided, adjustments made regarding tasks at work, and matching individuals to suitable job listings.
- ④ Supporting persons with disabilities that leads to improved self-understanding and self-confidence: supporting persons with disabilities in regaining self-esteem, encouraging individuals to perform self-discovery, usage of specialized tools, and support regarding self-understanding while working.

Perceptions surrounding the realistic prioritization of the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for effective employment support showed a decreasing degree of variation from item ① to item ④. Personnel training was assumed to be important in raising support capacity moving forward. Additionally, perceptions surrounding the prioritization of personnel training, in the case of new employees, in particular, were seen to vary in the order of ②③①④.

At organizations where services related to employment transition and retention support were provided, the priority of ④ was considered relatively higher, whereas at employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities, particularly in urban areas, the priority of ④ was observed to be lower. No other significant discrepancies were observed in the priorities of organizations at which support was provided, in relation to personnel training, which were assumed to occur due to regional factors or based on organization type.

B. Verification of the balance related to employee and on-the-job personnel training

The balance related to methods used to obtain knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support, as prioritized in practice at each organization, was categorized into one of the following: *training-focused*, *OJT-focused*, *information-exchange-focused*, *training and OJT*, *training and information exchange*, *OJT and information exchange*, and *combined methods*.

- Training-focused: a mindset and sense of ethical awareness that should be present in support providers, the prevention and prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities, an understanding of and measures taken toward abuse prevention, self-selection and self-determination as well as regaining self-esteem in persons with disabilities, and an understanding regarding the strengths and abilities of the individual with disability.
- OJT-focused: attitudes that should be taken by support providers, skills related to records and communication, support related to employment seeking as well as resignation and re-employment, and support related to adjustments made in the workplace or regarding tasks at work.
- Information exchange-focused: collaboration with related institutions, gathering information related to corporations, and daily life support.
- Any other combinations aside from the above (combined methods): implementation of consultations and provision of explanations regarding support plans, support provided to business owners, and so on.

C. Initiatives and challenges related to personnel training in the acquisition of skills and knowledge

Based on the open-ended answers obtained in relation to initiatives and challenges related to personnel training performed at the organizational level, challenges identified included the following: securing chances for training sessions, securing and retaining personnel, insufficient know-how related to personnel training, acquisition of various knowledge and skills, personnel training that considers individual and regional differences, and information sharing with employees and other institutions.

(3) Specific contents of initiatives taken at the organizational level regarding personnel training

Interviews were conducted with parties in charge of personnel training from eight employment support organizations, where personnel training was conducted in the form of various training programs or on-the-job training leading to effective employment support. These interviews were conducted online or face-to-face. During the interviews, respondents were asked to clarify details regarding what constituted an ideal support provider. These interviews also sought to elucidate the know-how and favorable instances of initiatives taken at the organizational level taken toward the goal of personnel training, as well as specific details regarding knowledge and skills required for effective employment support.

A. Image of an ideal support provider with regard to personnel training

A support provider who emerged as being “able to work together with users, able to think flexibly and take various perspectives while valuing fundamental knowledge and skills, as well as able to disseminate information,” following the process of personnel training, was seen as desirable.

B. Initiatives taken at the organizational level regarding personnel training

Considering the challenges related to the acquisition of various skills and knowledge within constraints related to personnel and time, as well as the importance of training tailored to each individual involved in employment support, the following personnel-training-related initiatives were identified,

during the interviews, as being conducted at the organizational level by employment support professionals. Through these initiatives, continuous personnel training was effectively implemented.

- Initiatives related to participation in training, as well as the removal of discouraging factors related to the effects of training
- Linkage between external and personnel training taking place within the organization
- A proactive mindset that involves recognizing personal challenges and questions during OJT, as well as an environment where it is easy to conduct discussions
- Effective sharing of information and evaluation of cases, with minimal impact on workload

C. Specific details and initiatives related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment support

Specific initiatives were found to be conducted vis-à-vis the four domains surrounding challenges related to personnel training, as below. As an example, “participation and the accumulation of experience that begins when personnel are newly employed” is set out as a goal during personnel training. The researchers could elucidate the career paths of employment support providers, albeit generally.

- Regarding *a mindset, sense of ethical awareness, and attitudes that should be present in support providers*, the acquisition of fundamental knowledge regarding how a specialist in support provision should act within a multidisciplinary team, as set out as a goal during training for new employees, was prioritized.
- Regarding *assessments for persons with disabilities*, deepening understanding of disability characteristics, followed by collaborative assessments related to the self-understanding of persons with disabilities, were administered soon after hiring new personnel for skill acquisition.
- Regarding *collaboration with business owners*, training was conducted with a focus on on-the-job training so that new employees would understand the importance of said collaboration. The acquisition of skills that would allow personnel to perform evaluations on corporations and provide job coaching support at corporations was set out as a goal during personnel training.
- Regarding *building regional support networks*, when personnel were newly hired, the networks built through interactions that occurred during external training sessions as well as through day-to-day collaboration taken in support provision would continue to expand. The provision of ample support on a day-to-day basis for building networks was found to be important.

(4) Multifaceted organization of the knowledge and skills necessary for employment support professionals

As of now, fully fledged initiatives are being conducted nationwide to improve the expertise and support capacity of individuals involved in the provision of employment support. The results of this study have been compiled in the form of endnotes in this paper so that employment support professionals and parties involved in personnel training may strive toward the training of personnel with a common consensus related to the necessity of training and goals that will lead to improvements in skill. The

results from this study include a list of knowledge and skills related to effective employment support that has been organized in a multifaceted way, a checklist that allows for the evaluation of training, advice and support provided, and a list of information and points to note, which may inform initiatives taken by employment support organizations in regional areas at the organizational level regarding the personnel training of employment support professionals or the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

A. Creation of a list pertaining to knowledge and skills required for effective employment support

Information related to the knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment, taking the form of challenges pertaining to the training of personnel as specifically observed in practice at employment support organizations over the nation, was categorized under four domains (support related to working life that takes place through multidisciplinary collaboration and focuses on the individual with disability, building relationships with local corporations and related institutions as well as the dissemination of knowledge and raising awareness related to the employment of persons with disabilities, supporting persons with disabilities as well as corporations for adapting to the workplace and employment retention, and supporting persons with disabilities in improving self-understanding and self-confidence). Notably, major components were provided in the form of a list. Moving forward, this list may be applied in personnel training across the fields of employment and welfare, as well as in encouraging the formation of a common consensus held by parties in charge of personnel training in various organizations and support providers.

B. Evaluation of specific details related to effective training, advice, and support provided

As it became clear that realistic priorities related to specific methods of obtaining various knowledge and skills, such as training, on-the-job training, and information exchange, varied, it is assumed that this knowledge can be utilized during on-demand lessons taking place during basic training, as well as within curriculums for practical training. This information is also assumed to be useful in evaluating the contents included within on-the-job training following employee training, as well as themes surrounding information exchange during network meetings taking place in regional areas. The information gleaned is also considered useful in evaluating the contents of advice and support provided regarding initiatives conducted at various organizations, as well as advice and support provided at local vocational centers for persons with disabilities.

C. Reference materials related to initiatives taken regarding effective personnel training at employment support organizations

Information gathered regarding employee training conducted for personnel training, as well as specific details regarding initiatives conducted at the organizational level regarding on-the-job training and information exchange conducted at various organizations, in the form of methods through which personnel training was conducted at an organizational level and methods through which high-priority knowledge and skills could be obtained, was organized in the form of specific information and points

to note. This information may serve as reference material when evaluating the contents of advice and support provided at local vocational centers for persons with disabilities.

7 Relevant research products

- A study on community support in the healthcare, welfare and educational fields to promote work readiness and transition of persons with disabilities; Research Report No. 134, 2017
- A research on the roles and collaborative supports for employment and job retention of persons with disabilities among related service providers and professionals; Research Report No. 147, 2019
- Research on the current status and issues of human resource development and accumulation of support expertise in employment support providers; Research Report No. 167, 2023