

Approaches to Standard School Education Balanced with Psychological Care for Children during Disaster Recovery: From the Point of View of Class Management¹

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Schools in the areas afflicted by an earthquake disaster of unprecedented scale, already faced with the challenge of simply carrying out regular school education, also struggled with the problem of how to ensure the necessary psychological care for the damaged children. With regard to this, I undertook school support based on the following policies: 1. to enrich class management so as to provide a “safe-feeling environment” through overall support of the class group; 2. to grasp the support level of individual students in the class through regular assessments including survey methods, and adjust the support level as needed. In classes in good condition, results showed a significant decrease in students’ stress, and it was considered that an effect similar to the group approach took place through life and activity experiences in the Japanese class group.

Keywords: class group; group approach; class management; daily life

Introduction

Having been employed at a university in the Tohoku region until ten years ago, I was regularly involved with boards of education and schools in the Tohoku area. Many of my former students work as teachers in the Sanriku region as well. With the help of a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, I researched the issues of long-term absences and academic ability in schools along the coast from the perspective of their connections with the state of the class group. Data from February 2011 was saved in my office, and I continued teacher training based thereon. With 11 March 2011 as a turning point, my relation to the area became support work. In this paper, while reporting on a part of my approaches to school support, I will consider the qualities and functions of the class group, which as a daily environment in which to feel safe was an important element of students’ psychological care. I felt that this would lead to suggestions on forms and methods of psychological care for students at school during disaster recovery.

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Issues and Objectives

I. Issues regarding the state of the schools during recovery

Schools in the coastal area of Iwate Prefecture afflicted by the disaster were reopened in late April. Recovery was beginning in the area, and the schools opened with no more than the bare environmental necessities. Many schools carried out their educational activities in haphazardly borrowed school buildings or classrooms.

The issues I became aware of through conferences with boards of education and administrators as well as hearings with teachers included the lack of facilities and educational materials, which was more than enough of a problem to be going on with, as well as the difficulty of ensuring psychological care for the students. It became clear that, faced with the continuing overwork of managing shelters and visiting families, teachers were struggling with what to do how for whom and to what extent. This was because there were large discrepancies in the state of the children in their classrooms. Largely the issues were these. a) State of affliction by the disaster: children who had lost homes, families, relatives, and/or friends, and those who had not been directly affected. b) Region and situation of residence: children who were living in shelters or temporary housing in afflicted areas, and those who were living in their own homes. c) Status after the disaster: newly arrived students and students already enrolled. These are physical problems of direct or indirect damage. There was also the issue of individual student levels. d) Ways of showing sadness and suffering: children who showed nothing openly and became expressionless, and those who displayed distress. e) Children's original situations: students who had had disabilities or problems adapting, requiring individual support, since before the disaster, and those who had been able to conduct life on their own within group education.

These elements acted mutually on one another in complex ways, and children in a variety of situations gathered together in one classroom. Of the students displaying distress, not all had been directly or indirectly affected by the disaster, and there were students directly affected by the disaster who showed no visible change through daily observation from the way they had been before the disaster. It was very difficult to find guidelines to approach students in this condition, and as noted earlier, teachers struggled to understand what to do how for whom and to what extent. That is to say, the issue was that teachers couldn't appropriately carry out assessments of their students' psychological aspects.

II. Policies for approaching the issues

In order to consider policies for approach, the following two viewpoints were important.

1. Grasping the support levels of the individual students

Of the students in a given classroom, each needs a different level of support. It is required to grasp this accurately in order to support them appropriately. Ishikuma (1999) points out that from the perspective of school psychology, one can divide the support levels into three levels for approaches. First-level support is support answering the developmental needs which all children have, such as formation of friend relations and guidance for future career and educational choices, largely carried out for the entire group by the teacher during classroom management. Second-level support is support for children who need particular educational guidance and consideration, such as those with tendencies to long-term absence or with strong unease. This level requires early discovery, before problems can arise, and individual approaches. Third-level support is that

needed by children who require special individual support, such as those long-term absent from school, being bullied, or with developmental disabilities which make them unable to participate easily in classes.

It is necessary for teachers to grasp the support levels of each student in their classes.

2. The perspective of comprehensive psychological support for students

For children who received direct or indirect damage due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, continuing psychological support is essential. As in figure 1, a comprehensive support system is called for. Rather than focusing on what kind of support is important, it is necessary to have a comprehensive system for support which can change its focus according to the passage of time and actual conditions.

1) Support at D and C levels

D- and C-type support was urgently required just after the disaster. When someone comes near to death or great injury, once or several times, or experiences, witnesses or faces great danger to themselves or others, and when their reactions at that time related to extreme fear, sense of impotence, or terror, they are likely to be afflicted with Acute Stress Disorder (ASD; Takahashi, Ohno and Someya, 1995). Some children showed symptoms of ASD. In the same way, sudden experiences of disaster, extremely frightening experiences, experiences beyond the reach of self-control, or the loss of a dear one are engraved deep on the memories of the person who experienced them as psychic trauma, and appear as emotional symptoms such as depression, sense of powerlessness, grief, sense of loss, loss of basic trust toward society, humans, or oneself, or self-blame, or as physical symptoms such as palpitations, sleep disorders, nightmares, or difficulty breathing. These often lead as a result to disabilities which make life in society difficult, such as isolation, poor human relations, or social agoraphobia.

Further, even after more than a month has passed, people can be troubled by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Kobayashi, 1993). Representative symptoms are trauma flashbacks which occur regardless of the person's will, "re-experiencing" the feelings and sensations of the original experience, becoming oversensitive to sounds and stimuli, being nervous and unable to relax, being irritable, being unable to sleep (over-wakefulness), losing memories and senses of experi-

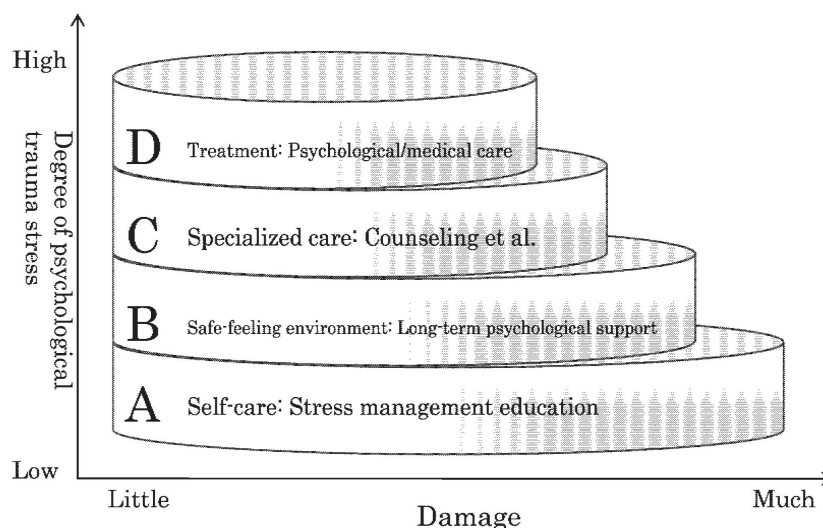


Figure 1 Comprehensive support system

ences (numbness), and avoiding contexts which recall the experience (avoidance). For the children showing these symptoms, individual support by specialists at the D and C levels was essential.

From just after the disaster until a month later, work with children showing symptoms of acute stress disorder and PTSD was urgently required, and work with children who showed symptoms of PTSD after that period also became necessary.

2) Support at B and A levels

As time passed, along with D and C support, B- and A-type support also became necessary for the students who had directly or indirectly been afflicted. Approaches to vitalize the children's natural healing ability and reinforce their energy to live became necessary, as work in order to heal psychic trauma. The psychological education and stress management to be undertaken in each class according to the "Iwate Children's Mental Support Program"² directive released by the Iwate Prefectural Board of Education was support on the A level.

In order to enhance the effect of A-type support, the existence of a B-level "safe-feeling environment" is important. This is the securing of an environment where physiological and physical safety, for the protection of life, can be attained, as well as security through interpersonal connections.

In the afflicted areas, where students lived in shelters or temporary housing amid the ugly scars of the tsunami damage to the towns, this hard-won piece of everyday life, the space of a classroom where familiar classmates gathered, led to gaining security through interpersonal connections, and became one of the B-level "safe-feeling environments." Therefore, the maintenance of the environment and functioning of schools and class groups as places to feel safe is essential. This is pointed out in the report of the Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education (2006) on the support for recovery of school education after the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

3. Items to be considered when discussing methods of psychological care for students

When advising schools or teachers on methods of psychological care for children, we considered the following three items based on 1) and 2). a) Focus on making the state of the class group a good one, so that it can become a B-level "safe-feeling environment," which is the basis for carrying out educational practice. This will therefore, through being aware that enrichment of regular educational practice can lead to psychological care for children, soothe teachers' distress over the need to do something special, and allow them to concentrate on daily educational practice. b) Ensure that teachers aren't overburdened in terms of time and effort, thus avoiding problems in their practice of regular school education. Many teachers had themselves been afflicted by the disaster, or were taking part in regional relief work, and became physically and mentally exhausted. c) Carry out assessments of student conditions through survey methods as well as observation methods. Through using survey methods as well, the points calculated for each student can become common guidelines for teachers when approaching the problems as a team. These are the three points.

4. Methods of psychological care for children

As guidelines for teachers promoting psychological care for children as a part of their educational practice in the school setting, based on 1), 2) and 3) in part 2, I emphasized the following two points. Their content was made public on the Internet as well as being mailed to schools and boards of education in afflicted areas, and also explained in regular teacher training in afflicted areas.

1) Guaranteeing safety and security

a) Enrich class management to make the class group a B-level “safe-feeling environment” for comprehensive support. b) To a reasonable extent, employ A-type stress-management education in daily educational activities, connecting it to everyday educational practice within the work of a).

2) The necessity of assessment

a) Carry out regular assessments, including surveys, of individual students in the class, and grasp their support level, making appropriate approaches for each support level. b) Don't overlook students needing second- and third-level support, and where individual mental support is considered necessary, connect solidly with comprehensive support professionals at the D and C levels. c) As far as possible, carry out assessment meetings regularly as a team of teachers.

As well, in order to make use of the surveys, we also used a standardized psychological exam, “Q-U (Questionnaire-Utilities)” (Kawamura, 1998) which teachers in the area had been using since before the disaster. This was because Q-U is capable of grasping both the individual support levels of each student and the state of the class group as a whole, serving as a guideline for teachers both for individual approaches to students and for approaches to the class as a whole during study time and class activities.

This paper's objective is to address the issue of how to carry out regular school education, itself a major difficulty, in schools recovering from the disaster, and while doing that how to ensure psychological care for damaged students: it will consider through a case study the qualities and functions of the class group, which was a major element in children's psychological care as a daily safe-feeling environment. As well, I used the results of the previous research considered in the Discussion section to work with the case study. That is to say, this paper does not suggest a new methodology for “emergency situations,” but has as its objective to show once again that making the approaches teachers take in “daily life” even solidier in emergency times produced effective results.

Case Study

“Two junior high schools coexisting in one school building”

This paper takes up a case study from Iwate Prefecture (Kawamura, 2011). It is based on a report from Sato Kenji (Sato, 2011), a teacher and the staff member responsible for student discipline, in the case of a junior high school from the coastal area which suffered major damage. As far as possible given the scope of the paper, I will also discuss teachers' approaches to maintaining the environment which is the necessary precondition for psychological care. Because the sufferers are still under psychological care, names have been anonymized.

I. Summary of the case and issues

X Junior High School is in the center of a city in the coastal area of Iwate Prefecture, with 420 students in 14 classes, the largest in the city. No students died or were injured in the disaster; five parents passed away. Twenty percent of students suffered damage (including complete destruction) to their homes, and thirty percent suffered economic effects such as a parent's loss of employment. As for the physical environment of the school, while the buildings and grounds were usable with some cleanup, the second gym and the martial arts area were made into shelters and

could not therefore be used for their original purposes. Roughly 200 students and staff from Y Junior High School, whose buildings had been almost totally destroyed in the worst damage within the city, came to X Junior High School to share the school buildings.

To sum up the problems facing this junior high school, the tasks for the aspect of dealing with students' psychological care were focused as follows. a) Students' support levels were mixed among levels one, two, and three. Some students lived in shelters through the first term. b) Students at a sensitive time of adolescence were sharing one building between two schools, each independently carrying out educational activities, and it was thought that trouble was likely to arise, due to the unease and lack of vision for the future left by the disaster, and to the stress of the cramped living environment. In dealing with these issues, teachers used approaches 1 and 2. They had to take on these approaches while also working actively to support regional recovery.

II. Summary of the approaches

I have organized chronologically the approaches to students' psychological care taken by the teachers during the disordered first term while preparing to reopen the school and after reopening.

1. Dealing with shelter management (12 March ~ mid-April)

X Junior High School was designated from 12 March as a city shelter, and teaching staff were put on a twenty-four-hour schedule as management staff for the shelter. The shelter housed 250 people, including students of the school. With few people familiar with one another, as well as the fact that immediately after the tsunami damage supplies went undelivered, the first days were a scene of impossible chaos.

Shelter duties were as follows. a) Making a list of people in the shelter. b) Meals and cooking. Preparing meals based on support supplies. c) Health and hygiene. Oil for the heaters, water for the toilets (because of the power outage, water had to be set aside in buckets). d) Nursing support. Helping out health visitors and doctors. e) Managing supplies. Bringing in and distributing support supplies such as food, clothing, and medicine. f) Visitors. Managing visitors from the media and people concerned with confirming residents' safety by name. g) Communicating with the headquarters organization. h) Supervising the shelter. Staying awake to answer needs of the elderly and sick, guiding sheltering efforts during aftershocks or tsunami warnings.

i) Psychological care for the afflicted children.

Given their profession as teachers, i), psychological care for the afflicted children, was a high priority for them, and with consideration for teachers' strengths, students' needs, and the physical environment, using Kokubu et al. (2002) as a reference, the following three things were done thoroughly.

1) Constructing relationships with special attention

Through sharing shelter life with afflicted students (eating and sleeping in the shelter with them, etc.), teachers sent the message that grownups were watching out for them and they could feel safe and secure. Teachers also paid special attention to students whose parents could not come to the shelters. This deepened their connection with the afflicted students and led to better student understanding.

2) Encouraging physical activity

Teachers made a playspace, brought in equipment, and played sports such as table tennis and soccer with the students. Relationships were built even among children of different ages who didn't know one another. Exercise itself also helped students relax and eased their stress somewhat.

3) Assigning roles as a framework without compulsion

Teachers requested that students help with hauling supplies, cleaning toilets, and shelter duties in general. Students were praised by the adults around them for working, and developed a sense that they were contributing to the management of the shelter, their sense of self-effectiveness apparently heightened. Teachers also called on unafflicted students to take part in volunteer work, and they came every day to the shelter to see their afflicted friends and talk with them, did cleaning work, and helped with reception duties at the shelter. Some students were thanked by administrators.

2. Approach to afflicted students' psychological issues, dealing with lost things (mid-March ~ late April)

Rising unease was observed among the disaster-afflicted students, due to the damage of their homes, the loss of school materials, and the loss of economic stability due to parents' unemployment. To deal with this situation, a) teachers took turns visiting households of afflicted students (including new students) and investigated students' and families' physical and mental states and what school materials and so on they had lost. b) Uniforms and textbooks were supplied as quickly as possible. This was the policy for dealing with this issue.

The household visits in a) were made to shelters on foot, as landlines and mobile phones were entirely unusable and debris made driving impossible. Students were sheltering not only in the designated city shelters but also with relatives' families, making it extremely difficult to track all students down. Afflicted students seemed to be coping with their grief by cleaning up their damaged homes or helping in the neighborhood. Their uniforms, textbooks and club materials had been swept away, and their words and attitudes showed a. inconvenience from the strict limits on their activities in the future, b. worry over how the unafflicted students would judge them for their lack of belongings, c. fretting over when the pre-disaster state would return, and d. specific sense of loss over treasured objects. Discussions with parents included a survey based on a questionnaire form. Visits were also made to new students, to grasp parents' needs as well as letting them know when schools were projected to open.

The most urgent aspect of the supply of lost materials in b) was the replacement of the new students' lost uniforms. It was thought to be essential to avoid an entering ceremony where some students wore school uniforms and others did not, and with "everyone in uniform at the opening ceremony" as their motto, the PTA appealed to graduates and gathered a large quantity of uniforms and gym clothes which were supplied to afflicted students. After that, the city provided new uniforms and gym clothes at no cost. This appeal spread over the country, and uniforms and gym clothes were also sent in support from a junior high school in Tokyo.

The first day of classes was held later than usual, on 22 April (a Friday), with the entering ceremony on Saturday, 23 April.

3. Developing the foundation of group formation (late April ~ early May)

For students to lead a satisfactory life at school, the school and class group must not fail to have "rules" and "relations" (Kawamura 1999). Through confirming the common rules between the two junior high schools for all, the teachers planned to establish "rules" through which the afflicted students could feel safe at school, and "relations" in which the students of the two schools could learn each other's good points.

The common rules included following school building use rules (don't go into the other

school's classrooms and corridors, etc.), speaking and acting with consideration for others (thoughtfulness), cooperating to share space for club activities, and so on. There were other points which needed confirmation after the schools reopened, but the teachers dealt with these by a common management meeting every week including both principals, vice-principals, teacher-administrators and disciplinarians.

Early in the year they held a joint assembly, presenting student council activities and singing the school songs, exchanging cheers, and introducing teachers. They aimed to create an awareness of mutual understanding and cooperation in order to share the same school building. As an opportunity for exchange between the schools, the bands practiced together from the beginning. Some sports clubs held monthly intramural games. Ninth-graders had a choral exchange as part of their classes, listening to one another's singing and discussing their reactions.

4. Dealing with the gap between afflicted and unafflicted students (late April)

It was feared that inconsiderate speech from the unafflicted students would create secondary damage in the afflicted students. This was dealt with by holding joint student meetings with Y Junior High and its many afflicted students, in the hopes that, through understanding the actual situation of the Y students, other students would become aware of the need for thoughtful speech and action toward the afflicted students, including those at X Junior High itself.

The Y Junior High School disciplinarian, himself afflicted, spoke specifically on current emotional states and things he wanted them to consider, including the following three points. a) Don't ask about what happened during the disaster or feelings about it, unless the afflicted students start talking about it themselves. They don't want to or can't talk about it yet, because they'll remember unpleasant and sad things. b) Don't encourage them to "hang in there" or "do your best." They're doing their best already, and it will make them unhappy if you talk to them as if there was some higher level of "doing their best" they had yet to reach. c) Don't tell them to "get a new attitude." Losing people and things and memories they cared about isn't something they can get over in a short time, and it will make them sad to think it's being taken so lightly.

Students had a general idea of Y Junior High School's situation, from newspaper reports and parents' discussions, but they were silenced and stunned by the Y disciplinarian's specific descriptions: "More than half don't have a house, can't watch TV, can't take a bath. They can't eat what they want to. They lost their equipment and can't even take part club activities." They also seemed able to understand emotionally why "do your best," so often heard on TV, was a taboo word. It is thought that they understood that consideration was necessary not only for Y students but for afflicted students at X Junior High School as well.

5. Dealing with students' stress (mid-May ~ early June)

In order to increase students' capacity for self-care, the Iwate Prefectural Board of Education set out the "Iwate Children's Mental Support Program." This involved "mental support classes," "individual talks with homeroom teachers," and "individual talks with counselors." At the school under discussion, they used it, with attention to the facts on the ground, in the following ways. 1) Combining "mental support classes" and "individual talks with homeroom teachers"

By carrying out "mental support classes" and "individual talks with homeroom teachers" as a set, they succeeded in increasing effectiveness and saving time. The following modifications were made to the idea.

① Based on the materials distributed by the Iwate Prefectural Board of Education, the school

held an internal training session beforehand and confirmed with all teaching staff the guidance process and important points, making a class plan. a) In the notes on the class plan they specified students who would need particular care during group activities, thoroughly considering the necessary attention. b) In order to enhance understanding of the students, they added questionnaire surveys to action observation and interviews in their preparation for the guidance.

② Coordinating with the teacher-administrator in charge, they made time for internal training beforehand and individual talks afterward.

③ As preliminary guidance for the program, the school counselor lectured to all students on the varieties of stress caused by the disaster and how to deal with them.

The “mental support class” comprised group activities meant to make students think about health issues such as sleep and appetite, to become aware of methods to deal with these, and to deepen their bonds with friends and teachers. Disaster-afflicted students also discussed ways to deal with stress in their groups. Because the school counselor’s previous lecture had provided the students with readiness for the program, the class took place in an intimate atmosphere. This was perceptible from the students’ post-class essays as well.

In addition, the school carried out beforehand an all-school “mental and physical health observation” (a directive from the Iwate Prefectural Board of Education). Analysis of the results showed that 41 students had high stress levels, of whom 13 were disaster-afflicted. Before the program was carried out, these students’ names and classes were made into a list which was passed out to all teachers at a staff meeting, confirming that they might need care. As well, having analyzed the questionnaire, it was found that afflicted students suffered more than unafflicted students from the chain reaction of insomnia, wakefulness and lack of appetite, as well as the connection between bad moods or anger and wakefulness, headaches and stomachaches. Observing afflicted students’ health more carefully, it was noted that afflicted students who complained of headaches or stomachaches might end up with interpersonal trouble, and plans were made for dealing with stress through club activities et al.

2) Cooperation with “school support counselors”

A school support counselor came twice a week for six weeks from mid-May on to care for the students. The school’s acceptance policy and the content were as follows.

① Clear assignment of roles

The vice-principal was in charge, the head disciplinarian coordinated within the school, and homeroom teachers listed students who needed to see the counselor and discussed them with the counselor.

② Clear cooperation process

The vice-principal explained the disaster-related situation and the division of duties, after which the head disciplinarian explained the pre- and post-counseling process. After that, the school support counselor discussed the students to be counseled with their homeroom teachers individually. Counseling sessions then took place. The results were discussed with homeroom teachers and the head disciplinarian.

③ Planning for cooperation with related organizations

For students needing continuing care, connections were made with the regular school counselor and with medical facilities.

④ Records kept of counseling content

The head disciplinarian, homeroom teachers, and the school support counselor kept records of the counseling sessions.

Information was relayed to the school support counselor based on results of the “mental and physical health observations,” as well as individual requests and judgments from action observation, based on standards such as “can’t do what they could do last year” and “in a depressed mood.” As a result, 25 students received counseling, including some who underwent more than one counseling session. Even students afflicted by psychological trauma were able to reduce their symptoms through multiple counseling sessions.

6. Use of class satisfaction scale (Q-U) (July)

Junior high school students are sensitive, and disaster-afflicted students in particular have complex psychological issues. Thus, in order objectively to grasp students’ interior lives, action observation and interviews were supplemented with the standardized psychological test “Q-U” (Kawamura, 1998) which was carried out in July. Q-U allows administrators to grasp individual students’ states of adaptation within their class and their desires within the various areas of school life, as well as an image of the class as a whole. The stress survey of the Iwate Board of Education’s “mental and physical health observation” was also carried out during the same period.

When (cross-) analyzing Q-U and the stress survey, certain points for attention arose. Four months after the disaster, in classes which had settled down into a state of affinity (“satisfied-group classes”), students’ post-disaster stress was more decreased than in other classes³ (see fig. 2). It was shown that “satisfied-group class” groups had the potential to lower students’ stress. However, because of interrelations, opposite vectors could also be imagined, and I want to make it clear that statements on the effect therein should be made very carefully.

While individual attention to students’ psychological stress is important, though, it is thought that the important role of the approach based on the mutual effects of the class group, where students spend their school life, should not be forgotten. The results of Q-U were confirmed with all teachers and used to enhance class group reinforcement.

From the second term on, the school under discussion used policies 1 and 2 to continue with students’ psychological care and was able to work through the 2011 school year’s educational activities without major problems developing.

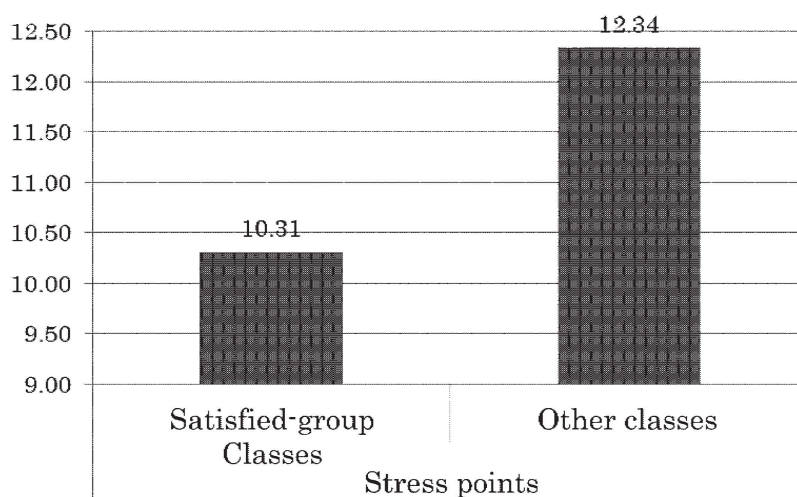


Figure 2 Stress points in satisfied-group classes and other classes

7. Summary of case study

From this case study, the following points regarding psychological care for students during disaster recovery are particularly noted.

1) A foundation for school education was solidly developed, and psychological care for students was placed within that framework

Not only was the physical educational environment organized, but the formation of the school group and class groups which are the basis of a stable daily life were carried out solidly. The practice at the case study school was far more difficult than educational experts may imagine. It was all too likely that trouble would arise from students' unease and difficulty in seeing through to the future after being afflicted by the disaster, and from their frustration with the limits of their living environment. Teachers took preemptive action regarding the problems projected, beginning by having students clearly understand and confirm rules as promises about living together; while carrying out daily educational activities steadily, the students of both schools stabilized, and it is thought that teachers were able to give students a sense of being responsible themselves for creating this living group.

2) Acting after appropriately grasping the status quo

The students in the school needed various different levels of support. Within this situation, questionnaires as well as observation were used to assess students' condition, and measures were taken after grasping the overall state of affairs. By using questionnaires, points were calculated for each individual student, which became common guidelines for teachers engaged in teamwork. Further, the content of support needed by students in afflicted areas changes over time. Even a good support program, if it diverges over time from the needs of the students at the moment, fails to create positive results. Based not on practices like "it's a directive, let's do it" or "it worked in the past, let's do it again," but through appropriately grasping students' individual psychological states and the state of the class groups, and acting based on the actual status quo, the success of the program was solidified.

3) Functioning staff support team stance

Teaching staff at this school were able to work together well not simply because they happened to be on good terms, but as the result of solid work done to make their support team stance function. The steps of each approach and teachers' individual roles and duties were made clear, with directions and information being clearly transmitted. It made a big difference that when beginning a new approach, the 5W1H were shared among all teachers. The context thereof was that the point of each approach was clearly explained along with student data, allowing teachers a shared understanding.

Discussion

I want to focus on the report in the case study that "four months after the disaster, in classes which had settled down into a state of affinity ("satisfied-group classes"), students' post-disaster stress was more decreased than in other classes. It was shown that "satisfied-group class" groups had the potential to lower students' stress." The points here are a) the point that students' stress is potentially reducible through daily life in the class group, and b) the point that even within a class group there were differences in students' stress reduction depending on their circumstances. I will consider these two points from the perspective of the group approach.

I. The group approach

In the area of counseling psychology, psychological support using the qualities of a group has been carried out since 1910, in areas such as the psychodramas proposed by Moreno, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Lewin et al.'s T-Group (Ishizaki, 2008). The group approach, of which the objectives are the psychological treatment, education and growth of the individual, communication among individuals, the development and improvement of relationships with others, and the development and reform of the organization, is the overall name for the various techniques which use the functionality, process, dynamics and characteristics of a small group (Nojima, 1999). In an educational context, the objective is often the advancement of the personality formation of the participating members. The program is structured so as to create living experiences in the group aimed at the members' education and growth, so that the living experiences become experiential learning. The group approach, as a method of achieving that goal, actively uses the functionality and characteristics of the group. It consists of the mutual human interactions which arise during the cooperative activities of people belonging to the same group, during daily group life, and the mutual effects of members on one another.

With regard to the effects attained by participants in the group approach from the group experience, Nojima (1999) presents a) the effects common to both the individual approach and the group approach, and b) the effects distinctive to the group approach, pointing out 15 specifics (chart 1). The group approach is also frequently used in the context of school education, and there are many reports of use in schools of the constructive group encounter (a part of the group approach), showing that it can provide psychological support toward promoting students' interpersonal abilities, preventing failure to adapt, and advancing maturity (Musashi, 2008).

Chart 1 Effectiveness of the group approach

Category	Item	Contents
Effects common to both the individual approach and the group approach	① Acceptance	Through being warmly accepted by others, self-confidence and sense of stability develop.
	② Support	Through comfort and encouragement from others, the ego is supported and strengthened.
	③ Transference	Relations with people considered important are recreated with others.
	④ Intellectualization	Intellectual understanding and interpretation reduce insecurity.
	⑤ Catharsis	Through releasing bottled-up emotion, tension is relieved.
	⑥ Self-understanding	Understanding deepens of one's own self-concept, behavior, and motivations.
	⑦ Guidance	Useful advice and information are received from others.
Effects characteristic of the group approach	⑧ Altruism	Through suppressing self-centered tendencies and warmly comforting others or giving kind advice, the joy of helping others arises and increases sense of stability and desire for life.
	⑨ Observer effect	While watching and listening to others' behavior, one learns to consider and learn from one's own.
	⑩ Normalization	Discovering that others have similar problems and concerns as oneself, one becomes aware of not being abnormal and feels relieved.
	⑪ Examination of reality	Recreating problems in family and interpersonal relations within the group, one learns their solutions through trial and error and thus acquires confidence; adaptability increases.
	⑫ Hope	Through seeing the growth and changes of others at close range, hope for the future develops.
	⑬ Study of interpersonal relations	Through talking and listening, self-expression capacity and sensitivity increase.
	⑭ Mutual effects	The group leader with the members, and the members among themselves, affect one another mutually.
	⑮ Group cohesion	Group consciousness increases mutual support capacity.

II. The class group from the perspective of the group approach

The class group in the United Kingdom and the United States focuses on the acquisition of academic ability as appropriate to each individual, as a context in which academic progress develops according to the individual, with a focus on students' individual learning: its functionality as a study group is emphasized. In contrast, the class group in Japan is composed of the same fixed members for at least a year, with the unit formed thereby aimed at advancing the psychosocial development of the students through living and studying activities and through children's mutual interrelations. Learning activities are mainly teacher-centered lecture-style lessons, with attention paid to children's learning together. Japan uses the overall term "class management" to cover all the guidance and support for the children in the class and the formation and maintenance of the class group, including learning activities, living guidance and educational advice (Kawamura, 2010).

From the results of a three-year continued observational and survey study⁴, Kawamura and Musashi (2012a) point out that in a well-regulated class with intimate connections, intraclass educational mutual effects take place as in figure 3; the use of a questionnaire to measure intraclass educational mutual effects (Kawamura and Musashi, 2012b) made it clear that there was a significant relationship between points for each factor and children's school morale (chart 2-1, 2). In short, the gains made by the members of Nojima's (1999) group approach from their group experience are similar in some ways to the intraclass educational mutual effects of the well-regulated, intimate class group which Kawamura and Musashi (2012a, b) point out. Students'

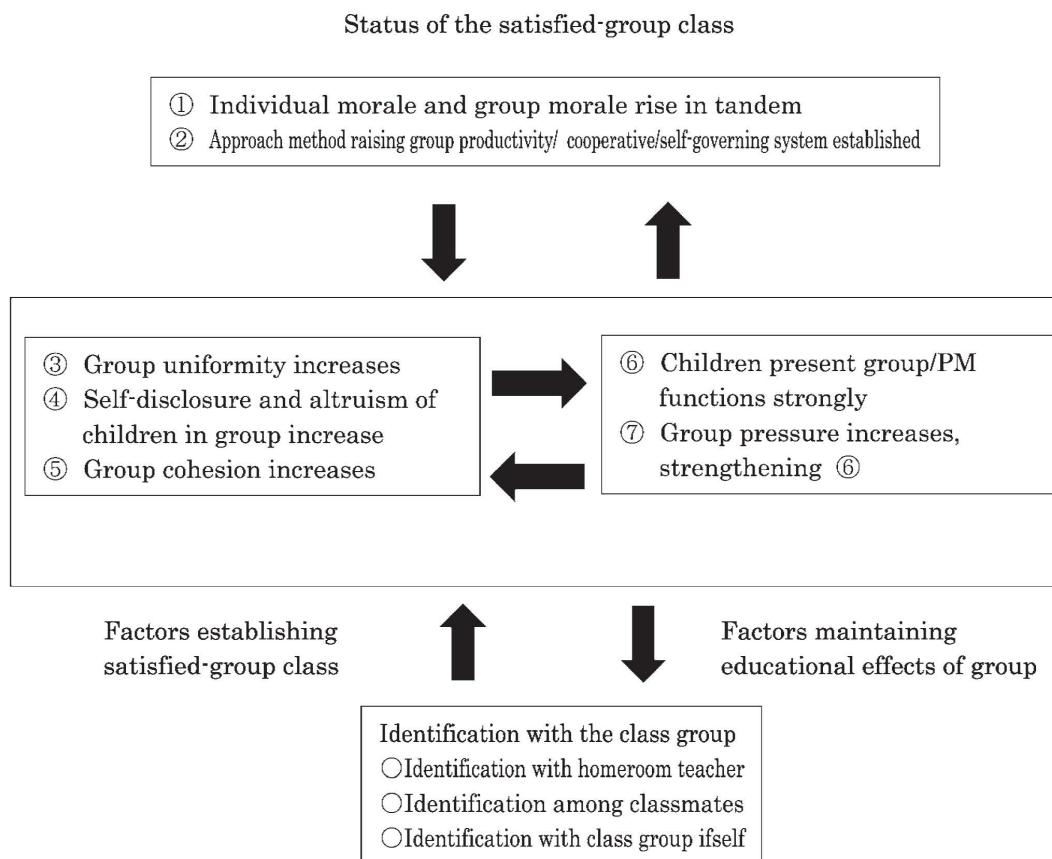


Figure 3 Mutual educational effects within the satisfied-group class

Chart 2-1 Correlation coefficients of class group mutual educational effects scale and school morale

	Group cohesion	P function	Group morale	Uniformity	M function	Altruism	Group pressure
Relations with friends	.494	.424	.415	.343	.548	.461	.493
	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Desire for study	.262	.436	.383	.306	.409	.262	.432
	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Relations with class	.525	.478	.489	.523	.586	.606	.554
	***	***	***	***	***	***	***

*** $p < .001$

Chart 2-2 Correlation coefficients of class group identification scale and school morale

	Identification with friends	Identification with teacher	Identification with affiliated group
Relations with friends	.425	.297	.392
	***	***	***
Desire for study	.386	.400	.457
	***	***	***
Relations with class	.555	.476	.521
	***	***	***

*** $p < .001$

group experience and activity experience within a class group take on a similarity to the group approach. It is thought that in this way the experience of everyday life and activities in the class group has aspects which contribute to students' psychological care.

III. The condition of the class group and educational mutual effects

The case study showed as well that even in the class group, the reduction of students' stress was not uniform. Okato (1996) presents the class as a place where "class creation"-style class management integrates subject teaching and lifestyle guidance, as a position from which to understand class management, and points out that this is a stance which considers overall education the reality of class management, and is now the mainstream in Japan. Nemoto (1989) states that "class creation" means the work of creating a class through trusting children's capacity for self-education as well as the capacity for mutual education of the group, further aiming to nourish these capacities, with children as the subjects of the group. The concept is to develop children's personalities in the class group in a goal-oriented way, given the premise that the process of democratic and autonomous group formation by the children and the development of children's democratic and independent personalities are indivisible.

Okato and Nemoto's points are premised on the idea that the daily class group requires fertile soil for planned experiential learning, and that class group conditions and functionality such that the daily life of the class group itself will serve as experiential learning for each student are called for. If the condition of the class group is poor, not only will the group approach produce no positive effects, but rather students' interpersonal relations will become defensive and will have negative effects on individual adaptation and further on development thereafter.

Since the mid-1990s in Japan, the failure of teacher-centered classes and class activities, that is to say the class group breakdown has been taken up by the media as a social issue. The former Ministry of Education set up the "Class Management Research Group" in 1998, defining the

“situation of a dysfunctional classroom” as “children acting out in the classroom and disobeying the teacher’s directions, subject classes being unpracticable, the school function of group education failing to take place in a class, a condition which continues for a given period of time and has turned into a situation which cannot be solved by regular methods used by the homeroom teacher,” and working to grasp the status of the problem. Their summary (Class Management Research Group, 1998) emphasized the compound nature of the problem, reported on 10 representative cases, and presented countermeasures. However, they did not go as far as to elucidate the condition of the class group with regard to this situation. In this context, the National Elementary School Principals’ Union (2006) reports that classes in a state of class group breakdown were up to 8.9% of the total at elementary schools. It is suggested by the above that on the ground at Japan’s schools, there were already a considerable number of classes in which Japan’s school function of carrying out education through the unit of the class group was dysfunctional. Kawamura and Musashi (2008a, b) took up 220 classes to examine the state of the class group as an independent variable, and pointed out that in the satisfied-group classes, where a given set of rules and good interpersonal relations held good at once among students, there were few incidents of bullying and the degree of learning established among the students was high; this proved clearly that the state of the class group has a significant influence on students’ activities.

Therefore, at the root of Japan’s class group system, there is thought to be a strong mutual relationship between the effectiveness of school education and the question of whether the students belonging to the class are able to have intimate and constructive mutual effects on one another. Particularly in a crisis situation such as that brought about by the disaster, as a major part of school education’s educational capacity, the effects of the group approach gained from the experience of life and activity in the class group are thought to be essential: they support the B-level “safe-feeling environment.” However, in order to achieve a certain degree of effectiveness, educators must be strongly aware that a good-quality class group is the precondition. Murayama and Nojima (1977) also sum up the group process based on the group experience as the stages of development theory (stage theory), pointing out that the stage beyond development of mutual trust depends on whether the group experience is able to develop the group process and whether it succeeds in becoming a satisfactory group experience for the members.

As well, the group approach focuses on the mutual effects of the interpersonal relations arising during daily life in the group. However, some students who suffer from psychological problems are in a condition where they are unable actively to take part in interchange with other students. If these students are forced to undergo the group experience just as the other students do, it is likely that they will be badly hurt. When a teacher tries deliberately to develop group activities similar to the group approach among students in the class, a grasp of the students’ psychological states is essential. There are students in the class who have not reached a state where they should be made to take part in class activities related to the group approach, and who need individual discussions with a professional.

Based on the above points, with an appropriate assessment of the class group for each individual student as a precondition, teachers are called on to carry out the basic practices of class management which makes the most of the special characteristics of the Japanese class group system, that is to “integrate individual care and group care.” This is a necessary condition for Japanese school education, and is thought to be strongly called for as well in a crisis situation such as that brought on by the earthquake and tsunami.

However, as in the case study, the class management carried out by teachers is left up to the

teachers' individual approaches. This paper was not able to comment on the manner of formation of a class group which contributes to students' mental health or on the different methodologies of the "daily" and the "emergency." I hope to address these points in the future.

In conclusion

The background of the bullying and truancy problems which schools have had to address in recent years is thought to include the aspect that schools and classes are not functioning as a community (Kawamura, 2010). A radical consideration of Japan's class group system, which dates back to the postwar era, may be called for with regard to the nature of schools in the future. Every time I visit a disaster-afflicted school, where I was deeply affected by the sense of the importance of students-people-supporting one another, this is how I feel.

Notes

1. This article was originally published, in Japanese, at *The Japanese Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 79, No. 4, 2012.
2. Iwate Prefectural Board of Education "Iwate Children's Mental Support Program" (Iwate Prefecture Education Center homepage: <http://www.iwate-ed.jp>)
3. The relative values of the lower measures on the class satisfaction measuring tool, acceptance points, invasion points, and stress points, are respectively $r = -.139$ and $r = -.369$, and it is thought that both measures are independent of the others.
4. Research from April 2010 to February 2011 at an elementary school was funded by MEXT's scientific research support fund, Basic Research C Task Number 21530703.

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