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ICT in Education: Case Japan

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ITK-FUKUOKA2009, the first itk conference in Japan was carried out on November 7th 2009, at Fukuoka University. It was a joint conference that is held with JADE (The Japan Association for Developmental Education) Kyushu-Okinawa branch.

In Japan, it is considered to be a social problem that students who are not equal to high school graduate in scholastic ability are admitted to enter universities. It is because of increasing percentage of students who go on to university and decreasing number of children. JADE was established in 2005 in order to make research and investigation of the developmental education for such students and to keep up with the situation by communicating and exchanging information among university community. The developmental education is called "remedial education" by parties concerned to education in Japan.

The ICT application for education is realized in various stage of the education. The most practical e-Learning systems are used in the job training for company workers. The workers learn the skills that are necessary for their daily jobs. Because of necessity for the job directly, the motivation for study is maintained in this case. The other successful example of the ICT application for education in Japan is the repeated practice type learning by using portable game computers. The software developed for portable game computers are commercially available. Such learning software are utilized for studying vocabulary of English and Japanese, mathematic calculus, historical matter and so on. The point for success is considered to be user interface that is familiar for the learners who often play games on the same hardware.

In higher education, such as university education, e-Learning is not practically introduced. Professors in universities consider e-Learning is not suitable for study in university that the thinking and concept building is highly required. They also know that the environment such as instructional design for teaching material, technical skills for contents production and learner support is important for e-Learning class.

Some of the JADE research groups have developed several e-Learning contents that are designed to be used for developmental education for university students. They also developed model class operation for effective teaching. They consider that the e-Learning would be effective learning tool for students just before and after the university.

For further expansion of the e-Learning, an organization named Association of Universities for the Promotion of Online Learning (UPO-NET) is established. The aim of the UPO-NET is to provide universities for common e-Learning environment by sharing on-line teaching materials that are produced and possessed by owner universities.

The above situation points that the e-Learning in Japanese universities is in the early stage in education system. More consideration and effort are needed to make the e-Learning effective system that is practically used in schools. The learner supporting system, such as mentoring is considered to be an indispensable factor for success of e-Learning.