Assessment methods used by occupational therapists working in special needs schools in Japan

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[Abstract] The purpose of this study was to elucidate the student assessment methods used by qualified occupational therapists employed at special needs schools in Japan and to examine the subjects of assessment. A survey of 31 qualified occupational therapists (7 men, 24 women) at special needs schools was conducted using a self-completed questionnaire. Seventeen valid responses were received (5 from men, 12 from women), for a valid response rate of 54.8%. The most commonly used assessment was behavior observation, followed by task analysis and range of motion. The Japanese Miller Assessment for Preschoolers, General Aptitude Test Battery, Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, Southern California Sensory Integration Tests, Southern California Postrotary Nystagmus Test, Japanese Sensory Inventory-Revised, Functional Independence Measure for Children, Assessment of Motor and Process Skills, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, and the new edition of the Kyoto Scale of Psychological Development were used infrequently. In the future, the use of objective observational assessments should be increased, and new assessment scales and Japanese versions of international scales that are appropriate for assessing students at special needs schools should be created.

Key words: special needs schools, occupational therapist, teacher, questionnaire, assessment

I Introduction

There have been calls in recent years for efficient and effective medical care based on scientific evidence. Such care is referred to as evidence-based medicine. The principle of evidence-based practice has recently extended to education in Japan. When teachers with licence of occupational therapist assess students, it is important to put evidence-based instruction into practice, evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction provided to the students and evaluate subsequent instruction. Special-needs education began in Japan in 2007. Special needs schools in particular are required to support students with severe, multiple, and diverse disabilities and to provide enriched instruction with the aim of fostering independence and social participation. In 2009, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology reported “Explanation of Curriculum Guidelines for Special Needs Schools: Independent Activities Edition” [1] and noted the importance of early evaluation of the physical function of those students (e.g., physical posture and gait, movements during routine activities and tasks, eating...