

12. Empirical Study on Development of Indicators for Revitalization of Lifelong Learning Activities: Conducted Through the Medium of the Social Education Director Dispatch System
Leader: BABA Yujiro, Director, Practical Social Education Research Center

(1) Purpose and Aim of Study

The social education director dispatch system officially promulgated by prefectural boards of education dispatches and assigns social education directors to municipalities. Focusing on two key characteristics of this system, namely complementarity (the ability to promote cooperation and coordination among prefectural/municipal social education administration systems while helping to achieve their objectives) and flexible expertise (the ability to deal expertly and flexibly with specific fields or issues at the municipal level), the report clarifies the role of this system in helping to revitalize lifelong learning activities among residents of the relevant regions.

(2) Outline of Research Results

- According to a questionnaire survey of all prefectures conducted in fiscal 2007 and 2008, 28 prefectures used the social education director dispatch system (or a similar system) in fiscal 2007, and 13 of those prefectures planned to use the system to the same extent in fiscal 2008, while seven planned to use the system to a lesser extent. Of the 20 prefectures that used the system in fiscal 2008, 12 planned to use it to the same extent in fiscal 2009, while five planned to use it to a lesser extent. Of the prefectures that did not use the system or had already abolished the system in fiscal 2007 and 2008, none planned to establish or use a similar new system. Thus nationwide use of the system is on a downward trend.
- Analysis of questionnaire results indicated the following five problems relating to use of the system: i) reduction in the number of prefectures using the system; ii) jobs of dispatched staff before and after dispatch; iii) requirements for qualifying for appointment as a dispatched social education director; iv) the tasks that should be undertaken by dispatched social education directors; and v) personnel and expense issues when accepting dispatched social education directors.

- Analysis of interview results revealed references to the following six points: i) establishment of administrative structures for promotion of social education; ii) wider understanding of social education; iii) lower barriers between school education and social education; iv) establishment of local government social education systems; v) innovative ways of operating systems; and vi) formation of networks of social education staff.