

16. Study on the Training of Coordinators who Assist School Support Volunteer Activities

Leader: Eiji Hattori (Director, Practical Social Education Research Center)

1. Purpose and background of the study

The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, established in July 2008, states the necessity of strengthening collaboration and cooperation among schools, families, and communities, thereby enhancing the educational function of the society as a whole. In many local communities, people have already begun to make efforts to support schools and help children's sound development, such as through programs operated by the Regional Headquarters for School Support and positive volunteer activities by local residents. In order to promote such activities all over Japan, there is a need for coordinators who work as a bridge between schools and local residents/bodies under a regional system to support schools, based on the power of various local entities and individuals. There is an urgent need to foster such coordinators.

The Practical Social Education Research Center conducted the "Study on the Promotion of School Support Volunteer Activities" in FY2007 and the "Model Training Programs for Fostering School Support Volunteers and Enhancing Their Skills" in FY2008. These studies showed that coordinators are playing very significant roles in promoting school support volunteer activities. In programs operated by the Regional Headquarters for School Support, local coordinators, who are deployed as the core of the programs, are expected not only to act as a liaison between schools and volunteers but also to promote cooperation by connecting various individuals, bodies, and facilities in respective local communities.

Based on the results of past studies on the training of social education coordinators and case studies by interview, we developed a model training program for fostering coordinators who assist school support volunteer activities in FY2009.

2. Outline of the study

(1) Objective and structure of the training program

Having analyzed the structure of training programs for school support coordinators in the "Study on the Role of Social Education Coordinators and Methods of Enhancing Their Skills" in FY2008, we then presented a model training program based thereon. Based on the results of this past study, we reviewed themes, content, and methods of training programs for school support coordinators and worked out a model program that can be actually used on site.

The objective of developing training programs for school support coordinators is to encourage coordinators to develop confidence in their knowledge and techniques through training, thereby enabling them to assist in school support volunteer activities without anxiety. The "Study on Measures to Promote School Support Volunteer Activities" conducted in FY2008

revealed that coordinators are playing extremely significant roles in assisting school support volunteers and generating cooperative relationships between schools and local communities. In light of this, we cited the following three areas of knowledge and techniques as indispensable for coordinators.

(i) Coordination skills (including communication skills)

To obtain knowledge and techniques for strengthening communication skills, including those for forming human relationships and for appealing to various groups; to understand local educational resources (individuals, bodies, and facilities, etc.) and seek collaboration among them; and to give advice and recommendations for volunteers

(ii) Understanding of school education

To obtain knowledge and techniques concerning school management systems, characteristics of school children, the outline of classes, and the flow of school life

(iii) Understanding of school support volunteer activities

To obtain knowledge and techniques concerning the positioning of volunteer activities in lifelong learning activities, and the current status of volunteer activities and notable points

We showed the structural relationship of these three areas, placing coordination skills at the core, positioning communication skills as incidental skills necessary to perform duties, and recognizing an understanding of school support volunteer activities and school education as the fundamental areas of the training.

(2) Content of the model training program

Before developing a model of training programs, we examined nine cases of training for school support volunteer coordinators conducted in prefectures and designated cities so as to ascertain and analyze the current status.

As a result, it became clear that there is a diverse range of people acting as coordinators: the level of their understanding of school education and their relationships with respective local communities varies significantly depending on their knowledge and experience.

Furthermore, their communication skills and their planning ability and presentation skills for proposing various ideas also vary widely.

Bearing such facts in mind, the model training program that we developed contains the following content at the following scale:

(i) Targets

Supposing persons who do not necessarily have enough fundamental knowledge and experience to act as a coordinator

(ii) Training content

Fundamental knowledge and techniques necessary to assist school support volunteer activities

(iii) Number of hours

Most training sessions now being conducted last for two days (around 10 hours). Therefore, we decided to develop a feasible training model of around 10 hours.

(iv) Responsible entities

- Supposing a training program mainly conducted by prefectures and designated cities
- Ensuring the versatility to allow municipalities to use the model program with a little ingenuity depending on their respective circumstances

The model training program is expected to be used flexibly with individual ingenuity according to the policies and circumstances of respective responsible entities. We introduced some examples of how to use the program and also presented methods to conduct training effectively.

3. Connection with the mid-term goals

In light of “ideal cooperation among schools, families, and communities” being cited as a priority issue for achieving the mid-term goals, we were able to work out a program for fostering coordinators in local communities.

4. Dissemination of research results

The report on this research study will be delivered to prefectural and designated cities’ boards of education and the whole text will be available on the website of the Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research.

5. Future plans

We finished this study in FY2009. We will encourage prefectures and designated cities to further disseminate and utilize the model training program developed through this study. At the same time, the knowledge obtained will be fully utilized in research seminars, etc. to be held at the Center.

6. Reports on this study

“Report on the Study on the Role of Social Education Coordinators and Methods of Enhancing Their Skills”

Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research
(March 2008)

“Report on the Study on Measures to Promote School Support Volunteer Activities”

Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research
(March 2009)

“Report on the Study on Training of Coordinators who Assist School Support Volunteer Activities”

Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research
(March 2010)

<http://www.nier.go.jp/jissen/chosa/houkokusyo0-0.htm>