

18. Survey on Training for Citizens' Public Hall Staff

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1. Purpose and background of the study

The February 2008 report by the Central Council for Education, entitled, "Measures to Promote Lifelong Learning to Lead the New Era – Aiming to Create an Intellectual Recycling-Oriented Society," states that citizens' public halls need to be positively used as the base for regional social education when promoting measures to assist the learning activities of each citizen and measures to enhance educational function of local communities. Therefore, citizens' public halls are required to make efforts to improve their functions qualitatively and quantitatively, not only as a place to provide learning opportunities that meet individuals' needs, but also as a facility to prepare educational classes that respond to local circumstances and needs and to assist in residents' activities. At the same time, they must make the most of the results of such efforts to enhance the educational function of respective local communities.

However, the Social Education Survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in FY2008 revealed that the number of citizens' public halls and their working staff has been decreasing. In order for citizens' public halls to play expected roles under such circumstances, the involvement of their working staff is very important. Directors and managers have to have the ability to understand issues of their respective local communities and accurately grasp local residents' needs, as well as to properly cope with general social requests. It is indispensable for them to devote themselves to enhancing their own skills as highly-specialized working staff by taking advantage of various training opportunities.

Therefore, in order to ascertain the current status of staff training at citizens' public halls, we conducted this survey targeting prefectural boards of education, municipal boards of education, and central citizens' public halls, with regard to the implementation of training for citizens' public hall staff in FY2008.

2. Results of the study

(1) Implementation of training by entity

Prefectures carrying out training for citizens' public hall staff accounted for 91.5%, while the percentage was 28.3% for municipalities, and 19.4% for central citizens' public halls.

The percentage of carrying out training for citizens' public hall staff was lower for municipalities and central citizens' public halls, compared to prefectures. The average number of training sessions per year was 5.37 for prefectures, 3.04 for municipalities, and 2.73 for central citizens' public halls, indicating that citizens' public hall staff are provided with nearly 11 opportunities to take such training per year on average. However, low percentages for

municipalities and central citizens' public halls revealed a large disparity in the availability of training opportunities among staff.

Looking at the percentage for cities and wards separately from that of towns and villages, and comparing them with the results of the Study of Classes and Courses at Citizens' Public Halls conducted by this Center in FY2006, the percentage of cities and wards and that of towns and villages that do not carry out training showed an increase. In particular, over 80% of towns and villages do not carry out any training. Such a decreasing trend in municipalities was also obvious from the changes in the number of training sessions.

(2) Training programs

Out of the top five themes of training programs provided by prefectures, municipalities and central citizens' public halls, "a case study on efforts by respective communities," "creation of better communities and towns," and "fundamental matters concerning lifelong learning and social education" have commonly been taken up. The remaining two themes cited were "trends in measures and projects for lifelong learning and social education (state, prefectures, and municipalities)" and "planning and designing of social education (citizens' public halls) projects and learning programs" for prefectures, "roles and operation of social education facilities" and "human rights education" for municipalities, and "roles and operation of social education facilities" and "roles of social education facility staff" for central citizens' public halls.

(3) Participation in external training and implementation of remote training

The percentage of central citizens' public hall staff members who participate in external training sessions was 81.7% for cities and wards, 80.0% for towns, and 77.3% for villages. The percentages showed no large difference, being around 80% for all three categories.

Meanwhile, a high percentage of cities and wards, towns, and villages replied, "we could not allow staff participation due to problems in the personnel system" and "we could not spare enough time to allow staff participation due to busy duties," as reasons for their staff not participating in external training.

According to the survey, only a few local public entities provide remote training. However, the survey also indicated that it is becoming increasingly difficult for citizens' public halls to spare money and time to allow their staff to participate in training sessions, as shown in the high rates of such responses as "we could not budget for staff participation in training" (nearly 30%) and "we could not spare enough time to allow staff participation due to busy duties" (nearly 40%).

As information and communications technology (ICT) has been advancing constantly, training utilizing ICT, which would be available anytime, anywhere, is one potential option for

the future.

3. Expectations for citizens' public hall staff training

We clarified and analyzed the current status of training for citizens' public hall staff and were able to obtain the following suggestions as expectations for the future.

- (1) Out of the top five themes of training programs provided by prefectures, municipalities and central citizens' public halls, three themes have commonly been taken up. Regarding two out of those three themes ("case study on efforts by respective communities" and "creation of better communities and towns"), training sessions by prefectures deal with case examples nationwide, while those by municipalities and central citizens' public halls mainly deal with case examples in their respective prefectures and municipalities. Therefore, there is a possibility that they can further enhance their training content by sharing roles.
- (2) Meanwhile, the theme "trends in measures and projects for lifelong learning and social education" was cited only by prefectures as one of the top priorities. Such broad-based content as the relationships with the state may be dealt with at prefectural training sessions more effectively and efficiently.
- (3) Given these, training sessions in local communities should not be considered separately, but be arranged systematically, while respecting the originality of each training session and comprehensively organizing respective training opportunities.
- (4) Recent financial difficulties and a reduction of working staff have made it increasingly difficult for staff members to participate in training. Nevertheless, undermining the quality of training by easily shortening training periods and hours must be avoided.
- (5) Public entities and facilities dispatch their staff to training sessions in hope of fruitful results. In order to respond to such expectations, further efforts are required to enhance the content of training programs.

4. Connection with the mid-term goals

We were able to clarify the current status of training at citizens' public halls, which can be the base for better cooperation among schools, families, and local communities. We expect that this study will contribute to the revitalization of citizens' public halls in the future.

5. Dissemination of research results

The report on this research will be delivered to prefectural 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.

6. Future plans

We finished this study in FY2009. We will make further efforts to disseminate the results widely to citizens' public halls. At the same time, the knowledge obtained will be fully utilized in special courses for citizens' public hall staff, etc. to be held at the Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research.

7. Reports on this study

“Report on the Study n Classes and Courses at Citizens' Public Halls”

Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research
(April 2007)

“Report on the Survey on Training for Citizens' Public Hall Staff”

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

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