

19. Study on Development of Training Programs to Enhance the Expertise of Social Education Directors

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1. Purpose and background of the study

After the revision of the Basic Act on Education in 2006 and the revision of the Social Education Act in 2008, people have come to expect more from social education directors, who take the initiative in the administration for promoting lifelong learning and social education. However, due to the reduction of the social education budget, the review of government subsidies for the system to dispatch social education directors, the consolidation of educational offices after municipal mergers, and the increase in local governments that delegate social education-related affairs to municipal entities, the number of social education directors has been decreasing.

Under such circumstances, there is an urgent need to improve training in order to enhance the expertise of respective social education directors. The Practical Social Education Research Center of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research has been conducting the “Study on Development of Training Programs to Enhance the Expertise of Social Education Directors” since FY2008. As a result of the survey in FY2008, it became clear that current training for social education directors provided by prefectures is far from sufficient both in terms of the number of sessions and training content. Based on this, we prepared, in FY2009, a model program for training to be provided by prefectures, and demonstrated its significance through holding training courses in Niigata and Aomori.

2. Results and outline of the study

(1) Development of tools to effectively carry out training

Bearing the fact that the number of training sessions is not enough, we developed tools to enhance the effect of a single training session. Specifically, considering the flow from the stage of raising motivation prior to the main training to the follow-up stage after the training as one round of training, we prepared the following five sheets as tools to effectively carry out the training and demonstrated their effects through training courses in Niigata and Aomori.

(i) Pre-training sheet (delivered at the pre-training)

- To help trainees be aware of the issues prior to the main training
- To help lecturers understand trainee awareness and improve the content of lectures
- To encourage trainees, lecturers, and the organizer to form a better network among them

(ii) Reflection sheet (delivered at the main training)

- To help trainees compile what they have learned from the main training

- To help lecturers and the organizer evaluate the curriculum of the main training
- (iii) Questionnaire immediately after the training (delivered at the main training)
 - For lecturers and the organizer to receive evaluation from trainees, with regard to the overall structure of the main training and their operation of the training as a whole, including the pre-training
- (iv) Report after the training (delivered as post-training 1)
 - To help trainees look back on the knowledge and techniques they have learned and consider concrete means to utilize such achievements in their daily duties as a social education director (help them set their action goals)
 - To help the organizer evaluate short-term results of the training
- (v) Follow-up training sheet (delivered as the post-training 2)
 - To help trainees review and analyze the progress of their efforts toward the individual action goals they set in the report after the training and to encourage them to exchange information and make adjustments as necessary
 - To help the organizer evaluate the long-term results of the training and to serve as materials to be reflected upon when the organizer plans and implements the next training program

The research study proved the significance of all five sheets. They serve as records of the process for each social education director, showing how they became aware of and resolved their own problems through advice from lecturers and practical exercises. These records may be shared with other social education directors who did not or could not attend the training and may eventually enhance the quality of overall social education directors as specialists.

However, in order to maximize the effects of all five sheets, both lecturers and trainees are required to bear a considerable burden. Some more improvements will be needed to simplify the format of the sheets and scrutinize the contents thereof.

(2) Presentation of a model program

We clearly indicated the viewpoint for organizing training programs and presented a model showing implementation methods, etc. for persons in charge of prefectural training sessions, who are working hard to enhance the expertise of social education directors under unfavorable circumstances with limited training opportunities. We explained the points to be noted clearly for each stage of organizing, implementing, and evaluating programs. The following items are part of knowledge obtained through this study.

(i) Stage of organizing a program

The FY2008 survey revealed that the demand for training differs between prefectural

social education directors and municipal counterparts. Therefore, efforts should be made to work out implementation methods that reflect such diversity. The survey also indicated that remote learning is effective in that it can flexibly solve individual problems and can cover the shortcomings of group training.

(ii) Stage of implementing a program

According to the survey, it was found that training only aiming to disseminate policies or distribute information can be completed only through the main training session, but that if the training aims to go so far as to have trainees acquire and improve knowledge and techniques on social education, and to make them change their attitude, then training in a cyclical form would be more effective. Cyclical training would clarify trainees' will and respective issues beforehand, encouraging them to confirm and fully absorb the fruits of the training and take actions after its completion.

(iii) Stage of evaluating a program

Post-evaluation needs to be reflected in the planning and design of following programs. Considering a flow from the pre-program stage to the post-program stage as one series of training is very meaningful even in that this enables organizers to not only expect output at the end of the main training, but also to follow the outcome in trainees' daily duties after the training.

3. Connection with the mid-term goals

In light of "ideal social education projects corresponding to rapid changes in society" being cited as a priority issue for achieving the mid-term goals, we were able to develop a training program that would contribute to the enhancement of the skills of social education directors from the contemporary point of view.

4. Dissemination of research results

The report on this research study 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.

5. Future plans

We finished this study in FY2009. We will make further efforts to disseminate the results widely so that they can be used as reference materials for improving and enhancing the content and methods of training to be provided at lifelong learning promotion centers, etc. established by local governments. At the same time, the knowledge obtained will be fully utilized in special courses for social education directors, etc. to be held at the Center.

6. Reports on this study

“Report on the Study on Development of Training Programs to Enhance the Expertise of Social Education Directors”

Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research
(March 2009 and March 2010)

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