

20. Study on Measures to Build Links between Local Governments and Organizations/Groups Involved in Social Education

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1. Purpose and background of the study

In recent years, it has been pointed out that the educational function of various regions has deteriorated due to weakening human relationships and ailing local communities. 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,” emphasizes the necessity of enhancing educational function of society as a whole and sharing goals among the entirety of each local community, suggesting that the administration should employ innovative measures, focusing on collaboration, networking, and its administrative function.

The report recommends that related organizations and groups in respective local communities should ascertain the issues and needs of their region, share goals, and jointly make efforts to enhance their communities’ educational function.

As a result of the promotion of programs operated by the Regional Headquarters for School Support, moves to create a concrete framework of cooperation, with schools as its core, have been spreading widely in local communities. On the other hand, however, it has also been pointed out that networks among local NPOs and other groups, administrative agencies, and related facilities have not necessarily been formulated sufficiently in such a manner as to fully utilize their respective characteristics.

Therefore, the creation of a framework of cooperation that enables people to deal with various problems in respective regions more comprehensively and multilaterally is required.

The Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research has conducted the “Study on Measures to Build Links between Local Governments and Organizations/Groups Involved in Social Education” since FY2008 and carried out an survey by interview of innovative cases, so as to ascertain the current status of the Lifelong Learning Platform,^(Note) which has been carried out jointly by various local organizations and groups, and other programs. As a result, it became clear that many local communities have been working to create various types of network bases, taking advantage of their respective features.

Based on this, in FY2009 we conducted a case study through interview, adding new examples, made classifications and comparisons among various network bases, and proposed desirable means to establish and operate new bases more effectively.

Note: The Lifelong Learning Platform refers to a local infrastructure to promote learning activities,

under which the industry, universities, special training colleges, NPOs, and other private bodies collaborate to provide learning content for career development, etc. and offer consultation (the aforementioned report by the Central Council for Education)

2. Outline of the study

We classified 18 cases of innovative challenges into the following five categories based on the purpose of their network bases (Lifelong Learning Platform, etc.), and compared the characteristics of respective cases for each category in terms of (i) location of the network base, (ii) the involvement of social education administration, and (iii) roles and effects of Lifelong Learning Platform, thereby clarifying how network bases are now being created and presenting the direction to be taken for operating those bases more effectively.

- (i) Cases trying to assist in the sound development of children within the local community as a whole
- (ii) Cases trying to facilitate individuals' learning through social education and have them contribute widely to society through their achievements
- (iii) Cases trying to seek near-future learning methods for social education, which have become possible thanks to the advancement of our IT society
- (iv) Cases trying to foster human resources, targeting women who seek re-employment after child rearing and people under unstable employment conditions
- (v) Cases trying to make the most of the educational function and practical abilities of NPOs and the educational and research functions of universities

(1) How network bases are now being created (by category of cases)

- (i) Cases trying to assist in the sound development of children among the local community as a whole

Each municipal board of education takes the initiative in establishing network bases by preparing visions and leading activities to create bases connecting schools and regions. Organizations meant to function as network bases are established in school districts and citizens' public hall districts, and coordinators and facilitators commissioned by the boards of education are dispatched there as staff. Furthermore, educational administration bodies set up councils to obtain the understanding and cooperation of school principals, guardians, and local residents, and dispatch personnel as needed, thus guiding school teachers and personnel, as well as local residents, with their strong leadership.

- (ii) Cases trying to facilitate individuals' learning through social education and have them contribute widely to society through their achievements

The central roles of executive committees or operation committees are mainly played by

the boards of education or the municipal administration. They plan, organize, and operate programs. Personnel who can take the initiative in providing assistance are often deployed so as to smoothly carry out those programs, and local residents are provided with opportunities to utilize their learning achievements. However, the survey also revealed the necessity to create a framework under which local residents and related organizations and groups can assume a leading role in operating networks, so as to ensure the originality and independence of respective executive committees, which are the very basis of the networks.

- (iii) Cases trying to seek near-future learning methods for social education, which have become possible thanks to the advancement of our IT society

They are developing infrastructure by effectively utilizing national government programs and arranging tie-ups with university research activities. As industry-government-academia cooperation is required from the preparatory stages, activities are carried out in a carefully planned manner, including surveys on implementation of lifelong learning programs in the region, the formulation of good relationships with related organizations and groups, and the trial operation of new systems. In order to ensure that role sharing among members of the promotion committees, etc. functions effectively, organizers should preferably work independently on a full-time basis, and it is also necessary to create frameworks to allow local resident participation.

- (iv) Cases trying to foster human resources, targeting women who seek re-employment after child rearing and people under unstable employment conditions

It became clear that the administration needs to take the initiative in creating systems and frameworks. In the future, the system may be operated by the public sector, but at the stage of formulating the basic organization and structure, the administration should lead the development of conditions and the promotion of programs. Furthermore, it is indispensable to seek collaboration across administrative agencies and cooperation with the public sector and local communities. It is also very important to formulate subsidiary organizations as actual working bodies when the need arises.

- (v) Cases trying to make the most of the educational function and practical abilities of NPOs and the educational and research functions of universities

The participation of multiple players is the premise of creating network bases. Under this category, participants from multiple sectors seek organizations created upon industry-government-academia cooperation. Also, in the case of programs to be operated under a project system, which will be more fruitful if operated under mutual cooperation, the creation of network bases is naturally required.

(2) Requirements to create network bases and effective operation means

Based on how network bases are now being created, as clarified by category, we presented the requirements necessary for creating network bases and a means to operate them effectively.

(i) Requirements necessary for creating network bases (by category of cases)

Requirements vary by category but cases in the same category show common features.

Category 3: “Cases trying to seek near-future learning methods for social education, which have become possible thanks to the advancement of our IT society” – “development of infrastructure by effectively utilizing national government programs and arranging tie-ups with university research activities,” “creation of systems on a step-by-step basis,” “creation of frameworks to allow local resident participation”

Category 5: “Cases trying to make the most of the educational function and practical abilities of NPOs and the educational and research functions of universities” – “creation of organizations founded upon industry-government-academia cooperation,” “devices to ensure funds,” and “organizer mobility”

(ii) Means to operate network bases effectively

Effective means also vary by category, but cases in the same category show common features.

Category 2: “Cases trying to facilitate individuals’ learning through social education and have them contribute widely to society through their achievements” – “creation of organizations where executive committees act voluntarily” and “proper role sharing between executive committees and organizers”

Category 4: “Cases trying to foster human resources, targeting women who seek re-employment after child rearing and people under unstable employment conditions” – “organizations consisting of members with high mobility,” “effectively utilizing national government programs, and seeking the continuity and potential of bases after finishing programs,” “making the most of the accumulated performance of social education administration,” and “effectively utilizing practical abilities of companies and NPOs”

3. Connection with the mid-term goals

In light of the “ideal cooperation among schools, families, and local communities” being cited as a priority issue for achieving the mid-term goals, we collected model cases that may help with the creation of concrete frameworks for cooperation in local communities, and were able to clarify effective operation methods from them.

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 make further efforts to disseminate and encourage the utilization of the results for the purpose of promoting links between local governments and organizations/groups involved in social education. 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 Measures to Build Links between Local Governments and Organizations/Groups Involved in Social Education”

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

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