

## **21. Study on New Roles of Lifelong Learning Promotion Centers**

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### **1. Purpose and background of the study**

The report by the Central Council for Education, entitled, “Development of an Infrastructure for Lifelong Learning” (January 30, 1990), proposes that it is necessary to establish lifelong learning promotion centers as the central organizations to promote lifelong learning in local communities. In response to this report, such centers were established nationwide and have played significant roles as local bases to promote lifelong learning. Furthermore, the Council report, entitled, “Measures to Promote Lifelong Learning to Lead the New Era – Aiming to Create an Intellectual Recycling-Oriented Society” (February 19, 2008), points out the significance of further promoting lifelong learning and creating an intellectual recycling-oriented society where individuals use what they have learned to give back to society based upon their needs, and thereby contribute to the sustainable enhancement of the educational function of society as a whole.

However, some local lifelong learning promotion centers now face difficulties due to reductions in budget and working staff.

Under such circumstances, we consider it necessary to ascertain and analyze the current status of lifelong learning promotion centers and seek new possibilities therefor, so as to ensure that they can continue to play their roles as base facilities promoting individuals’ lifelong learning.

### **2. Results of the study**

#### **(1) What became clear through the survey and interview**

- (i) System to provide information on learning opportunities and educational counseling services

Information on learning opportunities and educational counseling services are most commonly provided services at many centers and the average prefectural cost is 7,678,000 yen. Specifically, we clarified, through interviews, the details of services offered by the Sawayaka Chiba Kenmin Plaza (provision of information on lifelong learning) and those by the Osaka Municipal Lifelong Learning Center (development of a system for lifelong learning).

- (ii) Research activities and provision of learning opportunities for local residents

Research activities are ranked the lowest among specific projects now being carried out intensively. The prefectural budget for providing learning opportunities for local residents is 7,712,000 yen on average.

(iii) Creation of cooperative relationships with related organizations

Thirty-five centers consider “promotion of cooperation with related organizations and creation of networks” to be the top or a high priority among their projects. Regarding concrete efforts for promoting cooperation with municipalities and creating networks, those trying to promote the provision and sharing of information are the largest in number (30 centers).

(iv) Training of leaders and advisors for lifelong learning

A total of 39 centers have been intensively engaged in the training of leaders and advisors, and 21 of them consider it to be the top priority. Thus, projects to foster human resources are recognized as indispensable for lifelong learning promotion centers, which are the base facilities intended for that purpose.

The report introduces case examples, such as a training project for fostering lifelong learning experts which targets administrative officers, teachers, and group leaders and is conducted by the Sawayaka Chiba Kenmin Plaza. It also cites a local leader training project conducted by the Lifelong Learning Promotion Center, Yamaguchi Hitozukuri Foundation.

(v) Evaluation of achievements of lifelong learning

Utilization and evaluation of local residents’ learning achievements is not generally recognized as the top priority. However, the report introduces some case examples from the Lifelong Learning Promotion Center of the Yamaguchi Hitozukuri Foundation (i.e. a project for training leaders and supporters, and the Yamaguchi life academy promotion project).

(2) Expectations for the future development of lifelong learning promotion centers

Based on the current status of lifelong learning promotion centers, we have compiled a possible future course of direction for the development and new roles of centers, including some suggestions on what should be prioritized and from what points of view.

(i) Viewpoints on cooperation with other organizations and bodies

The following viewpoints are important:

- a. Whether cooperation is being made in forms other than just the provision of information on learning opportunities
- b. Whether cooperation covers a wider scope and not only the social education sector
- c. Whether cooperation with university or college centers is being sought
- d. Whether collaboration and cooperation with companies and institutes of vocational education are being promoted
- e. Whether collaboration and cooperation with the social welfare sector are being promoted

- f. Whether it is verified on a regular basis that the center does indeed play the central role in the network to promote lifelong learning

Efforts by the Hokkaido Lifelong Learning Promotion Center can be cited as an example of such cooperation. The center offers lectures through the “Citizen’s College of Hokkaido” as its multilateral project in cooperation with a large number of other organizations. Cooperation with a variety of organizations and bodies is of great importance as one of the roles and functions to be assumed by lifelong learning promotion centers.

(ii) Creation of new learning opportunities

The creation of new learning opportunities is considered to be one of the integrated forms of various roles and functions of centers, and many facilities have been making efforts therefor. Model examples include the mobile programs for lifelong learning provided at correctional facilities, hospitals, and other welfare facilities by the Mito Lifelong Learning Center in Ibaraki.

(iii) Utilization and evaluation of learning achievements

Proper utilization and evaluation of learning achievements is what is expected from lifelong learning centers in the future. However, this is rather difficult to accomplish with only the efforts of each facility. The Lifelong Learning Promotion Center of the Yamaguchi Hitozukuri Foundation has been carrying out, in cooperation with local organizations and bodies, the Yamaguchi Life Academy Promotion Project, with the aim of having individuals utilize their learning achievements to give back to society after the project. The Sawayaka Chiba Kenmin Plaza has also been carrying out a training project for fostering lifelong learning experts in cooperation with other related organizations. As shown in these examples, cooperative relationships with related organizations are indispensable for fully utilizing and evaluating individuals’ learning achievements. Centers in municipalities nationwide should cooperate on this matter.

### **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 clarify functions to be assumed by lifelong learning promotion centers, which, from the contemporary point of view, function as base facilities covering a wide swath of local communities,

### **4. Dissemination of research results**

The report of 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.

### **5. Future plans**

We finished this study in FY2009. We will make further efforts to disseminate the survey results to lifelong learning promotion centers, etc. established by local governments. At the same time, the knowledge obtained will be fully utilized for improving the activities of the “Research Exchange Forum for Lifelong Learning Centers Nationwide” held by the Practical Social Education Research Center, National Institute for Educational Policy Research.

### **6. Reports on this study**

*“Report on the Study on New Roles of Lifelong Learning Promotion Centers”*

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

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