

Potential Utilization of Social Work Support Services in Nursery Centers

: The Process of Changes in Childcare Workers Responsible
for Providing Support to Child-rearing Households with Problems

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This study explores the potential utilization of the support method used in social work in the family support provided by nursery centers. Four childcare workers with years of experience as nursery teachers, who were currently engaged in activities to help children with problems in their family backgrounds, were interviewed and the results analyzed using the Trajectory Equifinality Approach (TEA) in order to evaluate changes in their professional awareness as childcare workers responsible for family support. Consequently, the following three findings were obtained.

The first finding is that nursery teachers in charge of the class undergo a six-phase process until they develop a strong sense of professionalism as childcare workers responsible for family support. After accumulating experience in taking charge of children who are living in a complex family environment and have trouble developing a positive identity, nursery teachers are assigned to work as childcare workers responsible for family support. By promoting better understanding of the roles to be played by nursery teachers, the complex backgrounds behind each case, and the difficulties confronting private nursery centers, they gradually come to feel a strong desire to be a “childcare worker who can offer a sympathetic ear to children and their parents and provide support from their perspectives.” The second finding is that major contributing factors that enhance their professional awareness as childcare workers include encouragement from their superiors and colleagues, changes in their perception of parenting, a strong desire to prevent child abuse, and cooperation and collaboration with other relevant institutions. The third finding is that they, in addition to their personal qualities, have enhanced their skills needed for family support by developing expertise necessary for care workers through cooperative activities with other relevant institutions.

Asymmetry in the Peer Relationships

: Classmates with Developmental Disabilities and Students' Roles as Supporters

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In a regular classroom where students are supposed to have symmetrical relationships, students and their classmates with developmental disorders whose diagnosis names are undisclosed often have asymmetrical relationships. What kind of conflict does such circumstance bring to children?

The result of the analysis using membership categorization device indicates following. 1) In the "tolerance" practice for classmates with developmental disabilities, differences were found in the operation categories between teachers and students. 2) While the "tolerance" practice by students ensures educational access for children with developmental disabilities and fosters acceptance in the classroom, it asymmetrically fixed the peer relationship. 3) Students play a role of a 'supporter' in these asymmetrical relationships and it causes inner conflicts within them. Unlike other types of supportive relationships, it is difficult for them to leave those peer relationships in a classroom.

The results indicate that further studies of mutual acts in the class are necessary to examine the fixation of asymmetric relations caused by supportive practice for children with developmental disabilities and the resolution of conflicts among other children.

Institutionalization of the Instruction to Pass University Examinations in Top-Ranking Public High Schools and Its Impact on Teachers : A Case Study of “Shingaku-Shidou” in a Public High School in Tohoku Region, Japan

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Since 2000, local education boards in Japan’s urban areas have implemented reforms in top-ranking public high schools. These reforms focus on providing instructions to students with the aim to help them pass prestigious university examinations. Teachers refer to these instructions as “Shingaku-Shidou.” In line with these instructions, teachers have to believe that they should take responsibility for students’ examination performance and that their students’ performance in “Shingaku-Shidou” directly influences their prestigious university examination performance.

The research question is therefore, “What negative impact does the institutionalization of the ‘Shingaku-Shidou’ have on teachers?” In order to answer this question, I focus on top-ranking high school academic reforms in the 1990s in the Tohoku Region. This is because the institutionalized “Shingaku-Shidou” in the 1990s in this rural area is similar to the one in the urban areas. I chose the case of one school, which I coded “X Public High School.” The school is in a prefecture that I coded “Prefecture A” in the Tohoku Region. X Public High School has a long history as an old lower secondary school from before World War II. X Public High School teachers institutionalized “Shingaku-Shidou” with the support of the local education board in the 1990s. However, after the mid-2000s, the institutionalized “Shingaku-Shidou” moved from following a cooperative system to following a competitive one between teachers for their students’ examination records.

In the 2010s, it has been difficult for X Public High School to achieve its goal of increasing the number of students who pass prestigious university examinations. In short, the situation arose that teachers was continually expected to take responsibility for their students, however they had great difficulty to meet its expectation. Therefore, I conclude that the deinstitutionalization of “Shingaku-Shidou” has a negative impact on teachers because of the excessive responsibility for their students.

Reduction of Infant Mortality Under Japan's Total War System

: A Study on the Improvement of Infant Nutrition Performed
by the Health Department of the Aiiku Research Institute

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In this study, we focused on the spread of childcare knowledge and the associated health policies regulating the reduction of infant mortality under Japan's total war system. Specifically, we focused on the improvement of infant nutrition and the associated knowledge dissemination activities of the Health Department (HD) of the Aiiku Research Institute. Using the basic data obtained from the “survey for nutrition situation during weaning period,” which was performed in 1939 in farming villages with high infant mortality, the HD focused on helping mothers increase breast milk production, and developing nutrition substitutes in response to the food shortage at that time. After 1940, the HD continued these studies and disseminated the newly acquired nutrition knowledge through books and public health nursing education. Based on the results of our study, public health nurses in Aiiku village (a model region for the neighborhood aid project, which was developed by the Imperial Gift Foundation Aiiku-kai, as a governing body of the HD of the Aiiku Research Institute) provided pregnant and postpartum women with nutrition education in an attempt to reduce infant mortality in the village. We also discovered that the above-mentioned approaches by the HD inspired postwar maternal and child health policies.