

論文の英文要旨

論文題目

Examining the Promotion of Learning and Construction of Social Capital
for Children in Poverty:
A Case Study of a Learning Support Program in Japan

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Child poverty has drawn nationwide attention in Japan since the middle of the 2000s. Of the various measures that support children in poverty, Learning Support Programs based on the 2013 Act for Supporting the Independence of Needy Persons (*Seikatsu Konkyusha Jiritsu Shien Ho*) have been especially widely implemented. Several studies suggest that children in poverty are more likely to experience relatively low academic achievement and low educational attainment and later in life hold low income jobs and have a low standard of living. Other research indicates that children in poverty often lack social ties with others who are not family members, and consequently they are less likely to have social capital, or social ties used to produce benefits or achieve a goal. These studies highlight the need for Learning Support Programs, which provide participating children with learning support and opportunities to construct relationships with others. In other words, these programs have the potential to improve children's academic performance and create linking social capital, or social ties between those who reach out in greater positions of power and those of lesser power who receive the help. However, little research closely examines how staff members, including volunteers, in the Learning Support Programs interact with participating children to promote learning while trying to establish relationships that can serve as linking social capital.

Responding to this need, this research examines three questions: (1) how volunteers in a Learning Support Program reach out to participating children to promote children's learning and construct relationships with the children during program time; (2) how managing staff members in the program reach out to participating children to do the same; and (3) as a result of the interactions with volunteers and managing staff members, how participating children perceive their own learning and relationships with volunteers and managing staff members. With regards to the third question, the present research also investigates (a) whether participating children view their

relationships with volunteers and managing staff members as social ties that can serve as social capital and (b) whether differences distinguish children who think they have such ties and children who do not. To this end, the author of this dissertation conducted a case study in a Learning Support Program located in an unnamed metropolitan municipality—municipality X. The author took field notes, interviewed volunteers (who were undergraduate or graduate school students) and managing staff members, and surveyed participating children while working as a volunteer in the selected program once a week for three years.

The results indicate that volunteers who reach out to participating children first attempt to perceive how those children feel. Depending on their state of mind, volunteers, who consistently regard children with affection, respond either by maintaining their vertical relationship (e.g., showing authority or patiently avoiding conflict) or by attempting to develop with children a horizontal relationship (e.g., striving to become like friends, showing themselves to be not perfect, or sharing similar experiences). Such vacillations in volunteer responses seem to stem from volunteers' ambivalent feelings about their age, teaching qualifications, and the importance they assign to learning and social interactions. Subsequently, volunteers reflect on their interactions with children; if volunteers find those interactions rewarding, they will again participate in the program.

With regards to managing staff members, this study's findings indicate that they also first attempt to understand each child's state of mind. Subsequently, managing staff members deal with children individually yet treat all of them equally while maintaining vertical relationships with the children. Meanwhile, managing staff members also attempt to construct horizontal relationships with children by finding commonalities or showing themselves to be not perfect. Managing staff members, likewise, feel ambivalent about the balance of learning and social interactions, and, consequently, they sometimes vacillate. However, in addition to regarding each child with affection, managing staff members believe unwaveringly in the need to protect participating children, volunteers, and the program itself. Therefore, managing staff members seem to maintain vertical relationships with children more often than volunteers. In all likelihood managing staff members will continue this process as long as they find it rewarding.

The results of the survey demonstrate that because of their contact with volunteers and managing staff members, many participating children have developed positive feelings about learning. The findings also reveal that approximately half of the children want to visit the program to seek help if they experience trouble, and field notes show that even after graduating, many children revisit the program to report their situations or ask for help. These graduates seem to have formed ties with managing staff members and volunteers, and they utilize and gain benefits from these ties. Considering these results, this research suggests that volunteers and managing staff members in the program do create linking social capital among at least some of the participating children. The findings also indicate that participating children who want to seek help from the program feel more positively about learning than children who do not necessarily want to do so. Hence, the promotion of children's learning in Learning Support Programs seems to be correlated with the development of their ties with staff members.

Linking social capital is theoretically found between those who reach out in higher positions and those who receive the help in lower positions. However, this research suggests that linking social capital can be created when those who attempt to reach out vacillate. In the selected Learning Support Program, volunteers and managing staff members not only respond to children by maintaining their vertical relationship; they also attempt to establish horizontal relationships by interacting with children at their level. Volunteers and managing staff members are seemingly able to do this because they hold ambivalent feelings about the importance of learning and social interactions, and they often are not sure which variable they should prioritize at any given moment. Volunteers are also particularly ambivalent about their age and teaching qualifications.

Based on these results, this study concludes that those who work for Learning Support Programs and children in poverty need to be humble; they should be ambivalent about their actions and question whether their actions are appropriate, although those in management positions also need to be rigid in some cases to protect those they want to help. This research also suggests that staff members, including volunteers, in Learning Support Programs should endeavor to find ways to deepen children's understanding of learning so that children can develop greater trust and seek help when they need it.