

Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation

**Support for Children with Disabilities through School Social  
Workers — Focusing on Children who are Difficult to  
Connect with Support —**

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This study aims to identify the support that can be achieved through the involvement of school social workers (hereafter referred to as SSWs) for children with disabilities who are enrolled in regular classes and are difficult to connect with support. It also aims to present the knowledge that SSWs should acquire at the micro level (approach to individual cases), the meso level (approach to building school systems), and the macro level (approach to building consultation support systems for bodies such as local governments).

The introduction confirms that the role of SSWs is required to cope with the reality in which children with disabilities enrolled in regular elementary and junior high school classes face various challenges in their school and home life, such as abuse at home, victimization by bullies at school, violent behavior, and truancy.

Chapter 1 examines the current status of special support education for children with disabilities enrolled in regular classes, the current status of school social work, and the relationship between the two. The report also confirms that the relationship between the activities of SSWs and special support education in Japan has not been fully examined. It shows that support for children with disabilities by SSWs extends not only to micro-level practices, but also to meso- and macro-level efforts, such as collaboration with special support education and the creation of cooperative systems with the community.

Chapter 2 summarizes the relationship between supportive education for children with disabilities and school social work in the U.S. and examines the potential for school social work in Japan. In the U.S., SSWs are involved in activities such as the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for children with disabilities as coordinators, using a social work perspective. The key word here is collaboration and confirms the existence of collaboration with teachers and various other professions and school culture. We also show that these are important perspectives for practicing

school social work in Japan.

In Chapter 3, interviews were conducted with three people with disabilities. The needs of the children were identified, which are the prerequisites for micro-level activities. The results reveal that the needs of children with disabilities enrolled in regular classes are the presence and involvement of supportive schoolteachers and adults who are willing to confront them. The reality is that the children have various difficulties in their living environment, along with disabilities that are difficult to see.

Chapter 4, details interviews with three teachers. This chapter focuses on meso-level activities and identifies the support that SSWs can achieve to build an in-school support system that enables the provision of SSWs' perspectives and support. In the initial stages of support for children and parents by homeroom teachers, it became clear that, despite the assignment of SSWs, homeroom teachers were taking on the sole responsibility of providing care and support for children and their involvement with their parents.

In Chapter 5, we conducted interviews with ten SSWs and identified the following points for verification: 1) Awareness of the child's disability by SSWs and others, 2) Initiation of support by SSWs, 3) Parental acceptance of the disability, 4) Collaboration with school faculty and staff, 5) Discussions and support system development within schools, and 6) Items to be passed on among school types. The timing for SSWs to become aware of a child's disability or suspicion of a child's disability is when they begin to provide support for the diverse issues surrounding the child. The study reveals that SSWs accepted and listened to the parents' thoughts and feelings based on their psychological state, provide support for difficult life situations faced by the parents and their families, represent the child's thoughts and feelings to ensure the best interests of the child, and support the entire family in the process of accepting the disability. In creating a support system within the school, a support system for parents and children and a system to support teachers and staff are developed. Assessments are conducted from the perspectives of factors such as education, welfare and psychology, and needs are identified as far as possible before proceeding with responses. SSWs are then involved in creating a system for systematic development of cooperation with special support education. The handover between schools involves building a relationship of trust between the school sending the child and the school accepting the child, as well as a relationship of trust and support with the parents. Based on these relationships, opportunities for the accepting the child (e.g., cases meetings) are coordinated and held. The items of information for the handover include objective information such as the child's problems and wishes, detailed information collected by the SSW during the assessment, and, if the child has an individualized educational support plan, the contents of that plan.

Chapter 6 provides comprehensive considerations based on the results of these studies. The support that can be provided by SSWs is classified into micro, meso, and macro levels. The study also clearly indicates the support that SSWs can provide to children with disabilities enrolled in regular classes and presents the findings as knowledge that SSWs should acquire.