

## A Multi-layered Reflective Learning Community Supporting the Professional Development of Human Service Practitioners

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The framework supporting social education and lifelong learning in Japan is currently undergoing a major transformation. Professionals who support lifelong learning activities within local communities (shakaikyoikushi and shakaikyoiku shuji) are now expected not only to work within existing educational institutions, but also to organize people's activities around learning across a wide range of settings, including corporations, civic organizations, and welfare services. Furthermore, new visions for the education and professional development of these practitioners are beginning to emerge, emphasizing continuous learning processes that extend beyond initial training into ongoing in-service development. Therefore, clarifying the structures of learning that support the professional development of learning facilitators across all stages of their careers in these diverse fields has become an urgent task. To address this issue, the analysis of existing cases concerning the professional development of learning support practitioners is considered particularly important.

Accordingly, this study analyzes a roundtable practice conducted at Waseda University since 2006 that has supported the professional development of practitioners engaged in human service work. Through this analysis, the study aims to clarify both the structure of a learning community that collaboratively supports the continuous professional development of practitioners working across diverse fields and the conditions necessary for sustaining such a community.

The "roundtable" discussed in this presentation does not refer simply to a meeting or a mini-symposium. Rather, it is understood here as a learning method through which practitioners collaboratively reflect on practice. This approach has mainly been developed within teacher education, in-service teacher training, and the professional development of social education personnel. More specifically, in small groups consisting of five to six participants, facilitators, presenters, and listeners engage in dialogue by carefully listening to practice reports and collaboratively examining the significance and challenges of practice.

The practice reports presented within the roundtable are not merely activity reports, but reflections on practice conducted through practice itself. Practitioners narrate their own practices along the temporal process through which those practices unfolded, thereby verbalizing the process through which their own frameworks of recognition were transformed. Following these narratives, all group members engage in discussion in order to examine the significance and challenges of practice from multiple perspectives. In this sense, the roundtable can be understood as a dialogical, collaborative, and reflective form of learning.

Within the Education Program of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Waseda University, undergraduate and graduate students have organized and managed these roundtables as part of a program entitled the “Educational Practice Research Forum.” Following each forum, participants compiled records of practitioners’ reports as well as reports reflecting on the organizational process itself. This study focuses on the interactive relationships among different learning communities documented within these records in order to extract the learning structure embedded within the roundtable practice.

An examination of twenty years of roundtable practice reveals several important findings. For students, the roundtable functioned not only as a space for reflecting on their own activities, such as teaching practica or extracurricular projects, but also as an opportunity to reconsider their careers and ways of living from multiple perspectives. For practitioners, it became a place to reinterpret the significance and challenges of their practices within a long-term perspective and thereby gain insights for new developments. Some graduates have also implemented roundtable practices within their own workplaces, suggesting that the roundtable itself became a site for learning how to cultivate reflective practitioners. Furthermore, for undergraduate and graduate students involved in organizing and managing the roundtables, these experiences were not merely administrative tasks but opportunities to learn how to organize learning processes among diverse practitioners. Furthermore, careful consideration was given in the preparation and facilitation of the roundtable to issues such as human rights, gender equality, and respect for diversity, which likely contributed to creating a sense of safety among participants and enabled open discussion.

Thus, the roundtable can be understood as a site for the professional formation of reflective practitioners through the collaborative reflection of learners situated at different stages of learning and career development. This study suggests that such forms of learning are also essential for the

sustainable professional development of social education practitioners who are increasingly expected to work across diverse fields.