



International Network for School Social Work

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Friendship between Korean and Japanese school social workers Kyoungheon Park

Former President of KASSW, Currently Representative of SAM Education and Welfare

Korean school social workers visit Osaka, Japan

This February 12 Korean school social workers who work in schools, the provincial office of education and community education welfare centers visited Higashi-Osaka, Japan to meet Japanese school social workers. There is enough similarity in the education systems in Japan and Korea that we felt we could learn important ideas during our visit. We stayed five days in Higashi-Osaka City visiting an elementary school, a middle school, an education center and a child and family counseling department in a community social welfare center.



School social workers from Korea and Japan in Osaka

In both countries the school social workers find that schools and students are dealing with issues such as bullying, depression and self-harm, Attention deficit Disorder, internet and videogame addiction, absenteeism, dropping out and child abuse. We looked at how Korean and Japanese social workers are addressing these problems.

In Higashi-Osaka City each school social worker is in charge of several schools and they function mainly as consultants, rather than working directly with students, since they may visit a school only once or twice a week. They are focused on dealing with attendance problems and bullying (*ijime*).

In contrast, Korean education Welfare project workers are full-time workers for one school. Students or teachers can meet the worker at his/her office to seek help such as counseling or tutoring. The worker provides advocacy and sometimes a home visit with parents. They also plan and operate a program for low-income students. Many services are provided such as tutoring, counseling, referrals to various resources, social skills learning, classroom interventions and home

visits. Working with children suffering from abuse and neglect is the first priority to help them adapt to school and to assist parents and family. During our visit we also spent time talking with and getting to know Japanese school social workers in more informal settings. We were especially glad to meet some teachers of ‘*Min-jok*’ class (to provide Korean language class and Korean cultural activities not only to Korean-Japanese students but to anyone interested) and school social workers from Korean immigrant families.

Japanese school social work professors visited Seoul, Korea

Mr. Koji Kadota (professor of Kurume University in Fukuoka) and Mr. Toshiki Daimon (professor of Tokyo Fukushi University) visited Seoul in March. The purpose of the visit was to collect information related to Mr. Kadota’s research project on school social work and sexual minorities, funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science.



Joint seminar in Seoul

On the first day, KASSW (Korea Association of School Social Workers), KSSSW (Korea Society of School Social Work) and SAM Education and Welfare held a joint seminar on Special Education and the school social worker’s role. (SAM Education and Welfare is a private non-profit institute that conducts research and training for school social work). Mr. Kadota explained the recent change in the special education system in

Japan. He wants to suggest that the government utilize the school social worker system to help students and teachers in special education schools. Ms. Kyoung-sun Im, the chief representative of KSSSW and a professor of Baeksuk Arts University in Seoul gave a presentation. She introduced the KASSW’s effort to link special education and school social work, and Ms. Yoo-ri Choi, a school social worker from Middle School, reported a case experience of cooperating with the special education teacher to help a student.

On the second day we visited ‘DDing-dong’ a youth LGBT support center and then ‘Se-Um’ a center for children of incarcerated parents with the Japanese research team. Both are new but important service NGO’s that school social workers cooperate with. On the last day we went to an elementary school and had a meeting with a school social worker (education welfare project worker), two special education teachers, a senior teacher of an after-school program and an education welfare project team. Through their case stories we could learn how school social workers can cooperate with homeroom teachers, special education teachers and community service agents to help students with special needs as well as their families.

Korea and Japan share many commonalities in their school systems as well as common challenges in youth welfare. We, school social workers, will try to continue to communicate and learn from each other. We have also been communicating with Mongolian school social workers for about ten years. To continue our learning, some Korean school social workers are going to England and France this summer. Others are planning to visit Germany and Northern European countries next year. If you want to communicate with KASSW, please contact kassw7942@hanmail.net.