

Developing Social Ties in a Learning Support Program: Managing Staff Members' Interactions with Children

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1. Introduction

In Japan, child poverty had been overlooked by many until the middle of the 2000s. However, in order to support children in poverty and break the intergenerational cycle, various public measures including Learning Support Programs (*Gakushu Shien Jigyo*) have been implemented. The Learning Support Programs, which are half funded by the state and half by each municipality and held out of school hours for children from families below certain income levels, began in 301 municipalities with the commencement of the Act for Supporting the Independence of Needy Persons (*Seikatsu Konkyusha Jiritsu Shien Ho*) in April 2015, for the purpose of strengthening the safety net for impoverished individuals who may not qualify for welfare.

However, Learning Support Programs are not required to take any particular form. Some of them are directly managed by the municipalities, but many of them are entrusted to or collaboratively operated by other entities such as non-profit organizations, social welfare corporations, incorporated associations, foundations, or cram school companies. Most of these entities develop their own programs; some prioritize childhood learning by providing one-on-one tutoring or group tutoring, whereas others place more emphasis on building social ties with children and creating a reassuring environment (*ibasho*) (Saitama Youth Support Net, 2017).

Many researchers (Abe, 2008; Kariya, 2001, 2012; Hori, Kosugi & Kishi, 2014) have pointed out that children



from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have low academic achievement and low educational attainment, and more and more municipalities have also recognized the need to support the education of these at-risk children. The number of municipalities running these Learning Support Programs increased to 417 in 2016 then to 504 in 2017; equivalent to 46% then 56% of all municipalities respectively (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2018).

Meanwhile, other studies and field experience have suggested that children in poverty are more likely to experience poverty in relationships (Nitou, 2014; Saitama Youth Support Net, 2017; Yuasa, 2017). That is, they have less opportunities to benefit from social ties, or social capital. This does not just hinder advancement. When children encounter trouble, whether or not they have someone to turn to for help greatly influences outcomes. Recognizing this, many Learning Support Programs not only support learning but also endeavor to build social ties with participant children and create reassuring spaces for them. However, few evaluations or studies have been conducted to investigate how such ties or places are created. Therefore, the present study was commenced to examine the ways in which Learning Support Program staff interact with participant children to promote learning and build social ties/capital during program operation. By doing so, this study also sought to find insights into the actual practice of the programs.

2. Literature Review

2-1. Children's Socioeconomic Backgrounds and Social Ties

Relations between children's socioeconomic backgrounds and social ties have been discussed over recent years. According to Putnam (2000) youths in the United States from affluent families were two to three times more likely to have informal mentors such as family friends, religious or youth group leaders, and coaches, who could advise on various matters such as worries and academic or career options, than those from poor families. Putnam then pointed out that the gap existed as early as elementary school and widened as children progressed through middle school and high school. In Japan, Osawa (2008) also conducted interviews indicating that few youths from poor families had significant others such as relatives, school teachers, or cram school teachers who had helped them expand their future options. Moreover, the Health and Welfare Bureau of Kyoto City (2017) also interviewed organizations supporting children and youths experiencing difficulties such as poverty. The results indicated that these children and youths faced several problems such as the high level of distrust towards others (supposedly due to little contact with others), the scarcity of friends from whom they could seek help, and the paucity of role models who could help them develop their aspirations.

Several studies have suggested that children from low income families have relatively few social ties outside family members to turn to for advice or assistance when they encounter hardship. It follows that children who cannot afford to attend cram school or engage in various out-of-school activities will have fewer experiences, encounter a less diverse set of adults, and explore fewer career options than those who can, as Sato and Kuba (2017) also maintained. Therefore, publicly providing at-risk children with opportunities to interact with others from various backgrounds should enhance equity between children.

2-2. Linking Social Capital

From the perspective of social capital theory, children with fewer social ties may also have fewer chances to benefit from social capital. Although there are many interpretations of the concept, given the commonalities shared by definitions developed by researchers such as Bourdieu (1986/2011), Coleman (1988/2011), Putnam (2000), and Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003), 'social capital' can be defined as social ties or networks that produce benefits or help achieve certain goals when they are utilized. Moreover, social capital that operates vertically, where someone in a higher-status position helps a lower-status person, is categorized as 'linking' social capital (Shimizu, 2014; Woolcok, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Learning Support Programs are a formal public exercise in which non-family members reach out to children from low income families, help their learning, and give advice or other necessary

assistance. Therefore, the social capital created between staff and children participating in the Learning Support Programs can be considered linking social capital. However, social capital is often treated as pre-existing, with little research into how linking social capital is generated, particularly in Learning Support Programs.

That said, Kawasaki (2018) explored how social ties, which can include linking social capital, were created in a Learning Support Program by examining how volunteers in the program interacted with participant children. She described how volunteers maintained vertical, albeit warm, relationships; volunteers first attempted to perceive the children's states of mind and then responded by showing authority or patiently avoiding conflicts. On the other hand, the volunteers also attempted to build horizontal relationships with children by sharing similar experiences, interacting as if they were friends, or showing their own fallibility. These differences in volunteers' approaches seemed to be rooted in their feelings about their relative ages, their qualifications in teaching, and the importance of learning and social interactions. Subsequently, the volunteers reflected on their interactions and continued the process if they felt it to be rewarding. That said, interactions between participant children and staff, who did not directly teach subjects but instead managed the programs, went relatively unexplored. As such, it remained unknown how interactions between children and managing staff members differed from interactions between children and volunteers.

The present research, therefore, aimed to fill the gaps and reveal how staff members of Learning Support Programs help participant children learn and construct social ties which can form linking social capital. Not all children in Learning Support Programs are eager to participate, motivated to study, or willing to communicate with volunteers or managing staff members. Some of them are forced to come to the programs by their parents, are not good at talking with unfamiliar individuals, or are in a bad mood due to events prior to attending. By examining how managing staff members interact with children, this study may offer workers in this sector practical new ways to overcome difficulties faced in building relationships with children and promoting their learning.

3. Method

To examine how managing staff members in Learning Support Programs support the learning of participant children and help them build ties that can serve as linking social capital, the present study analyzed field notes and transcripts of managing staff member interviews from a particular program site.

3-1. Site of Study

Learning Support Programs are diverse with program content and staff/volunteer selection very much up to the discretion of each program. The site selected for the present study was a Learning Support Program in metropolitan municipality X. This program was selected for analysis because of its proven record fostering children's linking social capital and the benefits flowing thereof; many children who graduated from the program utilized their ties and visited the program to ask for help or share with staff members how they were doing. Therefore, this program was selected to examine how managing staff members interacted with children to produce such results.

The selected Learning Support Program was run by municipality X's Council of Social Welfare and held one-on-one tutoring sessions three times a week in the Council building. (The program also provided a consulting service on weekdays and *ibasho* (place of reassurance) service for four weekdays per week.) Municipality X is a commuter town in which urbanization has been taking place over recent years. Both large-scale shopping complexes and old shopping districts exist. In addition, quiet residential areas are also spread out. Therefore, at first glance, it may be difficult to discern the existence of child poverty in the municipality.

However, child poverty still exists in the municipality, and many local junior high school students receiving the *Jido Fuyo Teate* (Child Rearing Allowance) or *Shugaku Enjo* (Public Financial Assistance for School Supplies) were eligible to participate in the program, although there were limits on participants. Every year, the Council of Social

Welfare sent flyers to addresses of families in the municipality receiving the Child Rearing Allowance or Public Financial Assistance for School Supplies, calling for those interested in participating to contact the Council. Then, a child with his or her parent would visit the program for an interview with program staff, who would then consider various factors including the child's family background, academic level, and program capacity before deciding whether to accept the child into the program. As of September, 2017, 46 junior high school students were participating in the selected program.

To support participant children, the program had seven staff members and 102 volunteers. Their roles were different, and the managing staff members, full-time employees of the Social Welfare Council, did not teach, but managed all other aspects of the program; they were in charge of administrative procedures, program planning, contacting participant children or their parents, holding meetings with them when necessary, creating a favorable learning environment, promoting the program to teachers in the municipality's public junior high schools, recruiting volunteers, and other miscellaneous tasks. In contrast, the volunteers, who were undergraduate, graduate, or vocational school students, were responsible for teaching and talking with the children. The volunteers were not totally un-remunerated but received compensation for transportation costs on an equivalent basis to staff members.

The basic flow of a program activity day was as follows. First, managing staff members and volunteers would hold a preparation meeting for 10 to 20 minutes in which staff shared information with volunteers on particular students or recent events related to child poverty. For the following 10 to 20 minutes, each volunteer would read study logs of children they were assigned to for that day, and prepare activities. During this period, several children would arrive at the program and be attended to by their assigned volunteers as they arrived. The children and their volunteer would have one-on-one tutoring for 50 minutes, followed by a break with light refreshments for 10 minutes, then another 50-minute one-on-one tutoring session. Meanwhile, staff members would be contacting children who had not shown up, copying study materials, and preparing the refreshments. After the second round of one-on-one tutoring, volunteers and managing staff members would farewell the children and tidy the premises; volunteers would then update the study logs with what the children learned and suggestions for the following activity day. Finally, volunteers and managing staff members would hold a review meeting for approximately 20 minutes to discuss each child's progress. Participant children would spend two hours at the program on a typical activity day, and volunteers would spend three hours.

It also should be noted that the registered children and volunteers in the program were not allowed to meet up outside activity hours. Also, they were banned from taking pictures together, exchanging contact information, or otherwise contacting each other through social network services.

3-2. Field Notes and Interviews

The present study employed field notes and interviews with managing staff members for analysis. Field notes were taken by the author of the present study, who participated in the selected Learning Support Program as a volunteer. The author took part in the program approximately once a week for over three years, beginning from the program's opening date. The field notes mainly included observations, notes taken during preparation and review meetings, and conversations with managing staff members, volunteers, and participant children.

Also, in September 2017, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with two program staff members (Staff X and Staff Y) were conducted in a room of the Council building, with each interview taking one to one and a half hours. Before commencing the interviews, the author explained to the interviewees that their privacy would be protected, that they would not need to respond to the questions if they did not want to, and that the conversations would be recorded. The author then gained consent and asked questions. The interviewees were mainly asked about what they paid attention to when interacting with children, in what kind of situations they thought they succeeded or failed in interacting with them, and whether or not, and if so when, they felt children had changed or that they were of help to the children.

Field notes on managing staff members and interview transcripts with Staff X and Staff Y were included in the results. Staff X and Staff Y were regular, full-time employees, while Staff W and Staff Z mentioned in the results were contract employees. Also, three of these staff members were certified social workers or care workers and had previously worked with elderly people or people with disabilities until the program's launch, whereas one of them had teaching experience at public junior high schools.

3-3. Procedure

The present study's field notes and interview transcripts of the managing staff members were analyzed based on the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA) by Kinoshita (2003, 2007). M-GTA is often employed to investigate the processes behind problems in the field of human services. It enables researchers to find similarities in a large amount of text data, extract them as concepts by assigning labels, consider relations between labeled concepts, and categorize them. By examining the relations between categories, researchers are then able to grasp the whole phenomenon and create theories. Because the present study also aimed to understand the whole process of how managing staff members interact with children to build ties while promoting learning, and the elements involved in the process, M-GTA was regarded as an appropriate approach.

Concerning the procedure, the author first defined the Analytical Theme as "the process in which managing staff members reach out to participant children in the Learning Support Program." The Analytically-Focused Person, or an abstracted actor who represents the group of individuals sampled in the present research, was defined as "staff members in management positions in the program." Then, the author created Analytical Worksheets to develop concepts from field notes and the interview transcripts. Each Worksheet included (1) a concept name, (2) the concept definition, (3) examples of the concept (excerpts from the transcripts), and (4) theoretical notes on the concept (interpretations found in the process of analysis). Concepts were initially created based on the transcripts of the first interview. Subsequently, the author divided the concepts into categories and sub-categories and drew a figure to show the whole process. Managing staff members in the program and a supervisor who had advised learning support programs were also asked to comment on the concepts to increase the reliability.

4. Results

As a result of the analysis, 22 concepts, five sub-categories, and five categories were created. Table 1 shows the concept names, concept definitions, and concept examples. Overall, in order to reach out to a participant child and build a tie, managing staff members in the Learning Support Program first perceived the child's states of mind and interacted with him or her by maintaining their hierarchical relationship or by trying to construct a horizontal relationship. The differences in the responses to the child seemed to stem from their ambivalence towards the importance of learning and social interactions, their unwavering values, and their affection toward the child. Managing staff members then reflected on their interactions with the child, gauged how rewarding they were, and continued the process. This process is also depicted in Figure 1, and the details are shown below.

4-1. Perceiving the Child's State of Mind

To perceive a child's state of mind, managing staff members "observed how a child looked and felt"; by observing the child over a long period of time, the staff could gauge how the child was changing little by little, as in the case of one child who had never greeted the staff, but who began saying hello to them one day (as shown in No. 1 of Table 1). Managing staff members also initiated casual conversation with the child. For instance, they would ask the child what he or she needed to work on. By "listening and talking to the child," the staff understood well how the child was doing (as shown in No. 2 of Table 1). Thus, the staff endeavored not to overlook even small changes in a child.

Once managing staff members perceived the child's state of mind, they responded to that child in various ways.

4-2. Ambivalent Feelings Concerning Learning and Social Interactions

Differences in staff responses to the child seemed to be determined by their ambivalent feelings, their unwavering values, and their affection toward the child. Concerning the ambivalence, staff seemed to vacillate between the "importance of learning" and the "importance of social interactions." On the one hand, the managing staff members believed that learning was important and encouraged the children to study. As Staff Z said, "[We (staff members and volunteers)] are also thinking of what kind of cases children may fall into poverty, and we want to keep them from falling into it, don't we? In a sense, making them go to high school may be one of the surest ways to do so" (as shown in No. 3 of Table 1). However, staff also considered socialization with others as crucial. Staff X, for instance, stated,

[We] know we have no choice but to interact with others while working. [...]. I think one of the good things here is those children, who had almost never interacted with others, have been absent from school for a long time, or would not usually go out, are talking and interacting with someone or some people here. [...]. The junior high school students should have felt that the volunteers listened attentively to them, and that will lead to the next step. (No. 4 of Table 1).

Thus, managing staff members believed that both academic learning and interactions with others were important for children. However, sometimes learning could occur at the expense of social interaction, and vice versa, and thus staff were often in a dilemma as to how to balance the two.

4-3. Unwavering Values

While managing staff members wavered on the balance between academic study and socialization, there were some values which they held uncompromisingly. For instance, they believed that "they should not let a participant child hurt him- or herself" and "should not let him or her hurt others." Staff W, for example, strived not to let a child hurt herself with her own words. The child, who had gotten a low score on an exam, was not motivated to study and said, "I can't do this. I'm stupid anyway." In response, Staff W reassured her, saying, "Don't say that kind of thing. You aren't stupid. You can do this if you try. [The child] is capable of doing this" (as shown in No. 5 of Table 1). Staff also did not allow children to hurt others. For instance, when a child behaved unpleasantly towards some volunteers but not to others, the staff asked the child whether she understood that the volunteers would feel hurt if she was cold to them while warm to others (as shown in No. 6 of Table 1). Hence, staff clearly placed great importance on whether or not participant children hurt themselves or others.

Furthermore, managing staff members believed there existed things they clearly should or should not do "as professionals." For example, Staff X explained that when he had something to tell a child, he would think about how best to convey the message so that the child would really understand Staff X's intent as opposed to conveying the message harshly. He then went on to state, "This also applies to me. Even if what someone is saying is right, it also sometimes makes me angry. [...]. Well, I also wonder if it's okay to show one's feelings while working" (as shown in No. 7 of Table 1). Clearly, there was a sense among managing staff members as to how to be professional when engaged in the work of interacting with participant children.

4-4. Affection towards the Child

While managing staff members' ambivalent feelings and unwavering values apparently influenced how they interacted with children, their approach was also influenced by their affection toward each child, which involved

understanding, expectation, responsibility, empathy, and sense of service. A staff member's "understanding" of a child was deepened by observing and talking with him or her. Staff Y, for example, attempted to comprehend a child's personality or intent by observing them going about their business or noting how they responded in casual conversation (as shown in No. 8 of Table 1). Also, the staff held "expectations" of the children. Staff Z predicted that a child would improve on their examination scores based on how studious the child was in the program (as shown in No. 9 of Table 1). Moreover, the staff assumed "responsibility" for the growth of each child, which included aligning themselves with the child's growth aspirations. Staff Z also stated, "(A child) made up her mind (to continue aiming for her first choice of high school), so we also have no choice but to help her succeed" (as shown in No. 10 of Table 1). Thus, the staff were committed to helping children pass their high school entrance examinations. Furthermore, the staff also practiced "empathy" for participant children from families in difficulty; they imagined how hard it was for children to live in such environments, where, for instance, the mother always looked gloomy or the father was always harsh, and emphasized the ability of managing staff members and volunteers to help (as shown in No. 11 of Table 1). In addition, the staff also displayed a "sense of service." For instance, staff had waited a long time for a child who had been interviewed and enrolled in the program, but who had not yet attended. The staff responded to the extended absence by expressing a desire to help the child (as shown in No. 12 of Table 1). The degrees of staff's understanding, expectation, responsibility, empathy, and sense of service differed depending on each child and influenced how staff acted towards him or her.

4-5. Maintaining the Vertical Relationship

Depending on the dominant value or feeling towards a child at the time of interaction, managing staff members would either maintain the vertical relationship or attempt to construct a horizontal relationship. Maintaining the vertical relationship in the interaction involved staff maintaining their hierarchically higher position relative to the participant child. Instances of this were observed when staff "offered suggestions," "avoided conflict patiently," "provided words of caution," and "intervened on behalf of volunteers or other children" when needed. Staff, for example, "offered suggestions" to children from time to time on what to study and how to study in order to improve exam scores (as shown in No. 13 of Table 1). Also, the staff would "patiently avoid conflict" with a child. Even if staff got irritated, they endeavored to remain diplomatic. Staff X believed that if he showed his irritation, he would not convey his true intent and may break their relationship (as shown in No. 14 of Table 1). Moreover, when staff disapproved of a child's actions, they sometimes "provided words of caution," believing that "when adults scold children earnestly, they will understand the intent and will not get hurt, but understand how much [staff members and volunteers] care for them" (as shown in No. 15 of Table 1). Additionally, staff "intervened on behalf of volunteers or other children." Staff Z, for instance, said to a child who expressed a strong preference for particular volunteers, "When you say you want to study with (a particular volunteer), it compliments (the volunteer), but it would make other volunteers feel sad" (as shown in No. 16 of Table 1). Thus, managing staff members occasionally mediated volunteer-child and even child-child interactions when one party clearly had trouble communicating. Here, staff "dealt with each child individually."

That said, managing staff members also made effort to "treat each child equally." For instance, staff "presented the same opportunities" to all children; they informed them of news, activities, events, etc., and thus gave equal notice of the same opportunities (as shown in No. 17 of Table 1). Also after much consideration, Staff Y decided to address all children with the honorific ("-san") suffixed to their names. Staff were careful "to maintain a consistent attitude towards each child" (as shown in No. 18 of Table 1). Thus, staff were mindful to treat all children equally from their relatively higher position.

4-6. Attempting to Construct a Horizontal Relationship

While managing staff members often maintained their vertical relationships with children through individual

or equal treatment, they sometimes “attempted to construct a horizontal relationship” by lowering themselves to the level of the child. Staff Y, for example, tried to “find commonalities” with a particular child. By doing so, they hoped that the child would understand better, and feel closer (as shown in No. 19 of Table 1). In addition, staff members “showed that they were also not perfect.” For instance, when a child was unwilling to study functions, Staff W empathized with the child and shared that she was not good at mathematics either (as shown in No. 20 of Table 1). Thus, by identifying commonalities and sharing vulnerabilities, staff also attempted to construct horizontal relationships on the same level as the child.

4-7. Reflecting on Interactions

After interactions with a child, staff “ruminated” on them. For example, Staff X mentioned that he found it difficult to interact with a particular child since the child was different every time they met; talking to them a certain way only worked intermittently (as shown in No. 21 of Table 1). Also Staff Y said, “[When] someone praises or positively evaluates what I've done or how much I've cared for others somewhere, even though I myself cannot talk about those things, uh, I think in those times I feel fulfilled.” Staff Y then went on to state, “Even though I say "I'm doing this for others," it also leads to my own self-realization and satisfaction” (as shown in No. 22 of Table 1). Therefore, even though staff members experienced various difficulties, they continued working for the program if they could “feel rewarded.”

5. Discussion

To sum up, managing staff members in the Learning Support Program would first perceive the child's state of mind to reach out and build ties while promoting learning. Depending on how the child presented, staff would try to maintain their vertical relationship, or attempt to construct a horizontal relationship. The approach staff adopted also depended on their ambivalence, their unwavering values, and their affection towards the child. Staff would continue doing this as long as they found it rewarding.

A significant difference between how managing staff members and volunteers interact with children seems to relate to having and applying unwavering values, given that Kawasaki (2018) did not identify such values in volunteers. Given their additional administrative role, staff members remain vigilant as to whether the behavior of other staff, volunteers, and children may be harmful. In particular, they are also concerned about children self-harming. The belief that staff must protect children and volunteers seems to be unwavering.

In order to protect both children and volunteers, managing staff members sometimes need to choose whether to give a child special treatment or treat them equally depending on the situation. For instance, when a child's behavior risks offending or harming other children or volunteers, managing staff members tend to approach the child as an individual when intervening to mediate the conflict. Along the same lines, when a child does something self-destructive or disadvantageous to themselves, staff members use their relatively higher positions in the hierarchy relative to the individual child to offer tailored suggestions or caution. At the same time, staff members also seem to endeavor to treat each child equally; they share the same information with all children. Being authority figures, staff members have a larger influence on children than do volunteers. Therefore, singling out a child for special treatment in front of other children risks feelings of being unfairly treated. Thus, staff members who are charged with managing all children appear to maintain a certain distance from the children and take care to treat them equally.

Also, managing staff members in the Learning Support Program hold conflicting feelings concerning learning and social interaction. More specifically, staff often face difficulties in deciding when they should encourage children to study or socialize. When staff members stress learning, they lose the opportunity to listen to and talk with the children in a more relaxed manner which may reveal critical information. Furthermore, a child who comes to believe that a staff

member is unsympathetically single-minded about study may not accept help from that staff member when necessary. However, time spent building rapport with children is time not studying, which may affect their grades and their future. The fact that rapport-building and encouraging study can only be conducted at the expense of each other is a dilemma which plagues staff members.

That being said, managing staff members hovering between the importance of learning and the importance of other more informal interactions may lead to flexibility between the two. When maintaining the hierarchy, perhaps for the sake of emphasizing study, risks alienating the child, staff members can switch to interacting at the child's level and building horizontal ties by finding commonalities and disclosing their own weaknesses. After all, linking social capital may be created by managing staff members who develop both vertical relationships and horizontal relationships with children.

However, how flexibly managing staff respond to children may also depend on how accurately they can perceive the state of each child and how much affection they have towards him or her. Without the personal qualities of understanding, expectation, responsibility, empathy, and a sense of service, staff members would not be able to sense the child's state of mind.

Moreover, it should be noted that managing staff members continue to support children since, on reflection, doing so feels inherently rewarding. If they felt that that the gain—monetary, psychological, or otherwise—of helping children was outweighed by the burden of doing so, staff members would quit. Thus it is safe to say that reciprocity is embedded in the relationship between managing staff members and participant children.

6. Conclusion

The present research investigated how managing staff members in a Learning Support Program engage with participant children to promote learning and construct ties that can serve as linking social capital. In order to form such ties, managing staff members respond to the state of participant children by either maintaining the vertical relationship or building a horizontal relationship. The responses differ as managing staff members balance several factors including vacillating between prioritizing the importance of learning and emphasizing social interactions, applying their unwavering values to protect the children in their care, and the different degrees of understanding, responsibility, expectation, empathy, and sense of service towards each child. Subsequently, managing staff members reflect on their interactions with children and, if they feel rewarded, continue working to maintain or improve them. By repeating this whole process, social ties, which can serve as linking social capital, may be created.

Thus, in order to form such ties between staff and children, it is important for managing staff members in Learning Support Programs to be willing to be influenced by participant children while being flexible as to the balance between learning and social interaction. In the meantime, managing staff members should be encouraged to stand firm on their core values in so far as they pertain to protecting the interests of participant children. By doing so, they will be best able to decide whether to advise from their hierarchically superior vertical position, or interact horizontally at the child's level to build rapport.

Table 1

Concept Names, Definitions, and Examples

No.	Concept Name	Definition	Example
1	Observing	To monitor a child to discern how the child looks or feels	Staff X: ... everyday, every time something happens, [we] face each problem, so I'd rather feel good at the end, probably. Well, but I can also see children changing little, little by little, so I also feel I could be of some help to them at those times. Author: For example, what kind of changes have you seen? Staff X: Well, honestly, not only in their learning, but when they just came to say hello to me [laugh]. I also saw such students today, too, and sometimes feel like, "Some of them have changed a little," or "Oh, they have come to interact with other people," although I am not always with them since I don't teach (Staff X, interview, September 20, 2017).
2	Listening and Talking	To have a conversation to learn how the child is feeling or what the child is doing	(During a review meeting Staff Y commented, who saw a volunteer and a junior high school talking in English.) I thought junior high school students feel embarrassed to speak English, but when I asked her, "Do you have a test or something?" she said she would have an English conversation test the next day and have to take it with a classmate she had never paired up with, which I think is quite unbelievable [laugh] (Staff Y, field notes, June 27, 2016).
3	Importance of Learning	To believe that the child needs to study since he or she needs to prepare for high school entrance examinations	It's not that we are just sending the kids to high schools, but are also thinking of what kind of cases children may fall into poverty, and we want to keep them from falling into it, don't we? In a sense, making them go to high school may be one of the surest ways to do so (Staff Z, field notes, September 13, 2017).
4	Importance of Social Interactions	To believe that the child should interact with others	Well, honestly, we know we have no choice but to interact with others while working, and here we don't really intervene in their relationships with their friends, but after all, I think one of the good things here is those children, who had almost never interacted with others, have been absent from school for a long time, or would not go out usually, are talking and interacting with someone or some people here. [...]. After all, we want the kids to become confident, so now may be leaning toward improving their academic achievement, but it's not that we can decide which is bad or which is good, and we can't find the answer for this definitely. Still now some student volunteers say, "Uh, we couldn't study. I'm sorry we just talked." But I think they don't need to apologize for that. The junior high school students should have felt that the volunteers attentively listened to them, and that will lead to the next step (Staff X, interview, September 20, 2017).
5	Not Letting the Child Hurt Him- or Herself	To believe that the child should not hurt him- or herself or his or her future self	(Child A seemed to have gotten a low score on an exam and have lost motivation to work on practice questions.) Child: I can't do this. I'm stupid anyway. Staff W: Don't say that kind of thing. You aren't stupid. You can do this if you try. [You are] capable of doing this (Field notes, August 1, 2016).
6	Not Letting the Child Hurt Others	To believe that the child should not hurt others	(Staff Z had a one-on-one conversation with a junior high school student, who had showed an unpleasant attitude to some student volunteers in the previous weeks) The student said, "I'm shy. It takes time to open up to volunteers who do not look cheerful." But then I said a bit sharply, "But do you understand university students would also get hurt if you show a cold attitude to them while you are amiable for the other university students?" Then, she, sulking a bit, said, "I understand" (Staff Z, field notes, March 14, 2016).

No.	Concept Name	Definition	Examples
7	Being Professional	To believe that there exist things staff should do or should not do as professionals	Well, when I have something to tell junior high school students, I'd think of how I should convey it so that they would really understand my intent, rather than just conveying it harshly. This also applies to me. Even if what someone is saying is right, it also sometimes makes me angry. [...]. Well, I also wonder if it's okay to show one's feelings while working. (Staff X, interview, September 20, 2017)
8	Understanding	To learn and know what kind of person the child is	Staff Y: In a sense, I'm aware that I have my own style (to interact with students), but it doesn't mean that I want to persist in it. That is, I think I need to understand the relationships. Author: Uh, with each student? Staff Y: Yea, first I see how a student is going about his or her business, or talked to him or her casually, but when the response was not something I had expected, I wondered if the student would rather want to study seriously and concentrate on it. Or I also see what kind of personalities they have. I try to understand what kind of children they are, rather than caring whether they are following my style (Staff Y, interview, September 27, 2017).
9	Expectation	To expect that the child should do or can do certain things	[A child] is getting more cheerful as she comes here, isn't she? I heard her mother saying her academic performance was horrible, but the score, 38 points, in a math exam, seems to be the highest score she has ever got. But we think she can get higher score, don't we? This time, she may have felt tense at school, where she does not go usually, but I believe she can get 50 points or more (Staff Z, field notes, July 25, 2016).
10	Responsibility	To be accountable for the child's growth	[A child] has not said she will change her first-choice high school. But her classroom teacher once said that she was 60 points short, which was actually 80 points short, of passing the entrance exam [given the results of a mock exam]. But since then she has grown and now she is 45 points short. [...]. She made up her mind, so we also have no choice but to do so (Staff Z, field notes, January 25, 2016).
11	Empathy	To imagine how the child's background and share his or her feelings	Children like those coming here from families in difficulties meet particular people only. Their experiences are limited to such an environment, like "My mother always looks gloomy." But when they go out (and come here), they would feel like, "Here are such people as these who are always smiling," or "My father is always harsh, but here are such people as these who are very kind to me." So we can help them connect to the larger society. (Staff Z, field notes, April 11, 2016)
12	Sense of Service	To want to do something for the child	(About a junior high student who had not come for long since the first interview with the staff to participate in the Program) He's been struggling with his study since he was in elementary school. So he'd been losing motivation and cannot perform at his potential. School teachers also think like, "This student cannot do this," or "This student is lazy." But such a student was brought here due to a series of coincidences. At first, on the interview date, his mother brought him forcibly, and he said, "Let me think about it for a while." Then, we'd been waiting for him for long, and finally, last week he came here. We were glad about it [Staff Z, field notes, March 7, 2018].
13	Offering Suggestions	To advise what the child should do	[A child] looked anxious, saying, "I have only three times left to come here, and don't know what to study." So she usually says she wants to study English, but I told her how many more points she needs to get in each subject, like 15 more points in math, and what to do for it. They cannot do what they have never done, so we need to be strategic (Staff Z, field notes on February 15, 2016).

No.	Concept Name	Definition	Examples
14	Avoiding Conflicts Patiently	To strive to interact with the child with peace of mind not to break the relationship with him or her	Maybe, if I show my irritation, the focus will be on how I told them, so on that point, I need to think about how to talk to them and have them understand. It is not good to end in bad relationships or just make them angry, so I think we don't need to harshly tell them what we want to say [Staff X, interview, September 20, 2017].
15	Providing Words of Caution	Not to accept everything the child does and to give advice	It may be harsh, but you guys [volunteers] can also say that, or "No way," to other children [who passed the high school entrance exam but did not say any words of gratitude], at such a time as this. We've always asked you guys, "Please support them," or "Think about their self-esteem," but when adults scold children seriously, they will understand the intent, and will not feel hurt but understand how much we care about them (Staff Z, field notes, March 3, 2017).
16	Intervening on Behalf of Volunteers or Other Children	To intervene in conflicts between the child and a volunteer or among children	The other day, [a child] said, "I want to study with [a particular volunteer, R]." But at that time, [another volunteer, S] was in charge of her, and [the volunteer S] said, "It was tough." Then, I said to the child later, "When you say you want to study with [the volunteer R], it is a compliment for [the volunteer R, but other volunteers would feel sad." She is sensitive, so she immediately said, "I also like the other teachers. They are good at teaching." But here, we not only need to simply accept and empathize what children say but also sometimes have to find the opportunity to hit home. (Staff Z, field notes, February 15, 2016)
17	Presenting the Same Opportunities	To share the same information with all children	This year, we will have a summer party on August 15, Tuesday, from 15:00. We'd like to ask some of you, both junior high school students and volunteers, to join the executive committee, so please contact us if you can. Last year, some students sang songs, and we also played games, too. So if you can also do some performance, please let us know (Staff X, field notes, July 12, 2017).
18	Not Changing Attitudes Depending on the Child	To be careful not to favor or discriminate particular children	My belief is, actually, that I shouldn't change my attitude depending on the student. Well, I just talked about compatibility, but I don't draw any lines depending on it, and keep myself away from doing things like, "I'll do this for this student but won't do so for that student." Actually, honestly speaking, I thought a lot about how to call their names. Now I call all of them adding (the honorific) "-san" to their names (Staff Y, interview, September 27, 2017).
19	Finding Commonalities	To explore and tell what the staff and the child have in common	I think it's necessary to get to know about [students], but at the same time, I need to make myself understood, so while interacting with them, I try to use certain tones or let them know, like "I am a person like this." I also often use the same keywords or try to find favorite things in common or other common points, and in doing so, I want to understand them and want them to understand myself (Staff Y, interview, September 27, 2017).
20	Presenting Oneself as Not Perfect	To show that the staff also fail to do something or makes mistakes	Child: A lot of tests, I hate it. I hate functions, don't want to do this. Staff W: I also didn't like them, but everyone go through it. Volunteer: Yeah, all junior high students in Japan go through it. Staff W: You need to listen to what [a particular volunteer] says carefully. Child: Nope. I really don't want to do this. Staff W: I understand how you feel. I also wasn't good at math. But when you get older, you may feel you should have done (field notes, October 25, 2017).

No.	Concept Name	Definition	Examples
21	Ruminating on the Interactions	To look back what the staff did for the child and think of whether their interactions were appropriate	(Author: Don't you feel exhausted from doing this job?) I'd rather find it difficult than feeling exhausted. Well, things happen, like, "Yesterday, he or she looked like this, but today he or she is different." But we cannot help it because they are humans (Staff X, interview, September 20, 2017).
22	Feeling Rewarded	To feel that the staff have gained something equivalent to or more than what they have offered	We, kind of, console one another among colleagues, and maybe you student volunteers or people participating in this kind of activities to support others may have the similar experiences, but when someone praises or positively evaluates what I've done or how much I've cared for others somewhere, even though I myself cannot talk about those things, uh, I think in those times I feel fulfilled... Even if I say "I'm doing this for others," it also leads to my self-realization and satisfaction (Staff Y, interview, September 27, 2017).

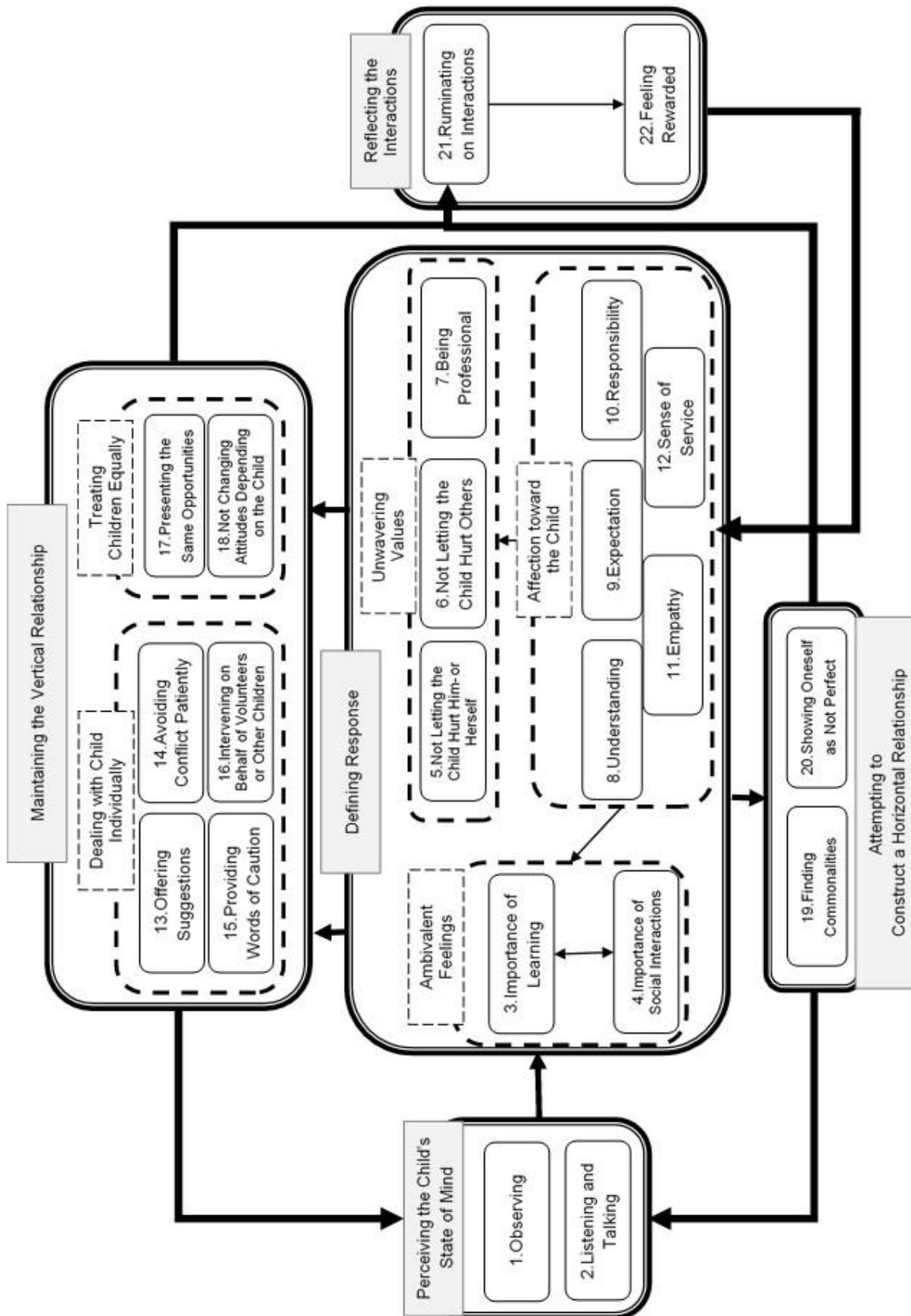


Figure 1: The Process of Managing Staff's Reaching out to a Participant Child in a Learning Support Program

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with participant