



Special Characteristics of the Curriculum of the Sophia School of Social Welfare NO.10

1. Education that is based on the spirit of Christianity

The Sophia University Specialized School of Social Welfare, the predecessor to the current Sophia School of Social Welfare (abbreviated here as SSSW), was opened in 1964. The catalog for the students of that year was a mimeographed pamphlet. On its first page, one can find a paragraph devoted to the special characteristics of this school:



“This school is based on the main educational pillars of Sophia University. Our mission is to cultivate truly capable qualified adults who can carry out the activities of social welfare in a professional way. Thus we aim not only at cultivating persons who will become social workers; we wish also to educate social workers who have sound human attitudes and visions of the world that will allow them to accomplish the Christian apostolic mission to social welfare work in Japan.”

In 1966, the Sophia University Specialized School for Social Welfare was changed into the Sophia Social Welfare Specialized School, thus becoming an educational institution that was technically independent of Sophia University. The previously mentioned catalog paragraph about the school’s special characteristics was rewritten in several parts (for example, the part about being based on the main educational pillars of Sophia University was dropped). The new version of the catalog was arranged according to the



guidelines of an organizational document of a specialized school.

As symbolized by the wording which clearly states its special characteristics, the SSSW from its beginning has devoted its educational efforts to a cultivation of specialists in social welfare in ways that are based on a Christian spirit.

These top two pictures show typical classroom scenes during the 1960s.

2. Some interesting special aspects of the educational content and the teachers of SSSW and its predecessors

From the very opening of the Sophia University Specialized School of Social Welfare, tenured professors of Sophia University took charge of a wide variety of classes. Joining them from outside Sophia University, a group of experts in the practical aspects of contemporary social welfare were employed as lecturers. These included some of the top researchers and educators active in Japan. Moreover, although this was less clear in the original curriculum, by the 1970s, as a so-called miscellaneous school, the SSSW curriculum included the requirement for each student to produce a graduation report, which was equivalent to the graduation thesis required by some university departments. This required report also contributed to the high quality of the education available, and became a means to offer a higher quality education for specialists in social welfare.

From the beginning, in response to the institution's educational commitment to Christianity, general education courses in Ethics, Philosophy, and Religious Studies were required. Besides these, until 1971 there were courses aimed at Catholic students, which were listed in the catalog as required in principle for students who were Catholics. These were first listed in the category of Theology courses, a category whose name was later changed to General Education Courses in Religion. These courses included Introduction to the Bible, Dogmatic Theology, and Church History.



This collection shows pictures of roughly half of the teachers in SSSW. These originally appeared in the Graduation Album (Yearbook) of the students who graduated in 1970.

3. An attitude toward class attendance that many students found quite severe

From the beginning of SSSW, the educational programs and courses were scheduled in the evenings for students who were working during the daytime. Even now, the classes for the course for Nursery School Workers and for the course for Social Workers and Child Guidance Workers begin at 1750. For the students in the course for Care Workers, starting with those who entered in 2008, the curriculum and timetable were modified to allow classes to start at 1330. Even here, the schedule was set up to allow students to mix their class times with times for work or household or local activities.

In order for a student to balance both work and home duties with classes, and to keep this up for two or three years of special schooling, each student must create understanding of the special scheduling from relatives and co-workers. This demands a great deal of effort. In spite of the wide variety of individual circumstances, the students' attendance at classes is severely monitored. We can imagine that the graduates have not a few mixed memories floating around in their heads and hearts regarding the Attendance Checking Cards that were distributed without fail to confirm their presence.

The founder of the original school, Fr. Peter Heidrich, held a severe ideal of the learning situation of the students. He accepted no compromises to his tough position that a person with too many absences had forgotten the essential meaning of being a student; such a person should and would lose the right to sit for the final examinations. The graduates and faculty members of this early period still share many episodes about Father Heidrich. For example, some remember his patrolling the corridors waiting for the chime that signaled the beginning of classes, standing careful guard to catch the latecomers. Others remember his rebuttal to any excuse presented for being late: "After all, it was you yourself who decided to come here for study, was it not!?"



This picture shows a typical classroom scene in 2010.

#### 4. Curricula that responded to the various educational demands of each decade

The current educational organization of SSSW has been arranged according to the qualifications and legal systems related to social welfare in Japan, especially those found in the 1987 Law of Certified Social Workers and Care Workers and in the 2000 Long-Term Care Insurance Act. The main role of SSSW is to form and educate persons possessing nationally recognized qualifications who can carry on social welfare activities. Thus, the curriculum of classes is compiled in accordance with the directives of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. Within these legal parameters, however, there exist many special educational relationships between Sophia University and SSSW, by which different educational strategies can be implemented to fit the various needs of the students. For example, starting in 2010, SSSW students can take advantage of a university course registration category for individual courses. This will allow SSSW students to attend classes and receive university credits for suitable courses provided by the Department of Social Services within the Faculty of Human Sciences. Also, SSSW students in the Nursery School Workers program can enter a sub-curriculum that results in a publicly sanctioned qualification as a Baby Sitter or a



This picture shows a class conducted in a Sophia University classroom equipped with personal computers.

Peer Helper. Further, SSSW students in the Caretaker program can participate in arrangements linking SSSW and NPOs or local welfare-related legal persons to receive monitored caretaking experiences or internships.

At the same time, some of the former unique points of the curriculum: Courses in Human Studies, Courses in Christianity, and required graduation reports, still remain as required courses in all the revised programs.