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SCHOOL LIBRARY CHALLENGE IN JAPAN - LIPER-SL: LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONS AND EDUCATION RENEWAL, SCHOOL LIBRARY RESEARCH GROUP REPORT

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Abstract. Japanese school libraries have had issues and conflicts over their specialists for over 50 years. LIPER-SL sets a new hypothetical model of “The Information Specialist for School”. A series of research examined the possibilities of this new professional and identified the gap between the ideal and reality. The present situation was analyzed through a national questionnaire followed by a focus group interview. The missions and functions of “The Information Specialist for School” were defined at the end of this research.

School Libraries in Japan and LIPER School Library Research

Issues in School Libraries and Their Professionals

After World War II, Japanese school libraries with *shisho-kyoyu*, (who is a teacher with the certification of *shisyo-kyoyu* interpreted literally as librarian-teacher) were introduced in educational laws such as the “School Education Laws and Regulations” (1947) and the “School Library Law” (1953). However, due to concerns about the lack of licensed *shisho-kyoyu*, the assignment of *shisho-kyoyu* was postponed “for an indefinite period of time” until the revision of the School Library Law in 1997. This means that the School Library Law was defective from the beginning. In the meantime, several schools employed supplementary staff without qualifications or job descriptions. They have been called *gakko-shisho* (school librarians) and have contributed much to the school libraries through their devotion to their work. Sakai, Nakamura, and Kitamura (2002) gave a brief explanation of these two models in their report. “Librarianship in Japan” published in 1994 by International Relations Committee of Japan Library Association also provides general information on libraries in Japan.

Revision of the School Library Law and Two Models of Professionals

In 1997 and for the first time in nearly half a century, the School Library Law was partially revised. The point of this revision was to assign a *shisho-kyoyu* to each school that has more than 11 classes.

This revision has raised at least two critical issues.

- *Shisho-kyoyu* were assigned to schools with more than 11 classes after the revision. However, there were no provisions to reduce their other duties in school in order for them to concentrate on their library tasks. As a result, *shisho-kyoyu* cannot fully devote themselves to their library work. On the other hand, *gakko-shisho* are regarded as school clerical staff. Some of them are part-time employees, and their work is too limited to implement the educational mission of a school library. In this way, even after the revision, the *shisho-kyoyu* system does not work well, and the *gakko-shisho* are not legally assigned to most municipal schools. This causes a serious divide among school libraries and impedes equal education opportunity.
- The conflict involving the two models of school library personnel is obstructing the progress and educational function of a school library. It must be noted that there is no theoretical or rational reasons for these two models, but only conventional expediency.

Challenge of LIPER School Library Research Group

In 2003, Japan Society of Library and Information Science, the nationwide academic society for library and information science in Japan, took the initiative of carrying out the three-year LIPER (Library and Information Professions and Education Renewal) project. The targets of research are public libraries, university libraries, special libraries, school libraries and library and information science education.

The goals of the LIPER project are as follows:

1. Evaluating the activities of the training institutions for professional librarians until now, and organizing research on the personnel systems and job description in the past and present. (Professional librarians mentioned here are the librarians who work for institutions including companies, information centers, museums, art museums and archives).
2. Identifying the specific area of knowledge and skills for professional librarians or information specialists and the responsibility of the training institutions to implement training systems including examinations for certification, accreditation, assessment systems and so on

LIPER School Library Research Group, LIPER-SL in short, started the research with a view that neither of the two models was functional in terms of the legal status, actual allocation, and full-time employment. In addition, the conflict of the models of library workers was not discussed enough theoretically in past research.

In this information age, new requirements for schools today must be considered. Kasai and Weintraub (2002) wrote that some drastic changes appeared in the past decade in different ways in the following two areas: the revision of the national curriculum (present curriculum was published in 1998-1999 and implemented since 2002-2003), and the introduction of computers and network systems in schools, as well as the revision of the School Library Law.

However, such changes did not affect information and media management in the total school management system. In most schools, printed materials, audio-visual materials, and digitally formatted materials are still handled by different divisions or teachers. The Integration of information resources and the management system should be based on reforms of the whole school management system with changes in educational philosophy, pedagogy, and curriculum planning. School library reform must be considered as a core subject of the school reforms.

Therefore, LIPER-SL set a completely new and ideal model far from the confusing conventional models of the school library personnel like *shisho-kyoyu* and *gakko-shisho*. The goal of this research is to describe a new model of school library professionals in Japan. LIPER-SL adopted a hypothetical method to carry out the series of research and presented the idea of the integrated “information media specialist in school”. To learn about the gap between the “information media specialist in school” model and other conventional models, LIPER-SL started a series of interviews of authorities in relevant educational fields, two main researches using a questionnaire to ask about task achievement, in school library (364 respondents), and a focus group interview with 6 participants from the questionnaire respondents. Additional interviews of some practitioners and researchers in school library and educational fields followed those two researches.

Research on Task Analysis of Japanese School Library Using Questionnaire

Background and Goal of the Questionnaire

LIPER-SL held a series of interviews of authorities in media and ICT fields as pre-research to discover the possibility of introducing school library professionals in Japan. Following the interviews, a questionnaire about how and what kind of task is done in Japanese school libraries was made in 2004. During the process of making a task list for the questionnaire, LIPER-SL tried to describe an image of the ideal school library professional today, and what the tasks are for today and future school library media centers in Japan. The models of ICT specialists that were acquired through preparatory interviews of educational authorities and “School Library Media Specialist” in the United States gave this research big impact and many insights during the preparatory stage. The purpose of the questionnaire research was to find out practices of the school library, its features and categories.

Research Method and the Number of Respondents

The questionnaire consisted of a cover sheet with 16 questions about general information on the respondents, a list of 101 questions on tasks in school libraries, and additional comments. The respondents answer about the degree of practice of each task by selecting one of the following: 1- Not done, 2- Poorly, 3-Good, 4-Done well. These 101 tasks were classified into 6 categories as follows:

- A: Diversification of media (19 questions)
- B: Introduction of IT (12 questions)
- C: Support for students’ learning (24 questions)
- D: Support for teaching (17 questions)
- E: Promotion of library use (17 questions)

F: Partnership with communities (12 questions)

These categories were designed for the researchers for later analysis. The questionnaire subjects were not informed about these categories.

By a random sampling method, a total of 1,042 public and private schools from elementary to upper secondary were selected. The questionnaire was sent in July 2004 and 364 schools (36%) responded. The items of the respondents are 181 elementary schools (50%), 85 lower secondary schools (23%), 76 upper secondary schools (21%) and 22 integrated schools (6%). Small-sized schools with less than 12 classes where a *shisho-kyoyu* is not assigned by law were 46%. Three kinds of analyses were done. The first one is the analysis of the respondent school and other information from the cover sheets. The second is the features and tendencies of all the respondents through 101 questions and additional comments. The third is the analysis by 6 task categories.

This report explains the task analysis by 6 categories. To measure achievement of each task, 3 (good) and 4(done well) answers for 101 questions were totalized and divided by the number of valid respondents. It is called the index of task achievement and described in percentage. It means the number of school library staff who thinks that over 67% of the task was achieved. Microsoft Excel and SPSS software were used for the analysis.

Research Results

The average of task achievement in 6 categories is shown in Fig.1-“Average of task achievement in 6 categories”. The rate for each category is as follows:

- 22% for A: Diversification of media
- 15% for B: Introduction of IT
- 47% for C: Support for students’ learning
- 24% for D: Support for teaching
- 47% for E: Promotion of library use
- 35% for F: Partnership with communities

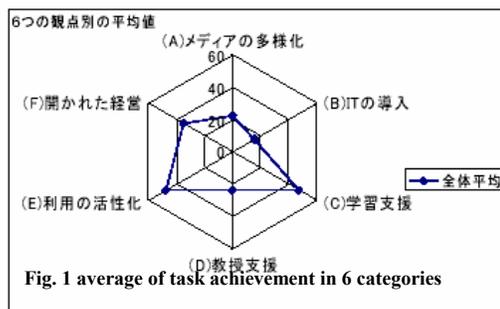


Fig. 1 average of task achievement in 6 categories

These results show that the task achievement varies by category. The total average of all 6 categories is 33%. Category A, B, D are less than the total average, and the tasks in those categories have been regarded as problems in past research and confirmed here. In addition, the index of task achievement from the viewpoint of 6 categories, analysis of variance concluded that the divide of the average of the rate of task achievement from the viewpoint of 6 categories was significant. “F: Partnership with communities” shows that two significant groups that have points higher and lower than average of task achievement exist. (F value=7.628 significance probability=0.000)

Qualitative Research on Japanese School Library: Focus Group Interview

Background of the Focus Group Interview

Following the results of task analysis, the focus group interview was designed to seek the factors behind the statistical research. Six interviewees were selected from the respondents of the questionnaire. In the previous research, Category-B (Introduction of IT)’s significantly low point was found. However, focus only on Category-B may result in giving too much attention to the IT infrastructure aspect of the school. Then, researchers checked how Category-B relates to Category-C (Support for students’ learning) or D (Support for teaching) as factors related to teaching and learning activities in school. Finally, more correlation was found between Category-B and D than Category-B and C. Therefore, two groups that have the highest and lowest points in those categories were selected. As a result, 6 participants seemed to represent the variation of Japanese school libraries in terms of gender, region, school type and whether they were public or private.

No.	Sex	Type1	Type2	Title	Status	B/D points product	B	D
1	F	Lower-Secondary	Public	Shisho kyoyu	Shisho kyoyu	63.11	7.44	8.48

2	M	Elementary	Public	Shisho kyoyu	Shisho kyoyu	48.22	7.44	6.48
3	F	Elementary	Public	Shisho kyoyu	Shisho kyoyu	37.81	8.44	4.48
4	F	Elementary	Public	Shisho kyoyu	Shisho kyoyu	11.43	-2.54	-4.50
5	M	Upper-Secondary	Private	Head of Library	Shisho kyoyu, Shisho (Librarian)*	11.43	-2.54	-4.50
6	F	Elementary	Public	Clerk (Library)	None	51.59	5.44	9.48

*Shisho (Librarian) is certified as a librarian for public libraries.

Figure 2. Profile of Focus Group Interview Participants

Goal of the Focus Group Interview

The goal of this interview is to collect data on the following feelings and opinions of the interviewees:

- Relation between one's own knowledge and skills on school library and the training system
- More influential factors to achieve the task in school library than the training system
- Reason why knowledge and skills are not reflected in the task
- Feelings and opinions on present school library staff in Japan
- Feelings and opinions on future model of school library professionals in Japan
- Feelings and opinions on ideal model of school library professionals in Japan and the possibility of changes in the training system for that goal

An interviewer raised the topics below to translate the research questions above into the questions in the interview.

- Present situation of "Introduction of IT" (Category-B) and "Support for teaching" (Category-D) in each school
- Expectation of others in school from a specialist of school library
- Usefulness of the training course for *shisho-kyoyu* or librarian
- Feelings and opinions on the level of the training course for future school library professionals
- Attitudes to the training system for future model of school library professionals in Japan

Research Method

Data Collection

Focus Group Interview was selected as a method to collect qualitative data to find out the background of statistical research results. Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996) explained that focus group interview is used to seek the background information behind the quantitative research or to dig out unexpected factors, and is suitable to generate a hypothesis and gain knowledge in specific fields. It is known that these methods are used for marketing research and policy making. Group dynamics is a key to this method. Therefore, in this research, higher and lower point groups were mixed to enhance the discussion based on the differences among school libraries.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis method was adopted to analyze the whole contents of semi-structured interview data. One main analyst and two sub-analysts were in charge of the analysis. All data was firstly divided into two flows like "Main flow" that are direct answers to the interviewer's questions and "Derivative flow" that are indirect and impromptu comments far from the main stream of the interview. Every comment of every participant was categorized. Finally, six important topics were generated through the analysis process. They are named "Discussion Points" and expressed as "Dp1 - Dp6" in short. These six topics raised new questions for the additional interviews held after this group interview.

Research Results

Dp1: Segregation of Library and IT Facilities (Separation of Library Education and IT Education)

This section consists of speeches on the physical separation of facilities and administrative divisions inside school. The tendency to divide personnel in charge of library and personnel in charge of IT facilities is especially stronger in elementary schools than in others school levels. On the other hand, where a full-time school librarian called “*gakko-shisho*” is assigned, an interviewee from upper secondary school seemed to approve of to integrating library and IT facilities and education under the control of library staff.

Dp2: Support for Teaching

In this section, there was some confusion among the participants about the concept of “Support for Teaching.” The results of the questionnaire also show that “acceptance of book requests from teachers”, “special loan to teachers” and “preparation of books for classes” are considered main tasks in this area. The more direct task of teaching support like “team teaching” and “information service on the copyright law” is not usually done in Japanese school libraries. This implies there are problems regarding the extent of present library functions and its personnel.

Dp3: Evasion of School Library Tasks (Second Priority to Teachers)

This topic is from the derivative flow. One speaker pointed out a case in a school in which some teachers tend to hide the fact that they have a *shisho-kyoyu* certificate in order to evade duties. Others participants agreed. This phenomenon is neither new nor unusual even to the researchers. However, it was never told in public before. Some speeches supported the opinion that a *shisho-kyoyu* is not a librarian but a teacher. It means that the school library management is only a second priority to teachers. The present *shisho-kyoyu* certificate is based on a teacher’s license and some additional credits in school library management. As Nakamura (2000) pointed in her comparative study between Hawaii and Tokyo, the teachers’ perceptions of school libraries are influenced by the nature of school library development in the society. However, if such perceptions limit the potential and possibilities of the school library professionals of the future, it may conflict with the whole LIPER discussion to inquire information professionals in the information age.

Dp4: Essentials of Library Science (Impact of Classification)

Some speakers had the opinion that the classification was the most impressive content during the training courses of *shisho-kyoyu* and librarian. This suggests that knowledge and skills on information and knowledge management should be included in the training process of school library professionals.

Dp5: Qualification, Certification and Training

Regarding qualification and certification, the problem does not lie in the qualification and certification system itself, but rather in the allocation of *shisho-kyoyu* to each school, the condition of working time and the reduction of other tasks inside school. Regarding the training system, some participants doubted the efficiency of correspondence education provided by some universities and various sorts of trainings offered by the school library or national and local teachers’ associations. Practical case studies with audio-visual teaching materials and library visits are much more welcomed than theoretical lectures. For on-the-job re-education and improvement of the skills of school library staff, advice from experienced teachers and librarians and IT training by municipal governments in a school district are good learning resources. As mentioned in the early part of this report, the present situation of the school library and its personnel in Japan extremely varies. This makes it difficult to set an appropriate course for school library staff with various qualifications.

Dp6: Social Needs to School Library

In spite of the tough situation of school libraries in Japan, almost every speaker expressed the importance and meaning of school library. Sometimes, their speeches jumped to the presence of libraries in the Japanese society. A speaker proposed making a new subject called “library study” in order show the appeal of the functions of libraries. It matches the ideas in the previous interviews of the authorities

of educational fields. Their talks sometimes expanded to include society and some of them pointed the importance of reading literacy and the “back to the basics” trend in recent Japanese education system.

A speaker expressed the opinion that *shisho-kyoyu* certificates are more for ordinary teachers than school library specialists.

New Model of School Library Professional in Japan

“Information Specialist for School”

LIPER-SL research groups concluded this research with the proposition for a future model of school library professional in Japan. This model was based on the series of researches explained in this report and additional interviews. In close cooperation with the other research groups of LIPER we decided to call the new model “Information Specialist for School”. LIPER-SL defines the missions of “Information Specialist for School” as follows:

- “Information Specialist for School” secures access to information and media for students and teachers in a learning community.
- “Information Specialist for School” gives support and instruction to students and teachers in a learning community to enable them to use information and media effectively.

To execute these missions, “Information Specialist for School” must handle with three following functions.

1. Information and knowledge management:
 - ✧ Building a system of knowledge and information that is useful for a learning community
 - ✧ Designing an effective learning environment with resources ranging from printed materials to digital information for students and teachers.
2. Information and knowledge sharing:
 - ✧ Preventing a digital divide by providing information on learning and teaching
 - ✧ Enhancing the growth of a learning community by encouraging the sharing of information and knowledge
 - ✧ Encouraging partnership with local communities and other educational institutions and information providers
3. Utilization of information and knowledge:
 - ✧ Contributing to literacy based on reading and use of information
 - ✧ Designing cross-curricular lesson plans
 - ✧ Providing support to teachers in their lesson plans and teaching

Issues for the Future

There are some necessary steps needed to introduce the “Information Specialist for School” into the Japanese school system. The following possibilities can be suggested for the necessary revision of the School Library Law and other related educational laws:

- “Information Specialist for School” as expansion of present *shisho-kyoyu*
- “Information Specialist for School” as a brand-new and independent specialist in school

The LIPER project aims to design a course on the graduate school level for an information specialist for every type of library. In that case, the second possibility seems to match the original purpose of the LIPER project.

Conclusion

In this information age, the management of learning resources in educational institutions is an important task. In Japan, the “Law Concerning the Promotion of Children’s Reading” (Dec. 2001), and the “Law Concerning the Promotion of Culture on Letters and Printed Materials” (July, 2005) were passed one after another. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Science and Technology decided to organize a national “Program for the Development of Reading Literacy” from April 2006. This program strongly reflects the views of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment on reading ability, for example. This does not only refer to literature reading, but also to visual literacy and the way of thinking. In this program, a school library’s role to support students’ learning was mentioned. However, at this moment and as this research reveals, the expertise of a school library professional is regarded as that of a part-time teacher. To lead to a breakthrough, a new model of “Information Specialist for School” must

show that such specialists play a significant role in integrating information and media tasks that are separated in schools now and change a traditional book room and other media facilities into a lively learning resources center. LIPER-SL's research will hopefully contribute to the policy making of the school library management and educational reform in Japan.

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Appendix

101 questions on task analysis

Task in School Library	Category
1. Use the internet as information source	A
2. Support the operation of computers and other equipment	B
3. Cooperate with volunteers	F
4. Collect reference tools	A
5. Make signs in library	E
6. Make a standard of selection of printed materials	A
7. Make a budget for printed materials and buy them	A
8. Select the printed materials, including holding a meeting for selection	A

9. Display in library	E
10. Use various standards for library	E
11. Report and consult with administrator	F
12. Cooperate with other school libraries	F
13. Design the layout of library	E
14. Manage network server	B
15. Give advise on the copyright law to teachers	D
16. Provide current awareness service to teachers	D
17. Provide reference service to teachers	D
18. Provide referral service to teachers	D
19. Conduct training on information and media use for teachers	D
20. Conduct training on library use for teachers	D
21. Provide teachers with information on the copyright law	D
22. Special loan of teaching materials for teachers	D
23. Collect materials for teacher training	D
24. Accept book purchase requests from teachers	D
25. Make booklists or book reviews for teachers	D
26. Make library guide or manual for teachers	D
27. Join the teachers' meeting as library staff	F
28. Cooperate with public libraries	F
29. Join inter-library network of public libraries and others	B
30. Build database of in-school materials and students' works	B
31. Lend audio-visual equipment	A
32. Maintain audio-visual equipment	A
33. Make a standard of selection of audio-visual materials	A
34. Make a budget for audio-visual materials and buy them	A
35. Select audio-visual materials	A
36. Make a standard for discard	A
37. Classify materials	E
38. Provide reference service to students	C
39. Provide referral service to students	C
40. Teach students sense of morality and ethics in information society	C
41. Teach students library and book use	C
42. Give students library orientation	C
43. Inform students of the copyright law	C
44. Give students information on the copyright law	C
45. Provide reading guidance to students	C
46. Provide special loan for students for research and report writing	C
47. Accept book purchase requests from students	C
48. Hold a reading circle (event) for students	C
49. Make booklists and book reviews for students	C
50. Make library guide or manual for students	C
51. Prepare teaching materials for class	D
52. Help teachers make lesson plans	D
53. Check bookshelves	E
54. Make curriculum of education on information and media	C
55. Set goal and evaluation standard for education on information and media	C
56. Teach subjects on information and media	C
57. Make tools like pathfinder and information files	A
58. Plan library orientation or library tour	C
59. Make a systematic plan of library and book use	C
60. Hold regular students' library committee meetings	C
61. Instruct students' committee about events	C
62. Participate in events of library associations and academic societies	F
63. Join team teaching	D

64. Allocate task in library	E
65. Communicate with network company (network management in school)	B
66. Make a list of webpage useful for learning of on library webpage	B
67. Make and maintain a library homepage	B
68. Make an annual report of library	E
69. Evaluate own library	E
70. Open school library to local communities	F
71. Make rules and regulations for library management	E
72. Make manuals for library management	E
73. Plan library management	E
74. Provide a card catalog to students and teachers	E
75. Make a computer catalog (OPAC)	B
76. Provide a computer catalog (OPAC)	B
77. Discard materials	A
78. Evaluate the collection	A
79. Accept student trainees for internships	F
80. Plan library events	E
81. Join the curriculum meeting as library staff	D
82. Join the school subjects meeting as library staff	D
83. Maintain computers in library	B
84. Maintain networked computers in library	B
85. Make a manual for networked computers in library	B
86. Publish library newsletter	F
87. Make statistical data in library	E
88. Make and use reservation forms for library	E
89. Promote an all-school reading hour	C
90. Hold a school meeting for library management	F
91. Make a long-term plan on collection	A
92. Make a standard to select digital materials	A
93. Plan a budget for digital materials and buy them	A
94. Select digital materials, including holding a meeting for selection	A
95. Manage books outside library, in special rooms and classroom libraries	A
96. Support special education for handicapped students	C
97. Plan reading literacy lessons	C
98. Plan a reading week	E
99. Conduct activities such as book talks and reading aloud	C
100. Participate in a meeting on school libraries inside and outside school	F
101. Cooperate with museums	F