

Pathways for School Library Education and Training in Japan

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Abstract

In this presentation we would like to introduce school library education and training in Japan. The School Library Law closely connects school libraries to the Japanese education system. Enacted in 1953, it covers the core elements of the school system in Japan. The first version of the law regulated school libraries, teacher librarians and the teacher librarians' training programme. It stated that a teacher-librarian should be in a school library if the school has more than 12 classes (which is the case for about half of the schools in Japan). However, most teacher librarians did not receive any exemption from their regular duties as classroom subject teachers. In the latest version of the law, amended in 2014, the placement of the school librarians has been documented in addition to the teacher librarians.

There is another type of library staff also working in schools: "school librarians" who work as librarians in the school library. There were school librarians in Japanese schools before this amendment, but they were not regulated by the School Library Law.

Keywords: School Library, Education and Training, School Library Law, Japan

Teacher Librarians and School Librarians

School librarians also work in school libraries, but their licences are not specific to a school library. In November 2016, the National Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) issued a model curriculum that included courses from teacher education, teacher librarian education and school library education for educating university students as school librarians. This model programme does not provide a licence upon completion (Horikawa 2017) and, since only a few universities began their courses in 2017, no students have completed it yet.

Training course of Teacher Librarians and School Librarians

The teacher librarian programme provides the five subjects required by the Rules for Training Affairs of Teacher Librarian. The subjects for a teacher's licence, required for teacher librarian certification, are regulated separately.

The school librarian programme and course contents deliver the 10 subjects according to the model curriculum proposed by MEXT.

Five subjects of the training course for Teacher Librarians

- (1) School Management and Libraries
- (2) Managing School Library Media Resources
- (3) Education and School Library Services
- (4) (4) Theories of Reading and Personal Development in Schools
- (5) Using Multimedia Information Resources

Ten subjects of the training course for School Librarians

- (1) Introduction to School Librarianship
- (2) Introduction to Library Service Technology
- (3) Introduction to Library and Information Resources
- (4) Introduction to Library Material Organisation
- (5) Practicum on Library Material Organisation
- (6) Introduction to School Library Service
- (7) Introduction to Information Services in School Libraries
- (8) Introduction to School Education
- (9) Education and School Library Services
- (10) Theories of Reading and Personal Development in Schools

Teacher Librarians Training programmes in Two Universities and in the Kyoto City Board of Education

Three programmes of school library education and training offered by Kyoto Notre Dame University, Kyoto Sangyo University and the Kyoto City Board of Education. These programmes illustrate school library issues in Japan related to role definition, staff titles as well as the education and training of school library staff.

The case of the teacher librarian program of Kyoto Notre Dame University

The university had the teacher librarian programme since 2003. This university, which is only for women, has two teacher training programmes: the programme for elementary school teachers (including special support education school teachers) and the programme for middle school teachers (Japanese, English and Homemaking). The students who complete these programmes can take the teacher librarian programme. Kyoto Notre Dame University does not have the school librarian programme that has just begun in Japan, largely because students seldom get a full-time job as a school librarian. We will introduce some examples and the part of the scenes of classes in this presentation.

The case of the teacher librarian program of Kyoto Sangyo University

The university the chief faculty member in charge of the teacher librarian programme teaches four subjects and the university's original subject "Seminar on School Libraries." "Using Multimedia Information Resources" has become an alternative subject, along with "Audio-Visual Education" and "Audio Visual Education and Media" which are taught by researchers in information technology. The major topic of the chief faculty member is educational technology. Based on the basic policy of MEXT, the aim is to improve the learning of students qualitatively by utilising diverse media for learning guidance. Cooperation between learning activities and school libraries is focused on. We will introduce some examples and the part of the scenes of classes in this presentation.

The case of the Kyoto City Board of Education. Kyoto City

Kyoto city includes 166 elementary schools, 73 middle schools, seven combined junior high/high schools, 10 high schools and eight comprehensive support schools.

Kyoto city has arranged a teacher librarian according to law, and some teacher librarians work full-time in their schools, while other teacher librarians serve concurrently as subject teachers. As the teacher librarians work as classroom teachers and teach subjects, the time they can spend on activities related to school libraries is limited. The city also placed school librarians for elementary and junior high school, but not every day.

Future Prospects for the Training

At present, there is standardisation of the teacher librarians' training and school librarians' training in Japan, because these professional systems are enacted according to the School Library Law, with the subjects covered by the courses regulated. However, this present situation does not guarantee expertise of the professionals in school libraries in Japan. We will introduce this problem from the perspective of the wider-relationship with the curriculum and students' learning.

At present, there is standardisation of the teacher librarian's training and school librarian's training in Japan, because these professional systems are enacted according to the School Library Law, with the subjects covered by the courses regulated. However, this present situation does not guarantee expertise of the professionals in school libraries in Japan. This problem seems to occur because of the following:

- 1) Education of school library staff: universities cannot afford to offer a large number of new courses. This circumstance at the university level hampers the changes needed to make for school librarian education. There are not enough courses in the teacher librarian's programme; the school librarian's programme has more courses but no new ones.
- 2) Roles and duties of school library staff: there are two professional titles (teacher librarians and school librarians) in Japan. However, each job's duties are not clearly specified in the school education setting. Moreover, the contents of the curriculum in universities are not keeping up with the needs of schools.

Conclusion

As a school library is one of the school's functions, it is necessary to define its role in the school and advance research related to that in pedagogy. The key factor in improving the expertise of the professionals of school libraries is interdisciplinary studies and their application such in school education. Interdisciplinary studies between library and information science as well as pedagogy or developmental psychology would contribute to the development of a school library. The application of such studies would also help address the gap between the school's need for a school library as well as the school library services offered to school children and teachers.

Note:

An extended version of this paper will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming book, *Global Action on School Library Education and Training*, edited by Barbara A. Schultz-Jones and Dianne Oberg, published by DeGruyter Saur.