

Chapter 4

10,000 Newly Certified Librarians, 100 Secure Jobs

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the status, challenges, and issues encountered in librarianship in Japan, especially school librarianship. Specifically, it focuses on the certifications for school library staff, the curriculum model, and the employability of certified librarians. Topics related to Library and Information Studies schools, training programs for certified librarians, summer and distance education, qualifications and accreditation of teacher librarians are discussed as well. Currently, librarianship and school librarianship are not close to implementing internationalization; however, this discussion cannot be avoided. Hence, this chapter argues that it is necessary to incorporate the specific trends in Japan along with global trends.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of supply and demand is critical for the LIS labor market in Japan. Annually, there are only fewer than 100 recruitments open for full-time lifetime librarians. Certified librarians (but also all workers) are also trying to avoid temporary employment because the salaries are low. More than 80% of libraries in Japan use human resource dispatch companies, and about 10% of the libraries are operated by commercial companies. Often, the hourly wages of temporary workers are less than 8 USD. Certified librarians get an additional 50 cents per hour.

In this instance, the cause is that there are too many training programs and new qualification holders. Educators conducting training programs recognize the problem

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of too many certified professionals with limited skills given the market demands for public librarians (Miwa, Kasai, Miyahara, 2011, p.60), but accept their teaching duty in order to retain their status in academia.

The school library system in Japan has similar shortcomings (Miwa, 2015, p.13). The School Library Law requires that all schools with more than 12 classes should assign someone in the role of certified teacher librarian. However, almost all teacher librarians do not receive any exemption from their regular duties as classroom subject teachers. They use only two hours a week for school library work (MEXT School Students Bureau, 2016, p.2), which means that they are primarily classroom/subject teachers with an added workload. They are only librarians on paper. So this is not an attractive job for those who want to work in the school library. Almost all schools hire no teacher librarians as a “professional teacher librarian”, thus there are no job offers as for teacher librarians. So, these questions are posed: Is professional migration be the answer? How prepared are certified librarians to be employed in other countries? Will their qualifications be recognized? Has the Japanese LIS training curriculum been designed to prepare certified librarians on par with librarian competencies around the world? How can professional librarians be hired by more institutions? How can we ensure stable librarian employment in Japan?

Based on the above issues, this book chapter presents the following:

1. Overview of Japanese Public Libraries and School Libraries, the governing laws, current status and findings of studies.
2. Similar studies about LIS education, certification, accreditation, current curriculum, training and formal education, globalization of LIS education in general and in specific libraries such as public and school libraries.
3. The new curriculum for the “school librarian.”
4. The relevance of the concept of internationalization to address the challenges in librarianship.

JAPANESE PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Public Libraries and Public Librarians

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)’s Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, the country of Japan has 11,448 full-time librarians (MEXT Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2016). To estimate, about half of this number comprises librarians over 50 years of age who were recruited more than 30 years ago. The other half includes “librarians” who were recruited by municipal governments through the civil service examination and assigned to libraries

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