

Status of the school library management manual in Japan: A questionnaire survey conducted with the boards of education and school librarians

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the status of school library management manual in Japan through a questionnaire survey. We distributed the questionnaire about municipality- and school-level manuals to boards of education and school librarians. The main results are summarized as follows: (1) Municipality-level manuals are not as pervasive as to school-level manuals, and that it is therefore necessary to demonstrate the usefulness of the manual to boards of education; (2) When classifying the contents of the manuals into Framework, Management, Instruction, Maintenance, and Service, the contents of Framework and Maintenance are commonly included, while those of Service and Management are rarely included; (3) School-level manuals emphasize clerical work and local events in schools, while municipality-level manuals emphasize relevant people and the library environment; and (4) Takeover documents and daily reports can complement school-level manuals as they explain the practices in schools that have been unwritten in official documents.

Keywords: school library, staff manual, questionnaire survey

1. Introduction

School librarians play an important role in the management of school libraries. They are the clerical workers in schools, and are called *gakko-shisho*. In most schools, a school librarian mainly manages the library, unlike a teacher librarian who is a teacher with a *shisho-kyoyu* certificate, takes classes every day, and generally does not work in the school library on a daily basis. Although school librarians cannot directly teach students in the classroom, they support students and teachers by providing instructional resources, reading and learning material (c.f., Japan Society of School Library Science, 2013). Furthermore, they may sometimes support students with mental disabilities in the classroom (Obata, 2012).

The number of school librarians in Japan is expected to increase in the near future. Japan's School Library Act was reformed in 2014, and it determined that every school should endeavor to hire a school librarian to improve the management and promote the usage of the school library. It also determined that

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state and local governments must endeavor to take necessary measures to enhance the quality of school librarians. In 2016, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology published the report about the certificate and training of school librarians.

However, in many municipalities, school librarians are placed in an insecure position. As the finances of the local government are constricted, many school librarians are on non-regular or fixed-year employment and some of them work for several schools at the same time. As a result, explicit and implicit knowledge of school library work is not effectively accumulated, which may lead to library management becoming unstable.

In this situation, a “school library management manual” (“manual”) may be a helpful tool for school librarians. The manual defines the policy, scope and process of school library work, and is shared by the school library staffs (Noguchi, 2015). The manual is expected to not only help school librarians manage school libraries smoothly but also standardize the school library services within a municipality. There are two types of manuals: 1) a municipality-level manual that is shared by all schools in a municipality, and 2) a school-level manual that is used in specific school. These manuals will become more and more necessary, especially for school librarians who are newly appointed and are not accustomed to school library work.

The status of the manuals in Japan has not yet been investigated except for one important study (Urano, 2003). We analyze the status of manuals of public schools through a questionnaire survey to reveal the general characteristics, while Urano (2003) analyzed only three manuals of private schools. The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we present our previous work; in Section 3, we present the result of questionnaire survey; and finally in Section 4, we summarize the results and outline our future work.

2. Related Work

Prior to this study, we have conducted some research on manuals. In Noguchi et al. (2014), we analyzed a number of manuals and listed the contents (Table 1), which were then divided into five categories: Framework, Management, Instruction, Maintenance, and Service. Noguchi et al. (2014) also revealed that the nature of the manuals is different depending on their target readership. Manuals for teacher librarians have a tendency to serve as guides for the effective use of school libraries, while manuals with a broader readership intend to create a foundation for the school library environment, regardless of a user’s background and experience.

Table 1. Content list of school library management manual

<u>Framework</u> 1. Library management policy 2. Yearly schedule 3. Library organization 4. School library staff
<u>Management</u> 5. Accounting 6. School library evaluation 7. School workshop 8. Collaboration with public library and other school libraries 9. Volunteer staff

<p><u>Instruction</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Library instruction and orientation11. Inquiry-based learning12. Reading guidance13. Support for teachers14. Library events15. Student librarian <p><u>Maintenance</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">16. Collection management17. Shelving18. School library media19. Selection20. Discard21. Library inspection22. Library facility management23. Usage statistics <p><u>Service</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">24. Browsing, circulation, return and demand25. Reference service26. Public relation27. Library environment28. Others

Moreover, we analyzed users' needs for the manuals through hearing investigations to school and teacher librarians (Asaishi et al, 2015; Noguchi et al, 2015). These revealed that (1) some content is required regardless of the school type, while the other content is required especially for specific school type: (2) some content is difficult to standardize in the manual: (3) the content should be developed in accordance with the circumstances of the municipality and school: and (4) the takeover documents and daily report may be used as the basis when developing the manual.

Based on these results, we will produce guidelines for creating manuals, and will try to develop a manual in accordance with them. Before developing a manual, we should investigate the actual status of manuals. In this paper, we try to answer the following research questions:

- How pervasive are the municipality-level and school-level manuals?
- What kinds of content are actually included in the manuals?
- Do takeover documents and daily reports have common contents with the manuals?

In the next section, the method and results of the questionnaire survey are reported.

3. Questionnaire Survey

We distributed questionnaires to 212 boards of education of all the municipalities in the four prefectures of Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba, and 85 responses were collected (response rate: 40.1%). We also distributed the questionnaire to 55 elementary schools in six municipalities that hired full-time school librarians, and 15 responses were collected (response rate: 27.3%). In addition, we distributed the questionnaires to 37 school librarians working for public elementary or junior-high school libraries. They were the participants of workshops held by SLiiiC and Gakuto-ken, both of which are voluntary organizations for supporting school library. We collected a total of 52 responses for the school-level manual. All questionnaires were distributed between May and August in 2015.

In the questionnaire, after briefly explaining the manual, we first asked whether the municipality or

school has a manual as shown below.

1. Does your municipality/school have a school library management manual?

In this question, we asked respondents to choose from three options (1. Completed, 2. Planning, 3. No plan). The results are shown in Table 2. From this table, we find that about 70% of municipalities have no plans to make a manual. This suggests that municipality-level manuals are not yet fully pervasive in Japan, and therefore it is necessary to demonstrate the usefulness of the manual to the boards of education. In contrast, over 60% of schools have already completed manuals. This result is not, however, consistent with our previous work (Asaishi et al, 2015; Noguchi et al, 2015). It is possible that the understanding of the manual was different among the respondents.

Table 2. Status of making manuals

	Completed	Planning	No plan	No answer	Total
Municipality-level	18 (21.2%)	7 (8.2%)	59 (69.4%)	1 (1.2%)	85 (100.0%)
School-level	32 (61.5%)	10 (19.2%)	10 (19.2%)	0 (0.0%)	52 (100.0%)

Thereafter, for the respondents that answered that they had completed or were planning to make manuals (25 municipalities and 42 schools), we asked about the contents of the manual, as shown below.

2. What kinds of content does your manual contain?

In this question, we asked respondents to check if each items in Table 1 were included in the municipality- and school-level manual. As we excluded seven responses from boards of education that did not check any, the final responses were from 18 municipalities and 42 schools. Table 3 shows the number of municipality- and school-level manuals that include the types of content. “27. Others” includes content such as lesson plans, copyright, school library act and official standards about the school library.

From the result of municipality-level manuals, we find that “1. Library management policy” (72.2%), “2. Yearly schedule” (66.7%), and “20. Library inspection” (66.7%) were the most commonly included, while “6. School library evaluation” (16.7%), “7. School workshop” (11.1%) and “17. School library media” (11.1%) were rarely included. When comparing the average value among the five categories described above, the Framework content was most commonly included (61.1%), followed by Maintenance (50.8%), Instruction (41.3%), Service (41.1%), and Management (25.0%). The ranking of the five categories is summarized as follows:

Framework → Maintenance → [Instruction → Service] → Management

where the direction of the arrow (→) depicts the descending order of the average value, and the square brackets ([]) group categories which take closer values together.

From the result of school-level manuals, we find that “2. Yearly schedule” (78.6%), “16. Collection management” (78.6%), and “23. Browsing, circulation, return and demand” (78.6%) were most commonly included, while “27. Others” (14.3%) and “7. School workshop” (19.0%) were rarely included. When comparing the average value among the five categories described above, Framework was most commonly included (65.5%), followed by Maintenance (64.6%), Instruction (49.0%), Management (45.2%), and Service (44.8%). The ranking is summarized as follows:

[Framework → Maintenance] → Instruction → [Management → Service]

In both municipality- and school-level manuals, the Framework and Maintenance contents were commonly included, while Management and Service were rarely included. It is considered that some contents of

Table 3. The number of manual including the content

Category	Content	Municipality-level	School-level
Framework	1. Library management policy	13 (72.2%)	31 (73.8%)
	2. Yearly schedule	12 (66.7%)	33 (78.6%)
	3. Library organization	9 (50.0%)	21 (50.0%)
	4. School library staff	10 (55.6%)	25 (59.5%)
	average	11.0 (61.1%)	27.5 (65.5%)
Management	5. Accounting	5 (27.8%)	23 (54.8%)
	6. School library evaluation	3 (16.7%)	13 (31.0%)
	7. School workshop	2 (11.1%)	8 (19.0%)
	8. Collaboration with public library and other school libraries	8 (44.4%)	32 (76.2%)
	average	4.5 (25.0%)	19.0 (45.2%)
Instruction	9. Volunteer staff	9 (50.0%)	13 (31.0%)
	10. Library orientation	7 (38.9%)	27 (64.3%)
	11. Inquiry-based learning	8 (44.4%)	21 (50.0%)
	12. Reading guidance	7 (38.9%)	23 (54.8%)
	13. Faculty support	6 (33.3%)	16 (38.1%)
	14. Library events	5 (27.8%)	25 (59.5%)
	15. Student librarian	10 (55.6%)	19 (45.2%)
	average	7.4 (41.3%)	20.6 (49.0%)
Maintenance	16. Collection management	11 (61.1%)	33 (78.6%)
	17. School library media	2 (11.1%)	13 (31.0%)
	18. Selection	11 (61.1%)	28 (66.7%)
	19. Discard	11 (61.1%)	28 (66.7%)
	20. Library inspection	12 (66.7%)	29 (69.0%)
	21. Library facility management	11 (61.1%)	29 (69.0%)
	22. Usage statistics	6 (33.3%)	30 (71.4%)
	average	9.1 (50.8%)	27.1 (64.6%)
Service	23. Browsing, circulation, return and demand	11 (61.1%)	33 (78.6%)
	24. Reference service	4 (22.2%)	15 (35.7%)
	25. Public relations	6 (33.3%)	23 (54.8%)
	26. Library environment	11 (61.1%)	17 (40.5%)
	27. Others	5 (27.8%)	6 (14.3%)
	average	7.4 (41.1%)	18.8 (44.8%)
Average		8.0 (44.2%)	22.7 (54.2%)

Framework and Maintenance are elementary items in the manual, while those of Management and Service are difficult to standardize in the manual.

When we compare municipality- and school-level manuals, more content is found to be included in school-level rather than in municipality-level manuals. This is true especially in “22. Usage statistics,” “5. Accounting,” “10. Library orientation,” and “14. Library events”. In contrast, “9. Volunteer staff,” “15. Student librarian,” and “26. Library environment” are more included in municipality-level rather than school-level manuals. This suggests that the school-level manual emphasizes the clerical work and local events, while the municipality-level manual emphasizes the relevant people and environment of the school library.

In the questionnaire distributed to the school librarians, we further asked about the takeover documents and daily reports, as shown below.

3. Have you made a takeover document for your successor? If yes, please write the contents.

4. Do you usually write a daily report as a part of your job? If yes, please write the contents.

We asked them to choose from two options (1. Yes, 2. No) and write about the contents as free descriptive answers. Table 4 shows the results of this survey.

Table 4. Status of takeover document and daily report

	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Takeover document	36 (69.2%)	14 (26.9%)	2 (3.8%)	52 (100.0%)
Daily report	48 (92.3%)	3 (5.8%)	1 (1.9%)	52 (100.0%)

From Table 4, we find that about 70% of school librarians have made a takeover document, and over 90% of them write daily reports. These results show that many school librarians have prepared a takeover document and write daily reports as part of their job. When we see the free descriptive answers, we can see that many were overlapped with the content list in Table 1. Examples of the overlapped content are as follows:

yearly schedule, volunteer staff, library orientation, reading guidance, shelving, return and demand, school library media, discard, and reference service.

These results support our previous work (Asaishi et al. 2015; Noguchi et al. 2015), which suggested that takeover documents and daily reports can be used as the basis for producing a manual. Furthermore, some contents of takeover document and daily reports are excluded from the content list in Table 1. They are related to the practices in each school, and some examples are provided below.

daily schedule, status of student and faculty, faculty meeting, request from faculty, time sheets, and the way of using computer system

This kind of information is beneficial for newly appointed school librarians because there are many practices in school that are unwritten in official documents, which may confuse them. Considering this, takeover documents and daily reports can not only become the basis for making school-level manual but also complement it.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the status of municipality- and school-level manuals in Japan through a questionnaire survey. In the questionnaire, we first investigated whether there is a manual being used by boards of education and schools, and then enquired about the contents of manuals. Furthermore, for school librarians, we investigated whether there were takeover documents and daily reports, and enquired about their contents. The main results are summarized as follows.

- (1) Municipality-level manuals are not as pervasive as to school-level manuals, and that it is therefore necessary to demonstrate the usefulness of manuals to boards of education.
- (2) When classifying the contents of manuals into Framework, Management, Instruction, Maintenance and Service, the contents of Framework and Maintenance are commonly included, while those of Service and Management are rarely included.
- (3) School-level manuals emphasize clerical work and local events in the school library, while municipality-level manuals emphasize relevant people and the library environment.
- (4) Takeover documents and daily reports, prepared in many school libraries, can not only become the basis for making school-level manuals but also complement it as they explain the practices in each school that have been unwritten in official documents.

Following the results presented in this paper, we believe that research in many directions related to these manuals is possible. First a large national survey is necessary to generalize the results of this paper and to reveal the characteristics of manuals according to the region and school type. Second we are planning to create guidelines to develop manuals based on the status and users' need for manuals and publish it on the SLiic webpage (http://www.sliic.org/?page_id=535). Finally, we will try to develop a manual in accordance with those guidelines, collaborating with some municipalities or schools.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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