

Attitudes and Self-Perceptions of School Librarians in Relations to Their Professional Practices: a Comparative Study Between Hong Kong, Shanghai, Korea, Taipei, and Japan

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Abstract

School librarians are not only managers of the school libraries, they are also educators, administrators, teaching consultants, information specialists, and information literacy teachers, etc. Unfortunately, in many countries, especially in Asia, there has always been a lack of understanding on the parts of the classroom teachers and school administration about the role of the school librarians in the public school system. Meanwhile, many novice school librarians do not have a clear understanding of the potential contributions of the school library programmes to students' overall development process and their achievement, as well as their contributions to students' overall enquiry-based learning as a whole. Furthermore, very little research is available on the attitudes and self-perceptions of the school librarians regarding their teaching role, in relation to enquiry-based learning for comparison. The study is designed to examine, explore and compare how school librarians in function between Hong Kong, Japan, Shanghai, South Korea, and Taipei, as well as how perceive their own status within the school community, by looking at their relationships with their principals and other classroom teachers.

Questionnaire Surveys & Findings

The school librarians in the public elementary or secondary schools in Hong Kong, Japan, Shanghai, South Korea, and Taipei were invited to take part in a questionnaire survey. A total number of 466 self-completed questionnaires were collected from all 5 regions. The results indicated that both Taipei and Korea

outperformed the other regions, in terms of both the quality of their school library programmes, as well as the level of job satisfaction amongst the school librarians. Research findings also indicated that all 5 regions have policies developed by either their respective Ministries of Education or the Education Bureaus - for guiding the school administrations and the librarians on the basic setup and running a school library. Ironically, although many of such 'national/regional' standards already specify that all schools must be equipped with school libraries, it is 'optional' for the schools to hire qualified librarians to manage those school libraries. For that reason, the principal's support and understanding plays a crucial role in the implementation of effective library programmes, as well as creating a positive working morale amongst the school librarians.

Introduction

According to Jackson (1981, p. 342), "Comparative librarianship offers the opportunity to look at theories and practices of librarianship in different countries for the purpose of solving and broadening understanding of library problems." Simsova and MacKee (1970, p. 14) also pointed out that comparative librarianship "is a study of library development in many countries to discover what developments have been successful and can be copied elsewhere... on an international scale to determine long-range trends, to appraise shortcomings, and to uncover contradictions and inconsistencies between practice and theory" (Jackson, 1981, p.342). The comparative method was used in this study in order to obtain a better understanding of the self-perceptions in relation to the professional practices among the school librarians in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Shanghai, and Taipei - to identify keys and solutions to more effective development.

According to the University College London CIBER Research Team (2008, p.32) in the U.K., information skills are vital for our next generation to survive in the information age "need to be inculcated during formative years of childhood: by university of college it is too late to reverse engineer deeply ingrained inhabit." School libraries and librarians may therefore play an important role in the development of enquiry-based learning among the students. Professional literature revealed that school librarians in many countries are facing similar problems related to their professional image, role and job satisfaction (Cheng, 2012; Hartzell, 2002; Miller, 2005; Nakamura, 2000; Wong, 1992; Zhan, 2012; Zhang, 2010). Meanwhile, there are not many cross-national comparative studies among Confucius societies in Asia. Without a clear picture of the actual situation and the possible inter-connections, no workable and sustainable strategies can be formulated for long-term development.

Purpose of Study

Job satisfaction in relations to school librarians' roles and scope of work are seldom measured, and compared cross-nationally. This study aims to provide empirical data for exploring the issues of the professional roles and job satisfaction amongst school librarians in 5 different regions in Asia, by looking at their relationships with other colleagues, as well as their role within the school community, e.g.:

1. Degree of job satisfaction - examine and compare their job satisfaction in relation to their professional practices, as well as the perceptions of the principals and other classroom teachers towards the school librarians.
2. Self-perceptions and professional roles – examine and compare whether they understand and value their own role as school librarian, particularly the teaching and instructional partner role.
3. School librarians' professional competency carried out in relations to the amount of resources and technologies available.

Research Methods

A cross-national survey was designed to determine and compare how school librarians perceive their own roles in the 5 different regions in Asia. The chosen regions were namely Hong Kong, Japan (Osaka and Tokyo), South Korea (Seoul and Pusan), Shanghai, and Taipei. The original survey questionnaire was in English, and was developed by the researchers in all 5 regions as a team effort. The finalized English questionnaire was then translated into respective languages before it was administered to the school librarians in all 5 regions for the actual survey. It was anticipated that no fewer than 100 completed questionnaires would be collected from each region. Hong Kong, Korea, Shanghai and Taipei had no difficulty fulfilling the minimum 100-response quota. However, only a total 58 completed questionnaires were collected from Japan (see Table A and section on Technical Limitations for details).

Technical Limitations

For Taipei, Shanghai and Hong Kong, in these 3 regions, researchers experienced no difficulties in collecting all 100 questionnaire responses within a single city alone. However, it should be noted that for Taipei, all 100 responses were collected from senior secondary schools¹ alone; and no junior high schools were included in the survey carried out in Taipei. Whereas for South Korea and Japan, researchers had to collect responses from more than one cities in order to fulfill the minimum 100-response quota. For South Korea, the total 100 responses were collected from both Seoul and Pusan together. Whereas for Japan, despite the questionnaires being administered to over 858 secondary schools in both Tokyo and Osaka, only 58 completed questionnaires were collected from these 2 cities in total. In addition, for Shanghai, in order to fulfill the minimum 100 response quota, elementary schools were also included in the survey; which made up of total 39% of total responses collected in Shanghai (see Table A).

Male-Female Librarian Ratio

By comparison, Taiwan had an unusually large number of male school librarians, and the male-female librarian ratio was almost 1:1. Whereas for the remaining 4 regions, the male-female librarian ratio ranged drastically from 1:2 to 1:8 (see Table B). There are no research findings available to explain the unusually 'even ratio' between male and female librarians in Taipei. According to the Taiwanese researcher's explanation, school librarian jobs are considered privileged positions in Taiwan. In Taiwan, most practicing school librarians are subject leaders, and many of them already hold the senior teacher positions. Being a subject leader also means that one could focus entirely on their library duties, without being expected to take on any other classroom teaching duties. As a result, in terms of workload, job prospect and salary, the school librarian positions in Taiwan are equally attractive for many male teachers.

Job-Related Professional Qualifications

A subject leader is expected to have in-depth knowledge of the subject that he or she is teaching. Such specialized knowledge will enable the subject leader to select appropriate teaching and learning approaches for each subject. With this assumption, secondary school librarians are also expected to be professionally qualified in the related disciplines. However, the results indicated that such an expectation of graduate-level qualifications in library science or teacher librarianship was not common throughout all 5 regions. For example, in Japan, only 3.4% of all respondents held MLIS degrees.² Similarly, only 3.1% of all

¹ Senior high schools in Taiwan, with students' age ranging from 16 to 18.

² According to the Japan Library Association, "*the prevalence of school libraries is due to the 1953 School Library Law, which stipulated that schools should have libraries, although an amendment made it not obligatory for schools to hire a teacher librarian to administer the school libraries professionally. Thus, many school librarians have worked without any official qualification.*" -- *Brief Information on Libraries in Japan - Japan Library Association (JLA)*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.jla.or.jp/portals/0/html/libraries-e.html#general>

respondents in Shanghai held MLIS degrees, while a majority (64.3%) of school librarians had other non-LIS BA degrees only; and their professional skills and knowledge were based mostly on practical experiences gained via on-job training. It should also be highlighted that currently, there are no certificate or diploma programmes available for training school librarians in China. In South Korea, 79% of all respondents held BA in LIS, meanwhile 16% held MLIS degrees; and only a very small number of the practicing librarians held other non-library-related BA or MA degrees.³ On the contrary, Hong Kong, Korea and Taipei had the highest percentage of professionally-qualified (at graduate level) school librarians. Amongst the Hong Kong respondents, 48.6% of them had *Diploma in Teacher Librarianship*⁴; while 14.7% had MLIS.⁵ For Taipei alone, although only 6.3% had MLIS, over 22.9% of them had undertaken other short courses in LIS. Results indicated the demands for job-related qualifications at post-graduate level for practicing school librarians were least common in both Shanghai and Japan by comparison (see Table E). The reasons behind the lack of emphasis on job-related qualifications and training; the inadequacy in appropriate staff development programmes; and also the lack of interests in such programmes amongst the school librarians in China have already been pointed out by Wang and Wang (2001).

Age and Its Relations to Length of Professional Experience

A majority of the school librarians in Taipei were middle-aged or above, i.e., 39.8% of them were between the ages 41 to 50; while another 30.6% were between age 51 to 60. At the same time, over 71.4% of the practicing librarians had only up to 5 years of related experience. As shown in Tables C and D, we can conclude that a majority of them already had long experience as classroom teachers of other subjects, prior to becoming school librarians. This also explained why a majority of the school librarians in Taiwan already hold senior teacher positions. For Hong Kong, over 37.6% of the respondents aged between 41-50; and 41.3% of them had 11-plus years of experience. Being middle-aged, coupled with unpromising career paths might be the main cause for being doubtful about their career choice as school librarians - an issue which will be further discussed in the following sections (see Table P). In Japan, over 31% were between age 41 to 50; while 41.4% already had 11 or more years of experience. For both Shanghai and South Korea, a majority (57%) of them were between age 31 to 40. But for Shanghai alone, a majority of them (56.7%) had over 11 or more years of experiences, while South Korea, 72.2% of them had 6 to 10 years of experience. In summary, both Shanghai and Hong Kong had the largest groups of librarians with the longest length of job related experience (see Tables C & D).

³ A Korean researcher provided an explanation for the high number practicing school librarians holding job-related qualifications. According to the Article 21 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Laws* in South Korea, school librarians working in Korea should hold the one of the following qualifications:

- (a) Bachelor's degree majoring in library and information science
- (b) Certificate in school librarianship
- (c) Graduate-level degree (master's degree) majoring in library and information science

According to the Article 33, 34 and 35 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Laws* in South Korea, for anyone who possesses the above-listed qualifications, he/she may be considered eligible to work as a librarian at primary, middle, and high schools in South Korea.

⁴ *Diploma in Teacher Librarianship* (學校圖書館主任文憑) – programme offered by University of Hong Kong, School of Professional & Continuing Education (HKU-SPACE). Information available at: <http://hkuspace.hku.hk/prog/cert-dip-in-teacher-librarianship>

⁵ CHENG, Po-Chung (1991, p. 169) pointed out that, "teacher-librarians are regarded as member of the teaching team and paid the same as their counterparts in the teaching team. They may not be professionally trained in school librarianship, but they have to receive a 2-year in-service training course for the necessary training. The course is run on apart-time day release basis. After the completion of the course, certificates will be given for recognition purpose." - CHENG, Po-chung (1991) "Hong Kong." in Jean E. LOWRIE & Mieko NAGAKURA. (2nd ed.) *School Libraries: International Developments*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, p169.

Library Collections (AV & Printed Books)

Printed Book Collections – Taipei, Japan and Shanghai were the 3 regions with the highest percentages of libraries that had the largest printed-book collections. For Taipei, a majority (73.2%) of their libraries held over 25,000 titles; followed by Japan (58.9%); and Shanghai came third, with 53% of the libraries holding 25,000 or more printed titles (see Table F). **AV Collections** - at the same time, both Japan and Shanghai had the highest percentages of libraries with very small or no AV collections, i.e., a majority (36%) of libraries in Shanghai did not hold any AV titles at all. Whereas for Japan, close to 60% of the libraries held a maximum 100 AV titles. By comparison, Taipei had the highest percentage of libraries holding 600 or more AV titles (see Tables F & G). Despite their comparatively large (printed) collection size, it was apparent that not enough efforts were invested in promoting the usage of the library collections in both Japan and Shanghai. Large printed versus small AV collections; low circulation rates; being inactive in hosting reading programmes, and being a passive curriculum facilitator; shortage in library technologies, etc. – a combination of these factors suggested that the librarians in both Japan and Shanghai might be more conservative and behind in terms of their concepts in operating their libraries. The inadequacies of the school libraries in Japan and Shanghai will be further discussed in the following sections. In Hong Kong, only 24.8% of school libraries had 25,001 or more book titles of books; and 27.5% had 601 or more AV titles, but the circulation rates among the school libraries in Hong Kong ranked at the top⁶ amongst all 5 regions (see Tables F, G & I).

Circulation Activities

Circulation statistics could be used as indicators for determining the success of the library programmes and other related services implemented by the librarians. Results indicated Hong Kong had the largest group of libraries with most number of items borrowed each day. For Hong Kong, 23.9% of the respondents indicated that 81 to 120 library items were borrowed daily; and only 7.3% of them indicated that fewer than 20 items were borrowed daily. For South Korea, a majority (34.3%) reported that they had 51 to 80 items being borrowed per day; and only 3% said that they few than 20 items were borrowed daily. For both Hong Kong and Korea, the librarians being active as curriculum facilitators and reading programme coordinators might contribute directly to the high circulation rates amongst these 2 regions. For Taipei, 37.5% reported that 20 to 50 items were borrowed daily. Another reason for explaining the high circulation rates in Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan was that all these 3 regions had largest student populations (see Table Q). By contrast, circulation activities were the least active in both Shanghai and Japan. The results indicated that 59.4% in Shanghai and 58.2% of libraries in Japan had fewer than 20 library items borrowed per day. For Shanghai, being passive in implementing reading-incentive programmes, and also being behind in library technologies might be the main factor contributing to the extremely-low circulation rates. On the other hand, Japanese researchers reported that students in Japan tend to obtain their leisure reading materials directly from the bookstores and/or from the public libraries, instead of relying solely on their school libraries. In Japan, with the implementation of the “Reading and Literacy Promotion for Children Legislation / 子供の読書活動推進に関する法律” (2001), and also with fewer manpower and budget constraints, public libraries in Japan are comparably more active in hosting reading-incentive programmes than school libraries. At the same time, school libraries in Japan are meant to support the formal school curricula, instead of focusing on the promotion of leisure-reading interests amongst students (this might also explain why the AV collections amongst school libraries in Japan tend to be very small). Additionally, the publishing industry for children and teenage literature is very large and diverse. A large number of new and attractive young-adult fictions and teenage literature are being published in Japan every year. For these reasons, students would naturally prefer to go to the bookstore or public libraries

⁶ 23.9% of school libraries reported that an average 81 to 120 items were borrowed from the libraries by the students each day (see Table I).

instead - potentially causing such low circulation rates amongst school libraries in Japan. On the other hand, for the 3 regions that had more encouraging circulation statistics (Hong Kong, South Korea and Taipei), librarians tended to be more far more proactive in serving as curriculum facilitators, as well as reading-programme organizers. Such issues will be further discussed in the following sections (see Table I).

Technologies Available in Library

Allocating more resources to technologies in the school library often means forgoing resources elsewhere. Hence, it is often difficult for the school management to invest the 'right' and 'adequate' amount of technologies into the school library. At the same time, the amount of resources being invested could directly reflect whether the senior management regards the library as an integral component of students' formal learning. Ranking based on the amount of technologies available amongst all 5 regions is as follows (see Table H):

(1) Taipei, (2) Hong Kong, (3) South Korea, (4) Shanghai & (5) Japan

For Taipei, Hong Kong, and South Korea, the amount of technologies were more or less proportional to the degree of recognitions and supports from the principals and other teaching staff (see Tables H & N). Whereas for Japan and Shanghai, both regions ranked at the bottom under this category. The high level of discontent expressed by the librarians (in Japan and Shanghai), coupled with the availability of limited technologies suggested that a majority of the school administrations in these 2 regions failed to see the library as one of the core curriculum elements (see Table N). Results also indicated the regions with libraries that were resourceful in technologies - all tended to have high circulation statistics (see Tables H & I). The existing data cannot prove that library technologies and circulation rates were factors interrelated to each other; however, according to the researchers, libraries with better and more up-to-date technologies tend to face few difficulties in attracting young student users.

Reading Incentive Programmes

One of the core duties of a school librarian is to constantly develop effective strategies to make maximum use of the library resources available to stimulate and encourage the students to become self-motivated readers (Glick, 2005 ; Trinkle, 2009). Ranking based on the average rating scores in the reading programme category is as follow (see Table J):

(1) Taipei, (2) Korea, (3) Hong Kong, (4) Shanghai, (5) Japan

The results indicated that the circulation rates went directly hand-in-hand with the amount of reading promotions carried out by the librarians; and not necessary related to the collection size. It was apparent that the regions (Taipei, South Korea, and Hong Kong) with librarians who were more active as reading-programme promoters and curriculum facilitators, tended to have higher circulation rates. On the other hand, for the remaining 2 regions (Shanghai and Japan), their librarians are the least active in reading-promotion activities, and their circulation statistics therefore appeared to be very discouraging (see Tables I & J).

Curriculum Facilitator Duties versus Support / Understanding of Teachers / Principals

According to the Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning of the Texas Administrative Code (2006), "The certified school librarian is an educational leader who promotes the integration of curriculum, resources, and teaching strategies..."⁷ Being able to serve as an effective curriculum facilitator or whether one has been given the opportunities to perform the role effectively has a lot to do with whether one's work is being valued or not. The regions (Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taipei) with librarians that were active as curriculum facilitators, tended to have more support, recognition, and understanding from the principals and other teachers (see Tables M and N). On the other hand, both Japan and Shanghai ranked at the

⁷ *Texas Administrative Code*. (n.d.) Available at:
[http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=7&ch=239&rl=55](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=7&ch=239&rl=55)

bottom, in terms of the amount of work carried out as curriculum facilitators, as well as the degree of support exerted by their colleagues.

Guidelines for Collaborations Between Teachers and Librarians

For all 5 regions, only very small percentages of libraries had written guidelines for collaborations between teachers and librarians (see Table O). Having very experienced librarians, who have been serving for 11 or more years still did not mean the written policies would be automatically developed (see Table D). It should be highlighted that for the regions with libraries that were high in circulation rates, active reading programmes, and resourceful in technologies, their successes seemed to be built upon good mutual understanding between the librarians and the teachers/principals, rather than on any written policies. For example, for Taipei, Hong Kong, and Korea – all 3 regions were comparatively successful in the above areas, they either had no written guidelines, or the collaborations were based solely on the personal choices between the 2 parties (see Table O). Despite of the absence of any written guidelines, principals and teachers in Taipei, Hong Kong, and South Korea were comparatively more supportive and understanding towards the work carried out by the librarians (see Table N). In other words, successful collaborations between the teachers and librarian did not need to be formulated in accordance to well-written guidelines; on the contrary, having supportive teachers and principals seemed to be a more influential factor in this regard. Based on the same assumption, being a capable curriculum facilitator and an effective reading programme organizer might also be the best way to earn support and recognitions from the principals and other teachers.

Degrees of Job Satisfaction

With reference to the comparison of job satisfaction amongst the school librarians, ranking based on the average rating scores collected from question no. 39 is as follows (see Table P):

(1) Taipei, (2) South Korea, (3) Hong Kong, (4) Japan, (5) Shanghai

For Taipei, South Korea, and Hong Kong, it was apparent that the degree of job satisfaction amongst the librarians was directly proportional to the amount of support and recognition received from the other teachers and the school administration. In addition, their job satisfaction also corresponded directly to their level of involvement in the school curriculum and the other reading incentive programmes (see Table P).

Results indicated that librarians in both Japan and Shanghai suffered from the lowest level of satisfaction amongst all 5 regions. As reported by the Japan Library Association (JLA), in Japan, the problem that *“most school librarians do not receive any exemption from their regular duties as classroom subject teachers.”*⁸ Supportive to Nakamura’s findings (2012), the school libraries in Japan are run by the teachers and not professional librarians on a part-time basis.⁹ This is in accordance with the results (open-ended answers) collected in Japan – out of all 56 responses collected, 21 respondents indicated that their library work had to suffer, due to the unreasonable amount of ‘classroom teaching’ they had to undertake, or other teachers without formal training had to serve as librarians at the same time... According to Nakamura (2012, p. 12), “most of the schools of more than 12 classrooms have shisho-kyoyu; over 60% of all the elementary and middle schools, and over 80% of high

⁸ Japan Library Association (JLA). [Online] Available at: <http://www.jla.or.jp/portals/0/html/libraries-e.html#general>

⁹ According to Nakamura (2012) *“Although many certifications are issued, a full-time “shisho-kyoyu” is hired by only some private schools where the financial conditions are very good and the idea of the school libraries are compatible with school’s educational ideals, such as the schools influenced by American missionaries. The field cannot even count the number of full-time “shisho-kyoyu”. Most “shisho-kyoyu” teach a class in elementary school and a subject in the junior and senior high schools, taking care of the classroom as well. Therefore, “gakko-shisho”, who might have certification of “shisho” and/or “shisho-kyoyu”, might be hired as part-time clerical staff to take care of the school libraries and students in the libraries. In sum, the type of school library personnel is too uneven between the schools, and it seems that none of them is recognized as an established professionals.”* – NAKAMURA, Yuriko. (2012) “Overview of Youth-Serving Libraries in Japan.” in FARMER, Lesley S. (Ed.) *Youth-Serving Libraries in Japan, Russia, and the United States*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., pp. 19.

schools have shisho-kyoyu. In reality, however, most of the shisho-kyoyu are actually full-time homeroom/subject teachers and do not have enough time to spare for the school library activities. Gakko-shisho do most of the work in the school libraries, although many of them are underpaid and are not treated as professional educational staff members nor are respected adequately as professionals.”

With reference to Shanghai, Zhan, Zhou and Liu (2012) identified the 3 key factors that affected the job dissatisfaction of the school librarians in Hunan Province, China; and they are: (1) low / decreased sense of achievement, (2) job burnout and (3) being cynical about their librarian work, due to low occupational status and lack of recognitions. Although Zhan's research (2012) focused only on librarians in a different province in China, some of the issues addressed may help further explain the dissatisfaction expressed amongst school librarians in Shanghai.

For Hong Kong, under question no. 39, respondents were asked, “*If you had different career choice, would you still want to work as teacher librarian?*” For this sub-question alone, Hong Kong received the lowest average rating score amongst all 5 regions. Such low score was not proportional to the degree of satisfaction towards their own job and the working environment amongst the school librarians. Some of the open-ended answers from question no. 38 might provide explanations on this situation in Hong Kong. When the respondents were asked, “*What changes might be helpful in fulfilling the roles of Teacher Librarians?*” 7 respondents ‘complained’ that their career paths were not optimistic. In addition, although they were employed as full-time librarians, many of them had too many other non-library-related subject courses to teach. For example, one respondent said that, “*Teacher librarians in Hong Kong have too many lessons.*” Such comments support the findings from a separate survey carried out by the Hong Kong researchers in spring 2013 - out of all 116 secondary school librarians surveyed in Hong Kong, only 31.9% reported that they had no other subject courses to teach. Whereas the remaining 63.7% indicated that they had to teach at least one to 6 other subject courses, while the remaining 4.3% reported that they had to perform other administrative duties.

Education Policies & Impacts on School Library Programmes

All 5 regions have policies or guidelines developed by either their respective Ministry of Educations or the Education Bureaus - offering standards for guiding the school administrations and the librarians on the basic setup and running a school library.¹⁰

¹⁰ National School Library Association (Japan) (1999) *Standards and Guidelines for School Library Resources and Facilities* (全国学校図書館協議会制定 - 学校図書館施設基準). Available at: <http://www.j-sla.or.jp/material/kijun/post-38.htm>

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology – Japan. (1993) *School Library Book Collections - Standard Charts* (学校図書館図書標準). Available at: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/sports/dokusyo/hourei/cont_001/016.htm

Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan). (2003). *General Principles and Guidelines for Management Senior School Libraries in Taiwan* (高級中學圖書館設立及營運基準) Available: <http://www.lac.org.tw/law/documents/01/7112811103771.pdf>

Shanghai City. *Guidelines for Implementing Elementary and Secondary School Libraries in Shanghai*. (上海市《中小学图书馆(室)规程》) Available at: <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/e8a47a1052d380eb62946dd5.html>

Hong Kong Education Bureau. (2009) *Code of Aide for Secondary Schools – School Librarian Section*, pp. 32-33. Available at: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/sch-admin/regulations/codes-of-aid/Replacement%20of%20Appendix%202.pdf>

Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong Education Bureau. (2002) *Quality Learning and Teaching Resources and School Library Development - Bringing about Effective Learning*. Available at: https://cd.edb.gov.hk/basic_guide/beguideeng0821/chapter07.html#top

Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong Education Bureau. (2002) *School Library Services: Learning How to Learn* (學校圖書館服務-學會學習：學校圖書館服務支援學與教) Available at: [rvcies/teaching-resources/supporting-learning-and-teaching-through-sch-lib-services/index.html](http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/sch-admin/regulations/codes-of-aid/Replacement%20of%20Appendix%202.pdf)

Common to all 5 regions, these guidelines highlight the expected functions of the school library, as well as the role and minimum qualifications expected of a school librarian. Despite the guidelines in all 5 regions clearly state all schools are expected to be equipped with libraries, such guidelines only indicate that school libraries “should/need” (to) be managed by fully-qualified professionals – implying that it is not obligatory for schools to hire qualified librarians to administer the school libraries professionally after all. In addition, for some regions, the guidelines indicate that at the school-level, it is up to the individual principals to ‘decide’ who will be ‘suitable/qualified’ for the school librarian job; or the school librarians would develop the library programmes under the direct leadership of the principals. For that reason, the support and understanding of the principal play a crucial role in the implementation of effective library programmes. According to the feedback given by a practicing school librarian in Hong Kong, *“Compared with other non-academic subjects, such as P.E., home economics, and art and design, etc., it is almost a “must” to have the appropriate qualifications to undertake these subjects. In addition, there are many health and safety regulations concerning the students that these teachers must observe carefully. In the case of teaching music, one would need to be able to play the piano and teach basic music theory. On the contrary, many principals do not always think that it is necessary to hire a qualified professional to manage the school library full-time – for the reason that the library circulation operations and book displays could be easily managed by someone with minimal training or job-related qualifications – in their opinions, no special training and skills are involved. Even when you have someone who is not so skilled in cataloguing (e.g., assigning wrong classification numbers or subject headings to the book items), or not so active in reading promotion, it would only mean that the students might take longer time to retrieve the book, or more students would go to play sports, instead of using the school library – the library itself could still be fully operational, and yet without causing any disruptions to students’ academic learning and safety after all. In many principal’s opinions, the school library is seen as an ‘add-on facility’ for the extra-curricular activities, and almost never contributes directly to the core curriculum...”*

Discussions of Findings

From a global perspective, although, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Osaka are generally regarded as international cities, unfortunately, librarians in these regions did not enjoy a comparable level of recognition and support from the teachers and principals as their counterparts. Although both Shanghai and Japan had the highest percentage of schools with the largest collections of printed books, librarians in these 2 regions seemed to be lagging behind in many areas. For example, librarians in these 2 regions were very inactive in serving as reading programme and curriculum facilitators. In terms of number and the types of library-related technologies available, both Shanghai and Japan ranked at the bottom. Also the teachers and principals in these 2 regions were the least supportive. Such negative attitudes might be caused by their lack of understanding or not valuing the pedagogical potential of the school librarians regardless of the lack of adequate school facilities and personnel. The major difference was that formal job-training programmes for practicing school librarians were simply absent in China. Whereas in Japan, certificate programmes are widely available; unfortunately, employment opportunities were given to a very small number of fully-certified school librarians (Nakamura 2012).

The findings from Japan and Shanghai are support the results reported by De Vita (2002) and Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle (2005), that a large number of school libraries are understaffed, underfunded, and underutilized. They often become the first victims of budget cuts made by school administrators, as many of them do not understand the potential benefits of school libraries and librarians. Such negative factors might have explained the low degree of job satisfaction amongst the school librarians, as well as their overall working environment as a whole. In fact, the negative influences of exam-centric education on high

school students in China and Japan were pointed out by Kirkpatrick and Zhang (2011); Simon (2000) and McVeigh (1995)¹¹. Consequently, materials not directly related to public examinations are normally treated as 'out of syllabus' and are not worthwhile to study. As a result, students are drilled to learn by rote memorization. For that reason, the school library and enquiry-based learning have almost no role to play in the overall curriculum.

Chinese researchers further explained that school libraries are highly undervalued amongst school principals in Shanghai, since they do not contribute directly to the formal curriculum. The libraries are normally seen as an 'add-on' facility that the school could easily 'live without'. In addition, school librarians are often treated as 'second-tier' teaching staff, meaning that employment terms and conditions (e.g., without work bonuses and poor career path, etc.) are not comparable with other regular subject teachers. For such reasons, it is almost impossible to recruit MLIS graduates to work as school librarians in Shanghai. Finally, many subject teachers are assigned or transferred to take up the school libraries without having any interests or professional qualifications/training in library work, with reasons ranging from poor health conditions to favouring a less stressful job before retirement. A combination of such factors have resulted highly-unfavourable working conditions and negative attitudes amongst school librarians in Shanghai.

Being a former British colony, Hong Kong's educational development more or less followed the global trends of educational reforms – this is reflected in the high percentage of practicing school librarians possessing postgraduate diplomas / certificates in teacher librarianship. Ironically, fully-certified librarians were unable to devote full-time to library work, as many of them had to teach other non-library-related subject courses. Poor career path was another major factor that seriously discouraged the working morale amongst the school librarians.

Reasons Behind Successful School Library Programmes in Taipei & South Korea

As explained by the Taiwanese researcher, with the implementation of the library legislation for senior high schools (高中圖書館設立及營運基準) in Taiwan, everyone is expected to have undergone some kind of formal or informal training before one is assigned to serve as a school librarian (see Table E). In addition, there is the Senior School Librarians Support Group (高中職圖書館輔導團) set up by the Taiwan Ministry of Education.¹² This Support Group receives generous funding annually from the Taiwanese Government for organizing training and staff development programmes on a regular basis for improving the overall professional competence amongst the senior school librarians in Taiwan. Such training programmes are well-received and the attendance is usually very high. In order to raise and unify the standards of the school library services, the Support Group has also developed an operational manual (高中圖書教師手冊) for senior school librarians in Taiwan to follow. Most importantly, as mentioned in the previous section, school librarians are privileged positions in Taiwan – as many of them already senior teachers or subject leaders. Being a subject leader also means that they could focus entirely on their library duties. For such reasons, many teachers are willing to serve as school librarians with much joy and enthusiasm, which eventually led to quality programmes being carried out by the school librarians in Taipei.

Research findings reflected that school library programmes in South Korea also excelled, and ranked second in many areas. According to Korean researcher's explanation, during the last decade, the Ministry of Education¹³ and Human Resources Development¹⁴ invested

¹¹ MCVEIGH, Brian. (1995) *The Formalized Learning Style of Japanese Students*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Japan Association of Language Teachers (21st Nagoya, Japan, November 1995)

¹² Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan) – Homepage. Available at: <http://english.moe.gov.tw/>

¹³ Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea – Homepage. Available at: <http://english.moe.go.kr/enMain.do>

60 billion won for a 5-year (2003-2007) strategic plan for revitalizing the school libraries in South Korea. Such a 'revitalization plan' resulted in significant improvements in the overall functions and services amongst school libraries throughout South Korea. And such improvements included the following:

- Significant expansion of book collections for school libraries
- Increased recognitions of the school libraries' pedagogical potentials – by actively engaging the school librarians in the design and teaching of the formal curriculum.
- Increased parent, family and community involvements in different school library programmes (Kim, 2012 ; Kwak, 2006 ; Noh, 2007).¹⁵

Conclusion

Chan (2008, p. 15) pointed out that “*good school library programmes are linked to higher academic achievement in students.*” Unfortunately, ignorance of the school librarian profession appears to be a universal issue and major problems identified included a lack of resources, lack of time, lack of certification programmes / training opportunities, lack of recognitions towards school librarians' qualifications, lack of understanding and supports of amongst the principals and teachers. The results from Hong Kong, Korea, and Taipei are supportive to that of findings of (Church, 2010; Hartzell, 2002; Haycock, 1999; Miller, 2005; Shannon, 2009) - the attitudes of the teachers and principals are the deciding factors of the library services in schools. Large library collections would not automatically lead to high circulation rates; on the other hand, instructional interventions, active participation in the curriculum and reading programmes of the school librarians were more influential factors in this regard. Optimistic career paths, compatible professional status, well-matched employment terms and conditions, and positive attitudes and support from school principals and teachers are no doubt the most important factors contributing to job satisfaction of the school librarians, regardless of the regions. Meanwhile, job satisfaction and the quality of library programmes are to some extent interrelated to each other.

Readers need to be aware that the survey response rates in Japan were very low (did not meet the minimum 100-response quota). In addition, for Shanghai 39% of the survey respondents were elementary school librarians – a combination of such factors might have affected the validity and reliability of the overall comparison amongst the 5 regions. Findings from Japan and Shanghai indicated that there was a serious lack of library usage tradition within the school community. In these 2 regions, results also reflected that teachers and principals not familiar with the range and level of services that can be provided by the school librarians. The findings of the survey might be discouraging for certain regions, but they are important for LIS research – as results of this study will no doubt provide the school administrations and the stakeholders a better understanding of the importance of job satisfaction amongst the school librarians. It is unwise to remain unchanged and keep our focus on competing for excellent public examination results. As a result, we should voice our concerns that their roles and status have been neglected by the authorities and stakeholders.

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Appendix 1

Table A. Questionnaire Survey – Responses Collected.

School Types	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Elementary / Primary Schools	0 (0.0%)	39 (39.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Secondary Schools	109 (100.0%)	61 (61.0%)	100 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	24 (41.4%)
Senior High Schools	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	93 (93.9%)	31 (53.4%)
Others	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (6.1%)	1 (1.7%)
Unknown	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2 (3.4%)
Total Responses Collected	109	100	100	99	58

Table B. Gender.

Gender	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Male	24 (22%)	11 (11%)	16 (16%)	48 (48.5%)	17 (29.3%)
Female	85 (78%)	89 (89%)	84 (84%)	51 (51.5%)	41 (70.7%)
Total Responses	109	100	100	99	58

Table C. Age Groups Amongst School Librarians.

Age Groups	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
20 – 30	14 (12.8%)	6 (6.0%)	21 (21.0%)	3 (3.1%)	5 (8.6%)
31 – 40	31 (28.4%)	57 (57.0%)	57 (57.0%)	25 (25.5%)	17 (29.3%)
41 – 50	41 (37.6%)	26 (26.0%)	17 (17.0%)	39 (39.8%)	18 (31%)
51 – 60	23 (21.1%)	11 (11.0%)	5 (5.0%)	30 (30.6%)	17 (29.3%)
60 or more	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.7%)
Total Responses	109	100	100	98	58

Table D. Length of Experience as School Librarian.

Length of Experiences	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Up to 5 years	41 (37.6%)	17 (17.5%)	16 (16.4%)	70 (71.4%)	20 (34.5%)
6 - 10 years	23 (21.1%)	25 (25.8%)	70 (72.2%)	18 (18.4%)	14 (24.1%)
11 years or more	45 (41.3%)	55 (56.7%)	11 (11.3%)	10 (10.2%)	24 (41.4%)
Total Responses	109	97	97	98	58

Table E. Job-Related Qualifications (some of the respondents chose more than one answers).

Types of Qualifications	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Diploma in teacher librarianship ¹⁶	53 (48.6%)	NA	N/A	7 (7.3%)	N/A
Grad. Diploma in LIS	8 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	N/A	15 (15.6%)	N/A
BA in LIS	14 (12.8%)	2 (2.0%)	79 (79.0%)	9 (9.4%)	5 (8.6%)
MA in LIS	16 (14.7%)	3 (3.1%)	16 (16.0%)	6 (6.3%)	2 (3.4%)
Other MA	N/A	0 (0.0%)	9 (9.0%)	6 (6.3%)	14 (2.4%)
Other BA	N/A	0 (0.0%)	7 (7.0%)	2 (2.1%)	34 (58.6%)
Short courses in LIS (less than 6 months)	5 (4.6%)	15 (15.3%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (22.9%)	N/A
With BA & practical experiences, but with NO related certificates/diploma in school librarian	0 (0.0%)	63 (64.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	N/A
Others	13 (11.9%)	15 (15.3%)	7 (7.0%)	43 (44.8%)	5 (8.6%)
Total Responses	109	98	100	96	58

Table F. Size of Printed Book Collections.

Collection Sizes (titles)	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Up to 6,000	4 (3.7%)	5 (5.0%)	1 (1.0%)	4 (4.1%)	1 (1.8%)
6,001 - 10,000	7 (6.4%)	3 (3.0%)	16 (16.0%)	7 (7.2%)	1 (1.8%)
10,001 - 15,000	16 (14.7%)	8 (8.0%)	37 (37.0%)	2 (2.1%)	4 (7.1%)
15,001 - 25,000	55 (50.5%)	31 (31.0%)	45 (45.0%)	13 (13.4%)	17 (30.4%)
25,001 / more	27 (24.8%)	53 (53.0%)	0 (0.0%)	71 (73.2%)	33 (58.9%)
Total Responses	109	100	99	97	56

Table G. Size of AV Collections (e.g., CDs, DVDs, audiotapes...).

Collection Sizes (titles)	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
None	3 (2.8%)	36 (36.0%)	4 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (15.5%)
Up to 100	27 (24.8%)	23 (23.0%)	32 (32.3%)	10 (10.3%)	33 (56.9%)
101-300	23	17	37	9	2

¹⁶ Diploma in teacher librarianship – this qualification applies to Hong Kong only.

	(21.1%)	(17.0%)	(37.4%)	(9.3%)	(3.4%)
301-600	26 (23.9%)	8 (8.0%)	16 (16.2%)	20 (20.6%)	4 (6.9%)
601 or more	30 (27.5%)	18 (18.0%)	10 (10.1%)	58 (59.8%)	10 (17.2%)
Total responses	109	100	99	97	58

Table H. Number & Range of Technologies Available.

Types of Technology	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Automated system	97	88	95	82	48
PC stations	82	68	84	91	51
Photocopiers	84	17	47	88	32
Printers	93	94	96	90	47
Scanners	70	30	39	73	20
TV sets	29	29	37	48	15
DVD players	47	12	62	72	21
Projectors	41	16	67	72	11
Security system	26	31	16	31	6
RFID	4	5	7	4	4
Internet (wired)	75	94	88	81	43
WiFi	65	46	13	80	15
Interactive Whiteboard	3	6	13	19	1
Laptops	27	1	5	28	16
iPads	11	0	1	20	4
Other software	17	5	7	31	11
Total	771	542	677	910	345

Table I. Average Number Items (Books & Other Resources) Borrowed / Day.

No. of Items Borrowed / Day	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Less than 20 items / day	8 (7.3%)	57 (59.4%)	3 (3.0%)	12 (12.5%)	32 (58.2%)
20 - 50 items / day	29 (26.6%)	25 (26%)	32 (32.3%)	36 (37.5%)	10 (18.2%)
51 - 80 items / day	35 (32.1%)	4 (4.2%)	34 (34.3%)	17 (17.7%)	5 (9.1%)
81 - 120 items / day	26 (23.9%)	9 (9.4%)	16 (16.1%)	17 (17.7%)	4 (7.3%)
121 or more items / day	11 (10.1%)	1 1.0%	14 (14.1%)	14 (14.6%)	4 (7.3%)
Total Responses	109	96	99	96	55

Table J. Types of Reading Incentive Programmes Carried out by the School Librarian (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Types of Reading Programmes	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Conduct book talks & reading aloud	3.13	3.05	3.11	3.43	1.64
Make reading lists for students	3.06	3.28	3.57	3.61	2.96
Organize author visits	2.92	1.72	2.69	3.12	1.11

Organize reading competitions	3.27	2.65	2.75	3.42	1.68
Arrange books displays, book fairs, exhibitions	3.66	3.25	3.24	3.65	3.04
Organize reading weeks	2.76	2.56	3.32	3.44	2.40
Develop whole school reading programmes	3.39	2.27	3.72	3.38	2.18
Advise teachers about reading programmes	2.97	2.13	3.45	2.92	2.15
Run reading club for students	2.93	2.61	3.40	3.36	1.39
Total	28.09	23.52	29.25	30.33	18.55
Average	3.2	2.6	3.25	3.37	2

Table K. Collaborations with Other Teachers (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Types of Collaborations	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Administrative role	2.67	3.10	2.82	3.30	2.25
Collection management role	2.88	3.22	3.32	3.27	2.54
Info. specialist role	2.36	2.83	3.2	2.96	2.53
Promote reading role	3.39	3.20	3.5	3.59	2.52
Curriculum facilitator role	2.42	2.73	2.96	2.80	1.89
Teaching role	2.41	2.70	3.48	2.94	2.27
Technology expert / leader role	1.86	2.45	2.6	2.81	1.82
Total	17.99	20.23	21.88	21.67	15.82
Average	2.57	2.89	3.13	3.1	2.26

Table X. Administrative Duties Performed Daily (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Types of Administrative Duties	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Develop library mission, policies	3.49	3.67	3.37	3.69	3.09
Manage budget	3.74	3.63	3.88	3.50	3.41
Design library layout	3.36	2.85	3.07	3.38	2.90
Write annual reports	3.45	1.47	3.39	2.59	2.19
Inform teachers about library programs	3.38	3.33	3.46	3.47	3.12
Evaluate collections & services (statistics)	3.43	3.49	3.36	3.54	2.72
Plan / organize events	3.69	3.36	3.84	3.84	3.12
Publish newsletters	2.38	2.16	2.73	2.81	2.90
Represent school library on meetings	3.06	3.72	3.04	3.72	2.60
Represent library on meetings outside school	2.43	3.74	2.64	3.36	1.72
Total	32.41	31.42	32.78	33.9	27.77
Average	3.24	3.14	3.3	3.39	2.78

Table L. Teaching Duties Performed Daily (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Different Teaching Duties	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Plan / teach literacy skills separately from teachers	2.04	1.57	2.73	2.70	1.5
Plan / teach information literacy units with teachers	1.76	1.53	2.32	2.56	2.14
Assist teachers to develop teaching activities for IL skills	1.73	1.70	3.00	2.73	2.64
Assist teachers in teaching literacy skills	1.71	1.60	2.89	2.81	1.60
Assess students' work, separately from teachers	2.01	1.26	2.18	1.93	1.36
Assess students' work with teachers	1.97	1.20	2.10	1.98	1.46
Advise students in selection of resources	2.68	3.10	3.47	2.94	2.98
Advise teachers in identifying resources for teaching	2.41	2.07	3.41	2.79	2.79
Total	16.31	14.03	22.1	20.44	16.47
Average	2.0	1.75	2.76	2.56	2.1

Table M. Curriculum Facilitator Duties Performed Daily (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always)

	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Attend meetings of school curricular committee	2.62	1.72	1.81	3.17	1.45
Contribute to school curriculum - integration of info. literacy skills into curriculum	2.13	1.45	2.39	2.99	1.78
Collaborate with teachers to develop teaching units – to integrate info. literacy skills	2.00	1.58	1.97	2.79	1.41
Total	6.75	4.75	6.17	8.95	4.64
Average	2.25	1.58	2.06	2.98	1.55

Table N. Degree of Support & Understanding from Principals & Teachers (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Degree of Support & Understanding of Colleagues	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Teachers understand my role & support me in my work	3.03	2.98	3.18	3.45	2.61
Principle understands my role & supports	3.18	3.11	3.16	3.62	2.46

me in my work					
Total	6.21	6.09	6.34	7.07	5.07
Average	3.11	3.05	3.17	3.54	2.54

Table O. Average Rating Based on a 4-point Scale: from Never to Always.

Guidelines for Collaboration	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
YES - Written guidelines on collaborations between teachers & librarians	6	1	11	6	2
NO written guidelines on collaborations between teachers & librarians	51	90	18	67	17
Collaborations between teachers & teachers are personal choices/ efforts	41	6	64	17	38
Others	0	0	0	0	0
Total Responses	98	97	93	90	57

Table P. Job Satisfaction as School Librarian (Average rating based on a 4-point scale: from Never to Always).

Degree of Job Satisfaction	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Do you find your job as librarian to be difficult?	2.84	2.69	1.46	2.44	2.84
Do you find your job to be interesting / challenging?	3.27	2.96	3.53	3.43	3.34
Do you take pride in your work as librarian?	3.14	2.97	3.64	3.34	3.28
Are you happy / satisfied with your work?	3.22	3.08	3.54	3.33	3.29
Are you happy with overall working environment?	3.18	2.31	3.2	3.23	2.74
Do you think you can make a difference in students' learning & academic achievement?	3.08	3.15	3.37	3.28	2.95
If you had different career choice, would you still want to work as teacher librarian?	3.04	3.53	3.13	3.40	3.07
Do you think you can play important role in developing students' enquiry-based learning?	3.30	2.97	3.39	3.32	2.93
Total	25.07	23.66	25.26	25.77	24.44
Average	3.13	2.96	3.16	3.22	3.06

Table Q. Total Student Population.

Total No. of Students	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Pusan / Seoul	Taipei	Osaka / Tokyo
Up to 500	11 (10.1%)	36 (36.4%)	16 (16.1%)	3 (3.0%)	9 (15.5%)

501 – 800	14 (12.8%)	28 (28.3%)	22 (22.2%)	3 (3.0%)	20 (34.5%)
801 – 1,000	54 (49.5%)	13 (13.1%)	18 (18.2%)	9 (9.1%)	11 (19.5)
1,001 – 1,400	29 (26.6%)	13 (13.1%)	28 (28.3%)	15 (15.2%)	6 (10.3%)
1,401 or more	1 (0.9%)	9 (9.1%)	15 (15.2%)	69 (69.7%)	12 (20.7%)
Total Responses	109	99	99	99	58