

School librarians' anticipated support for students with SEN: using a Modified Grounded Theory Approach

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The purpose of this study is examining some suggestions on how school libraries can be involved in Special Needs Education in a helpful way. The Modified Grounded Theory Approach is used as the method for this study. In my analysis I focus on the change in perception of 19 school staff members with respect to changes in the school library function and factors for these changes. Based on the result the school librarian's anticipated four supports are suggested as follows: providing suitable materials that take into account students' situation, searching study by team teaching, supporting students' self-affirmation by sympathetic understanding, and educational support encouraging students' socialization.

students with SEN, school librarian's support, Modified Grounded Theory Approach

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is pursuing some concrete suggestions on how school libraries can be involved in Special Needs Education in a helpful way. I used the Modified Grounded Theory Approach to analyse the following themes: (1) To clarify how school staff members who don't evaluate students' academic levels, for example, nurse teachers, school counsellors, and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO), change their perceptions and gain a new recognition of school libraries through the contacts with school librarians. (2) To clarify the causes of the changes of their recognition. By clarifying these points, it should be highly attainable to obtain useful suggestions as to the roles of school librarians' support for students with SEN, and the important functions of school libraries.

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)'s survey¹ in 2002, the ratio of students who have remarkable difficulty in learning and behaviour in public elementary and junior high schools is 6.35%. In January 2004, as a part of the process of the supporting system for those students, the guideline (the experimental idea) was completed² and in April 2007, Special Needs Education was inserted in the School Education Law for the first time. In this new system, "Team support" is advocated as a whole school approach. However, people who are concerned with special

¹ MEXT. (2002). Tsujo no gakkyu ni zaiseikisuru tokubetsu na kyoikutekishien wo hitsuyotosuru jido seito ni kansuru zenkoku jittaiyousa kekka.

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/public/2002/021004c.htm. (access 2008/1/15).

² MEXT. (2003). *Tokubetsu shien kyoiku no arikata ni kansuru cyousakenkyu kyoryokusya kaigi*. Kongo no tokubetsu shien kyoiku no arikata ni tsuite (saisyuhokoku) 2003.3.28.

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa /shotou/018/toushin/030301a.htm. (access2008/1/15).

needs education do not have any ideas on how to utilize the school library as a team support tool.

Some school counsellors (SC) and nurse teachers pointed out that students with SEN move to the counsellor room, the nurse's room and the school library. However, a SC in junior high school mentioned that they don't seem to use those places with exactly the same feelings³. Under these circumstances, what kinds of characteristics do school libraries have?

In Japan, the School Library Law and the School Library Standard stipulated the roles of school libraries: (1) Contribution to the development of educational processes, fostering cultivation as one of the educational assisting systems, (2) Offering places where students are able to acquire the ability of utilizing information and train themselves to be life-long learners. Furthermore, the report of the 15th Central Educational Council in 1998-The future minds for the future generation, in the crisis of lost heart-mentions that it is vital to develop a favourable environment of school libraries in order that students can relax and enjoy reading there like the oasis of their hearts.

Then, how do school staff members actually recognize school libraries? By investigating this theme, it should be possible to clarify how school librarians are able to contribute to Special Needs Education, as one of the team assisting systems within the whole school function.

According to the survey on who school librarians can consult with easily in daily life, they enumerated nurse teachers, school counsellors, and Special Needs Educational Co-ordinators (Matsudo, 2006). They are staff members who do not evaluate students' academic levels. These staff members are inclined to be involved with students with SEN.

1.2 Terminology

1.2.1 Students with SEN

According to the concept of Special Needs Education proclaimed by the Ministry of Education, students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are impaired students, including LD, ADHD, Asperger's syndrome. However, the UNESCO's concept of it includes students who can't catch up with school life due to various reasons of impediment. As a result, the focus of this research includes not only LD, ADHD, and Asperger's syndrome, but also students who refuse to attend school, or can't adjust themselves to classes, reported by homeroom teachers and recognised by all teaching staff members as such.

1.2.2 Teachers who don't evaluate student's academic levels

Teachers who don't evaluate students' academic levels share some common characteristics. They are not in charge of grading or academic achievement, but they take care of students' sensitive and weak points. In this research, nursing teachers, school counsellors, and Special Needs Education co-ordinators are categorised as those teachers.

In addition, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) are in charge of planning and management for school commission or training programs, contacting with affiliated organisations, and having consultations with parents, etc., to promote Special Needs Education. What is required of them is the objective stance to establish Special Needs Education. It is not the actual teaching in itself. However, under the current dual assignment system, homeroom teachers are frequently in charge of Special Needs Education and hold some special knowledge for it. As the result, they are appointed as Special Needs Education

³ School counselors and nurse teacher's comments on the interview that covered the relationship between students with SEN and school library. These interviews were done from 2004, July to 2005, July.

co-ordinators too. It was the case in this research. Therefore, when they were interviewed, they were asked to respond as Special Needs Education co-ordinators.

2 Methodology

2.1 *The-analytically-focused-person*

2.1.1 *The Range*

The-analytically-focused-person is one of methodological terms originally proposed in M-GTA to facilitate coding and interpretation of data. In the Modified Grounded Theory Approach, the paradigm of the sampling is basically stipulated by research and analysis themes. The analysis theme of this research is to clarify staff member's process of recognition on changes within the school library system and the causal factors which contributed to these changes in the recognition. Because of the premise that the interaction between school librarians and those staff members could have influenced the changes, this research limited the range of the analysis to the staff members who have personal contacts with school librarians.

2.1.2 *The Process of Selection*

It was necessary to confirm whether school librarians had personal contacts with staff members and identify who they were. For this reason, I set up the three conditions: (1) School library education was firmly established at school by having a school librarian who can concentrate on library work, even though he or she is a part-time worker. (2) At the time (June 2004), the arrangement of Special Needs Education co-ordinators and SC was under way to promote the support system for it. (3) Although the main focus of this analysis is public schools, some private schools were included. The reason was to analyze opposite examples as required by the Modified Grounded Theory Approach.

Concerning the condition of each school library, I referred to Japanese journal like, "*Gakko Toshokan* (School Library)", "*Konnichi no Gakko Toshokan* (Today's School Library)", and "*Gakutoken News*". As for self-governing communities' supporting system for Special Needs Education, the material investigated and compiled by the Research Team of Special Needs Education on Self-Governing Communities was available. I used School Directory 2004 version for school data. I sent a letter to each principal in 11 cities like, Tsuruoka (1), Tsukuba (1), Saitama (1), Mitaka (2), Tokyo, Setagaya (1), Ichikawa (3), Urayasu (4), Funabashi (2), Osaka (1), Okayama (1). I had an interview with a school librarian. When I asked whether they had consulting partners or not, all of them answered "yes". Table 1 shows who they are.

Table 1 School Librarian's Consulting Partners

multiple answer

Consulting Partners	Administrators	Teacher Librarians	Homeroom Teachers	Nurse Teachers	School Counsellors	SENCO
N	4	3	9	9 (7)	7 (7)	6 (5)

() The number of analytical focused person

The positions of school librarian's consulting partners were varied, but teachers who don't evaluate students' academic levels were included. I asked to have an interview with them through their supervisors. Among these candidates, I selected 19 staff members who

consented to be recorded while they were interviewed as the focal persons of analysis. They were 7 nurse teachers, 7 SC, 5 Special Needs Education co-ordinators. These 19 staff members frequently use a library and have interactions with a librarian. Therefore, since the scope of analysis was limited to the focal persons of analysis who had favourable relations with librarians, it should be kept in mind that the results reflect a certain limited range of the focal object within the whole support system.

2.2 Collecting data

2.2.1 The Semi-structured interview

In order to reconstruct the interviewee's subjective theory about the theme of the issue under study I used semi-structured interviews. These interviews were held between July, 2004 and July, 2005. As a listener, I interviewed 19 participants who were analytically focused persons for an average of 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview retains the open quality of an unstructured interview, but is controlled by a list of questions and topics to be covered (Neitzschman, L.& Neitzschman,H.2002)

I set the semi-structured interview guide, which consists of open questions that interviewees can reply to freely. By using an interview guide for all interviewees, comparative data analysis will be available. In this study, I asked mainly with respect to the process of change in perceptions on school library and the factors related to this change in recognition, e.g. "first impression on school library", "present impression", "view point of the changing", and "reason of the changing". Furthermore, I also asked "personal opinion of school library support for students with SEN".

2.2.2 Participant observation

Acquired data assumed the proof of semantic interpretation through participant observation, which referred to two kinds of data. Firstly, the observation focused on two points as follows; 1. How do school library users that include students with SEN use the school library? 2. How does a school librarian support them? This observation was conducted before interview time. In this observation, I asked a casual query on using library situation for students with SEN with permission of school librarians. I also took pictures of students using the library situation and school libraries layouts as records. Secondly, I took a video on students' library situation as a school librarian's view in December, 2002.

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Modified Grounded Theory Approach

This study aimed to elicit the 19 school staff's recognition change and factors involving the school library resulting from the interaction with a school librarian. Therefore, I adopted the Grounded Theory as a methodology. There were three reasons to adopt this for my study. Firstly, it could be available to clarify the process of recognition change factors. Secondly, the theory could be presented by formulating concepts. Thirdly, this theory is available to be added to correction by practitioners who work in this field.

Furthermore, considering the data analysis, I used a Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA) which a Japanese sociologist Kinoshita, Yasuhito⁴ (2003) developed from the original Grounded Theory Approach proposed by Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A.L. in 1967 following their dispute in the early 1990s on form procedures. Especially, Glaser (1992) emphasized descriptive accuracy and conceptualized abstract of time, place and people

⁴ Kinoshita, Y. Ph.D. Professor and Dean Faculty of Sociology Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, Tokyo

against Strauss's publication in 1990. However, he did not show the coding method concretely.

GTA is a qualitative approach to generate a theory from data, and succeeding the basic characteristic of Glazer and Strauss original approach, M-GTA employed a coding method of its own. In order to code from data, Kinoshita adopted using an "analytical worksheet" and analyzing the block of meaning context. An "analytical worksheet" consists of concept name, concept name's definition, variation (data) and theoretical notes. Furthermore, concepts are regarded as the minimum unit of analysis to confirm the researcher's interpretation and emerging categories.

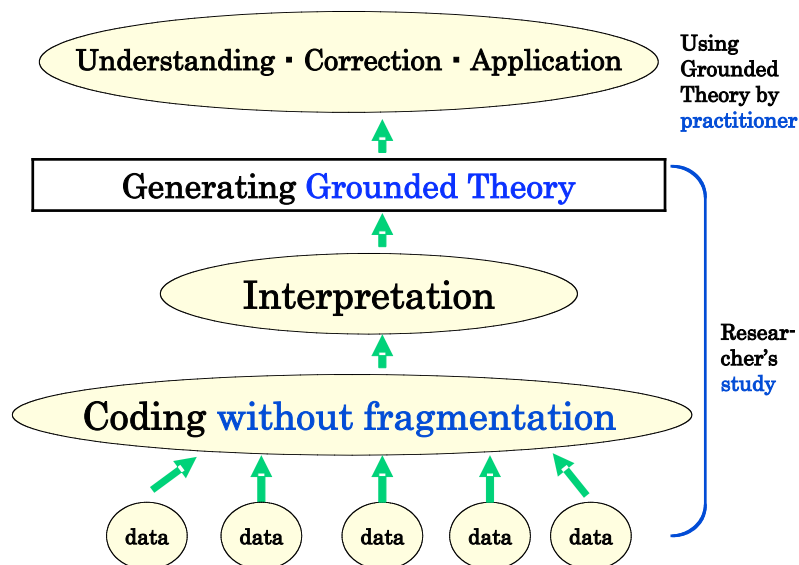


Figure1: Modified Grounded Theory Approach concept

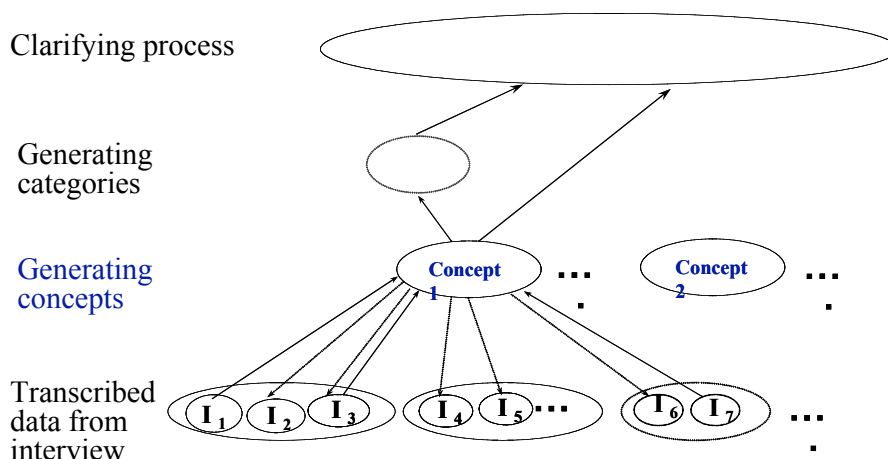


Figure2: Modified Grounded Theory Approach model

Kinoshita, Y. (2003). Grounded Theory Approach no Jissen. Tokyo: Kōbundō, p.184.

2.3.2 M-GTA Analyzing Procedures

M-GTA analyzing procedures are as follows:

- (1) To read all data.
- (2) To pick up one person's data, that includes a variety of topics. To focus on specific remarks and to fill in the variation section of the "analyzing worksheet 1".

- (3) To check similar remarks on the same topic. If you find similar remarks, fill them in the same variation section of the “analyzing worksheet 1”. If you don’t find similar remarks in the variation section, it won’t be a concept.
- (4) To avoid arbitrariness, you should check not only similar remarks but also remarks of an opposite opinion. If you find opposite opinions, fill them in the theoretical notes.
- (5) To generate the concept and name and define it. Consider the similar remarks in the variation section and opposite remarks in the theoretical notes of the “analyzing worksheet 1”. Regarding the other concepts, the same method applies.
- (6) To examine the relationship between individual concepts according to the aspect of the analyzing theme, including the causal relation. The category can explain two or more concepts as one settlement. The process is to be able to explain the flow of the movement clarified according to the analyzing theme.

Table2: Analyzing worksheet

concept name	
concept name's definition	
variation (data: block of meaning context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ <p>(you can add similar remarks from data)</p>
Theoretical notes	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Kinoshita, Y. (2003). Grounded Theory Approach no Jissen. Tokyo: Kōbundō, p.188.

In this research, I got supervision from the member of Modified Grounded Theory society at the stage of the research plan, the concept generation work, and the analysis result. The analysis was conducted originally in Japanese and shifted to English.

3 Result

3.1 Explanation of the results

Results shown here based on M-GTA centers on interpretation of qualitative data. First, the overall flow of the conceptual diagram, which shows the result of the analysis, is explained using concept names and category names. Here, < >, represents concept name, gothic font represents category name and () represents analytically focused person by numbers. As the abbreviations, n. is used for school nurse teachers, sen is used for special educational coordinators, and, sc is used for SCs.

3.2 Overview

Table 4 shows the list of processes, categories and concepts, and figure 3 is the overview which shows the process and factor of change in recognition of school library. As shown in the analysis procedure in 2.3.2, this overview was created through making categories based on the relationship between concepts and then analyzing relationship between these categories.

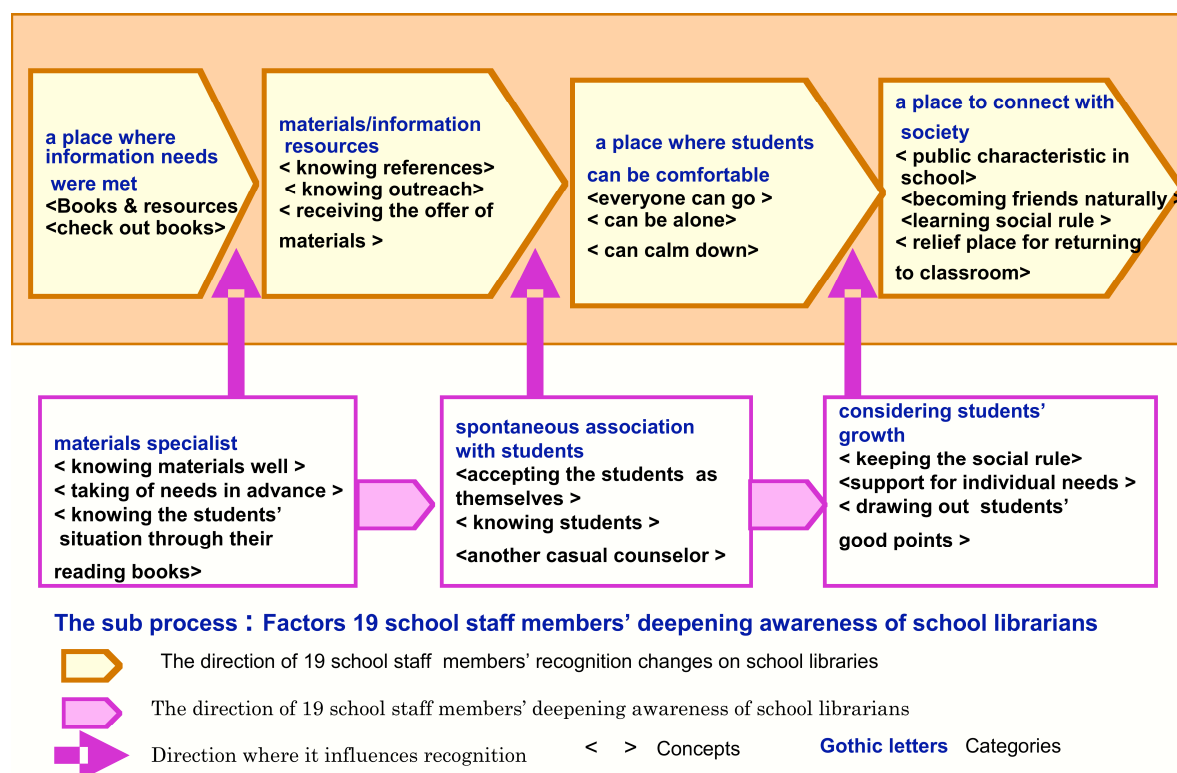


Figure 3: the process and factor of change in recognition of school library

These nineteen school staff members who do not evaluate students' academic score level have deepened their awareness of the school librarian's function by their interactions with school librarians. The sub process of their deepening awareness of school librarians influenced the process of change in their recognition of school library. Specifically, these school staff members used to have the impression of school library as **a place where information needs were met** when they had no relationship with the school library. In this category, it included two concepts of < there are books > and < check out books >.

However, they began to use school library after having opportunities to accompany students with special educational needs. Then, after receiving school library services, they began to regard the school librarians as **materials specialists**. In this category, it included three concepts of < knowing materials well >, < taking of needs in advance > and < knowing the situation of students through their reading books>. Also, they regarded school library as a place that provides **materials/information resources**. In this category, it included three concepts of < knowing references>, < knowing outreach> and < receiving the offer of materials>.

Next, these nineteen school staff members were attracted school librarian's spontaneous **association with students** with special educational needs. In this category, it included three concepts of <accepting the students as they are>, < knowing students > and <another casual counselor >. Thus, these nineteen school staff members began to recognize the school library as **a place where students can be comfortable**, in addition to school library's original function. In this category, it included three concepts of <everyone can go >, <can be alone> and <can calm down >.

Furthermore, these nineteen school staff members noticed school librarians' stance of **considering students' growth**. In this category, it included three concepts of < keeping the social rule>, <support for individual needs > and < drawing out of students' good points >. Moreover, these nineteen school staff members recognized the school library as not only a

place where students can be comfortable but also as a place to connect with society through the school librarians' stance of considering students' growths. In this category (a place to connect with society), it included four concepts of <public characteristic in school>, <becoming friends naturally>, <learning social rule> and <relief place for returning to classroom>.

4 Discussion

4.1 School library's characteristics through perception change result

The analyzing result of the process of the perception change of these school staff members towards the school library and the sub-process of the attitude change towards school librarians who bring in these effects has been shown. From this result, the three characteristics of school library that these school staff members noticed are as follows:

Firstly, the school library services carried out by school librarians are advice on books, reference and outreach. These services also enrich the functions of school library. This recognition indicates that these school staff members recognize school librarians as materials specialist.

Secondly, the school library is also a healing place where students can refresh their mind naturally. The school library is a place where everybody can go. One can be alone or talk to others if he/she wants. It is a place where people can adjust their social relations. This recognition connects to the stance of having a **spontaneous association with students**. This point is indicated by the recognition of school librarians' <accepting student as they are> by these school staff members.

Thirdly, the school library is also a place where students can communicate with others and in this way foster their sociability. The school library is a place where students can develop their social skills by activities like borrowing, returning books. Through relations with those who are <becoming friends naturally>, school library can be a <relief place for returning to classroom>. This recognition indicates the recognition of school librarians' response to each student with SEN accordingly and their stance of **considering students' growth**.

For example, school librarians offer materials that correspond to the students' level of developmental in research work. They also make students have a sense of responsibility by giving them jobs to do in the school library. By looking at the results, school library support through librarians can be expected from the following three respects. Figure 4 shows the school librarians' anticipated support.

4.2 School librarian's anticipated support

4.2.1 Providing suitable materials, which take into account a students' situation

By contact with visitors who come to the school library, librarians can find a different aspect of students that teachers and other school staff members cannot find. This enables librarians to understand students' conditions and needs, thus they can offer appropriate materials that fit the individual development and challenge of students. In this way, librarians can support students' development. Knowing what a student in bullying or a truant student worries about, librarians might be able to offer materials to solve their problems according to his/her inside needs. Concerning this point, this research illustrates school librarians' anticipated support as offering appropriate materials by understanding students' potential

needs in advance. The characteristics of librarians of <knowing materials well>, <knowing students> and <taking of needs in advance > make it possible.

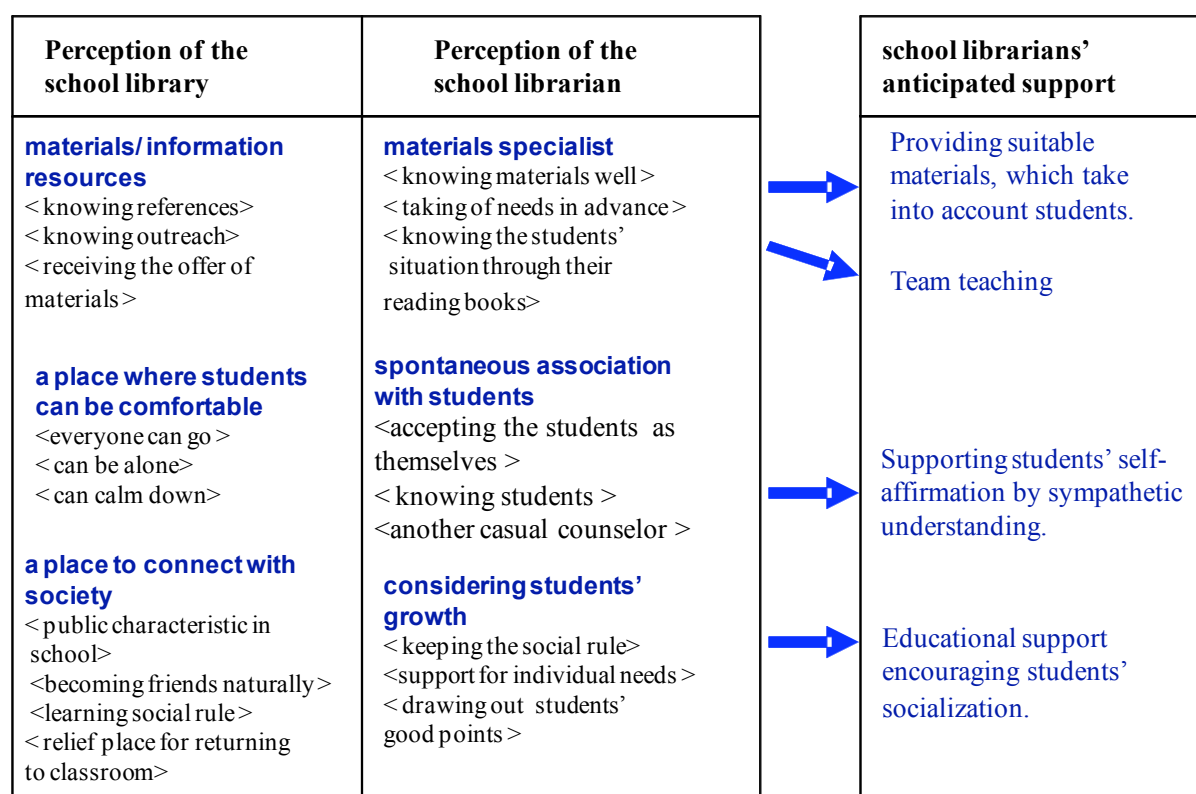


Figure 4 School librarians' anticipated support

4.2.2 Searching study by team teaching

School librarians can support for students with SEN as team teaching partners of teachers. Especially, they can support students who do not know what to do when they do searching study (besides tell them how to use the library). Through individual support by librarians, students with SEN learn a searching skill step by step and solve problems by themselves.

Kuhlthau (2004) points out that a pedagogical approach that can develop adequately all people's needs and ability to utilize library is necessary. A five-level model is shown for the Mediators who support information search and users education. The fifth level is "counselor". "Counselor" aims to help learners solve problems by themselves, while attending learners and having an overall interaction with them.

4.2.3 Supporting students' self-affirmation through sympathetic understanding

When facing students, school librarians <accept students as they are > and offer service from students' perspectives. As an extension, only listening to child students' trivial consultation and complaints can blow away students' gloomy feelings. Miyashita and Ishikawa(2005) define "one's own place" that students can feel mental peacefulness, be treated in their true light, and be treasured their self-value (p. 784). When we look at the results from this definition, it can be found that librarians' sympathetic understanding support of students helps school library to become students' own place. However, since there is someone at the place, students start to utilize school library for multiple purposes.

In addition, in the research field of library information science, discussion on school librarians' counseling mind is seldom heard as far as I know. However, the seven SCs whom

I interviewed are flexible about school staff members' involvement of students' matters and think it as school resource. In fact, from the result of the concept of <knowing students>, it is indicated that school librarians can also become advisors of school nurse teachers and SC since they know about students' other aspects that are different from in the classroom.

4.2.4 Educational support encouraging students' socialization

Through communication with friends that they get to know in the library and librarians, can develop their own social nature. In fact, school staff members are anticipating school librarians' educational support encouraging students' socialization.

Furthermore, Murray(2000) proposes that in the area of offering support, school librarians can help students obtain self-confidence by giving them roles. This study supports Murray in this point. However, this study shows support in terms of encouraging students' socialization from the concepts of school librarians' <keeping the social rule>, <support individual needs> and <drawing out of students' good points>

5 Conclusion

By using a M-GTA, this study shows the process and reasons of the perception change about the school library through the view of 19 school staff members who are involved in students with SEN. The previous research on the relation of special needs education and school library, for example, Murray's research shows the possibility of contribution by connecting with the functions of school library. This study points out school library's expected support in terms of cooperation with school staff members. Especially from the viewpoint of relations with students with SEN, the school library can be perceived as a place to connect with society.

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Statement of Originality

This statement certifies that the paper above is based upon original research undertaken by the author and that the paper was conceived and written by the author(s) alone and has not been published elsewhere. All information and ideas from others is referenced.

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