

**GlobalIS:
An Effort to Describe Trends in Japanese LIS Education for Global Collaboration**

MAKIKO MIWA, miwamaki@ouj.ac.jp
Center of ICT and Distance Education, The Open University of Japan

YUMIKO KASAI, ykasai@edu.tamagawa.ac.jp
College of Education, Tamagawa University

SHIZUKO MIYAHARA, s-miyahara@star.sagami-wu.ac.jp
Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Sagami Womens' University

ABSTRACT

The GlobalIS Project takes an initiative in attaining the globalization of Japanese library and information science (LIS) professional education by defining the requirements for internationally transparent and harmonized educational programs for LIS professionals. We ask three research questions in a stepwise manner: (1) What are the basic requirements for globalizing Japanese LIS professional education? (2) What kinds of efforts are required for us to attain a global collaboration between Asia and the Pacific in quality assurance of LIS education? (3) How can we attain global collaboration in the development of a common curriculum framework for LIS education in Asia and the Pacific using school librarian training as an instantiation? At the initial stage of the GlobalIS project, we reviewed the literature and interviewed people involved in regional and global collaboration for quality assurance and mutual accreditation of LIS educational programs, to identify the recent trends. For the first research question, we identified three requirements: (1) establishment of an office responsible for preparing and administering mutual accreditation of LIS programs with overseas counterparts, (2) implementation of the LIS examination as a means of establishing an outcome-based assessment of LIS education, and (3) establishment of graduate level LIS education programs to be mutually exchangeable with overseas counterparts. For the second research question, we tentatively identified three areas requiring effort: (1) improvement of international transparency of the Japanese LIS professional system, (2) comparison of the LIS curriculum contents with those of overseas counterparts, and (3) stimulation of interest in global trends in LIS education among Japanese LIS educators. For the third research question, we have begun preparation for the collaborative curriculum development of school library professionals planned for 2013.

Keywords: Library and Information Science (LIS) education; Global collaboration; Mutual accreditation; Common curriculum development; School library professionals; Comparative librarianship

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the Library and Information Professional and Education Renewal (LIPER) 2 project, we have been studying the history and current situation of quality assurance and accreditation systems of library and information science (LIS) professional education programs worldwide. The focus was on the transparency and reciprocity of professional qualifications and academic degrees in LIS. Through a discussion on the findings, we developed several proposals for the globalization of Japanese LIS education programs.

METHODS

In the initial stage of the GlobalIS project (Miwa, M. et al., 2011), we reviewed the literature on regional and global collaboration for quality assurance and mutual accreditation of LIS educational programs to identify the recent trends. We also interviewed researchers and professionals in US, Canada, UK, Australia, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Croatia, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, and China. They were identified through personal contact and recommendations of LIS professional organizations based on their knowledge on global trends of quality assurance and curriculum accreditation. Through the interviews we have identified areas that require further efforts.

FINDINGS

In this section, we will describe findings of literature review and interviews.

Global Trends of Quality Assurance in LIS Professional Education

Recently, the regional equivalency of qualifications in the LIS profession has been a hot issue in Asia and Europe. In North America, the American Library Association (ALA) established an accreditation system for the first LIS professional degree programs in the 1950s, and it currently accredits those programs in the USA, Canada, and Puerto Rico. In the UK, the Library Association (LA) and the Institute of Information Sciences (IIS) were merged into the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in 2002, which currently accredits LIS programs in England, Scotland, Wales, and several European countries. In Australia, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has been engaged in the accreditation of LIS programs. In the 1990s, collaboration between North America, England, and Australia was established to attain mutual accreditation at a global level. In mainland Europe, the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research (EUCLID) has been engaged in developing a European common LIS education program compatible with the Bologna Process, which aims to create a European Higher Education Area by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. In Southeast Asia, a common quality assurance and accreditation system, based on the North American model, has been proposed by members of the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL), but the actual implementation is still under discussion at several regional conferences, including the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library and Information Education and Practice (A-LIEP) series.

The Education and Training Section (SET) of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has been engaged in the development of procedures for determining the equivalency of degrees granted and the reciprocity of recognition of job qualifications of a variety of LIS programs all over the world. During a round table discussion held as part of the offshore meeting of the SET committee in Milan in 2009, representatives of Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), EUCLID, A-LIEP, and the LIS Special Interests Group from Developing Countries exchanged ideas and opinions on the international guidelines for equivalency and reciprocity of qualifications for LIS professionals on a global scale. Through this discussion, basic agreement was reached regarding the establishment of an international resource center for relevant information on LIS education, and the implementation of an outcome-based assessment of the LIS professional qualification system. In general, participants wanted the establishment of assessment criteria and an accreditation procedure that reflected the cultural and historical characteristics of each country and region.

Efforts for Quality Assurance in LIS Professional Education in Japan

In Japan, the LIS professional qualification has been approved based on two relevant laws: the Library Law (for public librarians) and the School Library Law (for teacher librarians). However, there is no qualification system for academic and special librarians. College and university administrators provide LIS training programs as part of their curricula to attract students who want to obtain a national qualification of public librarian. Educators of these training programs recognize the problem of too many certified professionals with limited skills for market demands of public librarians, but accept their teaching duty to retain their status in academia. In fact, we produce more than 10,000 people with the qualification of public librarian, but only thirty of them in average are employed by public libraries as professional librarians. Practitioners recognize the inherent problems of the current training system of LIS professionals, but hold back from encroaching on the system.

Since 2003, much effort has been made to establish a quality assurance system for LIS education programs in Japan through the LIPER project. The initial phase of the LIPER project (2003–2005) examined the general trends of LIS education to identify the need for possible reform, and made two major recommendations: (1) introduction of an LIS examination, and (2) introduction of a graduate level standard curriculum for information professional education

(Miwa, M. et al., 2006). The aim of LIPER 2, the second phase of the project (2006–2009), was to implement these recommendations, and to implement the LIS examinations on a trial basis. In addition, the Japan Society of Library and Information Science (JSLIS) hosted A-LIEP 2009 with the University of Tsukuba with the expectation of establishing the basis for international collaboration in LIS education, research, and practices among Asian and Pacific countries. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT) introduced a new standard curriculum for undergraduate level LIS programs, which will be implemented from 2012. Regrettably, this proposed curriculum reflects the historical focus of the public librarian side of LIS education in Japan, and does not take into account the possibility of mutual accreditation and international mobility of LIS professionals.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we will make proposals toward the globalization of the library and information profession in Japan based on the above findings. We will first identify problem areas in Japanese LIS professional systems for public, academic, and school libraries. Then, we will discuss recent trends in research, information and communication technology (ICT) implementation, and activities of professional and academic organizations as bases for supporting the reform of LIS professional systems. Finally, we will propose actions to be taken and efforts to be made for the globalization of the Japanese LIS profession in response to the global trends of the LIS professional systems we have identified in this study.

Problem Areas in Japanese LIS Professional Systems

Public Libraries

Article 2 of Japan's Library Law defines public libraries as those libraries established by municipal governments, while Article 4 of the Library Law determines responsibilities and qualification requirements for "shisho" (librarians) and "shisho-ho" (library assistants). They are the only library professionals established by law in Japan; this differs from overseas practices that establish library professionals in all types of libraries, not just public libraries. Moreover, the qualifications expected of "shisho" and "shisho-ho" are, on the college level (including community colleges), minors, while most of the overseas LIS professionals require graduate level professional education.

One of the surprising findings of the LIPER project was the overwhelming number of college graduates who obtain "shisho" qualifications and the limited number of them who actually find employment in public libraries. This represents an imbalance of demand and supply in the labor market of the LIS profession. Based on the findings, the LIPER project proposed in 2006, to introduce the LIS examination for quality assurance and outcome-based assessment practices of professional education (Miwa, M. et al., 2006). LIPER 2 initiated the trial LIS examination in 2007.

We support the introduction of the LIS examination and recognize the importance of quality assurance and outcome-based assessment of LIS professional education. However, we also need to fill the existing gap between the global LIS professional education system and the Japanese one in terms of the following aspects:

- The limitation of "shisho" and "shisho-ho" as the only recognized LIS professionals in Japan;
- The absence of higher-level qualification systems for those who have higher professional skills and experiences than are required for existing "shisho"; and
 - The limited connection between higher education institutions and LIS professional organizations.

Current knowledge-based society expects LIS professionals to offer a higher level of professional knowledge and skills than those required for "shisho". Thus, we need to establish an advanced LIS professional qualification system.

Academic Libraries

There is no qualification system for academic library professionals in Japan. The official regulation to support the existence of academic libraries is the Standards for University Chartering (SUC), which stipulates the requirements of all types of higher education institutions. Article 36 of the SUC requires higher education institutions to have “a library, an infirmary, a study room, and a waiting room for students”, and Article 38 defines the function of the library as “to systematically collect books, scientific journals, multimedia materials and other information resources required for education and research, according to the type and size of each department”, and to “organize and offer these information resources using adequate systems for information processing and dissemination”. Article 38 also requires the library “to have professional and/or full-time workers in order to exhibit its full functions”. However, the SUC does not define the skills and requirements for professional full-time library workers. Meanwhile, only national universities select their library workers by the civil service examination.

Recently, some national universities have outsourced their library services in response to the call for the reform of the public servant system for downsizing. This introduced a critical situation into the professional services of academic libraries. Some academic professional libraries, such as medical libraries, initiated new professional qualification systems, which, in turn, will provide a new initiative in developing a new LIS professional system in academic libraries as a whole. In any case, we need to introduce an advanced LIS professional system for academic libraries to ensure higher education institutions offer high level academic knowledge and services in response to the needs of a knowledge-based society.

School Libraries

The LIS professionals in school libraries have established “shisho-kyoyu” (teacher librarians) as stipulated by the School Library Law. The Japanese School Library Law, enacted in 1953, requires that every school (grades 1–12) establish a school library as a reading and learning information center and employs a teacher librarian, with a supplementary provision that states “the placement of a teacher librarian is optional for the time being” (Kasai, Y., 2006). Many schools did not place teacher librarians until 1997 when the supplementary provision was revised to require all schools with 12 or more classes place a teacher librarian by March 31 of 2003. Though teacher librarians were placed at most of the schools after 1997, their main task was teaching classes, while administration of the school library was supplementary. On the other hand, school librarians who had been responsible for the school library operation, but did not meet the stipulations of the School Library Law, were diminished.

According to the findings of the LIPER project, the system of teacher librarian has not fully functioned, even after 1997 (Kasai, Y., 2006). Since 1990, Japan’s educational policy has emphasized learning through practical experience, and project-based learning has been represented by “general learning” classes, which shed light on inquiry-based learning and information exploration being conducted in school libraries. However, school libraries operated under the supervision of teacher librarians who considered school library administration to be a supplementary job and could not respond fully to the new educational policy.

The targets of School Library Law are elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. However, functions of school libraries differ among the different schools. School libraries in elementary schools may be well operated even by the teacher librarians who view library administration as a supplementary job. However, middle and higher school libraries require massive information resources of higher quality, demanding much time and skills to operate, which are beyond the supplemental job of teacher librarians. Many public high schools had employed full-time clerical staff or “school librarians” responsible for school library operations for a long time. However, the number of school librarians diminished and was replaced by teacher librarians after the revision of the School Library Law in 1997. Thus, the school library system in Japan has similar shortcomings to public libraries as follows:

The limitation of “shisho-kyoyu” being the only recognized LIS professionals in the school library system in Japan;

- The absence of higher level qualification systems for those who have greater professional skills and experiences than those required for “shisho-kyoyu”; and
- The limited connection between higher education institutions and LIS professional

organizations representing school library professionals.

There is a relatively large gap between Western and Japanese LIS professional education systems in level and contents. In the North American model of LIS professional education, common basic knowledge and skills are taught in core courses, while specialized knowledge and skills, including those for school library media specialists, are provided as selective courses at Master's level. In the British and Australian mode, a graduate level diploma is required as the starting level of LIS professionals. On the other hand, only five courses in addition to the teacher certificate are required to become a teacher librarian in Japan, which is quite limiting. We need to introduce graduate level professional training for teacher librarians so that they are able to become fully responsible for school library administration.

One area of knowledge and skills in LIS, but lacking in the current teacher librarian education system, is information literacy training. Since the 1980s, information literacy training has been introduced in all types of libraries, including school libraries, in Western countries. However, it was not introduced in school libraries in Japan, even when informatics was introduced as a required course in elementary, middle, and high schools in the 2000s. Thus, there is little connection between the informatics course and the school library, and the importance of information literacy training in school libraries is not widely recognized by school teachers, including teacher librarians (Kasai, Y., 2006). The limited knowledge on copyright and information literacy training held by teacher librarians limits the opportunity for school libraries to provide information literacy training for students, which presumably allows unconscious plagiarism by college students to occur.

Research Activities

LIS research in Japan leans toward historical research and lacks empirical research (Miwa, M., & Kando, N., 2003). This is mainly due to the fact that a majority of faculty members who teach professional training courses for "shisho" were library practitioners who did not have formal research training. The qualifications of teacher-librarians, on the other hand, were given to those teachers who took five LIS-related courses, which limits the quality of research on school libraries as well. As a result, the Japanese LIS professional system is at a critical point: public libraries cannot offer the professional services demanded by ICT-based knowledge society, while school libraries cannot provide adequate information literacy training to prepare students to cope with the needs of the knowledge-based society.

We believe that empirical research can provide an initiative in a fundamental reform of the current library system in Japan. We need to turn the attention of LIS researchers and practitioners toward overseas trends in LIS education and research, so that they can learn the limitations of the Japanese LIS professional system.

One of the major indices of globalization in research is the ratio of researchers involved in international collaborative research activities. Based on a bibliometric analysis, Chang identified that no papers published in the Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology (JASIS-T) between 1981 and 2005 were coauthored by Japanese and overseas researchers, even though researchers of other Asian countries, including China, Korea, and India, published internationally coauthored papers (Chang, H.W., 2009).

We expect the Japan Association of Library and Information Science to take the initiative in improving the quality and quantity of Japanese LIS research by emphasizing the importance of empirical research and international collaborative research.

ICT Implementation

The use of ICT is a global trend in delivering LIS professional education. In North America, professional librarians need to obtain a higher level degree or qualification to seek career advancement. Thus, many professionals and paraprofessionals in libraries are taking advanced courses through e-learning while employed full-time. At the same time, library schools in North America and Australia offer LIS courses, not only in their own country but also overseas using e-learning systems. Japanese library workers may take such e-learning courses offered by North America or Australia to obtain a globally acceptable professional qualification. In Japan, a few colleges/universities offer undergraduate level LIS courses for "shisho" online, but do not offer graduate level courses.

Professional Systems

In North America, England, and Australia, where firm professionalism is established, LIS professional associations have influence over the curriculum development and definition of competency required for LIS professionals through accreditation and outcome-based assessment practices. Regrettably, the Japan Library Association (JLA), the single national professional association for LIS, does not grapple with professional accreditation, nor collaborate with international counterparts to cope with the globalization of LIS professional systems.

Reasons for the weak library professional system in Japan are:

Public libraries are not autonomous as organizations but receive strong governance from municipal government;

No clear definitions are identified as competencies required for LIS professionals; and

Weak authority of library professionals in terms of social structure and social norms.

We consider that the Library Law and School Library Law provide some structural authority to public and school libraries. The crisis of the Japanese library profession is caused by the legal authority that limits the activities and services of LIS professionals within the frameworks defined by these laws. Both the education system and professional career system should be examined in parallel.

Requirements for Globalizing LIS Professional Education

There is a considerable gap between Western countries, where a model of globalization in quality assurance of the LIS professional career system is established, and other parts of the world, including Japan, where no such model is established. We need to seek a global level quality LIS education system that include the quality assessment of the national library professional system.

To establish a new model of the LIS professional education system, we need to take the following three steps toward quality assurance:

Establish an Office Responsible for Preparing and Administering Mutual Accreditation of LIS Programs with Overseas Counterparts

In Japan, the motivation of the LIS professional association to globalize LIS professional education is low and restricted by current laws and regulations. Thus, the office responsible for international accreditation should be newly established. On the other hand, academic library professionals, who are not restricted by any legal regulations, but need to respond to the needs for high-quality services, are located in a good place to base global collaboration. We may first define an academic library professional system as a preliminary model of the LIS profession at the national level to explore the education and career development systems. To do this, we should establish the new office for global collaboration within the higher education sector.

Implement the LIS Examination as a Means to Initiate an Outcome-based Assessment of LIS Education

The quality assurance system for professional education in Western countries represents the twofold model of curriculum accreditation and outcome-based assessment of resulting knowledge and skills. This model is also reflected in the levels of the education system proposed to attain the standardization of LIS professional education in Europe, initiated by the Bologna Process (Figure 1).

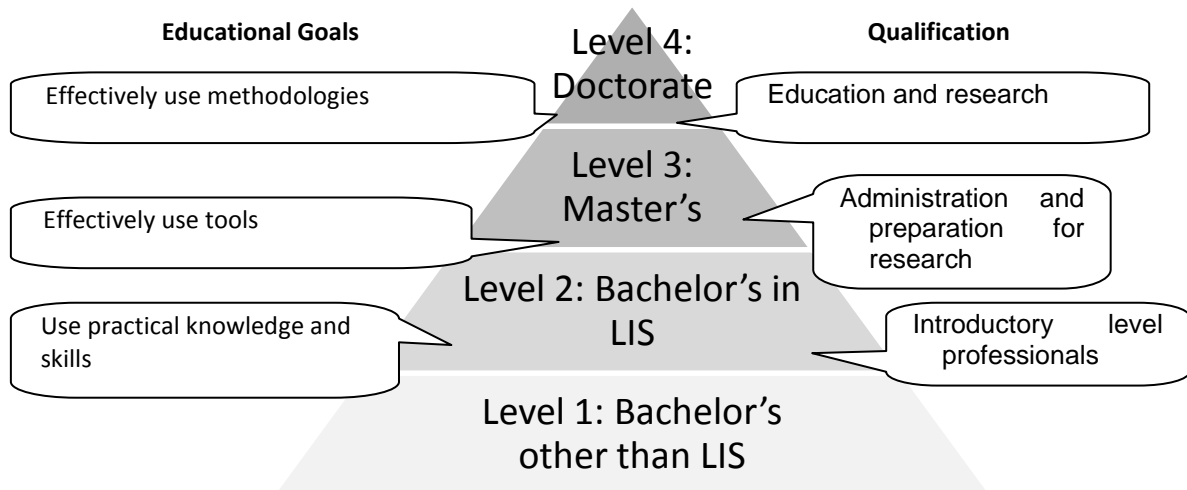


Figure 1: Level and Qualification of LIS Professionals

The current public library professional education system for “shisho”, which is embedded in college undergraduate non-LIS programs and provides 20–24 credits, can be positioned at Level 1 of the model. Thus, we need to establish the Level 2 program as the requirement for introductory level academic librarian education. The LIS examination to be introduced as the outcome-based quality assurance system of LIS professionals should assess this level of professional competency. To do so, we need to add new courses including user behavior and library management to the core curriculum at Level 2.

Establish Graduate Level LIS Education Programs to be Mutually Exchangeable with Overseas Counterparts

In North America, England, and Australia, graduate level professional education is required to obtain the professional status in the LIS occupation. For Japan to establish mutual recognition of a professional qualification with these countries, we need to shift LIS professional education from undergraduate to graduate level. However, a majority of LIS professional education in Japan is still offered as an undergraduate level minor program. It would be difficult to establish a completely new LIS professional education system beyond the framework of the Library Law and the School Library Law to attain mutual accreditation and credit exchange with overseas LIS programs. Thus, we propose to establish anew framework for the graduate level LIS professional education system for academic libraries that is not restricted by any national law. Specifically, we propose to establish a graduate level (one-year) professional LIS education program that does not provide a research-oriented Master's degree, but a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS). This would save time for full-time workers. Use of ICT to offer an e-learning program should also be recommended to allow full-time workers to remain in their jobs while studying for the MLIS.

Necessary Efforts to Establish Global Collaboration in LIS Education

In the midst of globalization in higher education and job markets, we need to develop Japan's LIS professional system to harmonize with the global trends. In the previous section, we reviewed problematic situations inherent in Japan's LIS professional system and proposed possible revisions to the LIS professional degree and qualifications for mutual accreditation toward global harmonization.

Currently, only North America, England, and Australia have fully implemented mutual accreditation. In Europe, the mutual accreditation system has been introduced in the framework of the Bologna Process. In Southeast Asia, a system for mutual accreditation of LIS degrees and qualifications has been proposed within the framework of CONSAL. Efforts toward mutual accreditation among Asian and Pacific countries, including Japan, in the series of A-LIEP conferences.

The global level of a mutual accreditation system for LIS professional degrees and qualifications was initiated by the Education and Training Section of IFLA. This initiative emphasizes the outcome-based assessment of the professional knowledge and skills of those who attain LIS professional degrees and qualifications rather than curricula and contents of educational programs. However, detailed procedures in mutual accreditation and responsible agencies are still under discussion. Meanwhile, competencies required for LIS professionals differ greatly between countries.

If Japan's LIS professional system is to attain global harmonization, we need to focus efforts in the following areas:

International Transparency of the Japanese LIS Professional System

By actively committing to the arguments for mutual accreditation of LIS professional degrees and qualifications in Asia and the Pacific, and on Global level, and conveying this to the global media, the historical and cultural influences of Japan's LIS professional system should be disseminated.

Comparison of the LIS Curriculum Contents with Overseas Counterparts

This could be achieved by reviewing the outcomes of LIS professional education and the competencies required for LIS professionals in other countries, and using them as references to develop Japan's strategies on attaining equivalence and reciprocity of the LIS professional system.

Arouse Japanese LIS Educators' Interests in Global Trends

By creating an information system for exchanging issues and arguments concerning mutual accreditation of LIS professional degrees and qualifications, we should inform Japanese LIS educators about the trends in LIS educational programs and the requirements for professional qualifications.

CONCLUSION

We reviewed the literature and interviewed people involved in regional and global collaboration for quality assurance and mutual accreditation of LIS educational programs to identify the recent trends.

We asked three research questions in a stepwise manner: (1) What are the basic requirements for globalizing Japanese LIS professional education? (2) What kinds of efforts are required for us to attain a global collaboration between Asia and the Pacific in quality assurance of LIS education? (3) How can we attain global collaboration in the development of a common curriculum framework for LIS education in Asia and the Pacific using school librarian training as an instantiation?

For the first research question, we identified three requirements: (1) establishment of an office responsible for preparing and administering mutual accreditation of LIS programs with overseas counterparts, (2) implementation of the LIS examination as a means of establishing an outcome-based assessment of LIS education, and (3) establishment of graduate level LIS education programs comparable with overseas counterparts. For the second research question, we tentatively identified three areas requiring efforts: (1) improvement of the international transparency of the Japanese LIS professional system, (2) comparison of the LIS curriculum contents with those of overseas counterparts, and (3) stimulation of interest in global trends in LIS education among Japanese LIS researchers and educators. For the third research question, we have begun preparation for the collaborative curriculum development of school library professionals.

FUTURE STUDY

In the second phase of the GlobalIS project, we will review the syllabi of major LIS educational programs for LIS professionals and compare them with the LIPER framework in the following areas: (1) basics of LIS, (2) information users, (3) information resource organization, (4) information media, (5) information services, (6) information systems, (7) management, and (8) digital information. We will interview researchers and professionals in LIS who are knowledgeable in trends of quality assurance and curriculum accreditation in Asian and Pacific regions to elicit up-to-date trends and perspectives on the globalization of LIS education programs. In the third phase, we will invite researchers and practitioners of school librarians and collaboratively develop a model curriculum to establish a basis for future collaboration.

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