Investigation on the Status of Information Literacy Instruction in School Libraries

학교도서관 정보활용능력 교육의 현황 분석

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ABSTRACT

To measure the state of instructional programs in school libraries revitalized by the MEST project, teacher-librarians who are members of a provincial library education research committee were asked to respond to a survey and phone interview. The results illustrate that both teacher-librarians and classroom teachers lack a comprehensive understanding of information literacy(IL), and that information literacy instruction(ILI) was implemented in less than half of the surveyed schools. Even in those schools where ILI was implemented, the curriculum was underdeveloped, frequently consisting of little more than basic library orientation programs. The lack of understanding regarding ILI by classroom teachers was specified as a major barrier.

초 록

본 연구는 학교도서관의 정보활용능력교육 프로그램의 현황을 살펴보기 위하여, 경북지역을 중심으로 활동하고 있는 경상북도학교도서관교육연구회에 속한 사서교사를 대상으로 설문조사와 전화 면담을 수행하였다. 조사대상 학교도서관 중 정보활용능력 교육을 실시하는 학교는 절반이 되지 않았다. 정보활용능력 교육을 실시하는 학교에서도 커리큘럼을 개발 중에 있었고, 대부분 그 내용도 기본적인 도서관 소개 프로그램 수준에 머물렀다. 또한 정보활용능력 교육 시행에 있어 가장 큰 장애로는 교과교사들의 정보활용능력 교육에 대한 이해 부족이 가장 큰 것으로 나타났다.

키워드: School Library, Information Literacy Instruction, Teacher-Librarian, Information Literacy, School Library Program
학교도서관, 정보활용능력 교육, 사서교사, 정보활용능력, 학교도서관 프로그램

1. Introduction

Traditionally the nature of the relationship between teacher and student is that of an authority figure and a passive learner respectfully while the pervasive method of teaching by rote still prevails in most Korean school classrooms. This environment is symptomatic of a culture that regards attending a top-tier college as a direct precursor to a better life with a high-paying job. This has led to an education system focused on recalling facts and bits of knowledge with little emphasis on analytical thinking or applying that knowledge in real-world situations. However, recent studies and theories on inquiry or constructivism have increased interest in inquire-based or project-based learning. As a result, the importance of school libraries in education is beginning to gain notice as the typical Korean classroom scene changes to foster a more active, engaging learning experience for students. With this awareness, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) launched the School Library Revitalization Project in 2003.

Over the course of five years, the project was successful in increasing the number of school libraries in Korea to 10,422. By the time the project ended in 2007, 94.1% of all schools contained a library. This statistic, which was collected by the MEST, included all libraries that measured larger than 33 meters squared, about half the size of an average classroom. The number of school libraries equipped to actually foster student learning in any real way is far smaller.

The number of teacher-librarians illustrates a greater problem for the state of school libraries in Korea. As of 2007, there were 537 employed nationwide which meant that only 5.2% of the schools staffed certified teacher-librarians (Korean Library Association 2009).

This sparse employment of teacher-librarians had persisted until recently. According to the 2010 Korea Library Year Book, the number of teacher-librarians reached 682 and the rate of school libraries with a qualified teacher-librarian slightly increased to 6.2% as of 2009 (Korean Library Association 2010).

Since the School Library Revitalization Project by the MEST had been praised for its success in physically laying the foundation for school libraries by increasing their numbers, a second phase was initiated starting in 2009 to conclude in 2013.

Over the last 30 years, the research and practice of Information Literacy (IL) has been a major focus for academic studies on school libraries in many countries, including the United States, Australia, and Canada. In these countries, librarians within educational institutions have been in pursuit of the best methods for arming students with the skills to become effective users of ideas and information (American Association of teacher-librarians 1988). Numerous research studies have illustrated that strong school library media programs improve student performance and that effective IL instruction integrated into subject matter fosters authentic student learning (Scholastic Library Publishing 2008; Haycock 2003; Lonsdale 2003; Lance, Welborn,

and Hamilton-Pennell 2001; Lance 2001; Francis, Lance, Lietzau 2010; Todd and Kuhlthau 2004, 2005). Recently, research on IL concepts and practices has even broadened beyond the educational sectors to the workplace (Lloyd 2006, 2007) and across diverse populations (Grassian and Kaplowitz 2001).

However, there has been very little research in this field in Korea. The specific problems that plague the state of school libraries and library education have yet to be identified, although a handful of research has been conducted to evaluate the results of the School Library Revitalization Project.

This study examines the views of teacher-librarians on the current state of school libraries and information literacy instruction (ILI) in Korea as a first step towards researching and ultimately improving school libraries in this country.

2. Historical overview of school libraries in Korea

Previously in Korea, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) worked by planning education programs and policies at the national level which were then implemented at the provincial, district, or building level. However, modern school library practices were introduced into the field as a grassroots movement by a group of enthusiastic pioneers after liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945.

Jong-Sung Kim (Kim 2000) delineates the history of Korean school libraries from the beginning. According to his work, the first modern school library opened at the Jin-Joo Girls' High School with a collection of 1,500 items and a semi-open access system in March, 1952. The Kyong Nam High School library that opened in May, 1957 was the first open-access library and was followed by other school libraries that adopted the system. In those days, the USIS libraries and the U.S. army libraries influenced the Korean library field to adopt the free open access system.

The first lecture series for teacher-librarians was offered to 50 high school teachers by the Ministry of Education for a week from October 27th to November 1st, 1958. However, a more systematic educational program started at Yonsei University that same year as an eight week program during the summer and winter breaks. This program was financed by the Peabody College of Education Teams as part of a U.S. foreign aid contract to assist education in Korea, administered by Yonsei University. Attendees were selected by the Ministry of Education. Through this program, new school library practices and theories were imported directly from the United States and a basis for school library research was established. Many of the field's future pioneers emerged from this program.

School library practices were continuously developing during the 1960's. For the first time in history, the Ministry of Education arranged 33 teacher-librarians to be hired for primary and secondary schools. Additionally, the Korea Library Association offered lectures and published subject

headings for primary and secondary schools. During the 1970's, there were significant changes in the education environment. First, the population of students in secondary education had exploded as the baby boomers after the Korean War came of age. Competition for entering the top middle schools was fierce and sixth grade students studied exclusively for the entrance examination that would decide what middle school they would be accepted into. The level of stress suffered by students and their families for this one-day examination was significant enough to be deemed a major social problem in Korea.

The military regime at the time eventually interfered in education tactfully yet sharply and the government eliminated the middle school entrance exam in 1969 as well as the high school entrance exam in 1974. The justification behind this policy was that it could relieve the high levels of fierce competition over the entrance exams. However, the unforeseen result was that the remaining college entrance exam became the only reason for all educational endeavors from kindergarten all the way through high school.

Therefore, primary and secondary education curricula were catered to multiple-choice tests focusing on memorizing the contents of textbooks to recall information in the form of facts and bits of knowledge. Also, an exorbitant amount of emphasis was placed on the subject classes considered most important for these exams. This kind of education process deeply withered school libraries. The only goal for teachers in the classroom was to ensure that students did not lose their focus on their textbooks. From the students' perspective, the best study method was to memorize as much as possible. It was almost impossible for school libraries to intervene in the learning process. As a result, the status of teacher-librarians had been relegated to simple keepers of the meager library collections. Most students who wanted to be teachers had little or no interest in becoming teacher-librarians.

Up to the 1980s, this kind of substandard environment continued. Then in the 1990s, the importance of school libraries began to be perceived again as the harm of teaching by relentless repetition rose to the surface at last. Influenced by constructivism, a wide range of ventures, with or without the collaboration of NGOs such as parent organizations, were tested as part of a Korean education reform movement. With these ventures, the movement for the revitalization of school libraries gained momentum again.

The MEST recognized the importance of school libraries and launched the School Library Revitalization Project in 2003 and ended the project in 2007. The project was financed with 60 billion won per year for 5 years for a total of 300 billion won. Nationally, 6,098 schools were financed and supported by this project. The main purpose of this project was to:

- Ensure basic school library facilities and build library collections.
- Strengthen school library-assisted instructional programs

• Employ full-time certified teacher-librarians and enhance their professional expertise
• Collaborate between public and private sectors to support school libraries

As a result of the project, the number of school libraries increased 27.3% and the number of books per student doubled when compared to 2002. While 80.4% of schools had school libraries in 2002, 94.1% of schools had libraries at the project's conclusion. The number of teacher-librarians also increased by more than triple, but it should be pointed out that these statistics can be very deceiving. Only 5.2% of school libraries employed teacher-librarians even after the project, which is still a crucial shortcoming that must be resolved as quickly as possible. Also the lack of library collections was observed as a problem and the researchers strongly suggested to carry out a further research in this area (Kwak and Chang 2006). As a whole, this project laid the foundation for school libraries in Korea with regard to building library collections, improving facilities, and positioning librarians in the schools.

The findings from the recent studies indicate that learning attitude and life skills of Library-Assisted Instruction have close correlation and suggest cooperative learning (Lee 2008). In addition, studies were conduction to develop the models of library-assisted instruction and to design the instructional program for the library-based instruction of teacher-librarians (Lee 2006; Hahm 2008).

In this study, the state of instructional programs in school libraries was measured from the perspective of teacher librarians.

3. Methodology

In order to research the status of ILI after the first MEST project and before the second project started, 33 teacher-librarians were surveyed and interviewed by telephone. These teacher-librarians were selected from the Gyeongsangbuk-Do Curriculum and Research Committee on School Library Education under the MEST. Among the 1,158 Curriculum and Research Committees under the MEST, there are only three regional committees on school libraries. The Gyeongsangbuk-Do Committee is the only one at the provincial level. As of 2009, 44 professional teacher-librarians belonged to this committee. For this survey, a total of 33 (75%) teacher-librarians responded, 19 from elementary schools, 8 from middle schools, and 6 from high schools.

As shown in Table 3, 30 (91%) of these surveyed librarians have worked in school libraries for more than five years, and they are the major founding members of the Gyeongsangbuk-Do Curriculum and Research Committee on School Library Education, which is widely regarded as the first professional organization in the field of school libraries. Gyeongsangbuk-Do, which is a southern province of South Korea, started to actively provide school libraries with certified teacher-librarians since the early years of the 21st century.

〈Table 1〉 School level of respondents

School level	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Elementary school	19	58%
Middle school	8	24%
High school	6	18%
Total	33	100%

〈Table 2〉 Years of respondents' employment

Years of employment	No. of respondents
1-2 years	2
3-4 years	1
5-6 years	8
7 years or more	22
Total	33

The survey was comprised of short answer questions as well as open-ended questions. Descriptive data like the inhibitors of ILI were gathered first by open-ended questions in the survey and the responses were summarized and classified by one researcher. After the initial summarization, additional phone interviews were conducted to obtain more explanations or to clear vague responses. Qualitative data was then analyzed again by means of content analysis and confirmed by the scholars in the field for validity. The survey and phone interviews were administered from August 2009 to March 2010.

4. Results

Results show that integrated IL instructions have been implemented in only 15 schools or 45% of the surveyed schools with teacher-librarians.

Despite the fact that all surveyed teacher-librarians recognized ILI as a core teaching activity in school libraries, more than half of the schools were unable to provide IL instructional programs to their students.

To identify how the fifteen schools deliver IL instructions, the respondents were first asked about instructional time per subject class, number of subjects per semester, and number of subject teachers that participated in IL instruction each semester. The results are shown in Table 3.

Half of the ILI programs are implemented for less than 2 hours per semester, 40% of the programs are for 3 to 6 hours, and only one program is for more than 7 program hours in a semester. The number of subjects that integrated IL instructions per semester was surveyed. 8 schools answered 3 to 4 subjects, 6 answered less than 2 subjects, only one school answered more than 5 subjects were integrated with ILI. Another aspect that was

surveyed was the number of subject or classroom teachers that participate in ILI per semester. More than half of the schools responded by saying that 2 to 3 teachers participated. Only one responded that more than 6 participated, 2 responded that 4 to 5 participated in the program, and 3 responded that less than 2 did.

These results illustrate that ILI programs have been integrated into less than 4 subjects with less than 3 teachers for less than 6 hours per subject class during a semester in the surveyed schools.

The subjects that were found to have integrated ILI are illustrated in Table 4. The number of schools that integrated ILI into Korean language classes is the highest, followed by social studies, science, history, English, and lastly the fine arts. 38% (16) of ILI programs were integrated into language arts, 36% (15) of the programs were integrated into social studies or history. It can be interpreted that most teacher-librarians' subject background are in these areas, not in science or arts.

When teacher-librarians implement ILI, the most frequently used instructional method is lecturing on internet searching and how to effectively use the library collection. Also, it is common practice for teacher-librarians to supply teaching materials

〈Table 3〉 Status of ILI

Status	State or Range	No. of Respondents
ILI Hours per Subject Class	More than 7 hours	1
	3-6 hours	6
	Less than 2 hours	8
Number of Subject Classes integrated with ILI per semester	More than 5 subjects	1
	3-4 subjects	8
	Less than 2 subjects	6
Number of Subject Teachers that Participated in ILI per Semester	More than 6 teachers	1
	4-5 teachers	2
	2-3 teachers	9
	Less than 2 teachers	3

〈Table 4〉 School subjects integrated into ILI

School subjects	No. of Respondents
Korean Language	13
Social Studies	11
Science	7
History	4
English as Secondary Language	3
Physical Education	3
Fine Art	1

to teachers and learning materials to students to support the subjects being studied in the classrooms. Even though teacher-librarians prepare lesson plans and participate in teaching subject content occasionally, their instruction program is fragmentary. Taking part in assessing student learning outcomes or designing complete lesson plans from the initial planning stages through to a final assessment of their effectiveness has not happened in these schools. Table 5 shows these results.

Among the 15 schools that implemented ILI, subject teachers initiated ILI in 6 schools, and teacher-librarians initiated ILI in 7 schools. In 2 of the schools, ILI was initiated through the collaboration of both the subject teachers and the teacher-librarians.

Of the 33 surveyed schools, 18 teacher-librarians said that they were not involved in any kind of instructional program that needed collaboration with subject teachers. They were asked what factors prevented implementation of integrated ILI in school libraries. Based on content analysis of their narrative responses, four were identified and are listed below in Table 6. The multiple factors were extracted from each narrative response.

〈Table 5〉 Teacher-librarians' instructional methods

Instructional methods	No. of Respondents
Library use education	12
Provide learning materials to students	11
Provide teaching materials to classroom teachers	10
Prepare lesson plans	6
Help students with homework and/or projects	5
Participate in teaching subject area content	4

〈Table 6〉 Factors that prevented integration of ILI

Factors (No, %)	Description of responses	No. of Responses
Attitude factors (25, 62.5%)	Classroom/subject teachers lack interest/understanding of ILI	12
	Lack of mutual understanding between teacher-librarians and classroom teachers	6
	Teacher-librarians lack understanding of curriculum taught by classroom teachers	2
	Classroom teachers lack assertiveness	3
	School librarians lack assertiveness	2
Time factors (7, 17.5%)	Lack of class time	5
	Classroom teachers overloaded with work leaving no time for ILI	2
Resource factors (5, 12.5%)	Poor library collection	3
	Lack of IL instructional materials	2
Environment factors (3, 7.5 %)	Competitiveness over entrance exam, nature of vocational & technical high schools	3
Total		40

The surveyed teacher-librarians pointed out that the lack of understanding and interest in ILI by teachers and teacher-librarians was a major barrier. Twelve (30%) of those surveyed said subject teachers and their lack of understanding of ILI was the dominant problem. Six answered that the lack of mutual understanding between teacher-librarians and teachers was a barrier. While only two stated the teacher-librarians and their lack of assertiveness was a problem, three said the classroom teachers and their lack of assertiveness was a problem. One of the surveyed teacher-librarians said that some classroom teachers in her school thought that they needed 30 to 40 copies of textbooks on library education to implement ILI. Some other teacher-librarians said that classroom teachers in their schools were completely unaware as to what ILI is. Furthermore, respondents noted teacher-librarians' lack of competence and assertiveness with frustration. One librarian said she did not have the capability to propose ILI to classroom teachers.

17.5% of those surveyed that were unable to implement ILI noted the lack of preparation time for the instruction. They explained that classroom teachers had no time for ILI because subject content as well as time allocations for teaching is prescribed in school education. On teacher-librarians' part, they are unable to offer ILI or develop ILI programs due to the burden of technical services and managerial chores. Also, those surveyed pointed to the lack of instructional materials and textbooks for ILI. The general learning environment at school, such as the entrance exam oriented school process or focus on the practical training at vocational and technical high schools, has hindered ILI.

5. Conclusion and limitation

IL is a subject that has been addressed seriously in Korean educational sectors since the 1990's. But school education in Korea relies on lecture-based instruction and follows prescribed content in textbooks so rigidly that resource-based teaching and active learning is not often seen. Thus, it is difficult for ILI to take firm root in traditional educational environments.

But findings from this study reveal that a significant barrier to ILI lies in teacher-librarians themselves. Even though 45% of the surveyed teacher-librarians answered that they implemented subject-integrated ILI in their schools, these teacher-librarians' instructional programs only cover basic library use education or providing learning materials, without total participation from planning to assessment. It is obvious that they realize that IL is a more complex and broad concept than traditional library skills, but the teacher-librarians in the study failed to address the problems and were unable to cover critical aspects of IL, such as ethical issues in the use of information. This survey indicates that teacher-librarians' perceptions of IL should be bolstered to encourage more comprehensive coverage of IL in their teaching endeavors. They should work to understand the concept of

IL as a whole, including theories of learning, and then put those theories into practice. These issues require further investigation to diagnose and solve the problems of development for school libraries, since the surveyed teacher-librarians in this study are considered to be leaders in the field.

Teacher-librarians in this study claimed that teachers' lack of understanding of ILI is a major barrier for their implementation of ILI. For ILI to be effective, all members of the school community need to develop an understanding of the concept and importance of IL. Therefore, teacher-librarians need to take the initiative and introduce it to the school community, develop well-designed training programs, and administer these programs in the school community which includes teachers, school administrators, and parents. It is also important that teacher-librarians in Korea make themselves visible in school communities and perform well as instructional partners with classroom teachers. School libraries can be put back on the right track in Korea with the efforts of professional teacher-librarians.

For these purposes, it is necessary to not only develop strong professional programs for teacher-librarians to play a vital instructional role but also to conduct analyses of teacher-librarian education in library schools. In addition, IL policies, standards, and guidelines should be formulated at national and provincial levels. Without them, ILI can hardly be guided and supported effectively. These areas require further development through future research. The production of instructional materials is also important to improve the future of school libraries.

After 5 years of the MEST project, there has been considerable improvement in facilities, information technology infrastructure, and collections in school libraries. However, the status of school libraries in school education has not yet developed to the level necessary to foster true student learning. The second MEST project takes a step in the right direction at a crucial time for school libraries. It focuses on the professional development of human resources and quality of collection as well as instructional programs in school libraries.

It should also be noted that the results cannot be generalized, as this study was conducted in a province of South Korea with a small number of teacher-librarians. Future research will expand this study's approach to examine the status of school library instruction and teacher-librarians' perspectives on IL in the other areas of Korea. Longitudinal studies will increase the validity of the results of this study.

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