

The impact of privatization in Japanese public libraries

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Abstract. The management of public libraries in Japan faced a big change in 2003. Public institutions had been privatized in the world from the 1970s, but privatization of public institutions was late in Japan. Public institutions came to be privatized in Japan in the 1980s, and the public library finally became a target of the privatization in the 2000s. The numbers of libraries which introduced the privatization increases year by year. Research in the arena of library information science had been accomplished about arguments of privatization in Japanese public libraries. However, most of studies were sets of opinions to object to privatization. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine opinions of various stakeholders about privatization of public libraries by content analysis. The authors succeeded in collecting opinions of stakeholders from newspapers. They clarified characteristics of privatization and present arguments in Japan.

Keywords: Privatization, Public Library, Content Analysis.

1 Research Background

1.1 The privatization of public institutions

The privatization of the public institution increased in a process to change from ‘the big government’ to ‘the small government’ in the U. K. and the U. S. of the 1970s. In Japan, the privatization of the public institutions, for example: Japanese National Railways and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, was carried out in the 1980s. Yumiko Noda mentioned, after the 1980s “the government is enlarged in a bubble burst of the 1990s, the later economic stagnation, and working from ‘public to people’ completely remains silent” [1]. On the other hand, the privatization formalized as a part of public finances and governmental reforms in developed countries except Japan after the 1990s. Noda also pointed out, how in the 1990s, “the way of wide public-private partnership (PPP) such as PFI or the outsourcing was groped for, and a form of the participation of ‘private’ diversified” [1].

In the 2000s, there was the second movement of privatization in Japan. In 2003, a designated administrator system that had a big influence on the management of the public library in Japan was established.

1.2 Japanese Public libraries managed by the designated administrator system

The designated administrator system in Japan is prescribed by 2 Clause 3 of Local Government Act Article 244. Japanese local governments can administration of the public accommodation to a private organization. It was expected to provide high quality services and reduce costs by a designated administrator system.

According to a survey of Japan Library Association in 2016, amongst 3,261 public libraries in Japan, 474 public libraries were managed by private companies via using a designated administrator system.

The number of libraries introducing the designated manager system tended to increase year by year. While the number of libraries introducing the system increased, the researchers found some cases that Japanese local governments stopped using a designated administrator system for public libraries and have moved back to manage the libraries by local governments by themselves.

1.3 The research on outsourcing in Japanese public libraries

In Japan, researchers wrote a few summaries of arguments about outsourcing in public libraries. Toshihiko Ogawa mentioned the early stage of privatization in Japanese public libraries, “public library services were outsourced because of unavoidable circumstances during the post-war confusion” [2]. From this viewpoint, the Japanese government had to outsource public libraries in order to construct public libraries and provide postwar library services to the citizens. In other words, the outsources of library services was related to the development of Japanese public libraries.

Finally, in 2003, as the designated administrator system was launched, private organizations -as the designated administrators- were finally able to manage libraries, and by 2004, the Private Finance Initiative system has begun running, and it was used to manage the libraries too. Researchers wrote only a few studies every 5 years. However, their papers were just studies of arguments collected from librarians and other professionals from academic/technical journals, in addition to negative opinions against the privatization of libraries.

2 Research Purpose and Motivation

The purpose of this research was to organize and analyze the topics/opinions of discussion on the outsourcing of public library in Japan from 2003 to 2016. There were studies that summarized the outsourcing of libraries in the past. However, most of those only summarized opinions from library staff and supporters. Therefore, in this research, opinions on outsourcing of public libraries were not limited to library staff and supporters, the authors widely collected topics/opinions of various stakeholders in the public library field. The authors built 2 hypotheses. 1) The number of Citizen’s opinions on outsourcing of public libraries has increased. 2) the number of positive and negative opinions is the same. This research is set out to contribute to the discussion of future style of library management including library users.

3 Method

In this research, the authors collected and analyzed by content analysis the opinions on the privatization of the public library not only from limited topics by library staff and supporters from newspapers, but also from various stakeholders. The authors focused on newspapers that has been published since 2003, because at that time the designated administrator system has been introduced. The authors analyzed every single paragraph from newspaper articles. By using content analysis, we could systematically extract and analyze the opinions about privatization of libraries.

The authors selected *Asahi Newspaper* as the research target that had the most articles about the privatization of the public library from 5 national newspapers. To survey used a retrieval style that was “(designated administrator OR outside order OR outsourcing OR PFI OR privatization) AND library”. Research duration was from 2003 to 2016. A total of 1,228 articles was counted from *Asahi newspaper*, and the number of extracted articles per year from the publication ratio of each year was calculated. From this result, a total number of 123 cases corresponding to 10% of all articles were selected. As a result of dividing 123 articles to be surveyed into paragraph units, the total number of paragraphs was 1,474.

Finally, they analyzed topics/opinions in each paragraph in the extracted articles. The researcher read it carefully every 1 paragraph and confirmed whether paragraph contents related to the privatization of the public library. And for the paragraph that content was equal to survey target, an opinion and a kind of person or group that said opinion were extracted.

4 Results

1,474 paragraphs to be analyzed, and there were 243 paragraphs that matched the theme of this study. Finally, 94 opinions and 19 kinds of stakeholders that said the opinion were identified in the paragraphs.

4.1 Opinions and Stakeholders

The authors examined 94 opinions collected. The opinions could be categorized into three groups: (1) positive, (2) negative, and (3) neutral to the privatization of the library. As a result, they identified 56 positive opinions, 35 negative opinions and 3 neutral opinions.

There were 19 kinds of stakeholders in the articles. Because of further analysis on types of stakeholders, they were classified into five groups, such as (1) local governments, (2) librarians, (3) users, (4) contracted companies, and (5) others.

4.2 Relationship between Opinions and Stakeholders

The authors analyzed the opinions of stakeholders in the paragraphs of newspapers, and created a cross tabulation about the positive and negative opinions and the types of

stakeholders (see Table 1). The result showed that the half of all opinions was concentrated for five years after 2012, and this explained that people actively started discussions about privatization of public libraries. Many stakeholders in the early stage tended to insist on strengths and weaknesses about with each other.

For instance, the positive opinions by local government were about: The improvement of library service quality and library budget reduction. On the other hands, the negative opinions were that users were afraid that personal information might be disclosed after privatization of library and that management by private companies didn't have continuity.

From this research, recently, we can deduce that the users' opinions increased in the last 3 years. Positive and negative opinions were not the same number. However, the number gap between positive and negative has recently decreased.

Table 1. Transition of stakeholders' opinions about privatization of public libraries

Year		2003	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	total
Local Governments	positive	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	5	8	5	4	34
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	6
Librarians	positive	0	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7
	negative	0	3	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	14
Users	positive	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	negative	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	3	1	9
Contracted companies	positive	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Others	positive	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, in recent years, many stakeholders of public libraries have actively mentioned concerns about the designated administrator system of public libraries. Opinions increased after 2012 because of the entry of a major private company that was Culture Convenience Club (CCC) in Japan. From this entry, the positive opinions regarding the development of rural towns by using public libraries increased. The emergence of the opinion about town developments is highly related to the changes in the existence of public libraries. Recently, environment of information and communication has significantly influenced on public library management. New roles of public libraries, for example - development of new local communities, have given meaning to the existence of public libraries in Japan. Therefore, it is desirable for stakeholders of Japanese public libraries to be able to choose an appropriate form that satisfies user needs in their local communities. In addition to that, discussions on the privatization of public libraries should be more active and detailed, since even if the designated administrator system has been introduced fourteen years ago, it is still controversial in the sphere of public libraries in Japan.

References

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