

National Policies on Assuring Teacher Quality: The Case in Korea

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Introduction

Korea's education system is based on the 6-3-3-4 ladder structure. Compulsory education at middle school level has been implemented in rural areas since 1985, extended at last to the entire country in 2002. Recently teacher education reform has been a hot issue in the Korean education. The Korean government has tried to change the teacher education policy to raise school teachers' competence. Teaching profession in South Korea is a stable occupation with relatively abundant free time. Teacher as a job is favored by many young people and adolescents because all school teachers are supposed to retire at 62 years old. Major paths of teacher training are somewhat different for each type of teacher. Most of elementary school teachers are trained by 10 universities of education across the country. Secondary school teachers are trained through several divisions: colleges of education, department of education in comprehensive universities, teacher education courses in comprehensive universities, and graduate schools of education. Teachers are employed by regional authorities. After graduating from the teacher education institutions and thereby acquiring the teacher certificate, a teacher candidate has to pass the teacher employment examination administered by metropolitan or provincial offices of education in order to be a teacher. Being a teacher is so competitive that many applicants from universities of education are apt to fail to pass the teacher employment examination.

The Government believes that teachers' expertise is closely correlated with the satisfaction

of students and parent. Accordingly, the government has conducted national teacher evaluation, with students and parents' participation, to build up teachers' professional capacity. Teacher evaluation involves students, parents, peer teachers and principal.

National Assessment of Educational Achievement

The government of Korea emphasizing students' academic achievement implemented the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) and opened the results of the assessment to the public. According to the NAEA results, schools with a significant number of underachieving students are designated as "creative management schools for academic improvement." The government supports the selected schools with intern teachers for learning assistance, special supplementary lectures, and teaching materials to guarantee that every student meets the standard for basic academic skills. Purposes of the NAEA are divided into four: first diagnosing the educational achievements of elementary, middle and high school students and the trends of the achievements systematically and scientifically, second, providing basic reference data of improving a curriculum by analyzing the degrees of students' achieving educational goals of the curriculum and checking the problems of the embodiments of the curriculum in the classroom, third, improving the teaching and learning methods and produce basic data used to set up a learning encouragement policy by analyzing assessment items and the relationships between achievements and background variables, last guiding the schools toward better assessment methods by developing and utilizing new and appropriate assessment methods

Teacher Evaluation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) is implementing teacher

evaluation nationwide. Teacher's Union and teacher's associations have tried to resist the government policy. However, public opinion including parents' voice supported the government policy criticizing the teachers' resistance as egoistic action. Eventually teachers accepted the evaluation policy with MEST's promise that the results of the teacher evaluation will not be opened to public.

After the evaluation, teachers with poor results receive supplementary training that is tailored to their needs, while teachers with high performances are given opportunities for personal research or education at universities and relevant institutions at home and abroad for them to upgrade their expertise. Currently 50 teachers are enrolling the teacher training program at Gyeongin National University of Education for their sabbatical year. They are attending college and graduate courses while implementing independent research individually.

Teachers with professional expertise can later obtain the leading position at schools through the open principal recruitment system. They can also be designated as Master teachers- a title given to teachers who are recognized for their professional excellence. These teachers' give consultation to peers and develop and distribute effective teaching methods.

Teacher Promotion

Development of Teacher Education (2011) and Policy for Teacher Promotion (2004) have been implemented for the change from hierarchical and year based promotion system to teachers' competence based system by Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST). The minimum year for promotion to school principal was reduced from 25 years as a teacher to 20 years. Additionally job as school principal was opened to not only vice principal but also competent teacher or outside person by open recruit system for it.

The positions of teachers are divided into teacher, vice-principal, and principal. Many teachers seek promotion to become school administrators. Teacher promotion is so

competitive that it is decided based on various sources of evaluation, including length of service, performance score, research achievement, and the bonus points for various educational activities.

Discursive Questions

- Is other country also experiencing the teacher education reform like the Korean educational change?
- What are the advantages and the disadvantages of teacher evaluation policy?
- How would the teacher evaluation policy influence on teacher education?