

Exploring Korean Elementary School Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching and the Teaching
Profession under the Influence of the Global Educational Reform Movement

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Abstract

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This qualitative study examined teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in light of recent educational reforms (2008 - 2016) in South Korea. As has been the case in many other countries, the educational reforms in Korea were heavily influenced by the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM). The common features of GERM are increasing competition among schools; standardization in education; focus on core subjects; test-based accountability; and school choice. While many international and comparative studies have become interested in the education systems of top performing countries, like Korea, on PISA tests, little attention has been paid by international scholars to each nation's distinct context and how that context may have had a significant impact on the teaching profession and teaching in that nation. Also, despite an increasing focus on teachers and teaching in international discourses, teachers' voices have often been left unheard.

To understand teachers' perspectives in a unique national context, I addressed four research questions: 1) what are the distinct characteristics regarding teaching and the teaching profession in Korea?; 2) what are the characteristics of the Korean educational reforms enacted from 2008 through 2016?; 3) how do Korean elementary school teachers believe that the recent educational reforms have been affecting the work of individual teachers?; and 4) how do Korean elementary school teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances?

I conducted a qualitative study and collected data from documents and from interviews with 29 Korean elementary school teachers. The findings of the first question showed that Korea has been able to attract and retain high quality teachers due to certain social perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession; an opportunity for social mobility and benefits through the teaching profession; job stability; and the feminization of teaching. However, the general public recently has put little trust in Korean schoolteachers because of a number of local circumstances, including: fierce competition for the university entrance exam; excessive dependence on shadow education; and the phenomenon of "school collapse." Regarding the second research question, the common features of GERM have also been observed in Korean educational reforms, but they have been modified by the Korean context. As for the third research question, the work of Korean elementary school teachers consists of primary work (teaching and teaching-related tasks) and supportive work (administrative tasks). Korean teachers have been experiencing chronic and persistently heavy workloads due to their many administrative tasks. In addition, earning promotion points can be considered another aspect of Korean teachers' work. Some teachers took on more responsibilities or worked in rural areas to achieve enough promotion points to be promoted to administrators. This promotion-point career ladder system in Korea has created an administration-oriented atmosphere and culture. The recent educational reforms

(2008 – 2016) have had a negative impact on classroom teaching and increased teachers' administrative tasks. Also, these educational reforms have affected the work of teachers by devaluing their teaching, lowering teachers' morale and self-esteem, and weakening relationships among colleagues. In answering my final research question, I found that most of my participants expressed satisfaction with their job due to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Nevertheless, some participants were simply tolerating their work. As for the roles of schools and teachers, most participants felt that they have been required to play multiple roles due to new social demands. However, one third of my participants explicitly noted that their traditional role of teaching academic knowledge has decreased whereas their role as childcare givers and service managers has increased. Regarding teacher professionalism, most participants believe that they had professionalism or expertise. However, many of the teachers in my sample did not feel that their teaching job was a profession.

Based on these findings, I discussed the importance of a close examination of local contexts in international and comparative education studies; called for a more critical review of the global governance exerted by transnational actors over educational systems in sovereign nations; highlighted individual countries' different responses to GERM; discussed the increased focus on teachers and teaching in Korea and the parallels between the Korean case and global trends; compared the Korean teachers' promotion system with teacher career ladders in other nations; and used intensification theory to comment on their chronic and persistent workload.

I concluded by discussing the implications for comparative and international education studies. I called for re-examination of the correlation between student achievement and teacher quality; made an argument for the inclusion of the voices of individual teachers; and gave some

suggestions regarding the use of the conceptual framework suggested by Akiba (2017). Then, I concluded this study with recommendations for future research and Korean teacher policies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study and Research Questions

Recently, many countries have been increasingly concerned with the quality of their K-12 education and have carried out nationwide educational reforms. Many nations have considered education as the key to the intellectual development of their “human resources” and the largest single determinant of their future economic progress. In particular, as a result of globalization, the waxing influence of neoliberalism, and the advent of the era of information and technology throughout the world, many nations have, since the 1980s, implemented nearly identical educational policies to improve the quality of their education systems. After observing these nearly identical educational reforms in both core nations and in developing countries over the previous three decades, Sahlberg (2011), an educator from Finland, created the phrase “the Global Educational Reform Movement” (GERM) to describe this phenomenon. He states that the common features of the GERM are competition among schools; standardization in education; a heavy focus on core subjects; test-based accountability; and school choice (Sahlberg, 2011).

The GERM has been promoted by external forces as well as adopted voluntarily by national governments. Transnational companies, groups of regionalization (e.g. the European Economic Community and NAFTA), as well as international organizations (e.g. the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development], International Monetary Fund [IMF], and the World Bank) have pressured nations to change their policies, including education policies toward the elements of the GERM. These international institutions have influenced educational reforms across nations “through their intervention in national education reforms and the policymaking process” (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 143). For example, the World Bank and IMF

have required some developing countries to institute user fees for primary and secondary education as part of their loan conditions (Klees, 2008). In the U.S., corporations such as Pearson, foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and other wealthy consulting companies such as McKinsey have exercised their influence in education by injecting a huge amount of money into educational projects, providing educational reports, and advocating neoliberal approaches. In addition, international development agencies have had a major impact globally by providing international and comparative data in teaching and learning, as well as students' scores on international tests, such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). In response to such international data and the recommendations from international agencies, some nations have reformed their education systems (Bieber & Martens, 2011; Fowler, 1995; Rinne et al. 2004; Shin & Joo, 2013).

As the GERM has manifested in many countries, teachers and teaching have become the main focus of educational reform. Despite the large influence of out of school factors such as poverty on student learning (Berliner, 2013), it is now commonly believed around the world that the quality of teachers is tightly related to the quality of education. International agencies and many scholars have offered empirical evidence demonstrating a correlation between high-performing students and high-quality teachers (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2000; Konstantopoulos, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Scheerens, Vermeulen & Pelgrum, 1989; Scheerens, 1993; Willms, 2000). Also, some media and reports (e.g. the Economist and the 2007 McKinsey report) highlight the importance of improving the quality of teachers in order to improve the quality of education (Paine & Zeichner, 2012). Now, in both local educational

reform efforts and among global discourses, teachers and teaching have become a central part of the conversation.

Although global and external forces have greatly influenced educational reforms across countries and similar education policies have been observed globally, each nation-state has responded to external and internal forces in its own way. This is because each nation has enacted its educational reforms in a different local context. Many scholars point out that educational reform is driven by the interplay between the global and the local (e.g Burbules & Torres, 2000; Paine & Zeichner, 2012; Tatto, 2006; Tatto & Plank, 2007). In particular, as Akiba (2017) discusses, sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995; 2001) helps us understand that educational reform is created within each nation as a result of collective sensemaking, negotiations, and contestations among policy actors at the global, national, and local levels. To understand educational reforms within each nation, it is essential to understand the complex nature and interactions between national environments and global dynamics.

Recently, South Korea (hereafter Korea) has gained attention globally due to its students' high scores on international tests and the high quality of its teachers. Since the OECD started to evaluate the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students across the world in 2000 through its PISA test, Korean students' performance has remained at or near the top among OECD countries (OECD, 2014). Seemingly related to these results, Korean teachers' high academic competency has also gained attention (e.g. Auguste, Kihn, & Miller, 2010; Barber & Mourshed, 2007). However, despite the impressive academic performance of Korean students and the international recognition of Korean teachers' academic ability, the quality of teachers has been questioned by the general Korean public, who also distrust the education system as a whole (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013; Ripley, 2013). Furthermore, Korean students' happiness at schools

was the lowest among the OECD countries surveyed by the OECD in 2012 (PISA. OECD, 2014). In other words, like other nations, Korea has had its own problems with its education system. Such problems have been particularly acute in relation to the overly fierce competition of the Korean university entrance exam and the country's heavy dependence on shadow education (cram schools).

In order to fix these problems and improve its education system, Korea has implemented a number of educational reforms. Among these educational reforms, the May 31st educational reform proposal of 1995 suggested by the presidential Commission on Education Reform is particularly salient, and understanding this proposal is essential to understanding the general tenor of the educational reforms Korea has carried out in the last two decades. Influenced by globalization and neoliberalism in the 1990s, the government under President Kim, Young-sam (1993 - 1998) planned to carry out comprehensive education reforms to improve Korea's national competitiveness and human resource development for the 21st century. The May 31st proposal (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995) was characterized by a change to a "customer" (student and parent)-centered education from a provider (schools and teacher)-centered education, and an increase in both autonomy and accountability for schools. Based on the overarching directions laid out in the proposal, 120 plans were suggested by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform, and these suggestions have continued to influence subsequent educational reforms over the past 20 years. Not surprisingly, these education reforms have frequently resembled the GERM, as Korea has tried to improve its education system by adopting education policies from so-called "advanced" nations, mostly English-speaking countries. Furthermore, teachers in Korea have typically been targets of reforms, rather than active participants, and have been a focus of public criticism.

Even though the education system in every country is, like that of Korea, complex and has its own educational issues, the international and comparative education literature has not thoroughly examined such details when addressing much-praised educational systems. International scholars (e.g. AERA [American Educational Research Association] symposium, 2015; Darling-Hammond, & Rothman, 2011; Ingersoll, 2007; Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016) have mainly looked, somewhat one-dimensionally, into the teacher education systems and the teacher policies of high-performing countries that include Korea, Singapore, China, Canada, and Finland. Also, these studies have not captured the voices of individual teachers who have in-person experiences with the systems and educational policies in these countries. In addition, many of these studies have given little consideration to individual nations' histories, cultural traditions, and the distinct educational structures and processes related to the teaching profession and teaching.

In this study, I examine the complexity of the Korean case by exploring Korean elementary school teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in light of recent educational reforms (2008 - 2016), reforms which are a product of both local and global influences. Regarding the period, I chose the period when two former presidents, Lee, Myung-bak (2008 – 2013) and Park, Geun-hye¹ (2013 - 2017) from the same conservative party were in office and Korean education reforms occurred between 2008 and 2016 seemed to show strong resemblances to the GERM. In order to explore teachers' perspectives, I first look into the distinct local educational structure and process around teaching and the teaching profession in

¹ The former president Park Guen-hye was impeached due to the culmination of a political scandal involving interventions to the presidency from her aide on March 10, 2017.

Korea and then examine teachers' views on their job under these educational reforms in the context of the GERM. The following research questions help define the scope of this study:

1. What are distinct characteristics regarding teaching and the teaching profession in Korea?
 - What factors have made teaching and the teaching profession attractive in Korea?
 - Despite the high academic competency of the Korean education system, why has the Korean public distrusted Korean teachers and the education system in general?
2. What are the characteristics of Korean educational reforms from 2008 through 2016?
 - What is the history of the educational reforms that have occurred in the past two decades (1995 - 2016) in Korea?
 - What is the relationship between educational reforms from 2008 to 2016 in Korea and the GERM?
3. How do Korean elementary school teachers believe that the recent educational reforms have been affecting the work of individual teachers?
 - What are the core aspects of the work done by Korean teachers?
 - How do Korean teachers think that the recent educational reforms have affected their work?
4. How do Korean elementary school teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances?
 - How satisfied are they with their work as teachers and with the teaching profession?
 - How do they think about the role of elementary schools and teachers?
 - What do they think about professionalism as it pertains to their work?

The Context of This Study

Korea distinguishes itself from most Western countries in terms of its demographics, the Korean idea of education (a so-called “education fever”), and a centralized educational system. Demographically, up until the present, and unlike Western countries, Korea has been a relatively homogeneous country. In 2016, the total population of Korea was 51 million (Ministry of the Interior, 2016) and the percentage of resident aliens was approximately 3.8%, or about 1.9 million (Korean Immigration Service, 2016). In K-12 schools, ethnically diverse students were 1.07% (67,806) of the total student population of 6,333,617 in 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2015a). 93.1% of these students were from international couples with one foreign parent and 6.9% of them were from foreigner couples where both parents are foreign (Ministry of Education, 2015a). The total number of students in Korea is decreasing by 200,000 per year, whereas the number of ethnically diverse students is increasing by 8,000-10,000 per year (Ministry of Education, 2015a). Like most OECD member countries, Korea has experienced an increased influx of migration since the 1980s because of the economic opportunities it offers workers. Therefore, Korean K-12 schools are predicted to be more diverse in the future.

The concept of education in Korea has been heavily influenced by Confucianism. Under this influence, education is highly valued “as both a means of self-cultivation and a way of achieving status and power” (Seth, 2002, p. 9). As their country has developed rapidly, Koreans have become further inclined to regard education as a means of social mobility. The desire to improve social standing through education has led to “education fever” and “examination hell,” which describe the intense pressure on Korean students to earn high scores on tests and enter a prestigious university.

After independence from Japan in 1945, Korea has maintained a centralized system where the government has provided uniform standards, controlled teaching quality, and distributed equal funding to schools across the nation (Seth, 2002). During the Japanese colonial period (1910 -1945), a comprehensive, modern national system of education was established (Seth, 2002). From the beginning of Japanese rule, the Korean education system was highly centralized. After independence, the U.S. military government in Korea (1945 - 1948) made few changes in the administrative structure of Korean education, due to the brevity of its occupation, a lack of resources, and other political reasons, like a concern that decentralizing the education system could invite communist influence (Seth, 2002). The centralized system that the Korean government inherited served its desire to produce a capable workforce for rapid economic growth under the authoritarian presidency of Park Chung-hee (1972 - 1979).

The modern history of Korean education is relatively short due to disruptive historical events such as the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953). In order to improve the economy and keep up with advanced countries after such periods of hardship, however, Korea rose from “the ashes of the Korean War” and improved its education system dramatically over a short period of time (Lee, Kim, & Byun, 2012, p. 303). As can be seen now in comparative and international data, Korea has made remarkable achievements in education. Over the past 10 years, Korean students have shown remarkably high scores on international tests. Korea was ranked first among OECD member countries (and seven non-member countries) in the percentage of people aged 25 to 34 who have graduated from junior college, university, or graduate school (OECD, 2015). Korea also showed a 71 % rate of entrance to university or graduate school, greatly exceeding the OECD average of 56% in 2008 (OECD, 2010). Due to these surprising achievements made within a short period of time, many

people around the world, including scholars, policymakers, and political leaders, have become interested in the success story of the Korean education system (e.g. Coughlan, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Pearson, 2014). Former U.S. president Barack Obama and his secretary of education Arne Duncan praised Korean education repeatedly in public statements (Haimson, 2011). It is in the midst of these dramatic results and praise from the outside that the Korean public has criticized the education system (H. Lee, 2010) and distrusted schoolteachers (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013). In the following sections, I describe briefly the current Korean K-12 and teacher education systems.

K-12 education system. Education in Korea is divided into three school levels: six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school. The first nine years of schooling (elementary and middle school) are compulsory, but school attendance is close to universal all the way through high school.² Students typically attend local elementary and middle schools and have little school choice until the end of compulsory education. At the high school level, students can choose from four different types of high school: general, vocational, special-purpose or specialized, and autonomous. In compulsory education, the percentages of students attending public schools are more than 98 % in elementary schools and about 83% in middle schools (MOE, 2015b).³ At the high school level, the gap between the

² To be accurate, the term “K-12 education system” should be corrected to 1-12 education system to fit the Korean context. But I decided to use the more common term throughout this paper.

³ In 2015, the numbers of students in public elementary schools are 2,676,109 (the number of schools: 5,903) respectively, and the number of students in private elementary schools is 255,502 (75). The numbers of students in national and public middle schools are 1,308,621 (the number of schools: 2,563) respectively, and the number of students in private middle schools is 277,330 (641).

numbers of public schools and private schools is smaller than at the elementary and middle school levels. The percentage of students in public high schools is about 60% (MOE, 2015b)⁴.

The Ministry of Education oversees the national curriculum from elementary school through high school. The rationale for the national curriculum is to ensure equal educational opportunity for all and to maintain a high quality of education (National Curriculum Information Center, 2016). Since the Korean government issued the first national curriculum in 1955, for all grades, elementary school through high school, the national curriculum has been reformed seven times, about once every 10 years in all subjects through 1997, and then three times in a few subjects, in 2007, 2009 and 2015. The national curriculum has been revised to reflect new demands for education, the emerging needs of a changing society, and the new frontiers of academic disciplines (National Curriculum Information Center, 2016). The curriculum serves as the basis for educational content at each school and for textbook development. However, individual schools have flexibility in accordance with the particular characteristics and objectives of each school. Based on the national curriculum, textbooks and teachers' manuals are developed by the government and private publishers. There are three types of textbooks provided in schools. The first type of textbook is published directly by the Ministry of Education and this kind of textbook is used as the standard in certain subjects for every classroom in the nation. The second type of textbook is published by private publishers but is fully authorized by the Ministry of Education. Individual schools can select from this second kind of textbook for subjects that are not covered by the first type of textbook. The last type is published by private publishers and simply recognized by the Ministry of Education as relevant and useful (National

⁴ The numbers of students in national and public high schools are 13,846 and 1,004,543 respectively and 769,877 students are in private schools.

Curriculum Information Center, 2016). Textbooks in this last category are used simply to supplement primary texts from either the first or second type of textbooks or when there is no first or second type of textbook for a given subject (MOE, 2019). In the past, the Ministry of Education provided one textbook for each subject to schools, but now there are multiple textbooks for each subject and individual schools have a choice in textbooks.

Teacher education system. In Korea's teacher education system, two separate tracks exist to train elementary and secondary school teachers. Elementary school teachers are trained in four-year programs at 12 national universities of education and one private comprehensive university, while secondary school teachers have more options. Secondary school teachers are trained in four-year programs at 46 colleges of education, 15 departments of education in comprehensive universities, and in education courses at 152 universities (earning requirement credits while majoring in different areas in education), as well as in two-year programs at 108 graduate schools of education (MOE, 2016b). After completing their program, teacher candidates are qualified to take the teacher exam, which is held once a year, to become a teacher in public schools. Metropolitan and provincial offices of education handle the selection and employment of teachers through these open tests. In contrast, in private schools, each school recruits its teachers independently, without necessarily requiring the teacher exam.

Becoming a teacher in public schools is relatively difficult in Korea. Teaching is a popular career due to its job stability, good working conditions, and competitive pay. Therefore, admission to university teacher preparation programs is very competitive. The vast majority of elementary school teachers are recruited from the top 5% of the high school academic cohort (E. Kim, 2007). As for secondary school teachers, many more qualified teacher candidates are

produced each year than are needed by the schools, and only 30% of secondary school teaching candidates are able to find jobs in public schools (E. Kim, 2007). Thus, for secondary school teachers, the recruitment process is still selective, but at the hiring rather than the admissions phase. Due to the intense competition during hiring and/or at the stage of admission to a qualifying program, being a schoolteacher is considered difficult in Korea.

Despite the popularity and intense competition of teaching jobs, however, the social status of teachers in Korea has been decreasing. Thanks to the influence of Confucianism, teachers have been respected because they have been regarded as people equipped with intelligence, great character, and a good sense of morality. It is commonly said in Korea that, out of reverence for one's teacher, one should not even step on his/her shadow, a proverb that has also been cited by Darling-Hammond (2010) in a chapter about Korean education. However, as will be shown in the survey results discussed below, public school teachers are no longer respected as much as they were before. In the view of teachers and academics, students as well as the general public are offering less respect to teachers nowadays (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013). The 2013 Global Teacher Status Index (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013) presents the level of respect for teachers and teachers' social standing in 21 different countries⁵. Among these countries, Korea has among the lowest rankings of students' respect for their teachers (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013). The Korean public does not trust its teachers,

⁵ The countries include Brazil; China; Czech Republic; Egypt; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Israel; Italy; Japan; the Netherlands; New Zealand; Portugal; Turkey; Singapore; South Korea; Spain; Switzerland; UK; and the United States (US). These countries were chosen based on their performance on the PISA and TIMSS assessments to represent each major continent and as representative of different types of education systems (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013).

either, with only teachers in Israel and Japan receiving less trust from their respective publics (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013).

In addition, teachers themselves feel that their authority has been lessened and that they have been treated as objects of, rather than participants in, the recent educational reforms (S. Choi, 2013). By conducting in-depth interviews with six elementary and secondary school teachers in Korea, S. Choi (2013) found that the teachers believed that their authority had decreased, both because school education has changed from provider-centered to customer-centered and because parents' voices in schooling have become more powerful. Also, these teachers felt that the control over teachers in Korea has been systemized through a teacher evaluation system and merit pay (S. Choi, 2013). An international survey, the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), shows that Korean teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy is lower than the average in OECD countries, despite the fact that they have a higher socio-economic status than teachers from other countries (OECD, 2014). Also, between 2013 and 2015, the rate of Korean teachers' voluntary retirement has been increasing (M. Kim, 2015). The decreasing status and the dissatisfaction of teachers are not good signs for Korean education. They suggest teaching is becoming less desirable as a profession, which will reduce the overall quality of Korean teachers in the future.

This complex situation, where on the one hand teaching positions are popular and difficult to attain, while on the other hand teachers are not happy with their jobs and are not trusted by the public, requires in-depth examination. In this study, I explore the complexities of teaching and the teaching profession in Korea and the influence of recent educational reforms on teachers in the context of GERM.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Several areas of literature will inform this investigation, including scholarly work on the following topics: global trends in educational reform, the increased interest by policymakers in teaching and teachers, and the interplay between the local and the global in educational reforms.

The Global Educational Reform Movement

Recently many nations have actively reformed their education systems to improve K-12 education. Of course, educational reform is not just a current phenomenon, and there have been educational reforms in many different countries at different periods since universal public education systems were established in the 19th and 20th century. What distinguishes current reforms from educational reforms in the past is that currently, reforms in many nations throughout the world are converging into one single pattern since the 1980s, as a result of globalization and neoliberalism, the rise of technology, and the advent of the information age. Of course, individual local factors have also heavily influenced how educational reforms have been implemented, so education reforms can be analyzed by both their global similarities and their local differences (Ball, 1999). I intend to focus on the former in this section, in order to understand global trends in educational reform. I deal with local differences in detail in the following section. I will begin with the background of the current global educational reform movement and I will then examine the similarity in educational reforms across countries.

Background of the global educational reform movement. The power of globalization, the neoliberal economic paradigm, and the advent of the era of information and technology, which overlap with each other, have led nations to introduce similar education reforms since the 1980s.

The power of globalization is often discussed as a leading cause of the global educational reform movement. Scholars describe globalization as the increase of international trade, free trade, foreign investment, decentralization, privatization, the blurring of national boundaries, the emergence of international institutions, and the frequent movement of people and businesses between or across countries, to name some key characteristics (e.g. Held, 1991; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Monkman & Stomquist, 2000).

Analyzing these elements, Morrow and Torres (2000) explain globalization in the contexts of economy, politics, and culture. In particular, they point out that most discussions of the need for education reforms have been driven by the interplay between the economic and political contexts of globalization. In the economic context, advances in communications and transportation technologies have helped companies to move beyond the boundaries of individual nations to take advantage of ample resources and cheap, but often skillful workforces from any nation, thus making these companies transnational. In order for a nation to raise its international competitiveness, it has become imperative that they reform the education system in their home countries to provide students with the requisite skills and dispositions needed to compete for jobs in the global market.

Politically, transnational companies, groups of regionalization (e.g. the European Economic Community and NAFTA), as well as international organizations (e.g. the OECD, International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank) have pressured nations to change policies, including education policies. These international institutions have influenced educational reforms across nations “through their intervention in national education reforms and the policymaking process” (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 143). For example, the World Bank and IMF have required some developing countries to institute user fees for primary and secondary

education as part of their loan conditions (Klees, 2008). In the U.S., corporations such as Pearson, foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and other wealthy consulting companies such as McKinsey have exercised their influence in education by injecting a huge amount of money into educational projects, providing educational reports, and advocating for neoliberal approaches. In addition, international organizations have had a major impact globally by providing international and comparative data in teaching and learning such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), as well as students' scores on international tests such as the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) (Robertson, 2012).

Because of these factors, education policies in many countries have been heavily influenced by the neoliberal economic paradigm. Neoliberalism was first introduced into the domestic policies of core Western countries in the late 1970s. In order to overcome an enduring economic recession, neo-conservative governments, as represented by the Reagan administration (1981-1989) in the U.S. and the Thatcher government (1979~1990) in the U.K., desperately adopted neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2005). Subsequently, international development agencies from core Western countries have helped to spread similar neoliberal policies in periphery states (Tabulawa, 2003). The three central principles of neoliberal policies are deregulation, competition, and privatization (Cox, 1996). These principles have led to actions such as cutting the public budget, shrinking the public sector, promoting market approaches to school choice, adopting performance assessment, and encouraging the private sector to become education providers (Burbules & Torres, 2000).

Neoliberal policies have dramatically changed the norms and discussion around education, normalizing the values of efficiency and cost-benefit analysis in decision-making.

According to Apple (2000), neoliberals believe that “what is private is necessarily good and what is public is necessarily bad (p. 59),” and that public institutions, including schools, should be made to disappear since they are “black holes” that take public money but do not provide adequate results. Furthermore, economic phrases such as “human capital” and “education consumer” have become familiar in the field of education and have been used without doubt as to their appropriateness. To become economically competitive in a global market, neoliberals regard students as “future workers” and believe that they “must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively” (Apple, 2000, p. 60). Even reforms are made using language from within this economic paradigm. For example, producer-centered school systems built for teachers and state bureaucrats are criticized for ignoring consumers (i.e., students and their parents) (Apple, 2000).

Such economic norms and language have led to the creation of new cultures within the field of education. In this economic view, education is seen as simply one more product to sell or buy (Apple, 2000). It is believed that by turning education over to the market, it will become largely self-regulating and efficient. Through the market, providers (schools and teachers) compete with each other to be selected by consumers (students and parents), and in turn the overall quality of the educational “product” will be increased. “Consumer choice” as represented by voucher or school choice programs is also believed to guarantee democracy. It is argued that consumers will be given a variety of options and choose what they like. Apple (2000) argues that, in this view of education, the political concept of democracy is transformed into a wholly economic concept. Neoliberal advocates have praised market-based solutions for allegedly creating a better system and enhancing efficiency in general, and there have been extensive attacks on the public sector and employees as stagnant (Apple, 2000). In education in particular,

schools and teachers have become targets of public criticism in the U.S., and some teachers, judged “ineffective,” have been forced to leave their work. This is different from previous times, when tenured teachers held relatively stable positions. Now, even tenured teachers may lose their jobs if they are evaluated badly.

Another aspect that has made educational reform across countries more similar is the advent of the era of information and technology. It is argued that nations can no longer be competitive in the global market by depending on standardized mass production and industrialization. It is also asserted that the market of this new era requires diverse and innovative products, services, knowledge, and information, which requires flexible, creative, and risk-taking workers. Whereas prior reforms focused on improving school facilities and increasing access to school, these new market demands have led nations to concentrate specifically on teaching and learning. Now, many nations have made changes in their school curriculum and in instruction in order to equip students with the knowledge and skills that are believed to be required in a post-industrial society.

The rise of a cognitive and a constructivist approaches to learning also have contributed to the recent changes in curriculum and instruction in the new era. This new paradigm of learning, which became more prevalent starting in the 1980s, emphasizes the importance of learner-centered education, problem-solving, cooperation, metacognitive skills, and other “soft” skills. Many nations now realize that their traditional curricula and instructional practices, which emphasized teacher-centered instruction, rote memorization, and the mastery of less important skills, did not help students to acquire the knowledge and skills that are necessary to succeed in the era of information and technology (e.g. Zhao, 2009).

In the new era, promising new industries which rely on a high level of ability in math and science, have also had a huge impact on curriculum and instruction. In many nations, there has been increasing investment in and emphasis on the fields of math and science (Marginson, Tytler, Freeman, & Roberts, 2013). For example, the U.S. government announced that it would spend at least \$200 million dollars a year for projects of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and computer science education in 2017 (The White House, 2017). Along with literacy, science and math are the two major subjects tested by the international tests like PISA and TIMMS as well as by standardized tests across countries.

Common Features of GERM. Many scholars have noted the similarity between educational reforms across nations. In a study of 16 nations, Rotberg (2004) found that decentralization, accountability, a flexible learning environment, and increased access to education are common trends in education reforms. Looking at the two examples of the U.S. and Australia, Fullan (2011) identified several common education policies used by leaders to accomplish reform. These include introducing accountability measures (versus capacity-building) for teachers, developing individual teacher and leader quality (versus group quality), focusing on technology (versus instruction), and employing fragmented strategies (versus systemic strategies) (Fullan, 2011). Somewhat overlapping with what Rotberg and Fullan found, Sahlberg (2011) notes how the current, wide-spread educational reform movement was created and disseminated predominantly by predominately English-speaking countries such as the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. Other countries have heavily relied on the research and innovations produced by predominately English-speaking countries and have undertaken similar educational reforms (Sahlberg, 2011). Sahlberg (2011) points out that at least five common features are present in these types of educational reforms throughout the world:

“competition between schools, standardization of teaching and learning, punitive test-based accountability, performance-based pay, and data-driven decision-making” (p. 142). He believes that the evidence shows that such features in educational reform, which do not exist in Finnish education, actually have not helped improve the quality of education. I discuss the five common features addressed by Sahlberg (2011) below.

Increasing competition among schools (vs. collaboration among schools). Recently, many nations have increased competition among schools as a way to improve the quality of education. In the GERM paradigm, it is assumed that competition will function effectively and efficiently, rewarding the best schools and weeding out failing schools. School choice is the most common way of increasing competition among schools across countries. As is presumed to be the case in the financial market, competition is believed to improve the quality of education by offering “consumers of schooling” (students and parents) a choice in the schools that students will attend. There has been an increase in alternative, private forms of schooling such as the voucher program in Chile, charter schools in the U.S., free schools in Sweden, and secondary academies in England (Sahlberg, 2011; OECD, 2013a). Given the prevalent belief that public schools are inefficient and perform more poorly than private schools, voucher programs and school choice, which allow students to attend private schools with money that is normally spent on public education, have become more popular. As a result, the number of students in private or independent schools has increased in many countries (e.g. Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016; Jensen et. al, 2013; Wiborg, 2010). However, recent studies (e.g. Mills & Wolf, 2016; Waddington & Berends, 2018; Figlio & Karbownik, 2016) reported that voucher programs have rather caused negative or neutral effects on student achievement.

Ranking schools using national standardized assessments has also increased competition among schools (Sahlberg, 2011). Many OECD countries (19 school systems in lower secondary schools and eight school systems in upper secondary schools) have implemented national standardized testing as of 2012 (OECD, 2013a). While “examinations” are used to determine whether students can progress to a higher level of education, student “assessments” are used for multiple purposes, such as informing parents of their child’s progress, monitoring schools’ progress, and identifying aspects of instruction or curriculum that could be improved. In recent years, student assessments in many countries have been increasingly used to compare individual schools to the district or national performance or/and with other schools (OECD, 2013a). On average across OECD countries, 45% of students are in schools whose principals reported that student achievement data is posted publicly (OECD, 2013a). In the United States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and New Zealand, over 80% of students attend such schools (OECD, 2013a).

While school competition has increased, the effectiveness of putting schools into competition with each other has been called into question. System-level correlations with the PISA did not show a relationship between the degree of competition between schools and student performance in 2012 (OECD, 2013a). The Finnish education system, which showed high student performance on the PISA⁶, has rather used a collaborative model among schools.

Standardization in education (vs. personalized learning). In the late twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, many countries have made nationwide efforts to create or change

⁶ Students performance in Finland was the highest in PISA rankings in 2000, 2003, and 2006. They have performed near the top in other years. In PISA 2018, they were ranked 16th in math, sixth in science and seventh in reading (OECD, 2019).

curricula to improve the quality of education. These countries have taken more and more control of the curriculum, resulting in more standardized education for students (Sparapani, & Perez, 2015). The National Curriculum in England in the 1990s, the New National Education Standards in Germany in the 2010s, and the Australian Curriculum in 2014 are examples. Even the U.S., which has traditionally given local communities control over education, has been trying to provide common standards for each state through the federally supported Common Core project. This trend of standardization in education is based on an assumption that all students should be educated using the same, ambitious learning targets (Sahlberg, 2011). Along with standardization of education, standardized testing and school evaluation systems have emerged to measure whether these standards have been attained.

On the other hand, some countries went against the general trend of standardizing curricula. Many Asian countries, such as China, Korea, Singapore, and Japan, which have had uniform national curricula for a while, have tried to reduce standardization in education (Zhao, 2009). Also, the Finnish education system sets a clear but flexible national framework for school-based curricula in order to encourage local schools to find the best ways to create personalized learning opportunities for all (Sahlberg, 2011).

Focus on core subjects (vs. focus on the whole child). In order to increase individual students' test scores, governments have increasingly focused on what are thought to be core subjects that are tested throughout the world. Math and science have been considered very important, since knowledge and skills in these subjects are assumed to be closely connected to success in current and future promising industries. Literacy is emphasized as a core subject, as well. Standardized tests and international comparative tests ask students to display their

knowledge and skills mostly in reading, writing, math, and science, which in turn influences class content and classroom practice, resulting in narrowed curricula that allocate increased time for core subjects at the expense of other subjects and incentivizing teaching to the test to increase students' test scores in only these subjects (Berliner, 2011; Dillon, 2006; Jerald, 2006; Manzo, 2005). Critics of a narrowed curriculum and teaching to the test argue that important knowledge and skills such as problem solving, creativity, and physical activities have been hampered by testing. Critics especially argue that a narrow curriculum and teaching to the test are likely to have a negative impact on students from low-income families and/or minority groups (e.g. Lomax et. al., 1995; King, Shumow, & Lietz, 2001).

Against this trend, the Finnish education system focuses on the whole child. In Finland, teaching and learning pay attention to all aspects of the growth of an individual's personality: moral character, creativity, knowledge, ethics and skills (Sahlberg, 2011).

Test-based accountability (vs. trust-based responsibility). Many countries have increased their emphasis on teacher accountability. Performance budgeting, merit pay, and teacher evaluation have become common across countries and are often connected to standardized test scores. The term “accountability” means to be called to account for one’s actions. At first glance, it is not problematic to identify and punish the “culprits” who have failed to teach students well (Crowe, 2011) and to give incentives to high-performing teachers. However, this marketplace model does not even work in the corporate world, except in the simplest and most standardized of jobs (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Private, for-profit companies have mostly been turning away from efforts to pay white-collar workers according to strict productivity measures (Goldstein, 2014). However, accountability has been strongly

supported for public schools, and in many places throughout the world schools and teachers are being held accountable for students' test scores. In the U.S., schools have been required to show successful outcomes in students' "achievement" to receive federal government funding and extra money for teachers. Due to the No Child Left Behind law of 2002, schools were sometimes shut down and teachers and administrators sometimes fired when students' performance on tests did not increase sufficiently. Likewise, many countries in Europe have increased accountability by intensifying control over teachers' work and prioritizing the schools' performance (Ball, 2003; Flores, 2008). When accountability schemes are used to control teachers and their work, teachers are often not treated as professionals, but rather as technicians or low-level bureaucrats whose mission is simply to increase students' test scores.

School choice (vs. equity of outcomes). Policies have been implemented in many countries to give education "customers" (parents and students) greater "freedom" in choosing their schools -- "freedom" which actually varies quite a bit depending on the decisionmakers' context and privilege -- and thereby encourages competition among schools (Sahlberg, 2011). Through increased school choice, advocates believe that schools will become more responsive and efficient, and serve diverse students' needs more effectively. However, critics of school choice argue that choice has not increased school performance, as its proponents claim. Critics have argued that school choice rather has led to the increased sorting of students by their ability and socio-economic background (Buddin et al., 1998; Coleman et al., 1993; Goldhaber et al., 1999; Lankford et al., 1995; Witte, 1993), which exacerbates unequal opportunities.

In sum, Sahlberg describes five distinctive common features in the global educational reform movement. Although these common features are observed globally, the nature and extent

of a country's choices regarding each feature are often different depending on the local context. In particular, some Asian countries, including Korea, China, and Singapore, which have high-performing students, high-quality teachers, and long-lasting government-controlled education systems, have responded to the current global educational trends somewhat differently than have Western countries. In particular, Korea has had an atmosphere of fierce competition for entry into the best high schools and universities, and a standardized national curriculum since 1955 (Seth, 2002). In order to reduce severe competition and provide relevant learning experience to students, Korea has made efforts to change previous systems. In other words, Korea may have reacted to the global trends in a different way than English-speaking countries. Such differences in educational reforms existing across nations can be explained by sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995, 2001), described below, which posits that education reforms are a result of collective sensemaking, negotiations, and contestations among policy actors at national and local levels. It is thus also necessary to understand the local context where educational reforms have been undertaken in order to understand how reforms are enacted.

An Increased Focus on Teaching and Teachers

Alongside global educational reforms, the quality of teachers and teaching has also gained a lot of attention nationally and globally. Research and advocacy have closely connected the quality of teachers with improved student learning and educational quality. It has become common to believe that the quality of education cannot exceed the quality of teachers, an idea which has been frequently cited in news stories and educational reports in many countries (Paine & Zeichner, 2012). In addition, international agencies have played a significant role in confirming a correlation between high-performing students and high-quality teachers in some

nations (Paine & Zeichner, 2012). Also, many other educational scholars have also shown empirical evidence about a connection between student learning and teacher quality (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2000; Konstantopoulos, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Scheerens, Vermeulen & Pelgrum, 1989; Scheerens, 1993; Willms, 2000).

As concern about the quality of teachers has increased, all domains regarding pre-service and in-service teachers have been considered by policymakers, from the recruitment of prospective teachers to the retention of teachers and to professional development, and global reform trends in education (GERM) have influenced policies related to teacher education and teachers. In some nations, including the U.S., there has been an increase in non-university-based private teacher education programs, some of which have been run by for-profit companies (Zeichner, 2010). Also, teachers have been required to be accountable for educational outcomes in much the same way that factory workers are encouraged to make larger profits by increasing their productivity. For example, teacher evaluation systems and merit pay have been introduced in some nations to identify and punish “culprits” whose performance is below a certain benchmarked goal (Crowe, 2011), and to give rewards to high-performing teachers who produce the desired product (higher standardized test scores).

In the midst of the increasing attention to teachers and teaching, core countries and international agencies have contributed to a widely shared lens through which to view teachers and teaching. Some other countries have adopted educational policies similar to those adopted by the U.S. government, for example teacher evaluation and merit pay. International agencies have been setting the frame for such policies through indicator studies, policy briefs, and surveys (Robertson, 2012). In particular, students’ test scores have been seen as an index of a country’s

future economic success and in turn used as an indicator of teacher quality. Although the role of teachers is not limited to increasing academic scores on the tests, students' test scores have become the major subject in the recent discourse about teacher quality globally.

While many governments have focused on improving the quality of teachers, teachers have been harshly criticized and have become targets of reforms in the past twenty years. This targeting of teachers has become a global phenomenon, regardless of students' performance on international tests or teachers' social and economic status within nations. Even in nations where students score highly on standardized tests, the issue of teacher quality is the subject of much concern (Ingersoll, 2007).

However, it is important to note that despite the focus on teacher quality, teachers may not be the most important factor in students' academic scores. According to a number of studies (e.g. Berliner, 2009; Hattie, 2008; Howard, 2010; Kim, Young-Cheol, 2012), much of the variation in student achievement is a result of out-of-school factors. Studies from several different countries (e.g. Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Machin & Vignoles, 2004; Byun & Kim, 2010), including the U.S. and Korea, show that the economic gap between students is closely related to the gap in students' test scores. Additionally, the economic gap is itself closely related to race and culture, with minority races and cultures less advantaged financially than the majority. Outside factors such as social class, race, and home culture likely play a role as large or larger in predicting students' test scores than classroom teaching (Hattie, 2008; Howard, 2010). Likewise, even within Seoul, the capital of Korea, researchers have shown that students from affluent districts went to the top university 9.6 times more than did students from poor districts (Y. Kim, 2012). Given these facts, it is necessary to re-consider the global focus on

improving teaching and teacher quality without also addressing broader social and economic inequalities.

Interplay Between the Global and the Local

Although common features, described above, are present in the global educational reform movement, many scholars point out that educational reform is not uniform and is driven by the interplay between the global and the local (e.g Burbules & Torres, 2000; Cummings, 2003; Paine & Zeichner, 2012; Tatto, 2006; Tatto & Plank, 2007). Individual nation states also play a major role in educational reform, even with the strong influences from globalization, neoliberalism, and the information age. Each nation is under the pressure of local forces and has different traditions and histories distinct from other nations, which bring about differences in the development, implementation, and consequences of these reform policies.

Refuting the assumption that different societies will eventually converge in a common direction, Cummings (2003) proposes “institutions theory” to explain the differences in educational changes in modern societies. He argues that there are at least six different institutions or core modern educational patterns around the world, exemplified by the patterns in Prussia, France, England, the U.S., Japan, and Russia. These core nations of the world system developed distinct institutions or patterns and later diffused these to their respective colonies (Cummings, 2003). For example, the Japanese pattern had a profound impact on the Korean and Taiwanese education systems. By comparing and contrasting educational changes in the six different patterns, Cummings (2003) generalizes the nature of educational reform. He points out that “educational reform, while often mentioning foreign examples in its rhetoric, tends to draw extensively on indigenous resources, indigenous ideals, and indigenous educational practices

(both past and present)” (p. 39). Therefore, even if a particular educational reform seems dramatic, “the memory of past ideals and practices will persist to exert influence on the new and even possibly at some later date to replace the new” (p. 39). Furthermore, since reformed educational institutions feel pressure to harmonize with other institutions in rules and procedures, educational reform “tends to turn inwards, reproducing and creating indigenous patterns, rather than outwards, converging on internationally approved patterns” (p.39). Thus, Cummings contends that educational change involves distinctive characteristics of each pattern, including concepts of the ideal person, the representative school, the proper scope of educational reform, learning theories, the governmental administration, and so on.

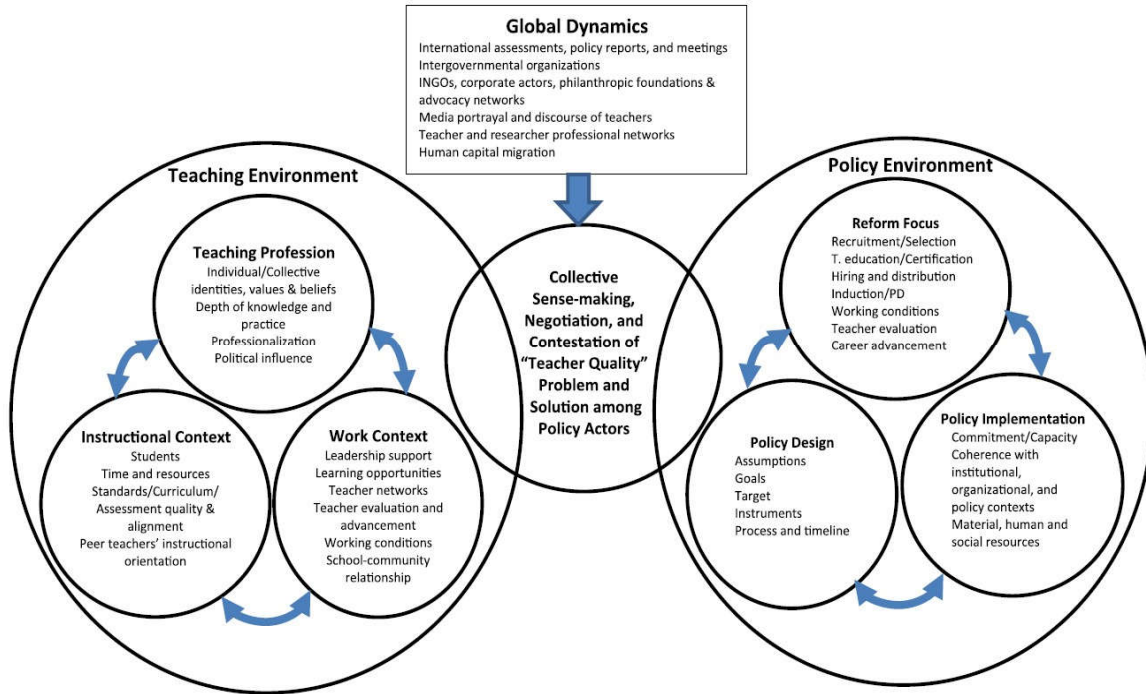
Despite increasing external global forces, Cummings (2003) argues that each nation-state has responded to external and internal forces in its own way, since each nation has undertaken educational reforms in a different local context that includes a distinct history, traditions, politics, social structure, and social problems. Overall, Cummings demonstrates the importance of examining local contexts when undertaking international and comparative studies. Similarly, discussing the relationship between globalization and education, Burbules and Torres (2000) point out difficulties for comparative analyses based on the different relationships between the state and education in different nations, writing that “historical epochs, geographical areas, modes of governance, and forms of political representation, and the different demands of varied education levels” (p. 15) can have complex effects on education. Burbules and Torres also emphasize that such analyses require “a more nuanced historical analysis of the state-education relationship” (p. 15).

While Cummings, Burbules and Torres discuss differences in educational reforms across countries even under strong global forces, emphasizing the importance of examining local

contexts, Akiba (2017) offers a further conceptual frame to help us understand educational policy in each nation. She points out that nations develop and implement teacher reforms differently because of nation-specific teaching and policy environments. Based on sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995; 2001), she argues that “teacher quality and solutions are identified within each nation are a result of collective sensemaking, negotiations, and contestations among policy actors at national and local levels” (p. 156). Policymakers, administrators, and educators go through a sensemaking process, interpreting new ideas through the lens of their preexisting beliefs and knowledge, and adapting the idea through interactions with others (Coburn, 2001; Jennings, 1996; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002, as cited in Akiba, 2017). Despite the common global interest in improving teacher quality, Akiba and LeTendre (2018) argue that the actual meaning of teacher quality within each nation or region (and thus how reforms are implemented) “varies because of differences in the national and local environment surrounding teachers and teaching policy” (p. 12). Figure 1 illustrates the collective sensemaking, negotiation, and contestation over teacher quality problems nations have and which reforms are needed as a solution.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of Teacher Reforms in Global Context



Note. Reprinted from “Teacher Reforms in Global Context: Research and Policy Dialogues”, by Akiba, M., 2017, *Educational Researcher*, 46(4), p. 157

Global dynamics. Global dynamics include various transnational policy actors and networks that have defined the global focus on teacher quality and continue to influence the development of policies and reforms targeting teachers. Figure 1 identifies a diverse group of global policy actors and a wide range of global factors that constitute the global dynamics around teacher quality. As discussed previously, transnational companies, groups of regionalization, and international organizations have impacted education reforms, linking education and economic growth and promoting neoliberal approaches (Akiba, 2017). International organizations have produced influential reports on the conditions of teachers and reasons to reform the teaching workforce (OECD, 2005; 2009; 2011; 2013b; UNESCO institute for

Statistics, 2006; Schleicher, 2016; World Bank, 2012) that are often cited by national governments (Paine & Zeichner, 2012, as cited in Akiba, 2017). International student assessment and nations' rankings in comparison to their economic competitors has also been used as rationale for large-scale reforms targeting teachers in many countries (Akiba & Shimizu, 2012; Wiseman, 2010). Furthermore, international agreements, meetings, and programs such as the International Summit on the Teaching and Profession and "Education for All" have promoted international communication among policymakers on the critical role of teachers in educating future citizens for the knowledge economy (Paine & Zeichner, 2012, as cited in Akiba, 2017). In addition, other important global actors such as international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, global teacher and research professional networks, and media organizations and their portrayal of teachers have influenced national education policies, although research on these impacts of these actors is limited (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018).

Global dynamics in education policy are complex, involving multiple global actors with various roles and agendas. Also, the impact of the global dynamics on national policymaking differs across nations based on their economic and political power. Developing countries are under pressure to adopt certain best practices recommended by international agencies when they receive financial support from them, for example (Klees, 2008; Tabulawa, 2003).

The literature on how policies travel internationally (Philips & Ochs, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2010) has showed political and economic rationales behind the decision to adopt "best practices" or "international standards" in both developing and developed countries. International assessment results are often used by governments to rationalize a predetermined political agenda, without studying teachers' contexts, such as working conditions, professional development, and organizational supports (Takayama, 2010). High-achieving countries such as

Finland, Singapore, and China attract the attention of policymakers globally, but few studies have showed the historical, political, and cultural contexts that have shaped the teaching profession in these countries (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018).

Teaching environment and teacher reform. Without understanding the complex and interconnected contexts in which teachers work locally, we will not be able to understand how the problem of teacher quality and potential solutions are debated by policy actors within each country. In Figure 1, Akiba (2017) identifies three major interrelated domains in teaching environments: teaching as a profession, instructional context, and work context. The domain of teaching as a profession includes teachers' identities and cultural values, depth of knowledge and teaching practice, and indicators of professionalization, including ownership and control of teaching knowledge and practice, professional autonomy, and professional accountability (Akiba, 2017). The profession of teaching also includes the political influence of teachers, based on the political power of teacher associations and unions and teachers' involvement in the policymaking process, which varies across countries (Bascia, 2000).

The domain of instructional contexts also shapes teachers' teaching practice on a local level. Students' characteristics, including cultural background, race and ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, age, and gender are critical factors in teachers' practice (Akiba, 2017; Akiba & LeTendre, 2018). Teaching load also affects performance and differs across countries and regions (LeTendre, Baker, Akiba, Goesling, & Wiseman, 2001), as does whether teachers are given assignments within their fields or not (Ingersoll, 2007). The quality and availability of instructional resources affect teaching, as well, especially in developing countries (Samoff, 2003; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012), as does the quality of standards, curriculum, assessment, and the alignment between them. Class size is also considered to affect teachers' instruction and in turn

students' achievement (Nye & Hedge, 2000). In addition, peer teachers' instructional orientations affect teaching both positively and negatively, especially in places where teacher collaboration and professional learning communities are promoted (Achinstein, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbett, 2006; Seashore Louis, 2012).

The work context of teachers also impacts teaching on a local level and includes support by leadership, learning opportunities, and teacher networks within and beyond schools. Work contexts impact instruction, attrition, satisfaction, and sense of belonging (Baker-Doyle, 2011, 2015; Kennedy, 2016; Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002; Townsend & MacBeath, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and include teacher evaluation and advancement systems as well as working conditions, including compensation and benefits. These communicate the expected responsibilities and performance of teachers and teacher leaders, reflecting the social status of the teaching profession in a particular region (Akiba & LeTendre, 2009; 2018). Lastly, the school-community relationship can provide both support as well as challenges to teachers (Akiba, 2017; Akiba & LeTendre, 2018).

Policy environment and teacher reform. The implementation of a teacher reform also “varies based on the reform focus (e.g. recruitment, teacher evaluation) and specific policy design (e.g. goals, instruments)” (Akiba, 2017, p. 160). The implementation process is affected “by the implementers' commitment and capacity, the policy's coherence with other educational and social policies and school organizational and institutional contexts, and the availabilities and qualities of materials and human and social resources” (Coburn, 2005; Gamoran et al., 2003; Honig, 2006; Spillance, Louis, & Mesler, 2009; Spillance & Thompson 1997, as cited in Akiba & LeTendre, 2018).

The focus of reforms related to the teaching profession ranges from teacher recruitment and selection to teacher education and certification and teacher hiring, development, and retention, as well as professional development, working conditions, performance evaluation, and career advancement (Akiba, 2017). Akiba and LeTendre (2018) explain how policies around teachers can be conceptualized in three major stages: 1) recruitment and education, 2) hiring and distribution, and 3) support and retention. Once the policy focus is decided on, policies are designed based on the (assumed) teacher quality problems that need to be addressed, and other goals of the policy (e.g., addressing a teacher shortage, improving teacher performance using rewards and sanctions), the targets are (e.g., accountability, standardization, professionalization, equity), and the implementation process and timelines that are established (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018). The policy environment interacts with the teaching environment to a significant degree (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018). In addition, within certain nations, such as the U.S., private companies have increasingly exerted their influence on educational policy environment through their “philanthropic” foundations, and via corporate support for neoliberal reforms like Teach for America (Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015).

Even given the strong influence of the global educational reform movement, the policy focus, policy design, and policy implementation processes vary significantly across countries, new policies in each country are developed in connection with broader environments surrounding teachers and past experiences with other educational and teacher policies (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand the differences in teaching and policy environments across countries. Akiba and LeTendre (2018) warn that we need to move beyond simply learning “international lessons” from high-achieving countries when seeking reform ideas

to solve our local educational problems and appreciate how different contexts affect implementation.

Given the importance of understanding the local context in comparative and international education studies, in this study, I will discuss the Korean local context for teaching and the teaching profession. In Chapter Four, I discuss based on secondary historical sources how teaching and the teaching profession became attractive in Korea and why many highly talented individuals came to enter the teaching profession. I will also examine why Korean teachers and public education have been criticized by the Korean public in recent years in the same chapter. In Chapter Five, I present the complexity of recent educational reforms targeting teachers in Korea from 2008 to 2016 in the context of the global educational reform movement. In Chapter Six, I show the Korean teaching environments and then in Chapter Seven I show how teachers' work has been changed by current educational reforms. Lastly, I explore Korean teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in current circumstances in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I conducted a qualitative study with Korean elementary school teachers. In order to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in light of recent global educational reforms, I conducted a basic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Researchers conducting a basic qualitative study are "interested in (1) how people interpret their experience, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experience" (p. 23). I originally planned to recruit all participants from a group of teachers who have participated in a voluntary online elementary school teachers' community. This online community is the biggest online group among Korean elementary school teachers. I conducted interviews with some of the teachers who were recruited from the community. However, the number of teachers recruited from the community was not sufficient and some of them were reluctant to talk about sensitive issues such as performance-based pay to a stranger. Therefore, I decided to ask teachers with whom I worked to participate in my study and then ask them to share my recruitment request with teachers known to them. I recruited additional participants in this way. I discuss this sampling process below.

In this study, my positionality is both that of an insider and at the same time that of an outsider. I was a public elementary school teacher in Korea from 2004 to 2012. Like other Korean elementary school teachers, I experienced the changes brought about by the recent educational reforms and felt frustration and discouragement under these reforms. It was precisely these feelings which led me to study teacher education and teacher policy, and eventually to conduct this research. So, I am certainly an insider from this perspective. On the other hand, I have been studying abroad since 2012. The time that I have been away from

teaching while living in a foreign country has given me a chance to reflect on my experiences as a teacher and to perceive Korean educational issues from a distance. When I was an insider, I, as a teacher, considered problems that I faced personally. Meanwhile, as an outsider, I have become able to look at such problems alongside their connections with global educational trends. Thanks to my positionality as both an insider and an outsider, I was able to interpret locally specific information by forming a close bond with my participants, and I was able to understand their colloquial language. I was, at the same time, able to bring an international and comparative perspective to my examination of participants' thoughts about teaching and the teaching profession.

Setting and Participants

Korean elementary school teachers are the subjects of this qualitative study. To select the participants in my study, I employed purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling helped me discover, understand, and gain insight via selecting information-rich cases which provided a great deal of information about central issues of this study (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). For purposive sampling, I determined three selection criteria: teaching experience, school locations, and gender. In terms of teaching experience, I chose teachers who have taught for more than 5 years. The Korean government began its historical educational reform in 1995 and policies of teacher accountability, school choice, and school competition have been implemented intensively in recent years between 2008 and 2016. Thus, I expected that teachers who have more than 5 years of teaching experience would be able to offer their vivid memories about recent education reforms and educational reform changes. In addition, according to a OECD report (2014), globally, teachers' job satisfaction begins to fade after the

5th year and is at its' lowest between 10 years and 20 years. Considering this fact, it seemed that teachers in the 5th - 20th year of their career may be best able to give their critical and thoughtful perspectives on their work as it has been impacted by the recent reforms. So, I focused my recruitment efforts on teachers with 5 through 20 years of teaching experience. Among the 29 participants, 25 teachers had between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience and four had between 20 and 30 years of teaching experience in 2016 when the interviews were conducted.

When I selected participants, I also considered their school locations. More specifically, I considered whether their schools were in affluent or poor areas. Due to efforts made to equalize the education system in Korea, teachers do not simply choose the schools at which they would like to work but are distributed by the local office of education in each province or each city (Kang & Hong, 2008). Also, they have to move to another school every 4 or 5 years depending on the regulation of the office of education in each province or each city. This is done in order to better ensure a greater level of equality in education throughout the region (Seth, 2002). Theoretically, public schools receive quite equal funding from the government and the quality of teachers is apparently the same across the nation. However, there are big differences between affluent areas and poor areas in terms of students' academic scores and parents' expenses on extracurricular classes (K. Kim, 2005). Considering these differences, I tried to recruit teachers from both affluent and poor areas to compare how these differences have affected the work of teachers in different areas under the nation-wide educational reforms. However, as the interviews proceeded, I realized that the school locations had relatively little impact on the work of teachers. Also, due to teachers' regular rotation, some participants had experienced working both in affluent and poor areas and were able to talk about their experiences in each. After all,

choosing participants equally from affluent areas and poor areas became of little use to my study, so the proportion of teachers from either area was not balanced.

Lastly, as for gender, I considered the proportion of male teachers to female teachers. The ratio of male elementary school teachers is about 23% in 2015. Therefore, I tried to match this percentage in my sample, choosing six male teachers out of a total 29 teachers (21%).

As mentioned previously, when I selected participants, I posted a recruitment advertisement in an online voluntary teacher community. This online community, called *Indischool*, was created by an elementary school teacher in 2000. This community is run by teacher volunteers and funded by donations from members (Seo & Han, 2013). Membership is voluntary and only open to current elementary school teachers. Membership is checked through the verification of a copy of a teachers' proof of employment. The community had over 140,000 members in 2015 (Lee, Taejeong, 2015), which constituted approximately 77% of Korean elementary school teachers (182,658). On average, 50,000 teachers visit the online website per day (Lee, Taejeong, 2015). On this website, teachers share their class materials, discuss the problems that they face in school with other teachers, and provide information, advice and help to other teachers (Seo, 2014). From the community, I chose a few participants according to the criteria which I have outlined above.

I also recruited participants from my previous colleagues with whom I worked, and their connections as well. The number of teachers recruited from this community was not enough and some of teachers who volunteered to participate were not willing to share their opinions about sensitive questions with a stranger. By asking some teachers, after their interviews, to recommend other teachers whom I might talk with, I recruited additional teachers who were able

to offer rich information. Merriam (2009) calls this type of sampling snowball, chain, or network sampling. Just as a snowball growing larger and larger, I accumulated more and more information-rich cases (Patton, 2002).

Using purposeful sampling, I recruited total 29 teachers and their brief information is in the Table 1.

Table 1*Characteristics of the Participants*

Participant	Gender	Years of teaching experience*	Position	City or province	Teachers' group membership	Educational background
P1	M	14	Head teacher	Incheon	KFTA	M
P2	F	12		Incheon		B
P3	F	8		Seoul		B
P4	F	7		Seoul	KTU	B
P5	F	13	Head teacher	Gyeonggi-do Province	KFTA	M
P6	F	7		Seoul		D
P7	F	8		Seoul		M
P8	F	10		Seoul		KTU
P9	F	11		Gyeonggi-do Province		B
P10	F	14		Seoul		M
P11	F	27		Seoul	KTU	B
P12	F	28		Seoul	KTU	B
P13	M	21		Seoul	KTU	B
P14	M	17	Head teacher	Seoul	KTU	M
P15	M	11		Gyeonggi-do Province		M
P16	F	22		Seoul		KTU
P17	F	8		Gyeonggi-do Province		B

P18	F	11		Seoul		M
P19	F	11		Seoul		B
P20	M	14	Head teacher	Seoul		B
P21	F	5		Gyeonggi-do Province		M
P22	F	8		Incheon		B
P23	F	15	Head teacher	Seoul		B
P24	F	12	Head teacher	Seoul		B
P25	F	19	Head teacher	Seoul	KFTA	B
P26	F	8		Seoul		B
P27	F	5		Seoul		M
P28	F	14	Head teacher	Seoul		B
P29	M	13	Head teacher	Gyeongsangbuk- do Province		B

Note. B: Bachelor's degree, M: master's degree, D: doctoral degree in education background; KTU: Korean Teachers and Education Workers'

Union, KFTA: Korea Federation of Teachers' Association

As displayed on the table, a majority of participants (28 participants) were recruited from the metropolitan area (Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi-do Province), 20 of them worked in Seoul, five of them worked in Gyeonggi-do Province, and three of them worked in Incheon in 2016. One participant worked in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. Most of them (22 participants) had between 5 and 14 years of teaching experience in 2016. To be specific, nine of them had between 5 and 9 years of teaching experience, 13 of them had between 10 and 14 years, three of them had between 15 and 19 years, two of them had between 20 and 24 years, and two of them had between 25 and 30 years. 11 participants were appointed as a head teacher. In addition to their primary work of teaching, the tasks of head teachers included taking responsibility for school administration, managing school curriculum, and/or handling administrative and educational tasks for a particular grade. Seven of these head teacher participants were interested in being promoted to an administrative job such as vice-principal, principal, or an officer in the office of education for a district, metropolitan area, or province. Some participants took the position of head teacher because other teachers in their schools did not want to take the position and so they reluctantly accepted the position (cases of P14, P15, P20, and P29).

I asked my participants whether they were members of any teachers' group. In Korea, two prominent teachers' groups are the Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU, *chŏn'gyojo*) and the Korea Federation of Teacher's Association (KFTA, *kyoch'ong*). Seven participants were members of KTU and three teachers were members of KFTA. KTU was established in 1989 to oppose the military dictatorship and to pursue democracy under the military authoritarian government (Seth, 2002). Unsurprisingly, this sort of action was illegal at that time. After the dictatorship was over, it became a legal union in 1999. However, it became an illegal union in 2013 again (MOE, 2013a) when the president, Park, Geun-hye (2013 – 2017)

who is the daughter of dictator Park, Chung-hee (1962 – 1979), became the president. KFTA was established to improve teachers' social and economic status and develop the professionalism of the teaching position, but this is not a labor union (Suh & Choi, 2009). Professors of universities, vice principals, principals, teachers can be members of KFTA, whereas KTU consists of only teachers according to their websites.

As for educational background, all participants went through four-year teacher education programs. 11 of them completed a degree higher than master's in education and six of them either had finished required courses or were taking courses in graduate programs of education in 2016.

Data Collection and Procedures

In this study, I raise four research questions: 1) What are the distinct characteristics regarding teaching and the teaching profession in Korea? 2) What are the characteristics of Korean educational reforms from 2008 through 2016? 3) How do Korean elementary school teachers believe the recent educational reforms have been affecting the work of individual teachers? 4) How do elementary school teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances?

In order to address these questions, I collected data from interviews and documents. To be specific, regarding the first question, I referred to literature about the history of teacher education and teacher policy in the modern Korean education system as well as to some major newspapers that addressed teacher policy and public opinions. Due to the turbulence of recent Korean history, which includes multiple periods of great disruption, such as the Japanese colonial period (1910 ~ 1945) and the Korean War (1950 ~ 1953), the history of modern Korean

education is relatively short. Due to this short history, the recent expansion of schooling and teacher education is usually a subject in educational administration or educational sociology. Therefore, I referred to peer-reviewed articles published in journals of educational administration and journals of educational sociology to explain the change in the public's views on teaching and the teaching profession. Also, I looked at the archives of some major newspapers in order to evaluate the contemporary public opinion regarding teaching and the teaching profession at the time when the educational reforms and teacher policies in question were first introduced and implemented.

Regarding the second question about the recent Korean educational reforms, I referred to the literature about recent educational reforms in Korea and documents published by Korean governments between 1995 and 2016. As for the third and fourth questions, I interviewed 29 participants about their work experiences and their perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in light of recent educational reforms. I ended interviewing participants when a point of saturation or redundancy was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Upon receiving Human Subjects approval, I posted a recruitment advertisement (see Appendix A) on the website of the teacher online community (*Indischool*). I have been a member of this community since 2003, and members who conduct research were often allowed to recruit participants from the community. After about a couple of months, I received about 10 ~15 responses to my advertisement from the community. However, I was able to interview only four of these (P1, P2, P21, & P22) after I sorted them out based on their willingness for sharing their personal experiences with me, teaching experience, and their available times. Due to the insufficient number of participants and data collected, I interviewed 14 of my former colleagues.

I first met some of these colleagues when I worked in two different schools located in the same school district in Seoul. The district that I worked in was not an affluent area. Students' scores on the national standardized tests in the district were always lower than the average score for schools in Seoul. Students in my first school were from families between middle-class and low-income. The other school that I worked in had many students from low-income families, students with single parent, and/or students were raised only by grandparents. So, the school had been designated as an Education Welfare school⁷. Only four of my colleagues still worked in the same schools when I conducted interviews in 2016. The rest of my colleagues had transferred to different schools, and some of their new schools were in affluent areas or had students from wealthier backgrounds. Through my former colleagues' connections, I was able to interview 11 more teachers.

Each interview took about 1 ~ 2 hours in-person or through a phone call. I visited participants' schools to conduct in-person interviews, but with P29 I had to conduct a phone interview due to the long travel that would have been required for an in-person interview. In most cases, an interview was conducted individually (23 participants), but occasionally two or three participants joined at the same time for their convenience. Amongst them, I interviewed two teachers simultaneously twice (P1 and P2; P3 and P4) and three teachers together twice (P12, P13 and P14; P17, P18, and P19). Teachers in the same group knew each other very well, so their close relationship actually created a more comfortable environment for the interviews than individual interviews and they helped each other answer my questions from different perspectives after hearing the other participant(s)' responses. I used semi-structured interviews

⁷ Since 2003, The Education Welfare Priority Zone plan supports areas where low-income families live by providing educational and cultural benefits (KDEI, 2008).

which were a mix of more and less structured questions (Merriam, 2009). I started interviewing them with structured questions (see Appendix B), but based on their responses I added or reduced questions. All interviews conducted for this study were recorded with the participants' consent using a digital recorder. The interview data was collected between June 10th – August 24th in 2016 and interviews were conducted in Korean. During and after data collection, all recorded files were transcribed for data analysis using Express Scribe Transcription Software. I transcribed all interviews in Korean, but all relevant data supporting my claims were translated into English.

Data Analysis

Some of data analysis took place simultaneously with data collection. In the search for teachers' perceptions on their work and on the teaching profession under recent educational reforms, I aimed to answer my research questions through a thoughtful analysis. During and after a few interviews, I was able to evaluate and challenge my original interview questions. Sometimes, emerging elements such as promotion and talk of the career ladder in the interviews suggested alterations to the original questions. Therefore, I had to add some questions and place importance on them since many participants considered that the system of promotion and the career ladder have had a big influence on their work, and tasks assigned by recent educational policies were connected to promotion. Although the original questions provided the initial focus of data collection, they were altered as the interviews proceeded. This is the nature of qualitative research that researchers need to be flexible throughout the process (Suter, 2012).

Since qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative, I drew from the constant comparative method of data analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This method was

used to examine my research questions. I began with identifying segments in the data that are responsive to my research questions. I used “open coding” which meant that I was open to anything possible at the beginning of my analysis and made notes next to bits of data (Merriam, 2009). For example, in order to capture initial responses to the research question of the role of elementary schools and teachers, I assigned codes on the right side of my transcripts such as protecting against school violence and domestic violence, providing social welfare, having an all-round capability, and providing something that the current society needs etc. While assigning codes, I read my interview transcripts multiple times which helped me become familiar with my data and helped me learn to better recognize important pieces of data. Due to the amount of data, I realized that using a computer program was efficient to organize my data. Therefore, I began to use MAXQDA software. I put my previously created codes into the software program, which also gave me the opportunity to go over my data a few more times.

While putting the codes into the program, I also started doing “axial coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or “analytical coding” (Merriam, 2009) which is the process of grouping open codes. When I found recurring patterns and regularities, I created categories and sorted subsequent items into the categories (Merriam, 2009). In the transcripts of interviews, for example, participants talked about tasks which provided promotion points, teachers’ transfer to non-preferred schools for promotion points etc., so I tentatively put these codes under a category of earning promotion points. Then, when I found codes of issues or related to promotion points in subsequent transcripts, I put those codes into this larger category.

Some codes could be used in more than one category. In such cases, I tentatively assigned the codes under both categories. For example, teachers were taking on some

administrative tasks because they were included in their duties, while at the same time working on those administrative tasks increased the opportunity for some teachers to be promoted by earning promotion points. I thus assigned codes of some job descriptions to both categories, in this case administrative work and earning promotion points. In this manner, I continued to generate tentative categories. Simultaneously, I started checking whether previously generated categories “hold up” as I analyzed subsequent data (Merriam, 2009). Some categories remained solid and others did not hold up at the end. Gradually, I constructed my final set of categories. After finalizing my categories, I switched my stance from an inductive stance to a deductive mode, where I started looking for more evidence to support or refute my final set of categories. I kept doing this work until I reached a sense of saturation.

Validity and Reliability (Credibility and Consistency)

Although it is impossible for a qualitative researcher to capture an objective “truth” or “reality,” to enhance validity and reliability in this study I used the following strategies: triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer review. Triangulation is the most well-known strategy (Merriam, 2009) and was achieved in this study by multiple sources of data and multiple methods of data collection. As for multiple sources, I collected interview data from multiple people of different ages, genders, teaching experiences, and perspectives. In addition, although I collected data mostly from interviews with participants, I checked their interviews with relevant documents, such as official documents produced by the government and documents from individual schools as well as scholarly articles. For example, regarding teachers’ work, I compared what participants said about their work

against documents of performance-based pay criteria and job assignment and scholarly articles that analyzed teachers' work after researchers observed or interviewed teachers.

My second strategy for ensuring internal validity was member checks. I asked some participants whom I interviewed for their feedback on my emerging findings. Member checks were used to ensure my interpretations of collected data were reliable. After generating findings, I sent them to some participants to clarify if my analyses were accurate and captured fully the phenomenon of the Korean elementary school teachers' teaching environment. Adequate engagement in data collection was also used. I ended up interviewing 29 participants up to the point when the data and emerging findings felt saturated. Furthermore, I engaged in researcher reflexivity, which refers to "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). This reflexivity is partially demonstrated by the explanation of my positionality as an insider and an outsider earlier in this chapter and how I have come to research this topic.

As for external validity or transferability, I used rich and thick description. In order to enhance the possibility of the results of a qualitative research project transferring to another setting (Merriam, 2009), I described the setting and participants of the study and findings with as much detail as possible. In particular, I presented findings with the most detailed evidence in the form of quotes from participant interviews and documents. In this way, I expect that people reading this study can better decide whether and to what extent the findings apply to their particular situations. Stake (1995, 2000) has called this "naturalistic generalization." Naturalistic generalization "invites readers to apply ideas from the natural and in-depth depictions presented in case studies to personal contexts" (Melrose, 2009, p.600).

Chapter Four: Two Salient and Apparently Contradictory Aspects of Korean Education

In this chapter, I show two circumstances which may seem contradictory when viewed from outside Korea. Korea has been able to attract and retain high quality teachers, but at the same time the education system and these same teachers are increasingly distrusted by the Korean public. Among several causes, I investigate four major reasons that high quality teachers have been recruited and retained. On the other hand, I also examine the public's current distrust toward Korean education and teachers. Despite different views on the problems of Korean education, I describe three common problems frequently discussed by the Korean public in this chapter: fierce competition for the university entrance exam; excessive dependence on so-called "shadow education" (cram schools and private tutoring); and school collapse, which means that students are not engaged in or are running away from learning at school. I explain them below in detail.

Reasons for High Quality Teachers in Korea

Internationally, many nations have had concerns about attracting and retaining high quality teachers. Teaching has not been considered an attractive occupation and high teacher attrition rates have been observed in many countries including the U.S and U.K (OECD, 2005). However, there are some countries, including Korea, Taiwan, and Finland, where the teaching profession has been attractive, and has recruited and retained high quality teachers. In these countries, students have outperformed other OECD countries on international tests. This positive correlation between the high-quality teachers and students' high academic scores has re-confirmed the importance of recruiting, preparing, and retaining high quality teachers. Many studies have paid attention to what factors have contributed to making the teaching profession

attractive in some countries (e.g. Fwu & Wang, 2002; Hargreaves, 2009; Hwang, Chang, & Kuo, 2007; Malaty, 2004). Although such factors vary among countries, scholars list some common features that determine the status of teachers or teaching, including socio-historical precedents, the size and nature of the teaching force, salaries and qualifications, image, and knowledge and expertise (e.g. Hoyle, 2001; Wolfensberger, 2000). Due to Confucian culture and the Japanese influence during the Japanese colonial period, the features of the Korean case include socio-historical factors, government policies, salaries and qualification etc.

Given these determinants of the status of teachers and the Korean socio-historical context, I look into the reasons for high quality teachers in Korea: 1) the social perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession; 2) the opportunity of social mobility and benefits for individuals through the teaching profession; 3) the job stability of the teaching profession; and 4) the feminization of teaching. In the social perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession, I examine the traditional views of teaching and teachers and the image of teachers as intelligent that have been constructed socially and historically. Secondly, for individual teachers, they have chosen the teaching profession from the beginning of the modern education system because it provided an opportunity for social mobility and they received some benefits from the government. Thirdly, I show that the job stability of the teaching profession has become very attractive in the current unstable economic situation. The feminization of teaching, which is the last reason, may or may not hurt the status of teaching in Korea. However, considering the patriarchal dominance of Korean society in general, it has been observed that a lot of academically successful female students have been entering teaching a field within a less gender-discriminated environment, and in turn the flocking of intelligent female students into the field has raised the entering bar for teaching (Shin, K., 2014). Thus, I look into the feminization of

teaching to explain the reasons for the high-quality teachers in Korea. These reasons are not actually separate but connected with one another. I divide them only for organizational and explanatory purposes in this chapter.

The social perceptions on teaching and the teaching profession. Although teachers have traditionally enjoyed a great deal of respect in Korea, it might not be entirely accurate to say that teaching was a “profession.” The concept of “professionalized” teacher education did not exist until the late nineteenth century. As in many other countries, in recent years in Korea there have been efforts to professionalize teaching by the government through a lengthening of the period of teacher education; an increase in teachers’ salaries; and the improvement of teachers’ autonomy (Yeom, 2007). It is hard to conclude that Korean teachers historically enjoyed prestige as professionals. Thus, a different angle is required to understand the high status of teaching and teachers in the Korean context.

Traditionally, Korean society has valued education and has shown high respect for teachers. The root of valuing education and respect for teachers originated in Confucianism. Confucianism has influenced the idea of Korean education since it became the primary system of belief during the Joseon Dynasty (1392~1910). Under Confucian influence, education was considered very important to develop a good character and morality. Scholars who were great teachers were regarded as people equipped with intelligence, a great character, and a good sense of morality. Therefore, they have been held in high respect, and their scholarship has been revered (Seth, 2002). It has been commonly said that out of reverence for one’s teacher, one should not even step on his/her shadow.

Such respect for teachers can be found even in terms in the Korean language terms that are used to indicate teachers. There are different terms that can be translated into a teacher in the Korean language, for example *seon-saeng* (先生), *seu-seung* (師), and *gyo-sa* (教師) etc. While the word of *gyo-sa* began to be used since the modern educational institutions were established and teacher education started in the late 19th century, the words of *seon-saeng* and *seu-seung* have been used for centuries (Ko, 2002). While the meaning of *gyo-sa* is a teacher who teaches in elementary, middle, high school with required qualification, the words *seon-saeng* and *seu-seung* imply someone who has found enlightenment, has a great character, delivers the lessons of the sages, and has great erudition, so much that he can give advice to the King etc. (Ko, 2002).

In addition to character and morality development, Confucian culture emphasized one's social success (not necessarily economic success) through education (Pyo, 2000). During the Choson dynasty, education was the only way for the *yangban* aristocratic elite (and people with commoner status⁸) to pass the civil service examination to become civil officials, an achievement that was highly praised and regarded as an honor for oneself and one's family (Seth, 2002). This tradition that people achieve social success through education has continued and it has created a new culture - "education fever"- in contemporary Korean society (Seth, 2002). In this circumstance, teachers who have been in charge of educating students have been considered very important and their role has been respected.

This traditional view of teaching and teachers shows that Korean people respect and trust teachers because teaching was not only to educate children with the knowledge and skills to

⁸ Historians disagree over whether people with the commoner status took the civil service examination (Seth, 2012).

succeed, but also to help them become better persons with moral and character education. Traditionally, there was no doubt about teachers' knowledge, great character and high morality. Parents trusted and appreciated teachers' decisions even on the corporal punishment of their own children thinking that teachers could make their children good people (Pyo, 2000). Even though these traditional views are not as strong as they used to be, they still exert a strong influence in the mind of the public and on their expectation of teachers. Like a double-edged sword, these traditional views maintain somewhat the high status of teachers and attract high quality teachers, but it sometime becomes a measure to judge teachers' behaviors and attitudes. I will discuss this harsh judgment of teachers in a later section.

In addition to the traditional views on teaching and teachers, teachers have been able to maintain their intelligent and well-educated image among the public even after the modernization of the education system. Between 1884 and 1910, the first teacher institute, *Hanseong Sabom Hakkyo* (Seoul Teachers' School), was considered the highest education institute (Lim, 1998). Students who attended the first teacher institute, and teachers in the initial elementary schools run by the state, *sohakkyo*, were from aristocratic family backgrounds (Lim, 1998).

During the Japanese colonial period (1910 – 1945), teachers were relatively more schooled people. While the majority of Korean people did not receive any formal education, teachers graduated from at least elementary schools and received teacher training. For Koreans during the colonial period, access to education beyond the elementary level was severely restricted (Seth, 2002). Among 14% of Koreans with some schooling, hardly any went on to secondary schools (Oh & Kim, 1998). Table 2 shows that 86% of the whole population rarely

had formal education at the end of the colonial period. Thus, teachers were considerably more educated than the general public.

Table 2

The Composition of Korean Population by Levels of Education (As of May 1944)

Levels of Schools	Males	Females	Total (%)
University	7,272	102	7,374(0.03)
College	18,555	3,509	22,064 (0.1)
Secondary	162,111	37,531	199,642 (0.8)
Elementary*	40,702	9,240	49,942 (0.2)
Elementary**	1,281,490	355,552	1,637,043 (7.2)
Elementary drop-outs	190,250	64,555	254,805 (1.1)
Convenient Schools	864,308	115,814	980,122 (4.3)
No Attendance	8,430,940	11,211,835	19,642,755(86.2)
Total	10,995,628	11,798,138	22,793,766(99.9)

Note. Unit: person (Percentages),

* Elementary Upper-Level, ** Elementary-Lower Level

The information in this table is originally from 1944 Census Report.

Reprinted from “The Increase of Educational Opportunity in Korea under the Japanese Occupation: For Whom the Bell Told?,” by Oh, S. & Kim, K., 1998, *The SNU Journal of Educational Research*, 8, p. 84

Also, it was hard for students to enter teacher institutions during that time. During the Japanese colonial period, Japan systemized discrimination of employment and payment based on one’s academic background (Lee, Yoon, & Ryu, 1997). This discrimination encouraged Korean parents to try to send their children to prestigious schools established by the government (Lee, Yoon, & Ryu, 1997). Graduation from schools approved by the Japanese government was

necessary if one wanted to be a civil servant or to be hired by banks or good companies.

Koreans who resisted attending modern schools at the beginning of the colonial period, realized the importance of school graduation and started to compete with each other to enter a small number of schools from the 1920s (Lee, Yoon, & Ryu, 1997). In particular, in teacher institutes' the competition rate was very high in comparison to that in other kinds of secondary schools because teacher institutions guaranteed employment and provided benefits (Lee, Yoon, & Ryu, 1997). Teachers were considered elites due to the difficulty in entering teacher institutions.

Some scholars argue that Japan intentionally recruited intelligent Koreans to teacher institutions in order to prevent them from inciting betrayal (e.g. Kim, Y., 1987; Park, N., 1997). As mentioned above, a lot of academically successful people entered teacher institutions due to attractive conditions such as financial aid, boarding expenses, and guaranteed employment (Woo & Ahn, 2006). However, they were obliged to serve for a few years after graduation, which kept them in teaching or discouraged them from attending higher levels of schooling. Also, Japan viewed education as an instrument of the formation of an imperial citizen. According to the Educational Ordinance, which was issued by the Government-General of Joseon, "the purpose of the educational system for Koreans was to give the younger generations of Koreans such moral character and general knowledge as will make them loyal subjects of Japan" (Seth, 2002, p. 20). Under the purpose of education, Japan recruited academically promising Koreans to play an important role in implementing the assimilation policies of Japanese imperialism. The Japanese strategy of recruiting bright Korean students into the teacher institutes, teachers' relatively higher education backgrounds, and the difficulty of gaining acceptance to teacher institutions all contributed to the public perception that teachers were people of great intelligence and learning.

It is also ensured that intelligent people would continue to enter teaching after independence in 1945.

An opportunity for social mobility and benefits for individuals through the teaching profession. The ability to raise one's status by becoming a teacher and the benefits provided by teacher institutions have attracted talented people to teaching. Legally, teachers have been regarded as civil officials since 1895. Gojong (1863–1907), the twenty-sixth king and the second-last emperor of the Joseon dynasty announced that a public education system would be provided by the government in 1895, the legal position of teachers as civil servants was established and their official rank and salary system were designed (Ko, 2002).

In Confucian culture, becoming a civil servant was an honor for individuals and their families as mentioned above. Some students viewed the first teacher institute, *Hanseong Sabom Hakkyo* (Seoul Teachers' School), as a toehold to make their way toward becoming a public official, although it is not clear whether the students considered school teaching as their final goal or wanted to pursue a career as a different kind of public official through the teacher institute (Lim, 1998).

During the Japanese colonial period (1910 – 1945), teacher institutes, which were established by the Japanese imperial government in the 1920s, provided benefits such as free tuition and a stipend to attract talented people to teaching as explained above. Considering expensive school tuitions in secondary schools, and that wealthy Koreans had mostly occupied opportunities for education in 1920s through 1930s (Lee, Yoon, & Ryu, 1997), the free tuition from teacher institutions was an attractive deal for students who were smart but who were not able to afford tuition for secondary education.

Also, the position of teachers as civil officials, even low-ranking ones, during that period attracted talented people to teaching as well. Besides the continued influence of the Confucian culture where much respect was given to officials from the Joseon Dynasty, the position of civil official gave teachers significant authority in their villages. In order to control the Korean education system and effectively achieve its goal of forming imperial citizens, the centralized Japanese government made good use of Korean teachers as their assistants of Japanese control by hiring them as government officials (K. Kim, 2013). Although the Korean people greatly resented Japanese control, the status and power they offered teachers was nonetheless a strong draw for the profession. Teachers themselves and their families considered becoming a public school teacher an honor and the general public also showed respect to teachers (K. Kim, 2013). Because teacher status as public officers was maintained during the Japanese colonial period, the prestige of school teachers continued to strengthen (Lee, Ki-Hoon, 2007). The position of teachers as public officials has continued until the present, only the name has changed to public officials for education after the South Korean government established an education act in 1949 (Ko, 2002).

Some benefits, such as a tuition exemption⁹ and guaranteed employment, had attracted many talented people to teaching even after independence from Japan in 1945. Right after independence, there was a severe shortage of teachers because there was a great surge in student enrollment and the Japanese teachers, who made up 40% of all teachers, were gone (Seth, 2002; Woo & Ahn, 2006). The prestige of being a teacher and the Korean poor economic condition attracted educated people to teaching in spite of its relatively low wages in those days (Seth,

⁹ A tuition exemption was abolished in 1990 (Yoon, 1998).

2002). However, when teachers' turnover rate increased in the 1960s through the 1970s because of more job opportunities created by Korea's rapid economic development, especially for men, the government introduced benefits to induce talented high school graduates into teaching. These included tuition exemption with mandatory service and job guarantee for education majors at public teachers' colleges; a guaranteed retirement age of 65; and exemption from compulsory military service¹⁰ (G. Kim, 2002). Combinations of these incentives and social perceptions of teaching and teachers have attracted talented people to teaching in Korea.

Job stability. School teachers in Korea have had a guaranteed retirement age of 62 since 1999. People jokingly call the teaching job the "Iron-bowl" because teachers are not easily fired unless they commit crimes or conduct misbehaviors. Also, after they retire, they receive a public official's pension.

Since the IMF (International Monetary Fund) financial crisis, which was a painful blow to Koreans in 1997, job stability has become the most important factor for many of Korean people when choosing a job (Keum & Cho, 2004). As a lot of people who worked in the private sector were dismissed and individual businesses failed, becoming a civil official increased in popularity and competition (S. Kim, 2005). As a civil service job, school teaching has become popular and admission to university teacher preparation programs has become competitive. The vast majority of elementary school teachers are recruited from the top 5% of the high school academic cohort (E. Kim, 2007). As for secondary school teaching candidates, there are many more qualified teacher candidates produced each year than are needed by the schools (K. Shin,

¹⁰ An exemption from compulsory military service for male elementary school teacher candidates was ended in 1989 (W. Kwon, 2015).

2014). As a result, only 30% of secondary school teaching candidates are able to find jobs (E. Kim, 2007). Thus, for secondary school teachers, the recruitment process is selective, but at the hiring rather than the admissions phase. The job stability of school-teaching has attracted and retained a lot of intelligent people to teaching in Korea. Choosing a job is an individual decision, but the applicant's social circumstances affect one's decision. If the Korean economic situation had not had such a bad downturn and the private sector had maintained its abundant profits, the job stability of public teaching jobs would likely be considered as less attractive.

The feminization of teaching. Like many other OECD countries, teaching in Korea has been feminized rapidly in recent years. Teaching has become increasingly feminized in Korea since the 1980s. In elementary schools, the rate of female teachers exceeded 50% in 1990 (Song, 2000) and it was 78.6% in 2014 (OECD, 2016a). For secondary schools, there were 46.5% and 22.9% of female teachers in middle schools and in high schools respectively in 1990 (Song, 2000), whereas in 2014, female teachers made up 69% of middle school teachers and 50% of high school teachers (OECD, 2016a). Unlike the case of the U.S., where the feminization of teaching led to clearly negative perceptions such as lack of academic competence in female teachers (Condliffe Lagemann, 2000), it is more difficult to understand the overall influence of the feminization of teaching in Korea because the feminization of teaching there has not only given teaching the negative stereotypes associated with women, but has, through the huge numbers of talented female applicants, actually raised the entry bar of teacher education programs.

The history of formal education for females is relatively short in Korea and female teachers were not recruited until the Japanese colonial period due to the predominance of the

Confucian idea that men should be considered above women (B. Lee, 1999). Women were excluded from formal education and were not able to be civil officials during the Joseon Dynasty. Starting from a single private school founded in the late 1880s, education for women increased slowly (B. Lee, 1999). During the Japanese colonial period, elementary school teacher education for females began, but the number of students in the teacher education programs was very small. The Confucian culture did not allow women and men to be in the same classroom, so it was generally accepted that female teachers should teach only female students. The elementary school enrollment ratio of females was low (K. Kim, 2016). Therefore, the number of female teachers was small too.

For women who had more than a secondary education, many wanted to be a teacher and the elementary school teaching was the most typical job for them (B. Lee, 1999). The Japanese imperial government helped establish the social atmosphere that teaching would be the best fit for women in order to solve the problem of a teacher shortage (B. Lee, 1999). Teaching had a good social reputation for women (Park, J. 2004). Also, the public teaching job was the only civil official position allowed for women (K. Kim, 2016). Although Korean female teachers were discriminated against in regards to their salaries and in their chances to rise up the career ladder, and they often quit teaching after marriage, pregnancy, or childbirth, the teaching job provided them economic capability and independence (K. Kim, 2016). This helped create a new image of women. The new image of women had an impact on other women by improving the status of women and giving them hope for education, self-realization, and confidence (B. Lee, 1999).

The feminization of teaching has been driven by women's equal access to education and economic situations (Song, 2000; Shim, 2002). As women have achieved higher degrees since 1945, many women with college degrees have entered teaching (Song, 2000). On the other hand, as male dominated industries have grown rapidly, teaching has increasingly become less attractive for them (Song, 2000). Even while many male teachers left teaching because of more job opportunities available in the 60s and 70s, and that caused a teacher shortage, many intelligent women filled replaced their vacant positions (N, Park, 1997).

The 1997~1998 economic crisis attracted more top female students to teaching. The crisis made people realize the importance of job stability because a lot of people who worked in the private sector were dismissed and individual businesses failed (S. Han, 2017). Especially, elementary school teaching has become popular among female students and their parents. Since the crisis, entering a teachers' university has become even more competitive and only the top 3% female students of the high school academic cohort have been able to become teachers, whereas a majority of male students who received the same high scores on the SAT have chosen different professions (Y. Kim, 2015).

Although teachers' academic scores have greatly increased in recent years and the public perceives it to be very difficult to become a public school teacher, the feminization of teaching has been perceived negatively. Some scholars (Kim, Lim, & Han, 1971; Shin, Geuk-Beom & Choi, Don-Min, 1986) and major new media (e.g. the Dong-A Daily News, Maeil Business Newspaper, Kyunghyang Daily News, & MBC news) have demonstrated their negative biases towards women in their discussion of the topic of the feminization of teaching, showing their worries that male students would become feminized and female teachers would not be able to

manage classrooms and to teach physical education. Such negative perceptions of feminized teaching reveals that the status of female teachers is not the same as that of male teachers and they are regarded as somewhat incompetent despite their high academic scores. This reflects one side of Korea's patriarchal culture. In a newspaper article, Jeong (2015) argues that the feminization of teaching is a product of Korea's "sexist" labor market because female teachers receive relatively less discrimination in the teaching profession compared to the discrimination they face in other professions. It is interesting to note that Park, Nam-Gi (1997) worries that many smart female students will avoid teaching, as do their counterparts in the U.S., if Korean society achieves greater gender equality.

Despite such negative opinions on the feminization of teaching in Korea, it is still true that becoming a teacher in Korea is relatively difficult and the image of teachers as well-educated and intelligent has been maintained because many smart female students have chosen teaching as their career.

Reasons for the Distrust of Teachers and K-12 Education (Major Problems of K-12 Education)

It does not seem to make sense that the Korean public does not trust its K-12 education and teachers despite high academic students' scores on international tests, and academically competent teachers. Korean students have shown high scores on the international tests over the past 10 years and many people around the world have praised "the best" Korean education system (e.g. Coughlan, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Pearson, 2014). Even the former U.S. president Barack Obama and former secretary of education Arne Duncan have praised the Korean education system repeatedly in public (Haimson, 2011). Of course, it is true that Korea

has been developing rapidly, and education has been the engine of its economic growth. In order to bring about such dramatic economic growth, a series of authoritarian governments, for example, the governments of President Park, Jeong-hee (1972~1979) and President Chun, Doo-Wan (1980~1988), controlled the education system to produce skillful workers who could work for thriving industries (Seth, 2002). Along with Korea's strong desire for education, which has been called "education fever" (Seth, 2002), the government-driven efforts have made it possible for Korea to be ranked the highest among OECD member countries in the percentage of people (98%) aged from 25 to 34 who have an upper secondary qualification in 2014 (OECD, 2015). Korea also had 69% of its 24 to 34 year old adults graduate from junior college, university, or graduate school in 2015, which is the highest among OECD countries (OECD, 2016a).

However, those who have been educated in the Korean education system would not likely be proud of complements about Korean education and such impressive figures. It is even often said that there is a "crisis" in K-12 education. The Korean people in general think that there are many problems in the Korean education system (Ripley, 2013). Different groups of people have different views of the problems, and people's thoughts on the purpose of education and the role of teachers have changed with the times (Lim, J., 2012). Despite such differences, some major problems with the education system are often raised to demand or justify educational changes by the public, educational scholars, and the government. Due to limited space and the purpose of this section, I am not going to describe all those problems exhaustively here. However, the most frequently cited and most salient problems include, for example, fierce competition for the university entrance exam; excessive dependence on so-called "shadow education" (cram schools and private tutoring); "school (or classroom) collapse," which means that students are not engaged in or are running away from learning at school; outdated and boring classroom teaching;

increased school violence among students; and a lack of personality education to name a few (Im, Kim, Han, Hwang & Jeong, 2016; MOE, 2016a; Kim, J. 2004; Lee, C et al., 2001). Among these problems, I look into the three that Koreans often feel are the most concerning: fierce competition for the university entrance exam; excessive dependence on shadow education (cram schools and private tutoring); and school collapse. They are related to each other, but for the purpose of this dissertation I examine them separately.

Fierce competition for the university entrance exam. Since Korean society regards educational credentials as extremely important, Korea has developed a notorious standardized test system to rank and select students for limited spots in higher levels of schooling. The Korean people's obsession with such tests has created what is regularly called "exam hell" (Seth, 2002). The most high-stake test is the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), which is like the SAT in the U.S. But the pressure on Korean students to score high is extremely intense because it is believed that the test result decides the rest of their future (Goren & Blair, 2014). Senior year high school students and some repeaters, who have already taken the test more than once, are offered the exam once a year. It is half seriously and half-jokingly said that Korean students prepare for the test for 12 years, from elementary school to high school.

The competitive exam system has created many side effects. First of all, the market for private, after-school classes have dramatically expanded, giving additional burdens to both students and parents. The private, after school classes often referred to as shadow education include customers paying for after-school lessons within regular schools, informal and individual tutoring, cram schools, correspondence courses, and online tutoring etc. (Bray 1999; Byun, 2014; LeTendre 1994; Lee & Shouse, 2011; Stevenson & Baker 1992; Tsukada 1991). In order to be

competitive on exams, many parents and students feel that extra learning, besides regular schooling, is necessary and it has become a cultural commonplace that most students go to “cram schools” (*hagwon*) and receive private tutoring. In 2015, 80.8 percent of primary school students, 69.4 percent of middle school students, and 56.8 percent of general high school students used some form of private tutoring service (Statistics Korea, 2016a). Also, 57.2% of Korean students from elementary to high school paid for after-school lessons at regular schools in 2015 (Statistics Korea, 2016a). For the students, it is heavy burden to study late into the night by taking extra classes after school, while parents feel the economic burden by paying a huge amount money for such classes. According to the Statistics Korea (2016a), Korean students who had extra classes spent 5.7 hours per week besides regular schooling in 2015. Korea’s annual private extra class market, valued at 33 billion dollars, is equivalent to 8.8% of the total USD \$375.4 billion national budget (Woo, 2015). For public education, Korea spends only 70% of the average spent by other OECD countries. However, with regard to spending on after-school classes Korea spends 3 times more than the OECD average (Woo, 2015).

Second, exclusively focusing on test preparation has narrowed the school curriculum. Since tests are very important at higher levels of education, high schools especially focus mostly on the few subjects tested and it is often said that students learn only fragmentary knowledge and strategies for taking a test to score high on the tests. Also, students and parents as well do not want to waste their time on other subjects and teachers note that they sometime complain when the curriculum is far away from what is necessary for exams (Abelmann, Choi, & Park, 2012). Regarding this test-oriented school system, some (e.g. Son, 2014) worry that this system impedes students’ moral development and prevents whole person education, while others (e.g. So, 2012) believe that students need to learn other skills that are more necessary for the 21st century, such

as critical thinking, creativity, and interpersonal skills. However, the Korean intensive test system has hindered educational changes and experiments for improving the school curriculum. Although some critics argue that Korean education has not produced innovative businessmen such as Bill Gates or any Nobel Prize winners, as has the system in the United States (Seth, 2002), as long as the intensive test system exists it will be hard to change what students learn from schools.

Lastly, not only does the competitive exam itself generate a lot of stress and put pressure on students, but it creates a network of activities (e.g. long study hours, cram schools) which also add to this stress and pressure. The pressure from students' parents is enormous, which has even been described as "child abuse" (Koo, 2014; Ravitch, 2014). These long hours of study, no free time, and excessive pressure have contributed to a high rate of depression among Korean students (Lee & Larson, 1999; Lee, M., 2003). Korea notoriously has maintained high suicide rates relative to other OECD countries since 2003 (OECD, 2016b). Although Korean 15 – 19 year-olds' suicide rate was ranked 13th from the top among OECD countries in 2013 (OECD Family Database, 2015), the rate was still higher than the average of OECD countries and the rate has gradually increased. Also, among the causes of death, suicide is the number one cause of death among Korean youth (age 9 – 24) from 2007, and 7.4 in every 100,000 youth committed suicide (Statistics Korea, 2016b). In a 2013 survey of teenagers (ages 13 – 19) who attempted to commit suicide, the most common reason for their attempt was problems with their grades and entering a university (39.3 %) followed by financial difficulty at a distant second (19.5 %) (Statistics Korea, 2015). Every year after the university entrance exams, the mass media is flooded with stories about students killed themselves because their scores were lower than they

had hoped (Choi, Lee, Jeong, & Kwon, 2011). In this way, the fierce competition for the exam has been hurting Korean students mentally and physically.

Excessive dependence on shadow education (cram schools and private tutoring). As explained above, the majority of Korean students take extra classes beside regular schooling and the market for private classes has dramatically expanded. Under the intense competition of the college entrance exam, students and their parents as well are nervous and feel anxiety about lagging behind other students, and they rely heavily on shadow education (M. Kim, 2012). Among different types of shadow education, cram schools (*hagwon*) are the most common among Korean students (Byun, 2014). In *hagwon*, classes are small and tracked by students' academic ability, so students receive individualized care and instructions from teachers and they also maintain close relationships with teachers (M. Kim, 2012; Y. Kim, 2007). Therefore, many students and their parents are very satisfied with *hagwon* education and they think that they receive better quality of education than regular schools (Y. Kim, 2007). Despite these positive evaluations on *hagwon* education from students and their parents, Korean people have a negative opinion of shadow education in general, in addition to the obviously negative burdens that this kind of education puts on students and their parents.

First, although there are many different reasons students begin shadow education, most students choose shadow education to learn things ahead of their regular school classes that is called as *seonhaenghakseup* (learning in advance and preparing for higher levels of schools). When students were given a survey on which multiple answers were allowed, 81.2 % of students taking extra classes besides regular schools said that they chose shadow education for supplementary lessons in 2015 (Statistics Korea, 2016a). Also, 80 % of students said that they

took extra classes for preparation for higher grades and *seonhaenghakseup* (Statistics Korea, 2016a). With learning in advance through shadow education, students learn three to twenty-four months earlier than they are scheduled to learn in regular schools (M. Kim, 2012). Although there are few empirical studies about negative effects of learning in advance on students' learning, people opposing learning in advance argue that learning ahead disrupt classes in regular schools by harming other classmates and exhausting students themselves. For example, some students who do not attend extra classes are marginalized when most their classmates already knew what they are learning, and teachers speed up classes and do not explain enough because most students seem to know (T. Jeong, 2014). Also, students get exhausted because of overload, and lose concentration and an interest in classes because they think that they already knew the content of classes (H. Kim, 2014). For these reasons, the government has established a law to ban learning ahead in shadow education in order to normalize K-12 classes in 2014 (MOE, 2014a), which the ban is still controversial among the public over its feasibility and effectiveness.

Second, actually regulating shadow education has happened in the past too. Since shadow education has been considered to increase class inequality due to its high costs and limited access for low income families, the government has long exerted tight control over cram schools and private tutoring (M. Kim, 2012; S. Park, 2012; Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2010). One example of this is that in the name of equality of educational opportunity, the military government of Chun, Doo Hwan (1980 – 88) proposed the “7. 30 (July 30th) Educational Reform,” which prohibited all kinds of shadow education in 1980. It is a common phenomenon that a considerable portion of household expenditure goes into shadow education costs and it causes a lot of financial strain for many families. As a result, children from low income families

are more disadvantaged in access to shadow education than children from high income families (Byun, 2014). In 2015, while families earning, on average, more than ₩7,000,000 KRW (about USD \$6,000) per month spent an average of ₩420,000 KRW (USD \$365) each month and 82.8% of the students in these families took shadow education, families making less than 1,000,000 KRW (USD \$868) per month spent an average of ₩66,000 KRW (USD \$57) each month and only 32.1% of them participated in shadow education (Statistics Korea, 2016a). This survey shows that families' income and participation rate of shadow education are tightly related. The polarized spending on and participation in shadow education has become a social concern. It is assumed that education does not play a role as social mobility anymore, rather it is used to maintain the class status of middle and upper classes. There is a nostalgic Korean phrase of "dragons rising from streams," meaning that there is a chance for those of humble origins to become successful. However, many people have realized and become frustrated over the fact that it is nearly impossible to enter prestigious universities unless their parents can afford to pay for their extra education through shadow education. Thus, shadow education has increased educational inequality among Korean students.

Lastly, despite students' and their parents' positive comments on cram schools and private tutoring, many Korean people are worried that shadow education may produce dependency on the crams schools themselves. In order to gather more students to enhance their profits, cram schools try to achieve the most visible outcome in the minimum amount of time. As a result, most cram schools choose a more traditional pedagogy - rote memorization, repetition, simplification, drills, targeting questions that appear frequently on tests (M. Kim, 2012; Y. Kim, 2007). Many students and parents find these teaching methods helpful and reassuring (M. Kim, 2012). However, many people argue that this heavy dependency on cram

schools is robbing students of their capacity to learn on their own and other important skills such as creativity and critical thinking (e.g. Do, Park, Kim, & Cho, 2016; MOE, 2014b).

School (classroom) collapse. It is generally accepted that the K-12 education is in crisis and it is observed that every year the Korean government proposes some policies under the name of “*gonggyoyuk Jeongsanghwa* (normalization of public education (K-12 education)).” The discourse of the K-12 education crisis gained its strength with an increase in the phenomenon of “*hakgyo bunggoe* (school (classroom) collapse).” School (classroom) collapse rose on the surface and became a heated public discourse between 1999 and 2000. The term “collapse” reflects Korean society’s shocked reaction to students’ inappropriate behaviors such as truancy, sleeping and chatting with their classmates during classes, violent misbehavior, and challenges to teachers’ authority. Such students’ misbehaviors seemed to prove to a concerned Korean public that the K-12 school education was not functioning properly and teachers were not able to manage the crisis well or that they had just given up. Furthermore, reporting on “school collapse” showed that it was not just a one-time incident, but a consistent phenomenon spread nationwide. The major newspapers and broadcasts contributed significantly to showing the naked reality of what was happening in classrooms and this further entrenched the public’s perception that K-12 school education was in crisis and failing (J. Lim, 2012; B. Nah, 2001; H. Shin, 2003; J. Kim, 2002).

The vivid scenes of school collapse described and captured by new media stirred the whole nation. The Korean public had thought that uncontrollable classrooms existed only in foreign countries and movies. Of course, there were concerns about students who did not pay attention to class earlier than the phrase “school collapse” was introduced (e.g. I. Lee, 1990).

From the time between 1999 and 2000, however, prevalent and serious school problems were extensively reported and studied (J. Kim, 2002). Unlike the U.S. where the crisis of public education is related to students' low academic scores, the crisis of public education in Korea is more concerned with students who run away from schools or who challenge the traditional hierarchical order between teachers and students rather than their poor academic scores (B. Nah, 2001). Also, to be exact, it is not only a problem of public education, but a crisis of the whole K-12 formal school system including private schools in Korea. Therefore, it would be more proper to describe the crisis as not just a public education crisis, but simply a crisis of K-12 education in its entirety.

In order to diagnose the crisis, various groups of people voiced different opinions about the causes of school collapse. Many teachers and some scholars claimed that school collapse was caused by flawed education policies such as lowering teachers' mandatory retirement age from 65 to 62 in 1999, prohibiting teachers from receiving bribes from parents, and the banning of corporal punishment in schools, which have undermined teachers' dignity, authority and their control over students (e.g. Park & Kim, 2002; W. Kim, 2000; J. Yoon, 2003). Due to the fact that teachers have been targeted by these educational policies, but excluded from policy making, they have come to feel a sense of loss, become discouraged, and lack enthusiasm, and students increasingly do not respect teachers anymore (e.g. J. Yoon, 2003; Kim & Koh, 2000). Furthermore, many teachers, some scholars, and some parents have criticized students and families for a lack of familial education brought about by their emphasis on high tests scores over all else, such that students have become individualized, selfish, and have simply acted as they liked even at school (e.g. Park & Kim, 2002; S. Sim, 1999; I. Lee, 1999).

On the other hand, many students and parents insisted that teachers have maintained the status quo and its ineffectiveness, and that they have neither prepared for the changing world and the teaching of younger generations nor developed their professionalism (e.g. J. Jeon, 1999; C. Yun, 1999; J. Kim, 2002). They also criticized the test-oriented school system, teaching by rote, and uniform curriculum, which neither motivated students' desire to learn nor gave them a chance to develop a good relationship with teachers (e.g. Kim & Koh, 2000). Additionally, some scholars argued that school collapse was caused by a conflict between the traditional school culture and the current youth's culture (e.g. Cho, 2000; Ryu, 2001; M. Kim, 2000). Also, others pointed out that the old rigid public education system is not appropriate in a postmodern society, so that school collapse is an inevitable consequence (e.g. Yi, J. et al, 2000; J. Jeong, 2001).

Based on these diagnoses, different remedies have been proposed and some of them have been reflected in the educational policies of the Korean government. Several scholars and policy makers who considered maintaining traditional values and a Confucian philosophy of education emphasized the need to strengthen moral education at school and to retain teachers' authority and morality (J. Lim, 2012). Some groups of scholars and teachers who believed that the current school system was established on an authoritarian and bureaucratic model, insisted that democratic school management and participatory democracy in schools were essential to overcoming school collapse (e.g. Hwang, 2001; Sim, 1999). These two different groups shared somewhat similar ideas about the collective goals of education and rejected the marketization of the education system.

On the other hand, neoliberals, including a group of parents from middle- and upper-middle class backgrounds and the conservative mass-media, contended that schools would need

to adopt certain globalized characteristics such as a greater emphasis on individualism, unlimited competition, and diversity (J. Lim, 2012). They believed that the failure of schools was caused by the government's policy on the equalization of high schools (randomization in high school admission), the inflexible and uniform school system, and the lack of competition in the schooling system itself, including competition among teachers and individual schools (J. Lim, 2012). Therefore, they suggested early tracking, differentiated curricula, more independent private schools, flexible admission policies for universities, and competition among individual schools and teachers. These suggestions have been adopted by the subsequent government's educational policies. Besides these three groups described above, there is a more radical group responding to school collapse by rejecting the formal school system itself. This group of people introduced alternatives to the formal schooling such as homeschooling and alternative schools calling for students' right to pursue happiness (e.g. H. Cho Han, 1999).

Although the use of the word school collapse has been reduced, discourses on crisis of K-12 education have continued up to the present. In order to overcome school collapse and the crisis, the Korean government has adopted many of suggestions described above. In the context of global educational reforms in particular, the voices from neoliberals have seemed stronger than other voices considering educational policies and teacher policies adopted since then. I look into those policies in the next chapter, which is about the educational reforms which have occurred in the past 20 years in Korea.

Chapter Five: Educational Reforms in Korea in the Context of Global Education Reform Movement

The common elements of the GERM (the Global Educational Reform Movement) have also been observed in Korea, but some of these features existed in Korea even earlier than the GERM and some GERM features have been modified by the Korean context. In this chapter, I look into current Korean educational reforms as they have resulted from the interplay of the global and the local, mainly from 2008 through 2016 when the GERM's influence seemed the strongest in Korea. First, I show a brief history of the education reforms from 1995 to 2008 to give background to more recent educational reforms in the Korean context. Then, I discuss the relationship between recent Korean educational reforms and the five common features of the GERM: increased competition among schools, standardization of teaching and learning, focus on core subjects, test-based accountability, and school choice.

Educational Reforms in Korea from 1995 to 2008

Major educational reforms have often occurred when a new president is elected in Korea. From 1995 to 2016, Korea's presidents (Kim, Young-sam (1993 ~ 1998), Kim, Dae-jung (1998 ~ 2003), Roh, Moo-hyun (2003 ~ 2008), Lee, Myung-bak (2008 ~ 2013), and Park, Geun-hye (2013 ~ 2017) carried out similar educational reforms even though they were from different political backgrounds. This similarity is largely due to the fact that the Korean educational reforms from the past 20 years are deeply rooted in the May 31st (5. 31) Education Reform Proposal in 1995. Thus, to examine the current educational reforms, understanding the May 31st Education Reform Proposal is essential. Although many scholars (Y. Kim, 2001; H. Kim, 2000; B. Lee, 2002) have criticized the reform proposal, citing a heavy neoliberal influence, the

proposal was comprehensive and promised fundamental changes in the education system. In this section, I plan to look into each government's educational reform from 1995 to 2008, from the Kim, Young-sam government that produced the May 31st educational reform proposal to the proposals of Roh, Moo-hyun's government. My discussion of the 2008-2016 educational reforms from the Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governments in relation with the GERM follows this overview.

Kim, Young-sam government (1993-1998). In 1993, President Kim, Young-sam's win in the election was considered remarkable. After a series of authoritarian military governments (1961 ~ 1992), his government was the first civilian government in Korean history. As I described earlier in Chapter Two, the whole world had experienced big social, economic, and political changes in the late 20th century. Korea was also experiencing remarkable historical changes during this time. Although Korea had been seen as one of the most successful countries in the world in terms of rapid economic development, there were a lot of Korean people who struggled and fought for democracy under the authoritarian military governments for a long time (Cumings, 2005). Through the sacrifices of countless individuals, Young-sam Kim (1993-1998), who was a democratic activist, was inaugurated.

President Kim reformed previous systems to meet the demands of the Korean public. He carried out intensive reforms in many areas. Especially, he called himself the "Education President" and established the Presidential Commission for Education Reform in 1994 to provide guidelines for a major overhaul of the educational system (Seth, 2002). During the time of these reform efforts, worldwide economic depression had an impact on Korean economy too. To improve the Korean economy and be competitive in the global market, the Korean government

adopted neoliberal strategies such as reducing government intervention and strengthening market forces and emphasizing globalization (Ahn & Ha, 2015). These global trends had a heavy influence on the May 31st Education Reform proposal in 1995.

The May 31st educational reform proposal intended to make fundamental and comprehensive changes in the Korean education system. The reform was carried out not only to solve Korean local educational problems such as the excessive competition in university entrance exams and the financial burden of extra private education, but also to cope with global trends like globalization and a global society increasingly shaped by information and knowledge (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995). In this regard, it is said that the May 31st educational reform has changed the “paradigm of Korean education” (Ahn & Ha, 2015). After the May 31st educational reform proposal, there were three more proposals announced to add or modify suggestions to the previous proposals between 1995 and 1997. The reform proposals were characterized by the following goals: 1) education for all; 2) a switch from provider-centered to customer-centered education; 3) an increase in the autonomy and accountability of schools; 4) diverse and differentiated education¹¹; and 5) an increase in “digitization,” or the reliance on computers for all aspects of school work (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995). Under these directions, major goals were established, and 120 concrete plans were suggested by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (Ahn & Ha, 2015).

The major goals of the reform in K-12 education included the construction of a school-based management system, development of a new curriculum, establishment of systems to

¹¹ In Korea, “diverse and differentiated education” refers to a move away from a centralized, monolithic curriculum to a locally controlled curricula specific to each district, school or student.

evaluate and support education providers (schools and teachers), training competent teachers and so forth. These details are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Major Goals in K-12 education Suggested by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform

Proposals	Major goals in K-12 education
1 st proposal (5.31.1995)	Construction of school-based management system Curriculum that strengthens character and creativity Elementary and secondary education that respects a variety of learners' personalities Establishment of systems to evaluate and support education providers Training competent teachers Investment of public funding of five percent of GNP in education by 1998
2 nd proposal (2.9. 1996)	Development of a new elementary and secondary educational curriculum Revision or creation of educational laws to achieve educational reforms
3 rd proposal (8.20. 1996)	Reform of the current teachers' professional development training system Projects for the use of information technology in education
4 th proposal (6.2.1997)	Promotion of citizenship education Innovation in elementary and secondary education Reduction of expenses for extra private education

Note. This table was created based on the information from Education Reform Projects I, II, III, & IV

(The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, May 31, 1995; February 9, 1996; August 20, 1996; June 2, 1997)

These goals were materialized in specific plans. For example, in order to construct a school-based management system, building school governance committees from parents and communities, and inviting school principals and teachers from an outside pool¹² were suggested (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995). Regarding a curriculum that

¹² To be a principal, a teacher has to go through a career ladder from a regular teacher, to a head teacher, to a vice-principal, and to principal. However, inviting principals from an outside pool has opened up chances to skip the career ladder for regular teachers and to hire someone from outside the school system. Inviting teachers has given an opportunity for principals to bring teachers from other schools to their schools when most teachers were distributed by the local office of education every 4~5 years based on a city or province's regulation.

strengthens character and creativity, some distinct suggestions were: increasing after-school programs in schools, initiating a more global education, and improving foreign language education. To provide a diverse and differentiated education for a variety of learners, school choice in secondary education was, among other actions, suggested. With regard to training competent teachers, curriculum reforms in in-service teacher education programs, improvement of the teacher recruiting system, and performance-based promotion and pay were among the suggestions made (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995).

The government tried to implement their plans quickly within the space of a single presidential term. 87 out of 120 plans (73%) were implemented (Ahn & Ha, 2015). Some notable achievements of the reform in K-12 education are the establishment of school governance committees; the introduction of English language as a subject to elementary school curricula; and the development of the 7th national curriculum. The establishment of school governance committees was introduced to meet “customers” needs and increase the autonomy of individual schools in management (The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995). All public schools were required to establish school governance committees in 1997 by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Elementary and Secondary Education Act No. 5438, Article 34, 1997).

In addition, English was introduced to 3rd grade in elementary schools for the first time in 1997, despite concerns and criticism (Ahn & Ha, 2015). English had already become a core subject in middle and high schools. Due to globalization, foreign language education and the introduction of English to elementary schoolers were highly stressed.

The 7th national curriculum was also developed in 1997 as the May 31st educational reform proposal suggested. One distinct aspect of the 7th national curriculum was differentiated curriculum, which grouped students by their achievement level. Before the 7th curriculum, all students used to learn in the same classroom with the same content. In the 7th curriculum, math (grades 1~10) and English (grades 7~10) were divided into several levels (ten for math and four for English), with two sub-levels in each level to provide different levels of learning (MOE & HRD [Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development], 1997). Korean (grades 1~10), social studies and science (grades 3~10), and English (grades 3~6) are subjects that offer intense learning for advanced students and supplemented learning for underachievers in each lesson in the same classroom (MOE & HRD, 1997). In secondary schools, students should, according to the changes made by the 7th curriculum, move to different classrooms during math and English classes based on their individual levels.

Despite these accomplishments, some plans such as establishing private independent schools and introducing performance-based pay encountered opposition from teachers, parents, and stakeholders. Also, it was a very short period to implement all the suggestions within the 3 years left in President Kim-Young-sam's term. However, the subsequent governments kept and further developed the main ideas of the May 31st educational reform proposals.

Kim Dae-jung government (1998~2003). Kim Dae-Jung government's educational reform was heavily influenced by the government's strategies to overcome the financial crisis. Kim Dae-jung became a president when the country encountered the economic crisis of 1997-1998 and received a relief loan from the International Monetary Fund. The policy makers of the government claimed that the government's excessive intervention had caused the financial crisis,

and considered reduction of government, privatization, and deregulation as definite ways to overcome the crisis (Ha, 2006). Although Kim Dae-jung, who was the first president elected from an opposing party, not from the ruling party, ended up keeping the neoliberal ideas of the May 31st educational reform when he carried out educational reform (Kang & Ryu, 2014). By changing the name of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE & HRD) in 2001, the government plainly showed its interest in connecting education more tightly to industry needs.

Examples of Kim Dae-jung's educational policies in K-12 education are: the implementation of the 7th national curriculum; the mandatory establishment of school governance committees; the establishment of autonomous schools (*cha-yul hak-kyo*) and specialized high schools; the test trial of private independent high schools (*cha-lip-hyŏng sa-lip ko-tŭng-hak-kyo*); and the introduction of performance-based pay system etc.

In order to diversify K-12 education and expand school choice, autonomous schools and private independent high schools were suggested by the May 31st educational reform proposal. For equality, the Korean government began pursuing a policy of high school equalization wherein new high school students were randomly assigned to schools within their districts, and there was criticism that such a policy impedes student's diverse abilities (Y. Kim, 1995; J. Yoon, et.al, 2002). Autonomous schools and private independent high schools were alternatives to the policy of high school equalization. Autonomous schools were first introduced as regulation-free schools which had freedom to appoint their principal, develop and implement curriculum, use textbooks, and select students as they wished (S. Jeong, 2005) whereas principals of regular public schools were appointed by the central government and public schools had to comply with

the national curriculum and use textbooks produced, authorized, or recognized by the government. From 1999 to 2002, 32 specialized high schools such as alternative high schools, vocational high schools, high schools of arts and sports were assigned as pilot autonomous schools (Kang & Ryu, 2014). Private independent high schools were instituted on a trial-basis to improve the uniformity of education and increase the limited school choice resulting from the earlier High School Equalization Policy (HSEP) (K. Bae, 2013). Independent private high schools are schools that recruit teachers and students and manage their curricula and finances without the government's interference¹³ (K. Bae, 2013). When the establishment of private, independent high schools was suggested by Kim Young Sam's government, it encountered many opponents who viewed the policy as the demand of an elite group who would try to use such expensive private schools as a toehold for prestigious universities (C. Kim, 2002). However, private independent high schools began with six high schools in 2002.

A performance-based pay system was introduced in 2001 despite teachers' resistance. The performance-based pay system was intended to give incentives to teachers based on their workload and abilities (C. Park, 2014). Also, it was expected that constructive competition between teachers would improve teachers' professionalism and increase the quality of education as a result (H. Shin, 2010). Unlike in the U.S., in Korea, a teachers' rate of bonus pay is not decided based mainly on students' test scores, but rather it is based on many criteria that are guided by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE & HRD) and then determined by each school (MEST, 2011a).

¹³ Independence of finances is a big different in private independent schools from autonomous schools. Other differences are that legally either public or private elementary, middle schools, and high schools can choose to be autonomous schools while private independent schools are only one kind (I. Lee, 2004).

The most salient policy pushed by an economic view was lowering teachers' mandatory retirement age although this lowering was not included in educational policies of the May 31st education reform proposal. The public's frustration caused by the economic crisis led to stronger demands for education reform. People were upset with the fact that public teaching jobs were not affected by the economic crisis and requested that public school teachers also share in the country's financial pains (S. Choi, 2013). Lowering teachers' retirement age became a major issue in 1999 and teachers' mandatory retirement age was lowered from 65 to 62. The logic of the MOE & HRD was that "if one older teacher retires, two young teachers can be hired with the same cost" and this would help lower the unemployment rate by hiring young people who had teaching certificates (H. Shin, 2010, p. 37). However, this policy rather caused more expenses than calculated in the form of retirement pensions for retired teachers. After the government lowered the retirement age, more teachers retired than expected because many experienced teachers who were frustrated by the policy and worried about the possibility of receiving less pension later, also retired (H. Shin, 2010).

Furthermore, this policy was criticized by elementary teacher candidates and elementary school teachers for lowering the quality of elementary education (e.g. H. Lim, 2001; Y. Yoon, 2001). The retirement of a lot of teachers, along with the policy of class size reduction, caused a serious shortage of elementary teachers, especially in rural areas. In order to solve the teacher-shortage problem, the government hired temporary teachers and eventually trained people (who had only secondary education certification) for a short time and then hastily hired them to work as full-time elementary school teachers (H. Shin, 2010). In 2001, many teacher candidates from most teachers' colleges came out on the major streets in Seoul and protested against the policy saying that poorly-trained teachers would hurt the expertise and professionalism of elementary

teachers as a group (H. Lim, 2001). Above all, this government's short-sighted teacher policy had a major side effect: teachers felt that they had become targets of the educational reform. Therefore, the educational policies of the Kim Dae-jung government lost the support of teachers (Ahn & Ha, 2015).

Roh Moo-hyun government (2003~2008). President Roh Moo-hyun, who was a human rights lawyer with only a high school diploma, was from the same party as Kim, Dae-jung. He criticized neoliberalism and emphasized equity in education and education as a public good. It was expected that his government would implement education policies which headed in a different direction from those of the previous governments because of his emphasis on equity (vs. excellence) and collaboration (vs. competition) (H. Shin, 2005). His government did indeed try to implement educational policies to provide equal opportunities to every student and to break down chronic Korean education problems, such as academic cliques and the hierarchies among schools.

However, the neoliberal direction of educational reforms established since the May 31st educational proposal continued from the beginning of his term because the president's ambitious plans encountered huge resistance from other political parties and interest groups (H. Shin, 2005). Also, the government did not have enough capability to deal with political conflicts over educational policies and was not fully able to pursue their chosen educational policies in the middle of such conflicts (D. Park, et al., 2007). Furthermore, the government's early-term decisions (e.g. signing up with the World Trade Organization for free trade in higher education

and the introduction of National Education Information System, NEIS¹⁴) surprised and disappointed people including those educators and teachers who had passionately supported him (B. Cheon, 2003). As a result, his educational policies were not welcomed by educational actors and were particularly distrusted by teachers throughout his term (Kang & Park, 2007).

Looking at educational policies during his term, the government planned to improve public education to provide equal opportunities to everyone. In order to improve public education, the government focused on reducing private education expenses because the former president Roh Moo-hyun saw that shadow education had weakened public education and that parents and students had not trusted public education, and in turn shadow education had expanded and weakened public education even more in a vicious circle (MOE & HRD, 2004a). The document of “the Private Education Expense Reduction Policy through Normalizing Public Education (*kong-kyo-yuk chǒng-sang-hwa-lǔl t'ong-han sa-kyo-yuk-pi kyǒng-kam tae-ch'aek*)” shows his major education policies in K-12 education. These policies included schools’ absorption of extracurricular lessons; the improvement of teacher quality; the improvement of the high school equalization policy by expanding school choice and differentiated curriculum; and a guarantee of a national minimum in education. Among these, I discuss the two policies which were most salient during his term.

To reduce shadow education expenses, the government tried to embrace demands for shadow education to the public education system by providing extra classes. For examples, the

¹⁴ NEIS is a website which connects all levels of schools with the Ministry of Education, district offices of education, and other administrative agencies to manage educational administrative work electronically (J. Park, 2007). Until 2005, educational administrative work was dealt through hard copy on paper. For fear of the possibility of personal information leaks and violations of human rights, teachers rejected the policy to put this information on the web from the inauguration of the new government in 2003. However, despite the strong rejection from teachers, the government forcibly began to use NEIS in 2005.

government offered free courses through TV (Educational Broadcasting System, EBS) and internet (e-learning) (MOE & HRD, 2004a). By connecting such courses tightly with the university entrance exam, the government hoped to reduce the number of students taking classes in cram schools and to provide equal opportunities to students from low income families and/or rural areas (MOE & HRD, 2004a). In addition, regular schools have come to offer extra classes of core subjects by school teachers and received less tuition than cram schools and expanded existing after-school programs even by hiring people from outside (MOE & HRD, 2004a). These efforts from the government proved to help reduce mainly low-income families' expenses on shadow education (Kang & Park, 2007). However, at the same time many criticized the fact that these efforts made regular schools into cram schools (D. Park, et al., 2007).

In addition, the Ministry of Education made changes to the college application process in order to reduce the nationwide reliance on shadow education. After these changes, the weight given to students' high school GPA would be considerably higher in the college application process. However, ironically, this change only increased demand for shadow education as parents and students felt even greater need for high GPA's. Nationwide shadow education expenses were 46.8% more in 2007 than they were in 2003 (An, 2015). Therefore, the goal to reduce shadow education was evaluated as unsuccessful.

Improvement of teacher evaluation was also suggested as one of ways to reduce shadow education. This was intended to raise the accountability and credibility of teachers, so that parents would come to trust K-12 school education over shadow education (MOE & HRD, 2004a). Two different teacher evaluation systems that were already operating in schools were the teacher performance rating for promotion and the teacher performance-based pay system.

The teacher performance rating for promotion was adopted in 1964 and targets two groups: teachers and vice-principals (Choi & Park, 2016). This system had been used to aid decision-making regarding promotion, and the results of the evaluation were not automatically given to teachers. Only those teachers considering promotion were concerned with the results of this evaluation. The other one was the teacher performance-based pay system introduced in 2001. Since both systems provided only numbers, scores and rankings among teachers, the results of evaluation did not give teachers any written feedback to improve professional development (E. Kim, 2008; Y. Lee, 2006; J. Lee, 2004; J. Jeon, et al., 2008).

In 2004, an OECD recommendation helped promote a new teacher evaluation system. The OECD reported that the existing Korean evaluation systems (i.e., teacher performance rating for promotion) had critical problems (Coolahan, Santiago, Phair, & Ninomiya, 2004). Key problems were that the systems failed to supply teachers with constructive feedback, advice, and learning opportunities, and mainly the system lacked clear, concrete, and systematic evaluation standards and procedures (Choi & Park, 2016). Therefore, a new teacher evaluation system began in 48 pilot schools in 2005 (Ko, 2011). Teachers, vice-principals, and principals were evaluated by peer teachers, vice principals, principals, students, and parents. It was also expected that the system would help teachers develop professionalism by providing not only scores, but also feedback (Choi & Park, 2016).

However, this system encountered major resistance from teachers (Shin & Park, 2008). Teachers did not like adding one more evaluation system to the already existing ones without replacing or terminating previous ones. Also, they questioned whether the evaluation system could evaluate individual teachers' classes effectively and objectively and whether competition

created by the new evaluation system would help teachers improve their professionalism (Shin & Park, 2008). Therefore, the evaluation system was not fully adopted after all, only operating in pilot schools during the Roh Moo-hyun government. In addition to teachers' resentment against the NEIS as explained above, this turbulence further increased teachers' anger and frustration toward the government (Ahn & Ha, 2015). Thus, teachers became very cynical about and less supportive of the government's educational policies throughout Roh Moo-hyun's term.

Summary

In short, the above descriptions offer a brief overview of the educational reforms conducted by three different Korean governments (Kim Young-sam, Kim Dea-jung, and Roh Moo-hyun) between 1995 and 2008. Despite the different political backgrounds of these administrations, they implemented similar educational policies based on the May 31st proposals that were announced in 1995 in order to solve Korea's local educational problems and at the same time to cope with global trends like globalization. The May 31st proposals have been praised as changing the "paradigm of Korean education" (Ahn & Ha, 2015) but criticized by many scholars (Kim, Y. 2001; Kim, H. 2000; B. Lee, 2002) due to their heavy neoliberal influence.

Looking at many educational policies suggested by the May 31st proposal, it can be seen that the GERM had begun to influence these Korean education reforms. During the three different governments discussed above, distinct educational policies included an emphasis on core subjects (especially English), the expansion of school choice, the introduction of performance-based pay and a new teacher evaluation system. Although it was not a common feature of the GERM, the educational policy of lowering teachers' mandatory retirement age was

implemented in 1999, and this decision was heavily influenced by economic, rather than educational considerations. Due to strong resistance from teachers, parents and advocate groups, some of these policies (school choice and a new teacher evaluation system) were not able to be implemented and were only used on a trial basis during this period (1995-2008). However, the next two governments that I discuss below fully implemented these controversial education policies from 2008 to 2016.

The Korean Education Reforms in Relation to GERM from 2008 to 2016

Korean education reforms occurred between 2008 and 2016 seemed to show strong resemblances to the GERM. Of course, such resemblances did not appear only during that period because the seeds of the GERM were planted by the previous governments and they grew gradually. Then finally, GERM-like reforms did bloom fully in Korea between 2008 and 2016. It is because educational policies suggested by the May 31st education reform proposals such as a new teacher evaluation system, school choice, and school competition through school performance evaluation were implemented completely during the period. Before discussing the relationship between Korean education reforms and the GERM, I briefly mention the backgrounds of the two former presidents who carried out education reforms from 2008 to 2016.

During the period, the two presidents, Lee Myung-bak (2008 ~ 2013) and Park Geun-hye (2013 ~ 2017) were both from the same conservative party and continued to carry out education reforms based on the May 31st education reform proposal. President Lee Myung-bak, who was a businessman, stressed autonomy, competition, and diversity. The aim of educational reform for President Lee was to build a nation with talented people calling *in-jae-dae-gug* (MEST, 2011b). To accomplish this goal, the government used a strategy of reducing government interference.

The government tried to transfer authority to local governments and to expand the autonomy of local governments and schools, while increasing their accountability (MEST, 2008a). The government tried to reduce its size in accordance with the notion that a small government is the best. For example, this administration combined the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology and called this new entity the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) (E. Kim, 2012).

In this way, the Lee Myung-bak government had finally implemented “delayed” education policies which had had only trial runs in previous governments. Therefore, many scholars say that neoliberal education reform was accelerated during his term (e.g. J. Son, 2010; Ahn & Ha, 2015). The expansion of school choice, introduction of nationwide standardized tests in elementary and secondary schools and announcement of test results in public, and autonomous school policies were representative of the new government’s education policies (H. Yoo, 2009). President Park Geun-hye, when she came to power, mostly maintained the education policies implemented by the Lee Myung-bak government, although she carried out further education reform by introducing still more new policies. Therefore, I discuss the education policies implemented in the governments of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye in relation to the GERM because features of the GERM reached their peak during these two governments. In the following sections, I will show how the Korean education reforms during these two governments share common features with the GERM.

Increasing competition among schools. From 2008 to 2016, the Korean government tried to increase competition among schools by implementing school choice, school

performance-based pay, and the nationwide standardized test, National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA).

Like the global trend of school choice, the Lee Myung-bak government tried to expand school choices by implementing the “High School Diversification 300 project,” which was diversifying types of schools until 2012. The High School Diversification 300 project had its root in private independent high schools that were suggested by the May 31st education reform plan and began its trial during the Kim Dae-jung government. For equality, the high school equalization policy had been relatively well complied with by the previous governments and has been operating when this research was conducted in 2016. However, the Lee Myung-Bak government began to push ahead with the project to increase school choice for students and parents and to expand the autonomy of schools. As a result, there were 143 special-purpose schools, 499 specialized schools and 164 autonomous schools in 2014 and 138 boarding schools in 2013 nationally in Korea (An, 2014). However, the increased number of autonomous private high schools instigated hierarchy among high schools and the academic gap between autonomous private high schools and general high schools became huge since autonomous private high schools selected outstanding students in the first round of school choice (S. Park, 2013; Park & An, 2013).

School performance-based pay and the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) had also increased competition among schools. They were related because reduction of the number of underachievers on the NAEA was reflected in school performance as one of the measured categories. From 2011 to 2015, performance-based pay, which operated to increase

competition among teachers, incorporated school performance¹⁵. When adding evaluation of school performance to performance-based pay was announced in 2010, the government expected that teachers would collaborate with other teachers working in the same school and the entire schools would compete with other schools, and collaboration and competition would help improve the quality of education (MEST, 2010). From 2011 to 2015, each school received one of three rates (S, A, and B), and the rates were graded based on different categories such as the reduction in the number of underachievers on the NAEA between the previous year and the current year; distinctive school events or activities; the percentage of students who took after-school programs in schools (MEST, 2012a). After ranking school performance was introduced, teachers received different amounts of bonuses depending on their school's rate as well as their individual rate and consequently, the gap in the wages between different rates of teachers was bigger than before (C. Park, 2014). By paying different amount of bonus among teachers and schools, the government had tried to increase competition not only among teachers, but also among schools.

Standardization of teaching and learning. Standardization of teaching and learning is not only a current trend in Korea. Korea has retained a national curriculum since 1955 (for details, read about the K-12 education system in Chapter One). Influenced by the American progressive educational concepts of student-centered education, differentiated instruction, and individual responsibility, Korea has in general tried to go in the opposite direction from the standardization of teaching and learning to flexible or personalized learning since the 1990s (J.

¹⁵ School performance-based pay was terminated in 2015 due to lack of objectivity of the evaluation and teachers' work overload which caused them to create many documents to prove their schools' performance (Y. Cho, 2016). Since then, performance-based pay has returned to the original way to evaluate only individual teachers' performance.

Kim, 2004). However, as long as the most high-stakes university entrance exam exists, it would be hard to expect dramatic change in classroom teaching and learning. I explain briefly about the opposite direction of standardization of teaching that has occurred in Korea. Then, I discuss the obstacles preventing changes in teaching and learning.

The government-led national curriculum has provided the same content to every school. Theoretically, all students throughout the peninsula had received the same education with the same textbooks based on the national curriculum. However, there had been criticism that the government's control of universal and standardized education did not reflect specific local and classroom contexts and was not able to provide individualized education to students (Y. Min, 2003). Therefore, since the 6th national curriculum (1992 ~ 1997), the government has tried to decentralize the curriculum by allowing metropolitan and provincial offices of education to adjust the national curriculum to the local contexts and to develop localized textbooks (Park, S., 2008). Furthermore, since the 7th national curriculum (1997 ~ present), the policy of curriculum autonomy was expanded to individual schools. The national curriculum explicitly says, "schools must provide school curriculum appropriate for the local contexts, based on curriculum guidelines from the city or province and curriculum guidelines from the district office" (MOE & HRD, 1997). Especially, the 7th national curriculum was divided into two parts, the national common basic curriculum (grade 1~10), and elective curriculum (grade 11 ~ 12). Therefore, individual high schools have become able to choose subjects to teach in their schools within loosened restrictions based on their characteristics and students' needs.

The Lee Myung-bak government, which emphasized competition and autonomy, even further expanded individual schools' autonomy to push ahead with the plan of school-based

management since 2009 (MOE, 2009). The national common basic curriculum has been reduced to only grades 1~9, so the high school curriculum has become completely elective. Also, individual schools, both elementary and secondary, were allowed to increase or decrease the teaching of each subject by as much as 20 ~ 35% per year (MEST, 2009a). Therefore, it has become possible to switch hours between subjects for the first time in Korea. The rationale behind this change was that a local community and an individual school would be able to provide relevant learning experiences to students by reducing the time spent teaching common knowledge and values provided on the national level (Lee Ju-ho et., 2006). Thus, at least systematically, conditions for providing localized, individualized, and differentiated curriculum in individual schools have been established.

While the systematic changes have been happening in curriculum development, there have also been changes in curriculum implementation that is, in individual classrooms. There had been negative opinions about the traditional, teacher-centered and test-focused classes for a while. Since the 1990s, student-centered classes and performance assessment focusing on the learning process rather than test results had gained attention (J. Kim, 2004). In such a circumstance, the newly developed 7th national curriculum was characterized by a diverse and differentiated curriculum centered on learners (MOE & HRD, 1997). The textbooks and teachers' manuals developed based on the 7th national curriculum contained and suggested many activities in which students could learn by doing. Also, in order to provide personalized and differentiated learning, teachers were strongly encouraged to reconstruct the national curriculum, rather than just teaching a class exactly as the textbooks and teachers' manual say (MOE & HRD, 1997). Given this kind of autonomy, individual teachers have changed their classroom teaching by using different teaching methods such as collaborative learning, group activities, and

games, and adopting Informative Communication Technology (ICT) in their classes (Choi & Hwang, 2004; J. Kim, 2004).

Nevertheless, it has been difficult to change classroom teaching, specifically in academic-bound high schools. The most high-stakes university entrance exam (the College Scholastic Ability Test, CAST) has influenced what has been taught at schools. Both students and parents have wanted classroom instruction to focus on preparation for the test and high school classes have often obliged. Moreover, taking advantage of the autonomous school policy, some high schools have increased the hours spent on English and math subjects, and reduced other subjects that are not tested by the CSAT, such as physical education, music, and art (Hong, 2011). As long as the CSAT exists in Korea, the test will continue to have enormous control over what is taught at schools.

Focus on core subjects. In Korea, focusing on core subjects is a current trend, and this focus has intensified from 2008 to 2016. Core subjects have always been important in Korea because they feature prominently on school tests and on the university entrance exam. For students to prepare for the tests of core subjects, attending some kinds of shadow education has become a common phenomenon in Korea (for more information on shadow education in Korea, see chapter 4). Although the government has tried to reduce families' spending on shadow education and concentrate learning on creativity and personality education, the current education policies have actually stimulated students and parents to be even more concerned with core subjects.

Among core subjects, English has received the most attention since the late 1980s. Under the government's drive for globalization, strengthening English education in schools has been

highly stressed. To be competitive in the job market as an individual and in the global market for the nation, Koreans are obsessed with learning English, and this obsession has been referred to as “English Fever” in much the same way that the overall obsession with education has been referred to as “Education Fever.” The Korean government’s plans for English education have further fueled this English boom. An English listening test has been included in the university entrance exam since 1991. Moreover, despite concerns and criticism, English was introduced as a compulsory subject from the 3rd grade of elementary school for the first time in 1997 (Ahn & Ha, 2015). Teaching English through the medium of English was suggested for English classes in 2001 by the government (Moon & Lee, 2002). In 2005, the government announced a Five-Year Plan for English Education Revitalization (2006 ~ 2010) to improve students’ English communication skills (MOE, 2005). In this plan, the government intended to place at least one native-speaking English teacher in every middle school by 2010 (MOE, 2005). Also, to test the feasibility of introducing English to first and second graders in elementary school, running pilot schools was planned in 2008 (Jin & Han, 2010).

During the Lee Myung-bak government, his educational policies on English education still further incited English fever. In 2008, the government announced specific plans to have all students to be able to speak English even those with only a high school diploma and for students to be able to go to college without extra private English education (Presidential Transition Committee, 2008). Such plans were 1) to hire English teachers who would teach English classes only in English; 2) to revise the English curriculum; and 3) to build facilities for English learning, such as English libraries, and English experience centers. Moreover, the government suggested the creation of English immersion programs in which students would be taught all subjects in English (H. Park, 2008). Although the plans for English immersion programs were

abandoned due to sharp criticism from the public, the government interest in such programs was sufficient incitement for many parents to prepare their children for English-only environments by paying still more money for extracurricular lessons (S. Kim, 2009). Other plans for improving English education in public schools were gradually implemented. For example, in 2011, the weekly class hours dedicated for English language instruction increased from 1 hour to 2 hours for grades 3 and 4, and from 2 hours to 3 hours a week for grades 5 and 6 in elementary schools.

Expecting to improve English communication skills, reduce the heated English fever, and families' expenses on extra classes, the government also has suggested additional English education policies, such as NEAT (National English Ability Test) in 2008 (MEST, 2008b). The NEAT is a computer-based test which tests four different communication skills in English, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Since Korean students in secondary schools have been learning how to take paper-based English tests, rather than learning how to use English for communication, it was expected that NEAT would change current English classes (Jin, Shin, & Shi, 2012). NEAT was one of several alternative tests suggested, and a huge amount (KRW ₩28,300,000,000, about USD \$26,000,000) of government funds were spent to develop it (H. Kim, 2012). However, the plan was abandoned in 2014 due to a concern that it would rather increase families' expenses on extra classes and expand the market of English cram schools against the government's expectation (Lim & Jeong, 2014). Nevertheless, due to the global importance of English and high English scores on the tests, it is likely that English education will continue to be one of main items on educational policies.

Besides English, other core subjects have also received more attention recently due to the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) and international tests, such as PISA.

Since recently the re-introduced NAEA tested core subjects (Korean, math, English), schools allocated more time to teach those subjects at the expense of other subjects. I explain the details of this time-reallocation below when I discuss test-based accountability.

International tests have also influenced Korean educational policies regarding core subjects. Although Korea's overall educational scores have been at or near the top of the list of countries which participate in PISA, the Korean government has still worked to increase its students ranking in subjects that have received relatively lower scores. In PISA 2000, Korean students were in first place in science, second place in math, but sixth place in reading. In order to improve reading skills, the Korean government switched the focus of Korean education curriculum from grammar and literature to critical and creative understanding and expression and developed teaching and learning materials and made bold investment in electronic media and the internet (Shin & Ju, 2013). In PISA 2003, Korean students' ranking increased in reading but, dropped in math and science. These results have in turn lent support to the government's plan for gifted programs including a school for kids gifted in science in 2003 (MOE & HRD, 2004b). In 2006, students' ranking in science dropped to 7th place which shocked the Korean public and the government even though students' rankings were the first in both reading and math (Shin & Ju, 2013). So, the government announced a proposal for enrichment of science education in elementary and secondary schools, the retraining of science teachers, and the building of science labs (MOE & HRD, 2007). In PISA 2009, students' science ranking increased. The Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (2010) considered that this increase in Korea's science ranking was due to the policies for strengthening science education. To maintain the high ranking, the institute suggested strengthening policies which guaranteed basic levels of achievement and which differentiated classes based on students' academic levels. This record of

national and international test-results leading directly to policy changes shows how schools and policy makers have increasingly focused on core subjects.

(Test-based) Accountability. The global trend of test-based accountability was witnessed in Korea too. However, test-based accountability is not sufficient alone to understand the accountability system operating in the Korean context. In Korea, the agenda of accountability gained attention in the educational field since the May 31st education reform proposal. To hold teachers and schools accountable for the education of students, two educational policies, the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) and Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development (TAPD), a new teacher evaluation system, were (re-)introduced.

The government introduced NAEA in 2008 (MEST, 2008c). NAEA was modeled after the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the USA (Hyun-Jeong Park, 2008). The NAEA was also called “*Ilje gosa*” which means all students take a test simultaneously. In the past, the nation-wide test was operated under the name of *Ilje gosa* and it was abolished in 1998 due to a criticism of ranking the whole country’s students, encouraging tutoring, aggravating the academic gap between rich students who can receive tutoring and poor students who cannot have such opportunities, and in turn maintaining the socioeconomic stratum (Suh & Hong, 2008). From 2000 to 2008, the NAEA had been conducted with the nationally representative sample of grade 6th in elementary schools, 3rd year (grade 9) in middle schools, and 1st year (grade 10) in high schools and those students took the tests in five core subjects (Korean, math, science, social studies, and English) once per year (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011). In 2009, the NAEA had changed to target all students of grades six, nine, and ten, and individual

schools' principals were required to reveal the number of students who took the tests and the number of students who were above average, basic level, and deficient in public every year and the differences between the current year's scores and those from previous years¹⁶ (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011). By measuring the educational achievement of students, and analyzing the trends of their achievement systematically, the NAEA aimed 1) to reduce an academic gap and to be used as reference for curriculum revision and teaching-learning methods improvement; 2) to find underachievers, provide them with additional help, and reduce their numbers; and 3) to encourage competition between schools and by doing that to improve the quality of education (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011).

However, there were two popular but conflicting opinions regarding this testing. One side supported the nation-wide test by insisting on people's right to know the test results; the importance of tracing and helping deficient groups of students; the benefits to increases in competition between schools; and the overall improvement of public education to name a few of their reasons (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011; Rhee, 2009; Suh & Hong, 2008). The other side strongly opposed the tests precisely because they did rank students and schools; they deepened academic gaps between regions; caused an obsession with test scores; expanded the market for private, extra education and so on (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011; Rhee, 2009; Suh & Hong, 2008). As this conflict continued, the tests for elementary schools were abolished in 2013 and the subjects of the tests for middle schools reduced from five to three subjects, Korean, math, and English¹⁷ (MEST, 2013).

¹⁶ In 2015, the grade for the tests for high schools changed from grade 10 to grade 11.

¹⁷ In 2017, Moon Jae-in government (2017 ~ Present) which put an emphasis on collaboration, not competition finally abolished the NAEA and the tests returned to the previous way with the nationally representative sample of grade 9 and 11 (MOE, 2017). Students have taken tests of three subjects.

The NAEA had some negative impact on schools and teachers. Many teachers refused to administer the test in their classes. Some of them, mostly from KTU (the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union), came out to the streets to protest against the tests (S. Park & M. Kim, 2017). Furthermore, teachers encouraged students and their parents to go on individual field trips on the day of tests (S. Park & M. Kim, 2017). This action led those teachers to be fired or dismissed (S. Park & M. Kim, 2017). On the other hand, some schools and teachers accepted the test and tried hard to increase test scores and to reduce the number of underachievers. They were concerned that a low ranking of their schools would affect their school evaluations and principal evaluations and have a negative chain effect (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011). In fact, as explained earlier, between 2011 and 2015 reduction of the number of underachievers on the NAEA affected school performance as one of the measured categories in elementary schools for three years (2011 ~ 2013) because of the abolition of the NAEA in elementary school in 2013, but secondary schools had been affected by the test results throughout the whole period.

In order to increase test scores and to reduce the number of underachievers, school classes became test-oriented, and teachers and schools even engaged in misconduct. Under the direction of the 7th national curriculum, many multichoice paper-based tests disappeared, and performance-based assessments, which measure students' learning using various methods such as papers, projects, were used in schools. However, introduction of the NAEA revived paper-based test-oriented culture in classrooms. Teachers and schools changed class schedules to allocate more time on the subjects tested and taught extra hours, before and after regular class. During those class periods, classes were mainly based on cramming and memorization (M. Kim & K. Kim, 2011; S. Park & M. Kim, 2017). What was even worse, some teachers and schools

fabricated the test results and overlooked students cheating (S. Park & M. Kim, 2017). Thus, test-based accountability caused problems in the Korean context as it has in other nations, such as the U.S where high stake tests have increased unethical behavior and cheating among administrators and teachers nationwide (Goldstein, 2014).

The other tool for accountability was Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development (TAPD), a new teacher evaluation system. When TAPD was first developed in 2005, Roh Moo-hyun's government encountered strong resistance from teachers but had managed to gradually increase the number of pilot schools trialing teacher evaluation (K. Lee, 2010). When Lee Myung-bak fully implemented the evaluation system, teacher opposition was again strong. However, there had been public demand for the teacher evaluation system since the system was discussed in 1995. Consequently, the teacher evaluation system was implemented when the public's demand increased high enough and President Lee Myung-bak pursued autonomy and competition to "save public education" (S. Choi, 2013). The government provided an instruction manual and a template with sample categories and standards. Each school was required to develop its own standards reflecting its characteristics and the opinions of teachers, administrators, parents, and students (MEST, 2009b). Although the teacher evaluation system was intended to help teachers improve their professional development, teachers were not pleased with it. After experiencing extensive criticism from the media and the government about their resistance to this evaluation system, teachers felt that their status had been lowered and their authority had been weakened (S. Choi, 2013). Also, due to the image of lazy and incompetent teachers created largely by the media, teachers felt that students and parents did not respect teachers as much as they had before and rather were seeking to monitor and criticize teachers (S.

Choi, 2013). Therefore, the new teacher evaluation system caused teachers to become frustrated with the government and decreased their morale.

School choice. School choice has been limited to high school selection in Korea. As I described in Chapter One, more than 98 % of Koreans attend public elementary schools and about 83% attend public middle schools (MOE, 2015b). Elementary and middle school students are generally assigned to a neighborhood school. Even in high schools, school choice had been restricted due to the High School Equalization Policy (HSEP) under which students were assigned to their district schools (regardless of whether public or private).

The HSEP was first implemented in 1974 in Seoul (the capital) and Busan (the second largest city) where competition for entry into a few elite high schools was very severe and serious inequalities across schools became social and educational problems (Byun, Kim, & Park, 2012). In next two years the policy extended the equalization to other big cities, and by 1980, the government was enforcing the policy in twenty cities (Seth, 2002). Some small cities and regions abolished the policy because assignment by lottery was considered impractical but, a growing number of local education district offices have adopted the HSEP, especially since 2000 (Byun, Kim, & Park, 2012).

However, HSEP has become controversial and a demand for school choice has gradually grown. Many parents were against the policy saying that the policy denied students' and parents' freedom of school choice and slowed students' learning (Seth, 2002). In 1980s, when a dispute over excellence versus equity and uniformity versus diversity grew heated, gifted programs were suggested and special-purposed high schools (science), so-called elite schools, were introduced for the first time (Paik, et al., 2015). At the beginning of 1990s, when national

competitiveness became important due to the influence of globalization and neoliberalism and the HSEP was considered a representative regulatory policy (S. Kim & J. Lee, 2003), special-purposed high schools were expanded or newly introduced (Paik, et al., 2015). Such new high schools were foreign language high schools and international schools.

In 1995, the May 31st education reform proposal also started to change the HSEP. In the cities where the HSEP were in force, students have been allowed to submit an application to the schools of their own choosing within the so-called “common catchment area” in 1996 (Byun et al., 2012). Also, a plan of autonomous private high schools was announced to give students and parents another option of schools to choose. As described previously, autonomous private high schools were operated as pilot schools until 2010. In 2010, Lee Myung-bak’s government permitted the schools as official schools. Under the project of the High School Diversification 300, the kinds of high schools were increased. Furthermore, the government even tried to remove the HSEP starting in Seoul in 2010. Although each city or region has the freedom to choose the HSEP, a superintendent of education in Seoul, who was from the same ruling party as Lee Myung-bak, removed the HSEP in Seoul (H. Kim, 2011). As a result, middle-school students living in Seoul could choose high schools even outside of their common catchment area.

Expansion of school choice in Seoul brought negative effects. First, as expected, the hierarchizing of high schools began in earnest. As students with good academic records chose preferred schools such as special-purposed high schools, private autonomous high schools, and high schools in wealthy areas, nonpreferred schools were filled with students with low academic records (H. Kim, 2011). Due to a huge academic gap between schools, preferred schools could maintain their high ranking by attracting academically smart students every year. However,

nonpreferred schools would become a place for “defeated people” (Y. Kim, 2011). Second, high schools intensively focused on preparation for the university entrance exam by increasing class hours for core subjects; sometimes extending school opening hours until 10 pm or 12 am for students’ self-study; and increasing the amount of time for tests because parents and students chose a school based on how many students from the school went to prestigious universities (J. Kim, 2011). Also, schools dedicated most of their attention and support to academically advanced students so that the school could increase the number of its students who went to prestigious universities (J. Kim, 2011). Third, high schools wasted a lot of money simply to promote their schools (J. Kim, 2011). Also, in order to promote schools, teachers felt that their workload was heavier than before (J. Kim, 2011). In this way, school choice has had negative influences on Korean education in recent years.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the Korean education reforms in the past two decades from 1995 to 2016. In the first part of this chapter, I explained briefly a history of education reforms from 1995 to 2008. During the period, the GERM started to influence the Korean education reforms, but many suggested educational policies such as a new teacher evaluation, school choice, and school competition were not implemented due to strong resistance from teachers, parents and/or advocate groups. From 2008 to 2016, however, Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye’s governments fully implemented such controversial education policies, including the NAEA. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter, I showed how the common features of the GERM have manifested in Korean education policies.

However, I showed that each common feature was modified by the Korean local context. Regarding competition between schools in the GERM, competition has increased among teachers and schools in Korea due to the implementation of performance-based pay, NAEA, and school choice. Standardized learning in the GERM has been a long-lasting phenomenon in Korea due to the national curriculum and the university entrance exam, despite a recent effort to localize and personalize the national curriculum. Similarly, focusing on core subjects has been going on in Korean schools for a long time due to washback from high-stake tests. The recent educational reforms further reinforced this curriculum narrowing tendency by emphasizing English education and giving more attention to core subjects due to NAEA and international tests like PISA. Accountability has become a key agenda in Korea too. However, test-based accountability alone is too narrow to capture the educational policies dedicated to increasing educational accountability, which include NAEA, performance-based pay, and a new teacher evaluation. Lastly, school-choice has expanded in recent years, but has been limited to high schools in a few places including Seoul (the capital). In addition, school-choice has been controversial and there have also been a growing number of cities that have adopted a High School Equalization Policy since 2000 (HSEP) (Paik, et al., 2015; Byun, Kim, & Park, 2012).

Despite these local differences, like other nations that have been influenced by the GERM, Korea has also experienced many side effects between 2008 and 2016. For example, school choice further strengthened the test-oriented curriculum and increased the hierarchy among schools and NAEA encouraged teachers and schools to engage in misconduct to increase test scores and to reduce the number of underachievers. Teachers, who have been given little active say, have only grudgingly accepted these educational policies. Despite their strong resistance to the new educational policies, the government has forced them to implement these

policies. Furthermore, teachers felt that they became objects of educational policies when the government introduced performance-based pay and the new teacher evaluation system. Teachers showed hostility to the idea that the government encouraged teachers to compete with their colleagues and paid more money to the “winner” than to the others (C. Park, 2014). In the next three chapters, I show in detail how these GERM-like educational policies affected Korean education by exploring individual teachers’ perspectives. In particular, I examine individual teachers’ work as it has been affected by the current educational reforms from 2008 to 2016 and explore teachers’ perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances.

Chapter Six: The Work of Korean Elementary School Teachers

In this study, I have included the voices of individual teachers, a group that has often been left unheard in previous studies despite the fact that teachers and teaching have become the main focus of educational reforms. In the previous chapter, I discussed some common features of the GERM observed in recent Korean educational reforms. In this chapter and the following chapters, I explore Korean elementary school teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession through their in-person experiences with educational policies under the recent education reforms (2008 ~ 2016).

I chose elementary school teachers as participants for this research although high school teachers, in some ways, might have been better-suited informants. As I described in Chapter Five, most common features of GERM appeared in academic-bound high schools in Korea and teachers in those schools would be able to provide rich data about their work as it has been influenced by such common features. In Korean elementary schools, some features of the GERM, such as school choice and the standardization of teaching were not relevant or did not affect the work of teachers as much as it did that of high school teachers. In fact, the curriculum and instruction of elementary schools are considerably more flexible than those of high schools and can be personalized to meet the needs of individual students because there is no high-stakes test to enter a middle school¹⁸ and most elementary school students are simply assigned to a neighborhood school. Furthermore, when I conducted this research in 2016, the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) had already been abolished in elementary

¹⁸ When a middle school entrance exam existed, the instruction of elementary schools was highly test-focused (Seth, 2002). The middle school exam was abolished in 1968.

schools in 2013, and the evaluation of school performance for performance-based pay was terminated in 2015. Regarding accountability (one of the five common features of the GERM), only individual teacher evaluation for performance-based pay and the new teacher evaluation remained relevant in Korean elementary schools in 2016.

Nevertheless, elementary school teachers were chosen for this study for two reasons. First, it is manifestly important to explore teachers' perspectives in all different types of schools, including elementary schools. Second, since I myself was an elementary school teacher, my own experience led to this research. I chose this research topic out of my interest in and curiosity about my workplace. Marriam (2009) has noted that it is very common to choose a research topic from one's personal interest in the field and in the work setting itself. My familiarity with teaching and the teaching job in elementary schools enabled me to conduct interviews with elementary school teachers successfully as I described in Chapter Three and to more fully understand teaching environment surrounding elementary school teachers when I analyzed data.

In this chapter specifically, I examined how Korean elementary school teachers have perceived their work in general to show a detailed picture of Korean elementary school teachers' work in prior to exploring teachers' perspectives on their work as it has been affected by the current educational reforms in next chapter.

The work of Korean elementary school teachers is identified mainly by two different types of tasks: primary tasks and supportive tasks. Primary tasks include teaching and tasks related to teaching such as lesson planning, assessment of students and students' counseling, whereas supportive tasks are managerial and clerical duties. After understanding the topic of this research, most participants pointed towards the heavy workload added by the current educational

policies. Then, when describing their work, they talked more about their administrative tasks than they did their primary tasks, and so the former became my major focus for this section. For a clear understanding of teachers' administrative tasks, I divided these tasks into three types: assigned tasks, additional tasks derived from assigned tasks, and "*jeonsi haengjeong*"¹⁹ (window dressing)." Besides these three, I added one more task, that of earning promotion points²⁰, to the work of teachers.

In Korea, the current career ladder system is administration-oriented (Ro & Park, 2002). Teachers have opportunities to be promoted from 2nd regular teacher, to 1st regular teacher, to vice-principal, and to principal when they meet certain qualifications. Promotion has generally accompanied transferring to an administrative role, that is becoming a vice principal or principal (Ro & Park, 2002). When teachers become a (vice-) principal, they leave teaching and mainly do administrative work. Many studies (e.g. Ro & Park, 2002; M. Kim, 2011; H. Lee, 2009) point out that the position of principal is an object of envy among teachers due to its great benefits, and these circumstances have created fierce competition among teachers and an atmosphere where promotion-oriented (administration-oriented) teachers are considered more competent than teachers who focus more on the primary work of teaching. To be qualified for promotion, teachers need to collect a large number of promotion points. Many participants said that some teachers have aggressively volunteered to take more and heavier administrative tasks than others to gain these promotion points which are in relatively limited supply. Because the

¹⁹ The Korean word literally means "exhibition administration" (展示行政).

²⁰ The teacher promotion system has been used in elementary, middle, and high schools in Korea since 1964 (Shin & Jeon, 2007). When teachers achieve high promotion points in areas such as teaching or work experience at school; professional development; teacher performance rating; and additional promotion points (Kim, Hong & Kim, 2017), they will have the opportunity to become administrators who leave teaching and then mainly help organize and supervise school work and the members of school.

system of promotion points is directly related to my research interests, I have included below a more thorough accounting of the promotion point system as it functions in Korean elementary schools.

I begin this chapter with a more detailed explanation of the two main types of tasks in the work of teachers (“primary tasks” that are related directly to the work of teaching and “supportive tasks” that are generally more administrative) and then later discuss the three types of specifically administrative tasks (assigned tasks, additional tasks derived from assigned tasks, and “*jeonsi haengjeong*”) along with the “task” of earning promotion points.

Two Different Types of Tasks

In order to meaningfully discuss the various influences of educational policies on the work of teachers, it is necessary to understand how the work of Korean teachers is composed. Korea elementary school teachers’ work is composed of tasks very similar to the list of tasks surveyed by the OECD (2018) in lower secondary schools (general programmes) in 37 countries. Although teaching is a core activity of teachers, teachers are also in charge of other activities (a.k.a. non-teaching activities). These non-teaching activities include individual planning or preparing lessons, marking/correcting student work, general administrative communication and paperwork, and communicating and co-operating with parents (OECD, 2018). These are the most common tasks required of lower secondary teachers globally, but teamwork and dialogue with colleagues and supervising students during breaks are also required in some countries. In addition, in a quarter of countries surveyed, teachers are required to take on various additional responsibilities, such as counselling students, teaching more classes or hours than required in the

full-time contract, or being class/form teacher (OECD, 2018). Table 4 shows the tasks and responsibilities that lower secondary school teachers are required to perform.

Table 4

Tasks and Responsibilities of Lower Secondary School Teachers

Tasks	Teaching
	Individual planning or preparation of lessons either at school or elsewhere
	Marking/correcting of student work
	Communication and co-operation with parents or guardians
	Team work and dialogue with colleagues at school or elsewhere
	General administrative work (including communication, paperwork and other clerical duties a teacher undertakes)
	Supervision of students during breaks
Other responsibilities	Students counselling (including student supervising, virtual counselling, career guidance and delinquency prevention)
	Participation in school or other management in addition to teaching duties
	Class teacher/form teacher
	Teaching more classes or hours than required by full-time contract (e.g. overtime compensation)
	Engaging in extracurricular activities (e.g. sports and drama clubs, homework clubs, summer school, etc.)
	Participation in mentoring programmes and/or supporting new teachers in induction programmes
	Special tasks (e.g. training student teachers, guidance counselling)

Note. This table was created based on information from OECD (2018).

While these components of the work of teachers are identified in many countries, including Korea, it is important to understand what kinds of work Korean elementary school

teachers perceive that they are doing at school. During interviews, participants talked about the work that they were in charge of. Of course, they talked about most of the components listed by OECD. However, they generally drew a distinction between teaching (or tasks related to their class) and assigned administrative work. Before a new academic year, Korean elementary school teachers are required to submit their preferences in the grade and/or subjects they will teach as well as their preferences in administrative work (Jung & Yang, 2016)²¹. Administrators (generally, the principal and vice-principal(s)) assign each teacher a grade and administrative task(s). Due to this convention, all participants talked about their work based on these two distinctive tasks. The below excerpt from P2 (12, F, R)²² was a common introduction from most participants when they were asked to describe their work in that year or previous years.

P2: I'm teaching second grade this year (homeroom teacher) and taking on administrative tasks related to my school library and reading education.

In this instruction, P2 indicated first her primary teaching responsibility (second grade homeroom teacher) and then indicates separately the administrated tasks she has been assigned (school library and reading education).

This distinction was also reflected in the criteria of performance-based pay. When talking about performance-based pay, most participants perceived that the rates of performance-based pay were basically determined by the grade that they taught, the workload of their administrative work, and whether or not they had been a “head teacher” in the previous year. To

²¹ However, new teachers can not submit their preference in a grade and administrative tasks because they are sent to a new school by a district office of education after all decisions are made (Jung & Yang, 2016).

²² Throughout Chapter Six and Seven, I add each participant's years of teaching experience, gender, head teacher (H) or regular teacher (R) in parenthesis. (12, F, R) indicates: 12 years of teaching experience, female teacher, and regular teacher.

check the criteria and better understand what participants said, I collected the official documents of the performance-based pay criteria either from participants or from their school websites. Since individual schools develop their own criteria according to their own circumstances, the documents from various schools were different. However, all schools basically shared the same general categories because performance-based pay guidance is provided by the Ministry of Education (K. Song, 2013). There were four categories provided by the MEST in 2010 which were also found in the documents from all of my participants' schools: teaching, guidance, administrative work, and professional development. Table 5 shows a simplified example that I revised after examining the documents collected from several elementary schools. Among these categories, administrative work is given its own category, so it is made distinct from other work. Considering that teaching, guidance, and professional development are teachers' primary work, that is teaching, and tasks related to teaching, the distinction between two different types of tasks exists at the level of the performance-based pay criteria, as my participants said.

Table 5

Categories of Performance-based Pay

Categories		Details	Points
Teaching	Class hours (per week)	More than 22 hours	
		More than 19	
	Open classes	Under 19	
		More than three times	
Guidance	Difficulty	Under three times	
		Homeroom teacher of grade 6	
		Homeroom teacher of grade 1 or 5	
		Homeroom teacher of grade 2, 3, or 4 & subject teachers	

		Head teacher
Administrative Work	Head teacher and administrative work	Difficulty of administrative work -high
		Difficulty of administrative work – medium
		Difficulty of administrative work – low
		More than 60 hours
Professional Development	Teacher training hours	More than 45 hours and under 60
		More than 30 hours and under 45
		More than 15 hours and under 30
		Under 15 hours

Note. This table was created based on information from the criteria of performance-based pay for public educational personnel and staff (MEST, 2012a), and from documents of the criteria of performance-based pay from elementary schools.

Dividing the work of teachers into two different tasks can also be observed in the work of many other scholars. Due to the increasingly heavy workload of Korean school teachers, many scholars (e.g. Jeong, Kim, Kim & Kim, 2012; C. Suh, 1995; Shin, Kim & Kim, 2007; I. Lee, et al., 2010; Chung, Joo & Chung, 2013; Chung, et al., 2016) analyzed the work of teachers and found ways to reduce their workload. Many of these studies sort teachers' work into essential tasks and non-essential tasks or primary tasks and supportive tasks. For example, Y. Jeong, et al. (2012) divide the work of Korean teachers into primary activity and supportive activity. The primary activity of the work of teachers is teaching students which includes class instruction (including preparing lessons and assessing students), classroom management (including counseling and guidance), and professional development (Y. Jeong, et al., 2012). On the other hand, supportive activity is administrative work, including participation in school management and other clerical duties (Y. Jeong, et al, 2012).

Assigned Administrative Tasks

When asked about their work as it has been affected by current educational reforms, most participants talked a lot about their administrative work at the interviews. This was because they felt that additional administrative work was added when new policies were introduced. Despite the fact that teachers in my sample offered fewer descriptions of their teaching or tasks related to teaching than they did of their administrative work, most participants believed that tasks related to teaching and their classrooms are essential (primary). Most of them complained that excessive administrative work interrupted their teaching in the classroom. P16 (22, F, H) said that heavy administrative tasks led to “poor classroom management” and “teachers became dissatisfied with their job because of non-essential tasks.” Also, P14 (17, M, H) complained that some teachers “shifted their priority from teaching to administrative work (for their promotion).” In terms of kinds of essential tasks, since most Korean elementary school teachers are also homeroom teachers, most participants included tasks of the work of homeroom teachers such as counselling students and/or parents, supervising students during lunch time and breaks, guarding students, and communicating and co-operating with parents besides tasks directly related to teaching (lesson plan and student assessment).

While such essential tasks of teachers are common or taken for granted as teachers’ work in many other countries, the administrative work that Korean elementary teachers are assigned may need additional explanation to more fully reveal the nature of this work in the Korean context. I received from my participants a few different schools’ documents detailing the division of administrative work and synthesized them into one table to show the administrative work that was common amongst my participants. Some schools have additional work depending on each school’s distinct type, such as pilot schools or designated schools for teacher candidates’

practice. The names of departments are sometimes different because schools divide their administrative work differently considering the number of teachers and differing school circumstances. In general, however, most schools had similar administrative tasks. P13 (21, M, R), who worked for 21 years in several different schools, said that “the basic administrative work is similar in every elementary school.” Table 6 is one example that shows the kinds of administrative work and the details of work that are found commonly in most elementary schools.

Table 6

Administrative Tasks at Elementary School

Department	Assigned task	Details
School Management	School Education Planning	School events, school evaluation, teacher conferences, teacher evaluation, school policies
	Registration	Student admission, National Education Information System (NEIS), school information disclosure
	School board	Organizing and managing the school board
	School promotion	Publication of school newspapers
Education Research	Curriculum	Curriculum development and implementation, student report cards, open class for parents, teacher training, professional learning community, order of textbooks
	Student Assessments	Supervision and management of assessments, planning for improvement of academic scores, plans for supplementary learning
	Supervision of Class	Supervision of classes
	Reading Education	Reading education, events for reading education, management of school library
	English Education	English education, events and competition of English education, supervision of native and other

		English teachers, management of English classrooms, English camp
After-school Programs	After-school Programs	Management and supervision of after-school programs
	School Violence	Investigation and reporting of school violence,
Character & Safety Education	Character & Safety Education	Safety education, fire drills, etiquette lessons, multicultural education
	Parent Groups	PTA, life-long learning
	Career Education & counselling	Planning career education,
Career Education, Science & Information	Science & Information	Planning events for science education, Management of gifted programs
	School Broadcasting club	Management of school broadcasting club
	Environment Education	Planning volunteer activities, planning for improvement of school cleanness,
		Planning of sport events, management of sport equipment, examination of physical strength,
Physical & Artistic Education	Physical & Artistic Education	planning of music/fine art competition, management of music classrooms
	Youth clubs	Leading and managing youth clubs

Note. This table was created based on official documents from elementary schools.

Belonging to at least one of the above departments, most participants undertook the assigned tasks of their departments. Among teachers, some of them are in charge of more administrative tasks than others because they are head teachers (e.g. N. Park, & S. Kim, 2006), single and/or young teachers (e.g. Jung & Yang, 2016), and/or members of the educational administrative task team (S. Cho, et al., 2016)²³. As the criteria of performance-based pay distinguish differences in the difficulty of administrative work, administrative tasks are not

²³ In order to reduce teachers' heavy workload, MEST suggested building an educational administrative task team in school in 2009 (S. Cho, et al., 2016). Teachers who volunteered to be a member of the team took more administrative tasks than their colleagues while taking less responsibility in teaching.

equally distributed among teachers (Kwak & Lee, 2014). Also, some tasks are not preferable because they provide a heavy workload²⁴. Among such tasks, most participants acknowledged that tasks related to after-school programs, school violence, NEIS²⁵, gifted education programs, youth clubs²⁶, and English education were not easy and often head teachers took responsibility of these tasks. Although they are not on the table, tasks of educational welfare, childcare programs, and innovative schools, which were added recently, also were considered as providing a heavy workload by many of participants.

To understand such tasks specifically, I asked participants to describe their work in 2016 and previous years. Many administrative tasks were related to the management of extra programs such as after-school programs, gifted education programs, youth clubs, childcare programs, multicultural education, English camps, or classes for underachievers. To run and manage extra programs, teachers make plans; hire and supervise staff; manage the payment of staff; manage the budget of these programs; order materials; report results and reviews of these programs to district (city or province) offices of education; and sometimes teach extra classes in the programs (e.g. S. Park & S. Lee, 2012). Besides the management of extra programs, some participants are investigating and reporting school violence (P5, P14, P15, & P16); running and managing NEIS (P7 & P20); planning to build a hands-on English education center (P5); communicating and cooperating with parents for school-wide work (P2 & P12); and making and submitting some documents when requested by the district (city or province) office of education

²⁴ To encourage teachers to undertake such tasks, additional promotion points are provided as compensation depending on the region (e.g. Na, Kim, Cheon, Kweon, Park, 2015; M. Cho, 2015).

²⁵ National Education Information System (NEIS) is a website which connects all levels of schools with the Ministry of Education, district offices of education, and other administrative agencies to manage educational administrative work electronically (J. Park, 2007).

²⁶ For example, cub scout and girl scout

(most participants; e.g. S. Park & S. Lee, 2012; Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013).

For example, P24 (12, F, H) as a head teacher of after-school programs described her administrative tasks as below,

P24: I'm managing after-school programs. (Compared to before when schools ran after-school programs on their own) administrative work has been reduced. Now, a school contracts a private company who runs after-school programs for the school. I do the paperwork and receive the complaints (from customers).

R (researcher): who chose the company for your school?

P24: I did. I put out an announcement to recruit a company. I organized the selection committee with some teachers from my school, other schools, and parents. [...] I requested paychecks for after-school teachers and staff by submitting documents, and reviewed school letters about after-school programs before they were sent to students' families.

Like P24, most participants undertook a number of managerial tasks of programs and paperwork. However, these tasks are often not directly related to their teaching and sometimes take their time away from the preparation of lessons and/or their regular teaching hours as many studies have discussed (e.g. Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013; S. Park & S. Lee, 2012). Therefore, teachers call these kinds of tasks “*chap-mu* (trivial tasks)” and wish to get rid of these kinds of administrative tasks so that they can pay more attention to their students and teaching and eventually to improve the quality of education (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013).

Additional Tasks Derived from Assigned Tasks

Teachers sometimes handle additional work related to or derived from their assigned tasks (e.g. Jung & Yang, 2016; S. Park & S. Lee, 2012). Additional work is not planned or expected, so this work is not described when teachers receive their tasks. However, it seems like many participants deal with this kind of additional work. Such additional tasks include unexpected tasks and/or working with (or taking care of) people involved in their assigned tasks. For example, when P5 (13, F, H) managed and oversaw tasks of English education, her school received a budget to build a hands-on English education center from the district office in that year. She recalled,

P5: I feel like that I'm destined to work a lot. When I undertook the tasks of English education, I built a hands-on English education center in my school. However, it was an unexpected task. To build the center, I drew up a project. For the project, I collected data, compared and analyzed examples of English centers in other schools. These kinds of work were hard (because it was not expected).

Schools began to build hands-on English education centers/classrooms in 2006 (Kim & Paek, 2010). In 2008, MEST planned to increase the number of English centers/classrooms dramatically nation-wide by the year 2011 (MEST, 2008d). According to this plan, elementary schools received a budget for doing so and teachers had to abruptly participate in the project of building an English center/classroom as P5 (13, F, H) did.

As was the case for P5 with this project, teachers often receive unexpected tasks due to a new educational policy announcement. Since school violence and safety have become big social concerns in recent years, new educational polices and/or suggestions to prevent school violence

and accidents have continued to be introduced (Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015). P16 (22, F, H) recounted the following:

P16: I'm in charge of character education. Accidents related to school violence happened continuously last year. I kept being requested to plan and offer classes on character education and on the protection against school violence for our school including other additional tasks due to the new educational polices.

In addition, working with (or taking care of) people involved in their administrative tasks is another example of additional work. Of course, teachers work with many different groups of people including students, parents, and administrators for their primary work, teaching (S. Hwang & H. Choi, 2014). However, working with people involved in their administrative tasks means that teachers function as managers, interacting with different groups of people such as part-time instructors, volunteer parents, and administrators. Some participants (P5, P7, P9, P23, & P25) are sometimes stressed out and struggling when working with such groups. P25 (19, F, H) was in charge of after-school programs at her school, so she interacted with the instructors of after-school programs. However, she expressed her frustration over dealing with a lot of requests from these instructors:

P25: I manage and supervise educational activities of instructors in after-school programs. However, I don't think that we need to do everything that they requested. When an instructor cancels his/her class, I don't think that I need to make a school letter about canceling her class. (She needs to make a letter and send it to her students' families.) I think that my responsibility is to manage and supervise after-school programs, to inform instructors of any changes or decisions made by the school or something, and to hold an orientation for them. However,

instructors are confused about the work that we should do for them and they depend on us too much.

P2 (12, F, R) also talked about her frustration when working with parents. For managing and running a school library, P2 needed help from many volunteer parents. However, she said that she “got hurt from students’ parents a lot” when she worked with them. She continued saying:

P2: I found it very hard not because of the tasks, but because of students’ moms. I’d rather take after-school program tasks (these are undesirable due to their heavy workload) than this work! [...] I suggested something with a good intention, but parents interpreted it differently and demanded something unusual. This kind of situation occurs too many times.

P7 (8, F, R) and P23 (15, F, H) also described the additional work and difficulty they experienced when working with other people such as native English-speaking teachers or short-term contracted instructors. They both agreed that working with other people was harder than their administrative tasks. As a person supervising native English-speaking teachers, P7 (8, F, R) took care of their personal business. She said, “I need to go to a clinic with my school’s native English-speaking teacher for his health check-up tomorrow.” She thought that “it is okay to take care of their personal business if they are effective for students’ learning.” However, she expressed her frustration with an inexperienced native English-speaking teacher and discussed the difficulty she had working with him. She often had arguments with him because of his lack of class preparation and unwillingness to accept her feedback. P23 (15, F, H) also had a painful time when she supervised a native English-speaking teacher. P23 recalled:

P23: I had a hard time because of a native English-speaking teacher in my school. I think that my lack of English ability was the biggest problem although the native English-speaking teacher was immature. I was not able to communicate with her well and had to accept what she demanded.

Above all, some participants sometimes experienced difficulty and discouragement when they worked with administrators (mostly principals and vice principals) to discuss or receive approval on their administrative tasks. P7 (8, F, R), P23 (15, F, H), P24 (12, F, H), and P26 (8, F, R) told of such experiences. P7 (8, F, R) was disappointed by the attitudes of the administrators whom she worked with because they “thought that teachers did not do a lot administrative work even though they were insiders of schools.” P26 (8, F, R) said that teachers at her school were discouraged when the principal and vice-principal forced their own opinions onto teachers who were dealing with administrative tasks. P23 (15, F, H) also had a similar experience with the administrators in her current school. She explained,

P23: My school principal is very meticulous, so did not approve the documents that I submitted and returned them. About three fourths of the time, he rejected my submissions. He has his own styles regarding the format of documents. For very small things, he made me revise whole documents again. If I were a novice teacher, I would accept it. However, I have been working for a while and had a lot of experience with this kind of task.

As these participants described, teachers are doing extra tasks derived from their assigned administrative work. Teachers sometimes receive tasks that are abruptly added due to educational policy changes. Furthermore, they work with various people such as parents, instructors, and/or administrators when undertaking their administrative tasks. These are not stated tasks on their list of duties but become a big part of their tasks because some teachers feel

that working with people is even harder than their actual tasks (S. Hwang & H. Choi, 2014)²⁷.

Although these kinds of work have done by Korean teachers prior to the recent educational reforms (reforms from 2008 - 2016), these reforms have increased the likelihood of this kind of work. I discuss the impact of the recent educational reforms on the work of teachers in detail below in the second part of this chapter.

Jeonsi Haengjeong (Window Dressing)

Many teachers feel that they are doing some meaningless work just for the sake of proof and/or display (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013). When schools are chosen for some kinds of programs like those of a research school or pilot school, teachers need to produce something to show the results or effects of the programs (e.g. H. Oh, 2009). Also, when teachers participate in research competitions, they need to provide documents showing their research plan and results and evidence such as pictures and students' work (Cho & Nam, 2016). Of course, some teachers are willing to do this work when they think such work will benefit them in some way (Cho & Nam, 2016). However, other teachers have complained that research schools and pilot schools do not benefit students, but rather serve a small number of teachers with their personal goals (Kim & Jang, 2014). These schools were often used as a way for a few teachers to receive promotion points and many teachers working at such schools felt burdened and exhausted due to what they perceived as meaningless extra work (Kim & Jang, 2014).

For example, under the past system a few teachers from a given school, who had become interested in receiving points for promotion, could apply for their school to be designated a

²⁷ Hwang and Choi (2014) examine such emotional labor of elementary school teachers which causes additional job stress and burnout.

research or pilot school and when the school was designated as a pilot school, other teachers in the same school would have to run a program and produce results and report on the effects of the program (even if they did not want to participate) (Kim & Jang, 2014). After finishing their research or pilot school work, all teachers in that school would receive points for promotion as a reward (Kim & Jang, 2014). However, teachers regularly criticized research schools and pilot schools for not being effective for students' learning, but rather for disturbing students' learning by taking teachers away from their classes and exhausting them (Kim & Jang, 2014). Among my participants, P14 (17, M, H) and P23 (15, F, H) reflected on this state of affairs:

P14: We have often seen teachers who were interested in getting promotion points and pushed their class aside! We're sick and tired of them. They focus only on their schools being selected as a research or pilot school, (and after their schools are chosen) work only on papers and on decorating their schools for guests.

P23: A research school has a lot of jeonsi haengjeong (window dressing)! Usually it takes one or two years to finish (the program of a given research school). To show the results, we just make things (e.g. documents, evidences of effectiveness of research program) sloppily and display a lot of things (e.g. students' work, documents, and evidence).

As these comments reveal and many studies (e.g. H. Oh, 2009; Kim & Jang, 2014; E. Jung, 2006) show, research and pilot schools have a negative reputation among many teachers for creating a lot of meaningless tasks and taking teachers away from their primary work. Furthermore, the connection between research (or pilot) schools and promotion points aggravated competition among teachers who wanted to receive promotion points (Kim & Jang, 2014; H. Oh, 2009). Due to these problems, provincial and municipal educational offices have

tried to reduce the number of these schools in recent years (e.g. D. Kim, 2019; H. Lee, 2017; E. Choi, 2011; and J. Park, 2011). Additionally, the government has made it so that only a small number of participating teachers contribute to the extra research work required for this kind of program, rather than all the teachers at a given school, and only these participating teachers will receive promotion points (MEST, 2012b). These new changes demonstrate how poorly the system of research schools and pilot schools has been functioning.

Just as teachers who worked for research or pilot schools experienced heavy workloads and felt that had to waste time on “*jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing),” so did those who worked for specially designated schools including schools in the Education Welfare Priority Zone plan and innovative schools. Since 2003, The Education Welfare Priority Zone plan supports areas where low-income families live by providing educational and cultural benefits (KDEI, 2008). When schools are designated as an Education Welfare Priority Zone, students from low income families receive various benefits such as learning opportunities, cultural experiences, counseling and so on. Innovative schools were initiated by some teachers in rural areas in the late 1990s to prevent the closure of their schools due to the small number of students (Y. Kim, 2018). By providing innovative school curriculum and collaborating with their local communities, such schools succeeded in attracting enough students, some of whom even come from nearby cities. This success impressed policy makers, so the model of innovative schools was adopted as a policy in Gyeonggi province and then spread to other regions, beginning in 2009 (Y. Kim, 2018). Unlike research (or pilot) schools, participants (P5, P7, P8, P9, P11, P18, P21, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, and P28) who worked for one of these kinds of schools acknowledged and shared agreement with the purpose and importance of such schools with their colleagues but could not hide talk about their fatigue and sometimes talked about the excessive

“*jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing)” as well. P23 (15, F, H) was responsible for the administrative work of education welfare programs in her school and made the following claims:

P23: I'm a little bit negative about education welfare program. Of course, this will benefit students. However, I think we should give them more practical help. I don't understand why schools are taking responsibility for education welfare. This is not our primary work. We are not social workers. I don't have enough energy to do this extra work. So, I don't think that we are using money efficiently. We just copy what other schools have done for their kids in my school. [...] I cannot come up with other plans to use money (because of a lack of energy and time).

P23 (15, F, H) did not like that fact that she had to waste her energy doing extra work and waste taxpayer money on perfunctory, low-interest projects. Similarly, P5 (13, F, H) worked for an innovative school in 2016 and said,

P5: My school is an innovative school. As an innovative school, we should innovate something, but is this innovative? There are a lot of tasks in my school. But I don't know whether these tasks innovate something. Because we received money from the Office of Education, to spend the money, we make something, hire instructors to teach kids the violin.

Despite good intentions to innovate in schools, P27 (5, F, R) found nothing innovative in her school's mindless copying of what other schools did—activities such as making handouts, documents, and posters and providing after-school programs. These activities, far from solving problems in new ways, have simply increased teacher's workload without adding anything necessary or even productive. Due to this kind of problem, some of my participants (P23, P13, & P14) as well as other teachers in their schools (P20's school) are actually afraid that their schools may become so-called innovative schools. P23 (15, F, H) was considering transferring

to another school because her school would become an innovative school in 2017. P20 (14, M, H) said that he wanted to apply for his school to become an innovative school, but other teachers did not support this idea because “they think that they would have to do more administrative work than now.” The most salient aspect of innovative schools, as far as my participants who spoke on the matter were concerned, was the enormous additional meaningless administrative burden that such schools placed on their teachers. This aspect was highlighted sarcastically by P13 (21, M, R) and P14 (17, M, H) when they said that they wanted to “apply to become an innovative school that did not do any extra administrative work.”

In addition, some teachers who participated in research competitions felt that they were simply doing *jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing) (Cho & Nam, 2016). Research competitions have been held to help teachers improve their teaching through competition (MOE, 2016c). To encourage teachers to join a research competition, teachers receive promotion points when they win a research competition. Like research (or pilot) schools, some teachers who are interested in promotion participate in research competitions (Cho & Nam, 2016). However, competition among these teachers has been fierce and problems such as the subjectivity of evaluation and the lack of applicability of the research have caused controversy (Cho & Nam, 2016). Furthermore, plagiarism of research papers became a big issue in 2016 (S. Baek, 2016; Cho & Nam, 2016). When I conducted interviews with participants in 2016, four participants talked about problems related to research competitions. In particular, P23 (15, F, H) and P27 (5, F, R) as members of research teams in their schools talked about what they were doing for research and expressed their negative feelings about it.

P23: Recently, the number of research schools has been reduced. [...] Due to the problems of research schools, we do “Educational Power” instead of research school. Under the name of improvement of educational power, only a small number of teachers, not the whole school, maximum 5 in one school do Educational Power. (Five members are) a team. This team does some kinds of activities to improve educational power. Like a research school, this team chooses a topic when the education office provides a theme. [...] This is like a small sized research school. However, unlike research schools where all teachers in the same school used to receive promotion points, Educational Power does not guarantee promotion points. (In the district) only 70% of teams are chosen to receive promotion points, the other teams don't even though they worked hard for one whole year (30% of teams will not receive promotion points). [...] I have done this in my previous school for two years. This was very hard. Just imagine that five different people are writing a dissertation together. [...] However, I cannot say that what I'm doing is effective for students' learning. I know that it is not. I knew. I just made something to display. (I make) handouts. I always question how much this kind of work is effective (for students' learning). I'm very negative about it, but I cannot step out of it. To receive promotion points, I keep telling myself that it takes only one year. Only one year.

While P23 (15, F, H) voluntarily participated in the research team because of promotion points, P27 joined a research team unwillingly. When P27 (5, F, R) was asked to become a member of research team in her school by her head teacher, she was not able to refuse that offer. At the interview, P27 (5, F, R) expressed her frustration because she was not interested in promotion points. Furthermore, she felt that the research work was just *jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing) and it drained her energy that she could use to devote herself to her homeroom. When I asked her about the effectiveness of the research that she was doing, she answered,

P27: No for now. I saw what other schools did. I wrote my master's thesis last year. If your research is an experimental one, your educational program would be run for 8 or 10 hours in your classroom at best. However, editing a thesis takes months. So, when I saw other teachers' works who won the competition last year, I could tell how much time they spent on editing.

Researcher: Jeonsi haengjeong (window dressing).

P27: Yes. There's no new idea. When I looked at other schools' work, we already knew that information, and many schools have been doing the same kinds of activities. Even my school's research is not different. [...] Imagine that I write 100 pages long thesis and receive promotion points. However, when other teachers in different schools read our research thesis, they cannot be inspired by our work because they are already doing those things! This research can be used for showing off, but it is not helpful to others. It is just self-satisfaction. So, I'm not happy when I'm doing this work. I could have provided a lot of things to my students if I did not do this.

Although they had different reasons for participating in a research team, both P23 and P27 did not find anything helpful for their teaching or their students' learning from their research. Rather, both P23 and P27 felt bad for their students because they were not able to prepare their class well enough due to their limited time and energy. These issues of research competitions are addressed by many studies (e.g. Y. Park, 2000; H. Lee, 2002; K. Kang, 2006).

Both working at research (or pilot) schools and participating in research competitions are intended to help teachers' professional development, but these have degenerated into ways for some teachers to receive promotion points for the career ladder (e.g. J. Kim, 2000; S. Hwang, 2005; H. Oh, 2009; Kang & Moon, 2009). Moreover, teachers who were not interested in promotion were struggling with a lot of tasks that they were not willing to do, and they were not

able to balance their actual teaching with such tasks (Kim & Jang, 2014; J. Yoo, 2009). What was worse was that essentially no one, including teachers who were interested in promotion points as well as those who were not interested in them, believed that their tasks were helpful for students' learning (H. Lee, 2002; Y. Lee, 2002).

Like the additional administrative tasks described above, *jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing) has been a long-lasting burden for Korean teachers. The recent educational reforms between 2008 and 2016 has intensified this aspect of teachers' work, which is discussed in detail in the "Increasing administrative work" section below.

Earning Promotion Points

A journey toward promotion can be considered one kind of Korean schoolteachers' work. The promotion system has been operating in elementary and secondary schools since 1964 (Shin & Jeon, 2007). Promotion can be a goal and/or a reward of hard work among some teachers and some of them consider their effort that they put into the journey toward promotion as professional development. These teachers are working hard to attain enough points for promotion by becoming a head teacher; taking extra administrative tasks; participating in research (or pilot) schools and/or research competitions (as described above); and/or working at overseas schools and/or schools in rural areas (H. Lee, 2009). Although not every teacher pursued promotion, the system of promotion has had a big impact on the work of Korean teachers and a negative influence on the Korean teacher community (Kang & Moon, 2009; Eom, 2018). The promotion system has created an administrative-oriented atmosphere, additional

competition and conflict between teachers, a distortion of the system for inviting teachers²⁸, and uncomfortable power dynamics between teachers and administrators.

Promotion means becoming an administrator among teachers in the Korean context. Positions of administrators include vice-principals and principals at school, and supervisors and research officers in an education office. In fact, the administrative positions of supervisors and research officers who work in district, city (or province), or ministry office of education are called “*kyoyuk chŏnmunchik* (positions for experts in education).” Once a teacher is promoted to one of these positions, he/she leaves teaching and becomes a full-time administrator. Among these positions, the principal position is the most attractive to teachers because of its many benefits, such as having the highest position in the promotion system hierarchy of, more honor and respect, the expansion of one’s authority, a higher salary, a more flexible schedule, and exemptions from classroom teaching to just name a few (M. Kim, 2011; H. Lee, 2015; Eom, 2018). Because of these many benefits, in 2012, principals in elementary schools ranked the highest in job satisfaction out of all jobs in Korea according to a survey by the Korean Employment Information Service (Eom, 2018).

To attain an administrator position, teachers need to meet the required qualifications. For example, to become a (vice-) principal, teachers need to attain high points in four areas: teaching or work experience at school; professional development; teacher performance rating; and additional promotion points (Kim, Hong & Kim, 2017). The requirement of teaching or work

²⁸ Inviting teachers has given an opportunity for principals to bring teachers from other schools to their schools when most teachers were distributed by the local office of education every 4~5 years based on a city or province’s regulation.

experience at school is fulfilled when teachers work for more than 20 years (MOE, 2016d). Professional development is divided into two parts: grades from teacher trainings and research achievements (MOE, 2016d). Teachers receive research achievement points through winning in research competitions and/or completing a doctoral or master's degree. Regarding the performance rating for promotion (briefly mentioned in Chapter Five), a principal, vice principal(s) and more than three peer teachers evaluate teachers' performance (MOE, 2016d). Promotion points can be earned by working at a research (or pilot) school, Korean schools in foreign countries, and schools in rural areas; earning teacher training credits; and by contributing to the prevention of school violence (MOE, 2016d). Depending on the specific region, teachers can earn additional promotion points by taking on some kinds of responsibilities acknowledged by their superintendent of education in their city or province (Kim, Hong & Kim, 2017).

Although not all head teachers are pursuing promotion, many of them consider promotion (N. Park & S. Kim, 2006). The workload of a head teacher is very heavy but the additional monthly compensation (KRW ₩70,000, about USD \$58) is small (H. Joo, 2018). Head teachers continue teaching and at the same time administrate or manage either one whole grade or an additional department (described above) and often both (N. Park & S. Kim, 2006). Head teachers receive a few additional promotion points when they work for a certain number of years, depending on their region. These additional points lure some teachers to take such positions (N. Park & S. Kim, 2006). Also, in order to receive a high rate on teacher performance for promotion from administrators whose percentage takes up 60% of the total evaluation (MOE, 2016), it is necessary for teachers to take on even the more difficult head teacher roles. In Korean elementary schools, there is a hierarchy even among head teachers. For example, the head teacher in charge of the department of school management is considered to do more work

than the other head teachers and is given commensurately higher status (and is thus the most promising position from which to receive the highest performance rate) (Kang & Moon, 2009). Among my participants, 12 of them were head teachers in 2016. During the interviews, at least six head teachers explicitly discussed their desire for promotion. The rest of them had either no interest or had not decided to pursue promotion yet. Most participants who had less than 10 years of teaching experience were not quite sure about promotion even though they were helping at tasks through which they could receive promotion points²⁹. Not surprisingly, five out of my six male participants (P1, P14, P15, P20, and P29) were head teachers because they felt pressure that they had to pursue promotion and/or were expected to be a head teacher. Regarding such pressure on and/or the general norm of male teachers, P29 (13, M, H) who is a male head teacher but had not decided to pursue promotion, complained:

P29: If I'm not promoted, I would be considered incompetent. [...] I'm deciding in between pursuing and not pursuing promotion. Promotion is not my goal. I prefer teaching students and hanging out with them. However, if I'm not promoted, students would dislike me, and parents would dislike me as well. Not all of them though. I think that I could overcome such negative reputations about me in my classroom because I have seen a couple of teachers who overcame them by their efforts. However, it is hard to ignore that most people would stigmatize me as an incompetent teacher.

As P29 (13, M, H) was concerned, there has been an atmosphere where administrators were considered competent while regular teachers were considered incompetent (H. Lee, 2009).

²⁹ This can be explained by generation difference. In the U.S., Stone-Johnson (2016) found that different generations' aspirations regarding promotion were varied. Likewise, in Korea, J. Kim and B. Chung (2018) found that the millennial generation of teachers showed less interest in promotion compared to teachers of previous generations.

In particular, the Korean teacher community exists within a male-dominant society where males are often encouraged to be more ambitious. Thus, male teachers have shown far higher interest in promotion than female teachers (S. Im, 2007). P13 (21, M, R) who is also a male teacher, had worked with many senior teachers who “considered the teaching profession as an opportunity for promotion and thought about their personal achievement, especially male teachers.” P21 (5, F, R) who was working at a nonpreferred school where teachers receive additional promotion points due to its location said:

P21: If you work in this area for 10 years, you can receive full additional promotion points related to nonpreferred location. So, many teachers who are interested in promotion come to my school. A half of the teachers are male in my school. It is hard to find teachers over 50-years-old. Mostly 30~40 years old male teachers. There are a lot of male teachers in schools of this area where they can receive additional promotion points. When I came to this school, this area was nonpreferred due to inconvenient traffic. There was no subway at that time. New teachers used to be sent to this area. However, recently it has become difficult to enter this area because of additional promotion points.

As P21 (5, F, R) said, many male teachers voluntarily chose to transfer to a nonpreferred school due to the additional promotion points provided by that posting. Since additional points are critical to win in the competition for promotion, working in rural and/or underdeveloped areas is considered necessary for teachers who are preparing for promotion (Kang & Moon, 2009; Seong & Huh, 2015). Therefore, the ratio of male teachers in P21’s school was unusually high compared to the general ratio of male elementary school teachers (23%).

Like nonpreferred locations of schools, some nonpreferred administrative tasks with additional promotion points have also attracted teachers who are pursuing promotion (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; M. Cho, 2015). Such tasks have included education welfare, preventing school violence, afterschool programs, gifted programs, and/or school daycare depending on the region. Despite the difficulty of these tasks, teachers who were considering promotion sometimes aggressively seek out such tasks (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; J. Bae, 2013). P9 (11, F, R) had seen that head teachers who were the most powerful in her school took on many such tasks first. Due to the additional promotion points, she said that nominally “nonpreferred” administrative tasks actually became preferred among some teachers. Therefore, sometime there has been conflict among teachers due to the limitations on the number of teachers who could receive additional promotion points (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; J. Bae, 2013). For example, at the school where P21 (5, F, R) worked and where many male teachers were working, some teachers regularly had arguments when deciding who would receive additional promotion points for tasks related to school violence.

To earn the promotion points that were available in some schools, some teachers took advantage of a system where principals could bring teacher(s) from another school to their school (e.g. S. Yoo, 2012; Y. Koo, 2012; I. Jang, 2011; M. Kim, 2010) when most teachers must transfer to other schools every 4~5 years depending on a city or province’s regulation (mentioned briefly in Chapter Five). P2 (12, F, R), P23 (15, F, H), and P25 (19, F, H) were “invited” to their school using this system. P23 (15, F, H) frankly said that additional promotion

points were the reason why she came to the school where she worked in 2016 because the school was designated as an Educational Welfare Priority school³⁰. She continued to explain:

P23: I think that many teachers use the system like me to earn promotion points. If a school provides a role through which teachers can be promoted easily, a head teacher of department of school management or education research (generally the two most difficult but powerful head teacher positions) or if it is a school that includes teaching practice for teacher candidates, they transfer. When both sides of people, teachers and administrators think that they can benefit each other, administrators invite teachers and teachers transfer.

Regarding this phenomenon where some teachers were using the system for their promotion, P20 (14, M, H) and P29 (13, M, H) criticized this distortion of the system. The system of inviting teachers from another school was first suggested in 1995 in order to increase the autonomy of schools for the establishment of a school-based management system, and the number of participating schools has gradually increased since 1997. This system became available for all schools in 2009 (M. Kim, 2010). However, as was discussed above, some teachers have been using this system simply to earn additional promotion points for their personal aspirations (e.g. Y. Koo, 2012; I. Jang, 2011). Many participants acknowledged that administrators needed hard-working teachers who could voluntarily take on a lot of nonpreferred administrative tasks in their schools, and teachers who were interested in promotion needed additional promotion points. However, this situation has created incentives for these two groups to deal and bargain with each other, often in ways that result in favoritism, harmful power

³⁰ The Education Welfare Priority Zone plan supports areas where low-income families live by providing educational and cultural benefits since 2003 (KDEI, 2008).

dynamics, and occasionally even illegal activity³¹. Observing these kinds of deals, P9 (11, F, R), P21 (5, F, R), and P23 (15, F, R) described them as “political.” P23 (15, F, R) who was a head teacher and taking on a lot of administrative duties, recently realized the political nature of such circumstances:

P23: I was praised that I did a great job (by administrators and head teachers). But I didn't know that it was a strategy to make me work harder. Because I was praised, I was excited and worked very hard. I was like that when I was a young teacher. However, now I have come to realize that this world was very political. They (administrators or head teachers) used me for their needs. [...] They needed me for their additional promotion points. Now, I can tell that it is very political. If I need promotion points, we (administrators and I) both can use each other.

While P23 (15, F, R) felt that she was used for administrators' needs, P13 (21, M, R) pointed out that there were teachers who eagerly wanted to take on more administrative tasks than others for their personal goals:

P13: There are some people who do willingly take on more administrative tasks than others in school. [...] Principal and vice-principal(s) catch their willingness and use these teachers well for their needs.

P12: That's for achievement of authority and promotion.

That is, this political relationship built between administrators and teachers is for mutual self-interest, rather than for serving the educational mission of the school. In particular, P21 (5, F, R) who was working at a school where many male teachers were pursuing promotion, felt a strong

³¹ The media has publicized evidence of particularly inappropriate deals between teachers and administrators involving bribes (e.g. J. Anh, 2010; S. Lee, 2010).

political relationship between administrators and some teachers, and these teachers hold power in school as well. She said,

P21: I have come to realize that school is involved with power dynamics. People who do more (administrative) work than others have power and speak out their opinions loudly. [...] Especially, teachers who have maintained a close relationship with the principal normally achieved their goals (earned additional promotion points).

As described, earning promotion points has been a part of the work of some teachers for a while since the promotion system has been established in 1964. Ro and Park (2002) said that the current promotion system and the atmosphere where administrators were considered more competent has encouraged teachers to focus on earning promotion points. In order to earn high additional promotion points, some teachers were taking on extra administrative work, transferring to another school, and/or building a close relationship with administrators. To attain the promotion points that are limited to a small number of people, additional competition, conflict, and uncomfortable power dynamics have been created in the community of teachers (Eom, 2018), all of which can detract from educational goals, shifting priorities toward bureaucratic administration and away from classroom teaching.

The most harmful effect of the promotion system has been on students. Some participants have observed that teachers who were pursuing promotion were less likely to pay attention to their class. Among them, P14 (17, M, H) strongly insisted that the promotion system needed to be abolished, saying,

P14: The negative effect of the promotion system on our children's education is huge! As we have observed, head teachers in departments of school management and education research never

prepare their lessons properly. They don't have time because of a huge number of administrative tasks. They will become administrators. [...] It is rare to see that these teachers manage their classroom well.

P21 (5, F, R) observed these teachers closely in her school. Then, she found two types of their classrooms saying,

P21: To do a lot of administrative tasks, it was obvious that they didn't have time to take care of their class. In my opinion, they controlled students with their power in a very scary way. They trained students. [...] Students behaved like machines. [...] Or some of these teachers abandoned their students.

Due to these reasons, P11 (27, F, R) said that “parents hated head teachers’ classroom because head teachers had to do (administrative) schoolwork.” Park and Kim (2006) have observed that parents prefer that their children avoid head teachers’ classrooms, and that head teachers’ heavy workload and their higher frequency of missing classes have been ongoing problems. Although teaching was considered the essential work of teachers, for these teachers pursuing promotion it was likely that teaching would not be their priority. Therefore, there has been criticism that the current promotion system has disrupted public education and the preparation for promotion has encouraged teachers to move away from actual teaching (Kang & Moon, 2009; Eom, 2018; Seong & Huh, 2015).

Summary

In short, I examined how Korean elementary school teachers perceived their work generally. As for the work of Korean elementary school teachers, teachers normally distinguished two different types of tasks: primary work (teaching and tasks related to teaching)

and supportive work (administrative tasks). Primary work (teaching and tasks related to teaching) is common and taken for granted as teachers' work, as is the case in many other countries, but administrative work also takes up a huge portion of teachers' work in Korea. Most of the teachers in my study had a number of such administrative tasks.

Teachers in my sample sometimes handle additional administrative work related to or derived from their assigned tasks. Such additional work includes unexpected tasks and/or dealing with (or taking care of) people involved in their tasks. Although these actions are not officially delineated as their duty, they felt that these unexpected tasks were occasionally even harder than their actual tasks, a situation that matches that described by Hwang and Choi (2014). Moreover, many participants were also involved in "*jeonsi haengjeong* (window dressing)." When teachers worked at research (or pilot) schools and participated in research competitions, teachers had to produce a lot of meaningless documents simply as a sort of display or proof of work that did not, in fact, benefit students (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013; H. Oh, 2009; Kim & Jang, 2014; E. Jung, 2006).

Lastly, earning promotion points could be considered part of teachers' work. Some teachers worked very hard to attain enough points for being promoted to administrators by becoming a head teacher; taking extra administrative tasks; participating in research (or pilot) schools and/or research competitions (as described above); and/or working at overseas schools and/or schools in rural areas (H. Lee, 2009). Although not every teacher pursues promotion, it turned out that the system of promotion has had a big impact on the work of Korean teachers and a somewhat negative influence on the Korean teacher community (Eom, 2018).

In the following chapter, I explore teachers' perspectives on the work described by my participants as it has been affected by the GERM-like educational reforms between 2008 and 2016.

Chapter Seven: The Recent Educational Reforms and the Work of Teachers

The common features of the GERM in question in Korean elementary schools between 2008 and 2016 were as follows: school competition, the standardization of teaching, a focus on core subjects, and accountability. So, the educational policies I discussed with elementary teachers during the interviews were about ranking school performance (2011 ~ 2015), the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) (2008 ~2013), performance-based pay (2001 ~ present), and Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development (TAPD) (2010 ~ present). Ranking school performance was a way to increase competition among schools. NAEA was also used for school competition and strengthened the standardization of teaching and increased the focus on core subjects. Both performance-based pay and TAPD were introduced to hold teachers accountable for their work in Korea.

These current educational policies were major topics of my interviews with participants. However, when the interviews were conducted in 2016, school performance evaluation and the NAEA in elementary schools had already been abolished in 2015 and in 2013 respectively. Therefore, participants talked about these topics based on their memories only, whereas their discussions of performance-based pay were quite vivid because all my participants, at the time of their interview, had just received their rate for the academic year of 2015. Also, they talked additionally about other educational policies that they were directly experiencing at that time. Such talks became important when they talked about their general thoughts about the influences of educational reforms on their work. So, I included these conversations to describe a fuller picture of their experiences with educational policies.

Regarding the influence of educational reforms on their work, I categorized them largely as influences on teaching, administrative work, and other side effects. As for teaching, participants experienced few and mostly negative influences on their classroom teaching. In addition, they have observed and experienced that their administrative tasks have increased when new educational policies or educational reforms were introduced. Their increasingly heavy workload took their time away from teaching, which may be considered an additional negative influence of educational reforms on teaching. Furthermore, many participants described other side effects of the recent education policies (policies like performance-based pay and the new teacher evaluation (TAPD)). These side effects included: a devaluing of teaching, lowering teachers' self-esteem, and weakening relationships among colleagues. These have hurt the community of teachers and discouraged teachers who considered teaching valuable. These side effects have likely contributed to an environment that has an overall negative effect on classroom teaching.

The negative impact of recent educational reforms on classroom teaching

Among the recent educational policies, most participants felt that the new teacher evaluation system and performance-based pay had little direct impact on teaching, whereas school performance evaluations and standardized tests affected teaching either little or negatively. In Chapter Five as I explained, S. Choi (2013) found that teachers in his study became demoralized and they felt that they had lost their authority and status when the new teacher evaluation system was introduced and after they experienced harsh criticism from the public regarding their resistance to the new system. Some of my participants felt such feelings

when the system was introduced for the first time. P18 (11, F, R) was annoyed by the attitudes of some students and parents that she has experienced and seen. She recalled:

P18: When the system was introduced, both students and parents used this as their power. One of my students' moms was a member of the school board and came to my classroom for the first time. She greeted me saying, "I'm a member of the school board. You knew that parents could evaluate you now?" [...] When students evaluated teachers, they said "You should entertain us. You knew that we could give you low scores if you didn't do that. If you are doing things like this, we'll give you low scores." There were these extreme cases in my school.

However, despite these tensions between teachers and their evaluators (students and parents) caused by the new teacher evaluation system at the beginning of the new system's implementation, after a few years many teachers thought that it became just an annual routine that not many people including both parents and teachers cared strongly about anymore (B. Lee, & S. Lee, 2015). In particular, many parents seemed to be reluctant to participate in the teacher evaluation. P17 (8, F, R), who was in charge of the administrative work regarding the teacher evaluation system for a couple of years stated the following:

P17: I took on the administrative work of the teacher evaluation system for two years. Due to the very low participation rate of parents, my school had to encourage parents. This is completely opposite from the beginning. [...] If a school chooses an online evaluation, 50% of participation is considered high rate. If we combine the online evaluation with a paper evaluation, the rate goes up to 70~80%. However, it costs a lot of money to use a paper evaluation. [...] At the beginning, it seemed like parents held power to control teachers, but after several years, they do not want to participate in an evaluation if their teachers are not terrible.

Regarding this low participation rate and lack of interest in the teacher evaluation from parents, many participants thought that the evaluation system was meaningless. Besides evaluations from parents and students, the teacher evaluation included an evaluation from their peers. Many participants said that it was an unspoken but absolute rule that they gave each other a highest rate generally like many teachers revealed in a study (B. Lee, & S. Lee, 2015). About this meaningless task, P5 (13, F, H) complained,

P5: We gave each other the highest rate. The percentage of students' participation is not high either. I don't understand. We already have the teacher performance rating for promotion. I heard that when a teacher receives a low rate (from the new teacher evaluation), they are supposed to be sent to teacher training. But I haven't seen those teachers. So, I can't believe it. It is nominal. It is a waste of money (taxes) and paper!

P1 (14, M, H) and P4 (7, F, R) questioned the reliability of evaluations from both parents and from peer teachers because parents and peer teachers observed their classroom once or twice per year at best. Therefore, P1 (14, M, H) said that he did not “care about what they commented on teaching that much either positive or negative.” Similarly, P25 (19, F, H) also thought that “the teacher evaluation did not help improve teaching at all although it aimed for professional development.” She continued to say, “rather it seemed like it was introduced to make teachers feel bad and to hurt each other's feeling (when they received a low rate from their peers).” Many teachers felt annoyed by the new teacher evaluation system without seeing any benefit from it (M. Jeong, 2012; S. Kim & B. Kim, 2013). For many teachers, this evaluation system had just become one of the annoying but inevitable tasks that they needed to do.

Performance-based pay did not have much direct effect on teaching either, other than to diminish its importance relative to administrative tasks. In table 5, teaching is included as one of categories encompassed by performance-based pay, but only hours of teaching matter when teachers' performance is rated. Also, this "teaching" category usually does not significantly affect the performance-based rate of an individual teacher because relatively high points are given to the category of administrative tasks (Byun, Jung, Shin, Yoon, & Lee, 2018; Kwak & Lee, 2014). Table 7 is the same table as Table 5, but points for categories are added as an example. This example is from one of the schools where my participants worked. Depending on the school, points for each category are different. Through the interviews and documents, I found out that schools normally assigned relatively high points to the category of administrative work.

Table 7

Categories of Performance-based Pay

Categories		Details	Points
Teaching	Class hours (per week)	More than 22 hours	8
		More than 19	7
		Under 19	6
	Open classes	More than three times	2
		Under three times	1
Guidance	Difficulty	Homeroom teacher of grade 6	25
		Homeroom teacher of grade 1 or 5	20
		Homeroom teacher of grade 2, 3, or 4 & subject teachers	17
Administrative Work	Head teacher and administrative work	Head teacher	30
		Difficulty of administrative work -high	20

		Difficulty of administrative work – medium	15
		Difficulty of administrative work – low	10
		More than 60 hours	10
Professional Development	Teacher training hours	More than 45 hours and under 60	9
		More than 30 hours and under 45	8
		More than 15 hours and under 30	7
		Under 15 hours	6

In Table 7, except administrative work, the rest of categories are easily rated because they are based on concrete and quantitative distinctions. Most participants agreed that only numbers matter in performance-based pay because of the difficulty of measuring the actual quality of teaching. Even if a teacher spends many hours on his/her lesson planning, these hidden hours were not considered either. P5 (13, F, H) gave an example of a teacher from her school:

P5: Teaching students well is a different matter. It is completely separated. Even if I teach my students well, I don't receive a high rate. One male teacher in my school helps students after school to provide extra lessons to his students. He is very enthusiastic about teaching. But I think that he probably received a middle or low rate.

While performance-based pay was not concerned with the quality of teaching and students' learning, school performance evaluations and standardized tests were concerned with students' learning. However, these factors had a negative influence on teaching because students' learning was measured only through numbers, such as tests scores or the number of "underachievers," students who failed to meet the basic standard academic levels on tests. Similar to what I explained in Chapter Five, several of my participants (P2, P5, P8, P11, P18, P19, P24, P25, and P28) also changed their classes to increase test scores and to reduce the

number of underachievers in their classroom. They said that they provided workbooks and handouts to practice the standardized tests. P24 (12, F, H) told of her painful experience when she forced students to prepare for the test against their will. In 2008, she worked at a small school where only six students from her classroom represented the entire 6th grade of her school. She felt that “the pressure for increasing test scores and reducing underachievers was way stronger in provinces than metropolitan areas.” She continued to describe her situation:

P24: My school was in an underdeveloped area where mostly poor families lived.

Underachievers in my class had to stay after school to prepare for the test. They hated studying, but they had to solve problems in their workbook every day. They ran away, and I chased them. I even went to their houses to bring them back to school because it was my responsibility. Because of that, my class became very abnormal and relationships between my students and me became horrible. It was very hard for me to deal with these students. However, my school pressured me to reduce the rate of underachievers and not to receive a low rate from school performance evaluation. Without considering the difference of regions or schools, reducing the rate of underachievers was the number one goal. [...] Because I was an inexperienced teacher at that time, I forced my students too harshly. So, I became an enemy of my students. Now, I can tell that I was wrong completely, and I feel very sorry to my students.

Like P24 (12, F, H), other participants of mine related similar experiences of focusing their teaching on test preparation and having conflicts with their students. P28 (14, F, H) said that “ranking students hurt students’ self-esteem and it made students lose their interest in even coming to school.” She had a hard time to teach her students who lost their interest in learning. Therefore, most participants agreed that school performance evaluation and the standardized test negatively affected their teaching.

On the other hand, only two of the participants (P16 & P14) said that the standardized test did not affect their teaching at all. Although they agreed that the test hurt other peer teachers' teaching, they did not focus on the test and some of them protested against the test. P16 (22, F, H) did not follow even her school principal's request to prepare for the test. She thought,

P16: It was ridiculous. When the standardized test was operating in elementary schools and I taught grade six, I saw a classroom where students were preparing for the test almost every day to increase scores. The school principal encouraged teachers to have test-oriented and memorization-focused classes even before the first period started for showing a good image of the school. I thought that it was crazy. We have been trying to move away from standardized teaching and learning. However, the test was the opposite direction from what we have pursued and instigated the wrong direction.

As an active member of the Korean Teachers and Education Works' Union (KTU), P14 (17, M, H) refused to administer the test. He said that the test "did not disrupt teaching" but only because he and members of KTU "refused to administer the test and did not care about the test."

Despite the fact that one of the main purposes of the recent educational policies was to improve teaching and learning, the direct effect of these policies on teaching and learning was negligible or even negative. The standardized tests and school performance evaluation impeded efforts to move education toward more flexible and personalized teaching and learning. Additionally, most participants complained that such educational policies actually increased their administrative work and the increased tasks that likely disturbed their teaching indirectly by taking away their time, their energy, and their morale.

Increasing administrative work. Most participants felt that the new educational policies have added more administrative tasks to their work in general. New systems such as the new teacher evaluation system and school performance-based pay brought in additional administrative tasks. Increasing social demands such as the provision of education welfare (supporting areas where low-income families live by providing educational and cultural benefits), the prevention of school violence, and the reduction of shadow education became important duties of schools, so schoolteachers have received these additional administrative tasks as well.

Although it became just an annual routine that both parents and teachers did not care about (B, Lee & S. Lee, 2015), distributing and collecting surveys for the new teacher evaluation system was one of those burdensome administrative tasks that annoyed the teachers (P5 & P17) in my study. As described above, teachers participated in the evaluation system out of obligation and it became perfunctory (B, Lee & S. Lee, 2015). However, it created a burden for teachers who were in charge of its administrative work because of the low participation rate. In order to increase the participation rate, P5's school changed from an online survey to a paper survey which required teachers to do more work by distributing and collecting the survey from the entire school. About this extra work, P5 (13, F, H) commented that it was an "unnecessary task."

When the school performance-based pay existed, teachers dealt with even more unnecessary tasks. To compete with other schools, schools needed to provide evidence of each category developed by the Ministry of Education and the district office of education (MEST, 2011a). Table 4 shows the categories developed by one of the district offices of education for elementary schools in Seoul in 2013 (Seoul Gangseo Yangcheon District Office of Education,

2013). There were three common categories provided by the Ministry of Education: running specialized programs, the participation rate of students in after-school programs, and students' physical development³². Also, each district office of education provided other categories considering their circumstances. In Table 8, this particular district office of education required schools to provide evidence of teachers' training credits, effort of improvement of teaching measured by the number of open classes³³ given by each teacher, and consulting supervision (receiving advice on teaching from an expert).

Table 8

School Performance-based Pay Criteria

Category		Percentage
Common categories provided by MOE (40%)	Running specialized programs	10%
	Students' participation rate in after-school programs	15%
	Students' physical development	15%
Categories provided by the district office of education (60%)	Teacher training credits	20%
	Effort of improvement of teaching	20%
	Consulting supervision	20%
Total		100 %

P12 (28, F, R), P13 (21, M, R) and P14 (17, M, H) agreed that the “school performance evaluation heavily increased administrative tasks.” To be compared with other schools using quantitative indicators, P12 (28, F, R) said that “everything was documented to provide

³² Students' physical development was measured by a physical-fitness test called (PAPS, Physical Activity Promotion System). A percentage of 5th and 6th grade students who received more than average was reflected in the evaluation.

³³ Giving open classes means that teachers invite their peer teachers, administrators, and/or students' parents, depending on the occasion, into their classrooms to observe their classes.

evidence.” Similarly, P25 (19, F, H) said that “the school performance evaluation changed and controlled the work of schools” by focusing on those things that were evaluated. Regarding this, P16 (22, F, H) recalled,

P16: Actually, every school worked hard, but depending on which tasks they focused on decided the rate of school performance. Schools received a high rate when they dealt with principal tasks that their education office focused on. [...] To meet every category of school performance evaluation, I thought that we were doing “jeonsi haengjeong (window dressing).”

To receive a high rate, teachers needed to focus on tasks that their district office of education put an emphasis on and used their energy and time to provide strong evidence of each category of the school performance evaluation, which created extra unnecessary administrative tasks. Therefore, the short-lived school performance-based pay eventually led to its termination (Y. Cho, 2016). All participants agreed that termination of school performance-based pay was the right decision.

In addition, other educational policies introduced in recent years brought in extra administrative tasks as well. Although they were not educational policies discussed in this study, new education policies related to education welfare (supporting areas where low-income families live by providing educational and cultural benefits), school violence, and after-school programs have been introduced to schools and these have provided teachers with additional administrative tasks. Due to the heavy workload of these tasks, they were non-preferred tasks. Thus, teachers who were considering promotion and/or head teachers often oversaw these administrative tasks (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; M. Cho, 2015).

All participants except P20 (14, M, H) who were head teachers took responsibility of at least one heavy administrative task. For example, P5 (13, F, H), as a head teacher, oversaw the administrative tasks related to school violence. She said that she had a busy and tough year in the previous year because “school violence was severe and frequent,” and she “had to report every case of school violence to the district office of education” by investigating each case with the police. Since she had to meet with students and students’ parents involved in school violence and to mediate between two sides, she was mentally and physically fatigued.

When the ways of preventing and eradicating school violence previously employed by the government were considered ineffective, and with increases in social demands for new measures to prevent the growth and intensification of school violence, the Ministry of Education announced a new education policy of school-based measurement of school violence in 2013 (Chung, Park, Kim, & Sun, 2014; MOE, 2013b). Schools thus needed to play a larger role in preventing and eradicating school violence, which of course led to additional tasks. To compensate for this additional work, promotion points would again be given to the teachers performing these tasks (MOE, 2013b). Similarly, the educational policy of education welfare and after-school programs added more tasks to teachers’ work and doing these tasks provided promotion points to teachers because of their unwillingness to perform such tasks. Therefore, many teachers I interviewed generally associated the introduction of new educational policies with the creation of these new, additional tasks.

Perhaps the increase of administrative tasks was in some way inevitable because of new and increasing social demands in Korea as well as in other nations. The number of tasks teachers are expected to deal with is growing all over the world as Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) have

discussed. Apple (1986) described this pressure on schools and teachers with the phrase the “intensification thesis.” I discuss his theory in detail in my Discussion and Conclusions chapter. In brief, according to Apple, teachers’ work has evolved into the execution of tasks, which implies a process of “de-professionalization.” At the same time, teachers are subject to scrutiny and accountability (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). This leads to an intensification of the work of the teaching profession because teachers must perform an increasing number of (imposed) tasks for which they do not have sufficient time and resources (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). As a result, teachers lack time for their class and for forming collegial relationships and it hurts their personal lives (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). Not surprisingly, these negative consequences were also reported by the participants (P16, P20 & P23) of this study. P16 (22, F, H) continued to say that the increased administrative tasks took her away from her primary work, that is, teaching and she became dissatisfied with her job:

P16: Last year, when I received tasks, I did not know what I was doing. Last year was the worst year to me and my job satisfaction was the lowest throughout my 22 years of teaching because I wasn't able to use my energy for my class. I was burned out last year. [...] The big problem is teachers' burnout when the administrative tasks of new polices are given to teachers.

Similarly, P20 (14, M, H) complained about his heavy workload and its negative influence on his class and his private life as well.

P20: Heavy workload disrupted my teaching. [...] Last year, I had too many administrative tasks. Do you know what happens if you experience heavy workload? Your daily life is destroyed. When you are stressed out severely, you cannot have your family life properly. It is easy to be upset with your kids and your partner. Also, when you come to school, you cannot be productive and

efficient. It is likely that you won't prepare for class and you are likely to be upset with your students.

In short, many participants perceived that recent educational policies have increased their administrative tasks. Increased administrative tasks reduced their time to prepare for their teaching and decreased the time they could spend with their students (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013). Furthermore, some of them have become dissatisfied with their job because of their stress, burnout, and lack of time for their teaching, which also affected their private lives (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013). To borrow a word from Apple (1986), this may result in “de-skilling”: “the loss of certain professional skills due to their decreased importance on the one hand, and the increase of routine, often administrative, work-related tasks on the other hand” (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 1151).

Devaluing teaching. Another negative influence of these new educational policies, especially that of performance-based pay, was an apparent devaluation of teaching. As I described previously, performance-based pay was basically rated by an individual teachers' performance of administrative tasks and was not able to reward teachers who actually tried to improve their classroom teaching, probably due to the difficulty of measuring such an effort. When performance-based pay was first introduced, teachers used to receive bonus pay based on their years of teaching experience (Kim & Yoo, 2007). Although most participants did not like the system of performance-based pay itself, many participants thought that receiving bonus pay based on one's administrative workload was more reasonable compared to the past system that was strictly built on seniority. They continued to dislike the idea of performance-based pay, yet

they acknowledged that the new criteria were not as unreasonable as the older criteria. What P13 (21, M, R) said represents these teachers' thoughts:

P13: When I received performance-based pay for the first time, senior teachers received more than us. Now, the system is set up that even novice teachers can receive more money than teachers in their 50s. In the past, senior teachers took more money than us, but we (young teachers) had to do more administrative tasks than them. [...] Now, it is a matter of whether you do administrative work.

Since one's administrative workload now determined the rate of teacher performance, most participants noticed that head teachers usually received the highest rate and now they agreed that head teachers deserved the extra pay. When a head teacher did not receive the highest rate, it was sometimes considered unfair. P9 (11, F, R) described,

P9: If the head teacher of school management did not receive S (the highest rate), teachers who received S would feel embarrassed because they knew about the head teacher's workload. [...] So, head teachers change criteria of performance-based pay to make sure that the head teacher of school management receives the highest rate.

This situation happened in the school where P5 (13, F, H) worked. In her school, the head teacher of school management received the lowest rate due to the criteria agreed upon by teachers in the previous year. However, she said,

P5: This year we changed the criteria completely not to be able to compete with the two head teachers of school management and education research. They will receive 20 points exclusively. I'm sure that they will receive the highest rate next year.

Although schools could change their criteria of performance-based pay every year considering their circumstance and the opinions of teachers, many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P10, P13, P15, P20, P21, P23, & P25) seemed to accept giving a higher rate to teachers who did more administrative work. However, there were also some participants who expressed their bitterness about the criteria. For example, P4 (7, F, R) complained,

P4: Isn't it vague to determine criteria of outcome of education? Performance-based pay is to reward competent teachers. He/she can be competent when they are good at handling with administrative work. However, teachers who manage classroom well and teach well are competent too! When deciding a rate of performance-based pay, schools give more points to teachers who take on more administrative tasks. But, when you do more administrative work, it is likely to neglect your classroom. I feel very bad that we devalue teaching. I don't know how we can evaluate teaching. The outcome of education cannot be revealed within a short period.

Like P4 (7, F, R), other participants (P13, P14, P21, & P29) have observed that head teachers were likely to neglect their teaching because of their heavy workload. However, the current systems including performance-based pay and the promotion system have rewarded teachers and head teachers who have done more administrative tasks. Therefore, it is possible that the atmosphere created by these systems and the subsequent devaluing of teaching relative to administrative work will gradually permeate the perspectives of teachers as I discuss below.

Decreased teachers' morale and self-esteem. Another negative influence of recent education reforms on the work of teachers was that teachers were discouraged and losing passion for their work. Regarding the new teacher evaluation, many participants (P4, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P25) felt that their opinions were ignored and that they had become targets of (rather than participants in) the educational reform when it was introduced. P11 (27, F, R) pointed out

that the “current systems and policies have made the majority of hard-working teachers discouraged [through the government’s efforts] to screen out a small number of teachers who have had some problems.” P10 (14, F, R) talked about insufficient conversation with teachers when the new system was introduced. She continued to say:

P10: We could’ve avoided misunderstandings about the new teacher evaluation. [...] With the government not making any effort to help teachers understand the new system, teachers considered the system as an attack and then they became demoralized. Also, many teachers applied for early retirement because they got hurt severely³⁴. [...] If they want to improve classroom teaching and the educational environment, they need to convince us and carefully consider our morale.

Although at the time of my study, the teacher evaluation system no longer had much effect on teachers’ morale and confidence, the performance-based pay had a huge impact on teachers’ emotions. When the interviews were conducted, all participants had just received their rate of performance-based pay. Participants vividly talked about their and/or other teachers’ feelings such as anger, depression, and disappointment with their rates, which would have a huge negative impact on their work in both teaching and their service duties. Some teachers (both participants (P7 & P8) and their (P6 & P8) colleagues) were not able to accept their rates because they received a lower rate than they expected despite their hard work. Since their rate was given based on how difficult their administrative tasks were in the previous year, they felt that the degree of difficulty in their administrative duty was not well acknowledged by their

³⁴ According to a survey of the reasons for an increase in teachers’ early retirement, the burden from the teacher evaluation was significant, with 11.1% of retirees claiming it as a reason for their decision to retire early (S. Kim & J. Hwang, 2012).

administrators and colleagues. During the interview, P7 (8, F, R) expressed her disappointment and anger with her rate as well as with her administrators and her colleagues:

P7: My effort was not brought into view although I worked very hard and struggled. I hoped that administrators would acknowledge my effort. [...] The other teachers who taught grade 6 with me received the highest rate, except I did not. I did not make any trouble with the Chinese teacher whom I worked with because I tried to adjust myself to her. This does not mean that my duty is not difficult. Because I didn't cause any problems, nobody knew how hard it was and they could not see my effort and struggle. [...] I'm not just talking about receiving less money than others. Actually, I earned extra money last year that was more than the difference between the highest rate and the middle rate. I felt offended that my performance was not fully acknowledged.

Similarly, P8 (10, F, R) talked about one teacher who was hurt in her self-esteem after receiving a lower rate than she thought she deserved.

P8: One teacher's feeling got hurt very severely. She thinks that her duty is one of the hardest tasks, but other people don't agree with her. She was very disappointed and closed her heart. [...] I think that it is not due to money, but it is related to one's self-esteem. She was upset that she received a lower rate than she thought she deserved despite her hard work.

As these participants said, it was not simply a matter of money, but the rate given to their performance affected their self-esteem significantly because they considered their rate as a recognition of their hard work by others (Y. Cho, 2015; Byun, Jung, Shin, Yoon, & Lee, 2018). When the result of their performance evaluation did not meet their satisfaction, some participants (P3, P4, P7, P8, & P19) came to look back on the unfair process of decision-making and what they felt were unreasonable criteria. P7 (8, F, R) complained about the decision-making process of teachers' performance rate and said that it was not transparent. Although her rate was decided

by points from criteria, she believed that some powerful teachers and administrators still could manipulate points. Regarding this nontransparent process, P19 (11, F, R) also talked about these deciding criteria.

P19: When my school decides high, medium, and low regarding the difficulty of administrative work, only a few teachers participated in the decision-making process. Therefore, most teachers are unsatisfied with the fact that only a few teachers decided these criteria. In addition, it is very unreasonable because you can't tell how hard someone's work is unless you do their work.

This situation depressed these participants who did not have much power in their schools and had to accept what the other teachers decided. Furthermore, they were frustrated with the fact that the workload of some duties was not clearly measured. Regarding this, P17 (8, F, R) said,

P17: Sometimes, it is hard to tell the difference in the difficulty of tasks between teacher A and teacher B. Actually, there's no big difference in difficulty in their work but they receive a different amount of money. Everyone works hard to teach and manage their classrooms. Teachers said that they felt a sense of shame thinking that they were low level teachers and then lost passion for teaching when they received the lowest rate for a few years in a row.

Being frustrated with the subjectivity in measuring workload, having little power over decision-making, and constantly receiving the lowest rate, some teachers were likely to become lethargic (e.g. Kim, Gu, Lee, & Yi, 2012; Byun, Jung, Shin, Yoon, & Lee, 2018). Furthermore, the fact that the system valued administrative tasks more than teaching discouraged some participants (P3 & P4) even more by hurting their self-esteem as a teacher. The school where P3

(8, F, R) and P4 (7, F, R) worked gave teachers who chose to do administrative work almost exclusively far more points than other teachers. P3 and P4 recalled,

P4: Teachers were very disappointed. Those teachers who did more administrative tasks than us taught only 10 hours and received more points than us. The gap between them and us was more than 20 points. [...] We taught more hours than them and managed our homerooms, but these were not considered that much. I somewhat agreed with rewarding teachers who did more administrative tasks than me. However, I felt really bad with giving too many points to them.

P3: Some teachers complained that those teachers chose to do administrative tasks to be promoted (which is for their personal desire), and they received more money than us.

P4: Too large a gap in points between teaching and administrative work discouraged us hugely.

P3: This lowers our self-esteem as teachers.

This situation will gradually reduce the number of teachers who are passionate for teaching as seen in the conversation between P3 and P4 and shown in a study (Kwak & Lee, 2014) as well.

P3 and P4 said,

P3: I worked more administrative tasks than her (P4) in our first year. Then I received a higher rate than her (P4).

P4: I worked until 7 pm at school every day. However, it was not considered at all. For my students, I prepared my lessons very hard. However, no one knew my efforts. Other people couldn't see it. My hard work may have helped my students' learning and satisfied myself. However, the rewarding system only valued administrative work, so I lost my enthusiasm gradually. [...] I don't want to stay until late at school for students. I do only the work that my school asks me for. [...] I don't spend a lot of time to teach my students anymore.

Lowering teachers' morale and their self-esteem was the opposite effect from that expected by policy makers who introduced the performance-based pay. So, most participants (except P9 who said either abolition or maintenance was okay with her) felt that performance-based pay should be terminated. My research suggests, as P6 (7, F, R) points out, that performance-based pay was "the most poisonous element that makes teachers abandon their professionalism and self-esteem as a teacher."

Weakening relationships among teachers. My research also suggests that the performance-based pay and teacher evaluation system hurt relationships among teachers. Teachers who received a lower rate than they expected easily became disappointed with their colleagues and administrators as shown in the examples of P7 (8, F, R) and P8 (10, F, R) above. Furthermore, when teachers did not receive full points from their peer teachers on the teachers' evaluation, they were likely to become suspicious of their colleagues (B. Lee & S. Lee, 2015). P2 (12, F, R) said:

P2: teacher evaluation is not competition. So, giving full points to each other became common practice. However, when you don't receive full points, you start guessing and looking for someone who might not have given you full points. Who did that? Because of that, I heard that some teachers were suspicious about their peer teachers and this ruined their relationships.

In addition to disappointment with colleagues, some teachers' arguments over the criteria of performance-based pay resulted in destroying the entire atmosphere within school. Since teachers' rate of performance-based pay is determined by what criteria is used for assessing teachers' performance, teachers are likely to care about the decision making regarding the criteria in their schools. However, it was sometimes the case that some teachers had a much

larger share of input into the decision-making process and/or decided on criteria that did not satisfy other teachers (Y. Cho, 2015). In these cases, these teachers were upset with the decided criteria and these circumstances led to some arguments. P5 (13, F, H) described this situation as a “war” because everyone insisted on increasing points of an area where they could receive more points than others. P5 recalled:

P5: When we had a meeting, it was very intense. It was a war. WAR! These teachers (subject teachers, a nurse teacher, and school librarians) insisted on increasing their points (for their advantageous areas). [...] Although it was not a physical fight, we had psychological warfare whenever we had a meeting for deciding the criteria of performance-based pay.

P6 (7, F, H) also experienced the same situation several times when her school had meetings to decide these criteria. Observing conflicts and arguments among teachers, P6 lamented that performance-based pay was ruining the teaching profession.

P6: If we didn't have this (performance-based pay), conflicts wouldn't occur. We trusted each other to be doing their work well. Because we create criteria and score each other's work now, our self-esteem gets hurt. I thought that this system was not helpful at all to improve our profession.

Regarding conflicts, the performance-based pay made non-homeroom teachers, such as subject teachers, nurse teachers, school nutritionists, and school librarians upset (e.g. Yeo, Kim, & Kim, 2011). Since these teachers received less points than homeroom teachers in the category of guidance of the criteria of performance-based pay, their rates were normally low (e.g. Yeo, Kim, & Kim, 2011). Despite the difference in the type of work done by nurse teachers, school nutritionists, and school librarians, their performance was measured by the same criteria as

classroom teachers (e.g. Yeo, Kim, & Kim, 2011). Therefore, as P5 (13, F, H) mentioned briefly above, her school nurse teacher was upset with her rate and insisted on increasing her rate.

However, P5 said that “other teachers did not accept her request, considering it unreasonable.”

Similarly, a school nutritionist in P6’s school was upset with her rate and even threatened to quit her job. Because of this, her school had to overturn a decision on the criteria of performance-based pay which had already been through several changes.

In addition, I observed complaints from two participants (P3 & P11) regarding the unfairness of benefits. They complained that it seemed like head teachers received double benefits, similar to circumstances like those reported by Kim, Gu, Lee and Yi (2012) who observed similar complaints from teachers. P11 (27, F, R) described this unfairness:

P11: Head teachers received benefit from here (teachers’ evaluation for promotion) and received more bonus than us, then could be promoted in the future. The system gives all benefits to head teachers. I saw the criteria of performance-based pay of my school. Points of head teachers were there. The points were 10 or 20 points. We can’t compete with the points.

Furthermore, the current performance-based pay system created a prejudice among some experienced teachers against younger teachers. Some experienced participants talked badly about young teachers assuming that they were exclusively interested in earning bonus money by taking on a heavy workload voluntarily, but neglecting their major duty, teaching. None of my participants said that they requested additional administrative tasks to earn extra money.

However, P13 (21, M, H) who had 21 years of teaching experience criticized young teachers.

P13: I felt a difference recently. Young teachers in their 30s are different from us when we were in our 30s. [...] I believe that teachers need a sense of duty and should be righteous. However,

they are coldly calculating. They don't help other teachers. They are very individualized. [...] They volunteer for tasks that bring extra money to them.

As P13 said, some young teachers may have chosen difficult tasks for some reasons, such as extra money and/or promotion. However, some participants (P1, P8, P9, & P27) claimed that novice and young teachers used to be forced to do extra work without any compensation because some experienced teachers tried to avoid heavy tasks (e.g. Jung & Yang, 2016). Experiencing this unfair administrative work shared among teachers, some participants including P9 (11, F, R) described giving a heavy task as “passing a bomb” to the young teachers. P9 continued to say,

P9: It was unreasonable to force young and novice teachers to do more work than other teachers. So, giving incentives such as extra money and promotion would be a better solution than “passing a bomb.” [...] Teachers who want to be promoted compete to take difficult tasks.

Although P9 showed a neutral position regarding the existence of system of performance-based pay, she pointed out an advantage that the system was beneficial in giving some incentives to novice and young teachers who suffered from heavy workloads. However, some participants (P6, P7, P11, P12, P13, P14, & P15) argued that they needed different kinds of benefit, not bonus money, when they had to do difficult administrative tasks, such as receiving an easy grade or easy tasks in following year etc.³⁵

These differing views among different generations of teachers regarding the work of other generations showed a growing conflict in the community of teachers (e.g. Y. Cho, 2015). It was clear over the course of my interviews that the current system of performance-based pay

³⁵ Some studies point out that economic incentives through performance-based pay does not motivate teachers and suggested alternative incentives such as reduction of class hours, promotion, and public recognition (Kim, Gu, Lee, and Yi, 2012; Lavy, 2007).

had made the senior teachers suspicious and biased against young teachers. Instead of solving the problem of unfair workload distribution among teachers, some young teachers were now being stigmatized as selfish and crazy about money (e.g. Kim, Gu, Lee, and Yi, 2012).

In addition to these conflicts among teachers, teachers became less likely to help each other (Y. Cho, 2015; Kim, Gu, Lee, and Yi, 2012). P13 (21, M, R) described this phenomenon as the individualization of the recent generation. However, P10 (14, F, R) explained how her recent attitude changed:

P10: As for performance-based pay, I consider whether my work is recognized by other teachers and administrators. Why should I help others' work that is not my duty? This year, I switched the task that I did last year with another teacher. I received the highest rate last year. However, why should I help other teachers when I already know that I won't receive the highest rate this year? [...] Since I'm in charge of an after-school program, sometimes other teachers ask me to send a student's list of after-school programs or to help them (other teachers) with additional tasks. Why should do that? Now, I think about that. This is my attitude change.

Regarding teachers' individualism, Park, Jeon, & Hwang (2012) saw that educational policies such as performance-based pay, teacher evaluation systems, and standardized tests reinforced teachers' indifference to others' work by encouraging competition among teachers and letting individual teachers pursue their self-interest and individual accomplishment. In order to improve the teaching profession, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) emphasize investment in professional capital that includes, among other things, the social capital of teachers. Along these same lines, Coleman (1988) noted that social capital exists in the relations among people and he observed better productivity in a group with trustworthiness and extensive trust than a comparable group without trustworthiness and trust. Therefore, collaborative cultures among

teachers very likely help improve the quality of education. However, the current educational policies in Korea have promoted teachers' individualism and weakened their desire for collaboration.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored teachers' perspectives on their work as it has been affected by the current educational reforms between 2008 and 2016. The work of Korean elementary school teachers described as primary work and that described as supportive work were both affected by current educational policies. Ironically, most participants perceived that recent education reforms meant to improve the quality of education did not directly influence the primary work of teaching significantly and were considered to have an overall net negative effect by many of my participants. They felt that the new teacher evaluation system and performance-based pay had little direct impact on the quality of teaching, whereas the standardized testing and school performance evaluations impeded efforts to move education towards a more flexible and personalized teaching and learning. Furthermore, they thought that these educational policies actually increased their administrative work and these increased tasks may have subsequently disturbed their teaching.

While many participants perceived that the current educational policies did not affect their teaching directly, they thought that educational policies increased administrative work a lot. Distributing and collecting surveys for the new teacher evaluation system was added as one of the administrative tasks given to teachers. The short-lived school performance evaluation also created a lot of administrative work and heavy workload, which eventually led to its termination

(Y. Cho, 2016). In general, many participants felt that new education policies have added more administrative tasks to their work.

Lastly, recent educational reforms affected the work of teachers by devaluing teaching, lowering teachers' morale and self-esteem, and weakening relationships among colleagues. The performance-based pay rewarded teachers who did more administrative work than others, which was likely to create an atmosphere and culture where teachers devalued their primary work, teaching. Furthermore, some teachers (both participants and teachers) were discouraged and lost their passion for teaching when they found that they had been awarded a lower rate than they expected. They were upset and felt powerless when they did not have control over the system which seemed to be subjective and without transparency. Also, the performance-based pay and the new teacher evaluation system have fostered acrimony among teachers when some of them inevitably receive a low rate (Y. Cho, 2015; Kim, Gu, Lee, & Yi, 2012). Teachers became disappointed with their colleagues and administrators when their hard work was not recognized by others. Also, when teachers did not receive full points from their peer teachers on teachers' evaluation, they were likely to become suspicious of their colleagues. Furthermore, performance-based pay created conflicts among teachers and led to increased individualism (Y. Cho, 2015; Kim, Gu, Lee & Yi, 2012; Park, Jeon & Hwang, 2012). Thus, despite my participants' stated belief that these policies had little direct effect on their teaching, we can infer that these policies had a disastrous effect on the overall learning environment in Korean elementary schools. In the next chapter, I discuss how the Korean elementary school teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under such circumstances.

Chapter Eight: Korean Teachers' Views on Teaching and the Teaching Profession

In the previous chapter, I showed the negative effects of current educational reforms on the work of Korean teachers. In this chapter, I discuss how teachers view teaching and the teaching profession in light of these reforms. I believed that it is important to examine how Korean teachers think about their vocation because such perceptions can influence their motivation, job fulfilment, commitment, and self-efficacy, which in turn have a big impact on students' learning. Due to this reason, many studies have dealt with teachers' perceptions of their work, professionalism, and of their identities as teachers (e.g. Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; OECD, 2016c), and some of these studies have also examined teachers' perceptions of their professionalism and professional identities under the global educational reform movement (e.g. Day, 2002; Gewirtz, Mahony & Hextall, 2009; Helsby, 1999; Menter, Muschamp, Nicolls, Ozga, and Pollard, 1997). In this study, to understand teachers' views on teaching and the teaching profession, I asked three questions related to: 1) job satisfaction; 2) the roles of schools and teachers; and 3) the professionalism of the teaching profession.

Job Satisfaction

Unlike what the 2013 TALIS survey seems to suggest, most elementary school teachers in my study seemed satisfied with their jobs. Except one extreme case where one participant (P 22 (8, F, R)) was not interested in teaching from the beginning and who had been struggling with her teaching for the entire eight years of her career, most participants showed some degree of satisfaction. Nearly half of them (P1, P2, P7, P8, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18, P28, and P29) sincerely loved teaching and their job because they felt that they could contribute to the

society by helping little kids grow; that it was a rewarding job; and they felt that the teaching job fit their aptitude very well. Other teachers in my study liked the job too because they had autonomy in their classroom; and they had many opportunities to develop their professionalism through teacher training courses and graduate school programs.

In addition, some extrinsic factors made most participants satisfied with their job, such as its somewhat high socioeconomic status, the stability it offered, and its benefits (long vacations, maternity leave, and retirement pension etc.). These factors have been attracting highly competent people to the teaching profession as I explained in Chapter Four, and all participants also acknowledged these factors and appreciated them. In particular, female teachers in my study who had kids showed high contentment with their job because they did not need to worry about losing their job when they were pregnant and gave birth. This situation is in sharp contrast with that of a lot of women who have lost their jobs due to pregnancy and birth in Korea (N. Kim, 2014). In addition, they liked that they could strike a balance between work and family because of their relatively flexible work schedule. P3 (8, F, R) and P4 (7, F, R) said that they both realized how lucky they were after they went through pregnancy and birth. P4 and P3 continued:

P4: My teacher friends who are still single or have no baby complain a lot and they are very dissatisfied with this job. [...] However, I think that they don't know yet how lucky we are. They will think differently after they have a baby. We have a job that we can come back to (after pregnancy and birth) and we have flexible schedules. Despite the small salary and bad reputation about teachers, this job has a lot of advantages which overcome the weaknesses.

P3: I have a baby. So, if I could choose a job again, I'd choose this job. My friends working for private companies or even public agencies leave their workplaces after 7 or 8 pm. I can't do that with my family. Due to the flexible work schedule, I would choose this job.

Not only these female teachers, but other participants (both female and male teachers) also expressed their satisfaction with the job considering the country's current depressing economic situation. They were relieved that they had a stable job when the country's unemployment rate was very high. However, one third of them (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P25, P26, P27, & P28) described their satisfaction as "relative" and they were not fully satisfied with their work. P25 (19, F, H) who did not like her heavy workload as a head teacher said,

P25: As for workload, I'm dissatisfied with my job. [...] Also, when I have some troubles with students or parents, my job satisfaction drops. However, I am satisfied with my job stability. [...] Therefore, I can't say that I'm completely dissatisfied with my job. [...] Considering the current social atmosphere (low employment rate and depressing financial situation of the country), I should say that I like my job because it is very hard to get a job.

Like P25 (19, F, H), many teachers in Korea seemed to think that advantages of the teaching job surpass the disadvantages. Therefore, the primary school teacher attrition rate was only a little over two percent in 2017, which included regular retirement³⁶ (0.8%), voluntary retirement³⁷ (0.8%), and other reasons (0.5%) (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2018). Considering that the first two reasons for retirement concern only teachers whose teaching experience is over 20 years, teachers' turnover rate is very low.

³⁶ The mandatory retirement age of teachers is 62 in Korea.

³⁷ Teachers can apply for voluntary retirement when they have worked for more than 20 years.

However, despite teachers' low attrition rate and the high satisfaction rate expressed by my participants during their interviews, it is important to note that some participants wanted to quit their job because they were dissatisfied and/or had lost their pride as a teacher. When I interviewed participants in 2016, eight participants (P5, P10, P21, P23, P25, P26, & P27) including P22 (I consider her an outlier because she was unsure about teaching from the beginning of her career) told me that they wished to stop teaching if they could. P25 (19, F, H), P23 (15, F, H) and P27 (5, F, R) were burned out due to their heavy workload and they felt guilty that they were teaching students without passion. In particular, P27 (5, F, R) was confused about her identity as a teacher because she was undertaking a lot of administrative tasks saying that she had "two jobs," one as a teacher and one as a clerical employee. Her school experience and her identity confusion made her skeptical about the professionalism of teachers, a point also made by a recent study (Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2013). Similarly, P10 (14, F, R) and P21 (5, F, R) were questioning the professionalism of teachers³⁸. They both had lost some of their pride as teachers. They were disappointed that they did not have much professionalism and even if they had, their professionalism was not acknowledged by other teachers or the public. I discuss this in detail in the section on the professionalism of the teaching profession below.

Additionally, P5 (13, F, H), P22 (8, F, R), P23 (15, F, H), and P26 (8, F, R) added that teaching and working at school had become very hard due to the impolite attitude and distrust from students and parents, which increased their dissatisfaction with their work. Three of them expressed the feeling that students did not listen to them well anymore. P26 (8, F, R)³⁹

³⁸ Both of these teachers had chosen to study abroad to earn a PhD when I contacted them again in 2019.

³⁹ She took maternity leave and parenting leave for a while for her kids and then came back to school in 2015, so the time-span over which she had taught is much longer than her actual time teaching (eight years) would suggest.

complained that compared to before when she began to teach, “students were very rude and defied teachers now.” Also, P3 (8, F, R), P4 (7, F, R), P5 (13, F, H), and P26 (8, F, R) observed that many teachers had become relatively powerless when they were involved in students’ problems and had to deal with students’ parents. P5 (13, F, H) pointed out that “recently parents and students have come to be placed on top of us (teachers) in the power dynamic.” P5 had taken on the responsibility of school violence as a head teacher and P26 (8, F, R) had witnessed school violence at her school during the previous year. They both observed that teachers were regularly accused as the cause of school violence and they were viewed as irresponsible and lazy people by both parents and administrators.

Regarding their “lowered” position or status, some participants thought that it was to some extent related to the current educational reforms and the mass media. P3 (8, F, R), P4 (7, F, R), P6 (7, F, R), and P11 (27, F, R) pointed out that educational policy makers have viewed education from an economic perspective and emphasized students and parents’ rights as “service customers” while treating teachers as a group of people to be reformed and that this state of affairs has subsequently lowered teachers’ morale. Along with educational polices, some of the teachers in my sample believed that the mass media has played a big role in creating negative images of teachers, usually focusing disproportionately on a small number of problematic teachers. P11 (27, F, R) still remembered the time when the policy of lowering teachers’ mandatory retirement age was announced and how the mass media responded to the policy. She recalled:

P11: If we get rid of one old teacher, we can give job opportunities to many young people! Like this, the mass media played a big role. [...] Also, the mass media said that they found a lot of gifts

and purses received in a female teacher's closet. [...] I was so embarrassed when I told people that I was a teacher at that time. So, teachers felt disillusionment about teaching, then chose early retirement.

During the time, P11 (27, F, R) was frustrated by the corrupt image of teachers who were portrayed by the mass media as accepting gifts, money, and other bribes. Many participants felt bitter about the negative images of teachers amongst the public and felt hurt that they had become an easy target for criticism in their communities. For example, P3 (8, F, R), and P4 (7, F, R) both heard gossip about themselves among students' parents, and P11 (27, F, R) also noticed that some teachers were ridiculed by students' parents via social media. They said that they were discouraged by this negative word-of-mouth from students and parents and felt sad that they were not respected anymore.

In short, most teachers in my sample were somewhat satisfied with their work due to the advantages of the teaching job: for both intrinsic reasons and extrinsic reasons. As the teaching profession became popular due to extrinsic reasons, they were also satisfied either highly or relatively with such factors. Many of them in my sample thought that the advantages of the teaching profession surpassed its disadvantages. However, there were also some teachers in my sample who were simply tolerating their work. They did not like the fact that the professionalism of teachers was under assault and that as a result, their main job of teaching students was becoming more and more difficult.

Roles of Schools and Teachers

The teachers in my sample felt that the roles of schools and teachers have changed recently. Due to new demands and societal changes, schools and teachers have been requested to

provide various things, such as childcare, multicultural education, safety education, social welfare and so on (Oh & Kim, 2017) as was discussed in Chapter Seven. However, while teachers have been undertaking these newly required tasks, several of my participants (P7, P11, P17, P19, P23, & P24) felt that one of their traditional roles, the teachers' primary role of teaching knowledge, has decreased and their role as a clerical worker has become more important.

Most of my participants acknowledged that parents had lowered their expectations regarding teachers' role in improving their children's grades. They said that nowadays most students attended *hagwon* (cram schools) and both parents and students depended on *hagwons* for students' academic achievement. As their role in teaching academic knowledge has decreased, one third of my participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P23, & P24) said that parents have come to view teachers as childcare givers. Regarding this, P24 (12, F, H) described her case:

P24: Clearly, our role is going toward childcare. In the past, teaching knowledge was a big part of our roles. However, it is hard to find students who come to school to learn academic knowledge. They have already learned this at hagwon. Only a couple of students don't go to hagwon. But they are subscribing to home-study materials, or their parents teach them. So, they don't feel that they are learning something new at school. [...] When their parents visited school, they also said that they taught their kids academic knowledge (through their help or hagwon), so they wanted their kids to hang out with their friends and to maintain good relationships with their friends at school.

Regarding teachers' increased role as childcare givers and service providers, a few participants including P21 (5, F, R) and P10 (14, F, R) observed that especially some senior teachers were

very frustrated, and they were upset with some parents' attitudes and being treated as childcare givers. It seemed that some senior teachers were not able to accept or adjust to this new teachers' role as childcare givers and the changes in parents' attitudes while thinking of the past when teachers were respected by both students and parents (Kim & Hwang, 2012). P10 (14, F, R) saw that "some senior teachers retired earlier than they were supposed to retire after they struggled with parents' constant requests such as feeding medicine or tying students' hair back." Although the percentage of those dissatisfied was not as high as that of more senior teachers from other studies⁴⁰, several of my participants also expressed their dislike for this role of childcare givers, and they wished to teach something new to students as a teacher. P24 (12, F, H) said,

P24: When we taught something interesting, kids appreciated us and said that their teachers were smart. However, this kind of scene doesn't occur in the classroom anymore. Teachers' role of teaching knowledge has been reduced a lot. I heard that some countries have banned students from learning in advance because it takes away teachers' right to teach. I want to have something like that where only schoolteachers can teach. Then, I can have my right to teach back. Without this, I feel like that I'm just a care giver.

While many participants felt that their role as childcare givers has increased, schools' role as childcare centers has been growing recently too. In order to accommodate the needs of double-income families, low-income families, and disadvantaged families, schools have begun to provide after-school childcare for 1st and 2nd grades since 2004 (KEDI, 2018). Childcare

⁴⁰ In a survey conducted by Kim and Hwang (2012), 81.7% of senior teachers (age 50~60) said that they have considered of voluntary retirement. Teachers in the survey answered that the major reasons for a rise in voluntary retirement are: 1) difficulty in guidance of students (73%), 2) increased stress due to administrative tasks (31%), 3) increased stress due to parents' requests and complaints (29.9%) etc.

services at school have gradually increased their hours and the number of classes and expanded to higher grades in primary school. Therefore, most participants felt that elementary schools have become childcare centers rather than educational institutes. P15 (11, M, H) explained,

P15: I don't think that elementary schools are childcare centers. However, they are gradually changing to childcare centers. [...] The government is playing an important role to make this change happen. But this is also connected to a social issue. For double-income families, they need childcare. So, schools need to provide more after-school programs than before. If kids come to school even on Saturdays, schools need to take care of them. Instead of an educational institute, the role of childcare center has increased.

As P15 (11, M, H) anticipated, childcare programs in primary schools have seemed to increase. Childcare programs in primary schools have been very popular among parents proven by the fact that parents' satisfaction rate with these programs was 95.7% in 2016 (Special Report Team, 2017). So, expansion of childcare programs at schools has been one of the pledges from major political parties in recent elections (Yeram Kim, 2018). Some participants (P7, P9, P16, P18, and P23) were unhappy with the school's role as childcare centers because they viewed that providing childcare programs in primary schools was a policy mainly to win votes from parents without thinking about the lack of budget, classrooms, and teachers trained in that form of childcare. Although these participants hoped to remove childcare programs from schools, they acknowledged that the role of schools as childcare centers has become important and would keep growing. Also, two participants (P7 & P15) accepted out of necessity that schools would be the best place to offer childcare programs.

While schools' role as childcare centers becoming more important (J. Kim & Y. Shim, 2015), several participants (P7, P11, P17, P19, P23, & P24) felt that their role as a service manager has increased. As explained in Chapter Seven, teachers manage and supervise childcare programs in addition to other school-run programs, such as after-school programs, gifted education programs and English camp (e.g. S. Park & S. Lee, 2012). On top of already existing administrative tasks, teachers have come to undertake a lot of managerial tasks for such programs without extra pay, but some tasks provide teachers additional promotion points as compensation depending on the region (H. Lee, 2009). Also, they have needed to settle complaints from members of such programs. Working on these tasks, P24 (12, F, H) has come to think that "teachers have become service managers and receiving parents' high satisfaction rates on the services we provided is considered important." Similarly, some participants including P17 (8, F, R) and P19 (11, F, R) thought that the government tried to come up with services (policies) to please parents. Therefore, they felt that their role as a service manager has been encouraged by the government.

In addition to this role, most participants felt that they had to play a lot of different roles. They were experiencing increased expectations in many different areas from policy makers and the general public in recent years. P7 (8, F, R) and P16 (22, F, H) said that recently teachers were required to have an "all-round capability." On the top of the basic demands such as equipping students with social skills, an upright character, and fundamental skills, these participants said that they needed to provide multicultural education, software program education, safety education and other skills in a timely fashion⁴¹. For example, when students'

⁴¹ An increase in the expectations put on teachers regarding current issues (e.g. school violence, sex education) has also been observed in research on mass media (Oh & Kim, 2017).

safety became a big concern nationally, fueled by a tragic ferry incident where almost 300 high school students died in 2014, P14 (17, M, H) said that “schools and teachers were required to provide safety education and to prove what we did with documentation.” Regarding the many requests made of teachers, P16 (22, F, H) complained:

P16: Like a multi-functional stem cell, I have to be good at teaching and guiding children. Also, I must treat emotional problems and provide childcare. I need to pay attention to their safety and teach sports. [...] I have to provide unification education and physical education and so on. Although we are hearing that we have professionalism, the circumstances do not help us become professional. I feel like that we are requested to become a god.

Additionally, most participants reported that they needed to take a lot responsibility for social problems. School violence, domestic violence, and child abuse have been paid a lot of attention by the public in recent years, particularly after the occurrence of certain well-publicized and severe crimes. The role of schools in protecting children from such violence has become more important than ever before (Jin & Eom, 2016). With schools being considered the best place to help solve social problems by the public, most participants felt that their responsibilities have become bigger and bigger. For example, P7 (8, F, H) said that “when students’ violence occurred within school and even out of school, teachers were blamed (by parents and the public).” Regarding this kind of blame on teachers, P23 (15, F, H) said,

P23: I think that when something is wrong, our society usually blames schools and teachers. This is a very common phenomenon in our society recently. The public’s expectations of schools and teachers are very high. However, when the expectations are not met, schools and teachers are criticized harshly. It is hard to hear positive encouragement or gratitude from the public.

Similarly, most of my participants expressed that they were overwhelmed by the many different, newly required roles as well as by complaints from the public.

In short, while teacher's traditional role of teaching academic knowledge has decreased, my participants felt that the importance of different roles such as a childcare giver, service manager, and multi-functional employee have increased due to the social changes and subsequent public demands. They acknowledged the importance of such roles, and some of them including P7 (8, F, H) admitted that "schools would be the best place to provide students a safe place and protect them from social violence." However, they also expressed their fatigue and frustration at having to take on so many different roles and none of my participants spoke enthusiastically or with pleasure at the new roles they were being asked to take on.

Professionalism of the Teaching Profession

Most participants agreed that they had professionalism or expertise. However, it was interesting that individual teachers had different concepts of professionalism or at least different priorities within the concept of professionalism. It was a complicated endeavor to distinguish between "professionalism" and "expertise" when I conducted my interviews. The equivalent Korean word for "professionalism" and the one that I used during interviews, '*jeonmunseong*,' could be interpreted as special skills or knowledge that is acquired by training, study, or practice (the definition of "expertise") or as a combination of skill and high standards (the definition of "professionalism")⁴². Participants used the term *jeonmunseong* to mean either professionalism or expertise. To differentiate between them, I needed to ask participants if they considered their job

⁴² Referred to Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary

a profession. Regarding this question, only three participants (P2, P12, & P15) thought that their job was a profession that required professionalism. On the other hand, many of them disagreed with the idea that their job was a profession but said that they had developed some expertise to teach young students throughout their career.

Most participants pointed out that teachers developed expertise through practice over time. Many of them recognized the knowhow of experienced teachers. They said that experienced teachers knew how to deal with different types of children, and they knew what strategies or teaching methods worked with different groups of students better than novice teachers. What P5 (13, F, H) said represents a belief that most of my participants expressed:

P5: Teachers gain expertise (professionalism) over time. The difference between novice teachers and experienced teachers is that experienced teachers (not too old) understand contexts quickly and find solutions efficiently based on their experiences. However, novice teachers are not good at dealing with different situations with different students, parents, and others. [...] Probably novice teachers are better at knowing various teaching methods than experienced teachers. However, experienced teachers are better at dealing with students and solving problems related to students than novice teachers.

These same sentiments led P9 (11, F, H) to observe that “parents of students trusted experienced teachers” more than inexperienced teachers.

Regarding such professionalism, most participants talked in particular about their expertise that was specialized for elementary education. In Korea, elementary school teachers stay in a home classroom with their students throughout the academic year. They focus their teaching on students from one grade for an entire year, and over time, and depending on the

grade they are assigned to teach each year, they gain experience with each of the elementary grades (1-6). They are also all required to teach nearly every subject. Due to these circumstances, most participants mentioned their sharp knowledge and understanding about child development throughout the elementary education period; distinct skills in life guidance of elementary students and classroom management; teaching skills for different ages and levels of students and different subjects. Regarding the professionalism of elementary school teachers, P24 (12, F, H) offered the following illustration:

P24: Think about a difficult topic. For example, Jupiter and space. For first and second grade students, I believe that elementary school teachers can teach the difficult topics. I'm sure that they know how they can change the content of the topics because they know levels of first and second grade students and how much they could understand. Teachers can change terms and know what kinds of activities students like. Using such activities, they make students understand difficult topics. I think that that is an aspect of the professionalism (of elementary school teachers) and I like my growing sense to distinguish students' favorite activities. [...] For example, students love a fake microphone. When I give it to students, they speak very well and actively. [...] This is not a theory, but I learned it from my experience. We are practitioners, not theorists. Experienced teachers even organize a system of checking homework in an orderly manner and know how to switch students' seats effectively and fairly and that is a very important matter for students.

In addition, most participants mentioned and some participants (P8, P12, P13, P16, and P24) emphasized at-length their expertise in teaching students social skills and virtues. In an example of the latter, P8 (10, F, H) explained:

P8: Rather than teaching subject matters well, I help students develop the character and social skills that they need during elementary education. For example, I provide activities such as discussion and problem solving frequently in order to help students develop their thinking skills. There are virtues that are necessary for a social life, such as thoughtful consideration for others. I think that cram schoolteachers can't do this. I guess that this is elementary school teachers' professionalism. Parents also expect schoolteachers to do this (helping students develop their character).

It is interesting to note that, as is the case with the passage from P8 (10, F, H), most participants made little or no mention of their professionalism regarding knowledge of subject matter. In addition, some teachers (P3, P4, P14, & P26) explicitly agreed with the sentiment expressed by P27 (5, F, R), that “teaching academic knowledge effectively did not represent elementary schoolteachers’ professionalism.” P15 (11, M, H) similarly recognized that “teachers’ authority regarding knowledge has become weak due to the internet, cram schools and parents.” Several of my participants (P1, P5, P13, P19, P23, & P26) expressed thoughts in line with that of P12 (28, F, R), who accepted the reality that “cram schools equipped students with academic knowledge.” P1 (14, M, H) even said that cram schoolteachers were more effective than schoolteachers “in teaching academic knowledge by providing individualized lessons due to their small class sizes and use of cramming methods,” although my participants (P1, P8, & P11) generally did not think that the cramming methods and rote memorization used by cram schoolteachers were appropriate methods for students’ learning. Most participants weighted their professionalism in classroom management, knowledge about child development, and character education over cram schoolteachers’ techniques. Therefore, P1 (14, M, H) proudly called himself a “pedagogical expert.” While these elementary teachers’ perception of their

professionalism as a subject matter expert seemed weak, they had pride in their pedagogical professionalism.

Additionally, a few participants (P7, P24, & P25) added an understanding of and ability to manage the skills of administrative work to their concept of teachers' professionalism. Since teachers were assigned with different administrative tasks almost every year, P7 (8, F, R) said that "an ability to adjust to new administrative tasks quickly" needed to be included for teachers' professionalism. As a head teacher, P25 (19, F, H) also perceived that professionalism included understanding and managing administrative tasks:

P25: I know that too much administrative work is a problem. However, administrative tasks are definitely needed for teachers to understand how schools run. Educational policies came down to our administrative tasks. [...] If teachers don't understand educational policies well, I don't think that those teachers have professionalism. [...] Some teachers were not good at and afraid of dealing with or managing administrative tasks. [...] Therefore, I think that teacher training is needed (for those teachers).

Similarly, P24 (12, F, H) who was also a head teacher thought that managing administrative work was related to professionalism. She was considering promotion and wanted to work at an administrative level above that of the school. This kind of administrative work is known in Korea as "*kyoyuk chönmunchik* (positions for experts of education)⁴³." She felt that the "work of a regular teacher did not seem to help self-development." Therefore, she volunteered for a

⁴³ The Korean phrase "*kyoyuk chönmunchik*" means administrative positions (educational supervisors and officers) in district, metropolitan, province, or ministry education offices and I have translated this phrase "positions for experts in education."

subject teacher position and reduced her class hours almost in half to manage more administrative work than other homeroom teachers.

Like P24 (12, F, H), it seemed that some administrators and teachers regarded professionalism as something that they could best achieve while pursuing promotion. Some participants (P17, P19, P21, P23, & P29) talked about their experiences with administrators. For example, P19 (11, F, R) received some advice from the administrators of her school and they suggested that she needed to do something that provided promotion credits. During their joint interview, P19 (11, F, R) and P17 (8, F, R) [they worked in different schools] were somewhat frustrated by administrators who looked down on the teaching position:

P19: My experience is probably limited. However, they (administrators) were regular teachers but were not satisfied with their teaching position. So, they passed a test to become a supervisor or to get an officer position in the education office and then became an administrator. I have seen people who believed that they developed professionalism by doing extra work (not teaching). Even my school principal and vice-principal told me that I shouldn't stay here (as a teacher). They said that I needed to do something such as administrative tasks and research competition. They think that such things help professionalism and that they have professionalism. Then, do they think that we, teachers don't have professionalism?

P17: I saw that some of them actually chose administrative careers because they were not able to work well with students and their parents. [...] They did not value teaching and judged teachers based on their management ability and their ability to perform administrative tasks. They look down on us (teachers).

It seems that some teachers pursuing promotion share with administrators a similar concept of professionalism as described above (B. Chung, 2012). In my interview with P25 (19,

F, H), she talked about B. Chung (2012)'s article, which she had read for a graduate seminar she was taking at the time of our interview. During her in-class discussions, she heard other teachers talking about the phenomenon of teachers focusing on promotion points:

P25: Some teachers in Gyeonggi-do Province focused on earning promotion credits right after they became a teacher. [...] They collected information about how to do it in advance.

These teachers who were focusing on earning promotion points seemed to have different concepts of professionalism from other teachers who perceived professionalism as something that they could develop through work in their classrooms. As shown in Chapter Seven, however, it was not surprising that some teachers who were interested in earning promotion credits would connect their professionalism with promotion.

While most of my participants thought that they had professionalism as teachers, many of them (except three participants, P2, P12, & P15) disagreed with the idea that their teaching job was a profession, particularly when considering outsiders' (the general public) views on the teaching job and the perceptions of even insiders (teachers and administrators) on teachers' professionalism. Due to a long period of distrust of teachers and K-12 education, as explained in Chapter Four, most participants acknowledged that their professionalism has not been respected by the general public. Although P10 (14, F, H) said that "the teaching job was professionalized because people could not teach without an official teaching certification," most participants including P10 felt that recognition of teachers' professionalism from the general public had become low.

Regarding the low recognition of their professionalism, several participants (P8, P9, P10, P15, & P23) talked about how the traditional and exclusive roles of schoolteachers as those

capable of transferring academic knowledge had been diminished and how students were now acquiring knowledge from many different channels. P15 (11, M, R) thought that “in the past, in the culture of Confucianism, teacher’s exclusive knowledge helped them secure their power and authority.” P10 (14, F, R) said that teachers were once “considered highly educated people and an elite group.” Nowadays, however, many participants thought that the knowledge or education gap between teachers and the general public has been reduced and P9 (11, F, R) said that “parents who were interested in their children’s education could have access to knowledge about education and child psychology” because the knowledge that teachers learned to teach is “not as difficult as medical knowledge and laws.” Furthermore, P23 (15, F, H) said that “teachers have become very common in our society.” Besides schoolteachers, “students learn from many other teachers on a daily basis in cram schools, tutoring, and after-school programs.” Therefore, these teachers felt that their role as an exclusive knowledge transmitter has been greatly weakened and their authority over knowledge and concomitant social status were not as high as before.

Rather, most teachers in my sample experienced becoming an object of ridicule in the public and even among their students’ parents and expressed feeling that their job was valued only from an economic perspective from the public. Some participants (P3, P4, P6, & P11) said that they sometimes heard envious comments from surrounding people. For example, P6 (7, F, R) heard that “you must be happy with your job” from her acquaintance. However, she noticed that “such comments were not a sign of respect for a teacher, but envy of the job itself” because of “the merits provided by the job.”

While the benefits of the teaching job have been focused on and emphasized by the mass media, teachers themselves have become targets of criticism and these benefits have often been

used to argue that teachers are overcompensated. P11 (27, F, R) recalled a newspaper article emphasizing that “teachers received salary even during the vacation when they took a break and could earn money even after 60.” Also, she said that “newspapers overstated a small number of cases of unethical teachers as a general case,” and such reporting has created a negative image of teachers in the mind of the general public. P10 (14, F, R) overheard parents’ complaining about their children’s homeroom teacher in her (P10’s) yoga class. These parents talked about the homework that their kids’ homeroom teacher provided in a sarcastic tone. In this kind of environment, my participants generally did not expect respect for their professionalism from the general public.

In addition to a lack of recognition of their professionalism from the general public, some of my participants (P11, P13, P14, P17, & P19) believed that even some insiders (educational officers, and teachers) seemed to look down on teachers’ professionalism. P14 (17, M, H) was the loudest critic of such insiders’ views:

P14: They (educational officials and policy makers) think teachers don’t have professionalism. We teach as we are told. We have a (national) curriculum designed by experts. [...] They don’t accept teachers’ professionalism. There are even professional positions in our field. The position of educational supervisor is a profession. Professional positions exist separately (from the teaching positions). [...] Even among teachers, we say that a teacher took a test for “kyoyuk chōnmunchik” and were promoted to a professional (expert) (referring to the positions for experts in education as discussed above). It is an administrative position. This is sad thing! It shows that we aren’t proud of our job. It is the same thing as announcing that we don’t have professionalism.

Like P14, P11 (27, F, R) was frustrated with insiders' negative views regarding teachers' professionalism and she gave the following example of the de-professionalizing effects of performance-based pay:

P11: Even principals and vice-principals don't accept that teachers are professionals. Then who'll recognize our professionalism when even insiders don't acknowledge it. [...] If they considered us as professionals, they wouldn't try to divide us into three levels using performance-based pay. [...] No wonder that society doesn't accept our professionalism, or even parents.

In this kind of circumstance where these participants believed that neither outsiders nor insiders consider teachers professionals, I noticed that some teachers who were proud of their job became skeptical about their professionalism. During their interviews, three participants (P10, P27, and P21) expressed that they had lost their pride in their work:

P10: In this society where the teaching job was not recognized as a profession as much as I expected, my concept of teaching as a profession has been destroyed and I have lost self-esteem as a teacher. Even if I worked hard, I was just an elementary school teacher. I knew that students' parents were talking maliciously about teachers. [...] In this circumstance, [...] I don't feel any respect for my job, so for me this job is just an occupation. So, I think that a job can be changed, and I want to find a better job. [...] Now, I gave up my concept of pursuing a calling. I want to find a job where I can get back my pride and challenge myself.

This was a huge mind change for P10 (14, F, R) because her dream was to become a teacher since she was little. She said that she even cried with joy when she received an appointment letter at the district office of education and worked very hard taking on several responsibilities. However, when I met with her, she was cynical about her job and planning to leave the job.

When I contacted her later in 2019, I found out that she was studying abroad to earn a PhD. Like P10, P21 (5, F, R) was also studying abroad to earn a PhD when I contacted her in 2019. She expressed ambivalence about teachers' professionalism during her original interview as well.

Both P21 (5, F, R) and P27 (5, F, R) who had five years teaching experience showed deep concern and ambivalence about their professionalism. They both thought that professionals were people who could provide some advice on certain problems as an expert. P27 (5, F, R) had been thinking about issues of professionalism and did not have confidence in herself as a teacher and became even more frustrated after a senior teacher whom she admired and respected decided to retire earlier rather than wait for regular retirement. The reason why the senior teacher chose early retirement was that he felt that he was not helpful for the school anymore. Before he had to transfer to another school due to the regular transfer requirement (all teachers must usually transfer to another school every five years in Seoul), he decided to retire in his current school that he had worked at for five years. At the interview, P27 (5, F, R) sadly talked about the conversation that she had with him:

P27: He told me "I was afraid to transfer to another school. When I go to another school, the peer teachers won't welcome me because they will think that I won't share administrative tasks with them. Also, administrators aren't happy with my transfer because they cannot ask me to work (due to his age). Kids don't like me, and their parents don't like me either. So, I was gradually scared to move to another school." Not only him, other senior teachers who are considering early retirement said the same thing!

P27 (5, F, R) was somewhat shocked and disappointed with the reality that seniority and their expertise were not valued at school. This situation made her recall a conversation with

kindergarten teachers in her graduate school. She relates the shocking story she heard from them as follows:

P27: When a director of a kindergarten (which generally are entirely separate from public elementary schools in Korea) hires a teacher, they prefer a young teacher over an experienced teacher. [...] In a kindergarten, if a young person has a teaching certificate, doesn't cause any problems, and is pretty and kind, they are probably better than experienced ones. If a teacher has more experience, it is hard for the director to deal with them and has to pay them more. Especially, if a teacher is not married, it is even better for the director because he/she asks for extra work. [...] In our society, we don't recognize kindergarten teachers' professionalism. Rather, we look down on their job because they did not graduate from a good college and they receive a small salary. I don't know how different elementary school teachers are from kindergarten teachers.

P27's conversations both with her senior teacher and kindergarten teachers discouraged her. She did not make as big a decision as P10 and P21 (who both chose to study abroad), but she chose to take a number of teacher training courses for her professional development or at least for her "self-satisfaction." These three teachers' struggles and strategies to overcome such struggles give insight into individual teachers' low recognition of their own professionalism as a teacher.

In sum, most teachers in my sample believed that they had professionalism in knowledge and skills specialized for elementary education which they developed over time. Some participants (P7, P24, and P25) added the understanding and managing the skills of administrative work to teachers' professionalism. While these elementary school teachers thought that they were experts in pedagogy, their perception of themselves as experts in subject matter was weak due to the many different channels from which students acquired academic

knowledge. In terms of teaching as a profession, most participants (except three teachers) disagreed that their teaching job was a profession considering outsiders' (the general public's) views on the teaching job and the unflattering perceptions of even insiders (teachers and administrators) on teachers' professionalism. Along with distrust of teachers and K-12 education, they felt that they received little recognition of their professionalism from the general public and sometimes experienced being targets of ridicule. They lamented that even people involved in the education field did not acknowledge teachers' professionalism. In these circumstances, three participants (P10, P21, & P27) who once were proud of their job lost their self-esteem as teachers and were struggling to find an exit or a solution, which also revealed their low recognition of their professionalism.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored Korean elementary school teachers' views on teaching and the teaching profession. Regarding job satisfaction, most participants showed their satisfaction with their job both due to the intrinsic aspects of the job and extrinsic factors such as high socioeconomic status, job stability, flexible schedule, and benefits. Although one third of my participants thought that their job satisfaction was a "relative satisfaction" considering the country's current depressing economic situation and they were struggling with heavy workloads, many participants agreed that the advantages of the teaching job surpassed its disadvantages. In this regard, my participants' attitudes appear to be representative, as the schoolteacher attrition rate is very low in Korea (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2018).

Nevertheless, some participants (P5, P10, P21, P23, P25, P26, & P27) were simply tolerating their work. They complained of their heavy workload, and in turn some of them were

confused about their identity, considering themselves caught somewhere between being a teacher and a clerical worker. Also, three participants expressed that they had lost their pride in their career and acknowledged the low recognition of their professionalism by both teachers and the public. Furthermore, other participants (P5, P22, P23, & P26) pointed out the difficulty of teaching and working at schools due to the impolite attitudes from both students and parents, which attitudes were partially influenced by current educational reforms and the mass media. These reforms and the mass media have created a negative image of schoolteachers.

As for the roles of schools and teachers, most participants felt that the new social demands and changes required both them and the schools they worked at to play multiple roles, a situation that matches that explored in a recent study by Oh and Kim (2017). These roles include providing childcare, multicultural education, safety education, and social welfare among others. More than one third of my participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P11, P15, P17, P19, P23, & P24) noticed that their traditional role of teaching academic knowledge has decreased due to the prevalence of shadow education, whereas their role as childcare givers has increased. Also, schools' role as childcare centers has become important due to social demands, which made many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P9, P14, P15, P17, P19, & P23) feel bitter.

In addition, several participants (P7, P11, P17, P19, P23, & P24) felt that their role as a service manager has increased. They managed school-run programs such as after-school programs, childcare programs, gifted programs, and English camp and had to pay attention to "customers' (a.k.a students and their parents)" satisfaction rate. Besides their existing roles, most teachers in my sample felt that their newly added roles and responsibilities, such as protecting against school violence, required them to have an all-around capability. While some

of them acknowledged the importance of their increased roles in the changing society, they also expressed their fatigue and frustration at the addition of these new roles without any monetary incentives.

Lastly, most participants believed that they had professionalism or expertise. They acknowledged the knowhow of experienced teachers. Regarding such knowhow, they talked about their expertise and skills specialized for elementary education such as their detailed knowledge and understanding about child development throughout the elementary education period; distinct skills in life guidance of elementary students and classroom management; teaching skills for different ages and levels of students and different subjects. Additionally, some teachers in my sample (P8, P12, P13, P16, & P24) emphasized their expertise to teach social skills and virtues to elementary school students. However, most of my participants' perception of elementary school teachers' professionalism as a subject matter expert seemed weak because of the widespread use of cram schools, although most of them believed that they were experts in pedagogy.

Three teachers (P7, P24, & P25) in my sample added understanding and managing skills of administrative work to teachers' professionalism. Also, according to some of my participants (P17, P19, P21, P23, P25, & P29), it seemed that some teachers as well as administrators who were once teachers regarded professionalism as something that they could achieve primarily through pursuing promotion into administrative roles, an attitude which matched the research of B. Chung (2012) as well.

While most teachers in my sample thought that they had professionalism as a teacher, many of them (except three participants, P2, P12, & P15) did not feel that their teaching job was

a profession when considering outsiders' (the general public) views on the teaching job and the perceptions of even insiders (teachers and administrators) on teachers' professionalism.

Teachers in my sample thought that the low recognition of their professionalism was caused by the weakening of their traditional role as those responsible for teaching academic knowledge (P8, P9, P10, P15, & P23) ; a focus exclusively on their economic benefits by the mass media (P3, P4, P6, & P11); and a negative image of them created by the mass media (P10 & P11). Some teachers in my sample (P11, P13, P14, P17, & P19) complained that even insiders (teachers and educational officers) did not acknowledge or looked down on teachers' professionalism. This lack of recognition from both insiders and outsiders has lowered their pride in their work. In the next chapter, I synthesize and discuss my findings and conclude my study.

Chapter Nine: Discussion and Conclusions

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore Korean elementary school teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession in light of recent educational reforms (2008 – 2016). As has been the case in many nations, the educational reforms in Korea were heavily influenced by the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM), worldwide educational trends that have seen increasing competition among schools; standardization in education; focus on core subjects; test-based accountability; and school choice (Sahlberg, 2011). In order to explore teachers' perspectives, I looked into the distinct national educational structures and processes around teaching and the teaching profession in Korea and then examined teachers' views on their job under national educational reforms and in the larger context of the GERM. The research questions were: 1) what are the distinct characteristics regarding teaching and the teaching profession in Korea?; 2) what are the characteristics of Korean educational reforms from 2008 through 2016?; 3) how do Korean elementary school teachers believe that the recent educational reforms have been affecting the work of individual teachers?; and 4) how do Korean elementary school teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances?

I conducted a qualitative study. In order to address my research questions, I collected data from interviews and documents. To be specific, regarding the first question, I referred to literature about the history of teacher education and teacher policy in the modern Korean education system as well as to some major newspapers that address teacher policy. As for the second question, I examined documents from the Korean government that have announced recent educational reforms, as well as relevant articles and newspapers. Lastly, to examine the

third and fourth questions, I interviewed 29 elementary school teachers and referred to official documents produced by schools and educational institutions, and articles to help put my interview data in context.

For data analysis, I utilized aspects of the constant comparative method of data analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). I began with “open coding” which meant that although I had a theoretical frame, I did not have themes pre-selected at the beginning of my analysis, but rather allowed these themes to emerge in the process of analysis. In my initial reading of the data I had transcribed, I made notes next to bits of data (Merriam, 2009) and from these notes I later selected the most salient themes. During and after this open coding process, I also began “axial coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) or “analytical coding” (Merriam, 2009) which is the process of grouping open codes into related categories. When I found recurring patterns and regularities, I created categories and sorted subsequent items into these categories (Merriam, 2009). After finalizing my categories, I switched my stance from inductive to deductive, and I began looking for more evidence to integrate into my finalized set of categories as well as for disconfirming evidence. I kept doing this work until I reached a sense of saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The findings of this study were described in detail in Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, and Eight of this dissertation. These findings showed two salient and apparently contradictory aspects of Korean education; similarities and differences between Korean educational reforms and the GERM; distinctive aspects of Korean teachers’ work and influences of recent educational reforms on their work; and their perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession. In what follows, I summarize and discuss the findings and address their implications for the comparative and international education field. Lastly, I conclude with recommendations for future research and Korean teacher policy.

Discussion of the Findings

In the case of Korea, it was found that the correlation between students' high scores on international tests and the high quality of teachers was not as simple as many scholars (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2000; Konstantopoulos, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Scheerens, Vermeulen & Pelgrum, 1989; Scheerens, 1993; Willms, 2000) have argued. Despite the high quality of teachers in Korea, many Korean students depend on at least one kind of shadow education (cram schools and private tutoring) as explained in Chapter Four. In their interviews, most teachers in my sample also admitted that their role as knowledge transmitters has been reduced and that most students learned academic knowledge at cram schools, as I discussed in Chapter Eight. Thus, Korean students' high academic achievement requires a different explanation, as the connection between their high academic scores and the quality of their teachers is much less strong than it otherwise might be. This detail in particular reveals the importance of a close examination of local contexts in international and comparative education studies and shows that merely comparing quantitative data paints an incomplete picture.

Regarding the attraction and retention of high-quality teachers, an aspect of Korean education that is often praised by observers from outside Korea, my study likewise underscores the need for this aspect to be examined in its local context. In Chapter Four, I listed four major factors that have contributed to competent people becoming teachers in Korea: 1) the social perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession; 2) the opportunity of social mobility and benefits for individuals through the teaching profession; 3) the job stability of the teaching profession; and 4) the feminization of teaching. This last point, the feminization of teaching, has hurt the status of teaching in other countries, such as the United States. However, given the

intense patriarchal dominance of Korean society in general, academically successful female students in Korea have taken advantage of a school environment with relatively less gender discrimination, and in turn the flood of intelligent female students into the field has raised the entering bar for teaching (K. Shin, 2014). Many other countries, such as the U.S., have failed to attract competent people to teaching in large numbers due in part to differences with the Korean system, such as low social perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession, low salaries and few benefits, and, somewhat ironically, increased career opportunities for women which in turn has led to fewer highly capable women seeking out traditionally feminine careers. (Goldstein, 2014; Herbst, 1991; Lagemann, 2000). Thus, in order to recruit high quality teachers, simply suggesting factors that have helped attract competent teachers in other nations may not be effective without also considering the particular social contexts of countries that have been successful in this endeavor.

For example, as I explained in Chapter Four and have shown as well in the interviews with my participants in Chapter Eight, job stability has become the most important factor for many Korean people when choosing a job, particularly since the financial crisis of 1997 (Cho, & Keum, 2004). A survey that was conducted among students in elementary, middle, and high schools showed that the teaching job has been the most or second most popular job since the Ministry of Education and the Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training began administering the survey in 2007 (MOE, 2019). One third of young job seekers prepared for the test to become public servants, a category that includes teachers (S. Lee, 2018). For example, the competition in the exam to become a teacher in public schools has become so intense that it has been called the “Second Examination Hell,” which follows the “First Examination Hell,” a common way of referring to the college entrance process in Korea (B.

Jeong, 1991; Kang et al., 2010; K. Shin, 2004). These phenomena reflect the unfortunate reality that many students and young adults weigh job stability over their vocational dreams or individual aptitude due to the country's high unemployment rate and the depressing economic situation. During my interviews, one third of my participant teachers also expressed their "relative satisfaction" with their job considering the current economic situation, as I described in Chapter Eight.

In addition, although the feminization of teaching has raised the entry bar for teaching, many well-prepared female students choose teaching as a safe way to avoid Korea's sexist job market and unfriendly working conditions for women. In Korea, people who have a teacher's certificate and who are in the last year of teacher education programs take an annual teacher's exam to become a public school teacher. Koreans consider this test to be fair to all genders (H. Jeong, 2015). However, many women, not men, rush to the test because teaching is considered the "best" job for women in Korea (K. Shin, 2004). Korean women traditionally remain in the second level labor market (Acker, 1990; Reskin & Padavic, 1994; Britton, 1997; Britton, 2000; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The sex-segregated occupational structure is becoming more widespread in Korea (K. Shin, 2004). In such circumstances, a teaching position provides women a somewhat reasonable salary, job security, and social status.

At the same time, a teaching career allows women the flexibility to earn money while also performing women's traditional domestic roles such as housekeeping, childbirth, and child-care (K. Shin, 2004). Thus, female teachers have been consistently considered as ideal spouses in Korea (J. Ha, 2007). In Chapter Eight, the interviews with a few married female teachers also showed that they liked their job because they could keep their job while they went through

pregnancy, childbirth, and took care of their child(ren), whereas a lot of women in other industries forfeit their jobs in order to raise their children. The great demand for teaching jobs amongst Korean women is due in large part to the fact that in Korean society women are highly encouraged to pursue traditional domestic roles while being treated unequally in the wider labor market.

Considering these circumstances (one third of young people flock to the test to become a public servant, women do not have equal opportunity in the labor market, and women are pressured to take on traditional domestic roles), the high quality of the majority female teacher pool can be seen as a symptom of endemic misogyny, rather than simply as an indication of an appealing career. It seems likely that the highly competent and well-prepared women who comprise the majority of Korea's teachers would seek a much wider diversity of careers if the labor market were equal and if domestic work were shared equally between men and women. It is, of course, necessary to make the teaching position attractive in order to recruit competent and motivated people and thereby improve education. My point here is that it is also important to think of deep-seated and therefore taken-for-granted social problems before simply concluding that Korea has the "best" system for recruiting the high-quality teachers.

In Chapter Five, I discussed the educational reforms that have occurred in Korea in the past 20 years (1995 – 2016) and discussed common features of the GERM as they have manifested in Korean educational reforms. "Global dynamics," a category that includes various transnational policy actors and networks, is one of the areas in the conceptual framework suggested by Akiba (2017). A global dynamics perspective can be used to explain some of the resemblances between Korean education reforms and the GERM. Kim Shin-bok (2003), who

was the vice-minister of the Ministry of Education from 2002 – 2003, described the strong influence of the OECD and PISA on Korean educational reforms, even as early as the May 31st educational reform proposal of 1995 suggested by the presidential Commission on Education Reform. The OECD conducted reviews on educational policies funded by the Korean government for two years, beginning in 1994 (S. Kim, 2003). Also, leading members of the presidential Commission on Education Reform visited European countries and OECD offices, and they referred to documents and ideas produced by the OECD for their May 31st proposal (S. Kim, 2003). In order to justify these educational reforms, the Korean government utilized the authority and reputation of the OECD (Shin & Joo, 2013). The Korean situation reflects Robertson's (2012) argument regarding the extensive global governance exerted by transnational actors over educational systems in sovereign nations.

Although the Korean government had an equal partnership with the OECD, the Korean government considered policy recommendations from OECD as something they had to follow and thus accepted them actively (Martens, Rusconi & Leuze, 2007). Since 1995, thematic reviews specialized for Korea and comparative data such as Education at Glance and PISA produced by the OECD have had a constant impact on Korean educational policies. The new teacher evaluation in 2004 and the 2010 nationwide standardized test, National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA), are examples of such connections. Therefore, this explains partially how educational policies suggested by the May 31st educational reforms proposals could be implemented in the subsequent governments, despite the fact that these governments represented different political orientations.

As I explained in Chapter Five, PISA also had a great impact on educational policies in Korea. Despite the high ranking of Korean students on the test, the Korean government focused the curriculum more on core subjects in order to maintain this high ranking. Despite calls for critical reviews of the global governance of OECD and PISA (J. Kim, 2017; Shin & Joo, 2013), these two bodies in particular have been powerful global dynamics in Korean educational reforms in the past 20 years and the results and suggestions from these institutions have often been accepted and acted upon uncritically in Korea as in other countries (Paine & Zeichner, 2012).

An additional “global dynamic” that had a big impact on teaching policies in Korea was the Asian Financial crisis of 1997, which led to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis and externally imposed financial restructuring in Korea. This financial crisis radically changed local perspectives of teachers and the teaching profession in Korea from an economic stance. As explained in Chapter Five, in order to overcome the financial crisis, the policy of lowering teachers’ mandatory retirement age received a great deal of attention from the public. At the same time, teachers felt that they had become targets of public criticism due to their resistance to the policy and the negative images of them created largely by an antipathetic mass media (H. Shin, 2010). In Chapter Eight, this phenomenon was also described by P11 (27, F, R) who was teaching during the period. While the financial crisis increased the popularity of the teaching job and raised the entry bar of teaching due to its job security, the policy of lowering teachers’ mandatory retirement age frustrated and demoralized teachers as well (H. Shin, 2010). In particular, many depressed elderly teachers left their jobs, and this caused a shortage of elementary school teachers, especially in rural areas (H. Shin, 2010). Teachers trained for a short time were hastily hired in elementary schools in such areas (H. Shin, 2010). This also hurt

the pride and professionalism of elementary school teachers as a group (H. Lim, 2001). These local, chain effects of teacher policy were precipitated by global dynamics, particularly the way that the IMF crisis unfolded in Korea.

In the same way that the 1997 crisis had locally specific effects in Korea, the recent Korean education reforms between 2008 and 2016 have also been modified by the Korean local context. I chose the peak time of the GERM-like Korean reforms, from 2008 to 2016 to show as much resemblance to the GERM in Korean policies as possible. Nonetheless, there was also significant local modification of GERM found in the Korean educational reforms as I described in Chapter Five. One example of GERM as it has manifested in Korea is increased competition among schools and teachers. This was accomplished via performance-based pay, the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA), and the institution of school choice. Sahlberg (2015) observed that school choice has increased school competition in a number of countries, including Chile, Sweden, the U.S., and England. However, school choice was not sufficient to explain the increased competition among schools and teachers in Korea. Of course, school choice increased competition among high schools in a few regions, especially in Seoul. However, since 2000, a growing number of local education district offices adopted the High School Equalization Policy (HSEP) wherein new high school students are randomly assigned to schools within their districts (Byun, Kim, & Park, 2012). Therefore, because of the randomness of school assignment, school choice cannot fully explain the increased competition among schools and teachers in all levels of schools in Korea.

The (re-)introduction of the NAEA and performance-based pay contributed more to the increased competition among schools and teachers than did school choice alone. Reduction of

the number of underachievers on the NAEA was reflected in school performance as one of the measured categories from 2011 to 2013 in elementary schools and from 2011 to 2015 in middle schools and high schools. Since teachers received different bonuses depending on their school rate from their school performance evaluation as well as from their individual rate, these two factors (NAEA and performance-based pay) increased competition not only among teachers, but also among schools.

Similarly, another of the common features of the GERM, test-based accountability, is not enough alone to understand the accountability system as it has been functioning in Korea. As mentioned above, the national standardized test, the NAEA, was indeed used as one of the categories for the evaluation of school performance to hold teachers and schools accountable for students' achievement from 2011 to 2015 (to 2013 in elementary schools). However, there were other categories in the evaluation of school performance such as distinctive school events and the percentage of students who took after-school programs in schools (MEST, 2012a). Therefore, test-based accountability, with its short life-span, can only partially explain the accountability system under the recent Korean educational reforms.

Compared to the national standardized test, the new teacher evaluation system has had a much greater impact on the community of teachers as a tool of accountability in Korea due to the local circumstances (distrust of teachers and the public education). As described in Chapter Four, the general public's distrust of teachers and of K-12 education has mainly been caused by the fierce competition on the university entrance exam; excessive dependence on shadow education; and school collapse, not by the low test scores of students. During Lee, Myung-bak's government (2008 ~ 2013), raising accountability gained a lot of attention by policy makers and

especially became a key agenda priority (K. Song, 2013). Despite a strong resistance from teachers, the new teacher evaluation system (TAPD) was requested and supported by parents and policy makers (Shin, Yang, Lee & Ka, 2013) and finally was fully implemented in all schools in 2010 (S. Choi, 2013). As many scholars have pointed out, individual countries are apt to respond to the GERM in different ways (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Cummings, 2003; Paine & Zeichner, 2012; Tatto, 2006; Tatto & Plank, 2007) and Korea, after this analysis, is clearly no exception.

While Korea has undertaken localized educational reforms under the influence of the GERM, as I discuss in Chapter two, the features delineated by GERM are not an exhaustive list of global trends in education reform. An increased focus on teachers themselves is another global trend that has been observed too in the educational policies of Korea, especially in the accountability system (the new teacher evaluation system). The Korean government's control over the quality of teachers in the current education reforms is not new but has continued throughout the modern history of education. One example of the government's control is shown by its long-running influence on the teacher education systems (Seth, 2002; N. Park, 1997; Y. Kim, 1987). The phrase "the quality of education cannot go beyond the quality of the teachers" has been taken for granted and often used by many different groups, including scholars, policy makers, parents and even teachers in Korea (Y. Yoon, 2006).

The educational reforms in Korea between 2008 and 2016 often cited the widespread and long-lasting Korean belief in the importance of the quality of teachers (J. Son, 2010). The reforms proposed during the May 31st, 1995 proposal emphasized a customer-centered education and accountability, and as I discussed earlier, this proposal had significant influence on the

educational reforms proposed during subsequent governments (G. Yoo, 2010). The most representative educational policy along these lines was the new teacher evaluation system. In order to improve teachers' professional development, the government forced the implementation of this new system against the teachers' will. Teachers' resistance to the evaluation system created a conflict between teachers and the public (K. Kim & S. Lee, 2011). Before the introduction of the teacher evaluation system, teachers had increasingly been considered public enemies and had experienced extensive criticism from the media, the public, and the government (S. Choi, 2013). In this way, teachers were increasingly the focus of recent educational reforms in Korea, and their professional development has come to be under tighter control from outside (the government and the public) (K. Kim & S. Lee, 2011). This increased focus on teachers themselves is a world-wide phenomenon discussed by scholars (Paine & Zeichner, 2012).

Given the recent GERM-like educational reforms in Korea, I explored teachers' perspectives on their work as it has been affected by the reforms made to teaching and the teaching profession. While I conducted interviews with participants, I also looked into their "teaching environment," another of the areas in the conceptual framework for teacher reform suggested by Akiba (2017). Through many of my participants' voices and many studies (e.g. Kang & Moon, 2009; Eom, 2018; Seong & Huh, 2015), I noticed that the promotion system has been harmful to and disruptive of the community of teachers for a while. For Korean teachers, "promotion" has come to mean becoming a full-time administrator ((vice-) principal, supervisor, or research officer in an education office). Therefore, the promotion system has rewarded administration-oriented teachers, and it has created an atmosphere where administrators were considered competent while regular teachers were considered incompetent (H. Lee, 2009).

Furthermore, the increasing preference given to administration has caused fierce competition among teachers who are seeking promotion, and led some to manipulate a system where teachers may be invited from another school⁴⁴ to earn additional promotion points (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; J. Bae, 2013; Y. Koo, 2012; I. Jang, 2011). The most undesirable effect of the promotion system was that the system made teachers use their energy and time for something unrelated teaching and has pushed them away from teaching (Kang & Moon, 2009; Eom, 2018; Seong & Huh, 2015).

This Korean teachers' promotion system is unique. Some countries such as Canada and Finland do not even have formal teacher career ladders (NCEE [National Center on Education and the Economy], May 3, 2020), while others like the U.S have career ladders that encourage teachers to remain working as classroom teachers (e.g. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards). Some OECD nations such as Germany, the U.S., England, and Australia have a separate recruitment system by announcing a vacancy and recruiting a principal from applicants (Huber & Pashiardis, 2008). Since becoming a school principal in these countries is not considered a promotion that requires many years of preparation as a classroom teacher, people under 40 can find work as a school principal (OECD, 2014). In Korea, however, there are no principals under 50-years-old, and nearly half of the school principals are 60 years of age or older, and principal positions are dominated by males (87%) according to the data of TALIS 2013 (OECD, 2014). Although the characteristics of principals in Korea is not a central focus of this study, my descriptions of the Korean promotion system, with its intense and long-lasting

⁴⁴ A policy for "inviting teachers" has made it possible for principals to recruit specific teachers from other schools and bring them to the principal's school. Ordinarily, most teachers would be distributed throughout the district by the local office of education every 4~5 years based on a city or province's regulations.

competition for promotion and related gender biases can help put the quantitative data from the OECD in context.

Another aspect of Korean teachers work that has been draining teachers' energy and time is their heavy workload. Teachers' heavy workload has been a long-standing problem in Korea, and policies to reduce this workload have been suggested since the 1970s by many scholars (C. Lee, 2017; Jeong, Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2012; C. Suh, 1995; I. Lee, et al., 2010; Chung, Joo & Chung, 2013; B. Chung & S. Lee, 2016). The government tried to reduce teachers' workload, for example, by digitalizing paperwork using the NEIS (National Education Information System)⁴⁵ in 2005, hiring assistants for administration work in 2006, and introducing the educational administrative task team⁴⁶ in 2011 (C. Lee, 2017). However, it has been noted by some researchers that these efforts had a minimal effect on teachers' actual work and that these effects were actually negative in some ways (C. Lee, 2017). In brief, Korean teachers' heavy workload has been chronic and persistent.

Furthermore, the recent education reforms have increased teachers' workload even more as many of my participants observed in Chapter Seven. They perceived that the introduction of new educational policies brought schools extra administrative tasks. As I discussed in Chapter Seven, the increase of administrative tasks was virtually inevitable because of new and increasing social demands in many nations. TALIS 2018 (OECD, 2020) also shows that nearly half of teachers participating suffer from too much administrative work, and that is one of the main sources of their stress. Drawing from general theories of the labor process, Larson (1980)

⁴⁵ For additional details, see Chapter Five

⁴⁶ For additional details, see Chapter Six

says that “intensification ... represents one of the most tangible ways in which the work privileges of educated workers are eroded” (p. 165). It “represents a break, often sharp, with the leisurely direction that privileged non-manual workers expect” as it “compels the reduction of time within the working day” (p. 166).

Hargreaves (1994, pp. 118-119) lists effects of intensification: 1) reduction of “time for relaxation during working day”; 2) “lack of time to retool one’s skills and keep up with one’s field”; 3) creation of “chronic and persistent overload which reduces areas of personal discretion, inhibits involvement in and control over longer-term planning, and fosters dependency on externally produced materials and expertise”; 4) reductions in the quality of service”; and 5) “enforced diversification of expertise and responsibility to cover personnel shortage, which can in turn create excessive dependency on outside expertise and further reductions in the quality of service.”

Apple (1986) found a number of these aspects of intensification in teaching, especially in “those schools which are dominated by behaviorally prespecified curricula, repeated testing, and strict and reductive accountability systems” (p.43). Teachers worked for such schools spent hours even before and after school on “arrangements for giving tests, and then grading them, organizing lessons (which were quite often standardized or pre-packaged)” (pp. 43-44). Due to a proliferation of administrative and assessment tasks and their lengthened working day, teachers lost opportunities to be creative or imaginative for their teaching (Hargreaves, 1994). In addition, Apple (1986) points out two aspects of intensification that are specially grounded in education and teaching: 1) creation and reinforcement of scarcities of preparation time; and 2) it is misrecognized as a symbol of increased professionalism by many teachers.

Findings of this study regarding Korean teachers' heavy workload show a number of similar effects of intensification. Apple (1986) reports that intensification is found in schools where prescribed curriculum, frequent testing, and an accountability system are dominant and these externally imposed sources seem to explain, at least in part, Korean teachers' chronic and persistently heavy workload. Korea has maintained a centralized curriculum system where the national curriculum, textbooks, and teachers' manuals have been provided by the government since its first national curriculum in 1955⁴⁷. Also, paper-based tests and worksheets were often provided to even elementary and middle school students by schools and teachers to help them prepare for entrance exams for middle schools and high schools.⁴⁸ Even in recent years, although the government has tried to decentralize the national curriculum since the 6th national curriculum (S. Park, 2008) and provide autonomy to individual schools to adjust their curriculum since 2009 (MEST, 2009a), the accountability system has been gradually strengthened by a (re-)introduction of the national standardized test, the new teacher evaluation system, school performance-based pay, and individual performance-based pay, which have led to an increase in Korean teachers' workload as described in Chapter Seven.

In addition, as I pointed out previously, most teachers in my sample have experienced an increase in their workload when new educational policies were implemented. With increases in the social demands and expectations put on teachers and schools, such as the reduction of school violence, the doing of social work, and the implementation of safety education, teachers have been made to take on these additional tasks through the creation of new educational policies (Oh

⁴⁷ For more details on the Korean educational system, see Chapter One

⁴⁸ Middle school entrance exams were abolished in 1969 and high school entrance exams existed between 1973 and 2017 in some cities and provinces.

& Kim, 2017). As depicted in Chapter Eight, most participants felt increased expectations from policy makers and the general public in many different areas in recent years. Most of them were overwhelmed with the extra work added by these external requests without any extra pay. These phenomena and effects are consonant with the intensification described by Apple (1986).

On the other hand, in Korea, some teachers themselves have had a choice in their taking on an excessive workload (B. Chung, 2012). In order to achieve additional promotion points for their promotion, some teachers have chosen a heavy workload by taking a head teacher role and by taking on difficult administrative tasks; applying for and working in research (pilot) schools; and participating in research competitions etc. (B. Chung, 2012). Observing this situation where teachers volunteer themselves into an excessive workload, Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran (2006) refined Apple's claims about intensification, noting that teacher themselves were one source among a variety of intensification sources. These scholars also point out that the impact of external expectations is "mediated by teachers' personal sense-making as well as by specific school characteristics" (Ballet and Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 1151). This sense that teachers themselves could be responsible, in part, for their own intensification was also observed by a couple of my participants (P14 & P16) who exercised their autonomy to resist intensification. P16 decided not to focus on the national standardized test and P14 refused to administer the test even under high pressure to do so, as described in Chapter Seven. Also, depending on their local circumstances, several of my participants (P2, P5, P8, P11, P18, P19, P24, P25, and P28) expressed feeling more pressure to reduce the number of underachievers on the standardized test by their school principals than did others..

Although Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009)'s last claim about intensification is that "the impact of intensification is not always entirely negative" (p. 1151), I was not able to find any positive impact of intensification perceived by teachers in my study. As several scholars have also observed (Apple, 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1996; Hargreaves, 1992; 1994;), I witnessed teachers' discussing how intensification added to their stress, reduced their preparation time for teaching, reduced their time for interacting with students, and how it had a negative impact on their personal lives. Under the circumstances of intensification, most of the participants in my sample observed and experienced that teachers were easily drawn away from their essential work of teaching, and that teaching itself has been devalued, sentiments shared by Apple and Jungck (1996).

I found that intensification of teachers' work has affected teachers' perspectives on their job. There were at least two different reactions to intensification among my participants. As Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) note, the "experience of intensification" is different for different teachers (p. 1151). On the one hand, three of my participants (P10, P21, & P27) were confused with their identity as a teacher and were questioning their professionalism as described in Chapter Eight. These teachers did not think that the ever-growing list of administrative tasks and "window dressing" performances were their essential work, a perspective that Kim, Lee, Hong, Hwang, Lee, and Kim (2013) found to be common among Korean teachers. On the other hand, as scholars (Apple, 1986; Densmore, 1987; Apple & Jungck, 1996; Hargreaves, 1992, 1994) point out, some teachers in my sample (P7, P24, & P25) and administrators described by several of my participants (P17, P19, P21, P23, & P29), misrecognized dealing with increasing and often changing administrative tasks as their increased professionalism. Namely, these teachers and administrators have accepted the "de-professionalization" of teaching (Ballet and Kelchtermans,

2009, p. 1151). Zeichner (2020) refers to the intensification of teachers work as managerial or organizational professionalism and has observed a widespread phenomenon where the de-professionalization of teaching takes place under the guise of making teachers more professional. The Korean circumstances fit this description.

As I have already noted, the intensification of Korean teachers' work has been persistent and has been reinforced by the recent educational policies between 2008 and 2016. Under the current promotion system, the government and each office of education in a city or province has often compensated teachers who were taking on heavy administrative tasks with additional promotion points and performance-based pay. Because of this, there has been increased competition and conflict among teachers over who will take on the heavy duties which confer additional promotion points (e.g. Na, Kim, Kweon, & Park, 2015; M. Cho, 2015). Conflicts such as these were observed in schools where some of my participants (P5, P9, P21, & P23) worked as described in Chapter Seven. This situation highlights the fact that many Korean teachers have voluntarily chosen to contribute to the intensification of their work, albeit because of the incentives they were offered to do so. It is unsurprising that this administration-oriented system and culture have discouraged teaching-oriented teachers by devaluing teaching and in turn, decreased their morale and self-esteem and weakened relationships among teachers as shown in Chapter Seven.

In this system where teaching-oriented teachers are discouraged and administrative-oriented teachers are rewarded and promoted, it is an especially difficult task for schools and teachers to improve the quality of education and revive the public's trust in K-12 education and teachers. There are already many alternatives to K-12 education in Korea, like cram schools

(*hagwon*), so students' parents have gradually considered elementary schools as a free and safe daycare center rather than as a place for learning, and more than one third of my participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P11, P15, P17, P19, P23, & P24) discussed this change in perspectives in Chapter Eight. It is unfortunate that the same Korean teachers who are praised internationally for being highly educated and well-trained have been losing opportunities to develop and exercise their professionalism and skills in teaching. Instead, they have been gradually de-professionalized and de-skilled under the guise of teacher professionalism (Zeichner, 2020).

Implications for Comparative and International Education

Based on my findings, I discuss several implications for comparative and international education in the following paragraphs. After first discussing the implications of this study, I address conclusions and recommendations for future studies and for teacher policy in Korea.

First, my findings show the importance of a close examination of local and national contexts in international and comparative education studies rather than a superficial comparison of purely quantitative data. Thanks to international data from PISA and TALIS, it has been easier for international scholars to compare quantitative data and make a correlation, for example between students' test scores from PISA and the quality of teachers. Due to this kind of comparison, teacher education systems and teachers' policies in high-performing countries, including Korea, Singapore, China, Canada, and Finland have been somewhat one-dimensionally examined and praised (e.g. AERA [American Educational Research Association] symposium, 2015; Darling-Hammond, & Rothman, 2011; Ingersoll, 2007; Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016).

However, a deeper look at local contexts can provide important nuance to the narratives produced by quantitative data. As I showed in Chapter Four, Korean K-12 education and teachers are not trusted by the general public despite students' high scores on international tests, and academically competent teachers. Furthermore, the Korean people think that there are many problems in the Korean education system (Ripley, 2013) and due to these problems, K-12 education in Korea is regularly referred to as "in crisis." In particular, there has been excessively fierce competition for the university entrance exam, which has led most students to depend on so-called "shadow education" (cram schools and private tutoring) (M. Kim, 2012; Byun, 2014). Considering this heavy dependence on shadow education and most of my participants' acknowledgement of their reduced role as knowledge transmitters, Korean students' high academic achievements cannot simply be explained by the quality of teachers. My study exemplifies the importance of understanding local context in comparative and international education studies, which scholars such as Cummings (2003) and Burbules and Torres (2000) have also called for.

Second, in line with what I just said above, the correlation between student achievement and teacher quality needs re-examination. Student achievement has been and will be a critical issue linked with teacher quality in international and comparative education studies (Akiba & LeTendre, 2018). The belief that higher-quality teachers will "effectively increase the future human capital resources of a nation and thereby improve national economic strength" (p. 572) has been shared widely among policy makers globally. However, as a number of studies (e.g. Berliner, 2009; Hattie, 2008; Howard, 2010; Y. Kim, 2012) point out, much of the variation in student achievement is a result of out-of-school factors. These scholars' claim is relevant with the findings of this study, where most of my participants acknowledged that most Korean

students now depend on shadow education and their role as “knowledge transmitters” has been reduced.

Outside factors such as social and economic status, and the home cultures of a student’s family are likely to affect student achievement (e.g. Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Machin & Vignoles, 2004; Byun & Kim, 2010). Such factors can affect a student’s family’s decision on whether or not they can afford extra classes and help from shadow education and what types of extra classes (e.g. private tutoring, hagwon, and online classes) they can receive according to nationwide statistics (Statistics Korea, 2016a). For reasons such as these, we need to reduce the narrow focus on the link between teacher quality and student achievement in international and comparative education studies.

It is noteworthy that PISA has recently included an equity measure in addition to the overall achievement ratings. According to OECD (2012), equity in education means that all students, regardless of gender, family background or socio-economic status have opportunities to benefit from education. In other words, equity in education means that students’ socio-economic background should have little or no impact on their achievement and all students should have access to quality educational resources and opportunities to learn (OECD, 2012). In many countries like the U.S., the quality of schools and teachers varies greatly between schools in economically advantaged areas and those in less advantaged areas. This is one reason that PISA decided to include an equity score so that people would take equity in learning outcomes into account when interpreting countries’ scores. Although Korea has had various equalization policies (e.g. rotating teachers within a city or province about every four or five years, offering incentives for teachers in historically disadvantaged areas, and a high school equalization policy

which randomly assigns students to schools within a district), inequity in education has actually grown even larger between 2006 and 2015 (OECD, 2018).

Third, it is important to critically review the global governance of transnational organizations like the IEA [International Education Association], the OECD, and UNESCO. Transnational organizations have played an important role in confirming the link between high-performing students and high-quality teachers in some nations (Paine & Zeichner, 2012). Furthermore, Sorensen and Robertson (2017) point out that transnational organizations such as the OECD and the European Commission have framed a specific idea of teacher quality. For example, they argue that the OECD has narrowed down an understanding of teacher professionalism and teacher quality to its own terms and “relocated the determinants of governing to the global scale” (p. 118). This has left little space for teachers to stake a claim to their own professionalism and to define for themselves what “teacher quality” means, specifically “in a range of diverse learning and social settings” (Sorensen & Robertson, 2017, p. 118).

Although a nation is not obliged to comply with suggestions from such organizations, national educational policy makers as well as teachers can feel constrained to follow the models and ideas generated by global policy groups (e.g. Sorensen & Robertson, 2017; Meyer, Strietholt, & Epstein, 2018). For example, as I explained earlier in this chapter, the May 31st educational reform proposal referred to documents and ideas produced by the OECD. In such manner, international organizations “suggestions” have significant influence over sovereign nations’ laws. Also, the reputations of transnational organizations and so-called “objective” quantitative data from PISA have been used to justify educational policies in Korea, such as the

new teacher evaluation system, the national standardized test, and new educational polices for core subjects as I described in Chapter Five. Therefore, the comprehensive and fundamental changes made to the Korean educational system via the ideas of the May 31st educational reform proposal, ideas which have affected educational reforms in subsequent governments, have been criticized as being heavily influenced by economic views and neoliberal strategies (Y. Kim, 2001; H. Kim, 2000; B. Lee, 2002). Also, the national standardization and an emphasis on core subjects interrupted the effort in Korea to change to flexible or personalized learning as explained in Chapter Five. Educational policies implemented for accountability encountered teachers' resistance, and these policies caused instead the negative side effects that I described in Chapter Eight.

Similarly, in Japan, the country's effort to provide "*yutori* education," translated as "more relaxed education," to its students has reversed completely since 2010 after experiencing disappointing results in international educational comparisons, the so-called "PISA Shock" (Aspinall, 2014, pp. 15-16). In the U.S., students' below-average rankings on PISA tests has been considered another "crisis of education" and has provided a "push for greater school accountability in the name of educational and economic efficiencies" (Koyama, 2013, p. 77). Considering these phenomena happening globally, scholars have urged caution on the expanded governance of transnational organizations as well as on nations' uncritical and voluntary acceptance of these organizations' suggestions in their educational policies (Mahon & McBride, 2009; Meyer & Benavot, 2013; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Tröhler, 2010).

Fourth, this qualitative study included the voices of individual teachers, a group that has often been left unheard in previous studies despite the fact that teachers and teaching have

become the main focus of educational reforms. By including their voices, I was able to describe Korean teachers' teaching environment, one of the areas that Akiba (2017) suggests can be used to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the interplay between the global and the local and to illustrate the detailed consequences of recent education reforms as these reforms have been experienced by the teachers. In line with this, Hargreaves (1996) points out that teachers' voices "can be a source of great insight into the working lives of teachers, and the systems within which they work" and listening to these voices "enhances our understanding not just of these teachers, but also of our systems and ourselves" (p. 17). Smit (2005) also argued that their voices provide valuable local knowledge that "offer substance and deeper nuanced understandings of the complexities at the various levels of policy implementation" (p. 294). In order to better understand educational reforms and systems in any given nation or region, teachers' voices need be included in international and comparative education studies. This is an ongoing claim and the source of much educational scholarship (e.g. Gozali, Claassen, Soto-Peña, Whang, & Luschei, 2017; Hargreaves, 1996; Quaglia & Lande, 2016; Akiba and LeTendre, 2018).

Fifth, the conceptual framework suggested by Akiba (2017) provided me a productive lens through which I might examine how the recent educational reforms have been implemented in Korea. Despite the common features of the GERM observed in the educational reforms between 2008 and 2016 in Korea, each of these common features was modified to a greater or lesser extent by the Korean local context as shown in Chapter Five. As Akiba (2017) argues, this difference can be explained by the "collective sensemaking, negotiation, and contestation among policy actors at national and local levels" (p. 156). In order to understand the collective sensemaking, negotiation, and contestation in a nation or region, Akiba (2017) provided three

domains in the conceptual framework for us to look into: global dynamics, policy environment, and teaching environment (for more details on these domains, see Chapter Two). These three domains help international and comparative education scholars to examine educational reforms in a comprehensive way.

However, based on what I observed of the Korean educational reforms through this study, I would like to note that educational reforms are not complete products, rather they are ongoing, dynamic, and fluid constructs. Also, the relative influence of each of the three domains outlined by Akiba can differ depending on time and place. Because of this fluidity, describing ongoing policies as the result of collective sensemaking, negotiation, and contestation may offer too concrete a sense of a finished product. For example, the teacher policies of the new teacher evaluation and performance-based pay were introduced despite strong resistance from teachers in Korea. These policies have been gradually and grudgingly adopted by the community of teachers. However, the new teacher evaluation has evolved into a low-stakes, routinized process, and there have been many changes in the performance-based pay such as the addition and then the later termination of the school performance-based pay and changes in the criteria of teacher's performance-based pay. Therefore, I suggest that Akiba's conceptual framework should be implemented in such a way as to highlight the shifting and dynamic nature of educational policies.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, my experience as a teacher candidate and as an elementary school teacher are what first led me to conduct this research project. When I was in a teachers' college, I went out on the major streets with most of my colleagues in Seoul in 2001

and protested against the policy to hire people with secondary teacher certificates to work in elementary schools after only a very brief re-orientation. Despite such resistance from teacher candidates and in-service teachers to this policy, teachers with little elementary-specific education were indeed hired to solve the sudden shortage of elementary school teachers caused by the policy to lower teachers' retirement age. I remember vividly the prevailing, negative image of teachers, and the media portrayals of teachers as a "selfish" group, intent on pursuing only their self-interests. It was the first time that I gave serious thought to the issue of teachers' professionalism.

While I was working as an elementary school teacher from 2004 and 2012, I had more opportunity to think about my professionalism and identity as a teacher. I also experienced many of the depressing situations that my participants described in this study. I personally experienced and witnessed the times when the new teachers' evaluation system was introduced in 2010, and when the newly introduced performance-based pay was gradually adopted. Due to these two policies, there was widespread anger and depression among teachers. Like many of my colleagues I participated in the movement of returning the bonus money that I received as performance-based pay⁴⁹ to the government in 2006. Despite this kind of effort from teachers, both systems were gradually accepted as time went by, and the bonus money gap among teachers became bigger. When the school performance-based pay was added to the system of performance-based pay in 2011, the difference in the amount money that individual teachers received was bigger than before (C. Park, 2014).

⁴⁹ This movement of returning the performance-based pay was led by the Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU) since 2001 when the system of performance-based pay was introduced (C. Lee, C. Park & Y. Kim, 2003).

The introduction of school performance-based pay actually affected my life as a teacher significantly. Since at least one teacher's participation in a research competition from an individual school helped increase its rate for school performance-based pay, I was pressured to participate in a research competition by the administrators of my school in 2011. At the same time, other teachers in my school applied for a research school and their proposal was accepted. So, my school ran a special program for two years. Running a special program also helped increase the rate of my school regarding school performance-based pay, and all the teachers in my school received additional promotion points because of our participation as a research school. Thanks to all this hard work, my school received the highest rate, and I received the highest rate on my individual performance-based pay and the biggest amount money that individual teachers could receive in that year. In addition, my school's principal proposed that I take a head teacher position to pursue promotion in the future because he appreciated my ability efficiently to deal with administrative work.

Although I was glad that my administrators recognized my hard work and I was rewarded with compensations (the bonus money and additional promotion points), I was confused about my identity as a teacher and kept questioning the teacher professionalism promoted by my circumstances. Of course, I worked with many good colleagues who gave me good tips for classroom management and shared their teaching materials and practices with me. These teachers were admired and respected by a small number of teachers including me. However, I also worked with some head teachers who prioritized administrative work above teaching, so other colleagues talked behind their back because of their indifference to students. Unfortunately, these head teachers held power in school and maintained a close relationship with administrators, and later I heard that many of these same teachers had become administrators in

district offices or schools. I was upset by a system which seemed to de-value the primary work of teaching and my frustrations eventually led me to begin this research. While I was collecting data from my participants, I realized that my experience was very similar to what my participants had also experienced and observed. It is simultaneously gratifying and disappointing to find that my own story has been repeated so resoundingly by those teachers who participated in my study - gratifying to share common ground and to share a common passion for the primary work of teaching - disappointing that so many of my colleagues continue to feel that their work as teachers is little valued by the public and devalued by their own schools' administration. My participants' stories were, in large part, also my story.

In this study, I was able to look into our stories in the light of recent educational reforms (2008 – 2016) and the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM). Combined with the existing administrative-oriented system, the GERM-like educational reforms have contributed to a depressing situation for teachers' work and lives. In particular, the systems for accountability have strengthened the government's control over teachers and created conflict and competition among teachers. This circumstance is unlikely to help improve teacher's professionalism, particularly as it pits teachers against each other as rivals, rather than bringing them together as collaborators. As I commented in Chapter Seven, the social capital of teachers exists in the relations among people (Coleman, 1988) is likely being done great harm by these circumstances. Therefore, the policy-makers' goal of attaining an ever higher quality of education will likely remain a fantasy under these GERM-like education reforms. Indeed, it seems likely that the quality of public education has already been made to suffer because of them.

In order for policy makers to improve the quality of public education in Korea, I would like to suggest first the abolition of performance-based pay. Performance-based pay has several negative side-effects in Korea, as showed in this study, and due to these negative effects, most teachers in this study are convinced that it should be ended. Second, in order to redirect the administration-heavy system and culture away from clerical tasks and more towards actual teaching, policy makers need to consider modifying the teacher career ladder system. As opposed to the administration-favoring promotion system of teacher career ladders, the “Master Teacher⁵⁰” promotion system has been operating to foster teaching-oriented culture in Korean schools since 2012 (MEST, 2011c). This Master Teacher system was created with reference to teaching-oriented career ladders systems in other nations (e.g. England, Singapore, and the U.S.), and adapted to fit the Korean school system (C. Suh, 2010). It was expected that this new system would provide teaching-oriented teachers with an opportunity for promotion as a master teacher. A master teacher’s role was to offer advice to more junior teachers regarding both the teaching of content as well as strategies for encouraging students’ moral education (MEST, 2011c). The benefits of becoming a master teacher included a reduced teaching load and extra pay for professional development.

Despite the good intentions behind and the benefits of the master teacher system, teachers have lost interest in it because of several problems, such as a lack of clarity in defining master teachers’ roles and conflicts between master teachers and administrators (D. Shin, 2018; Jang & Paik, 2014). In order to revive the master teacher system and to encourage teaching-

⁵⁰ Teachers who has more than 15 years teaching can apply for a master teacher. After an examination of candidates’ qualification and interviews, Mater teachers are chosen by the office of education in a city or province (Jang & Paik, 2014). A master teacher works for a school for four years.

oriented teachers, systematic support will be required such as clarifying the position master teachers have in a school and the role they are expected to play. Also, master teachers should themselves be involved in determining their own roles and their opinions should be reflected in the decision-making and educational policies related to the master teacher system.

In addition, the revision of the master teacher system may not be enough to reorient the system and culture away from its heavy emphasis on administration. Efforts to change the administration-oriented teacher career ladder system need to be made as well. One such effort already exists, the move towards “open recruitment” of principals has been operating to diversify the path of promotion in 2007 (K. Park, 2017). Thanks to this system, theoretically teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience can become a principal without going through the promotion-point career ladders. However, between 2015 and 2017, a majority of principals (90.8%) were still hired from the pool of candidates who had already acquired the qualifications for principal through the promotion-point career ladders (Jeon, Kim, & Jang, 2018). Also, there have been some corrupt dealings between hiring personnel and candidates, so the transparency of the “open recruitment” system has been questioned (K. Park, 2017). This system is not a silver bullet for changing the teacher career ladder system yet. However, the “open recruitment” system has potential to improve the career ladder system in Korea if policy makers continue to respond to its problems and gradually expand its reach.

For future research, I would like to recommend studies as follows. First, international and comparative education scholars should include teachers’ voices from different levels of schools to provide a better picture of the education system operating in a given nation. Second, more studies are needed to pursue the questions of this study with a broader sample of Korean

teachers, given that I focused on teachers from the Seoul metropolitan area. Third, studies are needed to look into the educational polices suggested by city or provincial offices of education in Korea. Although I focused mainly on educational policies that were proposed and imposed by the national government, I acknowledge that there is significant variation in administrative suggestions and the implementations of educational policies within a given nation. For example, as is the case with school choice and the high school equalization policy in Korea, each city or provincial superintendent has the freedom to choose how these policies are implemented. Therefore, I propose that future researchers should also compare the different ways that educational policies are presented and implemented within a given nation and to examine educational polices as they manifest at the city or provincial level. Fourth, since this study explored the perspectives of elementary school teachers in Korea, I hope to see studies that explore the perspectives of secondary school teachers, both from middle schools and high schools. In particular, school choice has been a more relevant factor in high schools in Korea and high school teachers would be able to provide valuable insight into this and other aspects of the Korean education system and educational polices. Lastly, teachers' experience under Moon, Jea-in's government (2017 – present) should be examined in future research. I looked into educational reforms between 1995 and 2016 and included teachers' experiences during the period in this study, especially focusing on 2008 through 2016 when two conservative governments were in power. After president Park, Geun-hye was impeached in 2017, the current president was elected from a progressive party. As I said, the GERM-like educational reforms were its peak during the two conservative governments. Although Moon, Jea-in promised the abolition of performance-based pay as his campaign pledge, the system of performance-based pay has not been terminated yet (D. Kim, 2020). The future research will be able to discover

whether the GERM-like reform has continued, or whether the GERM-like reform has lost its power in Korea.

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The Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU, *chŏn'gyojo*)

<https://www.eduhope.net/>

The Korea Federation of Teachers' Association (KFTA, *kyoch'ong*)

<https://www.kfta.or.kr/>

Appendix A: Recruitment Advertisement

Hello,

I was an elementary school teacher in Seoul between 2004~2012, and am now a graduate student at the University of Washington in the U.S. I have an interest in Korean elementary school teachers' views on their work under recent education reforms since the May 31st Educational Reform of 1995.

The effects of recent reforms have included: increased competition between schools, greater standardization of teaching and learning, increased teacher accountability, and the introduction of performance-based pay. Teachers and teaching have increasingly become the main focus of these reforms.

Recently, some domestic and international surveys and studies have shown that Korean teachers' job satisfaction and confidence in their job are low. Also, the rate of teachers' early retirement is increasing.

I would like to know how teachers believe that recent educational reforms have been affecting the work of individual teachers and how teachers view teaching and the teaching profession under these circumstances.

In order to conduct this research, I would like to recruit teachers who have between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience. If you are willing to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me.

I will conduct interviews between mid-June to the end of September. I plan to interview each teacher once. Each interview will take about 1~1.5 hours. If your school is located near where I live, I may visit your school. Otherwise, I can use online tools (e.g. skype).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Jiyoung Kim

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Preamble: I was an elementary school teacher in Seoul between 2004~2012, and am now a graduate student at the University of Washington in the U.S. I have an interest in Korean elementary school teachers' views on teaching and the teaching profession under recent education reforms between 2008 and 2016. I would like to conduct in-depth interviews with some teachers whose teaching experience is greater than five years. If you don't mind, would it be alright if I record our conversation? These interviews will be strictly confidential.

Personal/Background Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What grade and subjects are you teaching this year?
3. Could you tell me briefly about your educational background?
4. How many schools have you worked for? Could you briefly tell me about those schools including the current one? How long have you worked for each school? Also, could you please tell me the sizes of those schools, the students' academic abilities at each school, and their parents' socio-economic background?
5. Could you tell me more specific information about your current students? How many students are in your class(es)?
6. Could you tell me about your current work place? What is your responsibility in your school besides teaching?

Recent Educational Reforms & Teachers (classroom teaching & school work)

7. Could you describe your classroom environment? What are the difficulties that you encounter in your classroom?
8. Could you describe your work environment? How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues and school administrators? What are challenges that you are facing in your workplace?
9. Have there been any educational policies or changes that have made you frustrated or concerned you?
10. How have those educational policies or changes influenced your work?
11. How have you responded to such changes?

Teachers' perspectives on teaching and the teaching profession

12. What were the attractions of the teaching profession when you chose teaching?
13. Teaching is a popular job in Korea. What do you think that the Korean public seems to think are the attractions of the teaching profession?
14. Which other professions' social status can be regarded as similar to the status of the teaching profession?
15. Do you think that teaching and the teaching profession is respected by the public, students, parents, and administrators recently? If so, why? Or If not, why not?
16. Do you think that teachers' social status has recently been increasing or decreasing? Why?
17. Have you felt or experienced changes in teachers' social status throughout your career? If so, could you tell me your personal examples?

18. Do you have any ideal teacher and classroom in your mind? Please describe your ideal teacher and classroom.
19. When you entered teaching for the first time, what did you expect to teach and do as a teacher?
20. Is there any difference between what you expected and now? If so, what is that?
21. What educational policies have changed your views on teaching and the teaching profession? If so, how have they influenced your views?
22. What is the most difficult thing for you to deal with as a teacher recently?
23. What does teacher professionalism mean to you?
24. What role do you think the public demands of you as a teacher?
25. What does teaching and the teaching profession mean to you?