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Why Centralize Teacher Professional Development? Limitations of Centralized Teacher Professional Development Based on A Review of TALIS 2013 Results of South Korea

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Abstract

It is well known that teachers are the core for improving quality of education, and many countries and international organizations are emphasizing teacher profession development. Teacher professional development has positive influence on students' academic achievement, school effectiveness, and hence many countries are implementing policies to promote teacher quality. On the one hand, centralized teacher professional development, because it is direct, relative to educational policy at central level, and sometimes obligated, could contribute to effective teacher development. On the other hand; however, because centralized system neglects what teachers want and need at the school level, centralized teachers professional development has limitations. The purpose of this study is to identify the limitations of centralized teacher professional development through an analysis of OECD TALIS 2013 results of South Korea. While South Korea is known for strong teaching force, it is also identified to have a centralized teacher professional development system, and this may be deduced to centralized teacher professional development could result in strong teaching force. However, the analytical review of TALIS 2013 results show that while Korean teachers' participation in various professional development activities is high, their perceptions on the activities are negative (i.e., perceive as administrative tasks and very little impact on improving teaching and learning). In addition, Korean teachers' self-efficacy was found the lowest among the TALIS participating countries, which could be an indication that professional development is not functioning. Based on the findings, this study suggests first, governments need to re-think their top-down teacher professional development policies; second, teachers need to be more active in their professional development, meaning that teachers need to perceive professional development as their right not as obligation; and finally, a balanced approach is needed, that is a centralized and school-based, in teacher profession development.

Keywords: Professional Teacher education, TALIS 2013, South Korea

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Introduction

The importance of teachers for improving quality of education is well known. Previous research (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Youngs & King, 2002, etc.) identify teachers' positive attribution to student learning. Additionally, empirical research (RAND, 2012) found that teacher influence on student performance, in particular to math, has two to three times more influence than any other school factors. Moreover, it is known that teachers have direct and/ or indirect influence on various factors that affect student learning, which include school environment, students' attitude, and motivation toward learning (Hattie, 2003). For these reasons, governments around the world are striving to enhance quality of teachers. International organizations, too, through their initiatives promote teacher development as ways in which to improve student learning. The 2015 World Education Forum, for example, emphasized the importance of teachers that they are central for improving quality of education. Hence, systemic teacher training and development is one of the key factors for improving quality of education (UNESCO, 2014).

Traditionally, South Korea (hereafter Korea) highly values teaching profession, and up until now, has represented one of the most popular career. According to a recent report by Varkey GEMS Foundation, Korea was ranked fourth among 21 OECD countries in the Global Teacher Index, meaning that Korea as a strong teaching force. Korea is also well known to have a centralized teacher professional (PD) system. OECD (1982), along with many other countries such as Germany, Spain, France, and Singapore, identified Korea to have a centralized teacher PD system. This might be deduced that centralized teacher PD can improve teacher quality. The meaning of centralized teacher PD are twofold. First, centralized teacher PD formal rather than informal, meaning containing certain procedures, requiring given hours and activities, and most times, if not all, providing certificate (Webb & Norton, 2003). Second, centralized teacher PD is perceived, by teachers, as a requirement rather than a right (OECD, 2005). Therefore, centralized teacher PD is more task oriented, cost-effective, and efficient. In other worlds, it can be easily adapted to many countries who seek improving teaching force.

On the one hand, there are research findings that centralized teacher PD connects to positive outcomes, such as improved teacher motivation and disposition (Kim, 2012), increased students' academic performance by mediating other factors (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Ryu & Jung, 2015), and improved school effectiveness (Kang & Kang, 2010). On the other hand, however, there are research finding that identifies limitations of centralized teacher PD. These include disconnected purpose, incongruity of content, and inappropriate methods and lack of follow-up support (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Jeon, 2010).

Through an analytical review of the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) result of 2013, aim of this study is to identify strength and limitation of centralized teacher PD through the case of Korea and to provide implications. This paper will start with contextual information regarding OECD TALIS and teacher PD in Korea, followed by key findings of TALIS of Korea, and end with implications.

Review of Literature

Teacher professionalism

Traditionally, definition of professionalism is approached with trait theory that it is a professional virtue (Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, & Cribb, 2009). In other words, a profession is someone with the professional virtue, and it can be acquired and possessed through certain training. In this vein, Etzioni (1969) described the concept of professionalization, which is the process of becoming a profession, and identified teachers as a semi-professional. Once believed as an unchanging trait, recent studies argue that professional virtue is a shifting phenomenon

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(Whitty, 2006); therefore, professionalism can be defined differently by different era, society, and context.

More recently, teacher professionalism is connected with teacher competence. Spencer & Spencer (1993) explain competence as individuals' intrinsic trait for effective task completion. The focus of this competence, compared to professionalism in general, is that it can be measured; therefore, knowledge and skills are more important. The most well known teacher competence is the OECD's Definition and Selection of Competencies also known as the DeSeCo project. Many countries are currently implementing DeSeCo within their education and teacher policies (Gordon, Halasz, Krawczyk, Leney, Michel, Pepper, Putkiewicz, & Wisniewski, 2009; Caena, 2014). Based on the concept of teacher competence, teachers are given a list of what to know and how to do. In other words, teacher competency is an approached as an alternative definition of teacher professionalism.

Another line of research (e.g., Friedson, 2001; Evetts, 2007; Hargreves & Fullan, 2012) identify concept of professionalism to be formed based on relationships among interested parties, such as teacher, students, and parents. Freidson (2001), for example, conceptualized professionalism as a matter of trust between the expert knowledge provider and receiver. Based on his conceptualization, teachers by providing expert knowledge and skills to students build trust with each other and both together form the concept of professionalism. Similarly, Hargreves & Fullan (2012) conceptualize teacher professionalism as a capital. Specifically, they suggest teachers to have social capital, decisional capital, and human capital, which are possessive, but at the same time a relative concept.

Teacher Professional Development

Whether it is a trait, competence, or relations, it is generally agreed that teacher professionalism can be developed through a certain course of actions. Teacher PD can be defined as various different forms of actives, formal or informal, mandatory or voluntary that increase capabilities of persons who are involved in education activities (Lee, Yoon, & Coi, 1993). More specifically, teacher PD are activities that provide knowledge and skills for teaching and learning (OECD, 2005), improve abilities of school related work through reflective practice and belief, and capabilities of actual course design, teaching and learning, and evaluation of specific content (Youngs & King, 2002).

Among various different reasons for teacher PD, the most interest is in its effect on students' academic performance as well as school effectiveness (or school improvement). First, research (Youngs, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011; Ryu & Jung, 2015) identify that teacher PD has positive correlation with students' academic performance. The studies found that teacher PD increase teachers' intrinsic motivation, such as self-efficacy, positively influence change in students' attitudes toward learning, and hence increase their academic performance. Second, teacher PD, through increase of content knowledge, self-efficacy, and understanding of student growth affects school culture (Supovitz, Mayer, & Kahle, 2000). This can be explained by a throughput concept of school effectiveness (Hoy & Miskel, 2001), which describe teachers' positivism impact the process of schooling that results in positive school culture (Desimone, 2009).

Teacher Professional Development in Korea

In Chapter VI of the Public Educational Officials Act of Korea, it is stated, "Every public education official (teachers) shall be given equal opportunities to receive re-education or training at training institutes." This means that Korean teachers have the right to engage in PD, and this also means that Korean teachers are obligated for PD. In Korea, there are 17 provincial Office of Education and all have teacher training institutes. Each year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) releases Annual Plan for Teacher PD, and based on this plan, provincial Office of Education develop their plans for teacher PD. In addition, based on the MOE's enforcement

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decree teachers are required to participate in minimum of 60 hours of PD a year, and based on teacher appraisal system, teachers are required to observe and provide feedback. As mentioned above, Korea is identified as one of countries to have centralized teacher PD system, and by the structure of teacher PD, the national level education policies are effectively conveyed to classroom teachers.

In recent years; however, there are efforts to apply more school-level teacher PD, which is teacher professional learning community (PLC). PLC, as it is known by previous research, increase teacher collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 1993), bring active participation of teachers' as change agent (Fullan, 2007), and improve conditions for shared school leadership (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstorm, Anderson, Michlin, Mascall, Strauss, Thomas, & Moore, 2010). Studies of Korean PLC echo these findings. Ryu & Jung (2015), for example, find that teacher PLC positively influence student learning and Kim (2001) also find that English teachers self-efficacy increased through PLC and positively impacted their classroom practices. Lee (2017), however, warn that most research on PLC in Korea are only providing the concept of effective through well-operating PLCs. She claims that rigorous research on the effects of PLC is much needed to understand the positive effects of PLC in the Korean context, and that too much trust on PLC might hinder student learning.

Study Context

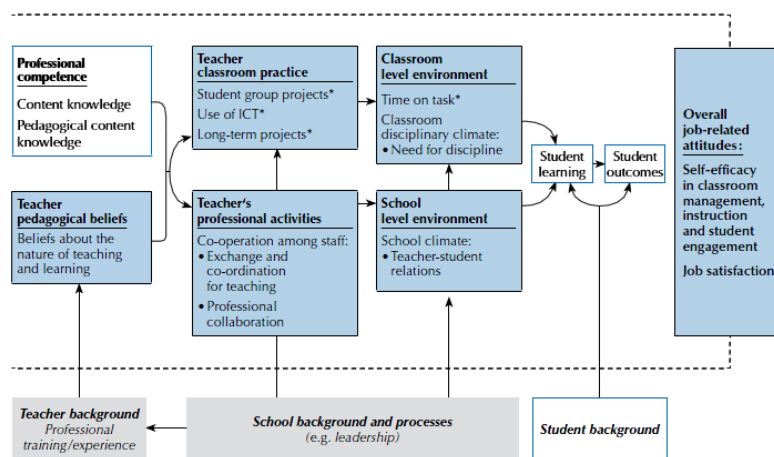
OECD TALIS 2013

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) program entitled Teaching and Learning International Survey is the first international level large scale teacher survey that compare teachers' teaching and learning practices and teaching environment. Primary purpose of TALIS is to provide policy relevant information regarding teachers' practices and their teaching environment (OECD, 2009). This includes information about teachers' belief on teaching and learning (self-efficacy), their classroom practice, and support system for teachers, such as professional development, school leadership, and teacher appraisal and feedback. More specifically, TALIS has specific themes, including school leadership, teachers' professional development, teacher appraisal and feedback, teacher practices and teaching environment, and teacher's self-efficacy and job satisfaction (OECD, 2009). These core themes of TALIS connects with securing and maintaining qualified teachers, career development for teachers, factors of effective teaching and learning practices, and the quality of teachers, which are high priorities of teacher policy in many countries.

TALIS 2013 started in year 2011 with data collection in 2013, and results were released in year 2014. Total of 34 countries joined the survey, targeting 200 randomly selected schools with at least 20 teachers and a principal at middle school level² (i.e. ISCED 2) from each participating countries. Figure 1 shows the overall conceptual framework of TALIS 2013. Based on the concepts, as mentioned above, TALIS 2013 examined factors such as school leadership, teachers' professional development, teacher appraisal and feedback, teacher practice and teaching environment, and teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Additionally, TALIS 2013 looked into perceived value of teaching profession in society, reward and evaluation systems, satisfaction and effectiveness of teacher training programs, principal leadership, teacher beliefs and attitudes, and teaching patterns (OECD, 2014).

² TALIS 2013 provided options for ISCED 1, ISCED 2 high school, and TALIS-PISA link, while having the ISCED 2 middle school as a core.

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[Figure 1] TALIS 2013 Conceptual Framework

Korea participated in TALIS 2013 at ISCED 2 middle school level. A total of 183 schools completed the survey with 88.4% teacher participation and 92.9% principal participation rate. Like many other participating countries, Korea administered the survey via on-line, which was in the month of May of year 2013. Preliminary findings suggest that while the TALIS results confirmed some of the strength of Korean teachers, it also revealed some of the weakness of the teaching profession. Traditionally, Korea has the reputation of having strong teaching force that promotes strong students' learning outcomes (e.g., PISA, TIMMS). In addition, teachers in Korea are perceived as a highly respectable profession, and teaching profession is one of the favorite choices for a career. The TALIS 2013 results also reflected that the Korean society carry a high value to the teaching profession, which was amongst the top compared to the 34 participating countries (OECD, 2014). Regarding teacher PD, such as school leadership support, professional development, and teacher appraisal and feedback system also was reported strong. However, teachers' perception of the PD system showed low level of satisfaction. Specifically, Korean teachers reported low level of self-efficacy and job satisfaction, and while teachers reported high participation rate in professional development activities, barriers, such as cost and time conflict, were high in comparison to other TALIS participating countries.

Key Finding of Teacher PD in Korea Based on TALIS 2013

Who participated?

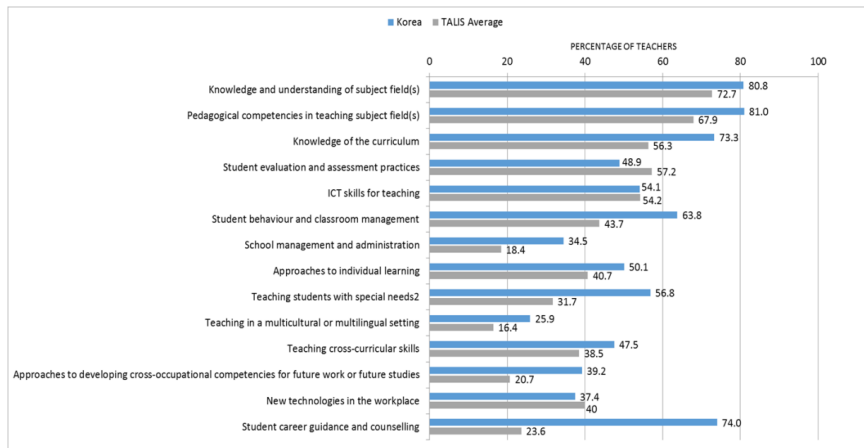
In the TALIS 2013, Korean principals were mostly in the age between 50 and 59 (54.4%) and over 60 (45.6%). When compared with the TALIS 2013 average, it is found that Korean principals' average age is much older with the TALIS 2013 average at 51 while Korea reported 59. In addition, proportion of female principals was much lower than TALIS 2013 average. Korean principals, however, had the least work experience as a principal, meaning that they spent more years as a classroom teacher compared to their counterparts of other countries. Teachers, unlike principals, showed a similar pattern or a slightly higher age compared to other countries. 33.5% of Korean teachers were in the age group of 40-49 and 28.8% was the TALIS 2013 average. In addition, percentage of female teachers was 68.2% for Korea and 68.1% for TALIS 2013 average. Teachers work experience also had a similar pattern except that Korean teachers have less experience in other education roles and jobs.

Professional development

Korean teachers, on the one hand, reported strong participation in professional development in the TALIS 2013. With the overall participation rate at 91%, teachers participated in various

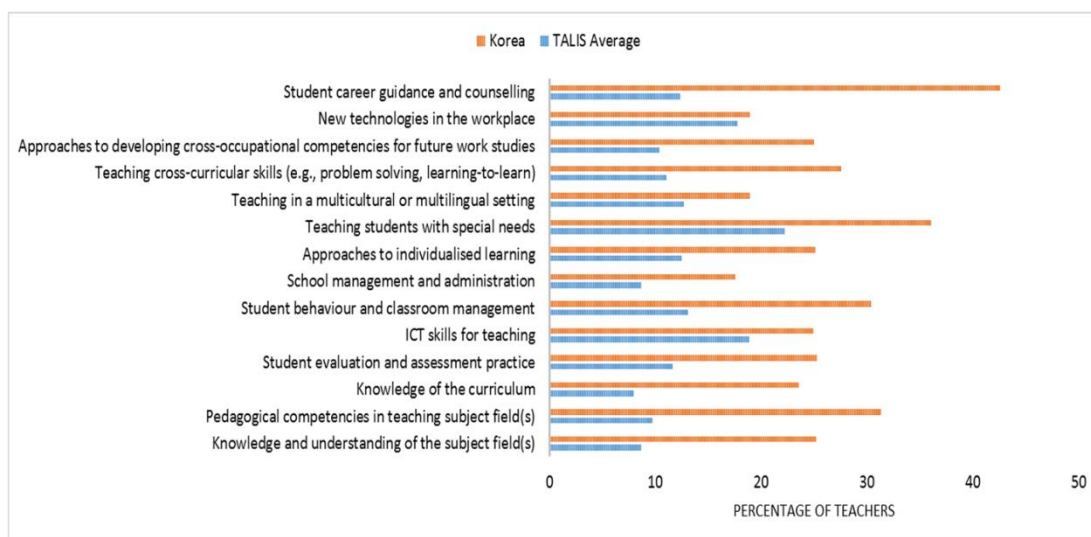
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different programs, which range from content knowledge of subject fields and pedagogical and curriculum to new technologies in schools and student guidance and counseling. On the other hand, Korean teachers reported high needs for professional development on various different areas, of which most are already being provided. As seen in figures 2 and 3, Korean teachers while reporting high level of participation in professional development activities (Figure 2), perceived that professional development programs need much improvement (Figure 3).



* Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database, Table 4.10

[Figure 2] Comparison of professional development participation by program area



* Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database, Table 4.12

[Figure 3] Comparison of professional development needs by program area

In addition, Korean teachers reported a much higher level of barriers regarding their participation in professional development. 83% of the teachers reported that professional development conflicts with their work schedule, 70% reported that they have lack of support, and 57% reported that they receive no incentives. Moreover, about half of the teachers felt that professional development programs were not relevant enough with their work and the cost for participation is too high. In fact, 64.1% of Korean teachers reported that they had to spend some financial cost for participating in professional development activities while TALIS 2013 average was only 25.2%.

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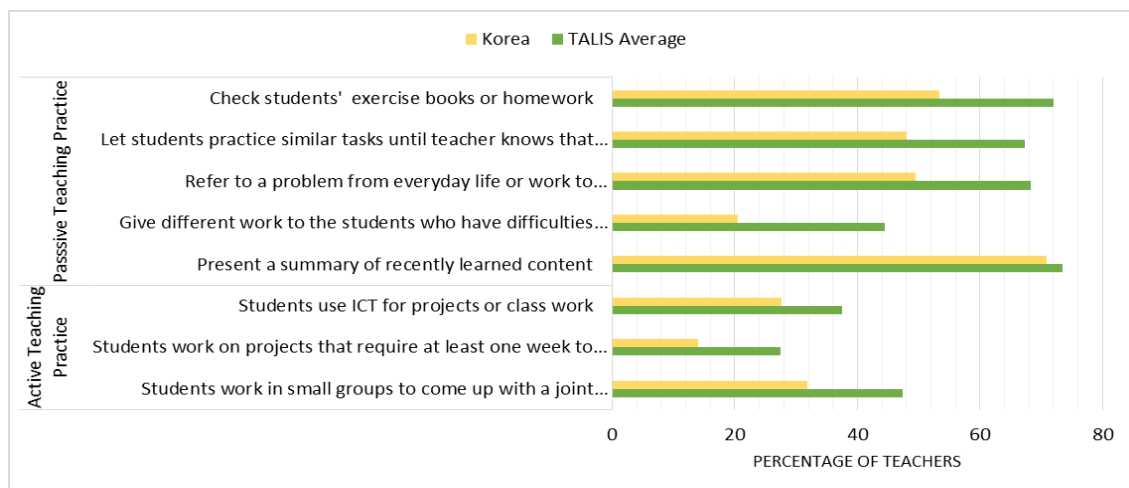
Teacher appraisal and feedback

In the TALIS 2013, Korea showed strong results on teacher appraisal and feedback. According to the TALIS 2013 results, almost all teachers received regular, formal and informal, appraisal and feedback. They are appraised not only by administrators but also by fellow teachers on a regular basis. In fact, when source of feedback is compared, feedback from other teachers was the most reported source, followed by principals and school management team. Additionally, appraisal methods were diverse, which include direct observation, student survey, and discussions about self-assessment results and feedback from parents.

Ironically, however, when teachers were asked about the impact of appraisal and feedback on their teaching practice, fairly a large number of teachers (41%) reported that it has little impact on the ways in which they engage in teaching and learning. Moreover, even larger number of teachers (60%) perceived that teacher appraisal and feedback are mostly done for administrative purpose and requirements.

Teacher practice

Korean teachers, when compared to their counterparts from other TALIS 2013 participating countries, had less active teaching practice in their classrooms. Active teaching in TALIS is defined as teaching practices that are student centered, such as small group learning, project centered learning, and ICT utilization. As seen in figure 4, when compared to the TALIS 2013 average, Korean teachers' active teaching practices show difference of 10 to 15 percent point or more in the indicators of active teaching practice. In addition, passive teaching practices, such as checking students' homework, letting students to practice, and differentiating teaching practice between high and low achievers, of Korean teachers also reported lower than the TALIS 2013 average.



* Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database, Table 6.1

[Figure 4] Comparison of active teaching practices

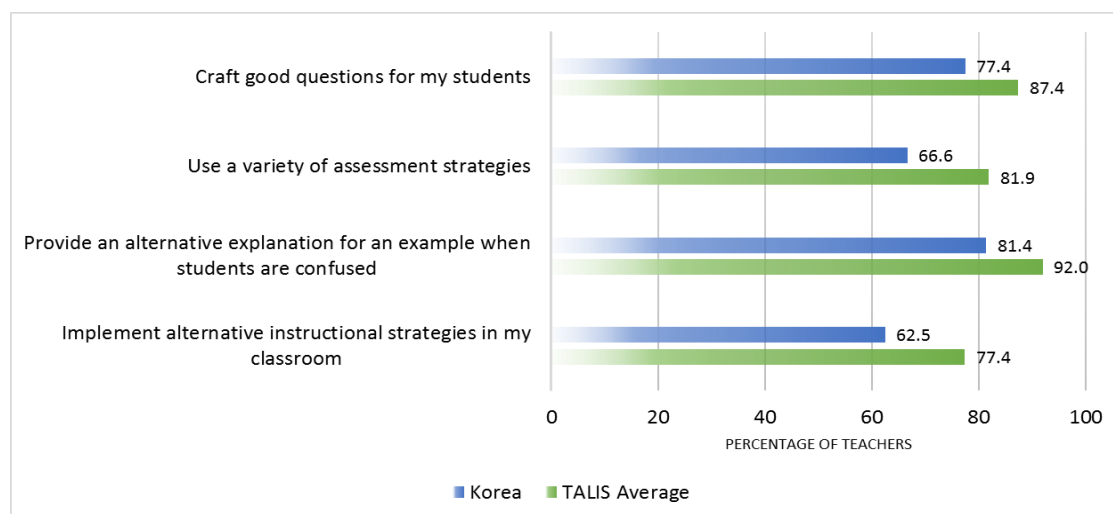
When teachers' time distribution in their classrooms is compared, Korean teachers showed a similar pattern with the TALIS 2013 average. 76.9% reported that they spend time on actual teaching and learning activities, 13.6% for keeping order in classroom, and 8.2% on administrative tasks. In addition, when teachers working hours on a week basis is compared Korean teachers working hours show a similar pattern with the TALIS 2013 average. However, Korean teachers reported much more time spent on administrative work, reporting that they spend 6 hours on administrative work in a week, which is one of the longest hours spent among

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the TALIS 2013 participating countries.

Teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction

TALIS 2013 measured teachers' self-efficacy in three different domains, which are self-efficacy in student engagement, in instruction, and in classroom management. In all three domains, Korean teachers reported lower self-efficacy compared to the TALIS 2013 average. In fact, Korean teachers reported the lowest level of self-efficacy among the TALIS 2013 participating countries. In particular, teachers' self-efficacy level in instruction showed the largest difference. As seen in figure 5, Korean teachers' level of self-efficacy is much lower than the TALIS 2013 average with more than 10 percent point or more difference.



* Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database, Table 7.1

[Figure 5] Comparison of teachers' self-efficacy in instruction

Teachers' job satisfaction was also lower than the TALIS 2013 average. Results show that 20.1% of teachers regret choosing to become a teacher, which is one of the highest among the TALIS 2013. In addition, 63.4% of teachers reported that they would choose teaching profession if they could decide again, and 40.2% of teachers reported that they wonder if it would have been better to choose another profession, again are lower when compared to the TALIS 2013 average.

Implications and Conclusion

Implications

From the demographic information of principals and teachers in TALIS 2013, it can be seen that the teaching force is aging. In particular, principals' average age (59 years old) is much higher than the TALIS 2013 average. One might argue that more experienced teachers are good, partly true that they can deliver more richness to schools and classrooms. The aging of the teaching profession, however, from a change and improvement standpoint, may withhold educational change and improvement. It is known that teachers' nostalgia and experience of change are mostly affected by teachers' age and career stage (Hargreaves & Moore, 2002). "More seasoned teachers who have remained in the classroom... are often unwilling to invest their professional energies in large-scale change efforts...." (p. 131). In addition, with most of the principals in the age group of 55 to 60 in Korea, who entered the teaching profession in between the 1960's and 1970's during which the time when Korea experienced many success not only in economic

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development but also in educational development. This could leave a strong nostalgia of the past for the principals (Lasch, 1991), which could be a concern for Korea's educational change and improvement.

The issue of the aging teaching profession and the possibility of resisting change becomes much more concerning with the results of teacher PD. While Korea showed a high participation rate in teacher PD, teachers also felt high barriers for participation. In addition, teachers showed high needs on PD program areas. This means, simply, that the current PD system (centralized teacher PD) is not working. In other words, it can be said that teacher PD is mostly done for administrative purposes. In addition, the barriers of teachers' participation in PD, such as time conflict, lack of support, and cost, are too high for individuals, which might be caused by principals, because principals' willingness to change and commitment are one of most important factors of initiating school change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

The results of teacher appraisal and feedback also leave mixed concerns. The TALIS 2013 results, on the one hand, show high participation rate of teachers', however, on the other hand, teachers' perception on usefulness and impact on their teaching practices are relatively low, and it is perceived as administrative requirements. From 2005, Korean MOE implemented 'Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development (TAPD),' which is a national level policy that aimed teachers' career development as well as enhancement of teachers' performance (Ministry of Education, 2008). Based on the TALIS 2013 results, it can be said that the centralized teacher PD (i.e., TAPD) is quite successful with high participation rate, but the TALIS 2013 results also show that teachers are not satisfied with the methods and purpose of TAPD. These concerns are also raised by other research results. Lee (2014), for example, argued that teachers are starting to see the positive change through TAPD, but reservations remain in methods of appraisal, such as utilization of results and interpretation of results by their evaluators (i.e., principals). In addition, Kim (2014) stated that over the years since the TAPD's implementation, teachers are becoming more positive about receiving appraisal, but this is largely due to the increased portion of appraisal by their colleagues.

The results of TALIS 2013 on teaching practice of Korean teachers are somewhat discouraging. Korean teachers reported lower level of engagement and commitment in their teaching practices in all questionnaires in the TALIS 2013. This result requires caution for interpretation because it is a comparison to other participating countries, which have differences in cultural and societal value related to teaching and learning. Still, however, the results indicate that large numbers of Korean teachers are not comfortable with rating their teaching practices at high level. This implies that teacher PD and appraisal and feedback system, which have the purpose of improving teachers' professionalism in teaching and learning, are not properly functioning. Additionally, the results of teachers' self-efficacy even more clearly confirms that teacher PD is not working. The results of low level self-efficacy in instruction show that high participation in professional development activities and appraisal and feedback does not necessarily connects with increased teaching and learning capabilities of teachers. .

Conclusion

The message of TALIS 2013 results of Korea is quite simple and clear. It is time to re-think the approach for teacher PD. First, a top-down reform and/ or policy implementation no longer work. Korea is one of fastest grown country in the world, economically and socially, and behind the growth was government led top-down initiatives. Education, including teacher PD, was no exception, and many of the top-down policies did have success. In the TALIS 2013 results, on surface, it can be viewed that school leadership, professional development, and teacher appraisal and feedback have sound structure. However, it also reveals that teachers are not satisfied with "how" things are done within the structure. This means that the government (i.e., Ministry of Education) needs to pay more attention on how teachers want their PD. Therefore, more school-based teacher PD needs to be developed and supported. Second, school culture needs to be more

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focused on teaching and learning. Many teachers in the TALIS 2013 perceived PD and appraisal and feedback as a burden (i.e. administrative work). While there may be other activities for improving teachers' practices, the above two are the most commonly used ways for enhancing teachers' professionalism. Therefore, teachers need to approach PD and appraisal and feedback with their own authority, which means that it is themselves who have the right to improve through such activities. Finally, centralized teacher PD clearly has positive impact; however, it needs to be addressed with a balance with what teacher need and want. In other words, governments while concerned with students' academic performance and school effectiveness might neglect that teachers are professions. Teachers as professions are the ones who have the most knowledge of what and how regarding teaching and learning, and burdening (or professionalizing from the government's standpoint) them with required teacher PD and centralized system might de-professionalize the teachers.

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