교사 전문성 향상 방안 연구
-한국의 학습 커뮤니티 사례-

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Developing Teachers' Professionalism
-Focusing on Korean Cases-

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요 약 이 연구는 한국 사회의 두 전문 학습 커뮤니티인 '전국역사교사모임'과 '초등학급경영연구회'의 구조 및 운영 체제를 검토하고, 그 장·단점을 분석한 연구이다. 이러한 사례를 분석하기 위해 로비(Robey)의 조직 변화 모델을 이론적 틀로 활용하였다. 이 연구에는 주로 문헌 검토와 현장 인터뷰라는 두 가지 연구방법이 채택되었다. 분석 결과, 여러 가지 장점(교사의 진취성과 자율적 의지에 의해 주도되는 쉬운 접근성, 풍부하고 실용적인 교육 해결책)과 약점(재정적 부담, 이론적 배경의 결여, 산발적인 참여자)이 발견되었다. 결론에서 이 연구는 교사의 전문성 함양에 중요한 역할을 하는 교육 리더 그룹이 되기 위한 세 가지 전략을 제시한다. 1) 교사의 학습 동기를 자극하기 위한 제도적 노력을 기울인다. 2) 교사라는 직업 자문을 위해 대학교수 및 다른 전문가들로 구성된 강한 네트워크를 구축한다. 3) 종합적이고 탄탄한 통합 시스템을 구축한다.

주제어 : 교사, 전문성, 학습 커뮤니티

Abstract   This study reviewed the structural and operational systems of two professional learning communities in Korean society and analyzed their strengths and weaknesses: the Association of Korean History Teachers and the Communities of Elementary School Classroom Management. In order to analyze these cases, Robey's organizational change model was used as a theoretical frame. Two research methods were mainly employed for this study: literature review and on-site interviews. The analysis found several strengths (easy accessibility, led by teachers' initiative and autonomous will, abundant and practical teaching solutions) and weaknesses (financial burden, lack of theoretical background, sporadic participants). In conclusion, this study suggests three strategies for an educational leader who has an important role in developing a teacher's professionalism: 1) Make an institutional effort to stimulate teachers' motivation to learn, 2) Create a strong network of university professors and other experts for career advice, 3) Build a synthesized and consolidated system.

Key Words : Teacher, Professionalism, Learning communities

1. Introduction

Professionalism among teachers has been recognized as one of the primary factors to reforming public education. In fact, the academia of educational administration and policy has argued that teachers' accumulation of knowledge and skills through professional development influences their teaching practices and thus, student learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Corcoran, 1995; Dufour, 2004). Accordingly, there is no doubt that the manners in which teachers acquire knowledge and skills and the discretionary learning opportunities afforded by educational administrators are an important issue.

The emphasis on professionalism among teachers is not limited to Korea; other countries have focused on this aspect as well. In the Unites States, since the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001, the role of educational leaders has changed dramatically. In particular, the shift in accountability has forced educational leaders to set higher standards, assess achievements, and reward schools based on these criteria. The Obama administration has also recognized that professional development among teachers is the most important factor to reforming schools. In Korea, programs for teachers' professional development are being expanded by the Ministry of Education and Science Technology. Government- driven programs are efficient in providing general information to teachers and helping them cultivate comprehensive teaching skills.

A large number of educational researchers have been recognized the importance of building professional learning communities as the basis for teachers' professional development (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Firestone et al., 2004; Little, 2001). That is, whether formal or informal, teachers' collective opportunities to increase their professionalism are central to maintaining and enhancing teacher quality. However, despite the evidence indicating that teachers who collaborate with each other are the most effective teachers, it remains puzzling as to why teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation. Even schools that encourage collaborative work are faced with the fact that the willingness to collaborate among school teachers often stops at the classroom door (Dufour, 2004, p. 9).

Moreover, most previous studies heavily depend on formal conditions for teacher learning within schools, districts, states or the national context. For example, there are subject-teaching associations, grade-level teaching associations, a state department of education, national professional organizations, etc. A major problem with formal learning opportunities is that they are narrow in scope and detached from real-time learning during the normal workday (Fullan, 1995; Knapp, 2003). This is due to the fact that mandated conditions create a compulsory learning environment rather than encouraging spontaneous participation. Due to this top-down approach, it is not only easy to ignore a teacher's individual situation, but it is also difficult to develop more a program that is responsive to their needs and conveys information in a timely manner. While formal professional learning communities for teachers are criticized for low relevance and passive participation, informal communities are less structured and planned with even less coercive manners. Informal learning opportunities tend to be more spontaneous and reflective in that they typically originate from real-time experiences (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Smylie, 1995). For this reason, an educational leader's role to support the spontaneous professional learning communities has been recently emphasized.

However our understanding on how educational leaders can induce teachers' spontaneous professional development is quite limited. In this context, this study focuses on spontaneous networks among teachers rather than the mandated networks. With a belief that informal communities make a difference in developing

teachers' professionalism, the author conducts an in-depth investigation of teachers' professional learning communities in Korea and overviews their structural and operational systems and examine strengths and weaknesses. In conclusion, the author presents preliminary findings and implications for educational leaders.

2. Rationale

Why are more effective, rigorous, and spontaneous professional learning for teachers communities needed?

Reforming schools and improving student achievement basically depend on teacher quality. Several policies and institutional efforts have been undertaken for a long time under this assumption. Nevertheless, no one can agree on the most effective way to improve teachers' quality and students' achievement. In fact, numerous studies haves proposed teacher inputs, such as salary, education level, and certification requirements, in order to improve the quality of teachers. However, recent reports and meta-analyses question the relationship between teacher inputs and teacher quality (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Wenglinsky, 2000). Other research suggest a more interesting result in that a teacher's impact on student achievement is influenced not by teacher inputs, but by a function of daily classroom-level curriculum and instructional decision-making (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Wenglinsky, 2000).

Successful school reform depends on shared governance, transformational leadership, student-focused teaching, teacher collegiality, and cultural change in schools (Barth, 2000; Caine & Caine, 1997; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Gordon, 2004; Green & Etheridge, 2001; Kovalik & Olsen, 1994; Leithwood, 1992; Sweetland, 2001; Wilmore & Thomas, 2001).

These are critical aspects for teachers' professional development. In other words, the idea of reforming schools is closely related to teachers' professionalism; hence, plans to reform schools should focus more on building up professional learning communities.

The meaning of professional learning communities is that educators are committed to working collaboratively in the ongoing processes of collective inquiry and communication to achieve better results for the students they teach. Namely, professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 25-29). The characteristics of a professional learning community are presented in Table 1 (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 9). Though some assert that professional learning communities do not pay attention to students' achievement, professional learning communities focus more on the student's achievement compared to other approaches.

〈Table 1〉 The Characteristics of a Professional Development Community

Shared beliefs, value and vision:
The staff consistently focuses on students' learning, which is strengthened by the staff's own continuous learning
Shared and supportive leadership:
Administrators and faculty hold shared power and authority for making decisions
Collective learning and its application:
What the community determines to learn and how they will learn it in order to address students' learning needs is the bottom line
Supportive conditions:
Structural factors provide the physical requirements: time, place to meet for community work, resources and policies to support collaboration
Relational factors support the community's human and interpersonal development, openness, truth-telling, and focus on attitudes of respect and caring among the members
Shared personal practice:
Community members give and receive feedback that supports their individual improvement and that of the organization

Schools composed of professional teachers and educational administrators try to improve school performance through educational inquiries and collaborative work (Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez, 1993; Louis & Marks, 1998). Despite the advantage and necessity of professional learning communities, there are few studies on how to create, organize, and develop them. In the United States, efforts to facilitate professional learning communities have been attempted since the mid 1990s. For instance, there is the nationally supported Creating Continuous Communities of Inquiry and Improvement and the federally supported Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Hipp, Olivier, Huffman, Beaty, Pankake, & Moller, 2001).

In professional communities, teachers share and trade off the roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist (Lieberman et al., 1988; Little 1990). There are currently some excellent professional learning communities, but not nearly enough. Most programs are designed by a school's governing board without consideration of an individual teacher's unique needs. This results from the fact these programs often pay scant attention to the teachers' autonomy. The school's governing authorities have an influence on the teachers' motivation and learning environment both within and outside the context of the school.

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning has profound implications for schools (Dufour, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, teachers' professional development must be planned and embedded under teachers' spontaneity, focus on student growth and be supportive of reflective practice. As instructional leaders, educational administrators play a critical role in ensuring that their schools support a rich learning environment for both students and teachers (Barth, 1990; Donalson, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004). That is, school leaders are the key to establishing a positive organizational climate in their schools and well-functioning professional learning communities.

3. Method

To overview the structure and operational system of teachers' professional learning communities, a theoretical framework is needed. This study employs Robey's organizational change model to review organizational effectiveness. Robey's (1986) model is not only more developed than Leavitt's model on socio-technical perspective on organization, but it also takes into account the impact and direction between factors (task, human, structure, and technique) of organizational change. According to Leavitt, an organization departmentalizes a certain objective, and its structure, both human and technique are used to accomplish it. Leavitt defines the factors of organizational change as task, human, structure, and technique.

While the relation between human, structure, and technique is weak, the factors of human, structure, and technique dimensions center strongly upon task. Based on Robey's organizational change model, this study investigates two Korean cases of professional learning communities in terms of structure and operation.

The data analysis included two Korean cases. The first is the Association of Korean History Teachers (afterward, AKHT) which was established in 1988 to assist history teachers who wished to receive more professional development. The other is the Community of Elementary School Classroom Management (afterward, CESCM) which was established in 1993 for elementary school teachers since 1993.

Data was collected from literature reviews including scholarly thesis, official reports, articles, information officially loaded on websites, and in-depth interviews. For the in-depth interviews, the author conducted eight face-to-face and on-site interviews with people who have been involved with AKHT and CESCM. The interviews focused on re-identifying preliminary findings about the structural and operational systems. Subsequent to the interviews, each interviewee was provided with a copy of the transcript of their interview and asked to review it for accuracy.

4. Findings

Reliability data can be gathered throughout the life cycle of a product (Guangbin, 2009). An important requirement for designing useful reliability is to have a good idea of how the product is actually developed in the laboratory and used in the field. A brief summary of the various types of reliability tests in the development and manufacturing stages and in the field is presented next.

4.1 The Association of Korean history teachers

AKHT is designed for Korean history teachers in secondary school. AKHT is one of the most notable associations among the others. The main objective of AKHT is to share contents and methods for teaching Korean history classes. Table 2 summarizes the structural and operational characteristics of AKHT.

〈Table 2〉 Descriptions of AKHT

Category	The Association of Korean history teachers
Human	AKHT currently has 8,304 members (middle and high school history teachers)
Structure	Operational teams: general affairs, research affairs, data & communications affairs, network affairs, public relation affairs) and research membership (regional research, teaching & lesson plan research, medium & material research, exchange research project research).
Task	Major tasks of AKHT are providing data & information, training & educating during summer & winter breaks, organizing study groups, and giving lectures for new teachers
Technique	Software: data, information, skill, experience, and knowledge related to teaching history Hardware: website linked to a private institution

AKHT's membership consists of 8,304 secondary Korean history teachers and its structure is divided into tightly interconnected operational teams and research membership. AKHT provides materials, information training programs, organized study groups and special lectures for novice teachers. All data and information are shared with members throughout the web site. AKHT also handles off-line training programs during the summer and winter breaks.

4.2 The Community of Elementary School Classroom Management

CESCM was established for elementary school teachers who wanted to gain knowledge, skills, and information for their teaching practice. CESCM was an elementary school teachers-led initiative and since its foundation in 1993, has been successfully maintained by its membership. Despite the lack of promotion or financial incentives offered by the Korean government, the teachers continue to voluntarily participate in CESCM. Table 3 describes the structural and operational characteristics of this organization.

〈Table 3〉 Descriptions of CESCM

Category	Community of Elementary School Classroom Management
Human	CESCM has about 5,250 members (elementary schoolteachers, administrators, and researchers).
Structure	CESCM is composed of an operational membership (president, vice-president and membership), research & information membership, and pre-service teacher membership.
Task	To develop teaching and lesson plans, to interact with overseas schools, to share data and information, and to conduct research projects.
Technique	Software: data, information, skills, experience, knowledge related to teaching the subject, managing classrooms, educating students Hardware: website-based structure

The membership of CESCM includes elementary schoolteachers, principals, assistant principals, researchers, and school commissioners. CESCM is organized with an operational membership, a research & information membership, and an undergraduate student membership. CESCM waives the membership fee for all members except for the research & information membership, and information is made available for all members. Pre-service teacher membership is eligible for undergraduate students in the college of education. The main task of CESCM includes helping teachers and advising participants. All of their data is on the website, and all members have the opportunity to participate in off-line training courses and seminars.

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses

From the results, the author found several strengths in the Korean cases. First, the teachers' professional development communities are built by teachers' initiative and autonomous will. It is evident that the teacher-led approach to professional learning communities strongly appeals to its membership. This plays a very important role in enhancing teachers' professionalism, as evidenced in the following AKHT member's comment:

"I am comfortable enough with AKHT. A culture of autonomy indeed is attractive. Frankly, getting to know each individual teacher and asking them to work under the formal system has not only taken a lot of my time but has also quite tiring and stressful. This community is neither steered by a superior institution nor tolerates a culture of unwillingness."

Second, abundant information and data for developing one's teaching practice is made available for its membership and contribute to the professional development of the schoolteachers. In the words of one teacher:

"It has shown me different resources that I didn't know before. It has helped me to learn how to effectively teach students… I learned a lot of skills on how to deal with students… This community has definitely helped me in developing my professional aspect…"

Third, easy accessibility and practical problem-solving solutions made available on the web-site meets teachers' expectation and interests. It is possible that teachers acquire knowledge and gain skills not only through the website but also through training programs and seminars. These benefits are reflected in the following teacher's comments:

"Actually, I became more interested in this than I thought… When I first came, I didn't really take it seriously, but now, it has become a very important part of my teaching practice. I asked the members questions regarding things that arose in my classroom… gained new insight I did not realize before… Sometimes I found myself being to answer other teachers' questions. I was happy to find myself in a position to help other teachers."

However, the two Korean cases also revealed several weaknesses that could affect the quality and

effectiveness of the teachers' professional learning. They include the following: absence of commitment of all members; a lack of outside support and governmental funding; and a lack of theory-based solutions.

A limiting factor is that these communities tend to be managed by only a few members. As a result, the communities are rather loose in their structure and operation and fail to be interconnected. In this regards, one of the teachers expressed a negative opinion in the following terms.

"Data and information is obviously provided by only a few members. Most teachers just received the data free of charge. I believe that our community can be developed by working together… Each member plays a very critical role to sustain the community…"

Another critical problem is the lack of financial support which possibly affects the teachers' motivation. With regards to the negative aspect of communities, one of the teachers in charge of a community criticized:

"I know that some teachers have complained. It was not special for them because they had to pay a fee in order to join the seminars and training programs. Although we receive financial support from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, it is not sufficient amount to waive the fees…"

Furthermore, the theoretical foundation of the communities is not solid. This is due to the fact that communities heavily rely on the teachers' experiences and fail to provide academic theories and analysis. A schoolteacher who participated in the communities pointed out the following weakness:

"It did upset me to see that the communities did not provide theoretical knowledge. In fact, the knowledge and skills we shared were heavily dependent on individual's experiences. I think this is very dangerous…"

Based on these findings, Table 4 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of professional development communities in Korean society.

〈Table 4〉 Summary of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Korean Professional Learning Communities

Cases	– The Association of Korean History Teachers – Community of Elementary School Classroom Management
Strength	– Organizations were built by the teachers' initiative and autonomous will – Abundant information and data for developing teaching skills is made available – Easy accessibility and practical problem-solving solutions
Weakness	– Management by only a few members – Financial burden – Lacking of academic foundation

5. Conclusion and Implications

A teacher's profession has an extensive and illustrious history and is based on the idea of accountability to students and society. Due to the rapidly changing factors regarding schools in Korean society, the professionalization of teaching workforce has become a critical issue and an important part of reforming public education. In this context, this study reviewed the structural and operational systems of two professional learning communities in Korea and examined their strengths and weaknesses.

An analysis of these cases indicated that an institutionally designed professional learning community might be less effective than those created by teachers' initiatives. For collaboration to influence professional growth and development, it has to be based upon teachers' willingness and autonomy. The findings from these two cases offer several clues about strategies for school leaders and policy makers who are committed to developing teachers'

professionalization.

First, the teachers' professional communities must strengthen their network by working closely with those in academia. The evidence from the two Korean cases illustrates that as a learning organization, teachers' communities can be nurtured when individuals reflect upon academic theory and teaching practices. A teacher's professional development is more effective if the community utilizes academic theory rather than simply giving advice. In order to realize this, university professors or other researchers could contribute to build a more theoretical foundation of the teachers.

Second, schools or district units have to make an effort to increase a teacher's autonomy. The findings from this study indicate that teachers' autonomy may encourage their participation in professional learning communities. In particular, collective autonomy for teachers is required for optimal professional growth. Teachers' collective autonomy is more effective if school leaders support the teachers' learning communities, rather than simply controlling them. It is possible that due to the mandated direction of and an administrative organization's operation, conflicts and competition that ignores teachers' needs and expectations can arise. Thus educational leaders can facilitate a teacher's motivation to learn by reforming the top-down administrative structure.

Third, the primary role of school leaders is to decrease the teachers' workload. Research evidence suggests that when a teacher has the autonomy to learn about different teaching mechanisms, there is a greater likelihood that the change will be positive. In order to stimulate teachers to concentrate on their professional development, it is necessary that school leaders make an effort to reduce the teachers' workload stress.

Finally, learning communities need further support in order to be effective. A finding of this study reinforces the results of previous studies (Darling-

Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; David et al., 2000). For example, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) found that the teachers' involvement in learning opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills depends on the financial support they receive. Furthermore, teachers in districts that paid stipends for in-service teacher's professional development were more likely to pursue ideas grounded in curriculum and instruction (David et al., 2000). By providing sufficient financial supports to sustain learning communities, educational administrators can help further enhance a teacher's professionalization.

It is necessary to have an accurate and efficient way of recording data related to reliability. With the decreasing cost and increasing power of computer systems, it is not very difficult to set up a computerized data collection system.

Since many types of reliability testing are performed and data collected, it is important to have certain common elements that extend across all of the different types of tests. It is recommended to have at least three related databases: a test log, a failure log, and a service log.

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