

## ABSTRACT

### A Study on Job Competency Development at Each Stage of Teachers' Life Cycle

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This study was designed to analyze major characteristics of Korean teachers' life cycle in both qualitative and quantitative research method, examine teachers' job competencies required for each stage of the life cycle, and finally explore ways to strengthen the required competencies for teachers in each stage of their life cycle. Followings are key research methods and results.

#### **Setting a Theoretical Framework based on the Literature Research**

Based on the analysis of the related advanced research, this study defined the teachers' life cycle as "a series of stage which shows outstanding characteristics of views and understanding on teaching and teaching behaviors from the beginning of the teaching career to the retirement" and teachers' competencies as "capabilities needed for successful performance of a teacher's duties which can be acquired and learned." In addition, this study categorized teachers' competencies into three areas of "understanding," "analysis and organizing," and

“relationship building,” 13 competencies (understanding of students, understanding of communities, understanding of the public education system, understanding of the modern society, information management and research, planning and organizing, relationship, communication, leadership), and 38 specific competencies. They were used as a basic framework for the study.

### **Research Methods**

Researchers used qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the major characteristics of Korean teachers' life cycle. At first, interviews with 40 teachers from various regions and schools were conducted. The interviews were aimed at understanding the general life cycle that Korean teachers go through and the questionnaires for the interviews included questions on circumstances at the time of the beginning of the teaching career, changes over time, present and future plans, competencies teachers had at each stage of the life cycle, and competencies required for each stage of the life cycle.

A survey was also conducted for two purposes. One is to analyze factors related with the teachers' life cycle using a method of cross-tabulation analysis while another is to analyze competencies required for each stage of teachers' life cycle using a method of Borich need analysis. The survey was participated by a total of 3,000 elementary, middle and high school teachers across the country.

Researchers also analyzed the current issues of teachers' job training programs in Korea and the examples of teachers' competencies improvement in each stage of their life cycle in foreign countries like Finland, France, and Japan and draw implications.

Two workshops were held to seek ways to strengthen teachers' competencies required in each stage of the life cycle based on the midterm study result, and

researchers drew the final conclusion by collecting ideas and opinions through the forum on the ideas established based on the overall result of the study.

### Major Study Results

Based on the research methods described above, following study results were delivered.

First, according to the qualitative analysis, teachers' life cycle can be categorized into the life cycle in terms of “changes in the role in the organization” and the life cycle in terms of “changes in the educational view.” The former is related with which role a teacher performs in school, which tasks a teacher carries out, and how a teacher forms and manages a relationship with colleagues. Meanwhile, the latter is related with how a teacher understands students, approaches subject matters, and defines his or her role while teaching students and operating a class. The life cycle in terms of “changes in the role in the organization” can be divided into four stages: an “adaptation” stage in which a teacher gets accustomed to tasks in school, an “independence” stage in which a teacher understands the dynamics in school and can handle important tasks in school, a “promotion aspiration” stage in which a teacher specifically examines whether he or she can get promoted and prepares for promotion, and a “retirement preparation” stage in which a teacher prepares for retirement. On the other hand, the life cycle in terms of “changes in educational view” is comprised of an “passion” stage in which a teacher tries to do everything and believes that he or she can do everything, a “maturity” stage in which a teacher is confident in his or her own knowhow of teaching and managing a class with accumulated experience, a “self-reflection” stage in which a teacher realizes that the core of education is missing in his or her knowhow and takes a new educational view from the perspective of students. Researchers outlined the

characteristics of Korean teachers' life cycle as follows. First, Korean teachers' life cycle shows a double-track structure. Second, it is difficult to combine the two types of the teachers' life cycle and understand them as one framework. Third, the importance or weight of the two life cycles can be different according to individual teachers and time. Fourth, the life cycle in terms of "changes in the educational view" can be understood as a process where a teacher grows or develops himself or herself throughout his or her teaching experience. Fifth, the "self-reflection" stage shows major information on expertise of a teacher which is developed through his or her teaching experience.

In the **quantitative analysis of Korean teachers' life cycle**, researchers tried to find out how the personal background and teaching environment is related in the life cycle of a teacher. According to the **analysis of factors of teachers and teaching environment related with the 'life cycle at the organizational level,'** there are following characteristics shown both in primary and secondary schools. First, more male teachers than female teachers, more master's degree holders than those with other different academic careers, more teachers who entered the teaching profession due to financial reason than those who did not, more teachers with teaching experience in unwelcome schools like rural area schools than those without such experience, more teachers with experience of serving as head teachers at school than those without experience, and more teachers who are serving as head teachers than those who are not are distributed in the "promotion aspiration" stage. Second, year career is closely related with the life cycle at the organizational level, and in particular, there are many teachers with long experience in the 'promotion aspiration' stage and 'retirement preparation' stage. Third, more teachers with children than those without children and more teachers who have nurtured children at the same age

with their students than those who have not are distributed in the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage. Fourth, many teachers who put more weight on teaching than any other duties are distributed in the ‘adaptation’ stage while a great number of teachers who put more weight on administrative works than any other duties are distributed in the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage. Meanwhile, there are following differences between primary schools and secondary schools in the teachers’ life cycle at the organizational level. First, while there are many teachers with relatively low income family background who are distributed in the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage in primary schools while there is no such phenomenon in secondary schools. Second, teachers trained in colleges of education or through a teaching certification course are more distributed in the ‘independence’ stage while teachers trained in graduate schools of education are more distributed in the ‘adaptation’ stage. Third, more public school teachers are distributed in the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage than private school teachers in secondary level. Fourth, more teachers in Seoul are distributed in the ‘independence’ stage than those in other regions while less teachers in Seoul are distributed in the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage than those in other regions.

According to **the analysis of factors of individual background and teaching environment related with the ‘life cycle at the level of educational view,’** there are following characteristics shown both in primary and secondary schools. First, as in the life cycle at the organizational level, there is a strong relationship between the teachers’ life cycle and year career. Second, more master’s degree holders than bachelor’s degree holders, more teachers with experience of serving as head teachers at school than those without such experience, more teachers who are serving as head teachers than those who are not, more teachers children than those without children, and who have nurtured children at the same age with their students than those who have not

are distributed in the 'self-reflection' stage. On the other hand, there are following differences between primary schools and secondary schools. First, while there is no statistical significance with regard to the gender of teachers in primary schools, there are more male teachers than female teachers distributed in the 'self-reflection' stage in secondary schools. Second, teachers who have not taught in unwelcome schools such as rural schools are more distributed in the 'self-reflection' stage than those who have in secondary schools. Third, there are more teachers at the stage of 'self-reflection' in private schools than public schools in secondary schools. Forth, in secondary schools, there are a high portion of teachers at the stage of 'passion' stage and low portion of teachers at the stage of 'self-reflection' among teachers who chose to enter the teaching profession due to their academic scores. Fifth, in secondary schools, more music, arts, and physical education teachers are distributed in the 'self-reflection' stage than teachers for general subjects. Sixth, in primary schools, many of the teachers who put much weight on teaching are found to be distributed in the 'passion' stage.

Major characteristics found in the analysis of the required competencies at each stage of the teachers' life cycle are as follows. First, the common competencies required for both primary and secondary teachers are 'understanding of students' and 'understanding of instructions and evaluations.' In general, highly required competencies include 'communication ability,' 'leadership,' 'understanding of curriculum,' 'understanding of the community,' and 'understanding of the modern society.'

Second, less required competencies are 'understanding of the public education system,' 'planning and organizing ability,' 'understanding of school organization and administrative system,' and 'relationship building ability.' While these abilities are developed over the teachers' life cycle, demand for them is

relatively low as the school does not require such competencies above the certain level.

Third, when comparing the level of required competencies at each stage of the life cycle, teachers at the ‘adaptation’ stage have highest demand for most of the competencies for teachers in the life cycle at the organizational level. In particular, primary school teachers at the ‘adaptation’ stage are more likely to have high demand for the teachers’ job competencies. As teachers shift from the ‘adaptation’ stage to the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage, their demand for the competencies decreases since they acquire most of the competencies over the life cycle. However, teachers at the stage of ‘retirement preparation’ are shown to have less competencies than those at the ‘promotion aspiration’ stage and have higher demands for competencies. This is because many of the teachers at the ‘retirement preparation’ stage are distributed in the ‘passion’ stage. Especially, primary school teachers at the ‘retirement preparation’ stage have high demand for a number of competencies including ‘understanding of the curriculum,’ ‘information management and research ability,’ ‘communication ability,’ and ‘leadership.’ In the life cycle at the level of educational view, teachers have lower demand for competencies as they acquire a certain level of the competencies throughout the life cycle. Teachers at the stage of ‘passion’ are found out to have higher demand for a number of competencies compared to the teachers at different stages.

Fourth, there is no significant difference between primary schools and secondary schools with regard to common competencies required for teachers. However, it is notable that primary school teachers have higher and more demand for competencies at each stage of the life cycle than secondary school teachers.

In the analysis of the current status of teacher training and major issues for

**enhancement of teachers' competencies**, current status of the teacher training at metropolitan and provincial education offices and remote training institutes was outlined, and major issues were introduced including 'absence of the training system established in accordance with teachers life cycle,' 'difference in individual teachers' commitment to training,' 'lack of appropriateness of the current training programs,' 'side effects of the linkage between the training and promotion,' and 'closed training management system and insufficient quality control of the training programs.'

**Examples of teachers' competencies improvement at each stage of the life cycle in major foreign countries** showed that various matters should be considered in establishing strategies for enhancing teachers' competencies in each stage of their life cycle. The matters include 'acknowledgement of the expertise of teachers based upon the trust in teachers,' 'stable and comprehensive approach in linkage with other related policies,' 'establishment of criteria for teachers' competencies at national level,' 'introduction of the research-based approach,' 'diversification of the teachers' career path which is now limited to supervisor, vice-principal, and principal,' 'enhancement of teachers' competencies at the beginning stage,' 'expansion of opportunities for improving teachers' competencies led by school,' 'transition of the point of view on in service teacher education from obligation to right,' and 'cooperation among teacher training centers and social institutes.'

Based on the analysis, this study suggested the ways for teachers' competency development as follows. 'Themes on competency development program at each stage of teachers' life cycle' are proposed for primary school teachers and secondary school teachers respectively with 'directions of the development program operation.' In addition, it is recommended in the study that programs for understanding of students and subject education and evaluation are developed for teachers as a whole, and programs for understanding of curriculum, leadership, communication, understanding of the community, and understanding of the modern society. It is also noted to enhance the education programs for teachers at the 'passion' stage, utilize teachers at the 'self-reflection' stage as instructors for education programs,



and develop leadership programs for teachers at the ‘retirement’ stage. In addition, it also suggested that ‘school administrators training programs’ include the ‘understanding on Korean teachers’ life cycle’ to enable competent teachers to exercise their abilities. As for the direction of the operation of in-service education programs, this study suggested ‘development of self-analysis tool for teachers’ life cycle and development of tailored teacher training or education programs,’ ‘diversification of in-service education programs for primary school teachers and enhancement of support for training of primary school teachers,’ ‘establishment of a firm status of teachers as researchers,’ ‘supporting teachers’ voluntary will for developing their competencies: supporting teachers’ academic club activities within school,’ and ‘development of a unit school into an academic community.’ As for the in-service education systems, this study suggested ‘establishment of standards for teachers’ competencies,’ ‘utilization of portal sites for training programs,’ ‘evaluation and certification of training programs,’ ‘establishment of an in-service education system linked between metropolitan and provincial teacher training centers and other social organizations,’ ‘provision of the public support for training for the first three years after entering the teaching profession(ex. 180 hours) and recommendation of mandatory training for every three years,’ ‘inclusion of hours performed as an instructor in the training hours,’ ‘provision of the public support for graduate studies,’ and ‘institutionalization of the sabbatical year for learning.’ As for teacher candidate training and placement, this study suggested to strengthen university programs for teacher education centering on understanding of students and supplementation of the selection of teachers for unwelcome schools like rural schools. Lastly, this study emphasized that strategies for improvement of teachers competencies at each stage of life cycle should be materialized in the change in the overall framework of school education by restructuring the school education system towards the one where teachers’ professional competencies are fully utilized and shared among the teachers.

**Keywords:** teachers' life cycle, teachers' competencies, the level of required competencies, the required competencies at each stage of the teachers' life cycle, the ways for teachers' competency development