The Implications to the Early Childhood Teacher Education in Korea from Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers' Professional Development

Jiryung Ahn[1]

Abstract

In becoming a teacher and teaching in early childhood education, it is important to be a "professional." We have learned a substantial amount of knowledge and information regarding effective teacher professional development from researchers and studies. So far, the importance of "professionalism" in teacher education, especially, in pre-service teacher education and training has been emphasized and the researches about "professionalism" were conducted. The purpose of this study is to explore the core competencies and features of professional development for early childhood educators and the implications for teacher education in a different educational background and culture.

Keywords: early childhood pre-service teacher, professional development, teacher education

1. Introduction

Every day as early childhood educators arrive in the classroom, they face the challenge of navigating complexities and dynamics in order to foster children's learning and development. Effective teachers in early childhood are able to both engage children in meaningful activities that promote their conceptual understanding and construct positive teacher-child relationships in the classroom. To become a teacher, usually, is required content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and, one more, knowledge of the learner. In teacher education, 'Becoming a professional', has been reaffirmed. This statement reflects the core of efforts to prepare pre-service teachers for success as educators in the multiple settings in which they work. As far as concerned a major issue for the early childhood education field is how to produce or create effective teachers. There is not an established pathway for early childhood teacher preparation and pre-service teachers' trainings.

Relatively, for a long time, professional development has been recognized as the significant elements in the effective implementation of quality in early childhood education (Clark & Huber, 2005; David, 2004; Girolametto& Weitzman, 2007; Lobman, Ryan, McLaughlin, & Ackerman, 2004; NAEYC, 2012). Professional development can be defined as 'the individual's ability to conceptualize and carry out activities which further personal growth in teaching' (McAlpine & Harris, 2002, p. 9). It can also be viewed as changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes for the improvement of professional practice. Contemporary researchers remind us that professional development can be conducted in various forms such as, attending a workshop, seminar, conference, and reading professional literature, but researchers consistently emphasize that effective professional development should be teacher-centered, ongoing, and able to foster collegiality, collaborative inquiry and critical discourse (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Nieto, 2003a, 2003b). In this era of accountability, policy-makers view professional development as the key to increasing teacher quality and improving student learning (Barrett, 2006, p. 6). Within the early childhood education field, professional development has been emphasized (UNESCO, 2009).

---

[1] Associate Professor in the department of early childhood education, Uiduk University, 261 Donghaedaero, Gangdongmyen, Geyongju, Geyongsangbukdo, South Korea (postal code: 38004) e-mail : jrahn@uu.ac.kr/ 82-10-4569-7626

Using varying methodological approaches, numerous large-scale studies have shown convincing evidences on the benefits of early childhood education educators, whether in developed countries such as the United States (Burger, 2010) and other countries and cultures. The field of early childhood education in the United States continues to gain prominence in conversations among policy makers, advocates, and a range of other stakeholders (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013; Ready Nation, 2014). In fact, many researchers tried to figure out the promotion teacher and child outcomes through effective models of professional development interventions (Justice & Mcginty, 2012; Kinzie, Whittacker, Kilday, & Williford, 2012).

Over the decades, we have learned a substantial amount of knowledge and information regarding effective teacher professional development from researchers around the world (Avalos 2010; Dana &Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; Webster-Wright 2009; Yendol-Hoppey& Dana, 2010). So far, the importance of "professionalism" in teacher education, especially, in pre-service teacher education and training has been emphasized and the researches about "professionalism" were conducted. Therefore, in this study, I would like to explore the core competencies and features of professional development for early childhood educators and the implications for teacher education in a different educational background and culture.

2. Research Method

2.1 Research Design &Data Resources

This study was conducted based on literature reviews and analysis, that is, primarily of a literature review and analysis from previous researches and various documents related teachers' professional development and teacher education. All data of this study were from previous researches about early childhood (pre-service and in-service) teachers' professional development and training. Those were diverse previous researches, legislations about teachers' professional or training development and government documents about teacher education and professional development through United States.

2.2 Data Analysis

The analysis went through by content analysis research methodology. Its procedures were described, some examples of its application were provided, and the controversial issues surrounding its use were discussed. Content analysis offers practical applicability, promise, and relevance for research and education. From these reasons, the content analysis was appropriate to this study.

3. Development of Professionalism in Early Childhood Education

3. 1 Content Knowledge and Schemas

The NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards) improves the quality of education that applies to various elements of the education workforce (NBPTS, 2012). The NBPTS demonstrates competency in five core areas, that is, these are a commitment to student, learning knowledge of the subjects they choose to teach, appropriate management of student learning, dedication to systematic and erective practice, and participation in learning communities (NBPTS 2012). In terms of professional development in education, ongoing and experience-based professional development is emphasized. Similarly to many other professions, early childhood education educators have the need for and the opportunity to engage in professional development and growth opportunities throughout their career. Almost all US states, in other words, 48 out of 50 states require early childhood education teachers to participate in professional development each year, though the requirements for what constitutes this vary dramatically (National Child Care Information Center, 2018). There are four modalities of professional development in which the early childhood education workforce typically participates: workshop-based instruction, during which individuals learn about a specific topic in a classroom-like learning setting for a set number of hours; communities of practice, in which early childhood education professionals come together as a group over an extended period of time to engage in a shared inquiry; individualized or on-site professional development, sometimes called 'coaching,' 'mentoring' or 'technical assistance,' during which a teacher has a content expert or more seasoned individual come into his/ her classroom to observe and render advice on how to improve teaching practices and credit for prior learning and experience, where states set up a process through which teachers who have been in the field for a number of years can create a portfolio that demonstrates their experience in a particular topic area and receive college credit (Gomez, Kagan,& Fox, 2015).

While each of these types of professional development offers important in-service professional development experiences, they alone are in sufficient preparation for working with young children. For many early childhood education educators, a combination of pathways ensure that they are armed with the knowledge and skills necessary to work with young children and their families.

Additionally, the content of professional development offered in states match the core knowledge areas set forth in a state's requirements for teachers' annual in-service professional development (National Child Care Information Center, 2018). From the equity perspective, many teachers equitable access to professional development and preparation opportunities. As research emerges to support the need for additional qualifications for early childhood education teachers, and as the demand for early childhood education grows, so does the need for more equitably distributed professional development. States now find themselves struggling to increase the capacity of institutions of higher education to offer degree programs in early childhood education, to support teachers to go back to school and/or obtain credentials, and to develop avenues for teachers to physically access professional development (Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives Center, 2014).

Shifting our conceptualization of professional preparation is from systemic approaches to improving the status of the early childhood education teaching. Recently, major conceptual shifts have early childhood education, moving it from a programmatic focus to one that is more systemic. With reviewing research on systemic thinking and system developments, national efforts are undergirded by a supportive infrastructure. Replete with inspectorates, regulations and monitoring tools, early childhood education does a solid job. Recent efforts to create mechanisms to improve teacher preparation and teacher professional development programs have taken hold with much success.

3. 2 Practice (Repetition) and Self-Monitoring

Teacher education programs are tasked with an immense job of teaching students new information and helping them apply that information in practical settings. A common way of attempt in programs is by incorporating classroom-based experiences into teacher preparation programs. These would be well served to consider two implications. First, students need opportunities for and guidance in different types of learning. It is beneficial for students to accumulate new experiences as they spend time in the classroom. In addition, to be successful teachers, they will need to be able to think through those new experiences and the new activities they pick up along the way to develop systematic strategies for working with children. Teacher preparation programs should consider if they provide enough time in classroom-based experiences for students to accumulate new experiences and if they are providing enough guidance in refection to help students connect new experiences and activities into larger strategies and philosophical approaches. Second, programs should be developed clearly and explicit expectations for the offered students. From the Dewey's perspectives, in terms of experience and education, all genuine education comes through experience. His opinions are applicable to teacher education. That is, it makes difference to prepare teachers in the way and expect a different results or impacts in contemporary classrooms. Practice-based teacher education programs include multiple opportunities and experiences for pre-service teachers begin to understand the complexities of teaching and integrate knowledge from learning and developmental theories into practice.

Although teachers repeatedly practice applying the new schemas they have developed, they also need to focus on monitoring the effectiveness of these efforts. That is, we need to provide the opportunities for improvement for the early childhood education teachers. As the researchers showed (Johnson, Paro & Crosby, 2017; Vartuli, Snider, & Holley, 2016), we need to acknowledge the potential benefit from attending trainings addressing how to build trust with and engage on a deeper level. Enhancing the collaboration between pre-service teachers through structured mentoring or coaching was greatly impressed.

Systemically, governing and financing early childhood education professional development have improved. Given the centrality of personnel competence to the overall quality of early childhood education programs, much energy has recently been expended to develop training programs. At the federal level, new technical assistance centers have emerged and conferences and materials are being produced to support those engaged in professional development. States, too, are increasing their commitment to professional development and they often have personnel devoted to advancing professional development (U.S Department of Education, 2018).

4. Conclusions

From this study, I would like to share some implications and suggestions for early childhood teacher education in Korea. In this study, I reviewed early childhood educators' professional development in the United States according to content knowledge and schemas, practice (repetition) and self-monitoring. Throughout conducting this study, I had impressions on how much pre-service teachers and in-service teacher work hard to become good teachers and want more professional guidance to help them to be better teachers. I believe that a little bit of attention to teacher research and education will provide a different insight for them to understand teachers' professional development. Most of all, administrators and education policy makers should consider teacher education as one of the criteria in teacher evaluations, self-supervision, and promotion procedure. In terms of these issues, we need to develop relevant information on students' skill targets and progressions, support for learning to skillfully use instructional and social interactions to promote students engagement and learning, and to effectively implement curricula.

In addition to, Korean educators need to emphasize the purpose of self-awareness in their teaching and instruction and were interested in "better" teaching instruction for all other teachers. More practice and repetition is required for professional development in early childhood educators to build up their knowledge of the learner (i.e. in this context, it means young children). So we need to more systemic practice guidelines and assessment. This new inquiry will help teachers see their own teaching from different perspectives.

Lastly, teacher education program should offer various types of inquiry and discourse so that prospective teachers are aware of idea and knowledgeable about teacher education. Diverse ways of self-monitoring and feedback are required and need to develop them for the early childhood educators. Now it is the time for young children's educators to develop more "flexible professionalism" in Korea educational environment. From these suggestions, I would like to settle down the stable professional development system for early childhood educators including pre-service and in-service teachers. We need evidence-based instructional practice, engaging teachers in intervention via relationship building and evaluating the success of intervention.

References

Avalos, B. (2010). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. Teacher and Teacher Education, 27, 10–20.

Barrett, J. R. (2006). Recasting professional development for music teachers in an era of reform. Arts Education Policy Review, 107(6), 19–28.

Brown, C. P. & Englehardt, J. (2016). Conceptions of and early childhood educators' experiences in early childhood professional development programs: A qualitative met synthesis. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 37(3), 216-244.

Burger, K. (2010). How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? An international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25, 104–165.

Castle, K. (2013). The state of teacher research in early childhood teacher education. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 34, 268-286.

Clark, P.& Huber, L. (2005). Enhancing early childhood teacher growth and development through professional development school partnerships. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 26(2), 179–186.

Dana, N. F.& Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2008). The reflective educator's guide to professional development: Coaching inquiry-oriented learning communities. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

David, T. (2004). Questions of quality: The contribution of research evidence to definitions of quality in early childhood education and care practice. Paper presented at the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) Conference 'Questions of Quality', Dublin Castle.

Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). Teacher-centered professional development. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Duncan, J. &Te One, S. (2012). Comparative early childhood education services: International perspectives. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Girolametto, L.& Weitzman, E. (2007). Promoting peer interaction skills: Professional development for early childhood educators and preschool teachers. Topics in Language Disorders, 27(2), 93–110.

Gomez, R. E., Kagan, S. L., & Fox, E. (2015). Professional development of the early childhood education teaching workforce in the United States: an overview. Professional Development in Education, 41(2), 169-186.

Howes, C., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (Eds.) (2012). Effective early childhood professional development. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookers Publishing.

Justice, L. M. & Mcginty, A. S. (2012). Early literacy intervention intensity and its relations to child outcomes. In C. Howes, B. K. Hamre, & R.C. Pianta (Eds.), Effective early childhood professional development (pp. 89-110).Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookers Publishing.

Johnson, A. V. S., Paro, K. M., & Crosby, D. A. (2017). Early practicum experiences: Preservice early childhood students' perceptions and sense of efficacy. Early Childhood Education Journal, 45, 229-236.

Kinzie, M. B., Whittacker, J. V., Kilday, C. R., & Williford, A. P. (2012). Designing effective curricula and teacher professional development for early childhood mathematics and science. In C. Howes, B. K. Hamre, & R.C. Pianta (Eds.), Effective early childhood professional development(pp.31-60).Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookers Publishing.

Knight, A.& LaGasse, A. (2012). Re-connecting to music technology: Looking back and looking forward. Music Therapy Perspectives, 30(2), 188-195.

Lobman, C., Ryan, S., McLaughlin, J., & Ackerman, D. J. (2004). Educating preschool researchers: Mapping the teacher preparation and professional development system in New Jersey. Retrieved 25 October, 2008, from http://www.fcd-us.org/ usr_doc/EducatingPreschoolTeachers.pdf.

Maynard, C., Paro, K. M., & Johnson, A. (2014). Before student teaching: How undergraduate student in early childhood teacher preparation programs describe their early classroom-based experience. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 35, 244-261.

McAlpine, L. & Harris, R. (2002). Evaluating teaching effectiveness and teaching improvement: A language for institutional policies and academic development practices. International Journal for Academic Development, 7(1), 7–17.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2012, 2017). NAEYC standards for early childhood professional preparation, position statement.

NBPTS (2012). National Board for Professional Teaching Standards State Regulation.

Nieto, S. (2003a). Challenging current notions of "highly qualified teachers" through work in a teachers' inquiry group. Journal of Teacher Education, 54(5), 386–398.

Nieto, S. (2003b). What keeps teachers going? New York: Teachers College Press.

National Child Care Information Center (2018). https://www.icf.com/.../national-child-care-information-center-ncc.

Office of the Press Secretary (2013). Remarks by the President in the state of the union address. The

White House. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarkspresident-state-union-address.

Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (2014).Strengthening the early childhood

and school-age workforce: A tool to improve workplace conditions, compensation, and access to

professional development. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

Ready Nation. (2014). Savings now, savings later: Smart early childhood programs pay off right away

and in the future. Retrieved from http://readynation.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/

ReadyNation-Savings-Now-endnotes.pdf.

Sumrall, T., Scott-Little, C., Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., Burchinal, M., Hamre, B., Downer, J., & Howes, C. (2017). Student teaching within in early childhood teacher preparation programs: An examination of key features across 2-and 4-year institutions. Early Childhood Education Journal, 45, 821-830.

Vartuli, S., Snider, K., & Holley, M. (2016). Making it real: A practice- based early childhood teacher education program. Early Childhood Education Journal, 44, 503-514.

UNESCO. (2009). EFA global monitoring report 2010: Reaching the marginalized. Paris, France: Author.

Webster-Wright, A. (2009). Reframing professional development through understanding authentic professional learning. Review of Educational Research, 79, 702–739.

Yendol-Hoppey, D.& Dana, N. F. (2010). Powerful professional development: Building expertise within the four walls of your school. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.