

Parental Perceptions on Parent Involvement in Korea

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate parental perceptions on parent involvement in Korea. Two-hundred-thirty-two parents participated in this study by completing a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Majority of parents perceived that parent involvement is significant and necessary although they are not able to participate in all events of parent involvement due to reasons such as time conflict and be baby sitters. In addition, parents wanted for teachers to frequently inform their child's progress, to contact them through various channels, and to respect their opinions in education for their child. Strategies to compromise the reasons hindering parental participation in parent involvement as well as suggestions to meet parental demands were discussed. Suggestions for further studies were also proposed.

Keywords : parent involvement, partnerships between parents and teachers, early childhood parent education

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Introduction

Parental Roles in Early Childhood

Parents¹ are the first educators of their child providing the primary context for growth and learning (Berger, 2008; Bredekamp, 2011; Follari, 2007). They nurture, socialize, and teach their child from birth. Thus, parental roles on the early years of their child's life have been recognized as one of the most critical factors for sound development in physical, cognitive, and social-emotional domains of the child. On top of satisfying the basic needs of food, shelter, and safe environment, parents provide love to their child, which is the basis for growing into a healthy body and mind. It is well known that the attachment established between the parents and their child for the first two years of life determines the quality of socio-emotional relationships of the children for the rest of their lives (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007).

In addition, numerous studies have reached the same conclusion: early experiences provided by the parents and the ways parents interact with their child during the first few years of life lay the foundations of the child's later life. According to Erikson, parents, as key parts of social environments of their child's life, play a critical role in facilitating the development of healthy personality (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Perry (2005), who has been a leader in brain research focusing on child trauma and the effects of child maltreatment, stated that:

Human beings become a reflection of the world in which they develop. If that world is safe, predictable, and characterized by relationally and cognitively enriched opportunities, the child can grow to be self-regulating, thoughtful, and a productive member of family, community, and society (p. 1).

Needless to say, Perry emphasized that parents are in the center of this world and determine its quality. Cognitively, Shonkoff & Phillips (2000) emphasized "...what is learned

¹ Due to the increasing number of different types of families in modern society, the term 'parents' in this article means those people who are primarily responsible for a child, such as parents, guardians, other family members, etc.

in the beginning of life establishes a set of capabilities, orientations to the world, and expectations about how things and people will behave that affect how new experiences are selected and processed” (p. 90). In other words, early life experiences determine later life and influence to achieve the full potential, and it is parents who provide the variety of experiences to their child during the early years of life (Morrison, 2008).

With their rights to make decisions for their child’s life, parents are considered as important allies in the educational process. They provide teachers² with specific and useful information about their child, including habits, abilities, feelings, dispositions, interests, and needs. They also share their concerns for their child, the family’s culture and language, and sometimes family crisis with the teachers (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005). Due to the influence of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, many educators have emphasized that families, school, and community together shape the contours of childhood. Researchers have reported that an effective communication and sharing of beliefs between home and school are the foundation for the success of education by promoting children’s positive behaviors and increasing their achievement (Desimone, 1999; Harvard Family Research Project, 2006; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; PTA, 2010; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Moreover, DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane (2007) found that “the level of parent-school involvement is a better predictor of grades than standardized test scores are” (p. 361).

This is not an exception in early childhood education. Studies have shown that successful early childhood education depends upon a positive and convincing relationship between teachers and parents, and this relationship holds across families with all different backgrounds including economic status, culture, race, ethnic group, and the parents’ level of education (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2007; Morrison, 2008). Carlisle et al. (2005) emphasized that parents’ close relationships with teachers and active involvement in school ease young children’s initial transition to school. This is because the close relationship helps them hear the same messages from powerful adults, teacher and parents, and view that the school is closely connected to the familiar world of their home. Bredekamp (2011) summarized the characteristics of children whose parents are actively involved in school as to “earning higher grades and scoring better on achievement tests; be promoted; attend school regularly; have

2 The term ‘teacher’ in this article is used interchangeably with the term school or administrator.

better social skills and adapt well to school; and benefit from long-term positive consequences such as completing high school and seeking postsecondary education” (p. 219). Moreover, early childhood is the time for families to establish new expectations and relationships with the school. The relationship built between families and school during this period of time has a great impact not only on establishing their relationships with schools in later schoolings but also on the children’s lives for some time thereafter (Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001). Thus, it is not overrated to emphasize the value of building solid partnerships between early childhood teachers and parents.

Parent Involvement

Traditionally, parents played supportive roles in education in order to provide their child with academic support at home, to raise fund for school, to volunteer as chaperones for special events, and/or to help teachers in the classroom. However, recently, their roles have been extending to making decisions in hiring new teachers, developing school policies, and selecting curriculum (Barge & Loges, 2003; Morrison, 2008). Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salina, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis (2002) categorized the effective collaboration between home and school as six types of involvement: (1) Parenting - To support parents to establish a home environment facilitating their child’s development and learning; (2) Communicating - To share information with parents with a variety of communication tools; (3) Volunteering - To create opportunities for parents to be involved in school events; (4) Learning at Home - To link parents with their child’ learning in the classroom and assist parents to help their child’s homework; (5) Decision making - To include parents in decision making processes ; and (6) Collaborating with the community - To coordinate parents’ access to services in the community based on their needs. They explained that parental roles in ‘Parenting’ are home-based and focused on their own child while those in ‘Collaborating with Community’ are extended to school/community-based and related to the quality education of all children. They also emphasized that successful partnerships between home and school can be expected when all parents are considered to be an asset to the school, when any types of involvement and contribution made by parents are honored, and when qualities of each type of involvement are emphasized and promoted by the school. In addition, Epstein et al. (2002) suggested that no

matter how much and what type of involvement is made by the parents, experiences of parent involvement must be useful for their parenting. Parents must feel that they are respected by the school and that they are included in the process of educating their child.

Barbour, Barbour & Scully (2008) classified three levels of parent involvement: Minimum level; associate level; and decision making level.

- * Minimum Level: To provide basic support for school programs, such as supervising their child's home work at home and helping teachers with some school events, including fund raising, collecting recycles to use in school projects, and making props for teaching.
- * Associate Level: To volunteer to assist teachers on a regular basis, such as being a parent volunteer in the classroom, tutors/mentors/chaperones, or assistants in computer labs and library.
- * Decision-Making Level: To participate in decision making processes in the school, such as serving on the curriculum committee, working in an advocacy group, or joining in child study teams (Barbour et al., 2008, pp. 321-322).

Their assumptions underlying the three levels of parent involvement are first, not everyone in the community is proactive in being involved in school events. Second, successful collaboration means that almost all community members are involved at one level or another, with a few individuals contributing at all levels. Barbour and his colleagues also described importance of building partnerships based on recognizing diverse capacities and needs of families of all children. They noted that different parents may have different perspectives and capacities on involvement with the school, special needs of services from the teacher or the school, and diverse levels of willingness to be involved (Barbour et al., 2008).

To summarize, all parents are respected in effective parent involvement programs. In addition, those programs embrace different types or levels of parent involvement through expecting diverse parental roles in school events. The more important factor is the quality of parent involvement for individual parents. No matter how much and what type of involvement is made by or for the parents, parents' experiences of being involved must support their parenting and should be valuable for the children.

Knowledge and Skills of Building Partnership: EC Teacher Qualification

Since parents are deeply related to a child's life especially during the early years, the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) include "Building Family and Community Relationships" as one of the six standards for qualification of early childhood teacher candidates. The NAEYC emphasizes that:

...they (prospective early childhood teachers) know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families and to involve all families in their children's development and learning (NAEYC, 2009, p. 12).

In fact, working with parents is as much a part of teacher's responsibilities as working with children in almost all early childhood classrooms. For this, teacher candidates must prepare necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions. In addition to the traditional types of families, they need to understand the nature and specific needs of families with different backgrounds and characteristics. Teacher candidates also need to develop skills to effectively communicate with them. Most importantly, teacher candidates are required to develop positive dispositions of collaborating with families of all children. Recognizing the importance of sharing goals and information with parents through two way communications, and valuing mutual understanding each other's contribution on child development and learning, and a willingness to work with parents/families to improve the overall learning environment for the students are dispositions that teacher candidates need to develop. Finally, teachers must understand that it is their responsibility to support and help families to resolve family crisis or issues, in order to minimize child abuse, child neglect, and any risks on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bredekamp, 2011; Kostelnik et al., 2008; Morrison, 2008; NAEYC, 2009).

Overview of the Study

Early childhood teachers often recognize that "working with families" is among the areas

where they feel least prepared and need the most help with (Bredekamp, 2011, p. 200). They frequently find relationship with families the most challenging part of their responsibilities (Bennett, Katz, & Beneke, 2006; Gartrell, 2008). Mayes (2002) also pointed out that many schools and teachers still need to learn ways to effectively welcome and help families of children, in order to build effective partnerships with them. In other words, considering that the key factor of building and sustaining effective collaboration between parents and teachers is communication built on mutual trust, understanding, cooperation, and shared responsibility (Ball, 2006; Bredekamp, 2011), schools and teachers need to obtain objective information about how parents perceive and expect from parent involvement, in order to ultimately provide the best possible education for all children. In addition, outcomes of research on parental involvement have reported that there are several factors and conditions hindering parent involvement. Carlisle et al. (2005) listed factors influencing parental involvement as parents' cultural backgrounds, the quality of parents' previous educational experiences, family structure, parents' work schedule, teachers' attitudes about parent involvement, teachers' expectations for parent involvement, and school's effort. DePlanty et al. (2007) summarized reasons for parents' inactive involvement as parents' minimal social network, unstable financial status, parents' low level of education, lack of teachers' open communication with parents, and teachers' lower efficacy. McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro & Wildenger (2007) reported that parents do not actively involve themselves because they do not fully understand school expectations resulting from lack of in-depth communication between parents and teachers.

Under this circumstance, the purpose of this study is to investigate parental perceptions on parent involvement in Korea, in order to provide early childhood teachers and administrators with objective information and insights of building partnerships with families of children. Research questions developed to address this purpose were as follows:

1. How much do parents participate in the different types of parent involvement?
2. What do parents demand from early childhood teachers for effective parent involvement?
3. Are the parental perceptions on parent involvement different depending on their demographic characteristics?

Method

Participants

A total of 232 parents, who sent their 5-year-old child to kindergarten in Busan³, Korea, participated in this study in 2010 through completing the questionnaire developed by the researcher. The majority of respondents was mothers (96.1%) and had an associate or college degree (75.4%). More than half of the respondents were home makers/unemployed (62.1%), and had 2 children (65.9%). Finally, slightly more than 57% of respondents were beneficiary of the government financial aid for sending a child to an early childhood institutions such as private kindergartens or daycare centers.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of Participants*

Categories		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	9	3.9
	Female	223	96.1
Age	20-29	20	8.6
	30-39	175	75.4
	40 or over	37	15.9
Education	High School	31	13.4
	Associate or College Degree	183	78.9
	Master's Degree or Above	18	7.8
Employment	Home Maker/Unemployed	144	62.1
	Part Time	28	12.1
	Full Time	60	25.9
Number of Children	1	59	25.4
	2	153	65.9
	MT 3	20	8.6
Beneficiary of Financial Aid	Yes	133	57.3
	No	99	42.7

³ Busan, the second largest city in Korea with approximately 3.6 million residents, is located on the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula.

Research Tool

Parental perceptions on parent involvement were investigated by the questionnaire developed by the researcher in fall of 2009. The researcher conducted literature review, and then developed the questionnaire, which consists of a total of 25 questions, composed of 6 questions of demographic information and 19 questions of parent involvement, including 4 questions for parents' participation in different types of parent involvement and 15 questions for parental perceptions on parent involvement (See table 2). The internal consistency for reliability analysis was conducted and the Cronbach's α coefficient of the questions was .840.

Table 2. *Questionnaire*

Category	Number of Questions
Background	6
Participation in parent involvement	4
Perceptions on parent involvement	15
Total	25

Procedure and Data Analysis

The researcher contacted directors of 40 kindergartens, about 10% of the total number of kindergartens in the city. They were randomly selected from the kindergarten list downloaded from the web site of the Busan Metropolitan City Office of Education⁴. Of those, directors of 24 kindergartens volunteered to participate in this study. A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed to parents in the 24 kindergartens in April 2010; and 247 questionnaires were collected at the end of April. Parents' participation in this study was voluntary, and anonymous. Respondents did not receive incentives for completing the questionnaire, which was estimated to take about 20 minutes to complete.

Of the 247 questionnaires, 15 incomplete questionnaires were excluded and 232

⁴ The Busan Metropolitan City Office of Education, an independent government agency, is in charge of policy and regulatory roles in the city's education system. There were a total of 388 kindergartens registered in the City Office of Education as of April, 2010.

questionnaires were statistically analyzed. In order to describe the basic features of the data, descriptive statistics were used. Chi-squared test and one-way ANOVA were also used to examine the group differences in parental perceptions as a function of their demographic characteristics such as their age, employment, education level, number of children in the household, etc.

Findings

The first research question of the study was to investigate how often parents participate in the different types of parent involvement. As shown in table 3, majority of parents (77.2%) considered that parent involvement is important in education for their child's development and learning. However, only a little more than half of the parents (56.0%) responded that they frequently participated in parent involvement. In addition, the main reasons for not participating in parent involvement was 'time conflict (54.3%)' followed by 'no baby sitter (18.5%),' 'not useful (15.1%),' and 'not welcomed (9.1%).' Minor responses under 'others' were 'do not know what and how to do (2.6%)' and 'financial burden (0.4%).'

Table 3. *Participation in Parent Involvement*

Importance of Parent Involvement						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
N(%)	64(27.6)	115(49.6)	47(20.3)	4(1.7)	2(.86)	232(100)
Degree of Participation in Parent Involvement						
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never		Total
N(%)	29(12.5)	101(43.5)	94(40.5)	8(3.4)		232(100)
Reason for not Participating in Parent Involvement						
	Time Conflict	No Baby Sitter	Not Helpful	Not Welcomed	Others*	Total
N(%)	126(54.3)	43(18.5)	35(15.1)	21(9.1)	7(3.0)	232(100)

*Financial burden (1, .4%), Do not know what and how to do (6, 2.6%).

Table 4 summarizes parents' participation in different types of parent involvement. The types of parent involvement with most participation were 'participating in classroom activities (85.3%)' followed by 'individual parent-teacher conference (76.7%),' 'participating in the program orientation meetings (73.7%),' and 'lectures or workshops on parenting (62.5%).' Two types of parent involvement, 'consulting family issues/crisis with teacher (11.2%)' and 'tutoring or teaching children special subject areas after school (10.3%)', were responded as the types of parent involvement with the least participation. In addition, slightly more than half of the parents (52.2%) responded that they are supporting child's learning at home, and about one-fifth of the parents had experiences of participating in meetings to make decisions in the school.

Table 4. *Parents' Participation in Different Types of Parent Involvement*

Category	Participation N* (%)
Participating in classroom activities	198 (85.3)
Individual parent-teacher conferences	178 (76.7)
Participating in the program orientation meetings	171 (73.7)
Lectures or workshops on parenting	145 (62.5)
Supporting child's learning at home	121 (52.2)
Small group meetings on specific needs or interests	61 (26.3)
As contributors of snacks or chaperones for school events	45 (19.4)
Meetings to make decisions in the school	44 (19.0)
As a presenters on careers or other topics in classrooms	40 (17.2)
Consulting family issues/crisis with a teacher	26 (11.2)
Tutoring or teaching children special subject areas after school	24 (10.3)

*Multiple responses

The second research question of the study was to identify parents' demands and concerns for effective parent involvement. Parents rated 15 selected concerns on a 5-point Likert scale (1= not necessary, 2= slightly necessary, 3= necessary, 4= very necessary, 5= critical). Table 5 shows the mean scores of 15 parental demands or concerns for effective parent involvement. Parents expressed that the most significant concern for effective parent involvement is establishing mutual and communicative relationships between teachers and parents (mean= 4.55/5.0). They also viewed that teachers must provide parents with frequent notice of the progress of their child (mean= 4.47/5.0), and parents must trust teacher's expertise in the

process of education (mean= 4.42/5.0) and cooperate with the school (mean= 4.35/5.0). In addition, parents demanded that teachers must contact the parents through various channels, such as phone, email, sending a note, etc. (mean= 4.26/5.0), and respect for the opinions of the parents on making decisions for their child (mean= 4.24/5.0). On the contrary, the three least demanded concerns for effective parent involvement were teacher's helping parents with family crisis/issues (mean= 3.16/5.0), opening the classroom to parents (mean= 3.32/5.0), and connecting parents to necessary services in the community (mean= 3.42/5.0).

Table 5. *Parental Demands for Effective Parent Involvement (N=232)*

Category	M	SD
• Establishing mutual and communicative relationships between teachers and parents	4.55	.65
• Providing parents with frequent notice of the progress of their child	4.47	.68
• Parents trusting teacher's expertise	4.42	.60
• Parents' cooperation with the ECE center/school	4.35	.74
• Teachers' contacting parents through various channels	4.26	.82
• Teacher's respect for the opinions of the parents	4.24	.74
• Teacher's effective skills to communicate with parents of diverse backgrounds	4.01	.82
• Providing parents with skills/activities to facilitate their child's learning at home	3.97	.85
• Involving parents in decision making processes	3.92	.88
• Lending educational materials/ books	3.68	.97
• Scheduling meetings in the evening or during the weekend	3.59	1.01
• Providing parents with small group meetings to discuss specific concerns	3.56	.97
• Connecting parents to necessary services in the community	3.42	.99
• Opening the classroom to parents	3.32	.92
• Helping parents with family crisis/issues	3.16	1.05

The final research question of the study was to find out if the parental perceptions on parent involvement were different depending on their demographic characteristics. Overall, there were not many differences in parents' participation in parent involvement as a function of their demographic characteristics. As table 6 indicates, statistically significant differences across sub-groups were found: Parents with associate degree or college degree (77.0%) and parents with master or above degree (83.3%) participated more in the program orientation

meetings than parents with high school degree (48.4%); parents with part time (14.3%) or full time (13.3%) jobs tended to volunteer more in tutoring or teaching children after school than home maker/unemployed parents (8.3%); home maker/unemployed parents (30.6%) and parents with part-time job (32.1%) participated more in the small group meetings on specific

Table 6. *Differences in Parental Participations by Demographic Characteristics N(%)*

Parents' Education					
		High School	College	Beyond College	χ^2 (p)
Participating in the Orientation Meetings	Yes	15(48.4)	141(77.0)	15(83.3)	13.234** (.001)
	No	16(51.6)	42(23.0)	3(16.7)	
	Total	31(100)	183(100)	18(100)	
Parents' Employment					
		Home Maker	Part Time	Full Time	χ^2 (p)
Tutoring or Teaching Children after School	Yes	12(8.3)	4(14.3)	8(13.3)	11.139** (.004)
	No	132(91.7)	24(85.7)	52(86.7)	
	Total	144(100)	28(100)	60(100)	
Parents' Employment					
		Home Maker	Part Time	Full Time	χ^2 (p)
Small Group Meetings on Specific Needs	Yes	44(30.6)	9(32.1)	8(13.3)	7.329* (.027)
	No	100(69.4)	19(67.9)	52(86.7)	
	Total	144(100)	28(100)	60(100)	
Number of Children					
		1	2	More than 3	χ^2 (p)
Meetings to Make Decisions	Yes	3(5.1)	37(24.1)	4(20.0)	9.693** (.008)
	No	56(94.9)	116(75.8)	16(80.0)	
	Total	59(100)	153(100)	20(100)	
Beneficiary of Financial Aid					
		Received	Did not Receive		χ^2 (p)
Participating in the Orientation Meetings	Yes	86(64.7)	85(85.9)		6.900* (.011)
	No	47(33.8)	14(14.1)		
	Total	133(100)	99(100)		

*p<.05, **p<.01

needs or interests than the parents with full-time job (13.3%); parents with two children (24.1%) and with more than two children (20.2%) participated more in decision-making meetings than parents with only one child (5.1%); and parents who did not receive the government financial aid (85.9%) participated more in the program orientation meetings than those who received financial aid (64.7%).

Table 7. *Differences in Parental Demands for Effective Parent Involvement*

		Parents' Age			F (p)
		20-29	30-39	Over 40	
Parents Trusting Teachers' Expertise	N	20	175	37	4.187* (0.016)
	M	4.00	4.46	4.43	
	SD	.79	.67	.60	
		Parents' Age			F (p)
		20-29	30-39	Over 40	
Parents' Cooperation with the ECE Center/School	N	20	175	37	8.415*** (0.000)
	M	3.75	4.43	4.46	
	SD	.85	.71	.65	
		Parents' Education			F (p)
		High School	College	Beyond College	
Opening the Classroom to Parents	N	31	183	18	7.184** (0.001)
	M	2.81	3.37	3.72	
	SD	1.05	.87	.83	
		Parents' Employment			F (p)
		Home Maker	Part Time	Full Time	
Scheduling Meetings in the Evening or during the Weekend	N	144	28	60	11.186*** (0.000)
	M	3.45	4.21	3.98	
	SD	1.04	.69	.91	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 7 summarizes the differences among the means on parental demands and concerns for effective parent involvement by demographic characteristics. Parents who are younger than 30 were less likely to consider 'parents trusting teachers' expertise in education' ($F=4.187$, $p<.05$) and 'parental cooperation with early childhood school' ($F=8.415$, $p<.001$) as

significant concerns for effective parent involvement than either of the other two age groups. Parents with college or above degree ($F= 7.184, p<.01$) demanded significantly more for ‘opening the classroom to parents’ than either one of the other two groups, parents with high school degree and parents with associate/college degree. Finally, parents who work part time ($F= 11.186, p<.001$) had significantly higher demand for ‘scheduling workshops/meetings in the evening or during the weekend’ than the parents who work full time and unemployed/home maker parents did.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate parental perceptions on parent involvement in Korea, in order to provide early childhood teachers and administrators with objective information and insights of building partnerships with families of children. For this, three elements were investigated: Parents’ participation in different types of parent involvement; parents’ demands for establishing more effective parent involvement; and differences of parental perceptions on parent involvement by demographic characteristics.

The result indicates that majority of the parents were aware of the importance of participating in parent involvement events offered by early childhood education centers or schools (Kim & Kim, 2004; Seo, Kweon, & Kim, 2006), although they do not always participate in those events. The reasons hindering parental participation in parent involvement were similar to those from the previous studies (Carlisle et al., 2005; Kim & Kim, 2004; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002; Seo et al., 2006; Sheldon, 2002). In order to facilitate parental involvement, these reasons should be compromised or reduced. Even though all of the reasons revealed in this study cannot be resolved completely, teachers must make efforts to use different strategies and skills for different parents, in order to build genuine partnerships with parents.

‘Time conflict’ and ‘no baby sitter’ were the top two reasons for the parents not being able to frequently participate in parent involvement events. As revealed in the group differences on parental demand for effective involvement in this study, parents who work part time tended to demand more that teachers schedule parent involvement events considering the parents’

schedule than other groups did. In addition, previous studies showed that different types of parents, such as single parent, both parents who simultaneously work full time, parent raising younger child, home maker parents with multiple children, and home maker parents with numerous household responsibilities, did not actively participate in parent involvement due to time conflict or not being able to find a baby sitter (Carlisle et al., 2005; Seo et al., 2006; Sheldon, 2002). Therefore, teachers need to take diverse circumstance of the parents into consideration when planning parent involvement. They need to schedule events in multiple time slots, including in the evening or during the weekend, to meet all types of parents' schedules (Carlisle et al., 2005), and provide parents with sufficient notice in advance, such as notice of the events in the beginning of semester or school year, with frequent reminders, in order for them to arrange time and essential service ahead of time. In addition, they must be able to provide child care service or internet-based parent involvement activities (Seo et al., 2006), in order to compromise the time conflict and baby sitter issues.

Another responded reason for not participating in parent involvement events was 'not useful.' This result indicates that parents do not frequently participate in parent involvement events because their experiences of being involved were not useful in their parenting. Epstein et al. (2002) suggested that no matter how much and what type of involvement is made by the parents, experiences of parent involvement must be supportive to their parenting. In order for teachers to develop useful parent involvement events, teachers should identify who the parents are, what parents need or want from being involved in school events, and to what extent they can be involved. Findings in this study showed that many parents wanted to be informed frequently of their child's progress, and to be contacted through various channels. Some parents demanded that teachers should respect their opinions when discussing their child's education while other parents wanted that teachers should have effective skills to communicate with them. On the contrary, only a small percentage of parents wanted teachers' service to solve family crisis/issues or to connect them to necessary services in the community. In addition, parents with either part time or full time jobs more actively volunteered to tutor or teach children in after-school programs, and home maker/unemployed parents opt to attend the small group meetings on a specific needs or interests. Similar findings to the above were also reported in previous studies both in Korea and in the US (Barge & Loges, 2003; Carlisle et al., 2005; DePlanty et al., 2007; Seo et al., 2006; Sheldon, 2002).

These findings suggest that parents need differentiated opportunities and content of parent involvement. Teachers usually possess dispositions to value recognizing and respecting individual differences of young children as well as developing and applying differentiated instructional strategies for them in the classrooms. These kinds of dispositions are also necessary when teachers are working with parents. Each parent is unique in terms of his/her understanding, willingness, ability, circumstance, culture, and need. Therefore, teachers need to identify parents' background, situations, and/or demands, prior to planning and implementing parent involvement events (Carlisle et al., 2005; DePlanty et al., 2007; Seo et al., 2006). They can survey diverse characteristics and the needs of parents in the beginning of the school year and plan a variety of parent involvement opportunities so that parents can select when, to what extent, and what kind of activities they participate in. In this way, teachers will be able to promote parent involvement that is useful for each parent and engaging all parents.

'Not welcomed' was another reason for the parents not always participating in parent involvement in the school. Ritblatt et al. (2002) reported that sensitivity of teachers to parents and familiarity of teachers with the parents and their culture are significant factors influencing the level of parental involvement in education. They emphasized that teachers who are sensitive to parents' needs and try to understand and care about parents foster positive attitudes and increase actual participatory behaviors in parents. The attitude of their child's teacher is a significant factor that affects a parent's willingness to participate in parent involvement activities. Parents may feel awkward or unwelcomed when the teacher does not believe in the effectiveness of parent involvement; when the teacher is fearful of the parents judging their teaching when participating in school events; when the teacher regards him/herself as the only expert and does not acknowledge the importance of parents in the process of education; and when the teacher has an unattainable expectation on the parents for their involvement (Carlisle et al., 2005). Thus, opportunities should be provided for teachers to strengthen attitudes of pro-family involvement and positive dispositions to respect parental roles in education of their child. Teachers also need to set relevant expectations on parental involvement, and to develop skills to clearly communicate with parents of their expectations. This can be done through well organized opportunities of in-service education and/or professional development led by the school, school districts, government, and/or professional

organizations.

Additionally, teacher educators should prepare teacher candidates to possess essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to build respectful and reciprocal partnerships with parents. Teacher candidates should be prepared to understand complex characteristics of diverse parents, to value the importance of parents in education, and to apply their understanding to create welcoming and supportive parent involvement (NAEYC, 2009).

Parental participations and perceptions on parent involvement revealed from this study were positive and encouraging. Majority of parents participated in ‘communicating’ type and/or minimum level of parent involvement, while some parents participated in other types or levels of parent involvement. According to Epstein et al. (2002) and Barbour et al. (2008), this is typical nature of parent involvement. Moreover, parents in this study considered mutual and communicative relationships between teachers and parents as the most significant factor for effective parent involvement. In addition, many parents from this study recognized that they must trust teacher’s expertise in the process of education and cooperate with the school to establish effective parent involvement. No matter how much and what type of involvement is made by or for the parents, the most important things are how much each parent is respected, how much their involvement is honored, and how meaningful their involvement is in their parenting and on their child. Therefore, teachers should prepare themselves to provide this kind of parent involvement opportunities by reflecting on their own attitudes, learning about parents, and generating appropriate strategies.

Finally, future research needs to examine parental perceptions of parent involvement in larger and more heterogeneous samples of diverse parents in Korea. This is because the findings from this study may not represent all parents in Korea, and strategies discussed in this study are common and are beginning points from which teacher can tailor or elaborate for a particular group of parents. For example, according to the statistical report from the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2008, the number of school age children from diverse cultural families increased about three times than that in 2005 (Han-Gyeo-Re News Paper, 2009). In other words, teachers who are working with parents with diverse cultural backgrounds should take ethnicity of parents into consideration when planning parent involvement. Carlisle et al. (2005, p. 161) described that “there is no such thing as a cookie cutter parent, and therefore, there can be no fixed set of factors that unfalteringly influence the

involvement of all parents.” Therefore, more studies with different groups of parents should be conducted, in order to provide differentiated parent involvement for all parents in Korea.

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