This Dissertation Committee for Tae Jung Kim Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Stakeholders Perceptions of Middle School Policy Choice Design, Implementation and Repeal in Seoul, Korea

Committee:

_____
Pedro Reyes, Supervisor

_____
Angela Valenzuela

_____
Martha N. Ovando

_____
Ruben D. Olivarez

_____
Robert Crosnoe

Stakeholders Perceptions of Middle School Policy Choice Design,

Implementation and Repeal in Seoul, Korea

by

Tae Jung Kim, B.A.; M.A.

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Stakeholders Perceptions of Middle School Policy Choice Design, Implementation and

Repeal in Seoul, Korea

Tae Jung Kim, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Pedro Reyes

The direction of high school choice policy has been one of the notable commitments every time the candidates of the superintendent of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education makes since the policy was repeatedly repealed and decided to be maintained. During the implementation of the policy, conflicts among policy related groups, such as teachers and parents, affected the decisions of the superintendent of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education to alternately repeal and maintain the policy.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspective gap, roles and influence among two different types of policy actors: teachers, and parents. Through this approach, the study examines the goals and outcomes of the policy, and addresses the success and failure of the policy through the different perceptions of practitioners, and consumers. In order to achieve these goals, this study used a qualitative research method involving thirty-nine teachers and parents.

The findings revealed that teachers and parents viewed that there are chronic policy making problems in Korea, which influence the frequent changes made to the high school choice policy. The absence of communication between a policy maker, policy practitioners, and policy consumers, a product of the top down decision making structure in Korea, has led to inefficiency and inflexibility the policy's implementation and practice. Teachers and parents suggested that

they should be able to contribute to policy consistency and successful implementation through early involvement in policy design and development. Understanding each role and exploring the perceptions of policy relevant actors in high school choice policy in Seoul provides a as well as providing for the further related policies.

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Chapter I. Introduction to the Study

School Choice in Korea: Overview

In recent decades, diverse policy actors, such as parents, politicians, educators, and school stakeholders, have challenged the idea of a homogeneous public school system being able to meet the needs all students with their diverse educational demands. This growing movement is related to the issue of national competitiveness and freedom of choice (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Gauri, 1998; Glenn, 1990; Ladd & Fiske, 2003; Levin, 2001; Neal, 2002). Influenced by globalization, school choice has become one of the most controversial issues in the Korean education system. Since the government has highly centralized education in Korea, the issue of who chooses where children go to school—parents or the government—has led to political conflicts between proponents and opponents of school choice.

Proponents of school choice insist such a policy encourages competition between schools to attract students and thus improve the quality of public education (Allen, 2001; Anderson, 1997; Boyd & Walberg, 1990; Budde, 1988; Caudell, 1997; Finn, 1990; Kolderie, 1990; Leonardi, 1998; Tooley, Dixon, & Standield, 2003). Moreover, they believe that parents have better knowledge than government officials of their children's talents or aptitude, meaning they are better equipped to choose the right schools to develop their children's diverse abilities. In addition, they believe low socio-economic status (SES) students in low-performing schools would have better educational opportunities if they could choose to attend high-performing schools (Bulman & Kirp, 1999; Caire, 2002; Coons, 1981; Hassel, 1998; Nathan, 1989; Viteritti, 2003; Young & Clinchy, 1992).

Critics of school choice believe such a policy creates a highly stratified society, only deepening the polarization between preferred and non-preferred schools (Bastian, 1992;

Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992; Boyd & Walberg, 1990; Gamoran, 1987; Oakes, 1985; Moore, 1990; Moore & Daven port, 1990). As earlier studies have shown, middle class parents put more effort into their children's education than low SES parents (Beales & Wahl, 1995; Bickers & Stein, 1998; Bridge, 1978; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Henig, 1994, 1996; Rubenstein & Adelman, 1994; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000; Wells, 1996;). Consequently, school choice enables them to move their children from low-performing schools to high-performing schools, leaving behing students with low socio economic status (Backer & Stevenson, 1986; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Epstein 1983; Gamoran, 1996; Goldhaber, 1996; Laeau, 1985; McDonald, 2002; Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2000).

In Korea, political conflicts over school choice generally involve three main groups of policy actors: (a) the government (the Ministry of Education), (b) teachers, and (c) parents. These three actors play different roles in policy design, implementation and change, and have divergent expectations of, and positions on, the policy. The Ministry of Education has absolute power in its decision making regarding whether to design, develop, or abolish a policy. Parents have great expectations about school choice policy, believing that the policy is able to bring multiple perspectives to school curriculum and approaches to instruction and school autonomy. Compared to the previous stabilized education policy, the equalization policy, this one could provide a more customized education for the various aptitudes and abilities of students. Preferring the equalization policy, however, are the majority of teachers. Under it, students were assigned to the school in their neighborhood; teachers did not need to work to promote their school being selected. Under the school choice system, though, teachers are required to attract students through tough competition based on school performance.

High school choice was first implemented in Seoul in 2009, though the Seoul

Metropolitan Office of Education planned to abolish the system by 2013, due to pressure from the teachers association.[1] Such a plan drew fierce resistance from the parent's union, such that it was cancelled. It was cancelled thanks to Moon, Yong-Lin, who was elected to the board of education in Seoul in December 2012, running on an a campaign promise of preserving the high school choice policy.

While it has a broader motivation, this dissertation focuses on the implementation and failure of school choice. School choice is one of many other educational policies such as English immersion,[2] frequent college entrance examination system reforms, and so forth. Like school choice, these policies have also shown iterative patterns where they were suddenly introduced, faced severe public resistance or failed during implementation, and, as a result were cancelled or abolished.

To shed light on the Korean political and educational context, the next section introduces preexisting educational policies as well as the current one of school choice. The remaining section of this chapter addresses the problem statement, provides a statement of purpose, puts forward three research questions, and explains the significance of this study.

Background

Review of Korea's Equalization Policy

In 1974, in the country's two largest metropolitan areas, the equalization policy for high schools was first introduced. This policy did away with the existing entrance examinations for high schools. Instead, students were assigned to a high school based on a lottery enrollment

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[1] The equalization policy assigns students to high schools in their area of residence on a lottery basis.

[2] The English immersion program was designed by the presidential transition committee in December 2007. It aims to ensure English fluency for students, improving their chances of bein successful in a globalized world. All classes were going to be taught in English by 2010. However, the plan was withdrawn in March 2008 due to the intense opposition.

system. Students were distributed to either public schools or private schools depending on their area of residence.

The main purpose of the equalization policy was to standardize the quality of high schools centrally located in major urban areas. The equalization policy also aimed to alleviate academic pressure that high school entrance tests put on middle school students, to reduce private education by eliminating excessive competition, and to regulate the standardized curriculum and teacher quality. In this way, it attempted to offer educational equity to everyone, regardless of one's socio-economic background (Korean Ministry of Education, 1998). Under the equalization policy, schools used certified textbooks, and all teachers were required to meet certain qualifying standards and to follow the guidelines the government set.

Since abolishing the Local Education Tax in 1961, the government has highly centralized the school financing system. The Ministry of Education in Korea now allocates local expenditures for education. Depending on government funds are not only public schools but also private schools. Adams and Gottlieb (1993) noted that a centralized and top-down policy approach leaves little room for autonomy at the local level. By implementing the equalization policy, the hierarchy of high schools has been dismantled, homogenizing the characteristics of high schools.

Educational Reform around the Equalization Policy

For the last thirty years, under the equalization policy, Korea's governmental education reform has focused not on improving the equalization policy, but on implementing college entrance exam reform. The government has changed college entrance exam systems in order to regulate private education, which is considered a deep-rooted education inequity problem. Kim and Lee (2002) concluded that the government's authoritative control over schools has been justified as an effort to solve the private education problems in Korean society.

However, education reform that focuses on changing the college entrance test not only fails to eliminate the private education problem, but also lowers school quality and students' academic competitiveness under the equalization policy. Frequent changes to the college entrance test system resulted in confusing students and generating a widespread distrust of public education. This led to increasing dependency on private education, which is more customized than general public education. In fact, the equalization policy made parents worry about deteriorating educational quality; they thought that a standardized curriculum would not be able to meet the diverse educational demands of students with different aptitudes and academic abilities.

Review of Education Reform in Korea

In the late 20th century, an emergent information society was in need of creative talent based on multiple perspectives on school curriculum, approaches, and individuality. Because of these changing educational needs, on May 31, 1995, the Kim Young Sam government publicly announced educational reform and launched the Education Reform Committee as a Presidential Consultative Council. The reform aimed at coming up with multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches, autonomy, accountability and creativity in education. It was a turning point in three aspects. It was a movement away: (a) from education by a government-controlled administration to education emphasizing school autonomy, (b) from supply-centered education to demand-centered education, (c) from standardized education to customized education for diversely talented students.

Going through the last three administrations, the Education Reform Committee has changed its name to the Presidential Commission for the New Education Community (Kim Dae Jung government), and then the Presidential Committee on Education Innovation (Roh Mu-hyun

government). It was later merged into the Presidential Advisory Council on Education, Science & Technology (Lee Myung-bak government). Despite its name changes, the counsel consistently pushes educational reform with the same goal of the original Education Reform Committee. For instance, in 1999, the Ministry of Education designed and implemented the Autonomy School, which has autonomy in differentiating school curricula, recruiting students across the country, and even hiring principals without certification. This experimental school originated from the Education Reform Plan of 1995.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education implemented the pilot program of Independent Private Schools. Under the equalization policy, both public and private schools have adopted standardized curriculum, selected textbooks, hired teachers with the same standard of qualification and certification, and recruited students by lottery based on residence. The pilot program of Independent Private Schools was designated to recover the autonomy of private schools.

In 2006, in order to strengthen the competitiveness and innovation of education services, the Minister of Education proposed a Public Innovation School program through which existing private or public schools could be converted into "stand-alone public schools" in each city or province.[3]

Review of School Choice in Seoul

In 2009 the Korean education system transitioned from its equalization policy (highly centralized governmental control) to its school choice policy (parental and student control). Since its implementation, high school choice has prompted competition between values that favor individual rights to choose, and values that favor equity for all children, regardless of their

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[3] http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=101&oid=014&aid=0000206569

SES.

As mentioned above, under the equalization policy, the government assigned, based on a lottery system, students to the high schools in their neighborhoods. Critics of the equalization policy contended that this system widened the educational gap between students living in wealthy areas and those in poor areas. Especially in Korea's capital, Seoul, the education environment influences real estate prices. Local high schools with a sterling reputation exerted a gravitational pull, attracting parents to live in those neighborhoods so that their children could go to those schools. Consequently, increasing demand for homes near such high schools drove up home prices. For example, high-income residential zones, such as Gangnam, in the 8th school district, are renowned for their superior educational environment.

Piloting and reforming school choice. In order to resolve educational inequity depending on students' residential area, the Ministry of Education began, in 2006, a study on high school choice and conducted a preliminary assignment of senior middle school students for piloting. In February 2007, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education established high school choice planning and began to design an assignment program. A primary testing assignment was conducted in December 2007. In July 2008, the then head of the education office in Seoul, Kong Jeong-taek, announced that, starting in 2010, the high school choice system would be enforced. The following month, after analyzing the primary testing assignment, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education came up with a provisional proposal on how to improve it.

In March 2009, the Ministry of Education announced a basic high school screening process plan and held a public hearing and information session. In August, the implementation plan for a new high school screening process was offered to the public. In November, the second testing assignment was conducted. The following month, third-year middle school students in

Seoul were assigned to high schools under the school choice system.

The initial outcome of school choice in 2010 was a widening of the academic gap between high-performing and low-performing high schools. In December 2010, in order to resolve school stratification, a task force was formed to reform high school choice. In July 2011, coming out of a study on high school choice reform were five improvement schemes, as proposed by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. In December 2011, through a parent seminar, the task force reviewed the current school choice system and formulated two plans.

In Plan A, students would choose up to a maximum of five high schools within their school district without ranking their preferences. Those who were not admitted to their preferred schools would be assigned to high schools according to proximity; in that case, GPA would not factor in. In other words, Plan A would severely restrict high school choice in Seoul in that it would only allow students to apply for schools "within their own school district." In Plan B, students would choose two to five schools within their residential or adjacent school districts. Students would be assigned to schools based on what they listed as their preferred schools, the academic ability of each student, and commuting distance.

The Office of Education was to settle on a plan by February 2012. Plan B was highly favored though not by teachers who were very resistant, as they preferred plan A. The Office of Education in Seoul considered abolishing school choice, but then tried to reach a compromise by combining the two plans. The Ministry of Education planned to develop a new simulation program by February 2012, aiming to confirm a new high school admission system for 2013 high school screenings.

Changes in the implementation plan. For the four years prior, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education had promoted the information that "senior" middle school students (students

in their last year of middle school) would be assigned to high schools through three stages of assignment. In the first stage, among all but the specialized high schools in Seoul, students would apply to two different schools, and 20 percent of the total entrance quota would be assigned to schools on a lottery basis. In the second stage, students would choose two schools within their residential district, and 40 percent of the total admission quota would be admitted. In the third stage, the remaining applicants would be assigned to any of the schools in Seoul, with their commute distance and religious preference being taken into consideration.

However, 10 days before implementing school choice in 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education announced that students would be pre-assigned based on where they lived. The announcement created confusion; it was delivered not by the media but in the form of a school newsletter to parents. The Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education informed parents that they would apply a "short distance assignment" to the second stage of enrollment selection. Under this policy, highly competitive high schools in certain residential districts would be mostly filled with students living in that district.

The impetus for this "short distance assignment" decision were concerns about the side effects of the school choice system. While preparing for school choice in Seoul, Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education carried out two assignment trials. One of the more competitive high schools in the trial was recorded as having the highest competition ratio of 27:1; one of the less preferred schools was under-enrolled by more than 50 percent. The proportion of low-achieving students increased in the less preferred schools because high-achieving students tended to apply for and attend the preferred schools with high performance. This resulted in further lowering the quality of the non-preferred school. In addition, in October 2009, high school rankings were released, ranked according to their College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) scores.

This increased the polarization between preferred high schools with high CSAT scores and less preferred schools.

Before the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education made its decision, it revealed that relatively upper middle class parents living in high-performing school districts had filed a civil complaint regarding school choice. In order to maintain the admission rate of students living in their residential district, upper middle class parents exerted pressure on the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education regarding the method of implementing school choice. The outcome of that pressure was the "short distance assignment." However, the "short distance assignment" would only increase socio economic stratification in education. Parents and students were likely to apply to neighboring schools with high CSAT scores instead of more distant schools with low CSAT scores. As a result, the school choice system with "short distance assignment" would not provide equal educational opportunities to parents and students with relatively low socio-economic status.

Abolishing school choice. In July 2011, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education announced its plan to abolish the high school choice system, a decision that was to take effect in 2013. Kwak No-hyun, who was then superintendent of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, pointed out that under the system, "Polarization between preferred and non-preferred schools is widening." In May 2011, he commented that the high school choice system should be revised or abolished.

Kwak raised concerns about the high school choice system because of a survey of teachers. The survey showed that nearly three out of four teachers (73.5%) strongly supported the equalization policy and opposed high school choice. This left only 22.7% of teachers supporting the high school choice system. Teachers against the school choice system believed it

caused the dismantling of the education equalization system and the ranking of high schools. The primary purpose of school choice was to improve the quality of education based on competition among schools. However, teachers pointed out that most of the preferred high schools were located in wealthy residential areas and attracted high-achieving students. In contrast, many of the low achieving students attended non-preferred high schools located in poor residential areas. Thus preferred schools would become more preferred with high achieving students, and non-preferred schools would become less competitive with low-achieving students. Teachers viewed school choice as widening the gap in the quality of education services offered at preferred schools and that offered at non-preferred schools. Moreover, they argued, school choice would lead to socio-economic stratification among schools. The decision to abolish high school choice, Kwak explained, was based on teachers' overwhelming opposition to its implementation.

In order to assess parents' opinions, the parent union for public education, *Kongkyoyuk Saliki Hakbumon Yeonhap,* conducted a survey of 1,124 parents regarding the proposal to abolish high school choice. Over half of parents surveyed (52.5%) said they preferred school choice to the equalization policy. If parents who supported high school ranking systems other than school choice were included, more than 60% of parents opposed the equalization policy. Only 32.5% of parents actually favored the equalization policy. Parents were concerned that the equalization policy would lower students' academic abilities, decrease the quality of public education, and increase private education.

Kwak would later be stripped of his title after the Supreme Court sentenced him, in September 2012, to a one-year jail term for a conviction of bribery. The decision to abolish high school choice would then be overturned. On December 19, 2012, Kwak's successor, the conservative Moon Yong-Lin, was elected. Maintaining the high school choice policy was one of

Moon's campaign promises, and holding true to that promise, Moon rescinded the decision to abolish. Indeed, Moon was expected to bring significant changes to Kwak's liberal educational policies.

Statement of the Problem

Education Policy System in Korea

In Korea, the highly centralized and authoritative government has traditionally wielded great power in shaping, implementing, and reforming education policies. Below, Figures 1 and 2 depict the organization of the Ministry of Education in Korea and Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. Under the Ministry of Education in Korea, there are 17 lower organizations; Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education is one of the lower organizations for the largest metropolitan city in Korea.

Figure 1. The Organization of the Ministry of Education in Korea.
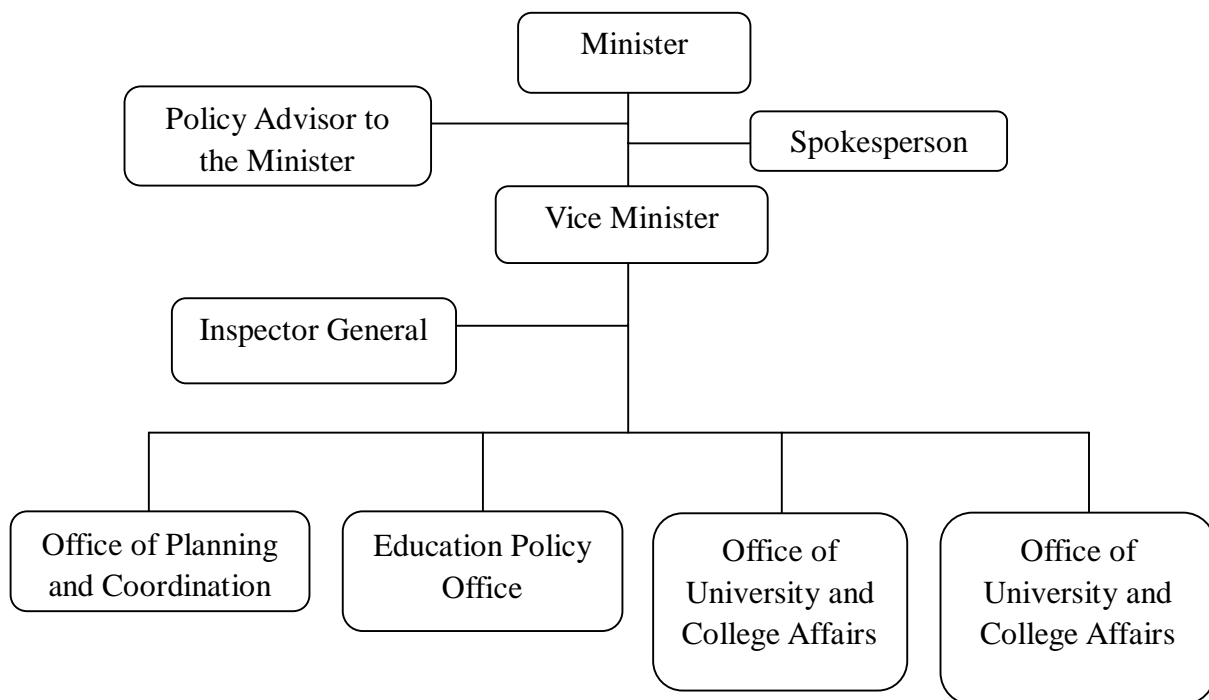
Figure 2. The Organization of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education.
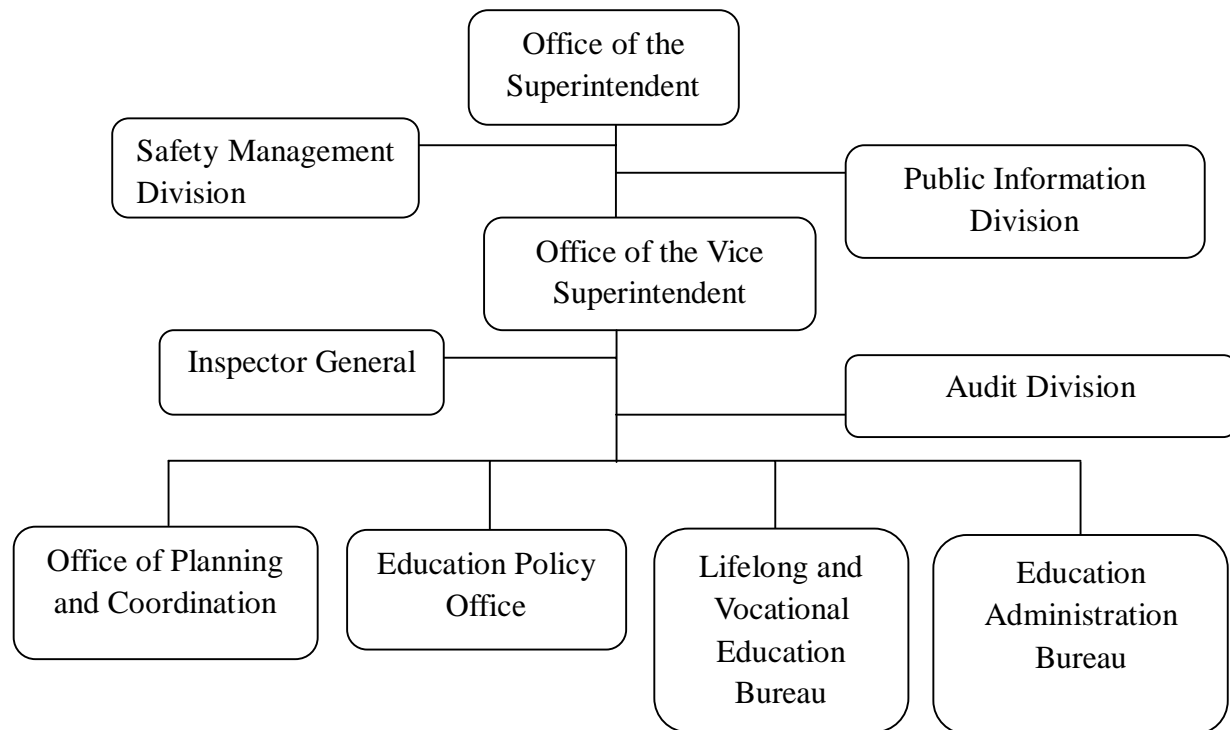
The government-controlled educational monopoly causes a lack of efficiency, autonomy, accountability, and multiple perspectives in education. Moreover, the hierarchical, top-down, decision-making structure cannot effectively handle the planned steps or unexpected complications that are involved in widespread social change. Presidents who need a steady stream of public attention continually reform the education system and establish new education policies to satisfy Korean parents' "education fever." The continual reforms, however, give an impression of inconsistency in educational policy and this not only confuses parents but also prevents successful policy implementation. Each of these contributing factors is explained in the sections below.

Deep-rooted credentialism. A significant feature in Korean society is "credentialism." Koreans have traditionally considered individuals' value to be indicated not by their ability, competence, or effort by by their academic degrees. While the value of a college degrees is

higher than a high school diploma, not all college degrees are valued the same; their valued according to rankings of the colleges who conferred them. Among OECD countries, Korea has the highest college entrance rate.[4] Koreans' extraordinary high rate of college entrance is rooted in "credentialism."

Korean parents' "education fever." Korean parents believe that individuals' upward mobility in social structures is based on knowledge and skills. This strong belief has resulted in remarkable growth in the private education market as well as in excessive competition. Korean parents put every effort into their children's education. They pay attention to whether their children are able to access educational resources equally and benefit from them as much as other children have under the public education system. Korean parents often depend on private education in order to make their children moe competitive and competent.

Inconsistency in education policy related to presidential election pledges. Education is always the first priority for Korean parents. For this reason, during every presidential campaign season, presidential candidates make diverse and inconsistent pledges. Many of these promises do in fact become education policies, though these are often criticized as mere display. A recent example illustrating the failure of these kinds of policies is the English Immersion Program. In 2008, then-presidential candidate, Lee, Myung-bak, proposed the English Immersion Program, which would aim to increase national competitiveness worldwide by having most subjects in public schools be taught in English. It was merely a proposal, but it generated intense debates among educators, parents, politicians and so on. The presidential transition committee withdrew the English Immersion Program due to a lack of preparation, as well as to the severe public outcry. The policy had been hastily planned and heedlessly withdrawn.

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[4] http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2011/11/education-south-korea

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Presidents and government officials also attempt to differentiate their platforms and gain public support with frequent reforms to the college entrance examination system. Unfortunately, these reforms mainly confuse parents and children preparing for college admission, and ultimately result in an inconsistent education policy.

School choice. High school choice in Seoul is simply the most recent example of a policy that has revealed endemic, systemic problems in establishing, implementing, and/or abolishing educational policy in Korea. The school choice system in Seoul, with its repeated policy reform and its instability, has long been confusing middle school students and their parents as they prepare to enter high school. The major reason for delay in improvement is the sharp conflict between the teachers association and the parent union. Another primary reason is that the time to prepare for policy change is not adequate. The Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education spent three years preparing for high school choice and then decided to abolish it only a year after its implementation. When the new superintendent of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education took office, there was controversy as to whether the school choice policy should be maintained or abolished. The victims of repetitive education policy change are students who are unable to adjust to a new high school entrance system.

Conflicts between policy actors on polarization between preferred and non-preferred schools. Since 2009, the implementation of high school choice in Seoul has revealed the remarkably competitive applicant rate differences between the preferred and non-preferred high schools. This difference is related to the average of each school's CSAT scores. According to the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, while there are more than 50 high schools with a competition rate which is one out of five, more than 40 high schools are either far less than one out of two, or less than the minimum applicant requirement. Parents tend to choose high-

performing schools instead of low-performing neighboring schools. As a result, polarization between preferred schools and non-preferred schools continues to grow.

In 2010, in order to strengthen accountability, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education said that if, for three consecutive years, the competition rates remained less than the minimum requirement, the Office would consider requiring schools to either reduce class size or become alternative high schools. In other words, if the schools failed to improve, they could be closed. In addition, to alleviate the polarization between preferred and non-preferred schools, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education announced that they had created a special budget of about $.3 million (356,000,000 won) to support non-preferred schools (2010 National Audit Report of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education). However, in reality, the special budget of $.3 million was allocated to 27 schools, which means each of those schools received only $12,000 (14,000,000 won), lower even than the salary of a teaching assistant. Moreover, most schools spent the support fund on promotional expenses to attract students, rather than on improving school competitiveness. In 2011, the Office of Education in Seoul pointed out that the current high school choice program fosters high school rankings based on CSAT scores and wastes the budget on promotional expenses.

To sum up, a driving force of Korea's socioeconomic development is Koreans' "education fever." However, this passion for education has led to intense competition, driving up private education expenses; indeed, the cost of private education is often beyond a family's financial means. Private education is often under threat of eradication if one listens to the campaign promises of politicians. However, this results in in an inconsistent education policy, as each new election cycle brings a fresh round of pledges. Frequent policy changes confuse teachers, the policy practitioners, and parents, the end consumers. Further, Korea has a highly

centralized government, with a top-down, policymaking system, and often excluded from the policymaking process are the on-site policy practitioners and parentspolicymaking. Showing the limitations of this process is the current education policy, high school choice. In a short time, school choice policy was designed, implemented, slated for repeal, and ultimately upheld. This policy inconsistency has revealed many negative side effects, such as polarization of high-performing and low-performing schools, overworked teachers, and public funding deficits. During the implementation of the policy, groups affected by the policy (e.g., teachers and parents) have bore witness to its weaknesses and come in conflict with one another. From the perspectives of two policy-affected groups, teachers and parents, this study focuses on what qualities and characteristics of the Korean educational system influence the design, implementation and repeal of the current policy, the roles of policy actors, and interactions among them concerning the policy.

Purpose of the Study

The main objectives of this study are threefold. First, it investigates the perspective gap, looking at the roles and influence of two types of actors—practitioners, and consumers. Second, it examines the goals and outcomes of the policy, which has been designed, implemented, repealed, and re-implemented during a short period of time. Last, it addresses the successes and failures of the policy as viewed by the two major policy-concerned actors. By soliciting perceptions of teachers and parents concerning school choice policy, this study illustrates the unique qualities of the decision-making structure in Seoul and how it affects the frequent policy changes. This study employs in-depth interviews to collect data. This approach enables me to identify how the traditional hierarchical, centralized, and authoritative governance system influences policy design, implementation, and its outcomes as well as policy inconsistency. In

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addition, this study proposes how further education policy should be shaped and implemented by clarifying the traditional political interaction and conflicts among policy actors. By examining school choice, this study will help provide guidelines for future policy implementation that ought to successfully reflect Korea's traditional institutional traits.

Research Questions

In order to clearly analyze the purpose of this study, the following research questions guide this dissertation:

RQ#1. What were the goals of influential stakeholders in the development of school choice in Korea?

RQ#2. How do stakeholders view the successes and failures of the implementation?

RQ#3. How do stakeholders view their roles and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the field of educational administration in Seoul for several reasons. First, it expands empirical research about the policy currently being implemented while giving the perspectives of key policy actors. This research also highlights the perception gaps among these different actors. And further, this research offers examples of the unique qualities of the Korea's decision-making structure, and how that influences policy implementation and its outcomes for practitioners and consumers. Second, this study provides practical and realistic approaches, based on the perspectives of major policy actors, for what policymakers should consider to improve the policy quality. By analyzing the causes of school choice failure, this study has research significance in that it will help to predict and avoid these problems in the

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future. Policymakers should consider the particularity of the Korean context in order to prevent repetitive structural failures.

The anticipated audiences of this study include educational policymakers, government researchers, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and education-related interest groups. It should also be of interest to researchers seeking to analyze school choice policy in Seoul as perceived by policy-affected individuals, to study roles and influence of policy actors and to investigate the frequent education policy changes in Korea. The findings from this study illuminate not only the roles and influences of policy actors connected with the high school choice policy, but also the unique qualities of policy-making structures in Korea.

Definition of Terms

Seoul High School Choice Policy

In 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education introduced the high school choice policy for Seoul. The main goal of this policy was and still is to provide an equal educational opportunity to students in school districts having poor educational conditions. To resolve the problem of school district inequity, it allows middle school students to apply for a high school based on their preference, regardless of where they live.

The Equalization Policy

Introduced in 1974, the equalization policy's main purpose was to standardize the quality of high schools by regulating the curriculum and teacher quality. Under this policy, students were assigned to a neighboring school based on a lottery-enrollment system. Students were distributed to either public schools or private schools depending on their residence area.

Independent School

The concept of an independent school was introduced in 2001 as a way to improve the

equalization policy. In place until 2005, this policy allowed independent private high schools to operate, with neither government subsidy nor interference, their own curriculums, to select students, hire teachers, and set educational expenses. Six schools piloted the independent school model.

Autonomous Private School

Beyond government regulations, a private school's model is to maximize the school's operational autonomy in curriculum, faculty personnel, student selection, and so forth. An autonomous private school operates with school foundation support, and without government subsidy. Autonomous private schools have autonomous authority over school management, maintenance personnel, and faculty salary. Student tuition can be up to three times that of general public schools.

Innovative School

Going beyond the one-size-fits-all public education curriculum, innovative schools pursue a new type of small school, with 25 to 30 students per class, and 5 classes per grade. They also use customized education, enabling them to increase creativity and self-directed learning skills to enhance public education. Innovative schools were introduced to enhance public education by encouraging creative and self-directed learning skills. Principals and teachers in independent schools have autonomy in school management and curriculum. They also pursue diversification and specialization.

Specialized High School

Specialized schools are high schools established and operated based on the Education Act; they are defined as "high schools serving academically and artistically gifted students." Each specialized high school has its own admission test.

School Stakeholders

These are individuals and organizations with educational interests. They may influence school management, and/or derive benefits or disadvantages from school management.

Reverse Discrimination

High school choice policy was designed to provide students and parents with equal access to high-performing schools regardless of the school district. However, parents in good school districts pointed out that the policy led to reverse discrimination in that, while it enabled students in educationally disadvantaged areas to apply to high-performing schools in other school districts, the same number of their counterparts having good neighboring schools had more chances of long distance placements than before.

Assumptions & Limitations of the Study

The assumption of this dissertation is that school choice in Seoul is a failure in that the policy was designed, implemented, scheduled to be abolished, and then preserved. The Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education is still implementing the school choice program in Seoul. The major limitation of this dissertation is the fact that the policy is continually changing. In other words, this study is limited to the current policy changes in Seoul. On this account, the time of the data collection and the subsequent changes to the educational policy should be considered in the interpretation of the findings.

The findings of this research cannot be fully generalized in that the panels representing policy actors do not represent all policy groups. Among the assorted educational policy actors, this study limits their number to the following: (a) a government officials (from the Ministry of Education), (b) teachers, and (c) parents. However, it is possible that other actors, such as the policy actors described in the literature review, may have contributed to the frequent changes of

the school choice policy.

Summary

Chapter I has introduced the issue of school choice in Seoul to help establish the foundation of the research by explaining the Korean educational context. Chapter II adds depth to the discussion by providing relevant research and related literature on school choice and policy actors. Such background contributes to building the context for this dissertation. Chapter III addresses the methodology used for this study, while Chapter IV presents the findings of this study. Chapter V presents a discussion of key findings, implications, recommendations, as well as conclusions.

Chapter II. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature related to fundamental debates around school choice policy. These debates concern such elements as educational quality, equity, autonomy, accountability, and multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches. To foster a deep understanding of school choice and broad perspective on the policy, this chapter also introduces the existing literature on American educational policies and international experiences as they relate to school choice. To establish a foundation for this research, as a conceptual framework, the researcher explores interest group theory to analyze the behavior patterns of the interest groups and predict policy outcomes (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1992; Becker, 1983; Drazen, 2000; Grossman & Helpman, 2001; Olson, 1965; Peltzman, 1976; Persson & Tabellini, 2000; Sloof, 1998; Stiger, 1971). Based on the interest group theory, this study was mainly concerned with the perceptions, interactions, roles, and influences on the policy among policy actors, teachers and parents. This relates to the failed, iterative pattern of Korea's current educational policy. Moreover, actors in educational policy are addressed and defined to clarify who they are, and what roles they play in shaping, implementing, and abolishing educational policies.

Overview of School Choice

Worldwide, among the diverse educational alternatives of school reforms in recent decades, the most controversial appears to be school choice. The ideological background underpinning school choice is that parents and students, not the government, should have the right to choose a school. Milton Friedman (1962) defined the position of the government in education as being somewhere between capitalism and neoliberalism. He suggested, as an alternative, a neoliberal concept of public education based on parents' school choice. Here, instead of a government establishing schools, assigning students to them, and subsidizing them,

parents would choose schools and the government would pay the educational expenses under a voucher program.

School choice is an alternative to a preexisting education policy and seeks to address unsolved educational problems (Plank & Sykes, 2003; Wolf & Macedo, 2004). As far back as the 18th century, Adam Smith (1776) criticized the educational maladies of government's monopoly on education. He argued that schools without competition could not improve their educational quality, and insisted that school competitiveness and innovation should be left up to market forces. Aside from free-market competition, another argument for school choice involves multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches. The student population has become increasingly more diversified. To satisfy the various educational needs of this student population, the educational system itself must become more diversified. Consequently, school choice not only enables parents to actively participate in their children's education and have more options, but also allows educators and school administrators to decide on curriculum, instructional methods, and efficient school governance. School choice also contributes to improving the satisfaction of parents with disadvantaged children by giving them opportunities to move their children from low-performing to better performing schools (Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Sugarman, 1999).

Characteristics of School Choice

The premise of school choice policy is that greater autonomy requires greater accountability. In recruiting students, schools seek to differentiate themselves from other schools. Schools must not only meet these diverse educational needs but they must also attract applicants with various aptitudes and abilities.

Autonomy. Bureaucracy is defined as an essential system of organization that performs

diverse and complicated tasks in a large organization (O'Toole, 1996; Simon, 1947; Smith & Meier, 1994, 1995). However, public school systems with bureaucratic regulation and highly centralized governmental control often work ineffectively and produce lower academic achievement (Brown, 1992; Chubb & Moe, 1988; 1990; Godwin & Kemerer, 2002).

For the last few decades, rapid changes in educational environments have required public schools to become more flexible and adaptable to parents' diverse and complicated demands (Barber, 2003, Hanson, 1996; Henig & Surgarman, 1999). A school system weighted down with a large bureaucracy struggles to respond to parents' diverse needs for their children's quality education (Brown, 1992; Chubb & Moe, 1990). Schools with a standardized curriculum under highly centralized governmental control are rigid and slow to adapt to environmental changes and unexpected educational demands (Hess, 1999).

Unlike traditional public school systems with a standardized curriculum and government-centered bureaucratic system, school choice enables institutions to have more autonomy in running schools, hiring teachers and staff, and developing a specialized and innovative curriculum (Chakrabarti & Peterson, 2008; Clark, 2009).

Multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches. Henig (1994) noted that the expanding school choice movement around the world, which is ideologically based on diversity, individualism, and a personal ability-centered pedagogy, is designed to provide more diverse opportunities from which parents and students can choose. As a society becomes more complicated, schools are required to meet diverse educational needs promptly and to become more efficient at keeping up with rapid educational environment changes (Barber, 2003; Good & Braden, 2000; Hanson, 1996; Henig & Surgarman, 1999).

Accountability. Under the school choice system, schools compete with each other to attract students. Under the traditional public school system, schools continually receive new

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students, needing to make no effort to recruit them (Hanson, 1996). Competition will, in theory, prod schools to improve the quality of their education.

Under the school choice system, school accountability is more emphasized. To increase school quality, each school is funded differently in accordance with its performance under an accountability system. Moreover, this accountability system shows which schools perform better or worse and facilitates parents in their choice of which school to send their children to.

Accountability systems measure school performance by the value-added test scores of attending students. However, some scholars have pointed out that a measurement of test scores by school or demographic characteristics cannot truly assess individual students', teachers', or schools' performances or improvement (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Kane & Staiger, 2000; Koretz, 1996; Ladd, 2001; Ladd & Hansen, 1999; Ladd & Walsh, 2000; Meyer, 1996).

School Choice Debate

Strengths of school choice. Underpinning the goals that school choice seeks to accomplish are two fundamental values: competition and equity.

Competition. Researchers have argued that the school choice system could improve school productivity and the quality of educational services by allowing parents to choose which schools their children attend. These researchers believe that if schools were in competition with each other for enrollment, they would pursue higher performance to be more competitive and to attract parents and students (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1955; Friedman & Friedman, 1980; Hoxby, 2000; Levin, 2001; Neal, 2002; Teske & Schneider, 2001). Moreover, some empirical studies have shown competition improves school efficiency (Belfield, 2003; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Coulson, 2005; Friedman, 1955; Hoxby, 2000; Levin, 2001; Merrifield, 2001; Neal, 2002; Rosegrant, 1999; Sugarman, 1991; Teske & Schneider, 2001; Tiebout, 1956). From this

perspective, when schools are allowed to develop their own efficient, competitive, specialized and innovative curriculum to stand out from other neighboring schools, their quality improves.

Equity and school choice. Even though competition contributes to the increase of efficiency, equity is also an important value in a modern, diverse society. When evaluating education policy, a key question is whether, under the policy, all children have equal educational opportunities. Educational equity means all children gain full access to education and have opportunities to develop their abilities regardless of socioeconomic background, race or ethnic background, gender, religion, and so on. According to school choice advocates, under school choice students from low SES backgrounds have equal access. For example, Levin (2004) explained that the introduction and implementation of school choice could successfully impact innovation, reform, productivity, accountability, social cohesion, and equity. In policymaking, one critical issue is educational inequitypolicymaking. Of course there is widespread agreement among policymakers and society about students' rights to equal education access. In reality, policymakers want to vouchsafe the privilege they enjoy regarding their children's education (Hockschild & Scovronick, 2003).

Weaknesses of school choice. Opponents of school choice argue that permitting students to enroll out of their residential school district can increase educational inequity. As students are allowed to choose their school, concerns arise surrounding ability groupings and segregation between high-performing and low-performing schools. In the same sense, many researchers have concerns that school choice deepens socioeconomic stratification by allowing upper middle class parents to move their children to high-performing schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Henig, 1994; Levin, 1998). Opponents of school choice raise the question of whether school choice policies will provide equal educational opportunities for children from low-income families compared to

those of high-income families. In terms of educational equity, the most critical factor in judging whether school choice facilitates access to better education for children of all socioeconomic backgrounds is the issue of whether privileged or disadvantaged parents more easily utilize the school choice program.

Educational inequity. While school choice is intended to improve education quality through competition (Maddaus, 1990), some scholars have documented that it can heighten issues of educational inequity and access (Hiirschman, 1970). As parents have more freedom of choice, schools can become more segregated according to children's socioeconomic background and academic levels (Fossey, 1994; Hirschman, 1970; Maddaus, 1990; Weiher & Tedin, 2002). When high-achieving students leave low-performing schools for high-performing ones, the relatively low performing children are left behind and in greater concentration (Barrett, 2003; Weiher & Tedin, 2002).

Moreover, earlier researchers have pointed out that high-achieving children from families with a high socioeconomic status benefit more from the school choice system than do those from a low socioeconomic background (Cullen, Jacob, & Levitt, 2005; Ladd, 2002). Studies have shown that parents with high socioeconomic status are more likely to pay attention to their children's education than those with low socioeconomic status (Ladd & Fiske, 2000; Schneider et al., 1998; Witte & Thorn, 1996). Therefore, high socioeconomic parents who are more actively involved in their children's education have a tendency to live near high-performing schools (Hoxby, 2000; Maddaus, 1990). In addition, unlike upper middle class parents who have ready access to useful information about their children's education (Lareau, 1987; Maddaus, 1990; Witte & Thorn, 1996), parents of low SES status often face difficulties accessing available information for school choice or even having time to participate in their children's education

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(Blau, 1993; Gorman, 1998; Lin, 2001; Martinez, Thomas, & Kemerer, 1994; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001; Pfeffer, 1991; Schneider & Buckley, 2002).

Critics point out that school choice increases socioeconomic status-based stratification among children and schools (Henig, 1994; Levin, 1998), because upper middle class parents are most likely to aggressively maintain their children's high socioeconomic status and move them to high-performing schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). Moreover, as earlier studies have stressed, under the peer effect, high achievers surrounded by a disadvantaged peer group are often held back from reaching their full academic potential (Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Hoxby, 2000; Zimmer & Toma, 2000). As a result, parents with high-achieving children are likely to avoid sending them to schools with peers from a low socioeconomic background. This phenomenon deepens the socioeconomic stratification among schools.

School Choice Experience in the United States

Over the last few decades, one of the most controversial education policies in the United States has in fact been school choice. The school choice debate and the voucher movement were caused by an awareness of the problems of poor public school performance and less equal educational opportunities between disadvantaged children and their high SES counterparts.

Voucher Programs

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, a report came out titled *Nation at Risk*. This study contributed to the emergence of a voucher program and school choice system in the United States; it pointed out that the main risk factor for the nation was the decline in educational quality. Two decades earlier, Milton Friedman had first suggested the concept of an educational voucher program. In the early 1960s, Friedman argued that the quality of public schools would increase if parents were empowered to choose their children's school. The voucher program is

categorized into private school vouchers, private schools for low-income families, deduction of tax for education expenditure, income deductions for education expenditure, and tuition tax credit or scholarship tax credit programs. In general, parents' positions on the voucher program depends on where they live and on the school quality of their local schools. On one hand, low-income parents who live near low-performing schools generally support school voucher programs. On the other hand, upper middle class parents who are satisfied with the performance of their neighboring schools show little enthusiasm for them.

Wisconsin was the first state to launch a school voucher system, initiated in 1990, in the city of Milwaukee.[5] The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) financially supports eligible children from low-income families who attend a private school. Students are allowed to apply to a number of private schools. They are required to submit application forms for the school voucher program in all cases, including the first application, continuing education, and transferring to other schools. In the case of a surplus of applicants, students are randomly chosen on a lottery basis.

The school voucher program enables low SES parents to send their children to private or previously unaffordable schools by providing them with government grants or subsidies (Moe, 1995). Proponents of school choice insist the voucher program contributes to improving the equal educational opportunities of children with low SES backgrounds (Neal, 2002; Nechyba, 2000; Sugarman, 1999; Viteritti, 2003). Before the introduction of the voucher program, upper middle class parents had enrolled their children in high-performing schools by moving to residential areas containing them, or they sent their children to high-performing private schools. Children of low SES backgrounds remained where they were, as they could not afford to move.

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[5] http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/budbriefs/01bb2.pdf

The voucher program enabled disadvantaged parents to choose high-performing schools over low-performing schools in their neighborhood.

Self-segregation based on race and socioeconomic class. Critics of voucher programs in the American context say the system intensifies educational inequity and socioeconomic stratification (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Henig, 1994; Levin, 1998). They point out that low SES parents acquire little information about school choice (Ascher, Fruchter, & Berne, 1996; Buckley & Schneider, 2002; Elacqua, Schneider, & Buckley, 2006; Schneider et al., 2000; Weiher & Tedin, 2002).

Moreover, earlier research has shown that parents tend to choose schools with children of the same race or from a similar SES background (Ascher et al., 1996; Buckley & Schneider, 2002; Sapoito, 2003; Schneider et al., 2000; Smith & Meier, 1995; Weiher & Tedin, 2002). In other words, rather than school performance being the consideration of choice for parents it is often the racial or SES composition of a school (Ascher et al., 1996; Jellison, 2002; Saporito & Lareau, 1999; Wells, 1996).

De facto limitation of voucher programs. A voucher program officially enables disadvantaged children to have a choice to attend better performing schools. However, vouchers cannot fully encourage this choice because many low SES parents have to send their children to low-performing neighboring schools out of consideration of the shorter commutes (Sawhill & Smith, 2000).

Charter Schools

The charter school movement is rooted in school reforms such as school autonomy, alternative schools, public school choice, specialized schools, and privatized education under the public education system. (America's first charter school law was passed in 1991 by Minnesota.)

In terms of school finances, charter schools receive not only public funds but also parents' donations. However, unlike private schools, charter schools charge no tuition.

The biggest difference between pre-existing public schools and charter schools is school autonomy. Charter schools are free from having to use nationally standardized teacher recruitment, curriculum, or textbooks; they are accountable for hiring teachers and administrators, developing their own curriculum, and choosing textbooks. While pre-existing public schools tend to have a top-down decision-making structure, charter schools have a bottom-up decision-making structure that enables them to reflect the will of parents and students. Students receive admission to the charter school on the basis of either a lottery system, or a "first come, first serve" policy.

Magnet Schools

Emerging in the 1960s were magnet school programs. Intended to reduce racial segregation in public schools, magnet schools are a part of the public school system but, to attract students, provide specialized curriculum and programs in a particular areas of study (Ilg & Massucci, 2003). To avoid racial desegregation in education, magnet schools adopt an open enrollment system across the intra-school district with parental choice involvement (Brooks, Stein, Waldrip, & Hale, 1999). Under the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), magnet schools are allowed to receive federal funding to promote better academic services and racial desegregation. Magnet schools expand the available school choice options for parents and students within the public school system while reducing ethnic and racial segregation in education.

Limitations of magnet schools. Some scholars have pointed out, however, that many magnet schools require applicants to pass a highly competitive entrance process. Consequently,

even though the magnet schools may offer specialized programs they need, low-achieving students left behind in low-performing public schools have a tougher time accessing them (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Neild, 2004). Mathis (2005) drew attention to this problem of isolating low-achieving students: As more and more high-achieving students in high poverty areas escape from low-performing neighboring schools to attend magnet schools, only low-achieving students remain. In other words, magnet schools may contribute to resolving racial and ethnic segregation, but they also cause ability grouping among students based on their academic achievement.

Open Enrollment Plans

Open enrollment plans enable students to apply to non-resident public schools. The purpose of open enrollment is to improve students' academic achievement by providing parents and children with more school choice options throughout the state.

Tuition Tax Credits

Tuition tax credit programs enable students from low-income families to attend a private school. As of May 2012, tuition tax credits exist in nine states: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island (Krista, 2005). A tuition tax credit is also called a scholarship tax credit; disadvantaged students receive a scholarship from a private nonprofit school tuition organization for tuition expenses and other required academic fees. Low-income parents sending their children to a private school benefit from an income-tax deduction for a donation to either a private nonprofit School Tuition Organization (STO) or public schools. Public schools spend the donation funds to improve their overall school quality.

International Experience with School Choice

As is the case in the U.S., around the globe, school choice has proved to be the most

controversial issue concerning the government's role in education. The issue provokes debates about whether an education system should be viewed as a matter of government welfare or individual choice. The purpose of this section is to review school choice systems worldwide and discuss the structural differences and limitations in implementing school choice in Seoul.

School Choice in the United Kingdom

Becoming a key factor in diverse aspects such as politics, economy, society as well as education in England is the emergence of "marketizatization." As marketization means to apply market principles to public education, in England's school system, researchers have argued that the concept of the "market" helps to improve school efficiency and quality by making "marketized" schools satisfy diverse educational demands based on competition among schools (Ball, 2006). In this way, England has adopted a worldwide shift from a centralized bureaucratic educational system to an autonomous, diverse, and specialized school system competing to attract more parents and students through school choice (Whitty, 1997).

Multiple perspectives on school curriculum and criticism. In relation to multiple perspectives on school curriculum, some reports have pointed out that a standardized curriculum in education presupposes that all children have the same educational demands and academic levels (DfE1992:3-4). Hence, as specialization and multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches have become more important than uniformity in education reform, the National Curriculum in England has come under review to improve education quality. In spite of the criticism against the standardized curriculum, however, in 1988, under the Education Reform Act, the National Curriculum was designed to promote standardized common content. The National Curriculum aimed to function as an indicator for parents to evaluate which schools performed better or worse by enabling them to measure school performance based on

standardized academic contents. Following the 1988 Education Reform Act, passed by the Conservative party, England implemented a school choice system that encouraged open enrollment and local management of schools; it also introduced formula funding, in which schools with more students received more funds from the central government.

Serious concerns about a hierarchy in the British school system and decreasing education quality increased parental desire for school choice and school diversity (NCE 1993: 180). However, critics of England's reforms argued that the introduction of marketization in education increased socioeconomic stratification in schools (Ball, 1993). For instance, upper middle class parents could afford to move to rich neighborhoods near high-performing schools (Browne, 2007; Riddell, 2005). This meant parental choice based on the concept of marketization in education opened up more possibility of socioecnomic stratification in schools in that the reforms enabled upper middle class parents to send their child to high-performing schools.

Educational Action Zones (EAZ). In 1997, when the Labour party won the general election, they added changes to the school choice system. Following New Labour's educational policies, beacon schools with specialized programs, corresponding to charter schools in America, were designed and supported by local education authorities (LEAs). Beacon schools with high achievement shared their specialized instruction, methods and pedagogy with those schools with lower performance. In addition, by limiting control of local education authorities (LEAs), educational administrators and teachers blurred the line between public and private sectors. For example, one of changes under the Labour party, the educational action zones (EAZs), not only promoted the involvement of private organizations but also financially assisted failing schools with special care and useful empirical information from high-performing schools. Some scholars have expressed concern about market-based privatization in education, especially in regard to

this partnership with private organizations (Cole, 1998; Hatcher, 1998; STA, 1998).

School Choice in Canada

Canada has various educational policies and experiences, depending on the features of each province. This makes it particularly interesting to examine Canada's school choice system. Parents in Canada have long been encouraged and supported to choose a school system: either a traditional public education system or other types of non-public schools under the province's control.

Canada has developed various education policies that are left up to each province's discretion. Constitutionally, the federal government is not involved in any of the provinces' education policy but funds educational costs in some proportion.[6] This policy arose not only from a consideration of the diverse compositions of each province but also from respect for parents' rights and willingness to educate their children in an environment that fits their cultural values, language, and religion. In Canada, only Alberta provides public funding to parents who home-school their children. Three provinces, Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, provide full public funding to Catholic and Protestant schools under public school boards. Four provinces, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec, financially support between 35 and 38 percent of public funding for students attending private schools. In some provinces, such as Alberta, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island (PEI), and Quebec, private schools are required to meet a standard curriculum approved by the provincial government.[7]

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[6] Department of Justice Canada, "Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982," Section 93, at *http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/index.html*

[7] Government of Alberta, "School Act: Private Schools Regulation," sections 2 and 10, at http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2000_190.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=0779750373

School Choice in New Zealand.

In 1987, to resolve systematic problems in education in New Zealand, Prime Minister David Lange and the Labour party formed a task force (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). The task force was led by Brian Picot, a successful New Zealand businessman. Based on the findings of this task force, the concept of marketization was introduced into education in New Zealand. The most systematic concern was that schools were not able to meet parents' demands for their children's education (Harrison, 2004). Traditionally, New Zealand had maintained a highly centralized school system under the central government. The school enrollment zones were abolished in 1991 under the Education Amendment Act, and since then parents have had the right to choose their school. Schools no longer have any right to offer admission on the basis of their own standards (LaRocque & Kaye, 2002). However, if schools have more applicants than slots, they can set a standard for selecting students. One concern with this system is that schools are no longer guaranteed full enrollment. In addition, students cannot be guaranteed open slots in schools in their residential area (Fiske & Ladd, 2000a).

In New Zealand, marketized school reforms have produced two reactions. Proponents insist that school choice in New Zealand contributes to improving school quality and cost efficiency in schools. Opponents counter that school choice has increased socioeconomic stratification in school structure (Ladner & McTigue, 1999). In other words, while upper middle class parents can move their children from low-performing schools to relatively high-performing schools, children of low socioeconomic status generally remain in low-performing schools and benefit relatively less from the school choice system.

Based on regulation and funding levels, New Zealand has three main types of schools: state, state-integrated, and independent schools. State schools are public schools with complete

funding and state regulation. State-integrated schools are private schools with full funding and state regulation under the state system. Independent schools are private schools with less government funding and fewer regulations than the other two types. Some scholars point out the funding system limits the emergence of autonomous, innovative, and diverse schools because only schools under state regulation benefit from the voucher program, while autonomous private schools, or independent schools, receive significantly less funding (LaRocque, 2005). In effect, these critics argue that the primary purpose of school choice in New Zealand has not truly been achieved because education reform in New Zealand maintained standardized regulations under state control.

Policy Actors

Educational policy, which the government designs, reflects what the government aims at or what it wants to prevent (Birkand, 2005). However, *policy actors* are defined not only as governments but also individuals or groups that are related to the introduction, the adoption, and the implementation of educational policies. Thus, the term policy actor involves a wide range of individuals and groups. However, this dissertation mainly focuses on two major policy actors—teachers and parents. In South Korea, these two actors have had the greatest effect on the decisions to introduce, implement, and abolish school choice in Seoul.

Two Major Policy Actors in School Choice Policy

Teacher associations. In America, at the state level, teacher associations are viewed as one of the most influential policy actors in education along with the state department of education, school board associations, administrator associations, and parent-teacher associations (*Education Week*, 1994). While teacher associations are thought to be an influential interest group in education policy, they are also viewed as the least aggressive group compared to other

interest groups (Kirst, 1984; Mazzoni, 1995; 2000; McDonnell & Fuhrman, 1986).

Parent unions. Traditionally, parents' participation in their children's education has been limited by government control of public education. Moreover, school governance has depended on educational experts, and the hierarchical system of schools have long excluded parent involvement from school management and the shaping of education policy. As school choice encourages parents' participation, however, parents have begun to band together and participate in the education system. Parents fight for educational demands to improve their children's educational quality and to shape and change policies initiated by schools and government. Sometimes, parents work with school administrators and experts attempting to affect new educational policies or changes.

Other Policy Actors

Government. As one of the policy actors, the government initiates reforms by setting the policy agenda through analyses of public educational needs. It either supports the passage of a legislative proposal or opposes it. Furthermore, the government enacts and interprets laws related to diverse educational policies, implements new policies, and supervises their implementation and outcomes. When there are conflicts and debates between different policy actors, the government plays the role of mediator to establish new policies.

Media. The media promptly spreads information on policy introduction, adoption, abolishment, and change. In addition, the media is a powerful actor that refers educational issues to the public, shaping public opinion and influencing the government's agenda. According to Graber (1994), the media intentionally selects and removes public issues from the agenda. In other words, the media helps to set the agenda by re-contextualizing selected facts and events (Fowler, 2012).

Interest groups. According to Thomas and Hrebener (1992), interest groups are defined as either formal or informal associations of individuals with the same interests and common goals trying to affect public policies (McDaniel, Sims, & Miskel, 2001; Sipple, Miskel, Matheney, & Kearney, 1997; Song & Miskel, 2002). They utilize media not only to draw public attention to specific issues they care about but also to support certain politicians or candidates who share their opinion or attitude.

Experts and researchers in education. Before and after implementing policies, government and non-government actors receive advice from experts and researchers regarding the efficiency and usefulness of policies based on their research and professional knowledge. As one type of expert, policy entrepreneurs help government agendas be more innovative (Mintrom, 1997). They sell their policy idea based on a high level of knowledge regarding the proposed policy. They also contribute to identifying the list of probable policy barriers and resolving these policy problems from various angles (Lambright, 1980).

Theoretical Framework

The goal of this study is to identify political interests and conflicts among various policy-concerned actors and to understand their interactions with the centralized government. Exploring policy decision making and interest group theory in this way will provide a nuanced picture of the roles of, and interactions among, policy-concerned stakeholders, and their influence on policy implementation.

Interest Group Theory

Early researchers focused on the idea that organized interests seek to affect policy decision making (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1992; Becker, 1983; Carpenter, 2004; Drazen, 2000; Furlong & Kerwin, 2004; Grossman & Helpman, 2001; McKay & Yackee, 2007; Peltzman, 1976;

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Persson & Tabellini, 2000; Sloof, 1998; Stigler, 1971). Interest group theory or the "capture theory of regulation" suggests that behavior patterns of interest groups and policy outcomes can be predicted. Interest groups attempt to sway policymakers in order to make them design regulations that benefit them (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1992; Becker, 1983; Drazen, 2000; Grossman & Helpman, 2001; Olson, 1965; Peltzman, 1976; Persson & Tabellini, 2000; Sloof, 1998; Stiger, 1971). Some organized interest groups do not have sufficient power to effect changes or sway policymakers (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Kingdon, 1984), however, interest groups sometimes cooperate to maximize their influence on policymakers (Denzau & Munger, 1986; Baumgartner, 2002; Baumgartner & Mahoney, 2002).

While policy design is in the domain of government officials, local administrators take responsibility for policy implementation (Stover & Johnston, 1999). However, it is important for the people in charge of policy implications to understand the policy in order for the policy to succeed (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002). The engagement of meaningful stakeholders is important in that the policy content should include the actual demands and potential benefits of the people who are deeply affected by policy implementation and its impacts (Klein & Knight, 2005). Van Winden (1997) and Hrenbenar (1997) emphasized the importance of interest group involvement in policymaking, and its valuable contribution to government policymakers, because government policymakers are unlikely to be as familiar with on-site issues as are interest groups. Additionally, interest groups have more understanding about how a policy will be applied and implemented as well as how the public will react to the policy. Reflecting interest groups' opinions is the safest and most useful way to make a reasonable policy. It reduces the uncertainty that attends implementing a policy designed solely by government policymakers. When it comes to policymaking, highly centralized, hierarchical government command and control systems should

therefore break from their top-down, policy-making structures to involve interest groups policymaking(Goodin et al., 2006).

Given the significant influence of interest groups in policy development and implementation, this study focuses on investigating how the two major policy actors concerned with high school choice policy in Seoul have an impact on policy design, implementation and outcome.

Summary

This chapter has addressed the relevant research and related literature as a foundation for this research. This literature review has also identified the elements of school choice and described school choice policies in other countries to explore diverse implementations of school choice under different policy structures and environments. The literature on policy actors was also reviewed in order to examine the roles of, and interactions among, policy actors, as well as their influence on the policy implementation. Moreover, to develop the theoretical framework for this study, the chapter has defined key concepts and terms related to interest group theory. The chapter that follows presents details on the field site and participants, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, and the validity and limitations of the study.

Chapter III. Methodology

Overview

To better understand the roles and perceptions of interest groups regarding the development, implementation, and repeal of Seoul high school choice in Korea, this study employed a qualitative methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). A qualitative research design allowed for the flexibility to capture a rich and thick description of Seoul high school choice. It is also well suited for answering the research questions of this study in that, not only do few documents exist, but also the outcomes have not been adequately measured so far due to the policy's short period of implementation. Even though the findings through a qualitative research approach cannot be generalized, understanding the perceptions and experience of the relevant individuals contributes significantly to influencing policy and practice (Clandinin, 2007). A qualitative research method provided the useful tools to investigate the experiences or perceptions of policy-concerned individuals such as teachers and parents. The method enabled the researcher to obtain precise non-quantifiable information. Moreover, through this qualitative interviewing methodology, the researcher was able to identify unexpected impacts through research questions about "meaning," "context," and "process" (Maxwell, 2005). This chapter is devoted to addressing the study's qualitative research methodology, participants and site selection, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability, and limitations.

Research Design

Participants Profiles

As a desirable sample for this qualitative research, experts should be chosen as a sample group for participation in the study (von der Gracht, 2008). Thus, the selected panels represent

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the two main types of policy actors involved in school choice: (a) teachers/school administrators and (b) parents.

In selecting participants, I was deliberate about interviewing teachers who had experienced guiding students in their homeroom for their high school choice and providing them school information, and parents who, under the high school choice policy, were preparing to or had already sent their child to a high school. All participants in this study had to be closely related to the policy design, implementation, and repeal. Since policy affinity was the most important requirement, I created a diverse sample without regard to certain characteristics of participants such as SES, educational background, age, or gender.

Recruitment

To select research participants, a purposeful sampling strategy was conducted (Patton, 1990). Teachers recruited to participate in this research had to meet the following criteria: was working for a middle school in Seoul and, as homeroom teachers, helped, under the high school choice policy, prepare senior (third year) middle school students go to a high school of their choice. Parents participating in this study also had to meet the following criteria: under the high school choice policy, having a child who has already enrolled in a high school or preparing to send their child to such a high school. For the interviews, I recruited 39 individuals consisting of the two focus groups(teachers n = 26, parents n = 13).

Living in America, I was forced to rely on emails and phone calls as the primary approach of contacting teachers and parents. Teachers and parents were recruited in two ways. First, I solicited school principals who met the criteria. These principals distributed my contact information and my interview request letter, including my dissertation research questionnaire (attached in Appendixes A and B), since most teachers and parents were reluctant to share their

private information. Second, I recruited parents and teachers through an advertisement posted across campuses. The flier made it clear I was looking for teachers and parents who had experience with the school choice policy and had an interest in participating in interviews about education policies. Teachers and parents were successfully recruited through both recruitment strategies. The tables below (Tables 1 and 2) show the demographic information of teachers and parents participating in this study.

Table 1

Participant Demographic (Teachers)

Name	Age	Gender	Position	Years of work
Kim, Ki Soon	-	F	Vice Principal	32
Yang, Hae Yoon	54	F	Head Teacher	30
Park, Se Yoon	36	F	Homeroom Teacher	4
Chung, Duhk Gyu	52	M	Homeroom Teacher	25
Lee, Hwa Jeon	51	F	Homeroom Teacher	10
Choi, Eul Yoon	56	M	Homeroom Teacher	30
Choi, Sang Young	52	M	Homeroom Teacher	25
Park, Sang Soo	43	M	Homeroom Teacher/Korean	14
Bang, Byoung Im	37	M	Homeroom Teacher/Technology	5
Hwang, Youjin	33	F	Homeroom Teacher	4
Yim, Tae Yoon	38	M	Homeroom Teacher/English	5
Lee, Si Woo	56	M	Homeroom Teacher	24
Choi, Yeo Joon	35	F	Homeroom Teacher/Math	6
Lee, Eun A	46	F	Homeroom Teacher	16
Kim, Tae Seo	58	M	Homeroom Teacher/Korean	30
Pae, Mi-yeon	32	F	Homeroom Teacher/Math	7
Lee, Byoung Hun	-	-	Homeroom Teacher	17
Yoon, Taehyeon	50	M	Homeroom Teacher/Science	24
Park, Shinjoon	50	F	Homeroom Teacher/Korean	12
Sung, Jinhoon	40	M	Homeroom Teacher	13
Yoon, Min Sae	51	M	Homeroom Teacher	25
Lee, Mi Joon	-	-	Seobu District Office of Education in Seoul/ Teacher	14
Son, Chae Young	53	F	Homeroom Teacher	20
Lee, Jung An	51	F	Homeroom Teacher	21
Kim, Young Ji	47	F	Homeroom Teacher	23
Lee, Joo Ha	32	F	Homeroom Teacher	6

Table 2

Participant Demographic (Parents)

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Grade of child
Park, Soo Ji	45	F	-	Junior
Seo, Ye Joon	45	F	Housewife	Seventh grade
Son, Hee Joon	45	F	Housewife	Junior
Park, Hyanghee	-	F	-	Freshman
Lee, Mia	-	F	-	Middle school
Kim, Ji Soon	-	F	-	High school
Seo, Ha Rin	-	F	-	High school
Lee, Jin Hee	44	F	Self-employed	Freshman/sophomore
Kim, Yoon Na	-	F	-	Sophomore
Lee, Woo Lim	49	M	Self-employed	Junior
Park, Myoung Joo	-	F	Housewife	Sophomore
Lee, Mia	41	F	Instructor	Seventh grade
Kim, Jeong Soon	45	F	Physical therapist	Sophomore/ Senior

All participants in this study were closely related to the policy's implementation and repeal.

Consent and Confidentiality

Before interviewing participants, I obtained informed consent after providing information about the research and the entire data collection process. Although there were background questionnaires (See Appendix A and B), participants were allowed to select a pseudonym or anonymous identity. Most teachers revealed their name, the number of years they had been teaching, and their gender. However, most of them did not want to share their personal contact number. In the case of the parents, beyond giving their names only a few of them shared more of their profile and background. In cases where a participant chose to be anonymous, I assigned him or her a pseudonym.

Data Collection Procedures

An important first step in data collection is gaining access to the data (Flick, 1998). Although finding a gatekeeper is a challenge (Bodgen & Biklen, 1998), the principals I contacted

played the roles of key informants as well as gatekeepers. Once I received IRB's determination letter, I started contacting school principals to recruit teachers and parents.

The data collection protocols utilized in this study included reflective notes and individual interviews based on a questionnaire for two different groups: (a) teachers and (b) parent. As part of the data collection procedure, I wrote reflective notes to obtain analytical distance from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). From each individual interview, numerous themes emerged, and reflective notes helped me to capture the major themes I wanted to explore in the study. Two questionnaires for the two different groups were also developed to investigate the research questions of this study. The interview questions for this study were developed through several literature sources. On the role and influence of teachers and the interaction of educational stakeholders, I drew on Hargreaves and Fullan (2000), Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002), McLaughlin (1990); on interest group theory, I looked at Klein and Knigh (2005), Olson (1965), Stiger (1971), Peltzman (1976), Becker (1983), Persson and Tabellini (2000), and Grossman and Helpman (2001). Interview questions were created on the basis of the research questions in this study. The conceptual framework that guides this study is interest group theory as it relates to the roles, influence, and interactions of stakeholders in policy implementation and outcomes.

Through the interview questionnaires, I conducted in-depth interviews of teachers and parents involved in school choice policy in Seoul. I selected 39 participants (teachers n = 26, parents n = 13). The interview questionnaires were distributed and gathered by gatekeepers. Interviews were conducted by email. Through the process, I obtained a main source of data deeply related to field experiences with school choice, and was able to elicit key information about the policy. By using this qualitative research method, I also had a chance to understand

interviewees' perspectives on school choice and how different policy actors interpret the policy (Kvale, 1996; Weiss, 1994).

Methodological Limitations

There were some limitations in the data collection procedure for this study. First, unexpectedly, I was unable to conduct follow up interviews with more detailed questions to elaborate my study. Due to their schedules, the participants were willing to grant only one-time interviews. Second, while most participants did not hesitate to share their thoughts and experiences about the policy, some were reluctant to bring up negative issues about the policy or to reveal their identity. For this reason, some parts of the interviews leave out some portion of these participants' detailed experience.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involved four general stages: reading the data, identifying themes from the data, coding the themes, and interpreting the contexts of the themes (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). All participants' data were collected through questionnaires containing 14 questions for teachers and 16 questions for parents. In cases where participants chose not to provide their real name, a pseudonym was assigned.

To begin, I translated all the interview data from Korean to English. I compared all the responses of each different policy group in order to obtain information on the different points of view about the implementation of the policy. In policy design, implementation, and repeal, each policy actor plays a different role; therefore, all responses were carefully analyzed and compared according to their roles.

Based on my knowledge, several themes emerged during the work of translation. I categorized the themes and classified several sub-themes in order to investigate the roles,

perceptions and experiences of the different policy-concerned groups and the interactions between them around the policy. Through reflective notes during the data collection and the work of translation that followed, the themes were clarified and refined.

Validity and Reliability

Maxwell (2005) defined validity in qualitative research as the "correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 106). To assure the validity and reliability in this study, three measures were taken: (a) triangulation, (b) peer debriefing, and (c) rich thick description.

In order to validate the evidence of my study, multiple sources of data were collected (Creswell, 2007; Shank, 2006). I brought multiple perspectives from diverse participants from two different policy-concerned groups. The main source of data was from individual interviews. However, I also verified the data through document analysis such as newspapers, journals, and books.

Peer debriefing (Creswell, 2009) occurred throughout all stages of this study. In order to keep my study reliable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), I discussed with my co-chairs my data approaches for eliminating any possible bias. My colleagues also checked each data-collection process regarding its suitability. Moreover, both the dissertation committee members and a peer group in an educational policy doctoral program verified my interpretation of the participants' responses.

Rich and thick descriptions of interviews with participants were also provided (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005) By doing so, readers of this study can gain a better understanding of the detailed aspects of the interview procedures.

Limitations

Utilizing the qualitative research method, the in-depth interviews with 34 participants offer up diverse opinions from different policy actors. However, the findings of the research cannot be generalized because of the limited number of participants (n = 39). The questionnaire will only reflect the perspectives of a small number of participants (teachers = 26, parents = 13). Thus, in terms of validity, the qualitative research method has the limitation that the data is based only on the subjective opinions of a small number of participants rather than on the objective numeric value of a majority. It is also possible that the teachers, in particular, might have been reluctant to reveal full details about the failure of school choice to avoid being put in a difficult position in the workplace. In order to resolve the limitations of the study, participants were carefully selected based on the depth of their understanding of the research purpose and of school choice policy. In addition, the researcher explained how the data based on the interviews were interpreted and used for the outcomes of the dissertation.

Chapter IV. Data Analysis

Overview

Due to interest groups' growing influence on policy change, this study focused on the perspectives of two of the most influential, concerned, and knowledgeable types of actors involved with the development, implementation, and repeal of high school choice policy in Seoul. This chapter has two primary objectives. The first is to examine the current school choice policy from a wide perspective on the two critical types of actors deeply involved in the policy: teachers and parents. This chapter presents their diverse points of view. The second objective is to address chronic problems in the Korean educational policy-making structure revealed through the current choice policy. All the detailed findings of this chapter answer the research questions raised in this study: (a) What were the goals of influential stakeholders in the development of high school choice in Seoul, Korea? (b) How do stakeholders view the successes and failures of its implementation? (c) How do stakeholders view their roles and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy? In this chapter, the analysis of synthesized interview data with each individual teacher and parent, highlights several themes and patterns of policy and educational structure. This study addresses not only high school choice policy analysis but also characteristics of the educational structure of Seoul. It does so based on the experiences, opinions, understandings, and perspectives of the two groups significantly involved in the policy.

Analysis of the High School Choice Policy in Seoul

The high school choice policy in Seoul was analyzed according to the participants' responses to five questions:

1. What was Seoul's high school choice policy initially designed for?

2. Who were the most influential stakeholders in the educational policy decision making?

3. What qualities/characteristics of school choice policies benefit the educational environment?

4. What limitations do school choice have?

5. What has to be prepared?

All the detailed answers teachers and parents provided not only described their experiences of the policy in the field but also showed different points of view about that policy. Interviewees from the two different groups also offered recommendations for how the current policy could be improved and what would be required for better implementation. As I analyzed the data collected through the qualitative research methods, certain themes emerged related to each of the research questions.

RQ#1. What were the goals of influential stakeholders in the development of school choice in Korea?

Initial Goals of the Choice Policy

      Teacher perspectives. Many teachers said that school choice improved the options of students and parents in relatively disadvantaged educational environments:

      School choice policy enabled students in poor educational conditions to go to a preferred school with better performance. Before the policy, even though students and parents wanted to apply to a good performing school, if they did not live in the school district, they are not allowed to apply for the school. However, the current policy granted a value for educationally disadvantaged students to have a right to choose a better school they wanted to go to regardless of school districts.

Since the previous policy assigned students to a neighboring high school on a residence basis, students having a lower performing school were not allowed to go to a school that was located in a different school district before Seoul's high school choice policy.

Equal opportunities for students. Ms. Lee, Eun A, a teacher, put a lot of meaning on school choice, "School choice means a lot in terms of providing choice opportunities for students." She shared her experience, "I counseled all of my students and viewed the policy as working positively." Other teachers such as Ms. Yang, Haeyoung, Ms. Lee, Mi Joon, and Ms. Kim Young Joo also saw school choice positively. Ms. Lee stated, "I expected school choice to contribute to developing each student's aptitude. I hoped school choice would not increase the number of dropouts." Ms. Yang agreed that she expected "the policy to increase the possibility that all the students are assigned schools they wanted to go to." Compared with the previous policy, Ms. Kim believed "school choice guaranteed the educational equal right of every student in that all students have a chance to choose a school."

Improving school quality through competition. Ms. Kim, Tae Seon, a teacher, hoped school choice would present a chance to improve the quality of education by encouraging competition between high schools. Another teacher, Ms. Pae, Mi-yeon also believed school choice increased not only school productivity but also the educational quality based on the competition between schools.

> Since education is very important in Korea, school choice was adopted to give students educational motivation by allowing them to apply for schools they want to go to and to help promote school development. High schools put every effort to improve the educational quality and the school system to attract parents and students. It results in the

development of school and the school productivity. Policymakers and decision makers seemed to expect a positive impact about the learner-centered education and school.

Therefore, according to teachers, school choice was originally designed to encourage multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches for a variety of student aptitudes and interests, to provide a wide school choice opportunity for students with poor learning conditions, and to improve educational quality through competition among schools.

Encouraging student aptitude and motivation. Teachers also believed that as more schools with standardized curriculum became specialized, students with various educational demands would have more diverse options in learning. In other words, students who had to go to general public schools under the previous assignment policy would have a chance to foster their aptitude and interests by having specialized schools in diverse fields such as arts, math, foreign language, music, painting, athletics and so on. Moreover, students would have a wide variety of options within each school's specialized curriculum, which would meet student needs and enhance academic motivation in different ways. Teachers specifically noted that school choice encourages student aptitude and promotes school diversification. In order to receive more applicants to their school, each school would need to differentiate itself from the others. In other words, by allowing schools to have their own curriculum and develop specialized characteristics, school choice would contribute to enhancing each school's specialization and lead overall to school diversification.

Ms. Lee, Joo Ha, a teacher, defined school choice as, "choosing and going to schools following personal preference, interests, or a future plan." Mr. Yim, Tae Yoon, a teacher, agreed that students, in this system, have wider options for schools considering their future career.

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Having a choice, students can apply to more specialized programs:

> Under school choice, teachers provide more good qualities of the policy. According to student aptitude and academic ability, students have more diverse schools such as classic high schools, technical and vocational high schools in sightseeing, broadcast media, finance, industry or design, specialized elite high schools such as foreign language high schools and science technology high schools and so on.

Since school choice policy encourages schools to diversify and specialize, in agreement with the other teachers quoted above, Tae Yeon, a teacher, said, "Diversification of choice enabled students to have more and more interesting learning opportunities and a variety of training courses since the curriculum they can choose are varied." Mr. Lee, Byung Hee, another teacher, added:

> Policymakers and decision makers implemented school choice because they strongly believed school choice not only provides students a wider variety of choices but also enforces a specialized high school system.

> Teachers viewed high school choice as aiming to strengthen competition among schools and encourage diverse school curriculums for students with different aptitudes. They also perceived Seoul's high school choice policy as guaranteeing the every student's right to equal educational by allowing a student to attend a better performing school regardless of their school district.

> **Parent perspectives.** At the beginning of the policy implementation, parents hoped it would provide a fair educational opportunity for their children according to student aptitude and academic ability.

> *Autonomy.* Parents also wanted the education system to respect each student's unique

individuality and the curriculum of each school to be significantly differentiated and diversified. In the same vein, school autonomy was recognized to be important. According to the parent Mrs. Kim, Yoon Na:

Parents expect a lot from the high school choice policy. Through school choice, children can freely choose high schools that match their aptitude, interests, academic ability, and their career plan since each school's curriculum has their own benefits. I believe that students enrolling in a school they chose can enjoy their learning, do their best, and smoothly prepare their future career during the school life since the school facilitates all the process of academic and career preparation with their unique curriculum. That'll be the expectation of most parents.

Parents agreed that all the school choice decisions were made based on a student's strong preference as well as that of the parents. Mrs. Kim, Jeong Soon said, "Helping my child choose a school, I always take into account what my child wants to be in his future, what his own roles are and what my part is." As these various examples suggest, parents admitted that their children's academic ability, preference, interest, and feedback greatly affected school choice.

School performance. Many parents considered school performance as a highly valued indicator of a good school. The atmosphere of a school is also deeply related to its performance. When choosing schools, parents give weight to the number of a school's alumni who continued on to prestigious colleges; they also consider the school philosophy and tradition. Parents believe all of these elements reveal the school's overall achievement. One parent, Ms. Seo, Ha Rin, shared this:

What I think is important in school choice is the commute and school atmosphere.

Especially, I do not want my child to be inferior compared to other friends in his class. The school atmosphere including the teacher quality and education direction is important because it reveals a schools' training skills and it results in the college entrance rate of each school.

As noted above, one of the most critical considerations in parents' decisions was a school's achieved entrance rate to top-ranked colleges.

Parent concerns about school choice. While some parents perceived school choice could bring great merit, given the available options for high-performing schools in other school districts, there were still other parents who preferred their local school because of the easy commute and their child's relationships with local friends. Parents want their children to spend as little time possible commuting, making the commute a top priority in school choice. Mrs. Park, Myoung Joo added this:

My child feels uncomfortable in a new environment, so it is hard for her to make a new friend in a new school. Friends have a great influence on children. I totally respect my child's decision to go to the local school where most of her friends go.

Mrs. Park's comment reveals a variance in parents' standards for school choice. Many participating in this study initially hoped school choice could provide them with wider access to high-performing schools in a good school district. Other parents preferred the local schools because of their children's established circle of friends as well as the preferable commute. In reality, however, parents who chose a low-performing local school because of the commute did not really have school choice as an available option. Regarding whether a policy works effectively in practice, policymakers must consider not only what to set as a goal but also how to

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successfully achieve the goal.

RQ#2. How do stakeholders view the successes and failures of the implementation?

Beneficial Qualities of School Choice

  Parent perceptions. After school choice was implemented, high-achieving students tended to apply to high-performing schools, while low-achieving students were left behind in low-performing schools. This resulted in school stratification. A lot of parents interviewed expressed concerns about the increasing academic gap among schools due to the ability grouping resulting from the high school choice policy. However, parents having high-achieving children tended to feel satisfied that their child was improving academically, stimulated by the severe competition within the high-achieving peer group in his or her class. A parent, Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, shared her experience:

> My son attends a specialized high school. Because all his peers in class are high-achieving students like him, he is given motivation by them. In an academic-oriented school environment, he made good companionship and had a happy learning environment, which enabled him to focus on his studies for college admission. I was very satisfied with his school choice.

Ms. Seo, Ha Rin, a parent favoring school choice also noted this benefit; school choice enabled her children to gather in similar learning-level classrooms. Another parent, Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, valued multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches:

> I strongly believe the best educational environment for a child is multiple perspectives on school curriculum. In a classroom, children can alleviate the stress by interacting with friends having different character and diverse perceptions and having teachers of different level of education.

Other parents added that school choice made each school emphasize autonomy by developing their own curriculum. One parent, Ms. Kim, Jisoo, expected this:

> If a child can be supported to make the most out of his talents during his school time and grow to be competent in his field, that school environment would be the most ideal I could imagine. I think that school choice which allows school and curriculum diversity, school autonomy, and school specialization would make my expectation feasible.

Since not all children have the same talents and abilities, parents believed there should be more diverse schools, which could find the hidden talents of their child and develop them.

Teacher perspectives. School choice aims to improve educational quality and provide a fair school choice opportunity for all students regardless of their educational district. Regarding the benefits after the policy implementation, teachers viewed the original purpose to be fulfilled. The whole school system strove to innovate and improve to survive the severe competition between schools. The teacher Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran said this:

> I am not sure if everybody likes this, but school choice allowing students' choice consequently drove schools to get into the keen race to avoid falling behind. By enhancing the contents of educational activities and improving school environments, schools are struggling more than before to hold parents and students' attention.

Another teacher, Ms. Kim, Young Ji, noted how school choice influenced schools to change their curriculum to attract parents and students: "As schools that put forward an increase of academic ability are highly preferred, free competition has been encouraged. School choice caused positive effects and change by changing the curriculum."

Teachers also talked about the multiple perspectives on school curriculum and

approaches: "Under school choice, schools are diversified and specialized. High school choice policy allowed students to choose more suitable schools in accordance with their career plan, so they can nurture their aptitude at earlier age" (Yang, Haeyoung).

Two policy stakeholder groups in this study, parents and teachers, concurred that school choice led to diversifying the school curriculum to accommodate student aptitude and needs and to improve the school quality and productivity by increasing fierce competition. Compared to the previous assignment system, schools had to strive to attract the notice of parents and students. The main purpose of school choice was to assure and promote school quality. Before school choice, schools did not challenge themselves to improve. However, as the above examples demonstrate, since school choice started being implemented, teachers and parents have witnessed high schools, trying to extract themselves from their former complacency, change their existing systems.

Limitations of School Choice

Initially, school choice was intended to ensure the equal educational opportunity for all students by providing students with the right to choose a school. It is impossible, however, for all students to get to go to the high school they set their sights on. While some students applied for a particular school and received admission, were declined and assigned to a different school. Moreover, while the number of preferred schools is limited, they draw an excessive amount of applicants. In contrast, non-preferred schools experience a shortage of applicants.

Teacher criticism of school choice. Some teachers in this study were critical of the original goal of school choice. Ms. Lee, Mi Joon, for example, viewed policymakers and decision makers as taking the position that educational excellence should be strengthened for a few gifted and talented students. These would be selected, through severe competition, to attend autonomous

private high schools and specialized high schools. Ms. Park, Se Yoon said, "School choice was made to satisfy parents' desire to send their children to a particular school in a specific area, a privileged area, such as 8th education district or 7th education district. However, it does not seem to work properly." In effect, a few specialized high schools give admission only to a few high-achieving students who pass the school's admission test. In the same context, in cases of high-performing autonomous schools, even though the admission is lottery based, these schools are allowed to have their own application requirement under the high school choice policy, so only the academic top 50% of students could even apply to those schools.

Even though school choice enabled students to go to a reputable school in another district, Ms. Park, a teacher, addressed the system's limitation, "While parents and students admire a prestigious school in another neighborhood, they still tend to go to the schools in their neighborhoods in accordance with the educational beliefs and because of commuting distance." In this context, Ms. Hwang Youmi, had this to say, "Teachers anticipate school choice to bring not only substantial effects but also school improvement. The high school choice policy should not be an administrative policy in name only." Teachers in the field hope school choice will not cause negative consequences for underprivileged children. Popular public high schools in a privileged area were an available option for students in educationally disadvantaged districts. Nonetheless, it would be hard for them to choose schools far from home given the attendant commute.

Reverse discrimination. A student who wants to get a good education has the right, in theory, to choose a school with the most excellent teachers, facilities, and best learning environment. However, students in educationally advantaged areas face the prospect of a long distance placement. Parents having neighboring schools that are high performing indicated that

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school choice could result in reverse discrimination. While it widens the school options of students in poor educational conditions, it could also cause some students to endure an illogical placement. The teacher Ms. Park, Se Yoon described school choice as follows, "School choice doesn't have substantial effectiveness as a system but only as a format. It has a limitation because school choice is also based on the lottery system." According to the teacher Mr. Yoon, Min Jae, "The primary purpose of high school choice was to give parents and students a…choice, but the chosen school cannot accommodate all the applicants." As the teacher Ms. Kim, Tae Seo added, "Students were desperate when they were assigned to…an unwanted long distance school." Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran went into detail:

> At the beginning of the implementation, due to a huge propaganda system, parents and teachers responded positively because school choice was recognized as a policy with a huge number of benefits. Notwithstanding, parents and students in preferred school districts complained about the possible long distance assignment. Furthermore, even non high schools have felt a sense of crisis, struggling to recruit students. Since the policy was carried out with more haste than caution, there was not enough discussions and well prepared systems to minimize possible side effects.

Ms. Pae, Mi-yeon, a teacher, particularly noticed how not all of her students were assigned to the school they hoped to. Students who were accepted felt satisfied with the system. However, her other students felt rejected because they fell behind the school choice competition and had to detach themselves from their friends. Ms. Pae added:

> In the case of my school, relatively many students went to the school they hoped for and got a satisfying result, but, even for a small number of students, some students had to go to a school not correlated with their expectations…Considering their disappointment, I

think the high school choice policy should be supplemented a little more. Besides, the competition between schools should work just as a motivation for developing quality.

As these examples show, the biggest limitation of the high school choice policy is the number of individuals unable to go to the school to which they applied. School choice was meant to increase school quality based on competition. However, the competition of school choice also widened school stratification. The section that follows details the correlation between high school choice policy and school stratification.

High school stratification. Multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches opens up a wider range of choices. More and more high-achieving students seem likely to choose academically superior high schools (science and technology high schools, foreign language high schools, and autonomous high schools). Consequently, the number of lottery-based allocations of high-achieving students to general public schools are likely to decrease. This trend could result in the educational insolvency of the general public schools. A teacher, Ms. Kim, Ki Soon, noted that school choice causes stratification between schools, and is a more favorable system for students with excellent grades, not for the relatively ordinary students:

High-achieving students with clear goals for their career tend to apply to academically superior high schools such as autonomous schools, global high schools, foreign language high schools, and specialized high schools. Consequently, students with lower grades are left behind in general public schools. In this way, if this situation continues, school stratification will be solidified and the academic achievement gaps among schools will widen. Although school choice was a system adopted to solve the unequal educational opportunities, only a few preferred schools have enough applicants. This has resulted in a growing percentage of low achieving students in non-preferred school. In contrast, a

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greater percentage of high achieving students attend preferred schools. As a result, the achievement gap between preferred schools and non-preferred schools has widened.

Another teacher, Ms. Lee, Mi Joon, noted that the high school choice system polarizes an achievement gap not only between general public schools and specialized high schools but also between boy's high schools and girls' high schools. Therefore, general public schools have experienced a decrease in their educational level. She added:

> The high school choice system stimulated severe competition between preferred and non-preferred schools. It led to school polarization and stratification. Moreover, it caused a regional disharmony because a number of applicants rushed to only a few schools in particular school districts, such as the 8th school district and 7th school district. I don't think the policy actually benefits the educational environment.

There is a general consensus among teachers that the high school choice policy labels Seoul's school districts as "the 8th school district and the others," stratifying high schools in accordance with scores. One of the teachers, Chung, Duhk Gyu, said:

> Under the condition that there already exist clear regional and economic disparities, it is not effective to solve the unequal educational opportunities that students only have a right to choose schools. The number of students who benefit from the system is extremely low.

Ms. Yoon, Tae Yeon, a teacher, pointed out that for successful implementation of the high school choice policy, the system should be prepared to solve the problem of a lack of enrollment in non-preferred schools as well as the unequal environments among schools.

Insufficient resources for implementation. A teacher, Mr. Chung, Duhk Gyu, was skeptical about the policy's effectiveness in terms of its implementation.

I think school choice is insufficient because even though it is a positive thing that the policy broke down the school district barrier, the actual movement of students is very minimal. The effectiveness of the system operation is not valid, and also, more difficult procedures are increasing.

Mr. Park, Sang Soo, another teacher, believed that school choice did not result in a significant change in practice, even though the big picture of the policy shows it has expanded choice. Regarding the ineffective implementation of school choice, Ms. Lee, Joo Ha, a teacher, also revealed the following:

One of the reasons teachers are reluctant to be a homeroom teacher of the 9th grade is that the homeroom teachers are in charge of filling out the applications. Diverse high schools send out their pamphlets for the 9th grade students. However, students don't actually read all the pamphlets, and teachers are the same as well. In other words, even though there are various schools out there, it is difficult for teachers to be well acquainted with the full contents. In my case, my role as a homeroom teacher is to inform my students that there are diverse schools. I also helped students to obtain information if they were interested in a particular school. Well, honestly, I have not specified any particular goal. As a homeroom teacher, the most important thing is to fill out and submit the application forms for the schools students apply to. Since there is a heavy workload for a middle school homeroom teacher, my goal as a homeroom teacher is to submit them by the deadline.

Ms. Lee also noted that, interrupting the effective implementation of school choice was the insufficient number of teachers assisting with applications for so many students needing to apply,:

Ultimately, I believe the high school choice policy seems to fit the future direction. The purpose or goals of the policy also considered students' interests and autonomy. However, the problem is the process. In the process of the policy implementation, do students and teachers know the policy well enough? Was there adequate training? There are more than 30 students per class. Is it possible for a homeroom teacher who has to do not only the homeroom work, but also administrative duties, to provide a customized guidance for each student? In my case, it was very difficult for me to manage a classroom, do the administrative duties, and carry out the curriculum all at the same, since all of this work was my responsibility as a homeroom teacher.

As Ms. Lee's testimony suggests, for successful implementation, teachers should have a deep understanding and knowledge about the policy and have received adequate training. In addition, teachers should be well informed of diverse schools with various curricula. And if the number of students per teacher is beyond his or her capacity, it is impossible for teachers to provide customized or even appropriate guidance. In this sense, Ms. Lee's experience highlights various aspects of what was lacking in the implementation of school choice.

Relative deprivation of disadvantaged parents. In the case of autonomous schools, the tuition per semester is nearly twice that of general public schools. Therefore, there are students who for financial reasons cannot choose these schools. While educational administrators believe they provide more choices and establish diverse educational conditions, in fact, only a limited range of schools are available for those parents and students with lower incomes. Furthermore, some teachers pointed out that upper middle class parents in good school districts affect educational policies. Ms. Kim, Ki Soon, a teacher, said, "Parents in the 8th and 7th school district have a great influence on schools and educational policies." Other teachers such as Mr. Choi,

Sang Young, Mr. Choi, Eul Yoon, and Mr. Chung Duhk Gyo agreed with the view that educational policy reflecting only advantaged parents in good school districts was a product of a succession of power and wealth. Regarding the impact of family environment on high school choice, Ms. Lee, Joo, Hee, a teacher, shared her experience:

> I certainly believe Seoul's high school choice policy contributes to broadening students' school opportunities. However, there are so many different schools, and the problem is because not only students but also teacher are not trained well enough, even teachers often experience confusion in what school would be right for a student. In the end, in choosing the right school, which remains the responsibility of the student, there are the factors of home environment. If parents are well educated and more in a position to have access to more information, they could give useful advice to their children. On the other hand, for those who don't, school choice is not very effective. To be honest, for a teacher, after implementing school choice, there is a lot more work. There are too many schools, different applications required and different deadlines for each school. Unless parents and students prepare individually, teachers are not able to take care of all the students.

Ms. Lee, Mi Joon's response demonstrates that the high school choice system brought more advantages to students with good socioeconomic backgrounds but more frustrations to educationally underprivileged students. This is also evident in the response of one of the parents, Ms. Seo, Ha Rin:

> The for-profit private institutes flourished after the high school choice policy was adopted. Parents and students in a relatively low socioeconomic class seem to have more challenges accessing education. Economically disadvantaged parents have difficulties in preparing their children for school choice.

In order to benefit from school choice, parents and students should be well prepared because they cannot entirely rely on teachers when they choose a school. Not only are well-educated, informed parents situated to give their child better advice, but also only upper middle class parents can afford the expensive tuition of autonomous schools. In contrast, the school choice system work poorly for parents having less information and who cannot afford to pay the tuition of autonomous schools or specialized high schools.

RQ#3. How do stakeholders view their roles and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy?

Perceptions of Stakeholder Influence

Who makes a policy and who influences the decision making is important because the policy reflects their point of view.

Top-down policy vs. consumer needs. Most interviewees responded similarly that the most influential person is the superintendent of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. A parent, Mr. Park, agreed: "I believe the most influential stakeholder is the superintendent. Each school should follow the policy and principles established by the superintendent." There was also a general consensus among teachers that the superintendent has the most power in educational policy decision making. However, they believed that, in practice, educational administrators have more influence than other concerned groups such as parents and teachers. According to the teacher Lee, Jeong Ran:

> Theoretically, parents and students should be the most influential in the policymaking and the decision making. The need of the educational consumer should be considered most, but sometimes education is influenced by political dynamics. As a result, important policies and systems are established and abolished bypeople not related to education.

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While both Ms. Lee and Mr. Park noted the superintendent being the most influential in policymaking, they also added that, in practical terms, the policy should be made reflecting what parents demand and how on-site teachers can handle it.

Practitioner input. In contrast, some teachers were of the opinion that educational administrators and privileged groups should carefully listen to voices in the field and be sufficiently cautious of the demands of students and parents, the educational consumers. Ms. Lee, Joo Ha, a teacher, provided a clear example of the current policy, which was not communicated with teachers:

> I think the most influential stakeholder is the educational administrator. In fact, they are the people who design the policy and implement it. Whenever they make a policy, they insist that they reflect the opinion of teachers, the teacher association, and students. Well, I don't know. In the process of one of the educational policies made recently and soon abolished, "dual homeroom teacher system,"8, indeed, it did not reflect the opinion of teachers.

Teachers admitted that the educational administrators and decision makers were the most influential policymaking group. What the interview data revealed was there was little room for other concerned groups such as teachers and parents to get involved in policy design and policy decision.

Perceptions of Needs for Preparation

Teacher perspectives. In order to reach successful outcomes, first and foremost, all those

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[8] In February, 2012, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology announced the implementation of the "dual homeroom teacher system." The policy was designed to eliminate school violence. The system was first implemented in middle schools and was to be expanded to elementary and high schools. At first, all schools were required to implement the system, but after one semester the policy was repealed.

that the policy affects need to have a deeper understanding of it. As long as teachers do not clearly understand a new policy and program, students and parents will also be confused about the policy implementation (Fullan, 1991). School choice encouraged multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches. However, teachers often fail to get school information due to lack of publicity. Mr. Lee, Byoung Hee, a teacher, commented on his concerns:

> High school entrance competition encourages private education and has an impact on home finances. This became more pronounced after the high school choice implementation. As a teacher, the lack of information about the policy and the school choice training system for 9th grade students does not work practically. As a result, for-profit private institutes are playing a leading role in school choice guidance.

Mr. Park, Sang Soo, a teacher, struggled to carry out the guidance role for individual students. Students have different career goals and aptitudes, and for school choice, a teacher needs to do a full interview with each student. However, the lack of school promotional materials made it difficult for teachers to offer guidance. Another teacher, Ms. Lee, Hwa Jeon said, "Schools need to provide information disclosure and data for students to attend a desired high school. In the current situation, schools are not well promoted." Information and promotion are two important key factors for teachers' successful guidance of school choice. In other words, whether teachers and students know the policy and acquire appropriate information determines the successful implementation of school choice. A head teacher, Ms. Yang, Haeyoung, said:

> For successful implementation, it is important to develop a specialized training program to improve teachers' knowledge and information and promote the intent of education policy and the choice procedure to parents. Well-informed teachers and good promotion will help parents and students choose a school that meets student aptitude and career

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interests.

Teachers interviewed commonly felt that they had insufficient information for choice guidance, despite being the primary resource parents rely on for guidance. This led to parental lack of awareness about better school choice.

Parent's perceptions. Parents considered teachers as the main information provider for the high school choice policy. The homeroom teacher, they agreed, had the greatest impact on their school decision. Ms. Park, Hyang Mee said:

> While preparing for school choice, as a parent, I considered the future job career of my child. I want high school to help prepare my child to build their career. To accomplish this, schools should correspond with a child's aptitude and academic ability. I try to help my child find their aptitude and advise them and provide a career direction. Personally, to prepare for the high school choice, I acquired information from media such as the Internet and through conversation with friends. By doing so, I can prepare my child to meet the academic requirements of a desired school. However, while gathering information, the [resource] I most depend on would be a teacher. Teachers are the closest person to my child and I strongly believe they have a better understanding of a student compared to any other person.

Parents were unanimous about teachers needing to guide their choice, so it was to their surprise that teachers had too little understanding and knowledge. The parent Lee, Jin Mi added her disappointment about this discovery:

> I attended several sessions but still feel frustrated about the absence of information. Frequently, a high school entrance policy changes a lot related to college entrance policy

changes. For this reason, it is hard to understand a policy change promptly. I hope educational information would be open access to anyone regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Emphasizing the need for information and promotion about the policy and of diverse schools were 11 out of 23 teachers and 7 out of 10 parents. This general consensus among parents and teachers indicates that a lack of information obstructed the successful implementation of school choice. Moreover, they commonly pointed out that there should be more easily accessible promotion and school information.

Beyond the Research Questions

The interviews yielded answers to this study's research questions. During the data analysis, this study identified two additional issues related to the main purpose of this research. Additional data were generated through the responses to an in-depth interview questionnaire distributed to teachers and parents. More detailed answers were given regarding the factors related to the chronic problems in Korean educational policymaking structure and further suggestions, from the participants' perspectives, for improvement were also obtained.

Chronic Problems in Korean Educational Policymaking Structure Related to Seoul's High School Choice

Limitations in the Decision-Making Process

Teachers and parents were interviewed to examine specifically how the unique educational structure in Seoul affected the implementation and frequent changes of educational policies seen by school choice-related stakeholders. This analysis revealed chronic problems in

the educational policymaking system that will significantly influence future policymaking and implementation.

Top-down policymaking. Teachers and parents described the decision-making process in education as a top-down policymaking system. Mr. Park, Sang Soo, a teacher, explained that new policies and programs are being made through a vertical and authoritarian decision making structure and then informed to the frontline schools. Those schools must then seek to catch up with the policy. Another teacher, Ms. Lee, Hwa Jeon, was concerned that the top-down policymaking system may make it difficult to identify clearly the real demands of schools. Since a new policy comes down to the school, teachers' practical knowledge and input is limited from helping to prevent students from suffering disadvantages. Ms. Lee, Joo Ha, a teacher, voiced her opinion about the policymaking system in Seoul:

> In my personal opinion, in Korea, the policy is created without simulating process and collecting opinions of policy-related people such as teachers and parents. I don't know well how Seoul high school choice policy was developed. However, I think that top-down policymaking and implementation is a very typical Korean thing. I think such a coming down structure of top-down policymaking blocked promotion and training of teachers and students for better understanding of the policy.

As these examples suggest, when policymakers develop policies, they rarely reflect the opinions of parents and field staff. Parents and teachers believe that such a top-down system causes an absence of communication among policymakers and the field staff, teachers and school administrators.

The absence of communication between policymakers and on-site teachers. Teachers and parents emphasized that, for successful outcomes, policymakers must adequately address the

opinions of those impacted by a policy. However, according to interviews with teachers and parents, there are significant doubts as to whether policymakers listen to the opinions of on-site staff and parents. Mr. Lee, Byung Hee, a teacher, said, "In policymaking procedures, the consultation [is made] only from some of the leading persons in the government and policymakers, and it degrades the quality of the policy and its results." Another teacher, Ms. Park, Se Yoon, stated that many educational policies are made based on the results of research and theory rather than the opinions of students and parents, who are the actual consumers in education. The teacher Ms. Lee, Joo Ha offered her observation:

> How much do policymakers listen to the voice of education when they propose policy? As shown [by the fact] that the dual homeroom teacher system was abolished in less than one year, there is a great gap between the reality of education and administration. In effect, I strongly believe if a policy is made on the basis of the opinions of students, parents, and teachers in on-site education it will be more likely to receive more support and bring successful outcomes.

Teachers felt that their opinions were not reflected in the policies. Teachers stressed the importance of on-site voices in making policies. Policies should be responsive to the needs of diverse consumers in real education. Document-based policy without on-site opinions is likely to cause hardship in its practical application.

Parental exclusion. Parents viewed the policymaking system as benefitting specific groups with power, regardless of parents' beliefs. Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, a parent, said:

> The current education policy is not from a long-term perspective. It cannot bring up the talent. Policymakers seem to accommodate selfish demands of certain interest groups such as profit private institutes and a few upper middle class parents. As a result, the

policymakers cannot substantially create a steady educational program to develop human resources.

Many parents interviewed echoed these sentiments and said that the educational policy reflected the opinions of only a few advantaged parents. Most parents felt excluded in policymaking procedures and were confused by the frequent policy changes.

As discussed above, interviewed parents said that the most influential person in policymaking is a superintendent of the Ministry of Education. Ms. Ji Soo, a parent, said that for settling policy-related issues, the expertise of a superintendent is important. However, a parent Ms. Lee, Mia also said that it is important for policymakers to accept public comments when they develop a new policy. And as the above examples suggest, most interviewed parents felt that they were excluded from policymaking

Table administration by politically oriented bureaucracy. Many teachers and parents pointed out that table administration and politically oriented bureaucracy resulted in the lack of a sense of reality in designing and implementing new policy. Ms. Kim, Tae Seon, a teacher, said:

A table administration policy which does not take into account the real situation of the individual schools fails. Namely, whether the policy is made considering the reality of each school will be an indicator to decide the success or a failure of the policy.

Another teacher, Ms. Kim, Young Ji, commented that an elite-centered policymaking system might hurt policy outcomes:

The current educational policies are being made by a few elite administrators while they ignore school situations. Among administrators in education, there are those studying abroad who don't keep up with schools in Korea. Policymaking and its running are done

without enough questioning. Frequent trial and errors raise suspicions and anxiety among students and parents about the new enforcement policy. I think collecting feedback from the front line of education and carefully running the policy is right.

Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran, a teacher, remarked: "Teachers, parents, and students are often confused about a policy because the system is constructed by politically oriented officials without any discussion with end consumers of the policy. This led to chaos in schools." These comments highlight the deficits of communication among policymakers and educational consumers, teachers, parents, and students. Teachers and parents perceive themselves as being excluded in policymaking procedures and they sense that their participation in that process could affect the quality of the education policy and its implementation.

For parents, table administration is linked more explicitly to dissatisfaction with the school services. Ms. Seo, Ha Rin, a parent, said, "The current government administrators should consider more the real satisfaction of students. For successful policymaking, it is necessary to hold more public hearings and an adequate consultation process when policymakers design a policy." Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, another parent, expressed how table administration affected parents and student:

> I think since senior officials establish a policy without paying attention to the voice of overall society, it affects children negatively. Policies made by a few government officials are not likely to encourage each child's personality and ability. The hard preparation makes all parents and students feel they need private tutoring.

Several parents echoed Ms. Park's idea that the policies made by only a few government officials, with the absence of communication, cannot actually benefit children. Ms. Lee, Miran, for

example, said:

> Sometimes, it seems like the politically oriented bureaucracy uses the education system for deriving their own benefits. The perspective should be changed to help students substantially develop their aptitude and academic interest. For better outcomes of the policy, it is required for policymakers to do the hard work to speculate on the opinions of policy-related people such as parents, students, and teachers, rather than [rely on] table administration.

Ms. Lee, Jin Mi, another parent, said:

> The policymaking process is like "a league of their own." I know, nevertheless, there are some government officials who strive for progressive and advanced education. However, I am doubtful whether they have an adequate understanding about the school reality. I think such people with that position could be vulnerable to outside forces, influential parties.

The interviewed parents' comments sums up participants' perceptions reflecting their experiences. They believed that communication and understanding between policymakers and end consumers would improve the quality of the policy and increase the possibility of successful implementation. They also thought that a politically oriented bureaucracy proposed policies for attention from the public, rather than to create better options for students.

Problems in Implementation

In discussing limitations in the decision-making process with diverse policy related stakeholders, two themes emerged among teachers and parents that reveal major challenges for successful implementation of education policies in Korea. One theme is that politically oriented

policymakers shape policy, and they often change policy to gain public attention and support. The second issue is that people have difficulty understanding a new policy and then dealing with it. Given the significance of education, voters impacted by educational policy react sensitively to superintendent candidates' campaign promises on education. For this reason, politically oriented bureaucracies often propose or change a new policy to keep or attract voters. The frequent policy changes have a significant impact on the educational strategies of teachers, parents, and students.

Policy inconsistency. The teacher Ms. Yang, Haeyoung said that educational policies and the related department changed every time the administration changed. Regarding this, another teacher, Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran, thought that frequent policy changes were not due to in-depth reflection on educational achievement but to education administrators' intentions to gain popularity. She expressed concern that an educational policy that was canceled a year or two after its implementation was canceled due to falling public confidence. Ms. Kim, Ki Soon, a teacher, described the relevance of policy consistency:

> Education policy for schools would have to be established based on the understanding and consent of the people. The success of education depends most significantly on five elements: One, understanding what parents and students expect for good education, two reflecting what they demand on the policy, three, having strong educational practice with the teachers, four, cooperation of teachers and parents, and five, cooperation of parents and local community. In addition, according to their educational philosophy, education policymakers sharply conflict with each other in the superintendent's election. And also, there is a change in education policy change whenever the administration and superintendent change. Consequentially, parents and students do not trust the policy and the decision making process has led to confusion.

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A vice-principal, Ms. Kim, articulated her perception of why the high school choice policy was so inconsistent:

It would be difficult to find past examples of such fast social and economic growth as that of Korea [elsewhere] in the world. As a result, significant differences in consciousness between the generations are going on, and education policies often change every time the administration change. This has led to a lot of confusion among policy related people such as teachers, parents, and students. Before the high school choice system, which was proposed to solve regional educational imbalance, was well stabilized, frequent changes [were already] occurring due to lack of confidence of stakeholders as well as policy makers.

She also explained policy inconsistency in relation to the unique cultural background factors in Korea, which influenced the policy development and the stakeholders' attitude and behavior toward the policy. Ms. Kim also emphasized the importance of policy consistency:

All educational policies have to be designed and established centered around students, who are the main agents of education. Additionally, policy consistency must be guaranteed, and, if it is, people should be able to predict the future of a policy. In order to establish future-oriented education policy corresponding to social and technological changes, policy developers and decision makers are required to establish the right talented people for the country and to take an effort to set up talent training bases.

Ms. Lee, Eun Mi, firmly believed that modifying a policy was better than repealing a policy and introducing a new one, as frequent policy changes result in a chaotic situation among students. Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran agreed and noted that it was necessary to determine the policy carefully after

a thorough simulation of all possible outcomes of risk, and to enforce it for a considerable amount of time. Mr. Yoon, Min Jae added that the policy should be built not on a temporary and fragmentary strategy but from a long term perspective which considers the feasibility of its execution on the site. These examples gleaned from teachers suggest that as long as the execution of education policy is varied in accordance with the interests of the authority policymakers, such short-term development plans will fail easily.

Parents, too, are confused by policy inconsistency. Ms. Kim, Ki Soon, a parent, said, "Schools often attempt to modify school curriculums and school policy to attain a good reputation. This also results in parents' confusion about education." In contrast to the current situation, Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, Ms. Lee Mi Ran, and Ms. Lee, Mira, all parents, expected even though it may take time, for consistent policy enforcement, policymakers are required to set goals with long-term perspectives to avoid confusion of parents and children.

The unique social and economic environment of Korea has put pressure on policymakers to quickly implement policy changes to address the policy agenda for each new administration. As the above testimony suggests, such sudden and frequent policy changes have confused teachers, parents, and students. Both teachers and parents emphasized the necessity for a consistent policy with a long-term educational goal.

Careless adoption of foreign policies. One of the reasons for the policy's inconsistency and failure, according to some teachers, was the careless adoption of foreign policies. Mr. Lee, Si Ung pointed out, "Sometimes heavily relying on foreign precedents, there is an unconditional priority of the foreign policy." There is a general consensus among teachers that such an unconditional priority often creates unexpected challenges in actual application. Mr. Lee, Byung Hee also expressed concerns about the introduction of successful educational policies from

foreign countries that paid no heed to the different cultural and administrative environment in Korea:

> Even though a policy had been implemented successfully in another country, if it is not appropriate for the educational environment of Korea, the policy should not be adopted in Korea. However, the government policymakers tend to introduce education models from developed countries, particularly such as the United States and Japan. The adoptions often occur to the exclusion of Korea's unique educational background. I think this shows the ignorance of the policy stakeholders and a lack of will for making unique Korean education development. Additionally, there is a need for policy stakeholders to have critical attitudes and perspectives on the education policy of the developed countries rather than unconditional accommodation.

Ms. Lee, Jeong Ran was of a similar mind:

> In the case of Korea, it has often adopted policies and systems from Western countries, which are thought to be relatively successful. The admission officer system[9] is a clear example. Even though the primary goal is ideal, many problems often occur in the actual implementation in Korea.

Ms. Kim, Ki Soon thought that careless adoption of foreign policies was related to a lack of educational identity. As a head teacher, she witnessed how such an adoption affected policy stakeholders and educational inconsistency:

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[9] The admission officer system was one of the essential educational reforms of the former President Lee, Myung-bak's administration. The system, implemented in 2008, gives admission by evaluating students' potential talents in accordance with each university's autonomous standard. Even though this system has been implemented in the United States, it has been controversial in Korea because the admission officer system is not appropriate for Korean society with its severe college entrance competition and flourishing private education market.

Since education is to help our children plan and practice for their future, today's education should be future-oriented. Having no educational identity, government administrators have only been in the pursuit of changes by introducing policies and systems from the education systems in the USA, Japan, the UK, France, and recently Finland. Whenever the head of an administration and education department changes, integral policies of the former head come and go. Not only teachers but parents and students are always anxious about that.

What teachers revealed was that actual problems occurred while implementing foreign policy in the Korean educational system. Teachers emphasized how important it was for government officers to carefully consider the unique educational environment of Korea when adopting foreign systems in Korea.

Educational background characteristics: "education fever." Korea's "education fever" is integral to the fast growth of its economy. For instance, as of 2012, Korea's college entrance rate was 72.5%, which tops the countries included in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). During the interviews, parents stated that they considered their child's achievement to be a measure of their success. That is, they think they are good parents when their child goes to a top-ranked college and obtains a good job. Ms. Kim Ki Sook, a teacher, described how those perceptions influence the educational environment of Korea:

"Education fever" of Korea has attracted attention around the world. While Korea did not have abundant natural and capital resources, human resource was a large driving force to develop Korea as a member of OECD. However, the current educational system of Korea in which the priority is entering top ranked colleges rather than developing creative talents is not able to cope with the increasingly diversified and specialized society of our

time. More than all, parents prefer their child to be a professional such as a lawyer, judge, prosecutor and doctor and ask schools to customize their curriculum for their child's academic success. In a way, parents' "education fever" became an obstacle to the settlement of educational policy such as high school choice.

Mr. Park, Sang Soo, a teacher, also shared his experience with parents' influence on the educational environment: "There are still many parents that educate their child only for college admission rather than considering the child's ability and aptitude. I think the only purpose of education in Korea seems weighted for college. This is not helpful to develop student talent through education." Another teacher, Mr. Choi, Eul Yoon, also noted that parents are strongly involved in education in Korea and it influences educational policy, school curriculum and college entrance examinations. Teacher Ms. Lee, Hwa Jeon added, "parents' 'education fever' is prevalent in Korea regardless of different socio economic classes, so any policies to induce a sense of hierarchy may cause significant side effects."

One of the parents, Ms. Lee, Mia, said that when students need to make any kind of educational decision, they tend to follow their parents' advice because they have no accurate information. She also believed that GPA-oriented and competition-oriented school environments, which exclude individual student's aptitude and personality, seem to be the birth of high school choice policy. Ms. Park, Hyang Mee also addressed how parents' perceptions have an influence on children's school life: "Korea went through a difficult history of ups and downs, so people still put the point of success in life only on the end result. Whether students have a healthy and happy school life doesn't really matter."

While the competition created by school choice may contribute to improving education quality, "education fever" could lead to a narrowing of school curriculum as well as an education

policy that focuses only on college admission. Through the interviews, teachers and parents seemed to agree that the educational background-oriented environment had increased college entrance rates in Korea. However, they also expressed dissatisfaction with the severe competition that has left no room for multiple perspectives on curriculum and approaches in education.

Suggestions for Future Policymaking

Among teachers and parents, opinions varied on how to improve the education policy. Teachers cared about student educational satisfaction and equity. Additionally, teachers wanted policymakers to develop consistent policies that avoid confusion and inefficiency. One teacher, Mr. Park, Sang Soo said, "Educational policy maker should find the best system which enables students to demonstrate their own ability." Parents also emphasized that a critical standard by which to measure policy quality would be students' satisfaction. A parent, Ms. Kim, Ji Soon, noted that children should be able to make the most out of their strengths through education. Another parent, Ms. Park, Hyang Mee, wanted all government policymakers involved in the reviewing, drafting, and developing of the policy to heed the voices in the field and make a policy that would maximize the potential of children's characteristics and talents. Again, a concern in Korean education has long been the excess of private tutoring and fierce competition. Government policymakers have attempted to stem the growth of the private education market by strengthening public education. Regarding this matter, Ms. Kim, Yoon Na, a parent, stated that while private tutoring could never be entirely eliminated, there are, according to the policy, a number of ways to reduce it.

No Marginalized Groups in Education

The age-old question about the target of education is this: "Does the current education policy guarantee the greatest happiness and satisfaction of the greatest number?" Teachers and

parents greatly cared about whether education existed for the public as a whole or for a few gifted and talented children. The current policy, which emphasizes multiple perspectives on curriculum and approaches in education, is widening the academic gap between preferred schools having a high rate of college admissions and non-preferred schools having relatively lower performance. Thus, teachers and parents yearn for a future educational system that allows students equal access to high-quality education. This is evident from a comment by the teacher, Ms. Lee, Mi Joon:

> Grudgingly relying on the private education market, students have to frantically study only for attending a good high school and receiving a top ranked college admission without the joy of learning. I believe education should be cooperative rather than competitive. Education should provide not only a few students but also the underprivileged with fun learning opportunities. Rather than elite education, a policy direction should be [taken] to ensure each student fulfills [his or her] educational achievement.

Another teacher, Ms. Lee, Hwa Jeon added that an educational policy that was designed only for a certain class, or that arrived at a sense of hierarchy, would be likely to bring significant side effects as well as a lot of resistance from underprivileged groups because educational fever is so prevalent among the whole class of parents. Indeed, many teachers explicitly defined what equality in education should be like. They pointed out that educational policies should guarantee all students equal access to education in the current knowledge-based society. By doing so, differentiated academic outcomes of students with different abilities and talents would be considered socially acceptable through fair competition.

Building a System: Teacher Training and School Infrastructure

In the educational field, teachers specifically noted that a lack of a support system is a major impediment to policy implementation. Once a policy is made, constant attention and support are required for a successful outcome. For the best results, policy accompanies well-established administrative and financial support as well as teacher training for high quality human resources. Regarding this matter, while experiencing Seoul high school choice policy as a head teacher, Ms. Yang, Haeyoung, illuminated her view:

> The educational administrator and policymakers are required to structure a system that allows students to easily access information about each school in order for them to choose a suitable school for their aptitude and career development. In order to stabilize the high school choice policy successfully, in theory, facilities, curriculum, teacher professional degrees of every high school in Seoul should reach a certain level evenly. And also, each school should vary its own curriculum and students can choose a school that is the most appropriate for their aptitude and talent. However, in reality, parents and students have a tendency to choose a high school only considering the favorable conditions of the college entrance examination. Therefore, there is a need that educational policy decision makers to identify different levels of schools and develop features and benefits of schools in educationally deprived areas by supporting administrative and financial resources. In other words, schools need to establish a variety of career training courses which are appropriate to the needs of students, and for this, the government is required to invest in high quality teacher training for student guidance. By being trained, teachers also need to continually professionally develop themselves.

Like Ms. Yang, Ms. Yoon, Tae Yeon, a teacher, said,

> Education not for politics but for the happiness and development of students is needed. School infrastructure and well-trained human resources should be a priority for successful results of a policy. Those things increase the productivity of education and the satisfaction of parents and students.

Another teacher, Mr. Lee, Byung Hee said that the most important part of the policy implementation was an aggressive governmental investment plan for education, so as to improve the inferior education environment. Teachers generally emphasized the well-prepared infrastructure and human resources as well as an accessible information system in accordance with policy development.

Listening to On-Site Voices

Teachers emphasized that policy developers must listen to stakeholders' voices, such as school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in a policy design and development process. In addition, teachers noted that government policy developers need to find a way to elicit meaningful opinions from the silent majority and to reflect their voices. A teacher, Ms. Lee, Joo Ha, suggested this could be accomplished through "in-depth interviews and surveys with teachers and students." Another teacher, Mr. Yoon, Min Jae, asked policymakers to evaluate how policies function in reality by canvassing, over time, the opinions of teachers, students, and parents. Ms. Kim, Young Ji thought that reflecting frontline educators' comments and end consumers' opinions required more than evaluation, but also giving the "educational consumer trust and a sufficient pilot enforcement." As these examples indicate, teachers and parents expected a policy based on on-site input to meet educational demands in reality. Along with these expectations, teachers also held that necessary to positive policy outcomes were consistency and

enough preparation for long-term policy implementation.

School Autonomy

In relation to high school choice policy, school administrators and teachers viewed that school autonomy should be strengthened. A vice-principal, Ms. Kim, Ki Soon commented that school autonomy regarding curriculum needed to be expanded to minimize the risk of school stratification. A teacher, Ms. Lee, Mi Joon, reiterated the importance of not only school autonomy but teacher autonomy: "I think teachers should be given autonomy and responsibility rather than heteronymous control. Above all things, government concentrated authority over schools and teachers should also be distributed to local schools."

As Ms. Lee and Ms. Kim indicated, the environment of each school had diverse demands and could be in need of different curriculums. Therefore, even if the policy turns out to be practical and to reflect teachers' voices, a different application of the policy might be required for each individual school. Hence, in application of the policy, an essential and primary element for the successful outcome of policy implementation is school autonomy.

Summary

Even though data in this study encompasses two policy-concerned groups—teachers and parents—it majorly reflects the perceptions of on-site teachers it. Regarding the original purpose of Seoul's high school choice policy, the government aimed at increasing the end consumers' satisfaction by ensuring their right to educational options. At first, teachers and parents also expected the policy to bring more diversified and specialized schools and thereby meet the different educational demands of diverse students. However, the policy implementation raised several issues and concerns. Initially, the Seoul high school choice policy was designed to provide equal educational access regardless of school district. However, while students in

educationally disadvantaged school districts are able to go to a high school in a high-performing school district, the same portion of students living in good school districts have to go to a low-performing school with a relatively far commute. Teachers and parents expressed deep concern about this. Parents in educationally advantaged school districts pointed out that the policy has, in effect, resulted in reverse discrimination, not the original intention of course. Conversely, disadvantaged parents felt relative deprivation. As schools diversified under the policy, parents having more information could better support their child's education, compared to those with less information. Since the teachers could not provide all the detailed information to all students, parents have relied heavily on the counseling of the for-profit private institutions. Although low-income parents were free to choose a school, they felt limited because they could not afford the expensive private tutoring and were less able to access information than affluent parents. Furthermore, as more and more high-achieving students applied to high-performing schools, the ability for low-performing schools to compete became quite low and school performance decreased. Such an intensified stratification among schools has raised concerns among parents and teachers.

The teachers and parents interviewed also witnessed, through the school choice policy, some of the chronic problems in the Korean educational policymaking structure. A policy made under a top-down policymaking system by a highly centralized government is likely to reveal an absence of communication with on-site teachers, school administrators, parents, and students. A lack of communication hardly satisfies the diverse educational demands in practice. In addition, endeavors to reform policy have led to frequent policy changes, often leaving parents and teachers confused. Adding to this confusion, according to teachers, is the careless adoption of foreign policies. Although a policy might have been successful in foreign countries, it was not

necessarily appropriate in Korea because of the country's specific features and educational environment. The educational background-oriented climate in Korea has created tension and excessive competition among parents and narrowed the education policy and curriculum to focus only on raising college admission rates.

Important to improving the policy's quality is being able to satisfy the educational consumer. Teachers expressed a variety of opinions about how to improve the policy and the environment. For the successful implementation of the policy, they wanted individual school information to be easily accessible to the public and to have a good infrastructure in place with well-trained human resources. Teachers believed school autonomy should be considered as a precondition of a flexible policy application for diverse student educational demands in practice. According to the teachers and parents interviewed, these suggestions would help insure that the policy would be fair for all.

Chapter V. Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of the Study

This study explored the different roles and perspective gaps among practitioners and consumers and addressed the factors affecting policy changes by analyzing the procedure of the design and practice. In-depth interviews with policy-concerned actors were designed to provide a response to the research questions regarding their different perceptions which cannot be quantitatively calculated. The primary research questions guiding this study were: What were the goals of influential stakeholders in the development of school choice in Korea? ~~Where those goals met during the implementation?~~ How do ~~influential~~ stakeholders view the successes and failures of the implementation? How do stakeholders view their roles and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy?

In the pursuit of answers to these questions, six months were spent collecting data, such as creating questionnaires, interviewing two focus groups and an individual researcher (teachers n = 26, parents n=13), and translating the interview transcripts. Also collected as supplemental information were articles from the major newspapers in Korea, which show the direction of policy development and the government's position on Seoul's high school choice system. As the role and the will of different policy actors have greatly influenced policy changes and their implementation (Honig, 2006; McLaughlin, 1990), in-depth interviews analyzed the detailed perspectives and the role of two major types of actors in policy design and practice. These included on-site teachers as practitioners and parents as consumers. Key findings indicate how each policy actor defined their role, and how those policy actors with different perspectives affected policy design, implementation, and repeal.

In this chapter, the following sections present a discussion of the key findings, their

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implications for research, theory, and policy, and recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Key Findings

RQ#1. What were the goals of influential stakeholders in the development of school choice in Korea?

Parents and teachers agreed that the goal of high school choice in Seoul was to widen the range of choices of parents (Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). The aim of this widening was to increase parents' and students' satisfaction with their school and education (Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Schneider & Buckley, 2002). Teachers also reported that school choice strengthened competition among schools (Arsen & Ni, 2011; Lubienski, 2006) and encouraged multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches for students with different aptitudes. However, all teachers and parents that participated in this study perceived that advanced and specialized curriculum, one of the main objectives of the Seoul high school choice policy, could not be free from the educational background-oriented culture of Korea. Due to Korea's general affliction of "education fever" and its concomitant passion to get into a good college in Korea, it is a challenge for schools to diversify their curriculum without considering achievement on the college entrance examination. Parents particularly valued high-performing schools, as they tended to send more students to top-ranked colleges. For this reason, if schools only focus on diversifying their curriculum and specialization in terms of student aptitude, they are likely to fail to attract students. These findings were affirmed by teacher and parent interviews; teachers and parents agreed that the entrance rate to top-ranked colleges was one of the most critical considerations of parents' choice and decisions. However, despite such a limitation on parents' preferred standard of school choice, both teachers and parents perceived that, compared to the previous policies, high school choice

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policy relatively encouraged student aptitude and promoted multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches.

RQ#2. How do stakeholders view the successes and failures of the implementation?

Parents of children enrolling in high-performing schools under school choice viewed the benefits of school choice as more academic-oriented, since the school choice policy enabled high achieving students from different school districts to be gathered in a similar academic learning classroom. They even viewed the successful enrollment in a good high school as the optimal way to gain admission to a top-ranked college admission in the future. Some other parents participating in this study believed that school choice, compared to the previous equalization policy, emphasized school autonomy and advanced and specialized curriculums by encouraging each school to develop its own curriculum.

Based on competition among schools, teachers perceived that school choice improved school environments and enhanced the contents of educational activities to attract more applicants. In this study, teachers saw multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches as a benefit of school choice in that it led to diversified curriculum and schools providing more customized educational opportunities to students with diverse talents and aptitudes.

Despite these perceived benefits, teachers and parents shared some concerns associated with the school choice experience. Key findings about the limitations of the policy, according to the perspectives of teachers and parents, indicated school choice caused four major problems: high school stratification, deprivation of disadvantaged parents, reverse discrimination, and ineffectiveness of the implementation. These negative outcomes of school choice are addressed below.

Most teachers participating in this study viewed that high school choice caused stratification among schools (Cullen et al., 2005; Oplatka, 2007). because the policy structure is more favorable for a few high achieving students rather than most ordinary students. Consequently, it forces general public schools into educational insolvency as long as high-performing schools have more applicants and students with higher grades, but the other low-performing schools are neglected. Originally, one of the main purposes of school choice was to increase school quality based on competition among schools (Arsen & Ni, 2011; Lubienski, 2006). In Korea, however, even public high schools have a tuition fee, so parents' choice for better performing schools impacts school finances. Popular schools have a large enough pool of applicants and are capable of retaining high-quality educational resources (Goldhaber, 1999; Howe, Eisenhart & Betebenner, 2001). Findings of this study, based on interview data with on-site teachers, show that, after the high school choice policy went into effect, the hierarchy of school quality is becoming more pronounced.

As mentioned earlier, the tuition rate of high-performing autonomous public schools, is higher than that of general public schools. This significant aspect narrows the range of school choice options for disadvantaged parents. Even though the high school choice policy widened the choice options for educationally disadvantaged students, some are unable to choose other schools for financial reasons. In other words, students' family income affects their access to high-performing schools. Some parents with relatively low SES saw school choice as only making the challenges they face in accessing better education more difficult. Indeed, widening school options calls on parents and students to be better prepared to choose a school. Parents perceived that private for-profit institutes sometimes have more accurate and diverse information about high schools. For this reason, parents who cannot afford to send their child to private for-profit

institutes felt they benefited not at all from the high school choice policy compared to upper middle class parents who could afford the private education fee for their child.

Another significant concern was voiced by parents living in educationally advantageous residences, and that concern was reverse discrimination. Some students who were assigned to high-performing neighboring schools under the previous assignment policy were assigned to non-preferred schools relatively far from home. Considering the commute and school performance, parents who failed to send their child to a preferred neighboring school felt relative deprivation. Parents residing in a good school district had actually less of a chance to place their child in a local school, which of course decreased their satisfaction with the high school choice system.

A majority of parents decided to send their child to a neighboring school based on the commute, because high-performing schools were too far away. Teachers interviewed in this study viewed that there were policy barriers in practice and that the system did not operate as effectively as previously thought. Teachers agreed that they did not have adequate training to obtain an in-depth understanding and knowledge about the policy and diverse schools.

RQ#3. How do stakeholders view their roles and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy?

In order to understand how stakeholders viewed their role and influence related to the development, implementation, and repeal of the school choice policy, it was necessary to take into account how others perceived them. Interview data indicated the perspective of each stakeholder about their role and influence, as well as about those of others.

Teachers. As a source of information on schools, the policy, and the application process, teachers are an important part of school choice. Parents said they depended on their child's

homeroom teacher for school information as well as information on the new educational policy. In other words, a homeroom teacher strongly influenced students in their choosing of a school, functioning as a bridge between the government and parents. However, teachers commented that they couldn't adequately fulfill the role as a guide for students to find the right school and to follow the right application procedure. The heavy workload of a homeroom teacher, they said, made it hard to help students obtain information about schools of interest.

Parents. Most teachers involved in this study agreed that parents in Korea pay a great deal of attention to their child's education and promptly and sensitively react to policy changes. Parents' believed that only a good academic path guaranteed their child's future success. This belief was grounded in their generational experience. Despite having limited natural resources, Korea has seen its economy make remarkable progress, which is attributable to Korea's wealth of human resources and "education fever." For this reason, while implementing high school choice policy, parents were most concerned about whether their child would be disadvantaged under the policy.

Due to the frequent policy changes, some parents relied on private for-profit institutions to obtain information about schools for their child. Parents perceived the superintendent of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education as the most influential person in the making, implementing, and repealing of the policy. Most of the parents commented that teachers and school administrators needed to be well informed about the application requirements, procedures, as well as the advanced and specialized curriculums of various high schools. They also wanted them to be well versed regarding the policy so as to provide customized guidance for their students' school choice.

Additional Findings

In the interviews with teachers and parents, suggestions were proffered on how the policy should be designed and what government policymakers ought to always consider. Teachers and parents believed educational policies should be designed considering on-site teachers' deep understanding and the supportive practice of their environment, as well as focusing on student-centered policies for successful implementation. Teachers and parents also suggest that government policymakers always need to consider practitioners' and educational consumers' opinions and experiences to formulate a successful policy. Without considering the actual and practical needs on-site, policymakers will never be able to satisfy educational demands.

Implications of the Study

Implication for Research

This study is significant in the field of educational administration in Seoul for several reasons. First of all, it examines a wide perspective gap among policy practitioners and policy consumers about the design and implementation of the high school choice policy in Seoul and it expands the relevant empirical research. As far as the critical contributions of the educational stakeholders, their roles, and the interactions among them, this study's findings support those of Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) who stressed policy is implemented through the interaction of educational stakeholders. Taking this into account, this study adds to the limited number of qualitative studies on high school choice, particularly focusing on policy changes during its implementation, by interpreting the perspectives of two major policy-concerned groups.

Furthermore, this study adds to the research on the need to transform the previous top-down policymaking structure in Seoul. Findings indicate that the absence of communication and a lack of information on policy design have confused teachers and parents in the implementation

and resulted in the repetitive consideration of repeals and changes.

This finding relates to the work of McLaughlin (1990), who emphasized the important role of teachers as key players in delivering information and guiding policy. In addition, this study has added to the research on teachers' influence and commitment to educational reform (Cuban, 1986; Barth, 1990; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002), as it provides additional examples to investigate how teachers in Seoul play a pivotal and influential role in policy implementation and policy change. Specifically, it provides a better understanding of the interrelationship of the practitioners and policy outcomes through a rich description of the perspectives of each policy-concerned actor.

This study offers valuable perspectives on the major policy-concerned actors, perspectives that need to be identified for subsequent research. Previous research has emphasized policy analysis itself, concerning its strengths and its possibilities or proved outcomes. However, that research has not investigated the perspectives of actual practitioners such as parents and teachers. Since policy practitioners greatly influence the outcomes of the policy, further study needs to consistently focus on the efficient interactions between practitioners and their perceptions and to provide in-depth understandings of policy-concerned groups to develop better and more effective policy.

Implication for Theory

This study's findings specifically support those of Hargreaves (1997), who suggested the willingness, attitudes, and behavior patterns of practitioners (as well as an unchanged structure) led to abandoned or failed educational changes. The findings also indicate how important the roles of teachers as practitioners and parents as consumers are in facilitating new educational policy and enacting its changes for successful outcomes. All the interviews of critical policy-

concerned actors described and analyzed in this study illustrate the influences and interactions among different individuals deeply involved in the high school choice policy. These interview analyses explain how the unique qualities of a decision-making structure and atmosphere in Korea affect the stakeholders' attitudes and behaviors toward the school choice policy development, implementation, and its outcomes.

Implication for Policy

This study offers practical and realistic approaches for what policy designers and decision makers should consider. In this study, findings based on the perspectives and experiences of the on-site practitioners and end consumers of the policy usefully contribute to the chances of improving the policy quality and developing it to be applied more efficiently. Findings from this study can be useful for policy and policymakers. When policymakers design and introduce a new policy, they should deeply and carefully consider: (a) communicating with on-site teachers, school administrators, parents, and students, and in turn reflect their needs and concerns in a new policy, (b) building a policy support system for practitioners and consumers to ensure a successful outcome, (c) developing a policy considering its long-term consistency, (d) providing teachers a training program for student guidance, (e) offering presentations and events that inform parents of the diverse educational options provided by a policy and giving opportunities for them to prepare long-term academic strategies for their children, (f) making no marginalized groups in education or in the policymaking procedure, and (g) changing the climate from a top-down policymaking and decision-making structure during the implementation of the policy to guarantee school autonomy.

Recommendations for Future Research

A growing number of studies have shown that critical variables in policy implementation

and its outcomes consist of the interactions among policy-concerned groups, as well as attitudes, behaviors, understanding, and perspectives of the policy practitioners and consumers. The first recommendation for further research is that interviews be conducted with more diverse policy-concerned groups. It is important to investigate possible variables that significantly affect the successful implementation of the policy. By expanding the range of interviewees, the research would contain a greater depth of policy implementation experiences and various standpoints from diverse participants. Future studies should also investigate more teachers and parents in more schools so that the results could be more generalizable. Further, this research could be replicated to explore frequent policy changes or policy implementations that have been undermined due to Korea's unchanging, conventional decision-making structure.

The second recommendation for further research is that a longitudinal study with the same homeroom teachers be conducted. As sample practitioners acquire more information based on their experience, the study could track how the policy is being implemented and how many more students benefit from the policy under the same sample teachers' guidance. This would provide needed data on the effects of how the policy is implemented and how it might be settled without further changes.

The third recommendation is that research be conducted on a specialized high school system, as opposed to only the high school choice system. This study focused solely on exploring general public high school choice. Future research could include the choice of different elite public high schools, specialized schools, to gain a better understanding of the impact of elite high schools on students' choice. Research of different student demographics in elite high schools would provide additional insight into the influential factors of the policy-concerned groups under the high school choice policy.

Complementary studies are needed to explore the implementation of high school choice policy in another Korean province. Further studies are recommended to explore the impact of a wider range of geographical differences on school choice policy implementation and outcomes under the same decision-making structure. This would help show how similarly or differently top-down decision-making structures work and influence the policy implementation in terms of regions. Including more provinces, schools, and participants in Korea would strongly improve the generalizability of this study.

An additional study conducted on other educational policies in Seoul would also provide increased reliability to the findings in this study. Questions similar to those asked in this study could be included in order to further investigate how the top-down decision-making structure in Korea affects the development of educational policy and the stakeholders' attitude/behavior toward the policy. This comparative research information would show if the conclusion of this study is reliable.

By conducting thorough interviews with policy-concerned actors, based on their perceptions and experiences, this study provides deeper and better understandings of the interactions and impacts of policy stakeholders around the design, implementation, and repeal of one particular policy. However, this study is based on a small sample size and is about one particular educational policy in Seoul, Korea. Expanding the research to include additional populations, schools, and regions would help to establish the validity of its results.

Conclusion

This study, through the perspective of practitioners and consumers, analyzes the current education policy, which has undergone repeated changes, and examines the role of policy-concerned actors involved. The findings of this study reveal some chronic problems of the

Korean educational system, which were readily perceived by the on-site practitioners and consumers. This study also contributes to helping understand what qualities and characteristics of the decision-making structure have influenced the frequent changes to the high school choice policy. In-depth interviews with teachers based on on-site practice unveiled the common characteristics of the design and implementation between the current policy and other previous policies, which were developed and implemented inconsistently.

A top-down decision-making structure in a highly centralized government and the absence of communication in policy design led to inefficiency and inflexibility in practice. The findings of this study reveal the true value of communication and understanding among practitioners and consumers in a policymaking process. With one voice, teachers and parents emphasized the importance of their being involved early in the policy development to avoid frequent policy changes, which only confuse practitioners and consumers. In addition, teachers and parents perceived that supportive systems to provide information are important for a better understanding and successful implementation of a policy. As the high school choice policy encourages school specialization and multiple perspectives on school curriculum and approaches, as well as school autonomy, teachers and parents need to obtain more information; this would enable them to support their child or student's education and to guide them in making a prudent school choice.

Policies should reflect not only students' educational demands and expectations but also teachers' opinions based on their on-site practice and experience. Policymakers should also avoid creating a policy based only on their own knowledge or based on successful foreign cases without considering the unique qualities of the educational background of Korea. Once a policy begins being implemented, frequent policy modifications often cause confusion for teachers and

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parents. For the successful implementation of the policy and for its consistency, policy should be carefully designed and developed to reflect on-site demands and should include policy-supporting systems.

Appendix A. Teachers Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Before we begin, I want to reintroduce myself and tell you about my research. As you know, my name is Tae Jung Kim, and I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. The purpose of my study is to explore stakeholders' perspectives, goals, and roles in the development and implementation of school choice policy.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Please share whatever you wish with me. At any time, you may decide not to participate in all or any part of this study. If you would rather not respond to a particular question, simply say, "I would rather not answer." If you want to withdraw from the project, let me know and I will delete all the records related to your participation in this study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the University of Texas at Austin.

If you have any questions about the study, please call Tae Jung Kim at 512-963-6178 or send an email to mtjkim@gmail.com.

All information provided in this survey will be kept confidential   Date: _____

       Name:_____ Age:_____ Gender: Male   Female Transgender

       Occupation: _____   Years of working:_____

       Job

       description:_____

Phone:_____ email:_____

***Stakeholders* in this questionnaire refers to school administrators, teachers, government officials and parents.

Opening Questions

1. Can you briefly describe your position(s) with the school and how many years you have worked there?

2. Do you support the school choice policy or oppose it?

3. How would you describe the school choice policy?

Key Questions

4. What has been your purpose/role(s)/experience of implementing school choice policy? Or what were your expectations/goals of school choice policy as a (school administrator, teacher…)?

5. How would you describe the implementation of school choice policy, specifically as it relates to stakeholders' goals, roles, and expectations?

6. What qualities/characteristics of school choice policies do you think benefit the educational environment?

7. From your experience, what are the challenges, if any, in implementing the school choice policy successfully?

8. Who were the most influential stakeholders to design and implement the educational policy?

9. With what standards would you define the successes and failures of the policy implementation?

10. What unique cultural/educational background factors in Korea influences the development of the school choice policy and the stakeholders' attitude/behavior toward the policy?

11. How does the unique decision-making structure in Korea affect the development of school choice and the stakeholders' attitude/behavior on the school choice policy?

12. What perspectives do you think stakeholders have of the development and implementation of school choice?

13. What recommendations do you have for policymakers developing future educational plans?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B. Parents Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Before we begin, I want to reintroduce myself and tell you about my research. As you know, my name is Tae Jung Kim, and I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. The purpose of my study is to explore stakeholders' perspectives, goals, and roles in the development and implementation of school choice policy.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Please share whatever you wish with me. At any time, you may decide not to participate in all or any part of this study. If you would rather not respond to a particular question, simply say, "I would rather not answer." If you want to withdraw from the project, let me know and I will delete all the records related to your participation in this study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the University of Texas at Austin.

If you have any questions about the study, please call Tae Jung Kim at 512-963-6178 or send an email to mtjkim@gmail.com.

All information provided in this survey will be kept confidential   Date: _____

Name:_____ Age:_____ Gender: Male   Female Transgender

Occupation: _____   School years of the child:_____

Job description:_____

Phone :_____   email:_____

***Stakeholders** in this questionnaire refers school administrators, teachers, government officials and parents.

Opening Questions

1. Do you support school choice policy or oppose it?

Key Questions

2. Is your child attending the high school he/she applied for?

 a. What preferences did you (do you) as parents have for choosing a school?

 b. Beyond parents, is/was there anyone else who influences/influenced your child to choose the school? In what ways? If no one has affected the school choice, do you think you would still prefer the same school?

3. What has been your purpose/role(s)/experience of implementing school choice policy? Or what were your expectations/goals as a (school administrators, teachers, parents…) of school choice policy?

4. What are you preparing (or have you prepared) for school choice?

 a. When did you start preparing for school choice?

5. How would you describe what type of information you needed more of and what information was missing while preparing school choice policy?

   a. Is/was the information available to you? If not, how should it be made accessible?

6. Among school stakeholders (e.g., government officials, teachers, school administrators, parent union), whose role is the most important in the implementation of school choice policy? Why?

7. Do you think parents' opinions were reflected enough in the development, implementation of school choice policy?

   a. If yes, please explain.

   b. If no, please explain.

8. What qualities/characteristics of school choice policies do you think benefit the educational environment?

9. From your experience, what are the challenges, if any, in implementing school choice policy successfully?

10. Who were the most influential stakeholders in the development and the implementation of

the educational policy?

11.   With what standards would you define the successes and failures of the policy implementation?

12.   What unique cultural/educational background factors in Korea influences the development of school choice and the stakeholders' attitude/behavior toward the school choice policy?

13.   How does the unique decision-making structure in Korea affect the development of school choice and the stakeholders' attitude/behavior on the school choice policy?

14.   What perspectives do you think stakeholders have of the development and implementation of school choice?

15.   What recommendations do you have for policymakers developing future educational plans?

16. Is there anything else you want to share?

Appendix C. Written Consent Form

The purpose of this form is to request your participation in a study conducted by Tae Jung Kim, a doctoral student in the Educational Policy Planning program in the Educational Administration department of the University of Texas at Austin. This form is also to provide you with information about the research study. The principal investigator performing this study, Tae Jung Kim, will describe this research and answer any of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Principal Investigator: Tae Jung Kim, The University of Texas at Austin, Educational Policy and Planning Program in the Department of Educational Administration, (512) 963-6178, email: mtjkim@gmail.com

Supervising Professor: Dr. Pedro Reyes and Dr. Julian V. Heilig, The University of Texas at Austin

The purpose of this study: To identify political interests and conflicts among various school stakeholders and to understand their interactions with the centralized government related to the failure of the current educational policy: school choice.

What will you to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last anywhere from a half hour to an hour during the 2013 school year. If needed, the researcher may ask for a follow-up interview.

NOTE:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

☐ Participate in an audio recorded interview, which will last approximately from half an hour to an hour.

Risks of being in the study:

☐ The Investigator does not anticipate any risks associated with this research study. In the unlikely event that unforeseen risks arise, you will be informed immediately.

☐ If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Investigator listed above.

Benefits of being in this study

This research allows policymakers, educators, and school stakeholders to more thoughtfully consider the Korean context when they develop choice policies in order to prevent the iterative failure of educational policy. Specifically, the findings of this research seek to inform educational policy decisions about school choice in Korea and elsewhere. After the study is complete, the researcher will share the research findings with any participants who request it.

Costs or Compensation

There is no compensation or cost for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections

☐ Only the researcher of this study will know the identities of participants. You will be given a

pseudonym and thus your identity will be protected. No information that might reveal your identity will be shared. In case the investigator gathers audio-recorded data, the digital file will be stored in a password protected USB drive and destroyed once the research has been completed. Also, the printed transcript will remain secured in a locked file in a secure location, the principal investigator's home.

☐ All the data collected from this study may be used for future research purposes. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with this study

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the investigator conducting the study. The researcher's name, phone number, and e-mail address is listed at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact: Pedro Reyes, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin; Julian V. Heilig, Ph.D., Co-chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional

Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685; or the Office of Research

Support at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You may keep the copy of this consent form.

Consent Statement:

I have read the research information provided by Tae Jung Kim and thoroughly understand what

I am being asked to do in this research. I consent to participate in the study.

_____

Signature, Date

_____

Signature of Researcher, Date

NOTE: Include the following if recording is optional:

_____   I agree to be **[audio and/or video]** recorded.

_____   I do not want to be **[audio and/or video]** recorded.

_____

Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature   Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks

involved in this research study.

_____

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent   Date

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