Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions & Current States on Community Education Network by Region Type

Heejeon Suh
Tongmyong University
suh@tu.ac.kr

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the perception and current states of early childhood teachers about the community education network for improving young children's character according to region type. Research results were as follows: First, the purposes of young children's character education through community education network showed that the acquisition of social norms, attitude without prejudice. Second, current state of community connected & collaborative education activities showed that utilizing human resources and use of institutions and facilities of the rural town found to be lower than those of big cities and small & medium sized cities. Lastly, teachers in rural town were more aware of importance of sharing vision, leadership, resource richness, resource transaction, and loop learning than big cities.

Keywords: Community education network, Young children's character education, Region type

INTRODUCTION

Character refers to the ability of individuals to 'how to be' and 'how to be together' in their society (Lee & Lee, 2017) and to a coherent and stable cognitive, affective, and emotional behavior style that interacts with the social environment (Kang, 2008). Meanwhile a community is a group of people who have a or common linkage (Hillery, 1955), and a group of people living in a certain area who share and share common values and interests in economic, social based and cultural solidarity (Kwon, 1989). In other words, communities have organic interactions based on common rules, customs, community consciousness, and common interests on a range of shared areas. Therefore, it is necessary for children to have the ability to respect and live together with others in their communities. They also expected to become democratic citizens by practicing their responsibilities, service and dedication as members of society. OECD (2012) focused on community engagement as a key topic for the quality of early childhood education. The scope of the community includes services that emphasize the development of children, such as neighbors, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, private foundations, and social and medical services. In Korea, the understanding of institutions, families, and communities as educational resources and their linkage is a major policy tool to help children develop and learn. The '3-5 year-old Nuri Curriculum' suggests that the curriculum should be operated based on cooperation and participation with the family and the community. In Germany and the United States, character education policy is a combination of creativity and civic education. In addition, parents and nonprofit professional organizations in the community participate or volunteer by local citizens to secure human resources (Lee, 2014; Seo, 2012). In recent years, various educational approaches have been attempted to enhance the character of infants. However, there has been a lack of discussion on the socialization and character development through the connection of infants and society, and the community connected education activities have also been pointed out as difficulties in sustainability or cohesiveness between early childhood education institutions and local communities (Kwon, 2016; Cho, 2017).

The network is defined as a community network that promotes relationship, connection, cooperation in 'inter-organization' (Wasserman & Faust, 2004). From an ecological point of view, it provides suggestions that the background and solution of child development or child problems can be accessed contextually through community education network. As proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the various environments of the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem influence the development of the child. The character development of infants should be continued in daily life through the system of cooperating with parents and the community (Gullo, 1990).

The community education network for enhancing young children's character in this study will be defined as a cooperative educational system and as providing opportunities for children with abundant character education and environment by utilizing the human, material and environmental resources of the community. The community education network is not a new concept but rather an action to restore the educational function of family and community as a living community lost due to rapid industrialization. The core concept of the community education network is transaction, and the area and subject of exchange are composed of human resources, programs, information, and space (Choi, 2013). In addition, there is a need for vision sharing, leadership, resource sharing, group cohesion (trust) formation, conflict management, loop learning, and change leadership as influential factors for successful implementation (Vande Van et al., 1980; Woo, 2014). Moreover, the network of community education in this study is a concept that includes the organic connection among early childhood education institutions, communities, and family.

The previous studies are as follows: There is a strong correlation between the effects of educational institutions and local communities on the effects of early childhood education and community linkage the actual state of early childhood education institutions and parents' participation, and teacher recognition of open day care center and parent involvement (Kwon, 2016; Kim & Um, 2014; Lee & Lim, 2016; Woo, 2007). Although there is an approach to establishing connections between education institution and family, it is not yet discussed on the aspect of infant character development and community education network.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the perception and current states of early childhood teachers about the community education network by region type.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The subjects of this study were 344 early childhood teachers who were in early childhood education institutions in 13 provinces.

Table 1. Participants' background information

Type		N	%	Total
Region type	Big city	184	53.5	344
	Small & Medium-sized cities	118	34.3	
	Rural town	42	12.0	
Institution type	Kindergarten	94	27.3	344
	Early child daycare center	250	72.7	

The educational institutions where the subjects are working were located in 53.5% in big cities, 34.3% in small cities, and 12.2% in rural area. 27.3% of subjects belonged to kindergarten and 72.7% of them belonged to early child daycare center.

Research instruments

Questionnaires were made by reference to education network research, community connected education performance factors, parent participation research, obstacles and activation plan of community network, school community and social capital, etc.

The questionnaire was composed of the perception of the purpose of young children's character education through the community education network, current state of community connected & collaborative education activities, and the importance and performance of the activating factors of community education network. The reliability (Cronbach's α) of current state of community-connected & collaborative education activities was .83. In addition, the reliability of importance-performance of educational network factors between early childhood education institution and community was .93.

Table 2. Questionnaire composition & reliability

Questionnaire Composition	No. of Questions	Reliability	Remarks
Purpose of young children's character education through the community education network	10	-	nominal scale
Current state of community connected & collaborative education activities	15	.83	Likert 5 point scales
Importance and performance of the activating factors of community education network	32	.93	Likert 5 point scales

Research processes

In order to verify the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was administered to 2 professors of early childhood education who had experience in community research, 3 principals of kindergartens and daycare center with 10 or more years of community-based field education, and 2 teachers with 5 years or more education experience. The preliminary survey conducted on 10 principals and teachers in early childhood education institutions. From November 10, 2017 to November 30, 2017, 370 questionnaires were distributed by mail or direct delivery to teachers in kindergartens and daycare centers nationwide, and 351 questionnaires were collected. The final analysis was 344 questionnaires.

Data gathering & analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0 program. Mean, standard deviation, frequency and

percentage were calculated for descriptive statistical analysis. one-way ANOVA and post-test (*Scheffé*) were performed for comparative analysis among variables.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Purpose of young children's character education through community education network

The results of the responses to the purposes of young children's character education through community education network showed that the acquisition of social norms (manners, public order, etc.) in the first place. Attitude without prejudice (disability, poverty, gender role) appeared in second and third place, followed by morality, and respect for natural environment/ecological diversity.

Table 3. Purpose ranking of young children's character education

Questions	1st Place No. of response (%)	2nd Place No. of response (%)	3rd Place No. of response (%)
Acquisition of social norms	**196 (57.0)**	63 (18.3)	22 (6.4)
An unbiased attitude	34 (9.9)	**74 (21.5)**	**75 (21.8)**
Morality	30 (8.7)	**70 (20.3)**	43 (12.5)
Respect for natural environment/ ecological diversity	18 (5.2)	44 (12.8)	**58 (16.9)**
Democratic values and attitudes	16 (4.7)	19 (5.5)	38 (11.0)
Understanding the community	16 (4.7)	11 (3.2)	26 (7.6)
Cultural and artistic experience	12 (3.5)	30 (8.7)	29 (8.4)
Understanding multiculturalism	9 (2.6)	18 (5.2)	32 (9.3)
Intergenerational Understanding	8 (2.3)	15 (4.4)	21 (6.1)
Others	5 (1.5)	-	-
Total	344 (100.0)	344 (100.0)	344 (100.0)

Current state of community connected & collaborative education activities

The community connected & collaborative education activities implemented by early childhood education institutions can be divided into three categories: Participation in service activities and events in the community, utilization of human resources in the community, and use of institutions and facilities in the community.

Participation in service activities and events in the community

The average scores of 'participation in service activities and events in the community' were very high, from 4.21 to 4.80, but there was no difference among the region type (p>.05).

Table 4. Degree of participation in service activities and events in the community

	Questions	N	M	SD	F (by region type)
1-1	Visit to the senior citizens' center	344	4.45	1.698	.165
1-2	Helping the poor	344	4.21	1.505	.061
1-3	Cleaning the community	344	4.85	1.586	1.007
1-4	Participation in local events and festivals	344	4.30	1.387	1.544

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

Utilizing human resources in the community

The average scores of 'utilization of human resources in the community' were very high, from 4.22 to 4.58, and There were statistically significant differences by region type in the invitation local personnel activities in 'inviting local personnel' (p<.05) and 'inviting local elders' (p<.05). In other words, utilizing human resources of the rural town found to be lower than that of big cities and small & medium sized cities.

Table 5. Degree of utilizing human resources in the community

	Questions	N	M	SD	F (by region type)
2-1	Inviting local personnel	344	4.35	1.505	5.355** (a,b>c)
2-2	Inviting local elders	344	4.58	1.527	8.421** (a,b>c)
2-3	Parent education contribution	344	4.36	1.399	1.037
2-4	Community donations from private organizations or professionals	344	4.22	1.252	.012

*$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, Big city[a], Small & Medium-sized cities[b], Rural town[c]

Use of institutions and facilities in the community

The average scores of 'use of institutions and facilities in the communities' were very high, from 4.15 to 4.59, and There were statistically significant differences by region type in 'physical activity' (p<.05). In other words, use of institutions and facilities of the rural town found to be lower than that of big cities and small & medium sized cities.

Table 6. Degree of use of institutions and facilities in the communities

	Questions	N	M	SD	F (by region type)
3-1	Local public agencies	344	4.15	1.144	.315
3-2	Associate educational institutions	344	4.21	1.072	2.320
3-3	Infants and toddlers support institutions	344	4.25	1.133	.871
3-4	Economy, industry, & healthcare	344	4.18	1.295	.875
3-5	Culture and arts	344	4.15	1.162	.865
3-6	Nature experience	344	4.29	1.034	.322
3-7	Physical activity	344	4.59	1.513	4.796** (a,b>c)

*$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, Big city[a], Small & Medium-sized cities[b], Rural town[c]

Importance and performance of the activating factors of community education network

Differences of importance degree of the activating factors of community education network by region type

As a result of analyzing the importance degree of factors, there were statistically significant differences by region type in of sharing vision, leadership, resource richness, resource transaction, and loop learning factors ($p<.05$).

Table 7 showed that teachers' perceptions of important factors to activate community education network between early childhood institution and community were as follows: sharing vision (educational interests in young children in the community), leadership (parents willingness to cooperate, and the will of principal of kindergarten or child care center), resource richness (suitable space and facilities for children's character education in the community, rich human and material resources of the community, and professional education staff in community organizations), resource transaction (share personality education data), and loop learning (educate their understanding of early childhood for local institutions and residents).

Post-test (*Scheffé*) result showed that teachers in rural town were more aware of the importance of sharing vision, leadership, resource richness, resource transaction, and loop learning factors than big cities.

Differences of performance degree of the activating factors of community education network by region type

Analysis result of the performance degree of factors showed that there were statistically significant differences by region type in sharing vision (educational objective exchange between teachers and institutional educators) ($p<.05$). According to result of post-test (*Scheffé*), teachers in rural town showed higher performance of sharing vision factors than big cities.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study were summarized as follows. First, the results of the purposes of young children's character education through community education network showed that the acquisition of social norms (manners, public order, etc.) in the first place. Attitude without prejudice (disability, poverty, gender role) appeared in second and third place, followed by morality, and respect for natural environment/ecological diversity.

Second, accroding to current state of the community connected & collaborative education activities implemented by early childhood education institutions, the average scores of 'participation in service activities and events in the community', 'utilization of human resources in the community' and 'use of institutions and facilities in the communities' were very high. Degree of utilizing human resources and use of institutions and facilities of the rural town found to be lower than those of big cities and small & medium sized cities.

Lastly, analysis result of the importance degree of factors showed that teachers in rural town were more aware of the importance of sharing vision, leadership, resource richness, resource transaction, and loop learning factors than big cities. On the other hand, analysis result of the performance degree of factors showed rural town showed higher performance of sharing vision factors (educational objective exchange) than big cities.

For further studies, considering the difference of importance of the activation factor according to region type, it is necessary to carry out an in-depth study on the needs and problems of community education network according to the region type through the interviews with the early childhood teachers. Also, it is intended to derive improvement and activation plan through comparative study between countries on community education network for young children's character education.

Table 7. Differences of importance degree of the activating factors of network by region type

Factors		Region Type	N	Importance			Performance		
				M	SD	F (Scheffé)	M	SD	F (Scheffé)
Sharing Vision	Educational objective exchange between teachers and institutional educators	Big city [a]	184	4.04	.788	2.537	3.35	.958	3.827* (c>a)
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.25	.795		3.47	1.027	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.21	.871		3.81	.833	
	Educational interest in young children in the community	big city [a]	184	4.29	.746	3.617* (c>a)	3.33	.920	2.808
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.42	.697		3.43	1.025	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.60	.627		3.71	.864	
Leadership	Parent's willingness to cooperate	big city [a]	184	4.42	.750	6.543** (c>a)	3.59	.901	.830
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.49	.701		3.67	1.030	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.86	.417		3.45	.916	
	The will of principal of kindergarten or child care center	big city [a]	184	4.45	.683	4.205* (c>a)	3.99	.852	3.946
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.56	.648		4.22	.828	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.76	.576		4.31	.811	
	The willingness to cooperate of local personnel and the head of the community institution	big city	184	4.21	.824	3.006	3.29	.855	.427
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.19	.787		3.37	.923	
		Rural town	42	4.52	.707		3.38	.795	
Interdependence	Cooperation with universities, professional organizations and human resources for character education	big city	184	3.97	.855	.625	2.91	.990	.678
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.04	.900		3.02	1.094	
		Rural town	42	4.12	.889		3.07	.894	
	Participation of local experts in designing character education programs	big city	184	3.76	.868	.932	2.98	1.024	1.806
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	3.84	.915		3.03	1.097	
		Rural town	42	3.95	.962		3.31	.749	
Resource Richness	Suitable space and facilities for children's character education in the community	big city [a]	184	4.26	.745	4.177* (c>a)	3.24	.990	.506
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.32	.738		3.20	1.017	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.62	.582		3.38	.882	
	Excellent educational programs in community organizations	big city	184	4.19	.797	1.586	3.36	.870	1.438
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.26	.778		3.34	.908	
		Rural town	42	4.43	.831		3.60	.767	
	Rich human and material resources of the community	big city [a]	184	4.17	.798	4.968** (c>a)	3.19	.869	2.246
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.28	.815		3.24	1.010	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.60	.627		3.52	.890	
	Professional education staff in community organizations	big city [a]	184	4.11	.855	3.416* (c>a)	3.09	.895	1.564
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.29	.775		3.08	.992	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.43	.801		3.36	.906	
Resource Transaction	Provide and share information on community organizations, people, and environments	big city	184	3.94	.755	2.365	3.34	.872	3.744
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.05	.783		3.53	.893	
		Rural town	42	4.21	.842		3.69	.749	
	Share character education data	big city [a]	184	4.19	.769	3.751* (c>a)	3.48	1.003	.782
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.31	.713		3.61	1.038	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.52	.671		3.64	.958	
Loop Learning	Educate their understanding of early childhood for local institutions and residents	big city [a]	184	4.11	.789	4.822** (c>a)	3.13	.953	2.609
		Small & Medium-sized cities [b]	118	4.24	.724		3.11	.994	
		Rural town [c]	42	4.50	.672		3.48	.804	
Administrative & Financial Support	Gain operational budgets	big city	184	4.25	.844	2.306	3.14	1.034	2.488
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.31	.790		3.31	1.000	
		Rural town	42	4.55	.705		2.90	1.122	
	Establish regulations and laws for com*munity connected* education	big city	184	3.85	.855	3.184	2.95	.960	.793
		Small & Medium-sized cities	118	4.05	.846		3.06	1.048	
		Rural town	42	4.14	.899		3.14	1.221	

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