

Cognition of the Teachers for Continuity in English Curriculum between Elementary and Secondary School in South Korea

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teachers' cognition for continuity in English Curriculum between elementary and secondary school in South Korea. Using the questionnaires developed to collect teachers' perceptions for English curriculum effectively, opinions from 272 elementary and secondary teachers on 7 factors were collected and analyzed.

Keywords: *Continuity of curriculum, Teachers' cognition, Elementary and middle school english curriculum*

1. Introduction

The current Korea National curriculum specifies that English education should have the systematic hierarchy by grade and school level [1][2][3]. In other words, sustaining horizontal and vertical continuity is very important in the composition of the curriculum, and continuity and connectivity among elementary, middle, and high school curriculum is highly required. However, whether continuity between elementary and secondary school English curriculum is proper or not has been a constant issue in English Education [4][5].

As teachers play main role in implementing the curriculum in real class and delivering it to the students, the difference in perception of elementary and middle school teachers will become an important matter when designing and executing learning and teaching in the field. Since the elementary and middle school English teachers have different route from the training institutes to the learning contents and methodologies, it is estimated that there are great differences between elementary and middle school English teachers [6].

Based on this necessity, this study diagnoses teachers' perceptions of continuity in diverse aspects. This study investigated teachers' cognition of elementary and secondary school English curriculum continuity by utilizing survey questionnaires produced through previous studies [6][7].

2. Results and discussion

Teachers' cognition of the influencing educational system [table 1] varied according to the school level. The average teacher response was 3.16 and the secondary teacher response average was 3.50, which was about 0.35 and shown statistically significance ($t=-3.671$, $p=.000$) The difference between the items was found to be statistically significant ($t=-2.389$, $p=.018$) In addition, the responses of the elementary teachers in

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the 17th questionnaire were 3.10 and the responses of the middle school teachers were 3.44, which was about 0.34, which was statistically significant ($t=-2.622$, $p=.009$) There was a significant difference ($t=-2.138$, $p=.033$) in the 18th item for the elementary teacher response of 2.84 and the middle school teacher response of 3.12.

Based on these results, it can be seen that middle school teachers have more positive opinions on questions related to education system than elementary school teachers. The results of this study are summarized as follows. First, it is shown that elementary school teachers think that the increase of English hours affects the securing of connections.

Table 1. Teachers' cognition for education system related to continuity

factor	education system related to continuity ***	reliability $\alpha=.689$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
1*	It is necessary to revise curricula of teacher training institutes (colleges of education) to sustain continuity in the National English Curriculum.	3.34	1.092	3.64	.911
2	I think KSAT (the national university entrance examination) affects continuity of English curriculum between elementary and middle school.	3.31	1.176	3.84	1.093
3**	If a national university entrance examination that emphasizes communication abilities (speaking, writing) is implemented, continuity of English curriculum will be more coherent between elementary and middle school.	3.10	1.023	3.44	1.072
4*	If English class hours increase, continuity of English curriculum will be more coherent between elementary and middle school.	2.84	1.030	3.12	1.098
Total		3.16	.759	3.50	.763

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)

(1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

Recognition of the English Curriculum The results of the study showed that there was no significant difference in the total opinions of the four items constituting the factor. However, in the case of item 33, there was an average difference of 0.19 between elementary school teachers 4.22 and middle school teachers 4.03, which was statistically significant ($t=2.201$, $p=.029$) There was also a statistically significant difference in the number of questions in Question 34 (3.59 for elementary school teachers and 3.82 for middle school teachers), with a difference of about 0.23 ($t=-1.996$, $p=.047$)

In terms of the results, the difference in the teaching methods appeared to be that the elementary school teachers and the middle school teachers expressed the same opinion, but they perceived that the elementary school teachers had a bigger difference than the middle school teachers. In terms of educational goals, middle school teachers feel that there is a big difference between elementary school teachers.

Table 2. Teachers' cognition for differences between English curricula

factor	differences between elementary and middle school English curricula	reliability $\alpha=.797$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
5*	Differences between elementary and middle school English classes are a huge aspect of teaching methodology.	4.22	.756	4.03	.628
6*	Differences between elementary and middle school English classes are a huge aspect of educational goals.	3.59	1.031	3.82	.864
7	Differences between elementary and middle school English classes are a huge aspect of education contents.	3.71	.903	3.82	.843
8	Differences between elementary and middle school English classes are a huge aspect of teaching and learning activities.	3.71	.931	3.82	.851
Total		3.80	.747	3.88	.613

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)
 (1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

As a result of looking at the difference of cognition between 'elementary school' and 'secondary school' in terms of 'continuity', the average opinion of the five items constituting the factor did not show any significant difference among the groups. However, there were statistically significant items. In the case of Question # 1, the average difference was about 0.42, which was statistically significant ($t=3.774$, $p=.000$) There was a significant difference ($p<.046$, $p=.046$) between the items of Question 8 and 3.86 for elementary school teachers and 4.05 for middle school teachers.

The recognition of the word 'connectivity' was higher in elementary school teachers than in middle school teachers, and both groups found that securing the connection between elementary and secondary English education was an important issue. However, secondary school teachers are more aware of the necessity of elementary school teachers than other elementary school teachers in the need to know about other school - level English education courses. In the case of pre-service teachers, since both groups had a general awareness of the linkage, it can be seen that the need for linkage is increasing after experiencing first-line education.

Table 3. Teachers' cognition for continuity

factor	cognition about continuity	reliability $\alpha=.695$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
9***	I think I know well the meaning of the words 'continuity of curriculum'.	4.05	.874	3.63	.933
10	I tend to be concerned about problems in continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school.	3.61	.989	3.49	1.015
11	I think continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school is an important problem.	4.38	.796	4.24	.735
12*	I think it is necessary to recognise English curricula of other school levels.	3.86	.835	4.05	.663
13	When I was a teacher candidate, I was concerned about problems in continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school.	2.94	.953	3.05	1.103
Total		3.77	.646	3.69	.551

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)
 (1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

As a result of examining the willingness to secure the continuity between elementary and secondary English curriculum, the average opinion of the six items constituting the factor did not show a large difference between the groups. However, there were items that showed statistically significant results when examining individual items in detail. In the case of item # 37, the average difference was 0.32 for elementary school teachers 3.43 and 3.75 for middle school teachers, which was statistically significant ($t=-2.553$, $p=.011$) There was a statistically significant difference ($t=-2.317$, $p=.021$) in item # 38, about 0.26 for elementary school teachers 3.73 and secondary school teachers 3.47.

Both groups responded "agree" to the linkage considered from the student's point of view, but when considered from the teacher's point of view, both groups showed a more negative response than the previous response. Especially, elementary teachers showed less need than middle school teachers. Secondary school teachers 'opinions are similar to' agree', suggesting that there is a difference between the groups' opinion that the elementary school upper class should consider middle school curriculum. On the contrary, elementary teachers responded more positively to the willingness to participate in the training program than the middle school teachers.

Table 4. Teachers' cognition for willingness to sustain continuity

factor	Willingness to sustain continuity between elementary and middle school English curricula	reliability $\alpha=.695$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
14*	From the teacher's point of view, it is necessary to improve continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school.	3.86	.953	4.08	.759
15	From the student's point of view, it is necessary to improve continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school.	4.06	.994	4.24	.804
16	For retaining continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school, it is good to adopt textbooks made by the same publisher.	3.53	1.222	3.29	1.012
17	I am willing participate in a task, when I am asked to do something to improve continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school.	3.76	1.053	3.70	.751
18**	It is necessary to teach English considering middle school English curriculum in higher grades in elementary school compared with lower grades.	3.43	1.059	3.75	.945
19*	I intend to participate in a teacher training course that offers information about English curricula of other school levels.	3.73	.925	3.47	.904
Total		3.73	.726	3.76	.532

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)

(1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

As a result of confirming teachers' perception about the difference of elementary - secondary English education curriculum, the average opinion of the five items constituting the factors did not show a large difference between the groups. However, there were two items that showed statistically significant results when examining individual items in detail. In the case of item 28, the average difference was 0.26 for elementary school teachers 3.40 and 3.66, which was statistically significant ($t=-2.257$, $p=.025$) There was a statistically significant difference ($t=-3.447$, $p=.001$) in the 40th item about 0.37 for elementary school teachers 4.37 and secondary school teachers 4.00.

Secondary school teachers perceived more strongly than elementary school teachers when elementary school students went to middle school and lost interest in English. As the level of the school increased, the perception of the improvement of difficulty level and the increase of the amount of learning showed similar trends in both groups. Elementary school teachers were more aware of the private tutoring situation of elementary school students in preparation for middle school English classes.

Table 5. Teachers' cognition for differences in continuity

factor	differences in continuity between elementary and middle school English curricula	reliability $\alpha=.695$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
20*	Commonly, when elementary school students enter middle school, I think they lose their interest in English study.	3.40	.879	3.66	.983
21	Commonly, when elementary school students enter middle school, I think they encounter difficulties in English study.	3.77	.823	3.84	.815
22	I think that the difficulty level of the English curriculum for the 1st grade of middle school jumps up drastically compared with the English curriculum for the 6th grade of elementary school.	3.78	.881	3.64	.986
23	I think that the amount of study in the English curriculum for the 1st grade of middle school jumps up drastically compared with the English curriculum for the 6th grade of elementary school.	3.94	.725	3.80	.871
24**	A number of elementary students depend on private education institutes to prepare middle school English.	4.37	.671	4.00	1.080
Total		3.86	.568	3.79	.668

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)
 (1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

As a result of confirming the degree of continuity with the connection of elementary and secondary school curriculum, the average result of the five items constituting the factor was 3.46 and the elementary school teacher was 3.28, and the difference between them (0.18) was statistically significant ($T=2.637$, $p=.009$) As for individual items, item 9 had an average difference of about 0.28 for elementary school teachers 3.69 and 3.42, which was statistically significant ($t=-2.644$, $p=.009$) There was a significant difference of about 0.54 between the elementary school teachers (3.76) and the middle school teachers (3.23), which was statistically significant ($t=5.399$, $p=.000$).

As a result of giving good implications, the opinions of each group on whether they have high inter-secondary linkages are similar to each other, and whether the sixth grade of elementary school English is appropriate for the first year of middle school It is similar to 'normal'. Through this, the response to the English course connection within each school level is close to positive, with 3.85 in the elementary school and 3.77 in the middle school, while the response to the linkage between grades is close to negative.

Table 6. Teachers' cognition for satisfaction for continuity

factor	satisfaction for continuity between elementary and middle school English curricula *	reliability $\alpha=.695$			
		elementary		secondary	
		M	SD	M	SD
25	I think that the continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school is coherent.	2.92	.776	3	.959
26**	I am generally satisfied that the continuity of English curricula between elementary and middle school is coherent.	3.69	.814	3.42	.881
27	I think that continuity of English curricula among grades in elementary and middle school is coherent.	3.85	.792	3.77	.820
28***	English curricula are well reflected in English textbooks of elementary and middle school.	3.76	.743	3.23	.848
29	English curriculum for the 6th grade of elementary school is suitable for preparing for English class in the 1st grade of middle school.	3.09	.863	2.96	.869
Total		3.46	.527	3.28	.600

(*= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$, ***= $p<.001$)

(1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

3. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of the teachers' interconnection using the questionnaire tool which can measure the opinions of the teachers directly teaching English in the educational field about the connection of the elementary and middle school English curriculum [8]. For this, 272 respondents were surveyed, and the collected responses were analyzed by factor analysis and reliability tests. Finally, the results of the 40 items of seven factors were derived. Second, the difference of perception among elementary and middle school teachers was examined.

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