

A Study on Korean High School Elective Curriculum

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate what is needed to properly manage the electives. The national curriculum has many advantages. However, the operation of the national curriculum will create an authoritarian educational environment. In addition, once established, legal authority makes it difficult to immediately modify the curriculum. In addition, it is difficult to run a variety of curriculum that suits the characteristics of the school and learners. Thus, recently, department of education in Korea has attempted to expand the elective curriculum. The study investigated what problems were and what was the current situation in relation to these trends. The questionnaire surveyed more than 7,000 teachers. As a result of the study, the teacher recognized that the elective curriculum was operating well. In this regard, the study provided more details.

Keywords: *Elective courses, curriculum, Korean curriculum, high school, elective curriculum*

1. Introduction

Subjects that students actually take at school may vary depending on cultural circumstances. In some countries, state governments play an important role in curriculum decisions. However, in some countries, schools may have their own curriculum. The former is called the national level curriculum and the latter is called the school level curriculum.

The advantages of the national curriculum are, firstly, there is a unified curriculum across the country. Second, it satisfies the link between the school level and the inter-school curriculum. Third, it might be able to develop a high-quality curriculum by utilizing rich professional manpower and injecting material resources. It also helps countries and society respond to the whole of the national direction for education. On the other hand, the operation of the curriculum is likely to be constant and strict, creating an authoritarian educational environment. In addition, once established, the curriculum is difficult to revise immediately due to legal powers. Third, it is possible that the teacher will move away from the curriculum issue and interfere with the teacher's professionalism improvement. It is difficult to run a diverse curriculum that meets the characteristics of the region, school, and learner.

School level curriculum benefits include followings. First, the curriculum could be developed for the specific situation of the region and school. Second, teachers develop and operate with ownership of the curriculum. Third, the curriculum can be quickly and flexibly

Article history:

Received (June 3, 2020), Review Result (July 8, 2020), Accepted (August 13, 2020)

modified and operated in response to a rapid change in the surrounding situations. In addition, the contextual nature of the curriculum promotes learners' natural learning opportunities. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of the school-level curriculum are: First, it is difficult to develop a quality curriculum due to lack of experts, budget, time, and awareness. Second, it is difficult to link the curriculum between schools and schools. In addition, it is difficult to propagate educational reforms, with a focus on regional, school, and teacher centers.

Recent curriculum revision trends combine the two types of advantages. In particular, countries with strong national level curriculum want to transfer a variety of options to schools. However, the long tradition does not change easily. In particular, teachers' perception of school culture does not change easily. A student's subject choice has several advantages, but it also has side effects. Students may choose courses based on their aptitude, but may also choose courses to change grades. On the other hand, the school may not meet all student choices. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the perception of the teacher. It is necessary to investigate what teachers perceive as a school-centered successful curriculum and what the current situation is. Research began with this issue.

Previous studies have mostly been related to high school vocational skills education and achievement [1][2][3][4]. A few studies have conducted studies of high school students' lack of subject selection skills [5]. On the other hand, the instruction manual had little effect on course selection [6]. In Korea, there have been two previous studies affecting student subject selection [7][8].

2. Research method

Korea's elective courses are as follows. Korea's school curriculum is based on national curriculum documents. The national curriculum sets the minimum standards that schools can organize autonomously, and the rest of the subjects are encouraged to choose. In other words, to understand the school curriculum, it is necessary to understand the standard national curriculum. Table 1 shows Unit Allocation of Korean high school.

Table 1. Unit allocation of Korean high school [9]

	Subject Areas	Subjects (Subject Clusters)	Common Courses(Units)	Required Units	Autonomous Implementation Units
Subjects(Subject Clusters)	Foundation	Korean Language	Korean Language(8)	10	Individual schools construct the curriculum in consideration of students' aptitudes and career plans.
		Mathematics	Mathematics(8)	10	
		English	English(8)	10	
		Korean History	Korean History(6)	6	
	Inquiry	Social Studies (including History/Moral Education)	Integrated Social Studies(8)	10	

		Science	Integrated Science(8) Science Laboratory Experiments(2)	12	
	Physical Education · Arts	Physical Education		10	
		Arts		10	
	Life · Liberal Arts	Technology · Home Economics/ Second Foreign Language/ Classical Chinese/ Liberal Arts		16	
	Subtotal			94	86
Creative Experiential Activities				24(408hours)	
Total Units				204	

In the [Table 1] unit is the amount of instruction completed 17 times in 50 minutes. In general, for international curriculum documents, this is the usual way to complete one semester unit within 17 weeks. In this regard, one unit can be considered as one credit. In addition, if a student wishes to take an elective that has not been taken by the school, the school will require the completion of the course at another school. Schools may open new courses in addition to those listed in this curriculum as needed. It can also recognize learning conducted in the area of local learning depending on the needs of the school and the student. Schools can open elective courses for college courses and, if necessary, internationally recognized curriculums or courses. In this case, the school must follow the guidelines set by the local and local school boards

Based on this, a questionnaire was constructed for the survey on recognition of elective subjects. The survey was conducted in November and was intensively investigated for more than 15 days. The survey was conducted by teachers, and a total of 40 items were surveyed. The reliability of the question was .952 with a Cronbach alpha value.

3. Results

Teachers' responses to the importance of the 7 factors for organizing and operating successful elective courses are as follows. Teachers responded that all seven factors were 'important'. Among the seven factors, the factor in which the highest importance response was 'the environment for the operation of the elective subjects, (infrastructure, home base, etc., (m=4.45)'. On the other hand, the relatively low importance factor was 'selected subjects in the curriculum, (m=4.01)'.

The average values of each teacher's and standard deviations derived from this survey are as follows. In response to each question, the response with the highest average value is the response to whether or not to use 'process-centered evaluation, (m=4.16)' covered in the 'Selective subject evaluation and feedback' area. On the other hand, the response with the lowest average value of the response is the response to whether or not the space required for the operation of the elective course, (m=3.10, which is covered in the section on "Prerequisites related to the elective course, (infrastructure)").

Regarding the operation of the school's elective courses, teachers showed more than 50% positive responses to all questions. Among them, the question with high positive response was 'determining whether to open the elective course by reflecting students' demand'. The question with relatively low positive response was 'I understand the careers that students want'.

Regarding the operation of the teacher's elective course, teachers showed more than 70% of positive responses to all questions. Among the questions that had a high positive response was 'I think that the class is operated in accordance with the guidelines of the elective subjects'. The questions that showed a relatively low positive response include 'personality and learning content of subjects, teaching learning and evaluation'.

Regarding the teacher's elective evaluation and feedback, teachers showed more than 60% of positive responses to all questions. Among the items that had a high positive response, 'I think they are using process-oriented evaluation such as formation evaluation and performance evaluation focusing on the student's learning process', The questions that showed a relatively low positive response were that 'Course elective courses will improve students' aptitude and career'.

Among the matters related to the organization and operation of the teacher's elective courses, teachers answered that 'I consider students who have decided on careers other than college, (employment, entrepreneurship, travel, and retake)'. Among the questions that had a high positive response, 'If there is a student's request, I tried to open as many as possible'.

Among the matters related to the organization and operation of the teacher's elective courses, teachers showed more than 50% of positive responses to all questions. Among the questions that had a high positive response was 'Efforts are being made to strengthen professionalism for teaching and evaluation of optional subjects'. In contrast, relatively low positive responses was 'Organization and division of duties for the operation of the optional curriculum are properly organized'.

Among the matters related to the organization and operation of the teacher's elective courses, teachers did not exceed 50% of the positive responses to all questions. Among these, the question that had a relatively positive response was 'Securing manpower, (teacher, and instructor) in charge of elective subjects'.

4. Conclusion

As a result of this study, teachers responded that the school elective was well established.

First, the school responded that it was providing information on subjects and offering elective courses according to student needs. When the elective course was opened, a decision-making process reflecting the opinions and discussions of the teacher proceeded, and efforts were made to grasp the desired course of the student. In addition, it said that the curriculum was considered in consideration of jobs other than university admission.

Second, teachers responded that the electives were operating well overall. Compared with the guides for the elective courses, it was operated appropriately, and responded that the

classes were faithfully operated considering the characteristics of the elective courses. In addition, it used a variety of teaching methods and responded that it provided detailed information on elective subjects.

Third, evaluation and feedback related to the elective course are generally well done. He responded that the process-centered evaluation was used well and that the performance evaluation was properly conducted. On the other hand, it was thought that general selection would help improve students' academic understanding, and responded that career choice improves students' aptitude and career development ability. In addition, respondents said that the operation of elective courses helped them design career paths considering aptitude.

Forth, satisfaction with the curriculum-making effort was high among all subjects. However, courses related to careers other than going to college, such as employment, entrepreneurship, travel, and retirement, were moderate. On the other hand, the school's efforts to open 14 to 50 subjects were as high as 4.03, but the effort to open fewer than 13 students was relatively low at 3.66. It was found that overall satisfaction was 3.80 in supporting joint school curriculum operation and participation.

Although it was evaluated that the member-related efforts for organizing the elective courses were well done overall, they were relatively low compared to other areas. Teachers' evaluation efforts and support for career design were assessed as being well done, and the principal's communication and elective course efforts considering teachers' competency also responded as well. The appropriate division of duties for members to run the elective course was 3.63, indicating that a more appropriate division of labor effort was required.

Fifth, in terms of infrastructure, it was evaluated as normal in all areas. Personnel in charge, budget, support from the Ministry of Education or the Department of Education, and space for the operation of elective courses all appeared to require more support and effort.

Some of the advantages and challenges of the selective curriculum recognized by teachers are: Teachers were able to offer a variety of subjects in terms of aptitude and career-related subject selection and from a student's perspective, but the relative disadvantages of calculating grades for a small number of subjects were recognized as problems. In addition, the elective courses have the advantages of 'improvement in class participation due to voluntary selection of students', 'enhancement of teacher expertise such as reorganization of curriculum', 'diverse attempts of class methods', and 'diverse cost burden'. We have found that there is a discrepancy between 'preparation of subjects' and 'subjects' and 'demand and demand of teachers', 'burdens for written exams', 'burdens for evaluation', and 'burdens with SAT'.

Acknowledgement

This study was funded by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. This study was conducted by revising and deepening some of the authors' writings in the report of "Kim, S., Park, J., and Jeon, H. 2019 High School Student-Centered Curriculum Organization and Operation Status Survey-Student Course Selection Status"

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