

2 Primary School English Teacher Education in South Korea

Challenges and Future Directions

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Introduction

In South Korea (hereafter Korea), English has been a mandatory primary school subject since 1997. As elsewhere in Asia, language-in-education policy in Korea has been influenced by globalization, particularly in that English proficiency is seen as essential for increasing the nation's economic competitiveness, but it has also been influenced from the bottom up, with political pressure from families perceiving English as indispensable to their children's education (Baldauf Jr. et al., 2011; Chung & Choi, 2016; Kang, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2016; So, 2020; Spolsky & Moon, 2012). Although the national curriculum asks for communicative language teaching (CLT) in student-centered classes with English as the medium of instruction (EMI), the local research has demonstrated that adhering to these guidelines has been an ongoing challenge for teachers (Butler, 2011; Garton, 2014; Jeon, 2009b; Kim, 2008; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Whitehead, 2017). Despite significant investment into public school teachers' professional development, teaching communicatively and using English as the language of instruction have been widely resisted for reasons such as large classes, inappropriate materials, uncertainty about how to teach communicatively, and teachers' lack of confidence using English in the classroom (Garton, 2014; Jeon, 2009b; Kim, 2008; Moodie & Nam, 2016). However, an overlooked aspect regarding the efficacy of English language teaching (ELT) in Korea is the consideration of who teaches English in primary schools and why they choose to do so (Jung & Norton, 2002; Moodie, 2019; Moodie & Feryok, 2015).

With this in mind, this chapter will follow up on reviews of the local research (Butler, 2015; Kang, 2013; Moodie & Nam, 2016), beginning with a critical look at how and why people become primary school English teachers in Korea by discussing the washback from the teacher employment exam and the issues related to the teacher assignment and rotation system. Next, the chapter discusses the trisected distribution of labor, which includes tenured teachers, local English instructors, and native English-speaking co-teachers from abroad. Then, the chapter will highlight challenges with linking teacher education to classroom practices and the challenges related to curricular policy and ELT materials.

In the conclusion, suggestions are offered for the future direction of primary English teacher education based on the points raised in this chapter.

Challenges for English Teacher Education in Korea

Before continuing, it may be helpful to review the background of primary school teacher education in Korea. Due to the social status and working conditions, it is a highly sought-after career (Kim, 2009, 2011). There are 12 public universities and one private university that train primary school teachers. Student quotas for these universities are strictly regulated by the Ministry of Education, and candidates usually need to be in the 95th percentile of their graduating cohort to get into an undergraduate program. Although pre-service teachers graduate with degrees in Primary Education, they choose one subject to specialize in along the way. Also, since the late 1990s, English language and English education courses have been core subjects in the curriculum (MOE, 1997). The inclusion of English as a core subject aligned with the government's plan for nation building in the era of globalization (Chung & Choi, 2016; Song, 2012). Because of this, the current state of primary school teacher education necessitates that all pre-service teachers receive some basic training in English pedagogy whether they specialize in it or not.

Originally, primary school teachers in Korea were generalists; however, since 1992 a hybrid system was introduced that allows for some teachers to be designated as subject specialist teachers at the beginning of the school year, usually for art, music, science, physical education, and/or English classes (Kim & Han, 2002; MOE, 1997). The teachers are assigned from within the school faculty at the discretion of the principal, and there are quotas in place to ensure that they do not teach more than about a quarter of the contact hours for Grades 3–6. The policy was based on pragmatism: While the policy makers intended to allow for outside specialists to teach in primary schools, such as those trained for secondary education, those plans were fiercely resisted by the teachers' union, who argued that only those trained in the designated primary school education programs would have the competence to engage younger students. Thus, when English was introduced in the primary school curriculum, each school – or to be more precise, each principal of a school – had to decide who would be responsible for teaching English classes (e.g., see Jung & Norton, 2002). In sum, within this system, all full-time primary school teachers are potential English subject teachers, and many teachers alternate between homeroom teaching and English teaching during their careers (Moodie, 2019), a point which will be explored below. First, however, teachers must pass a highly competitive employment exam, something which has presented an ongoing challenge for teacher education.

Issues with the Employment Exam

The teacher's exam for primary school teachers has two stages. The first comprises a written test of Korean history, an essay related to education policy, and short-answer questions targeting academic concepts from the core subjects in

the primary school curriculum (e.g., Korean language, English, math, and science). The first stage serves the purpose of narrowing down the number of candidates for the second stage, where candidates are invited at a three-to-two ratio for each position open in the province or city where they applied. This second and final stage consists of an oral exam, a lesson plan, and a teaching demonstration for a predetermined core subject (other than English). Then, there is an English interview and English teaching demonstration. The candidates are evaluated by a regional committee, but the evaluation criteria for each step are set by a national test design team.

The design of this employment exam has led to a number of interrelated issues for English teacher education and teacher education more generally. The first of these has to do with the exam's construct validity insofar as it applies to the skills and knowledge teachers draw on in actual classrooms.

A debate about the requisite knowledge and skills needed for language teaching has been going on for some time (see Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Although the field began with an assumption that teachers mostly needed linguistics knowledge and language proficiency, in-depth scholarship focusing on how teachers learn and what they need to know to do their jobs effectively has shown that teacher learning is essentially a type of experiential learning that – beyond understanding language and linguistics – requires appreciation for the context of education and practical experiences and reflective practice within that context for developing pedagogical knowledge (Freeman, 2016; Johnson & Golombek, 2016). However, the design of the teacher exam reflects a wholly transmission model of education in which candidates are required to recognize and apply academic concepts in high-stakes decontextualized settings. Exam questions target academic concepts, and answers must be precisely worded, conforming to terminology in mainstream education textbooks and policy handbooks. This is true of the first stage, but it also applies to the second-stage oral exam, which has been mislabeled as an interview. Candidates present responses to scenarios conceived of by the test development team. As such, there is no opportunity for authentic interaction between the panels and interviewees. It is only by the time candidates reach the final portion – the lesson plan and teaching demonstration – that they are evaluated according to their actual teaching skills. However, even this step is inauthentic, being more like performance art than actual teaching. Candidates need to stand in front of the committee and act out their procedures alone, mimicking interaction with imagined students as they do so. In summary, the teacher employment exam only barely assesses the primary constructs of importance for a teacher, that is, the ability to plan and enact pedagogy in real time in a classroom.

Because of this, the design of the employment exam has caused a fair amount of negative washback. Despite reforms in Korean education that see learning to teach as a social practice – for example, with a curriculum for teacher education that increases requirements for reflective practice, peer-teaching demonstrations, and collaborative learning – many of the efforts to reform teacher education are undermined by the rigid teacher exam. The exam format and target content

require that learners memorize academic concepts entirely decontextualized from a classroom setting. Senior students generally spend an entire year preparing for the exam, and a small private education sector has emerged to prepare candidates for it (Lee & Lee, 2014; Moodie & Nam, 2016). Another type of washback comes from the fact that all prospective primary school teachers need to learn English and how to teach it regardless of whether they will ever teach English or not once they get a position. This is due to the teacher assignment and rotation system, which is discussed at length below. However, regarding washback, the key point is that primary school teacher education “favors those who can afford private [English] education ... Trainees with high potential but lacking English proficiency have little opportunity for the stable careers offered in public sector education” (Moodie & Nam, 2016, p. 68). In other words, candidates who are able to take advantage of private English education have a head start for becoming primary school teachers than those who are not able to, whether or not they will ever even teach English later on.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, primary school teachers are trained as generalists for the most part, but they do specialize in subject areas (e.g., art, music, science, math, or English). However, an issue with these specializations is that once hired, there are “no measures in place to ensure they will teach in those areas” (Moodie & Nam, 2016, p. 67). Primary school teachers are hired by the city or province to which they applied. Once in the education system, “the assignment of teachers—whether it be to a homeroom and grade, or to a subject like English—is mediated by a teacher assignment and rotation system” (Moodie, 2019, p. 71). Because of this system, teachers are constantly changing grades, schools, and subjects throughout their careers, and although this chapter focuses on English, the problem pertains to all subjects and grade levels. In effect, the current system discourages the development of expertise in any one subject or grade, which presents a serious challenge for the development of primary school teachers in Korea. This system is further discussed below.

The Revolving Door of English Teachers

Korea’s teacher assignment and rotation system was initiated to distribute teaching expertise across the education system, ensuring that the best teachers did not cluster in the most desirable schools and districts (Kim, 2009). In effect, what it does is ensure that all teachers – experienced and novice, skilled or otherwise, committed or not – regularly change schools, grade levels, and districts. Although there are regional differences, teachers must generally change schools at least every four to five years and districts every ten to fifteen years. Once faculty assigned to a school, the system works as follows:

Before each school year, teachers submit paperwork with their top three choices for homerooms or subjects [e.g., (1) Grade 3/4 homeroom teacher, (2) Full-time English teacher, (3) Grade 5/6 homeroom teacher]. Then, school committees sort the requests in consideration of the needs of the

school and the teachers' seniority in the district and within the school. Next, they pass on their recommendations to the principal, who has the final say in the assignment of faculty to homerooms and subjects. Due to this administrative system, all primary school teachers are potential full-time English teachers, and assignments for teaching English may occur despite or because of interest in teaching English.

(Moodie, 2019, p. 71)

Moodie and Feryok's (2015) study described how teachers navigated this system throughout their careers, in essence describing a revolving door of English teachers. This longitudinal case study included four teachers, two of whom were novice teachers and two who were experienced. The two youngest teachers had been assigned to teach English full time at the start of their careers. As new teachers, they had no choice but to teach English despite their lack of interest in doing so. The two experienced teachers, however, navigated the system while transferring schools, volunteering to teach English so as to avoid Grade 6 homeroom teaching, a position generally considered to be the most challenging because of higher contact hours and more demands from parents. Yet an important finding was that all participants taught English for only a limited time. Within two years of the study, all four teachers returned to homeroom teaching, and none has taught English since. The issue with this system, then, is that "whatever expertise they gained during that time was lost to the system" (Moodie, 2019, p. 71).

A follow-up study considered this system and attendant issues in more detail (Moodie, 2019). This study collected narratives from 20 teachers about why they became teachers and why they volunteered to teach English. Although their motivations for teaching English ranged from intrinsic to extrinsic, what became apparent was how the teacher assignment and rotation system had mediated their commitments to ELT (see [Figure 2.1](#)).

In the end, what happened was that the system "placed some of these participants into positions that they did not want and were not prepared for, as few of the participants had any significant training in ELT" (Moodie, 2019, p. 80). Because of this, teachers faced challenges different to what they faced as homeroom teachers, including lower self-efficacy and difficulties with classroom management. When they were homeroom teachers, they were able to build strong rapport and relationships with their students; however, as English teachers they were responsible teaching multiple classes and grade levels with students who often treated English classes as play time. Therefore, most participants had lobbied their principals to return to homeroom teaching the following year.

Given the assignment and rotation system, one of the biggest challenges for English teacher education in Korea is that the administrative system discourages long-term commitment to ELT. In fact, the system makes it nearly impossible for someone to teach English consistently throughout their career, even for those who specialized in English education or took intensive in-service training courses. ELT commitments tend to be short term, and because of this, it

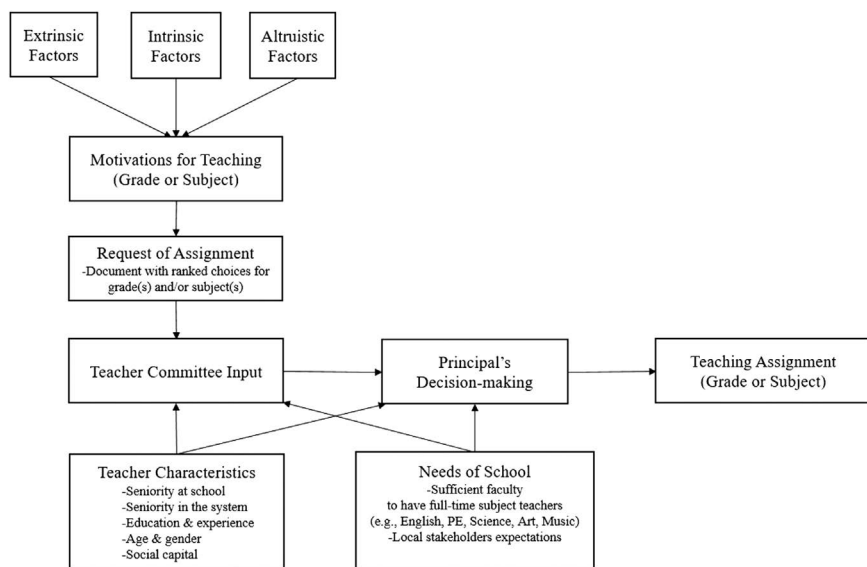


Figure 2.1 Flowchart of how the teacher assignment and rotation system mediates assignments to primary school grades and subjects (Moodie, 2019, p. 80).

has been difficult to develop expert primary school English teachers in Korea (Moodie, 2019; Moodie & Feryok, 2015). The teacher assignment and rotation system is perhaps the biggest factor for dealing with what Garton (2014) described as unresolved issues for primary school English education. As teachers rotate in and out of English teaching assignments, new English teachers deal with old problems. Thus, there is a paucity of ELT expertise in the system: Two decades after the primary school English began, teachers are still struggling with teaching English according to the curricular guidelines for CLT and EMI (Moodie & Nam, 2016; Whitehead, 2017)

Integrating Native English-Speaking Co-Teachers and Korean English Instructors

Another problem that has remained unresolved is integrating native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and Korean English instructors within the education system and school faculties.

The two main programs bringing NESTs to Korea are the English Program in Korea (EPIK) and the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) scheme. Both recruit native speakers from seven English-speaking countries. TaLK is a scholarship program which recruits third- to fourth-year university students (or recent graduates) to assist in after-school classes in rural primary schools. To qualify, TaLK scholars must have been educated in an English-speaking country. The program is open to students in any field, and no teaching certification or experience is

required (MOE, 2021b). EPIK candidates are hired as co-teachers for regular English classes. To qualify, candidates must have a bachelor's degree in any subject, be of sound mental and physical condition, be free from criminal convictions, and be under 62 years old. A recent and welcome addition to these qualifications is the requirement that new candidates also have at least a basic 100-hour teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) certificate, with exceptions for those with education degrees (MOE, 2021a).

Co-teaching in Korea has been a popular research area for some time (e.g., Carless, 2006; Copland et al., 2020; Jeon, 2009a; Moodie & Nam, 2016). Research has shown that integrating NESTs in the system has presented an ongoing issue since the inception of EPIK. Because of cultural, educational, and linguistic differences, even well-intentioned NESTs face marginalization in the workplace and are generally not seen as legitimate teachers (Yim & Ahn, 2018; Yim & Hwang, 2019), even if they happen to be qualified teachers in their home countries. NESTs are not able to participate in the vast number of in-service training programs that are afforded Korean teachers. Because of unclear guidance and a lack of effective co-teaching models, NESTs and Korean teachers “have largely been left on their own to decide how to teach” (Moodie & Nam, 2016, p. 81). As with their Korean counterparts, turnover is high, leaving a dearth of experienced NESTs in the system.

Up to this point, the chapter has focused on full time, licensed teachers, who teach the majority of primary school classes. They are not the only local teachers responsible for teaching English, however. Due to the quotas set for the number of civil servant teachers that can be hired, and also in part due to an oversupply of people trained for secondary school English education, an instructor position was created that allows for schools to hire local instructors to teach regular and after-school English classes on a contract basis when tenured teachers are unavailable (Kim & Han, 2002). Schools must apply for permission and funding from their local education office to hire them, with criteria based on the needs of the schools and districts. However, as with NESTs, English instructors are generally not seen as legitimate teachers by other faculty, and they lack the institutional support and access to the array of in-service training programs afforded to tenured teachers (Lee & Kim, 2016). In addition, they are hired on yearly contracts, leading to systemic turnover. Therefore, as with the NESTs and the full-time teachers, new English instructors face unresolved issues as well, such as being on the margins of the school system and having a lack of institutional knowledge for teaching English to draw from.

Connecting Teacher Education to Classrooms

Returning to pedagogy, a major challenge for teacher education, in Korea and elsewhere in Asia (e.g., Zein, 2016a,b), has been connecting teacher development programs with teachers in the context of authentic classrooms. One problem for pre-service education is that the practicum, at eight weeks, is quite short. Another issue is that even though an English teaching demonstration is

part of the teacher qualification exam, not all pre-service teachers have a chance to observe many English classes, and only about half have the opportunity of teaching English during their practicum (Jung & Choi, 2011). This is because in normal circumstances pre-service teachers, regardless of their specialty, are paired with homeroom teachers for the practicum. Therefore, they get an opportunity to observe and practice teaching a variety of subjects; however, there is no guarantee that they get a chance to teach English or their subject of specialization during the practicum.

Problems with the practicum notwithstanding, there have been a number of positive changes in local pre-service teacher education. For one, Korea has embraced the sociocultural turn (see Johnson, 2006). In contrast to the transmission model of education evident in the traditional way that teachers were educated, policy makers have accepted that learning to teach is a situated and social process. Education departments are now evaluated by criteria including learner centeredness, collaboration, reflection, and inclusion of student-led teaching demonstrations in coursework. Microteaching now constitutes a core element of many pedagogy courses, something shown to be effective in raising conceptual awareness of trainees while also fostering their pedagogical development (Moodie & Nam, 2016).

As for in-service teaching, with myriad off-site and online programs to choose from, Korea became the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) leader in terms of in-service teacher education contact hours (Kim, 2009). However, Korea is not necessarily a leader in the efficacy of its in-service teacher education as there are some significant issues regarding the mode of instruction. The main English programs – the six-month, intensive in-service English teacher training course and the two-week Teach English in English certification courses – do not involve situated learning. They occur on university campuses while teachers are on leave or during holidays, leaving the training decoupled from the context of their workplaces both in terms of location and time. Because of this, the efficacy of these programs has been called into question (Hayes, 2012; Kim et al., 2010; Moodie & Nam, 2016).

However, some positive changes for in-service teacher development have come from grassroots initiatives and innovative programs that situate learning with teachers in their classrooms and that occur within communities of practice. For instance, new teachers now partake in mentoring programs during their first semester of teaching, and research from Korea (Chang, 2015) and elsewhere (Moir et al., 2009; Strong, 2009) has shown how mentoring programs provide important personal and professional support for new teachers. Through reflection and engagement with the professional discourse, these programs help mentees develop practical skills in the context of their nascent teaching practice.

Butler and Yeom (2016) showed that mentoring can occur online too. Their case study of an online peer-coaching program involved having five participants videorecord three lessons and submit a self-reflection from each to the researchers. Then, each lesson was watched and assessed by two peers. After this, participants were asked to reflect on this process, considering the differences between

their self-assessments and those from their peers. The researchers showed that – in addition to helping teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge – the program improved their *dialogic competence*, that is, their ability to express their experience and professional knowledge with empathy, openness, and a willingness to change. While there are still many online courses which teachers take from home, alone, this study demonstrated a potentially more efficacious alternative to numerous online video lecture-based courses that make up so much of the current in-service teacher education courses in Korea.

In order to address some of the aforementioned challenges that primary school teachers have with teaching English, Ahn (2018) presented a model for teacher education that focuses on developing primary school teachers' identities as English teachers. She had trainees complete pre- and post-surveys, write autobiographic essays, and keep learning journals during an ELT course. In doing so, the teachers were able to conceptualize and express how their identities as English teachers differed from their identities as homeroom teachers and that “their English teacher identities changed and developed in their relationships with students, other teachers, and administrators within the context the teachers were located” (p. 101).

These example programs (Ahn, 2018; Butler & Yeom, 2016; Chang, 2015) have at least two important things in common regarding the state of English teacher education in Korea. First, they come from perspectives seeing teacher learning as continuing professional development situated and occurring within communities of practice. As such, they have much more potential for improving ELT practices than the asynchronous online or off-site programs that make up the bulk of training programs. Secondly, they address an issue of particular relevance for Korea in terms of fostering stronger collegial relationships and communities of practice among faculty members. As Park and Lee (2015) demonstrated, collegial interaction in Korean schools occurs much less frequently than in Western countries, such as England, Finland, and the United States. Korea has a more centralized, rigid, and hierarchical education bureaucracy than in these other countries. Because of this, and because of cultural norms extending from Korea's Confucian past, Korean teachers are often reticent to express their issues and seek help from elder colleagues than teachers in Western settings. These factors present barriers for developing stronger communities of practice and for facilitating more informal professional development to occur in schools.

Challenges with the Curriculum and Materials

The national English curriculum aims for primary students to develop basic communicative skills, develop an interest in English, develop confidence in English, gain a better appreciation of foreign and local cultures through learning English, and be able to communicate naturally about general topics and daily life (Chung & Choi, 2016; MOE, 1997). To do so, the curriculum promotes a communicative and task-based approach to language teaching with English as the language of instruction. However, since its inception, as in other countries (Butler, 2011), having teachers teach communicatively and in English

has been an ongoing challenge (Moodie & Nam, 2016). One of the challenges is that teachers' inexperience with CLT and EMI as learners of English presents an experiential gap that they must overcome (Moodie, 2016). Another challenge comes from the revolving door of English teachers described above. As teachers rotate in and out of English teaching assignments, they are less likely to develop the pedagogical content knowledge required for communicative teaching. Another reason is that Korean primary school teachers "generally harbor negative and unconstructive feelings about curriculum reform" (Park & Sung, 2013, p. 15). There have been so many changes to the curriculum over the years, and these changes get passed on to teachers from the top down, often suddenly, each coming with a burden of extra paperwork. For these reasons, teachers' commitment to implementing reform has been low. Other reasons teachers avoid CLT include large class sizes, a lack of CLT training, and a lack of appropriate materials (Jeon, 2009b; Whitehead, 2017).

Regarding the materials, teachers must use government-approved textbooks, and an array of publishers compete for their respective textbooks to be selected by schools (Moodie & Nam, 2016). Despite the available choices, research has shown that teachers are generally dissatisfied with the textbooks as they are ill-structured for CLT (Butler et al., 2018; Chung & Choi, 2016; Moodie, 2015, 2018). For instance, Butler et al. (2018) showed that despite directives for including tasks, a few activities actually could accurately be described as such: "Textbooks were differentiated across grade levels mainly through the manipulation of linguistic elements ... resulting in fewer opportunities for meaningful target language use needed to stimulate children's language development" (p. 285). Indeed, classroom-based research has suggested that task-based language teaching (TBLT) rarely occurs (Moodie, 2018; Moodie & Nam, 2016). Textbooks have strict guidelines regarding the number of words and syntactic structures permitted, which presents a challenge to developing tasks and communicative activities beyond the superficial level. Developing improved materials which better match curricular guidelines should be a high priority. With this in mind, this chapter will turn to the suggestions for future directions for teacher education in Korea to address these challenges.

Conclusion: Future Directions for English-Language Teacher Education in Korea

To summarize, this chapter has described the following challenges for primary school English teacher education in Korea:

- 1 Issues with the construct validity of the employment exam create negative washback, and there are no measures in place to ensure that pre-service teachers specializing in ELT will teach English once hired.
- 2 A revolving door of English teachers and a lack of long-term commitments to ELT in Korean primary schools have made it challenging to train and maintain an effective cadre of English teachers.

- 3 Integrating NESTs and Korean English instructors in the public-school system has been an ongoing challenge, and there is a lack of support for their professional development.
- 4 Official training programs tend to be decontextualized, occurring off-site and therefore one step removed from classroom practice.
- 5 Materials are inadequate for meeting learning outcomes and facilitating of curricular guidelines pertaining to CLT and TBLT.

To finish, this chapter suggests ways to address each of these challenges.

First, it is important to mitigate the negative washback from the employment exam. Pre-service teachers have no choice but to focus on learning the range of content required to pass it; however, this comes at the expense of learning more practical pedagogical skills. Changing the format and general nature of the exam is unlikely. With teaching being a highly competitive civil servant career, the fairness and openness of the hiring process is seen as imperative. Therefore, one possible solution would be to have a longer induction period once people are hired, for example, by shadowing a mentor teacher for a semester. A comparable solution would be to move up the employment exam a few months so as to reserve the final semester as a mentoring period. In addition, it would be efficacious to look for ways to match specializations with teaching positions, for example, finding ways for those specializing in ELT to teach English full time so that the extra pre-service training in that area is not wasted.

Second, in relation to this last point, it is crucial to address the turnover of English teachers caused by the teacher assignment and rotation system. The constant turnover of English teachers is an underlying issue that exacerbates the challenges to English teacher education and the consistent problems that new English teachers face regarding pedagogical content knowledge and materials. The impact of the teacher assignment and rotation system “requires further research, which could be conducted in terms of teacher turnover, teacher well-being, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes” (Moodie, 2019, p. 83). Another step would be ensuring that teachers who partake in specialized ELT training, such as those who specialize in ELT as undergraduates and those who partake in the intensive in-service programs, actually teach English. As of now, there is no concrete policy which assigns teachers based on their specializations. In addition, as Moodie and Nam (2016) stated, “there is a need for researchers and policy makers to look at the bigger picture and consider the role of English in primary school teacher education. For example, it might be worth exploring the feasibility of training full-time English teachers in addition to having all trainees learn a little about ELT” (pp. 70–71).

Third, it is necessary to better integrate non-permanent faculty (the NESTs and Korean instructors) into the education system and to provide them additional and higher-quality professional development programs. Better support systems and better mediation is needed. As Yim and Hwang (2019) observed, it is important that contract English teachers “experience legitimate peripheral participation and feel a sense of belonging” (p. 72). For now, they generally do

not. Administrators should recruit experts to develop stronger programs and to provide funding for NESTs' self-directed professional development, such as for enrolling in programs or attending seminars and conferences. As for the Korean English instructors, allowing them to participate in the in-service training programs designed for tenured teachers would be a straightforward and cost-effective way to improve the situation.

Fourth, it is essential to develop better teacher training practices by continuing to link teacher education with teachers in the context of their classrooms. As stated above, Korean teachers partake in the most in-service training among OECD nations (Kim, 2009); however, the effectiveness of much of this training is questionable (Moodie & Nam, 2016), particularly regarding the asynchronous online programs. It is important for Korea to address the experiential gap with CLT and EMI so that teachers can better understand how to enact policy (Moodie, 2016); however, doing so requires connecting teacher training with teachers in the context of their work. The official mentoring programs are a welcome addition, but they have room for improvement. For instance, the efficacy of mentoring is impeded by the fact that participants need to visit mentors at other schools, that participants need official permission to visit mentors during the school day, and that the mentors also need to be trained how to mentor (Chang, 2015). In this regard, mentoring and other programs involving communities of practice could benefit from increasing the dialogic competence of their participants (Butler & Yeom, 2016). It would be helpful to look for ways to increase the collegiality and communities of practice of teachers, and to bridge the distance between English subject teachers, homeroom teachers, NESTs, and Korean English instructors.

Fifth, developing higher-quality materials is essential. English teachers in Korea generally follow their textbooks and teachers' guides closely (Garton, 2014); however, public-school education is falling far short of the objective of having all primary students be able to communicate naturally about daily life and general topics. Part of the problem is the materials. Textbooks, while nominally communicative and task-supported, are in fact structural, following present-practice-produce methods for the most part (Butler et al., 2018). Developing better materials and teaching guides that better conform to the principles of CLT and TBLT is needed. This is also true of the supplementary materials being used. Indischool.com is a private forum where Korean teachers share materials and advice; however, it would be helpful if research were done investigating the pedagogic value of the ELT materials being shared. For instance, games are very popular on Indischool.com, and they are recommended in the English curriculum. In fact, they are the most used activities in primary school English classes (Garton, 2014). However, the pedagogical value of many popular games is questionable – while they are engaging for students, they tend not support meaningful development of language skills (Moodie, 2015). It is important to develop supplementary materials that better conform to curricular aims and that have clear pedagogic value. Doing so has been a challenge, however, and a big reason for this has been the consistent turnover of English teachers in the system.

Recommitting pedagogically, not just nominally, to CLT and TBLT would be a welcome direction, but to do so, it is necessary to have a consistent cohort of teachers committed to ELT long term.

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