Chapter 9
Leadership for Instructional Uncertainty Management: Revisiting School Leadership in South Korea's Context of Educational Reform

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Abstract Based on a thorough review of research about South Korean school leaders and their impact on school improvement, the present chapter provides an analysis of how they lead and manage schools in ways that soften the test-oriented mindset while promoting constructive changes that seek to nurture all students' academic engagement and wellbeing. Special analytical attention is devoted to understanding how South Korean school leaders work with teachers and other stakeholders to creatively overcome the sharp contradiction between the new visions of education that are transformative and the prevailing rigid school structure and culture that prevents true educational experimentation. The chapter concludes with discussions regarding the possibilities of broadening traditional conceptualizations of educational leadership by integrating an international comparative perspective into leadership research and theorization.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, extensive research has been conducted on school leadership, as it has been identified as an integral determinant of school capacity and effectiveness (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018). Notwithstanding the progress, most debates on school leadership have tended to evolve in universal terms

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without close analytic attention to the societal context in which the notion of leadership is shaped and its practice exercised (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Ham et al., 2015). Revisiting the notion of school leadership in South Korea's unique societal context of schooling, this chapter sheds light on the relationship between leadership and school improvement, with particular attention given to how school leadership may be conceptualized alternatively as a social process through which school leaders assist teachers to successfully deal with new discursive constellations of demands for improved education.

In any modern society in the world, one can hardly question the legitimacy of the belief that the utmost concern of public education is to educate youth to become both competent individuals and responsible citizens (Fiala, 2006). The future of society is widely believed to be determined by the quality of education that youth receive in school (Dee, 2004; Hanushek & Kimko, 2000). Like many other countries in Asia Pacific and beyond, Korea has also recently witnessed the rise of scholarly and policy discourses on educational reforms for tomorrow's schools in which creative and innovative approaches to teaching are emphasized to help all students find their learning more meaningful and engaging.

The function of education as a futuristic public project, however, is subject to substantial doubt in today's educational environment in Korea. As academic performance in the so-called core subject areas has been strongly emphasized in the context of the high-stakes testing regime, teachers are under the strong pressure of accountability, finding it hard to be motivated to help students engage deeply in authentic learning experiences. As a Washington Post article noted, "South Korea is the scene of perhaps the world's fiercest competition for a top-of-the-line education," where a child even in an average family turns into "an achievement-seeking machine, with parents providing the pressuring, planning, and funding" (Harlan, 2012). The implication of such a gloomy diagnosis of the current scene of education in Korea is clear—in spite of the urgency and importance of promoting more meaningful and diverse learning opportunities for all students, the mission is unlikely to be achieved without truly comprehensive change in the whole educational ecology.

In this chapter, we first discuss the current societal change underway in Korea and its challenges for public schooling. We then describe a new epistemic model of education that has recently been evolving in Korea in an effort toward redesigning schools. In line with this new model, we move further on to the notion of leadership as viewed from an instructional uncertainty management perspective, which sheds new light on the relationship between leadership and school improvement in terms of the social process through which increasing societal demands for improved education for all children are effectively addressed collaboratively. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussions regarding the importance of nurturing a healthy socio-ecological environment where effective leadership for school improvement is no longer evidenced by anecdotal observations but by everyday practices that unfold in all schools in a sustainable way.

Looking Inside Out: Challenges with Public Schooling in Korea

For more than half a century, public education has represented a key policy domain for Korea's economic development and sociopolitical progress. Korea, having risen from the rubble of four decades of oppression under colonial rule and a devastating war, has now become a role-model state whose success is considered worthy of being emulated by many developing countries across the world. In less than half a century, Korea has built one of the world's leading economies and has become a country of technological innovation. Further, it has also made a successful transition from a military dictatorship to a dynamic polity of democracy. These developments throughout the modern history of Korea are widely believed to have been possible largely because of the nation's strong emphasis on the value of education.

Not surprisingly, Korea's educational profile is a dazzling example of a success story to many outside observers. Political leaders around the world, such as the former U.S. President Barack Obama (2011), lauded Korea for its rigorous education system and the society-wide valorization of education. In addition to the close-to-universal enrollment rates for both elementary and secondary education, the quality of education, as measured by students' academic performance, is also very impressive. Korea has long been one of the top-performing countries in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

While well known for its sterling performance in large-scale international assessments in a range of cognitive domains, Korea has suffered from the criticism that its education system is effective in producing good test-takers without fostering meaningful learning. Students have usually been viewed as passive recipients of a standardized package of knowledge for tests rather than as active agents of learning and creative producers of knowledge. Inside observers of public education in Korea have long been well aware of this dark side of the impressive academic performance of their students. As standardized measures of academic performance are heavily emphasized in everyday discursive practices of education in Korea's high-stakes testing regime, few students actively seek opportunities to engage in authentic learning experiences.

The unquestioned emphasis placed on the testing and sorting of students leads to highly competitive and pressurized student culture. It is quite common for most students in Korea to suffer from extreme competition both in and out of school, as education is seen as a tool for status competition. This is a competition not just between students but also between their parents, inasmuch as many parents believe in the symbolic value of their children's educational success as an important status marker for family. A New York Times opinion article described Korea's education system as "a system driven by overzealous parents and a leviathan private [cram school] industry … [which results in] the physical and psychological costs that students are forced to bear" (Koo, 2014). In an educational culture permeated by grueling competition, meaningful and rich learning experiences fostered by caring and collaborative

interaction among students are beyond imagination. Although Korean students' performance is remarkably higher than their peers in most other countries across the world, their academic confidence and enjoyment have consistently been reported to be very low (Song & Jung, 2011). Further, a substantial proportion of students feel unhappy and alienated in school largely regardless of their academic performance, which has now become a central topic in research and policy debates in Korea (Choi et al., 2013).

The current education system of Korea, which is geared toward "achievement contests," systematically and inevitably produces a large number of "losers" at the expense of a small portion of "winners" in the zero-sum game of competition in public education. With the exception of those students who are doing quite well on tests, the majority of students are rather "invisible," literally wasting much of their time at school. The accumulation of their wasted time throughout their school lives consequently leads to serious challenges in developing positive self-concepts and planning future careers. Even the high achievers are not really the winners, because instead of becoming empowered and responsible citizens, many of them are liable to become passive consumers of a fixed set of knowledge rather than critical users and creative producers of knowledge.

Scholarly and policy efforts to develop an integrative and holistic approach to teaching and learning as an alternative model of education, as currently being envisioned and tested in Korea in various ways by both researchers and practitioners with support from the government, can be seen as a response to such a criticism to help future citizens grow as lifelong learners and creative problem solvers so that they can gain and produce the knowledge they need as they move forward in their lives. The next section describes one strand of such efforts exerted in Korea to redesign its public education.

Moving Beyond Complacency: Leading Toward New Possibilities in Education

In recent years, newly emerging policy discourses and initiatives in Korea tend to highlight the centrality of creating an educational environment in which all students can experience authentic intellectual achievement through exposure to creative ways of thinking and learning (Cha, Ahn, Ju, & Ham, 2016; Joo et al., 2016). The 2015 revision of the national curriculum standards of Korea, for instance, puts strong emphasis on nurturing all learners' creative capacities and diverse talents, i.e., student-centered education mindful of creativity, diversity, and equity. Such new models of education sharpen the importance of school leaders' effective leadership—for example, they should effectively help teachers build a healthy school culture in which all teachers are encouraged to continuously grow as reflective and innovative practitioners of instructional design and implementation.

This movement in Korea is not an idiosyncratic case, but this is part of a global trend. The dominant world-model of public schooling, which has lasted over the past two centuries with few drastic modifications, is currently undergoing substantial reform in many parts of the world. Such reform initiatives are typically rooted in the reasonable doubt concerning the model's adequacy for educating competent and responsible members of today's changing world—the world in which we witness new social changes that are intertwined with increased human mobility and rapid technological innovation, all on a global scale as well as at a local level. Although the dominant model of public schooling that has survived until today was once quite successful in terms of its instrumental efficiency in teaching massive groups of future citizens a standardized set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the utility and legitimacy of such a traditional model of schooling is increasingly subject to doubts and criticisms internationally.

In an effort to develop a conceptual framework for redesigning the traditional model of schooling, an alternative approach to schooling—often called the *yungbokhap* model of education—is currently being envisioned in scholarly and policy circles in Korea.[1] This alternative model emphasizes the centrality of the role of education in promoting all students' authentic and meaningful learning experiences. The central point where this alternative model departs from the traditional model is that the alternative model problematizes the practice of empowering some students at the expense of many others who are alienated from deep engagement in meaningful learning, while the traditional model of schooling tends to keep producing visible success stories at the cost of unheard stories of failure. If we understand education in a democracy as a futuristic public project for society as a whole, then education should be built and designed to contribute to the welfare of all students, who will determine the future of society.

This alternative model of education is based on a socio-ecological perspective that sheds light on the importance of nurturing a larger educational ecology in which sustainable school improvement is constantly fostered from inside schools rather than being imposed externally in a top-down manner. One of the ways in which this model may be understood is to assess education based on the *ABCD* framework, which stands for *autonomy*, *bridgeability*, *contextuality*, and *diversity* (Cha et al., 2016). This framework is an effort to provide a large yet realistic picture on how educational reform initiatives may develop in Korea and beyond. Below, we briefly discuss school leadership with reference to this framework.

[1]The Korean term *yungbokhap*, roughly translated, means holistic integration. Earlier versions of the *yungbokhap* model of education focused solely on curriculum integration, but the latest version of the model is conceptualized as an integrative and holistic approach to teaching and learning, not only in terms of classroom practices but also in terms of administrative supports and policy arrangements at multiple layers of the educational ecology. The Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), a government-supported research institute, has conducted extensive policy-oriented research on a range of related topics. However, it should be noted that there have been also criticisms on this new model. The most common criticisms center on the earlier model's narrow focus on curriculum integration. For the evolution of the model and the criticisms, see Cha et al. (2016).

Autonomy: An important aspect of effective leadership is that school leaders do not fail to pay careful attention to helping teachers become professionally autonomous to constantly improve their teaching. In recent decades, educational discourse in Korea has been problematizing the phenomenon that students are viewed as passive recipients of a standardized package of information and knowledge. Educational policy priorities have shifted the focus from authoritative structures of knowledge ready for consumption to increased student empowerment and learner centrism. Student learning is now understood as being facilitated and enriched through promoting inquiry-based and discovery-oriented approaches to curriculum and instruction. In light of the importance of individual students' active and self-directed engagement in learning, students are increasingly portrayed as capable individuals whose learning processes evolve toward greater autonomy and self-reflection in their growth. In accordance with such a discursive shift, the profession of teaching is increasingly understood as a highly complex job that involves numerous instances of classroom teaching where immediate professional decision-making is required to foster student engagement in active learning. As autonomous professionals, teachers are not only curriculum implementers but also curriculum theorists and instructional designers. A high level of school autonomy is also needed so that teachers may be given wide latitude and professional discretion to make important decisions in curriculum development and implementation.

Bridgeablility: It is important for school leaders to help teachers understand schools as collaborative and dialogic communities of inquiry in which differences in knowledge, experiences, and perspectives may be creatively bridged over through a variety of methods of interdisciplinary thinking and problem-solving skills. The changing discursive construction of public education in Korea sheds light on the importance of creating an educational environment where students are encouraged to become active and entrepreneurial learners who experience authentic intellectual achievement through interdisciplinary approaches of thinking and learning. In contrast to the traditional view of the school curriculum as a collection of segmented sets of knowledge to be consumed by students, today's students are expected to become active agents of learning and creative producers of knowledge. Most educational scholars and policymakers today would consider it problematic if students remain passive recipients of a standardized package of knowledge, even if they demonstrate high performance on tests. In line with this transition, the image of learners is shifting toward an integrative knowledge designer who is capable of contributing to knowledge building through creative methods of deconstructing and reassembling different bodies of knowledge. Student learning that involves such an interdisciplinary and inquiry-oriented model of education also requires a new image of teachers because such a model inevitably requires a high level of intra-school collaboration whereby teachers can not only learn from diverse experiences and perspectives but also enrich their instructional practice. This accounts for why a range of educational reform ideas and policies in Korea and many other countries commonly highlight the image of teachers as professionals who are empowered to actively develop curriculum models and instructional strategies, not only by themselves but also in collaboration with their colleagues.

Contextuality: Effective school leaders are expected to work closely with teachers to build a school culture where the meaning of the curriculum is not restricted to the "text" of curricular content, but it extends to the "context" that the curriculum can possibly evoke for students. Educational reform ideas in Korea have stressed the importance of nurturing students' rich learning experiences that are meaningfully re-contextualized in relation to various layers and aspects of socio-historical reality. Students are expected to grow as lifelong learners and creative problem solvers so that they can gain and produce the kind of knowledge and skills they need as they move forward in their lives. Thus, learning is seen as more than a simple process of mastering a predetermined set of knowledge that is often alien to individual students. Rather, learning is conceptualized as a process of students' active interaction with their social context. Such a conceptualization of learning recognizes students' own contextual positioning as an anchoring point from which learning can unfold in a variety of ways constructively. What this kind of learning entails is students' active interpretation of and participation in multiple layers of social context of which they themselves are part either physically or genealogically. Teaching strategies that are consistent with such authentic and meaningful learning are understood as processes of fostering individual learners' ability to creatively re-contextualize knowledge so that it may be actively reinterpreted and given meaning from the learners' perspectives.

Diversity: School leaders are obliged to find various ways to support teachers to ensure that they understand the importance of educators' keen awareness of student diversity and the effective use of such diversity as a valuable asset for teaching and learning. Students are diverse, and individual students' distinctiveness and uniqueness must be given special attention so that they can experience greater engagement with meaningful learning. Contemporary democratic values that valorize individual personhood as the fundamental basis of one's distinctive and special roles in society undergird various public policies in education for empowering all learners regardless of their socio-cultural group memberships. Curriculum standards and contents in Korea have also been, although slowly, revised to represent more diverse perspectives and possibilities. Furthermore, cultivating the diversity of human talents is very important in today's globalized world. Our future citizens will no longer live in isolated societies. In the globally interconnected world, human activities inevitably involve a greater degree of exchange of ideas and other human products. Competent individuals are no longer those who understand how to conform but rather those who can challenge and innovate from different perspectives. The rise of such a new social reality makes it an important social priority to ensure that all students are given enough and equitable opportunities to grow as competent lifelong learners who can develop their own talents in unique ways. Such a diversity of talents is an essential condition for individual citizens to initiate collaborative and transformative engagement with their local, national, and transnational communities.

In the next section, we move further on to the topic of leadership in the context of the social demand for, and evolution of, a new educational paradigm in Korea, i.e., the context of the changing world where schooling as a social institution is no longer legitimated by the traditional one-size-fits-all conception of education. In particular,

an instructional uncertainty management perspective is introduced to expand our understanding of the relationship between leadership and school improvement.

Working Toward School Improvement: Leadership Amid Instructional Uncertainty

Rather than viewing the school curriculum as a collection of segmented sets of knowledge to be passively consumed by students, newly emerging epistemic models of education tend to highlight the importance of creating a new educational environment—an educational ecology in which students are provided with ample support to become active learners who experience "authentic achievement" (Newman, 1996) by participating in rich opportunities for engaging in creative ways of thinking and learning (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Robinson, 2015). The 2015 revision of Korea's national curriculum standards was certainly a significant progress toward such a new model of education despite dissonance between policy intentions and actual effects.

Such a new model for promoting ambitious learning for all students presupposes a greater level of importance in school leaders' effective leadership. Non-traditional and innovative approaches to teaching and learning inevitably necessitate principals and other school leaders to play a central role; they should effectively support teachers in building and sustaining a healthy school climate in which teachers are encouraged to continuously grow as reflective and innovative practitioners of instructional design and implementation (Hairon & Chai, 2017; Rowan, Raudenbush, & Cheong, 1993). School leaders who demonstrate effective leadership are characterized as helping teachers collaborate with one another to constructively challenge and gain new insights into their teaching practices (Ham, Duyar, & Gumus, 2015; Ham & Kim, 2015). Teachers under such leadership are likely to feel less uncomfortable with confronting and managing instructional uncertainties that would result from integrating non-traditional teaching into their instructional practice.

Teaching is often an uncertain and complex task; instructional decisions with respect to how to promote student learning in a particular classroom environment can never be made with absolute certainty (Floden & Buchmann, 1993; Labaree, 2000). Further, the practice of teaching is, by nature, context-specific and full of situated-complexities, so that it cannot always be theorized in a generic way of explanation. Indeed, the profession of teaching is often seen as "the very prototype of the idiographic, individual, clinical enterprise" (Shulman, 2004, p. 139). This accounts for why teachers usually have a wider range of concerns than educational administrators and policymakers, whose attention is usually focused on a relatively small number of educational agenda items in relation to certain reform ideals that are often alien to concrete realities that teachers experience in their local schools (Kennedy, 2005).

The notion of instructional uncertainty is useful here, which is conceptualized as a state of doubt or a feeling of incertitude about particular instructional situations as perceived by teachers (Cha & Ham, 2012; Ham, 2011). Instructional uncertainty arises from teachers' recognition of instructional complexities that result from their efforts to use non-routine teaching strategies for fostering students' active engagement in authentic learning opportunities. While there are a variety of non-routine instructional approaches, most would agree that a central feature that underlies these approaches is the pedagogical philosophy that highlights the importance of students' engagement in inquiry-based learning, for which teachers minimize direct instruction and attempt to lead students through a series of questions and activities to help them understand, discover, and even create new knowledge (Fosnot, 1996; Weimer, 2002). As the image of good teaching constantly changes from unidirectional knowledge delivery to multidirectional and multimodal interaction, teachers are often situated "in an environment of substantive uncertainty, [where] pedagogical doctrines rarely provide procedural templates of sufficient specificity to guide [their] day-to-day practice effectively" (Bidwell, 2001, p. 106).

Teachers often prefer conventional teaching to protect themselves from the uncertainties that could emerge from students' unexpected reactions (Kennedy, 2005; McNeil, 1986). When teachers use instructional strategies that open up possibilities for students to engage in inquiry-based authentic learning, teaching becomes a more non-routine and unpredictable job, whereby instructional uncertainty inevitably increases. This is especially the case in Korea because most students expect teachers to be authoritative instructors who deliver the curricular contents to students in efficient ways—i.e., in ways that lessen the cognitive load on the part of students for the sake of test scores and formal academic records. As teachers put more effort to incorporate innovative—usually constructivist—strategies into their classroom teaching, they are faced with greater instructional uncertainty; that is, the practice of teaching becomes less reducible to predictable routines or "defensive teaching" (McNeil, 1986) practices, thereby exposing teachers to a greater extent to the notion of "teaching as an improvisational activity" (Heaton, 2000, p. 60) that requires "moment-to-moment responsiveness" (p. 63) in interacting with students. In most schools in Korea, neither teachers nor students are very familiar with the practice of such non-routine teaching and learning.

Such unfamiliarity and even discomfort with instructional uncertainty sharply contrasts with the increasing societal demands for a new model of improved education in which the practice of teaching is understood as a complex and non-routine job performed by highly professional educators. Working with this tension, teachers often benefit from reaching out to other teachers (Cha & Ham, 2012; Ham, 2011), whereby they can not only "reduce inappropriate pressures for certainty" (Floden & Buchmann, 1993, p. 380) but also exchange practical suggestions for dealing with uncertainty. That is, "[i]f the complexity of the task [in teaching] generates uncertainty, then lateral relations between [teachers] can serve as a source of problem-solving and processing of information as well as coordination" (Cohen, Deal, Meyer, & Scott, 1979, p. 21). By sharing understandings as well as exchanging ideas in an interactive and participative manner, teacher learning at school becomes

"distinctly organizational [as] it relies on the combined experiences, perspectives, and capabilities of a variety of [teachers as] organizational members [of a school]" (Rait, 1995, p. 72). This accounts for why "[n]etworks of colleague-to-colleague consultation and advice … [are often] more capable of coordinating the work of colleagues than the formal administrative hierarchy" (Bidwell, 2001, p. 105).

Such instructional uncertainty arising from promoting students' engagement in authentic learning can be more successfully managed, rather than simply avoided, if teachers work in a school where the principal and other school leaders demonstrate effective leadership (Ham et al., 2013; Ham & Kim, 2015). School leaders who effectively perform leadership with a transformative vision are keen to provide teachers with opportunities to revisit and improve their teaching, thereby "helping teachers generate reforms internally" (Youngs & King, 2002, p. 643). They are facilitators of teacher growth, who promote and sustain a school climate for continuous learning by keeping teachers well informed about various possibilities for constructively challenging and constantly providing new insights into their teaching practices. Such school leaders also function as supportive others who facilitate uncertainty management as "sources of information, collaborators in information gathering, evaluators of information, or buffers against information" (Brashers, 2001, p. 485). This type of leadership helps teachers reflect on their own practices and consider alternative frameworks for understanding teaching and learning, thereby assisting teachers with confronting instructional uncertainty that arises from their efforts to improve instructional practices.

Considering that innovative teaching inevitably accompanies a greater level of instructional uncertainty than conventional teaching, not all teachers would be readily willing to promote students' ambitious learning in their classroom teaching without effective leadership demonstrated by their school leaders. In this respect, effective leadership can be conceptualized as leadership for instructional uncertainty management—whereby teachers are encouraged and helped to collaboratively manage instructional uncertainties that emanate from their efforts to successfully integrate non-traditional strategies and innovative ideas into the planning and implementation of their classroom teaching to promote all students' meaningful learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

One might plausibly expect that school leadership would not matter much in Korea given its highly centralized education system compared to many Western countries. This is based on the popular assumption that teachers in a centralized system are passive practitioners who implement mandated policies. However, research has shown that

> even under an extremely controlled education system, teachers can still enjoy the necessary autonomy in expanding the required objectives for their teaching, deepening the coverage of what they are required to teach, and reasonably defending or accepting criticism and suggestions offered. (Wang & Paine, 2003, p. 92)

What this suggests, we believe, is that schools share some characteristics as "loosely coupled" (Weick, 1976) organizations even in centralized systems of education, where school leadership can still make a meaningful difference in teachers' instructional practice, i.e., the technical core of schools. Further, educational governance in Korea has recently undergone slow yet incremental changes toward an increased degree of local and school-based autonomy in educational administration and management, rendering it imperative that school leaders play a greater role than before in school improvement and capacity building efforts.

One might also suspect that school leaders in Korea have rather limited latitude in school improvement due to highly prescribed national curricula. This seems only partially true. In recent decades, academic and policy discourses on education around the world have shifted their focus from authoritative structures of knowledge ready for consumption to increased student empowerment and learner centrism (Gill & Thomson, 2017; McEneaney & Meyer, 2000). It is now largely acknowledged internationally that student learning can be facilitated and enriched through promoting inquiry-based and discovery-oriented approaches to curriculum and instruction (Cohen et al., 1993; Rennie, Venville, & Wallace, 2011; Zhao, 2012). In accordance with such a discursive shift, many educational reformers in Korea have also ruminated on how to create school environments in which teachers are constantly encouraged to develop and use instructional strategies in order to foster student engagement in authentic and meaningful learning opportunities.

Such an evolving educational landscape of Korea, coupled with the ongoing movement toward a lesser degree of centralization in public administration for education, makes the leadership performance demonstrated by school leaders even more important—many school leaders effectively collaborate with teachers to improve schools in accordance with new transformative visions of education, while there are yet many other school leaders who let their schools remain unchanged following the inertia of the past practices, either unwittingly or cynically. Effective school leaders assist teachers to confront, rather than avoid, uncertainties that arise from transformations of practices in, and underlying assumptions about, teaching and learning. Teachers may better recognize and inquire into various kinds of instructional uncertainty when school leaders provide the necessary administrative and professional support for teachers to become "professionally creative and autonomous" (Shulman, 2004, p. 151) enough to develop and use instructional strategies to implement more innovative and reflective teaching.

School leaders should understand that teachers' experience of "uncertainty is an essential driving force in teaching" (Floden & Buchmann, 1993, p. 380). It is because the recognition of uncertainty in teaching makes teachers "stop and think and want to find out more. … Being aware of the uncertainties [involved in] teaching … can be [a constructive] attitude towards the profession of teaching" (Munthe, 2007, p. 17). In this respect, effective school leaders often encourage teachers to become empowered agents who contribute to building and sustaining "collaborative cultures" (Fullan, 2008, p. 17), whereby teachers may collectively "engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice" (Elmore, 2004, p. 127) and thus effectively manage, rather than simply try to eliminate, possible sources of instructional uncertainty.

Despite the increasing importance of effective school leadership in Korea, many school leaders find it hard to demonstrate effective leadership. One reason for this comes from the fact that there is no specialized educational track for training school principals. Principals in Korea, in most cases, were once teachers for many years; that is, they were "promoted" to the principalship, the highest level in the career ladder that only a few teachers achieve in Korea. While this means that principals in Korea have considerable expertise as educators, this does not necessarily mean that they are well prepared to translate their educational expertise into effective leadership. Since principals learned how to lead from the apprenticeship of observation while they were teachers, leadership performance varies considerably among principals depending on their personal experiences with the principals they worked with as teachers. Some sorts of specialized and systematic professional development opportunities would help them in developing leadership competencies, both prior to and after assuming the formal principalship.

In addition, teachers and principals of public schools in Korea are all civil servants who cannot work for a single school for many years but must rotate around different school districts regularly. This constant mobility of school staff gives additional challenges. Both principals and teachers should adjust themselves to new school environments, again and again, thereby finding it hard to envision a long-term perspective on leadership and followership at a school. Although this rotation policy intends to equalize educational quality among schools in different school districts, this is also a bureaucratic control over teachers, which serves as a constraining condition rather than an enabling condition for effective and sustainable school leadership. We are not proposing that this policy should be abolished or revised, but we believe that research about school leadership in Korea should pay closer attention to various conditions that shape teachers' and principals' everyday routines of practice through which they interact with each other and with their students and parents.

As a final note, we also wish to emphasise that school leadership, as an integral indicator of school capacity, cannot be independent of the larger educational ecology within which school capacity is built and sustained. A newly envisioned model of schooling will be feasible only to the extent to which such a model can take root within the larger socio-ecological environment. Unless we align our efforts across different layers of public schooling, many school leaders' effective leadership performance is likely to remain just exceptional and rare cases that would not possibly be scaled up to a large number of schools. That is, the success of a new model of education will depend on how successfully a healthy ecology for education is nurtured. This is not simply the responsibility of some school leaders but the obligation of all educators because their professional beliefs and practices collectively constitute the core component of the larger socio-ecological environment of public schooling.

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