

Analysis of the Career Coaching Parent Training Program and Its Improvement

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we analyzed how the Career Coaching Parent Training Program (CCPTP) managed to help teachers during the Free Semester of Korean middle schools. The research questions are as follows: What are the parents' perceptions of the Free Semester System and the CCPTP? What are the characteristics of parents who continuously participate in the CCPTP? And, what are the suggestions for the educational policy makers or educators to improve the CCPTP? The CCPTP is a program that parents participate in to provide support for teachers at schools with student career planning, guidance, and coaching. Focus group interviews were used for an in-depth analysis of the program and its participants. These interviews were held twice within a nine-month interval. The participants consisted of three parents who had participated in the CCPTP continuously for 3 years. Many parents felt the need for the Free Semester and the CCPTP. As participants in the CCPTP, they had precise ideas about its advantages and disadvantages, and they suggested some ways to improve.

Keywords: career coaching parent, career education, Free Semester, parent training

Introduction

The educational reality in South Korea is that it holds a competitive, academic performance-centered structure and is oriented towards admission in higher-ranking

universities (Lee, 2014). Students have high academic achievement but are not happy. For 20 years, Korean students have scored among the best in the world on the Programme for International Student Assessment, although the results of the test dropped slightly in 2015. South Korean students scored the highest grades among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, but the level of student satisfaction was very low in the survey regarding quality of life. Korean students' life satisfaction was 6.34, and was one of the lowest among OECD countries. The subjective happiness index of Korean youth was the lowest of OECD countries (Yoo & Rho, 2017). Moreover, as students progress from middle to high school, their satisfaction in life decreased. This was due to the parents' prioritization of their children's education, and parents' expectation of their children to proceed to first-class universities. It also was attributed

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to parents being absent when children needed their guidance, such as when planning their careers.

Given this reality, the Ministry of Education introduced the Free Semester System to improve the Korean education system in 2016. The Free Semester System, designed to support students' happy school lives, allows middle school students to develop and design their future careers for one semester. During the Free Semester, students are exempt from tests and grades and have a chance to experience and explore various careers to help them design their future career paths.

Now that all South Korean middle schools have implemented the Free Semester System, people are taking more interest in the Career Coach Parent Training Program (CCPTP). The CCPTP is a program that parents participate in to support teachers at schools that provide student career planning guidance and coaching during the Free Semester. The Korean Ministry of Education explicitly stated that the necessity of adopting the Free Semester System lies in career education (Ministry of Education, 2013 & 2015). Lee (2013) insisted that the Free Semester is effective because a career-centered Free Semester is in line with the educational philosophy and basic direction of career education. Therefore, the introduction of the Free Semester System needs to be approached from the viewpoint of career education. The Ministry of Education announced in 2015 a plan to use parents as career coaches in the 'Free Semester plan'. The "career coaching parent" cooperates with career guidance counselors, homeroom teachers, and others to perform career guidance and career counseling as a career experience assistant.

Following this announcement in 2015, each Office of Education in Korea has provided the CCPTP for parents to assist homeroom teachers and career-counselling teachers. The CCPTP was established to assist parents who participated in schools as career development assistants. To educate and assist parents, Parents Service Centers have been established, and a separate budget for various programs is being implemented. However, the quality and the result of the programs have not been examined. The effectiveness of the CCPTP, designed to enhance parents' ability to support students' career exploration, has not yet been verified, due to the lack of basic research on the program's effectiveness.

The existing research on the effects of CCPTP in the Free Semester System is insufficient. Career coaching of parents is a channel for parental school participation,

and provides schools with opportunities to establish educational communities through mutual cooperation of parents, the schools, and students. Therefore, it is very important to look at how the CCPTP has been working under the Free Semester System, and to evaluate positive outcomes and limitations through the voices of parents who have participated as parent career coaches. To identify the characteristics, motivation for participation, and expectations of the CCPTP, the following research questions were explored:

What are the parents' perceptions of the Free Semester System and the CCPTP?

What are the characteristics of parents who continuously participated in the CCPTP?

What are suggestions for educational policy makers or educators to improve the CCPTP?

Background of the Free Semester System

The Free Semester System, which was designed to support students' happiness at school, allows middle school students to develop and design their future careers for one semester. During the Free Semester, students are exempt from tests and grades and take the chance to experience and explore various careers to help them design their future career paths. The Free Semester System, based on the Ireland Transition Year, was designed and introduced to suit the Korean education system. Introduced in 1974, the Ireland Transition Year provides various educational experiences and is implemented by schools autonomously (Kim & Choi, 2014). After completing their elementary and middle school education, students have a transition grade during which they find their potential and research possible careers through various experiences. They can also develop personality, social skills, and educational skills for one year before entering their senior year. There is also a Gap Year in the United Kingdom, which is a three to 24 month period between secondary and post-secondary education introduced in the 1960s. During Gap Year, students become more mature, independent, and confident. These traits enforce growth and competence in the job world. During the Gap Year students learn to better understand their community, culture, and decision making power. They also improve family relationships, psychosocial development, self-confidence, maturity, development of independence, career choices, and career

development.

The Danish also have a similar program, called After School. After graduating from public school, students are given the opportunity to experience a one-year boarding course, before entering vocational school (Kim & Choi, 2014). Through this After School course, students can improve academic performance, work on their social and personal development, and reflect on life through various experiences such as searching for their future careers.

The Korean Free Semester System and Parents' School Participation. After a one year pilot program in 2015, the Free Semester System was implemented in all middle schools in 2016. The Korean Ministry of Education (2016) noted that the Free Semester System referred to a system in which the curriculum could be flexibly operated during one semester of a middle school year, allowing students to lay down the burden of examinations and focus on their dreams and talents. The Free Semester was introduced to help students design happier futures. Korean students have invested the largest amount of time in the world in learning and report the highest academic outcomes, but have low level of self-satisfaction. Still, many parents and students believed that good grades and the reputation of their college were the most important elements of a students' future. Therefore, most parents possessed a strong motivation to pursue education for their children and invest financially in private education for children. Monthly spending on private education alone averaged 256,000 Korean Won (\$224) per child in 2016, according to the annual survey by the Ministry of Education and Statistics of Korea (2017). Studies conducted by Chae & Ryu (2008) and Yang, (2017) reported that 77.8 % of all students participated in private education, and spent an average of 7.8 hours in private education per week. Yang (2017) insisted that the total amount of private education expenditure will continue to increase, and the gap of expenditure becomes larger based on the income level of the family.

The life satisfaction of Korean students is the second lowest of all OECD countries. Korean students are much more likely than the OECD average to be the best students in their class, but they are constantly worried about receiving bad grades at school. However, there is not enough time to share their feelings with their parents, so children become anxious and stressed about their grades.

The Free Semester System was introduced to reform

this educational reality and provides two activities in a new way: subject lessons and Free Semester activities. Subject lessons maintain the previous curriculum but forgo official evaluations of students. This allows students to concentrate on coursework without the burden of academic tests. Free Semester activities are divided into four sub-areas: Career Search, Topic Selection, Arts and Physical Education, and Club Activities. The main objectives of the Free Semester are to explore the aptitudes and specialties of students, to plan their career paths in accordance with individual characteristics and competencies, and to expand opportunities for systematic career search such as career design support. It is recommended that career coaching parent teams be organized in school units to support various aspects of the Free Semester System, such as the Free Semester course experiences, club activities, and topic selection activities (Kim, 2014). Studies (Kim, 2017; Shin, 2015; Park, 2013; Ryu, 2013) have shown that the Free Semester has been operating successfully and that the students, their parents, and teachers are highly satisfied with the Free Semester System so far.

The role of the parent is crucial for the successful implementation of the Free Semester System and for educating children about their desired careers. Kim, Lee, Keum & Park (2016) also emphasize that active involvement and cooperation of parents is one important requirement for the successful implementation of the Free Semester System. However, looking at the current school system, the career guidance counselor and the homeroom teacher are in charge of career education. Student career education should be the responsibility of the school, the family, and society. In some cases the career guidance counseling teachers do not have a high level of professionalism of (Kim, 2012; Kim, 2015; Kim, 2013). In addition, it is practically impossible to provide the opportunity for multiple students to explore various career pathways with the current placement of only one career guidance counselor. Parents can be used as an alternative to fill the shortage of career education in schools.

Theories of Career Development and the Role of Parents. Parents are the most knowledgeable about their children and have a high level of interest in their career education, which is why they are deeply concerned with career education. Parents can have a positive or a negative impact on their child's career development, and studies have demonstrated that parents have great influence over

their children's career choices (Jungen, 2008; Kniventon, 2004; Middleton & Loughhead, 1993). Parents have a greater effect than teachers on their child's career choice (Kniventon, 2004; Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014) and are support their child's career decisions (Moreno, 2011). Moreover, parents are determined to be deeply involved in deciding which college their child will choose and what major they will have (Simpson, 2003). Korean parents often demand that their children go to a higher level of university in the hierarchical Korean university system.

Since the career development of children is affected by various factors, the primary goal of parental career education is to lead the development of the child's career. Systematic career education should be provided for parents to understand and guide their child's career problems, (Jeong, 1999). Kang and Kang (2009) suggest that parents can help students carry out problem solving tasks by accepting, understanding, and exploring intimate communication methods. Parents who acquire skills to supplement their children's career education feel efficacy (Middleton & Loughhead, 1993), and this parental efficacy can have a positive impact on the development and choice of the child's career (Yu, 2009). Therefore, if parents are equipped with the competence to understand the requirements of their children's career education, then they can also be an assistant in their children's career education. Although parents can contribute to the career development of their children (Young, 1994), it is also necessary that parents have desirable career values (Lee, 2008).

The Operation Status of the CCPTP. In 2015 the CCPTP was introduced to promote students' career education. In December 2015, due to the enactment of the Career Education Act, the Ministry of Education and Provincial Office of Education established a system for training parental career education experts. In order to improve the professional career coaching of parents, a 15 hour-online training program is provided in two levels of courses: basic and advanced. By the end of December 2015, 44,240 parents had completed the CCPTP in South Korea. According to the Gyeonggi-do Office of Education (2016), 11,909 elementary, middle, and high school parents in Gyeonggi Province participated in the program with more than 6,000 parents expected to complete the program in 2016. Most Provincial Offices of Education in South Korea provide face-to-face CCPTP separately from the online training program. In general, the CCPTP is operated in a step-by-step manner such as a basic course (step

1), an intermediate course (step 2), and an advanced course (step 3). After taking the advanced courses, the trainees are appointed as "career coaching parents," a volunteer group to provide students with career experience guidance and participate in other educational activities. However, less than 10% of the trainees in Gyeonggi Education of Office in 2016 were participating in career guidance for students, finding placement for students' career experiences, or other educational activities. More and more parents are required to participate in the CCPTP and take on the role of career coaching parent.

Method

We performed Focus Group Interviews (FGI) for in-depth understanding how program participants view the CCPTP, the program and its participants. There are several advantages of FGI (Wimmer & Dommick, 1997 recited). FGIs allow the collection of a large amount of data in a short period of time, to get insight into areas with lack of understanding, to understand relatively complex cognitive processes such as synchronization, and to gain insights that are shaped through collective interactions. Because the content of the interviews is not fixed in advance, much of it depends on the subjectivity of the participants; the FGI allows for more detailed experiences and field data on the CCPTP from various perspectives. The researcher also collects and constructs the research data by listening to the participants' responses from a relatively subjective viewpoint.

It was difficult for researchers to gather the participants because the CCPTP has been introduced relatively recently and is still in its infancy. For example, 720 parents started the CCPTP program at one of Offices of Education in Gyeonggi-do and 30 out of the 720 participants took the roles of career coaching parents in 2015. In 2016, 15 out of the 720, and seven out of the 15 are currently active in the career coaching parents program in 2017. In order to analyze the reasons why only a small number of parents are engaged in career coaching after educating many parents, it is necessary to have more in-depth interviews. The FGIs were conducted twice with nine months in between to further analyze what parents were doing in the program and whether they continued to

participate in the program.

Participants

Participants were selected according to a purposive sampling method. In order to select the participants, parents who completed the CCPTP in 2015 and who currently worked as parent career coaches were recruited. We selected Gyeonggi Province because it started the CCPTP earlier than other provinces and became a model in this program. Among 25 Gyeonggi Offices of Education we chose one Office of Education as a representative at the center of Gyeonggi Province. We asked a vice-principal in that Office of Education to gather as many participants as possible. The vice-principal selected a participant who was active in the career coaching parents' program for two years (2015 and 2016), and the participant chose two more participants. Finally, we selected three participants who had one or more of their children who have experienced or were currently experiencing Free Semester middle school education.

The characteristics of the participants were as follows: Parent One was a 47-year-old woman who worked as a manners instructor and had one girl who attended high school and one girl who attended middle school and participated in the Free Semester program in 2016. Parent Two was a 52-year-old woman operating a daycare center who had a son in college and a daughter who was a junior in middle school. Her daughter finished the Free Semester program in 2015. Parent Three was a 43-year-old woman who served as an educational theater instructor and had a girl in the third grade and a boy in the first grade of middle school. Her son participated in the Free Semester program in 2016.

Data collection

The first FGI was conducted for two hours on July 5, 2016 at the Anyang-Gwacheon Office of Education. We explained the purposes of the study to the participants in advance and they agreed to participate in the research. Two researchers and three parents participated in the group interviews. In this study, semi-structured questionnaires were used to explore parents' perceptions of the CCPTP before the FGI. The semi-structured questionnaires were

effective to elicit a wide range of options from the CCPTP participants so that the researchers could predict the overall frame for the research. We modeled our questionnaires on the design of the Kim & Kim FGI questionnaire (2011), and revised and supplemented these questionnaires after they were reviewed by two parent research experts. The questions included in the final questionnaire for the first FGI were mainly as follows: 'When did you become involved with the CCPTP and why?'; 'What was good about participating in the program and what did you feel when you participated in the program?'; 'If there was a change in the parents while participating in the program, what was the change?'; and so forth.

The second FGI proceeded in much the same way as the first one. The second FGI was conducted for two hours on April 25, 2017 also at the Anyang-Gwacheon Office of Education with the same participants as the first FGI. We explained the purposes of the study to the participants in advance and they agreed to participate in the research. Two researchers and three parents participated in the group interviews. The questions were nearly identical to those included in the final questionnaire for the second FGI, and are as follows: 'Did the participants continue to participate in the CCPTP, and why?'; 'Were there any changes or improvement in the program? If 'yes', what were they?'; 'How could the program be improved?'; and so forth.

The two FGIs were conducted for the same participants in the same environment. The analysis was conducted by the same researchers. In addition, the transcripts of interviews were translated into English by a bilingual user and corrected by an American who spoke English as her first language. After recording the interview, the content analysis was completed based on the transferred data.

Data Analysis

The two FGIs were first recorded in Korean and the researchers carefully classified interviews into four categories based on the questions and answers on the themes. Then the researchers classified and re-analyzed the core contents of the interviews into four categories; perceptions of the Free Semester, perceptions of the CCPTP including its strengths and weaknesses, characteristics of parents who were constantly involved in the CCPTP,

improvement of the CCPTP, and some suggestions for further improvement. A bilingual user translated the contents into English and the native speaker examined them.

Results

This study analyzed how the CCPTP managed to help teachers during the Free Semester of Korean middle schools using the FGIs. The FGIs were held twice within a nine-month interval with three parents who had participated in the CCPTP continuously for 3 years. Through this study, we found many parents felt the need for the Free Semester and the CCPTP. As participants in the CCPTP, they had precise ideas about its advantages and disadvantages, and they suggested some ways to improve.

Perceptions on the Free Semester System

Participants in the first FGI expressed concerns and expectations about the introduction of the Free Semester System for middle schoolers. Students were not burdened with tests and grades at school and there was an atmosphere in which they regarded the “Free Semester” as a semester which they could just enjoy. In this regard, Parent one pointed out that the students were not informed fully about the Free Semester. The fact that about 20% of parents attended the presentation about the Free Semester System shows that there was a lack of guidance and publicity. On the other hand, Parent two demonstrated the expectations of the Free Semester System by expressing a 'dream' about the students' futures.

[Document One] “There is no test, there is something free. Most children answer to this question, 'Do you know what the Free Semester System?' They say it is a semester of playing. 'It's a happy day because I don't have to take any tests.' In order to run the program, we need to tell students the Free Semester story from the elementary school upper grades. I mean... they need some information about the Free Semester before they go to the middle

school...; the students will be familiar with the Free Semester System when they come to the middle school” (Parent one in the first FGI).

“Only 20 out of over 100 1st Graders' parents participated in the presentation about the Free Semester System. I wondered something about the Free Semester on that day. There must be a big dream when I heard about it in the presentation. The teacher explained that it was free time to find their dream without discrimination against the children. So, 'Wow! This is very good. ~~~ My son told me that if the Free Semester System had been introduced 10 years ago, when he was in middle and high school, I would not have raised my son better. However, we have a dream with our daughter now” (Parent two in the first FGI).

Parent one also noted that the Free Semester System needs to be focused more on students' career development and should be expanded as well. In other words, it is necessary to extend classes on career education. Continuous feedback on career education should be provided throughout the entire school year rather than only during one semester. It is worth noting that this is based on the importance of career education.

[Document Two] “Even though it is my personal hope, the Free Semester System should be continued in the first, second and third grades. ~~~ if the children are doing something with dreams even in the second and third grades. When the teacher, the parent and the child go together, the ideal child's direction of their future career comes out” (Parent one in the first FGI).

Perception of the CCPTP including its strengths and weaknesses

Participants' perception of CCPTP is very positive. They insisted that this program should be an essential system for children's career education in school. The three participants started to meet students at school and talk about career education with them after taking the CCPTP. They commonly stated that the CCPTP must be a necessary program for parents because they could learn the basic and essential concepts of career education. There has

been much change in their perceptions of their child's career development thanks to the program, but they noted that the program needed to be improved in the future.

First of all, participants mentioned the necessity of the CCPTP including its strengths and weaknesses. They perceived that they had little opportunity to attend the school and that it was difficult because they were indifferent to their children's career education or hardly had any relevant knowledge about their children's career development. In Document 3, the participants pointed out that the biggest strength was that they learned basic knowledge about their children's career education. Most importantly, the participants were able to recognize their children's talents, whatever they were, such as studying, music or art. In addition, they were happy to have the opportunity to share that knowledge with other students through the program as a career coaching parent. However there were some weaknesses about the program. They hope that the program has more specialized and in depth content. Another weakness is that because most participants have jobs, there are not many parents who can work at school after finishing the program. After taking the program, most of the parents gave up becoming a career coaching parent.

[Document Three] “I came to learn about the coaching program hoping to find some help in guiding my child. When the parents observe at a distance the children can think for themselves and express their thoughts, and jobs, I think, are something that one should find through experience, and trials and errors ····. I think the problem with our country's education is that. I don't think grades are much important, as long as the child feels the achievement, feeling ‘I put in this much effort, and I am satisfied with it. I have never been to my son's school, because I was working. So learning in the CCPTP left a lot of regrets” (Parent two in the first FGI).

“So we were at our own work, but this career, and coaching was something that everyone learned for the first time, I think. Maybe it is because it was my first time. So I think it was first for everybody, then maybe they should have built the basics better to help us improve” (Parent 1 in the 1st FGI).

“And our child belongs to a group that does

not do that thing, it is acceptable. Children who can't do that, it is fine they will live with that, it is acceptable. Before, we were so envious about doing well at school and made your child take private education to do so as well, and backing them up with our support, but now we just accept it. Oh, that kid is good at that, acceptable! Our kid is good at other things, acceptable! Like that, we are changing little by little” (Parent three in the first FGI).

Next, they mentioned that they have changed their perceptions on their own children's career development. In Document four, Parent three and Parent one said that parent awareness of their children's careers was changing little by little. In the past, many parents wanted their children to become students who were good at studying. However, parents began to admit that studying is only one talent. If their children were interested in other things, they would be happy with that. Nevertheless, Parent one has argued that a social atmosphere still existed in which students were evaluated for grades or college rankings. In this situation, parents tended to link their child's career education with job choice.

[Document Four] “In the past, I wish my kids to be good at studying, and I work hard and support them from behind···, but these days I admit that it is not so important. That kid does that well, and this kid does this well··· I admit it! My child is good at others, I admit! I think it is changing” (Parent Three in the first FGI)

“Studying is actually one of the talents. I am 100% sure··· The child has a talent for studying, but it is only a part of some others” (Parent two in the first FGI).

“I think there exists still prejudice and it is the reality in Korea. I mean··· about the grades at school, the ranking of colleges and universities, and even we still have some kind of prejudice about the kinds of job” (Parent 1 in the first FGI).

“Moms nowadays tend to be, well of course there are children who excel at studies, but those children, well they accept them” (Parent three in the second FGI)

Finally, as shown in Document five, parents pointed

out that the preparatory process for educational contents and operation methods needs to be improved. They participated in the volunteering program without sufficient explanation or publicity, and were in charge of career education at the school without sufficient education. Parent one admitted that she felt guilty because she seemed to be a coach rather than a career coach. Parent three reported a situation where they had to go to school with lack of expertise. Parent two revealed their desire for a variety of education and Parent three addressed complaints about the passive role of delivering a given model. These statements show that parents themselves are hoping for an active role in career education.

[Document five] “Would it be nice if they could grow us well from the ground up? Just one day I was heard about recruiting a career coach, so I went there and listened to a lecture, and it was nothing but moving the scenario to the students. So it was very disappointing. We had a lot of regrets that we would not get closer to our children and to approach them more easily if we were to give them more education” (Parent two in the first FGI)

“I got training about career development and coaching and I went out to coach the students’ career development, but this is also a problem. I am not ready yet, I mean... not professional. We have to go to the students after we have enough professional education” (Parent three in the first FGI).

“I think it was time for me to check on my knowledge about what I know about my kids’ career development. This is not only about studying, but also recognizing the characteristics of each child, such as the belief that I was able to visit my child even though I did not study by myself. I checked it a lot this way” (Parent one in the first FGI).

“Then again, it is getting better. The parts that I feel lacking are like this. Anyone can coach if they have the training program memorized by heart. But if we do not know the overall background information and the intensified programs, there were times when we could not properly respond to the students’ sudden questions, and that happened a lot” (Parent one in the second FGI).

Characteristics of Parents Who were Constantly Involved in the CCPTP

During the second FGI, two of the first three participants noticed that they were still participating in the program. The two participants took the advanced program in 2017 again and became leaders of the career coaching parents. They formed a small group as leaders and played a role in improving their background knowledge by participating in class design and visiting each other's classes during club activities. However, one of them could not continue in the program due to an accident. Once healed, she continued her role in a different program.

[Document six] “So, because of the fact that the 2nd year team became the main leaders anyway... We have been studying among ourselves and making class materials through the small group meeting. And we discussed and shared that this way would be better this year reflecting on the experience of last year” (Parent one in the second FGI).

“I was too busy to participate in the program because I became a parents’ president this year. But I took the advanced training course and I just participating in theater class as my major” (Parent 3).

“We design the class again reflecting on the lesson after class, adding something better and subtracting something not good. We design re-program and create new class activities” (Parent one in the second FGI)

“I got an accident last July, had worn a cast for several months and could not continue the program. I found a different program which is similar and I could do volunteering for the youth out of school” (Parent two in the second FGI).

In Document seven, the participants noticed that over 720 people started together the CCPTP in 2015 in an Office of Education, however only about 10 parents have been involved in the career coaching program for three years. Parents who participated in parent career coaching activities consistently shared the following characteristics: They had enthusiasm for volunteering and felt rewarded as volunteers. They also had some teaching experience and were not afraid to stand in front of others. They also had expertise in some fields.

[Document seven] “Those who have stayed there have teaching experiences and eagerness. So they are not afraid to stand in front of students” (Parent three in the second FGI).

“The person who has done volunteering can do volunteering again. That’s just the root... Those who are now pausing for a while but were active in the past can start again. There are very few people who start volunteering without any experience at all” (Parent one in the second FGI).

“After the accident, I could not participate in the CCPTP, but I wanted to do something for students. I looked for a program that I can help students out of school who quitted or dropped school. I was happy that I can do something for them” (Parent two in the second FGI).

Growth and Improvement of the CCPTP, and Some Suggestions to its Improvement

The participants believed the CCPTP was improving in terms of the creation of small group meetings and having parents who had their own career expertise. The first participants became leaders and created small group meetings based on their own majors and interests. They also had their own expertise in specific areas such as art, music, literature, psychology, humanities, and so forth.

[Document eight] “Each of us has created a small group and we have observed the new participant’s class and share experiences after class. That makes a big improvement for everyone” (Parent one in the second FGI).

“When I become the promoter, I feel more responsibility and I need to take care of the other members. I am going to a small group meeting and it keeps on steadily. It seems that they are creating the synergy effect through mutual exchanges” (Parent one in the second FGI)

“Most parents have their own major. We are trained by the same program as all of them, but it would be much more effective if parents were put together in a small group meeting who had similar majors... In my case, I do my lessons with

theater plays thanks to my major, theater.” (Parent three in the second FGI).

The participants proposed some suggestions based on their three years of experience. First, they suggested that parents who had the same majors or the same interests make a small group and share their experiences. Second, they emphasized it was essential for the success of the program to work together, to cooperate with the school, and to prepare everything including their time schedule in advance. For example, parents were shocked that some schools had requested a lesson the day before. Finally, they argued that the recruitment method should be more systematic. It was ineffective to recruit many applicants for the program. After the basic program, it was effective to select a limited amount of elite people by applying strict standards and then to provide an intensive training program to help them become experts.

[Document nine] “Then parents with expertise will not quit. Because they can melt everything they have here... Someone may think that this is art part, I majored art so I can join them. Or others may think my major was psychology, so I can join that” (Parent three in the second FGI).

“It is ridiculous for parents who have received several basic education classes to attend classes. Therefore, we need systematic education” (Parent two in the second FGI).

“Lessons are not enough. It is important to practice. We cannot practice because there are too many people in the training course. It’s never possible with a simple program to train parents and make them professionals” (Parent three in the second FGI).

Discussion

In this research, we looked at the following questions: First, what are the parent’s perceptions of the Free Semester System and the CCPTP? Second, why do some parents participate in the CCPTP continuously? Third, what are the suggestions for the educational policy makers or educators to improve the CCPTP? Parents felt the need for the Free Semester and the CCPTP. Also, as participants

in the CCPTP, they had precise ideas about its advantages, disadvantages, and ways to improve. Through the two FGIs we have come to the following conclusion, and further discussion is required on the subject.

The CCPTP, which became more important with the adoption of the Free Semester System in middle schools in 2016, was intended to provide parents with the ability to give career education for their own children as well as for 'our' children. However, after thorough examination, there were some development challenges that the CCPTP must address before being deemed suitable.

First, the most important and urgent development task is to improve the background knowledge of the career coaching parents. As Choi (2015) stated, the role of the career coaching parent is to support the Free Semester management in various ways such as students' career experience, club activities, and to offer opinions on theme selection activities. In order to play such a role, corresponding expertise is required for each field. The career coaching parent wishes to acquire professional knowledge in addition to basic content, and to have an appropriate role in the school. It is necessary to systematize the process of the CCPTP step by step, reflecting the needs of parents. One suggestion is to allow parents who have completed the basic online course to participate in a face-to-face course, which is more intensive and advanced. It is necessary to provide institutional devices to grant certain qualifications to parents who complete a certain period of time. In addition, specialized courses should be organized for small groups rather than group lectures for many people. They should also include experiments, exercises, and discussion. Furthermore classroom practices that can be applied to the school site and how to deal with issues that may arise in the field should also be included.

Second, there is a need for a system where career coaching parents who have completed specialized courses and have expertise can play a long-term and sustained role in the school scene. The number of parent organizations is increasing through the support of parents' participation in schools, but it is still centered on certain parents. One of the reasons for this low participation rate is the lack of parental involvement (Center for Family-School Partnership Policy Research at Seoul National University, 2015). It is necessary to make institutional arrangements for trained career coaching parents by investing time, effort, and substantial budget

to play an effective and continuous role in the school scene. Most of the parents currently involved in CCPTP are not suitable to be a career coaching parents in the role of one-time student supervisors or even simple assistants. Self-esteem of the parents who are engaged in one-time events is also lower. It is possible to maximize the effect of the parents and the school site when it more specialized work can be identified and provided for parents.

Third, it is necessary to change the perception of parents' participation in school activities. Park (2016) emphasized the transition from the passive position to raise the awareness of parents' right to education to the active position to demand a right for their children and their right to participate in education. On the contrary, there are some points about problems such as exhaustion of teachers' emotions and loss of identity due to inadequate pressure and control of teachers; expressing excessive demands and complaints from the viewpoint of providers of education and consumers from the opposite point of view (Kwon & Kim, 2015). There still exist negative views such as 'skirt wind' and 'helicopter mom' for parents' participation in school. There is also a stereotype that parents require such social and economic status and time to participate in school. According to the National Institute of Lifelong Education (2015), the school and the parents need to communicate with each other to participate in the parents' school. However both the school and the teachers are perceived as a burden to participate in the parents' school. In other words, it is necessary to change the viewpoint of 'my child' to 'our child' through changing the perception of parents' school participation.

For Further Study

Parents' participation in school activities is significant in terms of volunteer work or donation of education, but a reward system is required to increase their self-esteem or level of satisfaction in taking part in the program. Participating in one session takes about three to four hours, but only 20,000 won is given as a transportation fee. Of course, as the participants mentioned, economic reasons alone cannot motivate parents to participate in the program. Therefore, a measure to increase their self-esteem or level of satisfaction in taking part in the program is required. Also, a study on the students' level of satisfaction with the CCPTP is necessary. Students

are the consumers of education, and those who actually experience the Free Semester. A study on student perceptions of Free Semester can explore the sustainability of the Free Semester, as well as the possibility for the development of the CCPTP. This could provide a long-term development plan for education policy as a whole.

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Appendix 1

< The questionnaire for the first FGI >

Describe your philosophy in educating your children or the ways in which the family supports the children to grow and mature.

How much of your children's characteristics are you aware? What they like? Their Talents? Dreams? Hobbies?

What would you do if your child's dream does not match with the parents' desire?

How important is the child's school grades and why?

Describe the private education that your child takes in order to improve their school grades. (cost, types, number of visits per week, period, and so on) Why or why not?

Have you participated in parent meetings? Since when? Are you currently participating in such meetings? What information do you get out of it? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Please tell us what you liked and what needs to improve on the basic and intensified course of the CCPTP.

What was the most helpful lecture or content in the CCPTP and what do you expect to learn from the advanced course?

How did you feel when you were taking the basic and intensified course of the CCPTP? How has your philosophy in educating your children changed?

Do you think that completing the basic and intensified course of the CCPTP lead the parents to the opportunity for change or improvement?

Appendix 2

< The questionnaire for the second FGI >

1. Almost 1 year has passes since the last interview in the summer. Are you still working as a career coaching parent?

① If so, what are your motivations?

② If not, why not?

2. How did you feel when you were working a career coaching parent?

① Personal aspect

② In relating to the children

3. What do you think are the resources required to work as career coaching parent?

4. Since the full implementation of the Free Semester in 2016, do you think there has been any change in the school or the educational environment?

① If so, please describe specifically.

② If not, why do you think so?

5. If you consider career coaching parent as a mean of parents' participation in school activity, do you think that there are any differences when compared to the existing means of participation? If so, in what ways?