

Influence of the Free Semester Program in Korean Middle Schools on Lifelong Learning

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A B S T R A C T

Recently, the Free Semester Program (FSP) has been recognized as a successful educational policy in Korean education even though there has been a regime change. The achievements of the FSP have been discussed as an innovative part of Korean education. In this study, we analyzed FSP practices from the perspective that the influence of FSP can be found not only on school education but also on life-long education. In this study, a literature analysis and a meta-ethnography analysis were conducted. At the Student level, FSP showed a ‘becoming a lifelong learner’ phenomenon. This phenomenon is materialized into ‘joyful learning’, ‘self-directed learning experience’, ‘knowing oneself while learning’, ‘learning together’, and ‘doing rather than knowing.’ At the School level, schools who implemented FSP became more open to the community. Schools often made good use of outside resources as educational tools, and tried to make connections with the community in the school curriculum. Many school educative activities also addressed problems in the community. We confirmed that FSP extended school education into individuals’ lifelong education. To ensure this extension took place, FSP must be implemented as follows: First, free semester needs to be extended to more than two semesters. Second, a ‘becoming a lifelong learner’ competency needs to be specified in the FSP curriculum. Third, schools need to enter the broader educational ecosystem at a local level. Finally, local communities need to make full use of human and material resources, map out ‘educational co-organizing learning’.

Keywords: Free Semester Program, lifelong learner, education community, innovation school

Introduction

One of the most frequently used words in Korean education policy is ‘competence’ The 2015 revised

curriculum provides competency-based curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015a). The policy of Free Semester Program (FSP) for middle school, which started in 2013, is also one of the important policy directions to cultivate core competency. In Korea, there is a reflection on the existing education policy in the context of increased interest in the six key competencies from the 2015 National Curriculum of Korea. competence.

Korea has traditionally sought to achieve outstanding academic performance through lecture-centered classroom instruction and summative evaluations. As a result, Korea is one of the top-ranked Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in the

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Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test scores. However, Korean students had a lower level of academic achievement, enjoyment of learning, and motivation (OECD, 2016). As a result of this, the direction of school education focusing on 'knowledge' has shifted to an interest in 'competence,' which is deemed necessary education in order to live one's life.

Korean educational policy makers are now trying to change the educational paradigm to foster the future core competencies for the Fourth Industrial Revolution as well as to enhance students' happiness at school. FSP is a flagship example of this change in educational policy. FSP has been held at all Korean middle schools nationwide in Korea since 2016. In FSP there are no midterm or final exams during one of the six semesters in middle school, and it includes student-centered classes and various experiential activities. (Ministry of Education, 2015b). Korean educational policies have been changed quite often because of political ideologies (Lim & Cho, 2013). FSP was introduced by the conservative government, yet even with the recent regime change to a liberal government, FSP was again adopted as part of the national political agenda, and has been identified for expansion (Committee for National Planning and Advisory, 2017). FSP has been recognized as the most successful educational innovation in Korea society (Kim, 2017).

The achievements of FSP have mainly been discussed in the context of innovations in Korean secondary education because it is an educational innovation policy established at the middle school level. However, FSP practices can extend beyond school education to lifelong education, as it has characteristics that go beyond the middle school period and the actual space. In this study we focus on analyzing the possibility that the experience of FSP will lead to students becoming lifelong learners, as well as

the possibility of forming local educational communities where schools network with community.

Free Semester Program

Why FSP? What kind of educational meaning does FSP have? The word 'free' indicates liberty from written tests in the passive sense. In the positive sense, it refers to freedom for joyful school life and for fostering the future core competencies (Choi et al., 2014a: 6). More specifically, 'free' can mean freedom from standardized tests, relative evaluation pressure, and passive school life, and free for a 'meaningful learning experience' (Lim, 2017a) in Korean secondary education. The free semester is the only semester of Korea's secondary education in which there is no general evaluation, and grades are not calculated (Shin et al., 2015). The lack of a comprehensive evaluation during FSP made it possible to reconstruct convergent curriculum and to revitalize student-centered classes and various experiential activities (Lim, 2016).

Although the FSP is similar to Ireland's Transition Year and the United Kingdom's Gap Year, some details of FSP are unique. For example, the timing of and content provided during the program is specific to Korea. FSP is mainly available to 7th Grade students, and its unique features include integrated curriculum, school-centered courses, process-based evaluation, career exploration, and other activities (See Figure 1).

The free semester activities consist of four areas: Career Exploration Activities, Theme Selection Activities, Arts and Sports Education Activities, and Club Activities. Looking at each area, Career Exploration Activities include

Period	Day	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
1		Regular classes (curriculum restructure, school-centered courses, process-based evaluation)				
2						
3						
4						
5		Career Exploration Activities	Theme selection Activities	Club Activities	Theme selection Activities	Arts and Sports Activities
6						
7						

Figure 1. Example of a Free Semester Time Table (Modified from Choi et al., 2014a).

'systematic career education that enables students to design their own future by exploring aptitudes and talents.' Arts and Sports Education Activities incorporate the development of students' potential through diverse and substantial arts and physical education. The purpose of Club Activities is to 'revitalize student self-government and develop specialty and aptitude by organizing and running clubs based on the common interests of students. Theme Selection Activities are intended for 'inducing motivation to learn by operating various specialized programs reflecting students' interests'(Korean Ministry of Education, 2015b: 8).

Lifelong Learner

Many scholars have mentioned that the knowledge students learn in school may not help students prepare for the future because the world is changing rapidly (Harari, Purcell & Watzman, 2015). It is important to develop students' capacity to become lifelong learners in elementary and secondary education, which necessitates reconstructing school education as a part of a lifelong education system (Kim et al., 2015). Froebel (date) attempted to develop a pedagogy that focused on helping students to create their lives voluntarily, resulting in play pedagogy and love pedagogy. Froebel's pedagogy should be understood as a continuum from childhood education through adult education (Scheuerl, 1978). According to Froebel (Date), education itself should give learners a joyful experience. Kim and colleagues (2015) mentioned that the key factors for becoming a lifelong learner include learning pleasure, enlightenment of learning methods, discovery and development of personality, and cooperation and communication methods. Lifelong learners are also important in daily life activities and practice from a sociological point of view (Kim et al., 2013).

Curriculum-centered and experiential-centered perspectives are controversial when discussing school curriculum. Experiential-centered perspectives, which have been overshadowed in most school education, have emerged as a main theme in lifelong education when discussing the theory and practice of adult education (Kim, 2013). The FSP includes such experiential learning (Lim, 2016).

Forming an Education Community

Stemming from the creation of an innovative education district project in Gyeonggi Province and creating a village community in Seoul, projects that build cooperation between schools and local communities, such as village schools, are becoming better defined. Although the names are different, in both projects all resources in the region, including schools, function as learning spaces for children, youth and residents. The emergence of such partnerships is closely related to changes in the educational paradigm. The closed educational system centered on existing school education is being transformed into an open education system centered on lifelong education for all, and the school and the community are discussed together as the educational space and subject.

One of the limitations of the educational system centered on school education is the limitation of students' educational experiences. It is difficult to do a connected with daily life education at existing schools which operate like solitary islands separated from their regions. This is also confirmed in Grundtvig's (1938) discussion of folk education in the 1800s. He characterized the education of the time as "Schools for Death" in his article "School for Life." He mentioned that it is not education that expresses the understanding of individual life and grows as a whole member of the society, but students, and that school-based education at that time was stained with Latin and vitality. He emphasized the experience of life as a necessity of education for life and the education contents for it (Kang & Chung, 2012). The ideas of Grundtvig are still valid today because learning, which depends only on formalized curriculum, teachers, and subject is not enough in a social existence for sufficient growth of individual. As a result, cooperation with the community is required to expand the educational experience. Coombs, the director of the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning in the 1960s, through "The World Education Crisis" pointed out that the lack of resources in school education and the education crisis (Coombs, 1968) became the backgrounds for changing the function of schools and forming cooperative relationships with the community.

Schools were also required to meet the educational needs of local residents in a rapidly changing society. Within the community, schools played a role as a local learning centers that fostered people's 'basic competence

to learn' (Dave, 1973) and that fulfilled the educational needs of the residents and life-oriented programs for community development. Schools were originally established based on the needs of the community, for the community, by the community (Yang, 2008), and because schools can exert greater power when they are in close contact with the community (Longworth, 2001). In 1971, Japan started the linkage between school education and social education, and developed the concept of academic convergence and academic cooperation in 1996 (Yang & Jeon, 2016). More recently, Japanese schools have set up regional support centers to promote the linkage between schools and local communities.

Schools have been thinking about cooperation in order to expand living education experiences, while local communities have been planning to cooperate and link in order to respond to the educational needs of local residents and to support schools as local institutions. Such joint educational experiences based on the linkage between schools and the community also increases the possibility of forming an education community. Educational communities are groups in which individuals gather together to control and influence the direction, content and purpose of their learning (Hugo, 2002). They learn and grow in conversation, behavior, and reflection. In the process of dealing with

local problems, these groups naturally become stronger in their sense of belonging and develop into local educational communities. Schools and local communities in their region naturally speak about the problems of education in the process of cooperating and practicing, and form an education community. When schools and communities are oriented toward unity beyond simple linkage, then the community moves toward a partnership based on the relationship that goes beyond the structural networking of learning resources.

Methods

In order to derive the experience of becoming a lifelong learner through the Free Semester Program, the criteria for naming as 'lifelong learners' were extracted from previous research (cite). Specifically, they are: enjoyment of learning, enlightenment of learning methods, discovery and development of personality, and learning of cooperation and communication. In order to determine the linkage between schools and communities for the free semester at the school level, four phases of the network - human,

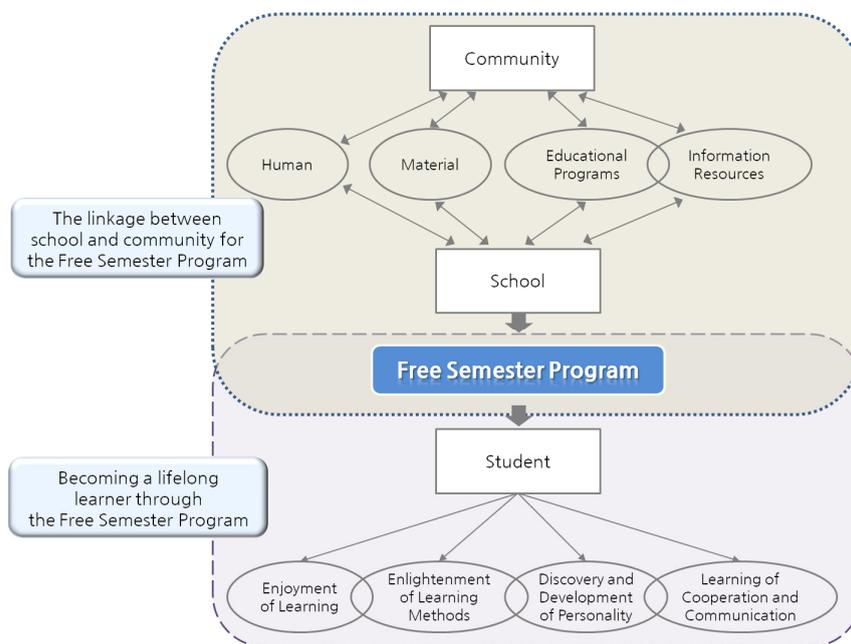


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

material, educational programs (business), and information resources – were set up as analytical criteria. The research model for exploring the lifelong educational meaning of the Free Semester Program is shown in Figure 2.

Methodology

In this study, a literature analysis and meta-ethnography were conducted. First, the research team reviewed previous studies related to lifelong learners and schools connecting with neighborhood communities, and analyzed other FSP-related reports and research papers published by the Korea Educational Development Institute (KEDI) and other research institutes.

Second, a meta-ethnography analysis was used to analyze the FSP-related case studies from 2013 to 2017 by the Center for Free Semester Program at KEDI and other sources. The Center for Free Semester Program at KEDI was established in early 2013, when FSP was initially designed. Our research team conducted a meta-ethnography on the basis of KEDI's research reports, research reports from other research institutes, and research articles from academic journals. The Meta-ethnography was conducted to comprehensively analyze a number of existing qualitative case studies of Free Semester Program from KEDI. Meta-ethnography was often used to analyze and interpret phenomenon by various ethnography materials(e.g., Kim, 2016; Cho, 1994; Major & Savin-baden, 2010; Noblit & Hare, 1988). Specifically, after analyzing the existing qualitative case study, we derived the lifelong educational meaning of the Free Semester Program through theme analyses.

Throughout this process the research team discussed what student-centered courses, process-focused assessment, and free semester activities including Career Exploration Activities meant in terms of lifelong learning.

Results

This chapter summarizes the characteristics of the students as lifelong learners who participated in the FSP

and the cooperation process between the school and the community in terms of program providers.

Student Level: Becoming a Lifelong Learner

The FSP appeared to be related to 'Becoming a Lifelong Learner' at the Student Level. This phenomena was embodied in 'joyful learning,' 'self-directed learning experience,' 'knowing oneself while learning,' 'learning together,' and 'doing rather than knowing.'

Joyful Learning: Liberty from Summative Evaluation. High school students were focused on learning for grades because their high school grades played a big role in their college entrance examination. Middle school students were also not free from summative evaluation. Since Korea has a variety of high school types and has a selection process, it was important for the students to go on to study in a science high school, foreign language high school, autonomous private high school, or a vocational high school. In Korean middle schools and high schools, students were learning under the pressure of two summative evaluations (e.g., midterm and final exams) every semester, so it was hard to realize the pleasure of learning itself. Learning was the process of sustaining pain. However, the free semester was different. Since there was no summative evaluation of the free semester and there was no grading score, students felt the pleasure and happiness of the learning process.

If we did not have a free semester, we would have felt depressed because of the examinations and studying. During the free semester, there are no paper exams and we do a lot of activities in each class, so I feel more active (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 10).

I didn't like to go to school in non-free semester. It was no fun at all. I didn't want to go to school because of the stress of studying. During the free semester, school became a paradise (Student; Choi et al., 2015: 77).

In the above cases, the students said that they were happy to go to school because they did not have summative evaluations and actual grades during the free semester. Also, since there was no overall evaluation, it was possible to learn with a focus on the core content rather than learning shallowly in a broad range in class to pass a

test. Also, since there was no summative evaluation, it was now possible to learn with a focus on the core contents rather than learning shallowly in a broad test range in class. Let's look at the next case.

Since we don't have tests any more during the free semester, teachers went a little deeper into the chapter and explained it more easily to understand if we didn't understand the contents (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 95).

In addition to the evaluation and instructional aspects, students had the opportunity for a happy experience because they participated in various student activities. The following is an example of Arts and Sports Activities among free semester activities.

At my school, we do many Arts and Sports Activities, which gives us a good way to live happily as an adult later on. The older generation seems to have actually graduated from the school without learning any musical instruments. Nowadays, children can learn a musical instrument in school and become an adult and lead a happier life (Teacher; Choi et al., 2015: 78).

Teachers expected that students would be able to deal with instruments through the free semester, which would help them live happy lives.

Self-Directed Learning Experience: Finding My Own Way to Study. While a general semester is lectured by the teacher and the student is listening and learning, the free semester classes pursue learning through students' participation and activities. Let's take a look at the teachers' cases.

They (Students) write a preliminary report, but I don't suggest actual experiment method. I just give students an empty sheet of paper. Students write names of their group and share the roles and then I present the stuff. Then, I help them to make the learning goals themselves (Teacher; Lim, 2016: 66).

After all, in life, these students have to choose and take responsibility for themselves every time they graduate from school. I think that school is a place to communicate knowledge, and I believe that students' self-directedness is enhanced by actively participating in free semester programs - (Teacher; Choi et al., 2015: 78).

In the above examples, the teacher in the free semester class designed the class so that the students could participate and act, but the actual class was made by students. The free semester helped students to live lives that they chose and take responsibility in the future. Now, let's look at the parents.

I was amazed that students were able to find out what they needed for their presentation program that could fit into their team work and learn it for themselves (Parent A; Choi et al., 2014b:14).

The time for my child to look self-directed for the job that he is interested in has been increased, and he has become aware of the route to find the information he needs (Parent B; Choi et al., 2014b:14).

The above parents also revealed that their children learned to do the projects themselves. In the free semester class, students became proactive rather than passive.

As students became the subject of the lesson and the teachers acted as assistants, the students were asked questions and had more conversations with the teachers (Teacher; Choi et al., 2014b: 16).

It is not us (students) who take what the teacher says, but we can preview what we are going to learn, and teach others, such as making PowerPoint slides, writing a paper, or bringing in some photos. In this way, I can remember it better as I make them on my own (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 241).

When we had a written test, we had to memorize things. But in the free semester, this way of evaluation is more memorable because I search for what we are learning and present them in front of the class (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 244).

I quit going to private lectures, and found my own way to study so my stress is gone. I think I concentrate more on my class. (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 93).

Students did not receive the content taught by teachers, but learned themselves on their own and teachers took the role of facilitators. In particular, students stated that the lessons learned during the presentation and discussion sessions were great.

Knowing Oneself while Learning. FSP helped students

discover and develop their individuality by ensuring students' choices rather than collectively learning knowledge. Particularly, the career exploration activities of the free semesters helped students to know themselves.

At the school, we selected 16 places that students wanted to experience first, and received students' applications (Teacher; CITATION).

It was not that students are just divided by where the places are located, rather teachers made it possible for students and parents to participate where they wanted, therefore, their satisfaction was pretty high (Teacher; Choi et al., 2014b: 5).

Once the students had gone through a lot of experience, watched a lot with their own eyes, and experienced indirectly or directly, they decided that this was right for me. I thought that they were still young but they themselves make a decision (Parent; Choi et al., 2014c: 38).

Free semester I think it is like a search period. I think it is time for students to explore rather than just studying, so that they can take an interest in an area, my job, a little more depth in the field, and experience it (Parent; Choi et al., 2015: 5).

Through the free semester's career exploration activities, students visited places to experience various things, and gained the experience of matching themselves to the world's occupations while listening to professional lectures. In addition to career exploration activities, theme selection activities have also helped students in their aptitude and career.

We survey students' preferences and satisfaction in order to operate with the programs they wanted. (Teacher A) It is desirable for students themselves to choose the program and career in accordance with the changes of the times, and participate more independently (Parent A; Choi, 2014b: 75).

In the above case, the teachers and the parents said that the theme selection activities and arts and sports activities reflected the students' preferences in the school. Through these various free semester activities, students had time to get to know themselves.

I didn't know what my kid is good at, but this

free semester gave my kid to find his interest and try out various things (Parent; Choi et al., 2014b: 15).

Parents said that the free semester was an opportunity to find out and explore the possibilities of their children. As such, students were learning about themselves during the free semester.

Learning Together. Learning just for the test or good score is and activity to do by oneself. Most of the work done in the world is conducted in cooperation with others. The free semester is pursuing group learning in class or free semester activities. Students enjoyed learning together rather than learning alone.

The group activities are more fun than doing alone. I spend a lot of time looking for it when I have to do something difficult all by myself (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 8).

I think it is good to be able to see something more wide because the thought spreads wide, and the thought of several people is gathered (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 33).

I think cooperation has increased as we have been learning collaborative skills (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 79).

I find myself learning more because I find the contents by myself. I also learn how to communicate with people. I find my own way of studying (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 336).

In the above case, the students said that learning together was a fun process, gave a broader view and increased cooperation. In addition, in group learning students taught and learned from each other, and students' understanding of the contents also increased.

We had most of the classes as group work during the free semester and semi-free semester. In a Math class, a leader was chosen because we mostly focus on solving problems. So when group members had a hard time solving problems, they solved them all together (Student; Lim et al., 2017a: 50).

There are a lot of students who do not follow lecture-focused instructions, and we have to study more afterwards. But, I was able to ask friends next to me when I didn't know, and I did not have to bear the burden of understanding the lessons

alone (Student; Choi et al., 2015: 52).

In the above example, there was a phenomenon where students asked and answered each other in the course of learning. Let's look at examples of parents and teachers.

Students had many discussions in class, which increases consideration for each other. My kid is a very stubborn one, but he learned to listen to others. And, if he thinks some kids are left out, he tries to embrace them (Parent; Choi et al., 2015: 7).

By emphasizing the cooperation process, we were able to see positive changes in students' attitudes toward justice, unlike in the past when they were reluctant to become a group with low-performing students (Teacher; Choi et al., 2015: 67).

Students, who have experienced a class that reflects cooperation and harmony among team members through the free semester, are now mature in group learning (Teacher; Choi et al., 2015: 69).

Parents mentioned that their children had a lot of discussions during class and that their friendships improved. Teachers also said that the free semester's group had a positive effect on student co-operation.

Doing rather than Knowing. In the general semester, knowledge is learned through lectures and tests, and the amount of knowledge to memorize is considered to be high. On the other hand, the free semester emphasizes experience through student participation and activities, so that the amount of knowledge acquired can be less than in the general semester. However, because students learn through various experiences during the free semester, they can be effective in developing various competencies.

I think this is an opportunity for my ability to be judged rather than studying (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 95).

It seems that the speaking ability of the students has improved because there are more discussions in class than we just write what we learn (Student; Choi et al., 2014c: 335).

In general semesters, students were evaluated on the basis of knowledge because the summative evaluation is done in a paper-based manner. However, during the free semester, students were able to demonstrate various competencies as well as knowledge by participating in

various activities, and were able to evaluate communication skills in the process of participation. Teachers were also designing an experience to learn doing rather than knowing.

I capture what competencies are needed for children as an educational topic. And, I link the chapters with the achievement standards of each subject, and even with school events (Teacher; Lim et al., 2017a: 203).

I teach binary with Morse code, which is to reconstruct Math. I plan a trip by calculating the distance of an internet map and calculating the distance, speed, and time. Students don't like Math, but they try hard even though I don't say anything (Teacher; Lim, 2016: 100).

I made a market and sold stuff during the Club Activities period. There were free semester activities at the scene, so they brought out everything and practiced how to sell them on their own (Teacher; Lim, 2016: 69).

Teachers were designing free semester classrooms so that students could organize classes and activities based on their competencies and learn through experience rather than memorization even if they learned knowledge.

At the School Level: Communication of School and Community

FSP aims to change the existing school education in three dimensions: class, assessment, and free semester activities. Teachers and students use community resources in class and free semester activities. In this section we summarize the education-centered activities of the schools and the communities during the free semester.

Local Communities in Support of Schools. Among the free semester activities, which are unique educational activities that can be seen only in the free semester, career exploration activities mainly focus on career learning, career counseling, career experience, and career portfolio creation. Career experience is an activity that provides opportunities for students to identify their own qualities and aptitudes through direct and indirect experiential activities. In order to enable students to experience career experiences using various types of organizations in the region, the "2015 Revised Curriculum" outline stipulates

the operation of free semester activities in connection with the local community. The "Career Education Act (enacted on June 15, 2012, enforced on December 15, 2012) includes the provision of an obligation to experience opportunities for public institutions and the operation of regional career education centers.

Each region's office of education has established centers for career experience support during free semester (215 as of 2017) in support of regional career experience activities. There is an environment to support schools, demonstrated by securing the legal basis for school-community connections, organizing concepts, and building support systems.

Four types of school-specific activities were established in this environment. First, opportunities were provided for students to experience careers by utilizing local organizations. This was one of the ways of linking with the most used areas in schools. Students often went to centers for career experience support during free semester in order to find a place to experience, or they participate in the work experience at their parents' workplaces. Specifically, one middle school located in Gangwon province had a career experience program that explored the 'place of work experience of my parents', and students created a report after a desired job experience, resulting in positive responses for students and parents. This kind of parental involvement in school contributed to broadening the understanding of the free semester program (Choi et al., 2014b). Some schools have partnered with youth centers in their regions and actively searched for experiences for their students.

Another school signed Memorandum of Understanding with local youth scholarship centers, persuaded employers to go to local experience centers, and secured 16 hospitals and 24 job centers for their students to participate in. In response, the teachers also expressed that "free semester caused a new wind in the region" (Choi et al., 2016: 115).

A second school-specific activity was to develop and operate jointly with local institutions for some difficult to teach subjects, while operating detailed programs during the free semester. For example, there was a case of one middle school in Seoul. This middle school developed and operated education programs by linking some of the theme selection activities programs with external organizations. In contrast to the way in which teachers developed educational programs and used external instructors, the development and operation of programs in collaboration with local institutions and schools with

expertise in specific areas differed in that they created a common educational experience.

Linking with community projects that were being promoted in the region was the third school-specific activity. In regions where the community network was strong, residents and professionals of the village actively took part in finding career experiences and providing educational activities, and there were cases in which they did not have difficulty in finding resources even though they were in rural areas. This can be confirmed by the following example.

We operate in conjunction with various community-linked projects or community projects. In fact, this town has a strong community network. With these networks, we can find as many resources as possible in these rural areas (Chief at W Career Experience Center, Kim et al., 2016: 218).

The Final school-specific activity was the participation of local universities. The Ministry of Education and the Korea Foundation for the Advancement of Science and Creativity (KOFAC) organized a support team with a college student volunteer group to support students' participation in curriculum and free semester activities in the FSP-operating middle schools. At the individual university level, universities opened their doors to support the FSP, in ways such as creating "support groups of pre-service teachers" or running a "college experience day" support program.

Until now, most of schools have met with the community in a passive way such as through after school activities or school trips, but it can also be said that the experiences that have been actively linked to the community in the school class during the school hours have become full-scale through the FSP. One teacher recalled that it wasn't until they began the first step of planning a career-free career program that they were able to identify the specific areas of education outside the school and draw them into the school (Choi et al., 2016).

Schools that understand the community. In general, associations presume two or more relationships and their interactions. Therefore, the school's efforts to understand the community in response to the role of the community supporting the school will emerge. The following is a list of school efforts to understand the community through FSP.

First, some schools tried to organize school curriculum to understand the community. The D middle school held

integrated classes with history, Korean language, art, technology and home, and English on the theme of local specialty products, followed by classes for inquiry discussion and career activities for specialty products. Through the experiences of local 'work' as a 'learning resource' of the school, students increased their understanding of these areas.

The second was the use of the community as a resource to understand the theme of some subjects. Specifically, the E middle school offered activities such as 'proposing a good living neighborhood' and 'hosting an idea contest for residents' budget' for the purpose of communicating topics in the content of Social Studies through concrete action. Beyond the experience of the community's being a resource for learning, students were given the experience of being able to become members of the community through their curriculum.

Third, there was a case where some schools visited the local community and improved students' understanding levels and at the same time provided natural career education. The F middle school ran a regional night market experience program to provide an opportunity to explore local marketplaces and to enhance understanding of people living various lives.

Finally, from the community perspective, the educational activities of the students played a role of linking the local history and culture. The G middle school operated the project named 'Memoro Recording Heritage,' which recorded and transmitted the memories of adults over 60-year-old living in the community and other senior interviews. Such activities included listening to and understanding the history and culture of the local community through local adults and raised the value of local tradition.

As such, students have had the opportunity to enhance their understanding of the communities on which the home and school are based by dealing with a variety of local stories in school hours. This renewal of the eyes of the students who see the community as a living space which is a residence space for making a living, enhances the possibility of creating a unique story about life within the community.

As a result of studying cooperation and connection between the school and the community through the FSP, it was confirmed that schools were breaking down their walls so that they could become more open to the community. Schools often made good use of outside resources as an educational tool, and tried to use contents

from community in terms of school curriculum. In addition, many school educative activities were organized and run in order to solve problems in the community. Through this, it is possible to discover the possibility of forming an education community with schools and local communities. It is because the school and the community are considering the way of supporting each other with the common theme of education. In this process, some of the schools and communities were found to recognize each other as the subjects of education. However, the subject of education was still focused on the students, and the common themes were limited to the themes that help the students in the school, rather than the problems they had in the community. Therefore, it can be regarded as a rudimentary level from the viewpoint that the school and the community form a single educational community.

Discussion

Based on the results of the above analysis, the meaning of the lifelong education of the FSP can be summarized as follows. Students are accumulating experience to become lifelong learners through educational activities during their free semesters. The school that plans and implements FSP is in the process of communicating with the local community by expanding the possibilities of forming community education community.

Based on the above results, the one free semester needs to be expanded in a timely manner. If the free semester is maintained as just one 'exceptional semester' as it is now, lifelong educational meanings will likely remain as unique educational experiences. Currently, the policy to expand the free semester is semi-free semester, which links a free semester and a general semester, and free year program in which there are more than two free semesters (Lim, 2017b).

In addition, the competencies necessary for 'becoming a lifelong learner' should be specified, and the curriculum of FSP should be restructured accordingly. In the age of the fourth Industrial Revolution, the pace of social change is so fast that schools cannot find their significance in teaching 'current knowledge' as they did in the past. Schools should strive toward "Learning to Be" (Delors et al., 1996), so that students can adapt to the changing

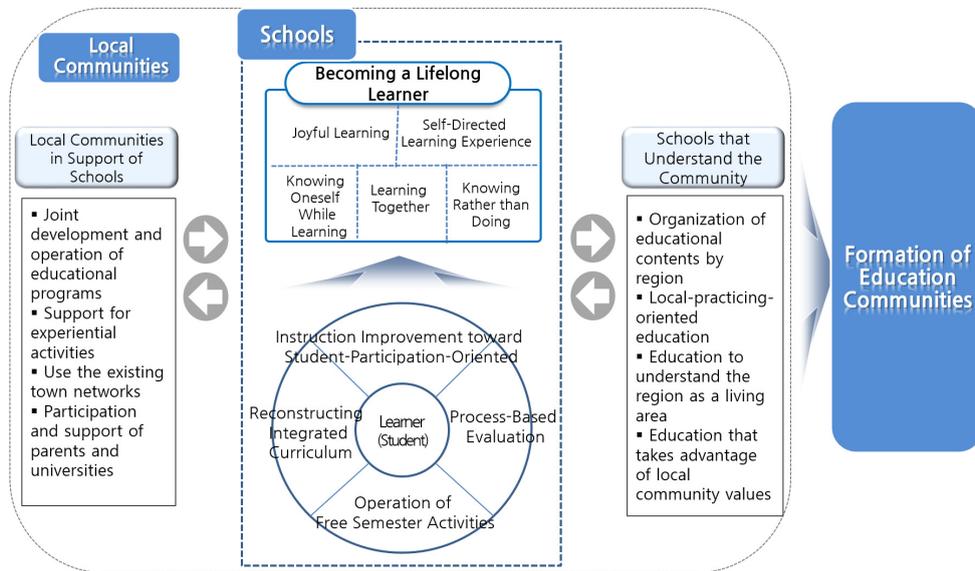


Figure 3. Lifelong Educational Meaning of Free Semester Program

world and continue to learn.

Schools should continue their effort to enter into the local educational ecosystem so that life can be transformed into a continuous space rather than a learning space separate from student life. Previously, there were several projects linking schools and communities. Examples are community schools, local schools, lifelong learning demonstration schools, and community school projects. However, they are limited in that they are more focused on activities than on subjects. On the other hand, the Free Semester Program is showing more advanced linkages and cooperation in that it creates cases of school and community linkage in curriculum and free semester activities. From the viewpoint of community education community, however, more extended educational practice is required, and efforts are needed to evolve the entire community into a system of implementing education.

Finally, local communities should strive for the design of 'educational co-organizing learning' that makes full use of the human and material resources possessed by the community and utilizes the characteristics of schools and localities. Joint experience is the experience of interaction among people in the same situation. Learning through this process can be a full and independent learning of the individual learners, and at the same time it can be a collective and unified learning (Kim, 2007). This

is called 'cooperative learning' by Kim (2007). Cooperative learning based on collective experience is directed towards individual and collective growth. The linkage between school and community should also develop into cooperative learning based on joint experience. Now, it is more focused on education practices that share their resources, so it is not specifically confirmed yet how to learn and grow. The experience that is not accompanied by growth is unilaterally restored to the participating actors, but not by the capacity of the community and the school. Therefore, the concrete design and practice of 'educational joint experience' that promotes individual and collective growth between school and community is required.

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