

## Korean Mothers' Perceptions of Kindergarten to Inclusive First Grade Transition of Their Children with Disabilities

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The current study examined Korean mothers' perceptions about the program transitions from kindergarten into first grade in regular elementary schools. Face to face interviews were conducted with the 15 parents of children with disabilities who made program transition recent year. Parents' perceptions were emerged in various issues. Parents often expressed concerns regarding placement choice, lack of information and support from professionals. However, Parents reported that they received emotional support and information from other parents. A discussion of the limitations of the present study and directions for future research are suggested.

*Key words : transition, inclusive education, & parents' perception*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

There are several significant transition points in the lives of children with disabilities and their families. Following the transition from one program to another, children can have positive experiences such as learning new skills, making new friends, and using skills learned in the previous program. However, children with disabilities often experience difficulty adapting to a new program due to the lack of necessary skills. Furthermore, as children move to the upper grades the learning environment typically changes from a play-based, developmentally appropriate model to an academic curriculum (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, & Holburn, 1990; Diamond, Spiegel-McGill, & Hanraham, 1988; Fowler, 1988; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Rule, Fiechtl, & Innocenti, 1990; Wolery, 1989).

Crinic, Friedrich, and Greenberg (1983) reported that the experiences of families of children with disabilities during transitions are particularly stressful. Families of children with disabilities often experience stress as they interact with new professionals, and arrange services for their children (Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, & Stella, 1988).

Research has shown that parents can provide a great deal of information to professionals (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, & Fowler, 1986) and collaboration between parents and professionals may contribute to successful transitions (Hains, et al., 1988; Winton, Turnbull, & Blacher, 1984). Many scholars suggest that the transition plan and service delivery decisions should meet the needs of the individual family, reduce the disruption of services, avoid duplication of services such as assessment, and meet federal and state legal requirements (Fowler, 1982; Fowler et al., 1988; Shotts, Rosenkoetter, Streufert, & Rosenkoetter., 1994; Winton, Turnbull, & Blacker, 1984; Wolery, 1989). Several researchers investigated families' concerns and perceived supports when their children made program transitions (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Hanline, 1988; Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Hanson et al., 2000; Johnson, et al., 1986). Parental concerns included: (a) information about school options for their children, (b) special services and children's readiness, (c) family involvement and collaboration with service providers, and (d) transition activities. Despite these concerns, most parents reported their involvement in, and overall satisfaction with the transition process. Additionally, parents reported that the following factors were supportive: (a) facilitators who helped with the transition (usually a service provider from a sending program), (b) emotional support from other parents and family members, (c)

early preparation for the transition, and (d) clear communication with professionals (e.g., written information prior to the program transition).

While preparing young children with disabilities for transitions between programs is relatively a “new topic” in the field of early childhood special education in Korea, Programs for young children with disabilities have increased and will be public school programs due to the law's guarantee of a free and appropriate education.

This study examined parents' perspectives on the current state of transition practices for children with disabilities from kindergarten to elementary school in Korea. Parents hold a great stake in their children's education in early childhood special education. Even though the traditional Korean ideology assumes that parents are responsible for the education of their children, the expertise and authority of teachers is highly respected and supported by Confucianism (Ellinger & Carson, 1990). Thus, parents' voices and perspectives must be heard in order to better understand transition practices in Korea. This study examined the concerns and needs of Korean parents have during the transition from kindergarten to first grade. Specific research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What do Korean parents of children with disabilities report as preferences, needs, and supports when their children make the transition from kindergarten to first grade?
2. What transition activities are parents engaged in during the transition from kindergarten to first grade?
3. What recommendations do parents have for other families and/or teachers and administrators regarding the transition from kindergarten to first grade?

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study utilized interview methodology to have parents reflect back on their child's transition experiences from kindergarten to first grade. Parents of children with disabilities reflected on their children's transition from kindergarten to first grade. Answers to open-ended questions provided in-depth descriptive information about these transition experiences. Interview data were analyzed thematically (Johnson & LaMontagne, 1993) according to the research

questions.

## 1. Participants

Two criteria were used to select study participants. First, parents of children who were identified as having moderate to profound levels of disability were recruited. Parents of children with this severity of disabilities often times struggle with placement decision in between special education schools or regular schools. The second criterion used to select participants was: children with disabilities had made the transition from kindergarten to first grade in regular schools. The Kindergarten and first grade had to be in two different school buildings.

Nineteen parents of children with disabilities agreed to participate in this study. All families live in Seoul. While 19 mothers were interviewed, only the interviews from 15 participants were analyzed (see Table. 1 for demographic information). Interviews from two participants were excluded because their children did not attend a kindergarten (one child went to a social welfare center and the other did not attend a kindergarten at all, expect experience with preschools).

〈Table 1〉 Participants Information

Variables		Numbers	Percentage
Child's Age	7 years old	4	26.67%
	8 years old	7	46.67%
	9 years old	4	26.67%
Child's Gender	Boy	8	53.33%
	Girl	7	46.67%
Child's Disability Level	1 (Profound)	5	33.33%
	2	7	46.67%
	3	2	13.33%
	4	1	6.67%
	5 (Mild)	0	0%
Type of Disability	Mental Retardation	9	60.0%
	Developmental Disability	6	40.0%
Transition Experience of Older Siblings		9	60.0%

Two other participants were excluded because their children remained in the same school for kindergarten and first grade.

Many children in this study remained in kindergarten one or two additional years before moving into first grade. Thus, the age of children when they entered elementary school varied based on parent's decisions to delay entry. Eleven out of 15 participating children had delayed entries of at least one year with three of these children being held back for two years. Only four children entered elementary school on time. Eight children were male. Twelve children had severe levels of disability. Sixty percent of the children (n=9) were registered as having mental retardation as their disability type and the other 40% (n=6) were registered as having a developmental disability, which included autism.

Mothers' educational level ranged from high school graduation to current enrollment in a doctoral program. Seventy percent of the mothers had a bachelor's or master's degree. Seventy nine percent of the fathers had a bachelor degree or above.

## 2. Instrument and Procedure

A semi-structured interview format was used in this study. The interview protocol was developed based on a literature review and discussions with several university faculty members in early childhood special education. The interview allowed participants to share their perspectives of the current transition process in Korea. The interview protocol was pilot-tested with three parents whose children recently made the transition from kindergarten to first grade. Pilot study participants provided feedback about the wording of interview questions and probes. The researcher modified the interview protocol based on their feedback. Additionally, the pilot study provided the researcher with an opportunity to practice interviewing and analyzing the data.

Interview questions and probes targeted: (a) parents' preferences and considerations in selecting a first grade placement, (b) sources of information and support concerning the transition from kindergarten to first grade, (c) transition activities, (d) parents' goals for their children in first grade, and (e) recommendations for other parents, teachers, and administrators.

Addresses of 280 elementary schools were obtained from the Seoul Office of Education Web site. The 280 school administrators were contacted via mail to explain the purpose of the study and to ask them to distribute consent forms with self-addressed stamped envelopes to potential participants. Only 2 interested participants returned the signed consent form along with their

contact information. The second method used to recruit participants involved personal contacts. The chair of the Organization of Parents of Children with Down syndrome assisted the researcher in recruiting some participants. Additionally, parents who were interviewed introduced other parents to the researcher. Interestingly, many participants reported that they had received the letters and consent form from their school administrators.

All participants were contacted by phone to make arrangements for the interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at a location and time that was convenient for each participant. The length of each interview varied from less than an hour to two hours.

The researcher then asked participants to sign the consent form and he explained the purpose of the study and the interview process. All interviews were recorded with a digital MP3 recorder and an audio tape recorder. Before the interviews, parents were told that the recorders could be stopped at any time should they become uncomfortable.

### 3. Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed by thematic units using content analysis procedures outlined by Johnson and LaMontagne (1993). The researcher read and reread all interviews, and separated the content into thematic units of analysis in relation to the mothers' perceptions of their transition experience from kindergarten to the first grade. Based on these units, categories were developed with definitions for thematic units. After refining these categories, all transcripts were separated into these thematic and categorical units. Then the researcher consulted early childhood special education professors, who had previous experience with this method of analysis.

Three researchers conducted the analysis: a professor and two doctoral students in early childhood special education. Two of the researchers were from the same cultural background as the participating mothers. The two doctoral students individually coded each transcript based on definition of codes for themes and categories. The themes and categories were refined through discussions. Any discrepancies between team members were negotiated until consensus was reached. Then final themes and categories were used to code all transcripts.

Intercoder agreement. A naïve graduate student in special education verified the themes and categories in order to assess intercoder agreement. This student independently coded 20% of the interviews (i.e., three of the 15 interviews). Percentage agreement for themes and categories was computed. Agreements were divided by the sum of agreements and disagreements and multiplied

by 100 to yield the percentage agreement. The overall intercoder agreement for themes was 88.7% (range = 80%-90%) and for categories was 80.2% (range = 74% - 87%). Disagreements were resolved through discussion until the researcher and coder reached consensus.

### III. RESULTS

#### 1. Preferences, Needs, and Supports

##### 1) Placement decision

Participants often explicitly reported their preference for an integrated first grade classroom for their children with special needs. Parents reported various preferences and factors that influenced their placement decisions. All 15 mothers emphasized the advantages of inclusion for their children with special needs. When participants described their placement preferences, they mentioned peer learning, social skills, and language development as major advantages. The following quotes are reflective of the comments made by these mothers: "Since he will not only live with people with disabilities, I wanted him to experience the real world. I never wanted him to only hang around with people with disabilities. I wanted to give him meaningful experiences in elementary school as much as I could. Even if it means a disaster for him in school, I still wanted to take the chance. That's the real reason why I sent him to regular school... academically I do not see any progress even until today. I think it will be still helpful to be able to see how regular children talk, how they play and things like that. That's why I send him here."

A few mothers compared special schools with regular schools; they preferred the regular school because of advantages for their children. She visited the special school with other mothers and noted that it was not what she expected. She felt that children were not provided with an adequate education, but were just taken care of by staff. So rather than leaving him there, this mother reported that she would rather have her child learn some social

Thirteen parents reported that they considered the location of a school as an important factor in their school selection. Participants often mentioned that a close distance was important. As one mother said, "I figured the one near home is the best. I have to go to school a lot." Another mother said, "It was not like going there for a year or two... the closest was the best." Also, four mothers explained that they preferred a school nearby so their children could

have friends at school and in the neighborhood. One mother expressed her concern about after school time by saying, “Even playing in the play ground, if there are children who know her at school they would protect her. They would play with her, like she is in the same class, but if children do not know my child at the playground in town because she is going to school far away…”

Another mother explained that location is important for safety reasons as well. She said, “Another reason is that the school is close to where I live. I don't like this school so much, but it's close to my house. So if he gets lost, it is easier for him to remember the route where we always travel between school and home. If it's the route he always travels, it's going to be some sort of second nature, so he will take the route… so that's why I choose this school.”

Five mothers considered the teachers' reputation when they selected an elementary school for their children with special needs. The mothers in this study often used the phrase “nice teachers.” One mother said, “This school has a very good reputation regarding that, the special education teacher is really famous and he is very kind.” Another mother expressed, “Ah, there are some very nice teachers! That's why mothers send their children here…Mothers, like migratory birds, all move when they hear some teachers are good in a particular school.”

Seven mothers chose their current school based on school related issues. Mothers described their preferences for a small class size, fewer students, a high quality environment, and the reputation of the school.

Seven mothers preferred to send their children with disabilities to schools with a special class. They selected a first grade based on the availability of special classes. Mothers often mentioned “individual instruction,” and “basic learning skill.” as important variables that they considered. One mother said, “There is no way she could get individual attention. But here (special class) basics are taught. They let her do what she is capable of, and develop.” Another mother explained, “He needed regular and special instruction, and the fact that his school could provide both was another important reason for choosing his school.”

## 2) Goals

Mothers reported various goals for their children with disabilities in first grade. Nine mothers mentioned developmental goals for their children to achieve in the first grade. Only one of these mothers mentioned academics as a goal for her child. Ten mothers described “general adjustment” into the classroom and school environment as major goals for their children.

Eight mothers mentioned “social skills” as the primary goal for their children to achieve in the first grade. One mother said, “I just want him to be able to hang around with other children and get along. Academically, I do not see any progress until today.” Another mother also described her goals for her child, “I want him to get along with others. And I think he can do study things at home with me... I want him to get along naturally... I want him to be friendlier.”

Among these eight mothers, four mothers also mentioned self-help skills such as toilet training and basic self-care skills as important goals for their children. Another mother mentioned language improvement as a goal for her child while three mothers mentioned physical development and health as important goals. Only one mother mentioned academic goals for her child. She said, “I just hoped he would be able to do the basic tasks, such as reading Korean and basic arithmetic so he will be able to live on his own.”

Ten mothers mentioned that they wanted their children be able to follow general school activities and rules. Often mothers emphasized independent living skills and integration into those activities as important skills.

### 3) Needs and concerns

They expressed their concerns about the placement decision before the transition, as all children made the transition into integrated first grades. However, only three mothers mentioned their concerns regarding the discrepancies between kindergarten and first grade. Most concerns were related to the adjustment to first grade. Especially right after the transition into first grade, the class placement between special class and regular class was the one of major concerns that five mothers mentioned. Seven mothers described teachers' negative attitudes toward their children as a concern. And ten parents described their relationship with teachers as a major concern. One mother mentioned the school environment, while another mother mentioned relationships with other mothers as concerns following their children's transition to first grade.

Five mothers expressed concern regarding their children's class placement. Some mothers wanted their children to spend more time in the regular classroom. However, one mother wanted her child to spend at least some portion of the day in a special class for individual education.

One mother pointedly talked about her concern about class placement: “I did not want to send him to special education even if it is just for the first grade... He prepared for the first

grade for four years. He prepared for the first grade since he was 4. We prepared for it for four years and I did not want that to be taken away. So I told the teacher I did not want to send him to special education class and also said I would do my best. Then she said that she would take him with her.” One mother had different opinions regarding classroom concerns. She wanted her child to spend some time in the special class for educational purposes

The biggest concern that mothers talked about were their relationships with their children's teachers. Eleven mothers expressed this concern during the interviews, often mentioning “a lack of communication.” One mother explained, “Some mothers who get too stressed or mistreated actually leave the school…it is indescribable and what about the stress the children are getting?” Seven mothers expressed concerns about teachers' negative attitudes and their not having knowledge about children's disabilities.

#### 4) Support and information

Seven mothers mentioned that their family and relatives provided support during their children's transition to first grade. Four mothers mentioned that the fathers of their children helped to some degree in preparing for the transition. However, mothers generally reported that there was minimal involvement by their family.

Only two of the 15 mothers mentioned that they received some support from their relatives. One mother said that an aunt of her child provided some suggestions and showed her how to care for the child. Another mother mentioned that her father-in-law showed support and made suggestions

Thirteen mothers reported that their major source of information was other mothers who had children with disabilities. One mother said, “The main source of information for a mother is other parents.” She explained, “All we have as a source of information is experienced people. And they only know these rules because they have suffered.” Mothers often mentioned that they received information, emotional support, and learned from other mothers' experiences.

Mothers explained that they received very detailed information about teachers and the school atmosphere from other mothers. One mother said, “They tell me things like what the teachers are like in different schools, and if the principal has been changed in a school. These things are going around to mothers. For example, when one mother was waiting on the playground on a cold day, the principal came and asked the mother to go to his office and wait, treating her to a cup of hot tea. In another school, the principal wanted the students to win the competition…

about how the school takes care or is indifferent about them.”

When asked about the support they received during the transition to first grade, participants were less likely to describe formal support received from schools. Nine parents mentioned that they had received some degree of support from the kindergarten where their children went. Some mothers noted that they only received general advice regarding their children's transition. A few mothers mentioned that they received general information regarding elementary school. However, they did not explicitly describe the information. Only two mothers explained that kindergarten teachers provided emotional support as well as a tour of the elementary school for parents.

Nine mothers mentioned that they received some support from elementary school personnel. Two mothers reported that they received support from elementary school administrators regarding the transition into first grade. One mother explained, “The school has too many stairs... Teachers knew that problem and gave some special consideration by moving the classroom to the first floor, just beside the front gate of the building. There were a lot of considerations for her.”

## 2. Transition Activities

### 1) Parents initiated transition activities

Fifteen parents mentioned that they prepared and managed at least one transition activity by themselves. The transition activities done by parents included information gathering, visiting schools with their children, arranging meetings with the teacher before or after school, delaying children's enrollment, teaching or enrolling their children in private lessons, and taking care of bureaucratic processes for enrollment. In addition, a few transition activities in relation to the child's adjustment were identified from interview data. Two activities, mentioned often by mothers, were staying in the classroom with the children and doing extra chores for the classroom.

All 15 mothers mentioned that they searched for general school information before their children's transition. The usual method of gathering information was contacting other parents whose children with disabilities went through the transition. Most mothers visited the school and arranged a meeting with the elementary school teachers by themselves.

Some mothers mentioned that they brought their children to school to introduce them to the

elementary school before first grade began. However they mentioned that there were not any particular activities, it was just a chance to familiarize their children with the new environment. A few mothers also mentioned that they showed the first grade classroom to their children, however, there were no special activities during the school visit.

After their children with disabilities made the transition to first grade, mothers often stayed in the classroom and did chores for the teacher. Four mothers mentioned doing extra chores for the classroom such as: "Food distribution is twice a week. We take turns. But I go everyday. It starts at 12:20. We, mothers, go everyday. We know our children are not having difficulty eating but still we go everyday. In the case when an assigned mother doesn't come, then I have to go. Working with three people is more comfortable, so I do it and help with cleaning. Now, the teacher leans on me. There are many dual-working families. So when they can't come, they contact me and if I can't go for some reason, then no one came. Then, the phone rings. 'Hi, the assigned mom didn't come. I was just wondering if you could come'. Then, I can't help going there. For us moms, the magic goes off at 12. We take children to school at 9 and we do housework and our own stuff till 12. When the magic goes off, then we go to school."

## 2) School initiated transition activities

Only four mothers mentioned that kindergarten personnel provided transition related activities. Two mothers mentioned that the kindergarten arranged school tours. Other mothers mentioned that the kindergarten provided school lists and had consultation sessions with parents.

Ten mothers mentioned that the elementary school provided transition activities prior to the child's transition. The transition activities included pre-orientation, an orientation or entrance ceremony, and a school brochure/pamphlet. Pre-orientation and an entrance ceremony are the typical administrative procedures that all schools offer during the transition to elementary school. Most parents mentioned that those activities were not very helpful to them.

The only transition activity mentioned by mothers that was done by the educational bureau was the admission notice sent to parents. Eight mothers mentioned the admission notice. Those mothers who did mention the admission notice from the district bureau expressed their dissatisfaction with the information or procedures.

### 3. Parents' Recommendations

#### 1) Advice to other parents

Seven mothers advised other parents to be emotionally confident and ready to go through the transition process. Four mothers mentioned the importance of preparing children with basic skills before the transition into first grade. Several mothers offered advice regarding school selection. Seven mothers recommended gathering information about the school and teacher, and meeting the teacher and discussing things with them before the transition. In addition, most mothers recommended choosing a regular school with a special class and focusing on benefits to the child as priorities.

A few mothers recommended for other parents to have a good relationship with the teacher and participate in the school activities such as "being a board member." Another mother recommended that having good relationships with other mothers is also important for adjusting to the new school.

#### 2) Recommendations to teachers

Eleven mothers had specific recommendations for regular education teachers. However, most recommendations were related to teachers' practices or attitudes after children made the transition into first grade. All mothers asked teachers to pay more attention to their children's special needs. In addition, mothers asked teachers to have their children participate in regular classroom activities. Four mothers also recommended that teachers need to have some training or knowledge about children with disabilities.

#### 3) Recommendation to schools and government

Eight mothers mentioned at least one recommendation for school personnel. Two mothers mentioned that they would like to have more information about schools and teachers during the transition to first grade. Four mothers mentioned that schools should reduce the class size for those rooms containing are children with disabilities. Five mothers mentioned that providing more systematic support for teachers or hiring more teachers would benefit children with special needs.

Nine mothers gave recommendations about providing information to the government, which includes the educational bureau and the general educational system. Most mothers would like

branches of the government to provide school information and administrative information regarding enrollment procedures during the transition to first grade.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

All 15 mothers reported that they preferred an integrated placement with a special education classroom for their children with special needs. These placement preferences are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Green & Stoneman, 1989; Peck, Carlson, & Helmstetter, 1992). There are three aspects of mothers' placement preferences that need to be discussed. First, their preferences were congruent with their perceptions of the advantages of integrated learning environments. Further, the mothers' perceptions are consistent with findings from other studies. All mothers in the current study perceived that their children should be educated with peers without disabilities in general education settings where rich opportunities for learning can also provide appropriate challenges.

It is worthy to note that most mothers in the current study mentioned social skills, including social learning, or the benefits of social integration as advantages that affected their placement decisions. A few mothers also mentioned the benefits of language development that children could gain from being around typically developing children. It was evident that there was relationship between mothers' preferences for inclusive educational settings and their beliefs about the advantages for their children if educated in inclusive settings.

Second, mothers seemed concerned about their children's individual educational needs as well as their social integration. Seven mothers mentioned that they preferred regular schools with special classrooms so that their children with disabilities could get the individual instruction they needed. It is probable that mothers' concerns with placement might reflect the current practice of inclusion. Most mothers appeared to believe that their children do not receive adequate individualized education in regular education classrooms. Thus, they believed that their children should be also educated in special education classrooms to compensate for their special educational needs.

Third, it is particularly noteworthy that parents considered teachers' reputations when selecting a school. Many parents mentioned the issue of teachers' reputations when discussing their preference for school placement. Only one previous survey study asked parents to rate important

factors for transition, including teachers' characteristics (Winton et al., 1984). It is particularly significant that mothers in the current study put great emphasis on teachers' characteristics. It is clear that they believed that teachers are important factors in their children's successful transition. One mother compared parents of children with disabilities to "migratory birds" when she discussed this issue. Perhaps it is due to the absence of systematic support from the educational system or special education policies that parents tend to rely on a more personal and informal level of support such as teachers when they consider educational placement decisions for their children with special needs. The absence of policies and systematic support from schools have create stressful situations for Korean families. Perhaps the future direction to improve the situation is to create more integrated schools for children with disabilities to move into, supported by clear policies and systematic support. Furthermore, professionals in schools should be aware of these issues that mothers are dealing with as they make placement decisions to better facilitate the transition process for children with disabilities and their families.

Most parents mentioned various concerns regarding their transition experiences. Some of the concerns mentioned by participants in the current study are congruent with previous findings. For example, issues described as concerns in previous studies conducted in the U.S. included: the discrepancy between programs in terms of level of involvement (Johnson et al., 1986), communication with teachers (Hanline, 1988), program quality, teachers' negative attitudes and relationships, and the relationship with other parents (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989). These issues were also identified as concerns in the current study.

Two concerns voiced frequently by participants in the current study are particularly noteworthy: classroom placement, and teachers' attitudes and relationships with parents. In the research by Hanline and Halvorsen (1989), parents identified the attitudes of staff as rejecting and patronizing. Individual administrators decide whether they should provide special education in a special classroom. Therefore, many mothers expressed concerns regarding classroom placement after their children's transition into first grade. This also corresponds to parents' preferences to select a school that included a special classroom. However, mothers perceived that classroom placement decisions were generally made for the regular education teachers' convenience. Mothers also reported no collaboration between themselves and teachers when making classroom placement decisions and designing the educational curriculum. Most teachers did not appear to welcome and consider parents equal partners who could contribute to their children's education. Further participants reported a lack of collaboration between regular

education teachers and special education teachers.

As shown in the results, parents reported that they had received support and information from various sources during the transition process. Results indicated that parents identified other parents, families, and relatives as major sources of emotional support. Parents also reported that they received support from educators. These sources of support and information are congruent with findings from other studies (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Hanson et al., 2000).

However, there are several differences when comparing the findings of the current study to the existing literature. Most mothers reported that they had received support and information regarding transition from informal sources. Informal sources of support included families and relatives, other parents, and others (e.g., customer and friends). Formal support included support from kindergarten and elementary school personnel. The frequency of incidences of informal support cannot be gleaned from interview data. Furthermore, the types of support and information shared appeared to be very informal and personal. For example, mothers mentioned that they had received emotional support from both kindergarten and elementary school teachers. Mothers often used words such as 'care,' 'feel better,' 'positive attitude,' 'warm, accepted,' and 'relaxed.' The type of information was usually very general information about school. Parents also received informal and personal emotional support from informal sources such as other mothers and church members. Information from other mothers tended to address informal concerns rather than the educational system or transitional processes. Many mothers were interested in obtaining information about the characteristics of the elementary school teachers and the school atmosphere. This information is not typically acquired through the educational system.

The transition activities described by participants in this study were very limited in terms of variety. Furthermore, most transition activities were initiated by mothers rather than provided by schools or educational offices. For instance, kindergarten staff provided only limited activities including school tours and consultations. Elementary schools provided a pre-orientation or orientation meeting, an entrance ceremony, and school brochures/pamphlets. Most parents reported that these activities were not helpful for their particular situation. Furthermore, parents reported that these activities were not individualized for families with children with disabilities. It is clear that Korean mothers did assume major responsibilities for transition preparation and managing transition related activities. Collaboration between stakeholders at sending and receiving programs is necessary to make program transitions positive and organized. Transition activities include a shared responsibility between stakeholders. Schools should provide organized and

individualized transition activities for parents so that they can make well-informed placement decisions for their children with special needs.

There are a few limitations with regard to this study. First the voluntary participation of a small number of mothers from one geographical region limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, maternal self-report data, while informative about transition practices, is limited in informing an understanding of actual transition practices in Korea.

Second, the characteristics of children and their mothers limits the generalizability of the results in several ways. For example, most children were described as having a severe to profound levels of disabilities. Mothers' expectations for their children vary depending on their children's level of disability. In this study, 12 of the 15 children were reported as having severe to profound disabilities. Thus, these mothers' expectations and preferences toward making the transition into integrated schools may be different from mothers whose children have less significant disabilities.

Finally retrospective interviews, requiring participants to reflect on previous experiences is a limitations of the current study.

There was substantial information about their emotional state as well as their perceptions about societal views toward their children's disabilities. A case study of a small number of participants may help capture rich details regarding mothers' stories. In turn, it will also help researchers describe in details the various transition experiences that families go through.

As mentioned earlier, there were many issues that were lightly addressed by the mothers who participated in this study. For example, some mothers briefly mentioned transition activities or supports provided by other stakeholders such as consultations from teachers, orientation meetings, or information brochures. These issues need to be scrutinized more clearly by asking other stakeholders for their perspectives on transition activities. Also, triangulating data with other sources such as documentation review or observations of the actual events would be helpful. Two possible methods could be used to explore those issues. First, a large-scale survey may provide clearer evidence of transitional activities provided by other stakeholders, such as kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers, and educational administrators. Second, an observational study would provide evidence about how various stakeholders implement transition related activities. This method might shed light on these issues in more objective ways.

A few implications for practice can be drawn from the results of this study. First, Many parents would like to have more information and support during this transition. Most parents

sought this information and support from informal sources such as other mothers and acquaintances. This information may include but is not limited to school choice, the availability of special education classrooms, location of the school, teacher student ratio, and class size. Professionals should make such information available to families of children with disabilities prior to the transition into first grade and continue to offer support throughout the transition process.

Second, participants indicated their preference for inclusive settings and expressed concerns about teachers placing their children in special education classes without prior discussion. Collaboration with parents would ensure that their preferences for inclusive education are honored during and after the transition. In addition, teacher preparation programs should better prepare teachers to support the increasing number of students with disabilities making the transition into regular schools. These professional development changes, in turn, might reduce some of the concerns that parents described and might facilitate better transitions and improved success for young children with disabilities.

In conclusion, Korean families' roles and their interaction style with professionals during the transition process were noteworthy. Families in this study seemed to rely on informal sources of support and information. At the same time, families assumed most of the responsibilities in preparing their children with disabilities to move into a new program. Their interaction with teachers following the transition seemed to be passive as they were cautious to bring up their own needs. It may be due to the traditions of Confucianism in which Korean parents show enormous respect toward teachers. Listening to the unique needs of families and understanding their experiences is an important method for facilitating transitions to the next environment.

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요약

## 유치원에서 통합초등학교로의 진학에 관한 장애아동의 어머니들 인식

백 상 수

본 연구는 유치원에서 일반 통합 초등학교로 진학한 장애아동을 둔 어머니들의 진학에 관한 시각을 조사했다. 최근 자녀들의 진학을 겪은 15명의 어머니들과의 면접을 통해 그들이 진학과정에서 겪은 지원과 난관들 그리고 진학과 관련된 활동들을 살펴보았다. 아울러 진학을 겪은 어머니들의 진학과 관련한 여러 제안들을 조사해보았다. 대부분 어머니들은 학교선택의 어려움과 정보와 지원의 결여 등을 진학에 관련된 어려움으로 지적하고 있다. 또한 어머니들은 공식적인 학교관련기관에서 보다 다른 장애아동들의 부모들로부터 많은 지원과 정보를 얻고 있었다. 이 연구의 개선점과 아울러 앞으로의 진학에 관련된 연구를 위한 방향을 제시하고자 한다.

주제어 : 진학, 통합교육, 학부모 견해

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