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## Are Korean Early Childhood Teachers Becoming More Responsive to Multicultural Children? An Analysis of Diversity Self-efficacy Data From the Korean Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE) Survey

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Korea is in transition toward becoming a multicultural society. This study assessed progress in the preparedness of Korean teachers to address diversity issues in this rapidly changing society. Analysis of diversity data from a 2011 national survey suggests that progress is being made toward making teachers more aware of developmental needs of diverse children. Moreover, data suggests that teaching experience, closer teacher-child relationships, and awareness of recent standardized curriculum may play a role in higher levels of diversity self-efficacy of early childhood educators. This study concludes with policy recommendations.

### Introduction

An article in the New York Times aptly pointed out that “South Korea, a country where until recently people were taught to take pride in their nation’s ‘ethnic homogeneity’ ... is struggling to embrace a new reality” (Choe, 2009). This new reality has emerged largely from a rapid increase in the numbers of foreign workers needed to fuel Korea’s growing economy and an increase in the number of foreign brides. In 2008, foreign residents in Korea made up about 2% of the total Korean population. One year later, the rate of foreign residents increased by more than 17% (Moon, 2010). Another indicator of this increase is that in 2008, 13,443 babies were born to inter-racial Korean couples. This number increased to 22,014 in 2011. This figure represents 4.7% of all births in Korea in 2011 (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2011). Korea’s recent journey in diversity has even begun to alter its language. Widespread use of terms such as “*Danil Minjok*” to describe the former one race native Korean nation is becoming less used in daily conversations. Such descriptors are now being increasingly replaced by words such as “*Damunhwa*” (multicultural) when referring to citizens of mixed race or families of inter-racial couples.

Rapidly increasing diversity in Korea presents many challenges for our highly industrialized nation. Perhaps one of the most critical challenges likely to affect our future economy, however, lies in the education sector. Specifically, we must learn how to better prepare teachers and children to celebrate the recent diversity in our nation. Since 2012, Korea has been applying a revised curriculum called the *Nuri* Curriculum to 5 years old children in Korean public childcare programs. The application of this standardized curriculum has more recently been extended to children ages 3 to 5. In this curriculum, cultural diversity is clearly emphasized. For example, the curriculum states children must “...learn to recognize and to embrace diverse socio-cultural differences...” It also indicates that teachers must consider the educational needs of multicultural families when preparing teaching-learning environments. In the social interaction section of the curriculum, it is emphasized that multicultural issues “take priority in creating

anti-bias environment where children can learn about different countries, races, and cultures.” It also emphasizes, “Children are to respect physical differences between oneself and others” and actively encourages children to “work toward living cooperatively with diverse cultures.” Emerging curricula such as this is clearly in line with Korean goals of becoming a 21<sup>st</sup> century diverse nation. However, we know very little about how *teachers* in the schools are currently prepared to use such curricula to achieve national goals.

Increasing numbers of leading scholars are expressing the critical nature of diversity education in early education. Keenhwe (2010), for example, suggests that it is important to focus on multicultural education from an early age to most effectively develop the ability to communicate with and relate to others from diverse backgrounds. Likewise, the 100,000 plus members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the United States acknowledge the importance of an anti-bias approach to early education in position papers and in its accreditation process (Derman-Sparks et al., 2010). Similarly, the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) addresses the importance of diversity preparation in global teacher education programs. In their position paper, "Preparation of Early Childhood Education Teachers"(1997), ACEI stresses that teachers should develop:

... comprehension of the variety and complexity of communication patterns as expressed by people of differing cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in a global context; a knowledge and understanding of differences and similarities among societies and cultures, both at home and abroad; an awareness of the social, historical and political forces affecting children and the implications for education within individual nations and world contexts (p.164).

Teachers and parents play an important role influencing children’s identity as well as developing an anti-bias perspective from very young ages. Data collected by the Panel Study on Korean Children in 2011(KICCE, 2012) suggests that Korean children spend more than 7 hours per day in preschools or kindergartens. Other than an average of 10 hours of sleep per day, this figure suggests that the majority of our children’s time is spent in school. If Korea is to create future citizens who value diversity more than previous generations, the development of lasting dispositions to respect and value those who are different must begin in the earliest years. And, classroom teachers will play a vital role in the development of such dispositions as Korea transitions toward becoming a truly multicultural society. Yet, research is just beginning to emerge to provide direction for qualities and experiences of teachers that are likely to result in more diversity-conscious teachers.

### **Teacher Impact on Multicultural Classrooms**

Some teacher variables were investigated in the KICCE teacher survey. This study investigated carefully selected teacher variables based on recent study trends of teacher impact on diversity in classrooms. Research provides a promising glimpse of teacher variables that are likely to result in more productive multicultural classrooms. Two promising variables include: teacher-child relationships and teacher-parent communication.

#### ***Teacher-child Relationships***

Productive teacher-child relationships appear to be a critical factor in the academic achievement of children. In an experimental study ( $n = 120$ ) of teacher-child relationships with kindergarten children, Ahnert, Milatz, Kappler, Schneiderwind, and Fischer (2013), for example, found that children with a closer relationship with teachers showed higher cognitive processing. In their study, teacher-child relationships were measured first and, then, children participated in computerized tasks in a laboratory situation. In order to measure teacher-children relationships, the researchers visited children in kindergartens. They first asked their

teachers to report on the quality of the teacher-child relationship using Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta, 2001), which measured closeness, dependency, and conflict. In addition, children and teachers were observed together. Later teachers were asked to provide evaluations of their teacher-child relationships from the children's point of view. Children were then given laboratory tasks challenging their cognitive processes relating to basic knowledge and belief systems. Tasks included things like classifying items (i.e., using a computer mouse, click on the figure which does not belong to the rest), ordering (i.e., click on the patterns which should be replace the blank in a way to match the order rows), and composing and comparing (i.e., click on the figure which best fits in the big pattern). Before beginning the tasks, an image of a child's teacher was shown to the experimental group ( $n = 60$ ) whereas children of the control group were shown a neutral image. Results suggested that cognitive processing was significantly ( $p < .05$ ) impacted by closer teacher-child relationships.

In addition to cognitive benefits of positive teacher-child relationships, other studies (Greenberg, 2002; Liew, Chen, & Hughes, 2010; Neu, 2013; Wentzel & Berndt, 1999) suggest closer teacher-child relationships may provide a powerful social context for ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minority children. These studies suggest that closer teacher-child relationships may positively impact language development, academic achievement and greater involvement in classroom learning environments.

### ***Teacher-parent Communication***

Teacher-parent communication has also been shown to be important in the maximal development of children in the early years. Miedel and Reynolds (1999), for example, investigated the association between parent involvement in early education and children's later school performance. In their longitudinal study of 704 parents of preschool and kindergarten children in Chicago, USA, researchers found a significant relationship between parent involvement in schools and higher reading achievement.

Likewise, Cheatham and Ostrosky (2013) conducted an analysis of conversations in teacher-parent conferences with native Spanish speaking, Latino bilingual and native English speaking parents and teachers. For this study, researchers gave teachers three different methods of setting goals for their children. The first method involved the teacher telling the parent a goal they had set for the children. In the second method, the teacher asked parents a goal they would like to establish for their children. In the third method, the teacher shared with parents a goal they had established and requested parent input into how to address this goal. Examples of goals described above included items like working with other children, helping the child better understand math patterns and help with writing letters. This investigation found that cultural differences and misunderstanding between teachers and parents might affect children's goal setting differently. For example, when teachers largely controlled child goal setting during parent-teacher conferences, particularly native Spanish speaking parents were confused by teachers' decisions but reluctant to ask teachers for a detail explanation. This study concluded that understanding of cultural backgrounds of children's families were productive when recognizing the value of what families can bring to teacher-family communication.

Eberly, Joshi, and Konzal (2007) also found that teachers in their study struggled to interpret parents' child-rearing practices due to different cultural perspectives. In their qualitative study, teachers indicated that they could not make generalizations about a child's culture based solely on their race or ethnicity because "*there are cultures within cultures.*" For example, teachers were confused and struggled in terms of understanding child-rearing styles when parents mentioned "*we give our babies coffee because coffee to us is a dessert,*" or when Puerto Rican mothers says to a child "*you touch it and die... because I said so.*" A teacher also expressed different cultural aspects on gender: "*... in certain cultures education for girls is not valued as much as it is for boys.*" The researchers concluded that more effective communication with parents resulted from better teacher understanding of the families' perspectives.

## **Teacher Preparation for Diversity**

If Korea is to maintain and expand its place, as an economic force in the world, greatly improved education for diversity is needed - urgently needed - especially in the preparation of teachers for very young children. Yet, little is known about how universities in Korea prepare teachers to work with diverse very young children in classrooms. Other nations such as the USA have a long history of teacher education institutions being required to assure graduating teachers are prepared for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy based on multicultural participation. The majority of U.S. teacher education universities, for example, follow, standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (Gorski, 2009). Standard 4 of these guidelines deal specifically with “*Diversity*” (NCATE, 2008). In order for teacher education programs to be accredited, the curriculum of institutions being assessed must demonstrate how they prepare candidates to be able to “demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity” and “apply them effectively in schools” (p. 34). It further requires that all teacher candidates “must develop proficiencies for working effectively with students and families from diverse populations and with exceptionalities to ensure that all students learn.”

Children of multi-ethnic families are a growing population in Korea. In order for all children to be competent in a global society, diversity should be addressed from an early age. However, little research exists regarding Korean multicultural education- especially regarding teacher preparation. This study sought to fill the research gap of Korean teacher education for multicultural education through analysis of data emerging from the 2011 KICCE survey relating to diversity issues.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. What is the current status of diversity self-efficacy of Korean early childhood educators?
2. What teacher variables appear to impact the level of teachers’ self-efficacy regarding diversity?

## **Methodology**

### **1. Data source**

The data used in this study was collected in 2011 by the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE). A total of 1,425 surveys were distributed to Korean teachers of children ages birth to 5 years who worked at national public daycares and kindergartens, and at private, religion-based early childhood programs. The response rate on the survey was approximately 45.2%. Accordingly, total 800 cases were used to investigate diversity self- efficacy of Korean early childhood teachers.

### **2. Instrumentation**

The survey was developed by KICCE to obtain national data regarding Korean childcare and education. The survey included separate questionnaires for teachers, mothers and fathers. Since this study was designed to explore state-of-the-art diversity status concerning classroom teachers, only data from the teacher questionnaire was used for this study. The Teacher Survey portion of this survey required self-reported responses to questions based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1(*strongly disagree*) through 5(*strongly agree*). For this study, we selected only survey items that were related to the diversity variables investigated in this study. This included teacher self-efficacy, child-teacher relationships, parent-teacher communication, and awareness of Korean national standardized curriculum for childcare programs. The teacher self-efficacy survey (7 questions) was developed based on Bandura’s (2006) not in references Teacher Self-efficacy Scale. For the purpose of this study, three items that measured teachers’ confidence

in their ability to promote diverse students' learning were selected and named *diversity self-efficacy*. These included the following items:

1. efficacy to motivate academic achievement for children at-risk,
2. efficacy in supporting children to work collaboratively
3. efficacy to help children overcome poor environments that prevents them from learning.

Each score of the three items was aggregated to get the total score for diversity self-efficacy. Also, within the survey, the three main predictor variables were measured as follow: 1) ten items relating to *teacher-child relationships* were used to measure teachers' use of various methods to interact with children, 2) four items considered *teacher-family communication* to measure how well teachers maintained communication with families and 3) *awareness of national standardized curriculum* was measured. The KICCE survey also included teacher's general background information (i.e. gender, teaching experience, and teacher certification). Teaching experience was measured by months of classroom teaching. Teacher certification was defined as whether the participant was certified to teach children in early child settings.

### 3. Variables

The dependent variable in this study was teachers' level of diversity self-efficacy (DSE) as measured by the survey. In order to answer the research questions under investigation, the following predictor variables were investigated: 1) *teacher-child relationship*, 2) *teacher-family communication*, and 3) *awareness of national standardized curriculum*. Total scores of the three items were calculated respectively. Teachers' characteristics were also considered as independent variables. These included: 1) *gender*, 2) *teacher certification*, and 3) *teaching experience*. Gender variable was used as a dummy variable indicating male (ref. female). Whether teachers were early childhood certified was indicated by the dummy variable (ref. not certified). We aggregated the teaching experience from each institution where the teacher taught, and then, the aggregated total teaching months, were controlled as an independent variable. Table 1 provides a summary of variables explored investigated in this study.

Table. 1  
*Summary of Variables*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Descriptions</i>
<b>Dependent variable</b>	
Teaching Efficacy	Total scores of Teacher Self-Efficacy on diversity
<b>Independent variables</b>	
Gender	A dummy variable indicating gender (0 = Female, 1 = Male)
Teacher certification	A dummy variable indicating certification (0 = No, 1 = Yes)

Teaching experience	Total teaching experience (unit: months of teaching experience)
Teacher-child relationship	Relationship between teacher and children
Teacher-family comm.	Communication between teacher and parents/families
Curriculum awareness	Awareness of latest early childhood educational policy

#### 4. Analytical method

A regression analysis was used to investigate what variables might better explain teachers' level of diversity self-efficacy (DSE). The following multiple regression model was used for this study.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 E_1 + \beta_2 E_2 + \beta_3 E_3 + \beta_4 E_4 + \beta_5 E_5 + \beta_6 E_6 + e$$

Where

Y = level of diversity self-efficacy

$E_1$  = gender,  $E_2$  = teacher certification,  $E_3$  = teaching experience,  $E_4$  = child-teacher relationship,  $E_5$  = family-teacher communication, and  $E_6$  = awareness of national standardized curriculum

#### Findings

This study used results of the KICCE survey to explore the current status of Korean early childhood teachers' level of DSE and predictor variables relating to the levels of DSE. Findings related to Research Question 1 are as follows:

##### Research Question 1: What is the current status of Korean early childhood educators' DSE?

The mean of total DSE score in this study was 11.49 (out of a possible score of 15). This suggests that Korean early childhood teachers, in general, were comfortable in their ability to celebrate diversity in their preschool classrooms

Most of the participant teachers (99%) were females ( $n = 792$ ). Data also suggested that the majority of teachers were certified to teach in childcare programs ( $n = 791$ ) (only 9 teachers were not certified).

Descriptive results of the variables are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.

##### Summary of Descriptive Statistics Result

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<b>Dependent variable</b>					
Diversity self-efficacy	800	11.49	1.65	3	15
<b>Independent variables</b>					
Gender	800	0.01	0.10	0	1
Teacher certification	800	0.98	0.11	0	1
Teaching experience	792	70.02	59.30	0	311
Teacher-child relationship	800	42.30	4.65	10	50

Teacher-family comm.	800	17.73	2.13	4	20
Curriculum awareness	800	6.20	1.06	2	8

**Research Question 2:** Teacher variables effect on *diversity self-efficacy*

The results of multiple regression analysis for the teacher variables effect on diversity self-efficacy are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3.  
*Summary of Regression Analysis of Predictors of Diversity Self-efficacy*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Intercept	2.013***	.666	.003
Gender	.519	.464	.264
Teacher certificate	-.358	.438	.415
Teaching experience	.003***	.001	.001
Teacher-child relationship	.188***	.012	.000
Teacher-family comm.	.048*	.025	.060
Policy awareness	.139***	.047	.003
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>.382</b>		

Note: \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

As can be seen in the Table 3, the prediction model for this study was statistically significant,  $F(6, 800) = 3.02$ ,  $p < .001$ , and accounted for approximately 38% of total variance of the DSE ( $R^2 = .38$ ). A significant effect on DSE was not found in either gender ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p > .10$ ) or teacher certification ( $\beta = -.36$ ,  $p > .10$ ). Since the data included very few of certified teachers (0.02%) as well as very few male teachers (0.01%), the dummy results were not likely affected. The teacher-family communication effect was estimated to be about .048 at the 10% significant level ( $p = .06$ ). This suggests that when one point of teacher-family communication increases, .048 point of the teachers' DSE increases.

Other significant predictors from the survey were stronger indicators of the teachers' level of DSE. First, the effect of teaching experience was significant at the  $p = .001$  level. This suggests that if one unit (month) of teaching experience is increased, the level of DSE was increased by .003. For example, a teacher who taught ten months more than another can be predicted to score .03 higher in DSE. This suggests that more experienced teachers may have a more positive impact on working with diverse children and families.

Second, teacher-child relationships accounted for approximately .19 ( $p < .01$ ) of the variance. Third, awareness of recent educational policy was positively related to teachers' DSE ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that DSC scores increased by .14 points with each additional degree of national standardized curriculum awareness. Thus, teachers who were more aware of the standardized national curriculum tended to have higher levels of DSE.

Overall, approximately 38% of all variance investigated in this model was accounted for by the dependent variable. This suggests that DSE may be best predicted by examining predictor variables of teaching experience, teacher-child relationship, and awareness of national standardized curriculum. Data from this study also found that teacher-parent communication was moderately related to DSE. Thus, active communication between teachers and parents may help promote more positive atmosphere where cultural

gap may be reduced between school and home. Such positive communication appears to be more ideal when there is an open, two-way communication between teachers and their caregivers.

## Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between diversity self-efficacy (DSE) and its predictor variables selected from the 2011 KICCE teacher survey. The most important finding of this study was that it appears that progress is beginning to emerge in the area of early childhood teacher's confidence in dealing with diverse children. While this finding offers optimism that we may be moving in the right direction, it also raises a number of issues. First, the human race has been consistent over the years in sometimes not necessarily *doing* what they know they should. This may well be the case with teachers in this study. They may *feel* relatively competent in dealing with classroom diversity; yet, instructional practices may present a different result. From this, it appears a highly productive line of research might be to explore the relationship between teachers' DSE and *evidence in the classroom* supporting a given DSE level. For example, do teachers who score high in DSE have classrooms with children's books, posters, and artifacts of diverse children? Perhaps an even more productive line of research might be to compare teachers' DSE with measures of *children's* views toward diversity?

Commensurate with previous studies of teacher-child relationships (Brown, 2002; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999), teachers in this study tended to have higher DSE as they professed closer relationships with children. Based on the specific survey items asked of teachers, closer teacher-child relationships may be summarized as a teacher who: 1) has positive attitudes when communicating with children, 2) encourages children to work together, and 3) a teacher who actively responds to children's demands with affection. These items address views toward general interactions between teachers and children within the classroom. Yet, close teacher-child relationship can be defined differently from the above. For example, Pianta (2001) defined closeness of teacher-child relationship as child's view of how much teachers support them and are appreciative of students as a resource. Another possible definition might be how attuned teachers are to children as individuals. For example, do teachers know families personally (e.g., number of siblings, family issues such as being refugees from North Korea), cultural background (e.g., nation, origins of family), and special interests of children (e.g., pets, goals). It may be, then, that the more a teacher knows about children and their family, the more likely teachers might be to respond more appropriately to instruction. More qualitative classroom-based research may allow researchers to better assess possible differences in what teachers profess and the reality of their relationships with children. Such research, for example, might explore specific ways that a teacher might support a child's adjustment while children are in transition (e.g., learning a new language, culture shock). Teacher-parent communication showed a moderate relationship with teachers' DSE. Descriptive result showed that teachers tend to actively communicate with families through various methods ( $M = 17.73$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ). Teachers in the sample reported that they frequently communicated with families via phone, face-to-face, text messages, and newsletters. While these methods may support greater teacher-family involvement, they may be overlooking even more effective methods not mentioned. Methods of communication such as these tend to represent a uni-directional flow of information- i.e. from the teacher to parent. In such one-way information flow, families who are cultural/linguistic minorities may not be fully considered as active participants. The ethnic minority participant parents in the KICCE survey were only .5% of total sample parents ( $n = 9$ ). Since diverse families are likely to rapidly increase, it is important for future research to begin to explore more effective strategies for building stronger teacher-family relationships. Further, the data from this study also suggests that family involvement strategies identified in the KICCE survey consisted primarily of teacher oriented activities such as: inviting families for their children's performances and reporting the developmental growth of the child. Teachers may have to find more effective ways to support families in taking greater responsibility for teacher-parent relationships. This is likely to be especially true when considering parents of mixed race. Lack of teacher knowledge of diverse cultures can widen this critical relational gap. Given the impact of this variable

upon the child development, however, effort in this area appears likely to result in highly positive outcomes.

Teacher awareness of curriculum was also found to be significantly related to diversity self-efficacy. Korean educators appear to be knowledgeable of the new policy relating to development of dispositions toward supporting diversity in classrooms. Since the most recent *Nuri* Curriculum places major emphasis upon diversity, this trend suggests that teachers may be more aware of diversity issues in early childhood programs. However, as discussed above, it is worth noting that higher DSE does not, in itself, predict how effectively teachers actually interact with diverse children and their families. In light of national diversity goals, it would appear prudent to investigate in depth the relationship between DSE and instructional proficiency as it relates to diversity in the actual classroom.

Results also suggests that teachers with more teaching experience profess to have greater confidence in dealing with diversity in their classrooms. Based on our nation's long history as a homogeneous nation, this result was a bit surprising. If, for example, preparation for diversity is just beginning to be included in teacher preparation programs, it would seem that more recent teachers in the field would be more knowledgeable and supportive of diversity than teachers who were educated when multicultural issues were not included in teacher preparation. It might be that this finding simply suggests that more experienced teachers are more confident in dealing with a host of potential classroom issues- diversity being but one. Further, a more experienced teacher might have had more experiences working with ethnic minority students- both good experiences and bad ones. Perhaps a more important issue that "self efficacy" would be to what extent more/less experienced teachers impact the development (cognitive, social, emotional) in a more positive direction. Thus, it could be that while teachers with less experience may be less confident in their "ability" to deal with diversity in their classroom, they might, in fact, be more likely to impact the actual educational attainment of diverse learners.

## **Suggestions**

### **1) Suggestions for Educators and Policy Makers**

In light of data from the KICCE survey relating to diversity self-efficacy of teachers, the following implications appear warranted for early childhood educators. First, early childhood researchers and policy makers would do well to provide specific information on how to ensure that dispositions towards valuing diversity is increasingly stressed in both teacher training and in-service education. Second, Korean teacher colleges and universities would do well to create campus climates and experiences that foster positive diversity values. In particular, institutes of teacher education have the responsibility to prepare early childhood educators to support diverse learning communities where all children have the equal opportunity to learn. Third, in addition to providing more appropriate and effective diversity knowledge and instructional strategies in pre-service teacher preparation, attention is also needed for educators who are already classroom teachers who have not had diversity preparation in their programs.

### **2) Suggestions for Future Study**

Internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) applies to every child equally- especially for ethnic minority children who are most vulnerable. This global standard for humane treatment of children obliges educators to provide an environment that supports children in developing their full potential regardless of cultural background. While the importance of multicultural teaching competence for the world's children has emerged as a central issue in education in very recent years, little is known about the extent to which Korean educators are prepared to meet this rapidly emerging cultural challenge. This study has suggestions for future research.

First, research is needed to determine the nature and quality of diversity preparation in teacher education programs, field experiences and in-service workshops. This information would assist decision-makers in determining those activities/programs that appear to be more productive in achievement of a national diversity goal.

Second, as described above, there might be a major gap between teacher's professed confidence in working with diverse children and what strategies they might actually use in their classroom to support positive diversity dispositions. Qualitative investigations into this potential problem could be especially helpful in addressing national diversity goals.

Finally, research is needed to identify more productive ways to develop better relationships between immigrant children and their families. Research from other nations might provide positive directions for strengthening such relationships.

## **Conclusion**

Children come into our world without cultural bias. As early as age 3, however, biases begin to emerge and often last a lifetime. If Koreans purport to create a nation based upon justice and equality for all, serious attention to diversity needs to be addressed in the earliest years. Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) Not in references suggest that children are aware from the earliest ages that color, language, gender, and physical ability differences are connected with privilege and power. While recognizing differences is a natural component of cognitive development, accepting and respecting these differences are the result of moral development that is acquired within a socio-cultural context. Prominent researchers (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrunner) are consistent in their view that a child's social environment is an essential component of a child's cognitive development. Thus, an increasingly productive, yet diverse, society has no choice but to address cultural diversity in the earliest of years. National educational policy is beginning to respond to diversity challenges (e.g., diversity emphasis in *Nuri* curriculum and becoming more supportive of multicultural families) (Lee, 2013). However, much work remains if we are to promote a culturally appropriate education for all of our children.

As results of the KICCE survey suggest, Korea has made progress in the area of diversity. However, our long-term ability to survive and thrive as a major economic force in the world may well depends as much upon our ability to respond to diversity as our traditional emphasis upon academic acumen of our students. Twenty-first century citizens need 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies. Skill in dealing with diverse cultures may well determine Korea's future. It is now time for Korean educators to move ahead full-speed in addressing multicultural educational challenges that will dramatically impact the future of Korea.

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