The First-year Principals Difficulties and Their Effective Solutions in the Republic of Korea

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1. Introduction

Article 20 Section 1 of the Republic of Korea’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act states that a principal shall play the principal’s three main roles of managing a school’s affairs, leading and supervising teachers and other staff members, and educating students. How successfully a principal performs these roles can have an influence on school performance. For example, a principal can have an influence on student achievement by supporting the instruction of lower-achieving students and setting goals that emphasize high performance (Brewer 1993; Marks and Printy 2003; O’Donnell and White 2005). Furthermore, a principal can contribute to high-quality teaching by supervising instructors in a democratic fashion and ensuring that the school is sufficiently equipped with appropriate technology. Finally, to ensure that a school is managed in an efficient and democratic manner a principal should be capable of successfully resolving school conflicts, even when various school stakeholders behave uncooperatively toward the principal and the school.

To successfully execute the abovementioned roles, a principal must possess the relevant knowledge and skills. In Korea, a principal’s two main sources of such knowledge and skills are the professional preparatory program, and field experience. A first-year principal, however, does not usually possess a sufficient level of such knowledge and skills. There are two reasons for this. First, it is difficult and time-consuming to adapt the knowledge and skills obtained from the professional preparatory program to a specific and unique school setting. Some first-year principals feel a gap between the theories learned in such programs and actual practice in the field. Second, a first-year principal has not yet obtained sufficient field experience that can be applied to the position.
Because of this lack of appropriate knowledge and skills, the first-year principal can encounter difficulties being a successful leader. These difficulties can influence a principal’s sense of self-efficacy as well as school effectiveness. If the first-year principal can successfully overcome these difficulties, s/he can obtain and maintain self-confidence and also create a high-performing school culture. However, if s/he cannot successfully overcome such difficulties, s/he can feel powerless and fail to obtain the sufficient support and cooperation of key school stakeholders that is necessary to create an effective school. In light of these factors, it is deemed very important for a first-year principal to successfully overcome the difficulties.

To date, however, Korean academic journals have published few papers on how principals can overcome difficulties early in their career. Based on this scarcity of research information, it is necessary to study the difficulties experienced by first-year principals in the Republic of Korea and possible solutions more broadly. In this sense, this study can contribute to improving the preparatory program for new principals and increasing principal effectiveness.

This study consists of two research questions. First, what are the two main difficulties encountered by first-year principals in the Republic of Korea? Second, what effective solutions did first-year principals use to overcome such difficulties?

II. Literature Review

It is worth noting that in reference to Korea, few studies have been conducted that focus on beginning principals. Most of the previous Korea-based studies dealing with principals revolved around leadership issues, roles, and accomplishments (Kim, 1998; Kwon, 1996; Choi, 2001; Kang, 2007). Furthermore, a majority of these studies have been based on the perceptions of teachers rather than of principals, an
approach that places certain limits on assessing the particular difficulties faced by principals. In addition, few studies in Korea have addressed the difficulties encountered by first-year principals, as this study did. Only a handful of studies including those by Kwon(1996), Choi(2001), Kang(2007), and Cho(1998) have dealt with this issue in any capacity. Among these studies, Kang has been researching the obstacles that first-year principals encounter while seeking to carry out their duties. Kang's study was conducted from the viewpoint of teachers, which distinguishes it from this study, in which both first- and second-year principals have been included. Research by Cho(1998) examines the principal's life through the ethnographic approach to understand how first-year principals address the major difficulties they run into on the job. Cho looks into the sense of isolation and management issues that first-year principals face and presents personal, institutional and heterogeneous approaches as possible solutions.

In the United States of America, there are two journal articles on the limitations that the novice principal can encounter. More specifically, Alvy and Coladarci (1985) identified curriculum and instruction and professional personnel relations as the most difficult areas. The methodology of this study was mailed questionnaire to the population of 70 Montana elementary and secondary principals, completing their first and second year. And Daresh(1987) identified the three limitations through interviews conducted of 12 first and second year building principals(both elementary and secondary). These were problems with role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulties with socialization to the profession and individual school system.

Also, to date there are two journal articles on the solutions for overcoming the first-year principal's pitfalls in the U.S.A.(Rooney 2000; Daresh 1987). The solutions of Rooney was to meet each teacher and department chair, to locate the power, to keep the central office informed, to find friends and mentors among your colleagues, and so forth(Rooney 2000). These solutions were not based on field research but the author's individual experience. Therefore, it is very unclear how effective such solutions are for overcoming the first-year principal's pitfalls. Daresh(1987) suggested each solution for the above
problematic areas. It was to modify current principal preparation programs into opportunities for true experiencial learning with regard to problems with role clarification, to give training programs of targeted inservice for support to limitations on technical expertise, and to provide mentor service and to modify the preservice preparation programs with difficulties with socialization.

. Research Methodology

1. The Subject of the Study

The subject of this study was principals working at schools in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, who have held their position for less than one year beginning from March 2007 onward. 12 principals were sampled on the basis of school level, school size, and principal’s gender. To begin with, the principal’s schools have been divided into elementary, middle, and high schools, and classified as either “singular” or “plural,” depending on the number of assistant principals employed there. Also, based on the presumption that leadership style differs according to gender, the principals have been classified by gender.

The study encountered some limitations in terms of evaluating all types of principals. For example, there were no first-year female principals in population to arrange interviews with, and only a limited number of high-school principals and first-year male middle school principals consented to be interviewed. In a number of cases interviews with qualified first-year principals could not be held because the prospective candidates reject to be interviewed. A total of 8 persons – 4 elementary-school principals, 3 middle principals, and 1 high-school principal – were interviewed. Their backgrounds are shown in the following chart:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Size of School</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Date of Posting</th>
<th>Previous Position</th>
<th>School Background</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>assistant principal</td>
<td>- School building and facilities under renovation - Strong interest in community residents and their demands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1 Sep 2007</td>
<td>junior supervisor</td>
<td>- School lags behind others academically</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>assistant principal</td>
<td>- Large-scale school - Aging building - Low socioeconomic level among parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>assistant principal</td>
<td>- Large variation in parents’ income levels</td>
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<td>Middle School</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>assistant principal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>junior supervisor</td>
<td>- Strong interest in private education - Large gap in income levels of students</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1 Mar 2007</td>
<td>junior supervisor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>assistant principal</td>
<td>- Overcrowded classes - Large student body - Strong interest in private education - Keen interest from area residents - Amicable relations with community</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>senior supervisor</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1 Sep 2007</td>
<td>Former professional</td>
<td>- Located in an area containing a cluster of private academies - Situated with private universities on the perimeter</td>
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Among these eight principals, six were appointed in March 2007, and two took up their new post in September of 2007. Five interviewees had been assistant principals, and four recipients have had a career in the education profession such supervisor. As it was reasonable to conclude that the challenges and difficulties encountered by the principals would vary according to each school’s distinctive qualities, research was done on each school’s background. The description of each school’s unique qualities are based on demographic data of students and their families, level of participation in after-school private education, school size, the condition of its facilities, and the school-community relations.

2. The Instruments of the Study

The instrument of was the semi-structured interview. At first, the interview questionnaire consisted of two questions: First, what are the two greatest difficulties that first-year principals encounter in the Republic of Korea? Second, what solutions have first-year principals employed to overcome these difficulties? However, following consultations with experienced principals on these two questions, part of the questionnaire was expanded to read as follows: First, what are the two greatest difficulties that first-year principals encounter in the Republic of Korea? Second, what solutions have first-year principals employed to overcome these difficulties? Third, to what extent have these solutions helped overcome the difficulties? And fourth, have these solutions caused new problems to arise?

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- Average socioeconomic level among students
- Founded 4 years ago
After the interview, however, it was impossible to get meaningful findings from the interviewees’ answers about the third and fourth questionnaires. Every solution they have used was helpful and it was difficult to analyze the answers about the fourth questionnaire because few interviewees answered for it. Therefore, we used just the first and second questionnaires to analyze the result of the interview as follows: First, what are the two greatest difficulties that first-year principals encounter in the Republic of Korea? Second, what solutions have first-year principals employed to overcome these difficulties?

3. The Methods for Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and saved to MP3 files. The data obtained from interviews with the first-year principals were analyzed as follows. First, the difficulties they encountered were analyzed on the basis of their roles. Second, the effective solutions they used were analyzed on the basis of their skills.

IV. Research Findings

Research findings consisted two parts: (1) Difficulties encountered by the first-year principals; and (2) effective solutions for overcoming these difficulties.

1. Difficulties Encountered by the First-Year Principals

Veteran principals experience fewer limitations compared to their novice counterparts in turning their educational beliefs and philosophy into reality, for they have acquired, through the innumerable trials and tribulations of managing a school, the savoir faire and know-how to realize their vision.

First-year principals generally encounter more difficulties managing their schools and have a harder time embodying their management and educational philosophy.
This study seeks to examine the challenges encountered by new principals, based on a literature review and on-site interviews. To do this, the study focused on difficulties related to a principal's primary responsibilities in areas of instructional leadership, community relations, and site management; in other words, the challenges of change management, faculty and community relations, and budget and facilities management.

1) Change management to actualize a principal’s management philosophy

Change management among principals was largely classified into three categories: curriculum improvement, personnel management, and reduction of families’ private educational costs. With regard to curriculum management, when a principal’s plan is not implemented as intended it suggests that the principal's curriculum improvement plans met with resistance from teachers who may have been concerned that the envisioned plan(s) would substantially increase their workload. The policy by some principals of fostering public education in order to reduce families’ private educational expenditures was at times misunderstood by teachers as a means to control them. The following is an excerpt from an interview conducted with a female principal who was appointed to her post in March 2007.

*When I first joined the school last year, I had to take over a curriculum management committee, in which I had no say. In the case of this year, in tandem with the seventh educational reform process and implementation of a five-day workweek, my school had to cut down its extracurricular activities in consideration of the special circumstances of this school’s region. And I realized that, although the students study more, the reduction in extracurricular activities and the insufficient humanities education have made students more unruly.*

Another female principal, who also accepted her post in March 2007 at a school with several assistant principals, said the following.
Teachers fear change the most. This leads to resistance. So I tried to change the school little by little, to keep resistance at bay. Change is something that teachers really shun, and because they’ve been like this for so long, they don’t know that it’s wrong.

Sometimes, new principals are brought on board as change agents to conflict-ridden schools or schools with a dysfunctional staff or a poor academic environment, leading to their being termed as "hired guns" (Kellough, 2008). As such, first-year principals must assume the task of tearing down the many walls erected to keep change at bay. But the challenges they face often require complex solutions that need plenty of time and refinement before they prove effective.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with a female principal, appointed to a school with 29 classes in September 2007.

The most difficult challenge was to control myself. I had seen so many good things in the years that I twice served as a school commissioner, at prestigious schools with a strong tradition. But when I came here, there was no such tradition, and I was overzealous in trying to turn this unsatisfactory school around... As principal, I needed to have ambition but also patience to forge a consensus, and that’s where I had trouble. I still have a self-control issue.

2) Community relations

First-year principals were found to also have difficulties understanding the community and school personnel as well as improving ties with these groups. These novice principals encountered numerous interpersonal challenges including those with faculty, parents, the school management committee, the existing school culture as well as with assistant principals in regard to role assignment.
The following is from an interview with a male principal with multiple assistant principals:

*It is important for principals, both experienced and new, to be able to grasp and capture the hearts of the school staff. If one fails to do that, the principal loses his or her sense of direction and the staff members move in their separate ways.*

Another female principal, appointed in March 2007 to a school with multiple assistant principals, made the following testimony:

*I’ve always thought that a principal’s role is like that of a mother, the mother of the school. As a mother of four children myself, I made a mental note of what my children’s schools have done well, and could have done better, so when I came to this school as principal, I tried to become the mother of all students here, to do my best for the children, build friendly relations with the parents, and seek support from the teachers. That’s the ideal picture. But when I tried to implement my educational philosophy, the level of support from the staff was not what I had expected.*

When the novice principal proposed ways to reduce conflicts with parents and the community, she met with strong resistance from the faculty. On the other hand, when she put forward plans to reduce friction with teachers, the parents and community strongly opposed them. The following excerpt, from an interview with a female principal appointed to her school in September 2007, points to a dilemma that new principals encounter when students live outside the school’s immediate environs:

*I’ve found that 90 percent of the parents here are from Ilsan [a satellite city of Seoul]. Because the school is not near their homes, I felt like their hearts were not in the school. They were more concerned with taking their children from school and getting back to their homes. They had very little interest in the*
community, not because they were bad people, but because they were not living in the same area as the school they just didn’t care that much about the school. But a school cannot exist on its own; it needs the collaboration of the community, the parents, and the students.

Such problems are not confined to new principals; they can also affect those with a great deal of experience. But because veteran principals are capable of mediating between entrenched groups and newer interest groups, their ability to arbitrate conflicts differs from that of a beginner principal. A principal’s first year on the job can be a long and arduous process. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a new principal:

Most principals are appointed to their jobs on March 1st, and it's a huge burden to start from Day 1 without knowing the staff, students and parents, or the community. The troubles we face are troubles with people. We run into problems with teachers, students, parents, and the community, yet we don't know them, and that's why it takes time to figure things out.

3) Facilities management and budget plans

This study has determined that for first-year principals in Korea, there is no shortage of hardships in dealing with facilities management. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a male principal, appointed to his job in March 2007, which illustrates this point:

Our school is a complex building, built with a budget of 30 to 40 million won from the Mapo District Office and the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. But the principal in charge during the initial design stage did not participate in the planning or design of the school, so when construction got under
way and problems arose, it created a lot of problems. That is the biggest problem: Things operate separately. There must be a system that requires that principals take part in the school building design process.

Another female principal, appointed to her post in March 2007, said the following:

The school was built by the office of education, and is managed by it, and I had been asked to focus only on teaching, but I was against that idea. Although the principal is not an expert in these things, having a say in the school facilities management and budget gives the principal a sense of ownership and more interest (in the school). It drives the principal to ponder over safety issues and ways to improve school facilities. It also provides an opportunity for the principal, assistant principals, and faculty to come together and discuss what we can do to improve our school facilities.

This study has found that first-year principals were concerned about securing a budget and managing it properly so as to carry out the school’s vision. It is important for principals to encourage and motivate their staff, most of whom lack awareness of budget matters, to get involved in budget management.

2. Effective Solutions for Overcoming Difficulties

The following are popular strategies adopted by first-year principals interviewed for this study as they sought to overcome the challenges mentioned above.

1) School Change

The leading solutions employed by new principals to address problems related to enacting school
change and realizing their management philosophy were speed control, self-restraint, persuasion, serving as a role model, application of career experience, and securing financial support.

A. Speed Control

Speed control refers to controlling the rate in which a principal pursues change in his or her school. One male first-year principal at a high school with one assistant principal adopted a method whereby he would push hard in the beginning and then slowly pull back. He learned that this approach led to greater overall achievement, despite strong resistance at the outset. In other words, a school would achieve more when the principal proposed a goal that seems impossible to attain and later compromises with the staff, as opposed to when the principal presents an objective that appeared only slightly out of reach.

If I were to put a figure on my school, let’s say it’s a 10. When I suggest a goal of achieving 15 to 20, it is more likely than not that we won’t accomplish that goal. But when I propose that we set our goal at 100, then my staff would say that’s impossible. That’s when I say, let’s cut it in half and achieve 50. Even with the compromise, the school can easily achieve 20.

On the other hand, a female first-year principal assigned to a girls’ middle school with one assistant principal opted for more gradual change. Recognizing that teachers would register strong opposition to the conducting of classroom observations, this principal, in seeking to transform her school culture from a teacher-centered to student-centered one, decided to visit the classroom of the head instructor, who was less resistant to the principal’s authority. And to instill a positive attitude among teachers toward instructional supervision, the principal showed her support for their interests, by modifying school facilities in line with their requests and giving them compliments. Such pedagogy improvement methods proved effective at boosting motivation and commitment from the teachers.
The two principals in the aforementioned cases both said their methods proved effective regardless of the speed at which change was implemented in their schools. This could stem from the fact that they wanted to evaluate their work in a positive light. It could also imply that what’s important in implementing school change is not the speed in which it’s done, but the willingness of the principal to carry it out and the consistency of his or her efforts as well as previous experience to this end.

There was a difference in what the two principals perceived as an effect of their school change. The male first-year principal at a high school with one assistant principal considered goal achievement an effect, whereas the female first-year principal at a girls’ middle school with one assistant principal considered the stronger motivation and commitment of teachers as a result. Due to the small number of cases evaluated, it is hard to state whether the difference in the speed of school change implementation is linked to the gender of the principal or the particular characteristics of each school.

B. Self-Restraint

Self-restraint refers to how first-year principals try to suppress their ambitions to make their visions and ideas for their schools a reality. One female first-year principal at an elementary school with one assistant principal harbored a strong urge to immediately carry out the effective ideas that she had acquired during her years as a school commissioner, but she soon learned to be patient, seek common ground with school personnel, and encourage participation from the staff.

C. Persuasion

Persuasion refers to when a new principal tries to get teachers, parents, or students to do something or to agree with him or herself. One female principal at an elementary school with two assistant principals explained to teachers the merits of the changes she wanted to implement, and through consultations with
them, was able to accomplish what she had set out to do.

I suggested that we hold a field day, but the teachers proposed that we just hold small-group tournaments. So I explained to them how wonderful it would be to hold a big sports day, with folk games and everything. Then we had to hold many discussions before we could actually have a field day. In the end, the teachers, as well as the parents, loved the idea.

One male first-year principal at a high school with one assistant principal said the best way to apply the good ideas he had learned through various career experiences is to appeal to teachers on a personal level.

The only way to deal with them is to get down on a personal level. Before the teachers’ labor union came into existence, teachers had a passion for education and would work until late even without overtime pay. But these days it’s difficult because they bring in all these contractual factors. It’s hard to persuade them by saying ‘Shouldn’t we do this?’ I still believe that teachers will, at the end of the day, do what their students want. I think the question and the solution is how smooth that goes.

D. Serving as a Role Model

A role model is someone admired, whom others want to emulate. It is related to referent authority, which is a person’s ability to influence others through their personality and charm, and set an example for others, to make them want to behave like him or her. Here is how one female first-year principal at a girls’ middle school with one assistant principal took the initiative and set an example for others to follow:
We give extra marks for doing volunteer work, but I had not been doing any myself. If my actions don’t match my words, I can’t convince others to do what I say. So I pondered over what kind of volunteer work I could do. Then, I decided to do volunteer activities for the school. Coming in an hour early or staying late after school is part of service work as well. Anything that I can do outside my regular work hours is volunteer work. We need help from the community, so I set an example by giving of my own time.

E. Application of Career Experience

Application of career experience refers to utilizing past experiences to solve problems at hand. Such a method is linked to professional authority, whereby one’s source of authority comes from professional knowledge. One’s career is also a source of knowledge, gained through experiences and reflection. The strategies of utilizing career experience and serving as a role model share a common denominator in that their source of authority is not derived from the principal’s position but from his or her character. In this instance, the principal has obtained compliance from counterparts in a legitimate manner.

The following is an example of application of career experience. A female first-year principal working at an elementary school with one assistant principal applied her past experience as a curriculum supervisor to improve curriculum management and coordinate class schedules.

A new principal would have a hard time readjusting the existing curriculum so that it reflects their management philosophy. But I was able to think ahead and gather various opinions about class schedules based on my experience as a curriculum supervisor for two terms.

F. Securing Financial Support from the Government
A female first-year principal at a girls’ middle school with one assistant principal obtained funding from her region’s district office to try and help students’ families reduce spending on private tutoring. Even so, students from well-to-do families did not end up attending the supplementary classes offered by the school, despite the fact that the public school’s fees were as much as one-third less than classes at local private cram schools.

2) Human and Community Relations

This study has found that first-year principals relied on dialogue, persuasion, and participation in school decision-making to resolve challenges involving human and community relations.

A. Participation in school decision-making

Participation in school decision-making refers to soliciting the opinions of school faculty and staff and reflecting them in the school decision-making process. One female first-year principal at a middle school with multiple assistant principals consulted with her school’s governing council as part of efforts to overcome difficulties with parents regarding school meals.

*I discuss things with members of the school governing council. It was the school governing council that first suggested that we change the school lunch menu, and we reached a solution by holding consultations with the chairman or with the council.*

Another male principal who works at a high school with one assistant principal frequently checked the school’s Web site to read comments from parents, and also held face-to-face meetings with parents as the
need arose.

B. Dialogue

Dialogue refers to two-way communication whereby participants exchange opinions and listen to each other. One male first-year principal at an elementary school with one principal turned to the area’s elderly in seeking to overcome challenges in community relations, and in the process gathered ideas from members of the community while sharing his vision with them.

*There are seniors in any community. There are seniors in school communities as well. The principal must meet with them because they are well-informed about the culture of the school and the area. It is wise to meet with them and listen to what they have to say. At first I just listened, at least for the first six months (on the job). Then they opened up to me, sharing with me how they would like to see the school managed. Their opinions are just for reference. I don’t have to do everything they ask me to do, but it is important to collect their ideas for reference. In order to listen to community members, a principal must interact with them a lot. I always review and study their ideas at night, they study them as well, and together we lead the school. It is important, also, to explain to them, whenever time allows, the visions in your head so they can follow the principal.*

Another male principal at an elementary school with multiple assistant principals used an online instant messaging system to check how the teachers are doing, and provide necessary assistance.

*I sit in front of the computer and send instant messages to teachers, asking them whether they’re feeling okay, and if not, that they should take off. It’s the thought that counts. A principal must read many books on educational psychology and the philosophy of education. Authority is given to*
To promote more dialogue, one male first-year principal at a high school with one assistant principal frequently took part in after-school teachers’ meetings. This allowed teachers to see that the principal was willing to fully support them. Recognizing that participation in meetings was low among female teachers, the principal had tried to hold on-the-spot meetings during breaks, but the female participation rate remained low. This implies that an important factors to consider when resolving challenges through dialogue, is promoting participation among female teachers.

I had a hard time with the teachers. So I tried to make myself present at their dinners and after-work meetings, but there is still a gap between a principal and teachers. It took me six months to make them see that I’m willing to support them in many ways. Another area where I had difficulty was dealing with differences between men and women (teachers). I could talk to the male teachers but it wasn’t so easy with the female teachers, who went home right after school. So I held various impromptu meetings during school vacations, including dinners and going to the theater. Even then the female teachers are not willing to take part. But I still make it a priority to have lots of contact with the teachers.

Dialogue had many positive effects in that it allowed principals to hold many conversations with the community’s elderly, who have substantial influence in their community and whose words tend to be dependable. It was also through dialogue that principals could uncover problems and build a sense of camaraderie.

C. Persuasion
In general, male first-year principals working at middle and high schools resorted to persuasion and justification to solve problems. One male principal at a junior high with one assistant principal stressed the spirit of volunteerism among teachers and persuaded those in the community who were critical of students’ misbehavior to understand it in light of the fact that the students were coming of age. The fact that principals can effectively use justification as a persuasive strategy can perhaps be linked to the deep-rooted Confucian nature of Korean society, which holds educational leaders, and their opinions, in high regard. It also reflects the notion that high ethical conduct is required of teachers.

D. Seeking advice from fellow principals

Seeking advice from fellow principals is a type of professional networking strategy. Networking occurs when a principal forms collegial relationships with other principals, be they novices, those who have “been there and fought the battles,” or others both inside and outside of their organization. For example, a female principal at a middle school with multiple assistant principals met with other beginning principals in her school district at least once a month, at which time they shared their grievances and sought each other’s advice on various matters.

3) Facility and Fiscal Management

The strategies employed by first-year principals to overcome difficulties in facility and fiscal management included promoting participation in school decision-making, dialogue, persuasion, and sponsorship.

A. Encouraging participation in school decision-making
One female first-year principal at an elementary school with a single assistant principal gathered opinions from teachers according to priority, in order to resolve issues related to the school budget. She also organized a committee in which the three main parties to education – students, parents, and teachers – could all participate together. The principal did not take part in the committee herself, but she encouraged the committee to come up with ideas to help set priorities for the school as a whole. The participation of students in such a committee was unheard of at other schools, giving the students a sense of uniqueness and satisfaction. This came at a time when students’ need and desire to take part in school decision-making has grown, in tandem with a heightened sense of student rights. Word spread among parents about the principal’s decision to create and operate the committee, creating a favorable opinion of the new principal.

B. Dialogue

One male first-year principal at an elementary school with multiple assistant principals frequently met with officials in the office of education and shared his grievances with them, in order to secure the budget necessary to expand his school’s facilities.

Whenever there is a grievance, you must keep on bringing it up. Nothing gets resolved if you remain quiet. For instance, I told people at the office of education that we can’t hold classes because we don’t have partition walls, and they were in disbelief. You have to keep mentioning things that are not working.

C. Persuasion
One male principal at an elementary school with one assistant principal used a combination of common sense, legal provisions, and various opinions to persuade the facilities contractor to address problems related to the school environment.

*I sit down with the contractor face to face, go through all the problems, and tell them why each of the problems is happening. They don’t oppose what I say, because it is mostly rational, data-driven and education-centered, and they usually follow what I say. Why? That’s because I’m not making absurd assertions, but persuading them by using common sense, law, and general opinions on the issue. We were able to fix 200 to 300 problems that way.*

D. Patronage

Relying on patronage, which refers to seeking administrative or financial support or encouragement from patrons (in this case, parents) to benefit a cause such as an institution or the arts, is a type of networking strategy. One female first-year principal at an elementary school with multiple assistant principals realized that in order to run a number of educational programs at her school, she needed financial aid to support the disadvantaged students who could not afford to take part in the programs. She looked to outside resources for support and organized a fundraising body to help support extracurricular activities. Because the sponsorship is in the beginning stages, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this approach.

. Conclusions and suggestions
This research studied the effective solutions to the problems that first-year principals encountered. For this study, eight first-year principals from elementary, middle, and high schools located in Seoul, South Korea, have been interviewed, but among them only one worked at a high school.

The difficulties that Korea’s first-year principals encounter mainly revolve around issues related to instructional supervision, human resource management, reduction of private education expenditure, realization of management philosophy, implementation of school change, human and community relations, and facilities and fiscal management. This suggests that the first-year principals run into difficulties across the range of their duties. When compared with the preceding American researchers (e.g. Alvy and Coladarci 1985; Rieger 1995), a distinctive feature is that facility and fiscal management have been included, and efforts to reduce private education spending are related to an educational phenomenon that is characteristic of Korea. On the other hand, interpersonal relations are one area in which first-year principals from both countries face.

Korea’s first-year principals have used various methods to overcome the abovementioned difficulties. Persuasion was a solution used for three problems, while participation in school decision-making and dialogue with community members and school personnel were strategies used to solve problems regarding community relations and facilities and fiscal management. Most of the first-year principals have responded that they were very effective. This implies that in order to solve their problems, first-year principals make liberal use of democratic communication.

In addition, to actualize the principal’s management philosophy and solve the changes taking place in their schools, role modeling or referencing career experiences have been effectively used, while speed control and self-restraint have been used to control the rate at which change is implemented in their schools. However, the first-year principals interviewed for the study did not see eye-to-eye on the appropriate speed in which to pursue change. Finally, to solve problems
related to facility and fiscal management, some principals have stated using a fundraising body, but it is still too early to judge its effectiveness.

In terms of the implications of the abovementioned research results on future research and educational practices, the following should be considered. First, first-year principals have expressed differing opinions on developing a management philosophy for the time it takes to bring change to a school and whether it is effective, so this area requires further research. Second, the effectiveness of a fundraising body has not been verified with respect to addressing the difficulties inherent to educational facility and fiscal management, and depending on the situation such an entity can cause new problems to arise so future research is necessary. Third, because a majority of first-year principals faced difficulties trying to bring the change to their school needed to fulfill their management philosophy, as well as during the principal training course, it is deemed essential for first-year principals to develop the competency to identify and utilize effective methods to bring change to their schools. Finally, the solutions used to solve the difficulties faced by first-year principals are democratic communication and personal authority, and the first-year principals have answered that these plans are effective. In the future, communication techniques need to be further developed and integrated into principal training programs, and the curriculum needs to include training on effective ways to display authority. Moreover, the use of educational methodology and evaluation are viewed as important elements of a principal training program.


