

## **A Comparative Study of Elementary Teachers' Beliefs and Strategies on Classroom and Behavior Management in the USA and Korean School Systems**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this cross-cultural study is to investigate elementary teachers' beliefs and inter-cultural perspectives in classroom management (instructional environment and behavior management) for students in public schools of the U.S. and Korea. The results supported that the two groups of teachers showed similar beliefs in instructional management styles, but demonstrated significant differences in student management styles. Overall, the Korean and the U.S. participating teachers tended to have slightly more teacher-directed instructional management style, but more Korean teachers believed in teacher-directed student management styles than the U.S. teachers. U.S. classrooms had higher numbers of students with problem behaviors than Korean teachers estimated in their classrooms. A majority of Korean elementary teachers used negative methods, like punishment, as behavior management strategies while U.S. teachers used more preventative and pre-corrective strategies.

**Key Words:** Elementary Teachers, Teachers' Beliefs and Strategies, Classroom Behavior Management, US and Korean School Systems

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### **Issues in Classroom and Behavior Management**

Over the years, improving student discipline and classroom management skills has been considered one of the most imperative tasks for educators. According to our educational environment changes and our society becomes more diverse and complex, a conventional discipline approach has its limitations in coping with new types of behavioral problems produced by new generations. The most important fact today is that despite the implementation of research-proven behavior management strategies and school-wide positive behavior support (PBS), many schools have experienced a higher proportion of students' problematic behaviors. Although a large body of research shows that there are reduced discipline referrals in schools and improved academics (Horner, Sugai, Eber, & Lewandowski, 2004; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008), classroom teachers still express that student discipline is the most complicated and challenging task for them (Lier, Nuthen, Sar, & Crijnen, 2004; Macciomei & Ruben, 1999). Many teachers have allocated a considerable amount of time to handle inappropriate student behaviors; they, however, frequently become discouraged and frustrated and even leave the profession in the end (Gresham, 2004; Levin & Nolan, 2000).

### **Behavior Management and Teaching Effectiveness**

Even though a student's academic achievement is considered a primary measure of teacher effectiveness, successful classroom management skill is a more crucial factor for a student's success than academic teaching skills (Blanton, Blanton, & Cross, 1994; Miller, 2009). If teachers are unable to obtain a student's attention and motivation in learning during their instructional time, teaching and learning will not take place, no matter how wonderful their lesson plans are. Indeed, when a teacher spends too much time helping students eliminate inappropriate behaviors, it will ultimately decrease instructional time and obviously reduce the learning opportunities of all the students (Fernley, 2011).

In addition, students' behaviors in class greatly impact the classroom climate and the extent to which all students are actively engaged in instruction (Beirne-Smith, Patton, & Shannon, 2006). Active and cooperative interactions between a teacher and students create a positive classroom climate and this positive climate is a critical factor for a successful classroom as well as for student academic achievement. Thus, good behavior management methods will lead to improved student learning and good instructional methods lead to well-behaved students (Beirne-Smith, Patton, & Shannon, 2006; Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

### **Curiosity in Asian Education**

Meanwhile, the high success of Asian students in international competitions has enhanced interest in their educational environments. Specifically, math and science achievement scores of Asian students are much higher than those of U.S. students, especially when it comes to the achievement of middle or high school age students (Haar, Nielsen, Hansen, & Jakobsen, 2005). It has been known that comparatively, Asian classroom enrollment is large, but the compensation for this is a relatively light teaching load (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Leestma & Walberg, 1992; Shimahara, 1998; Stevenson, 1991). These Asian countries' success in international academic competitions have caused many educators to wonder about the strategies and methods used by the Asian educational system: Do Asian countries use better instructional methodologies or do they employ better classroom and behavior management strategies?

As educators who have experienced educational settings in both South Korea and the United States, the authors had the same curiosity and initiated research studies, comparing and contrasting high school teachers' beliefs in regard to management of the instructional environment and students' problem behaviors in the USA and Korea (Shin & Koh, 2007, 2008). As one of the Asian countries whose students often placed high in international math competitions (Drehle, 2010), Korea's high

school classrooms had less classroom behavior problems than the U.S. classrooms even though there was no direct evidence that having fewer problem behaviors had a positive effect on students' higher academic results in the international competitions. Given this result with high school comparisons in two countries, the authors wondered whether or not a comparison of classroom management in elementary schools in the same countries would be similar.

The purpose of this cross-cultural study is, therefore, to investigate elementary teachers' beliefs in classroom management strategies for students in public schools of the United States of America and Korea. This study provides a comprehensive description of elementary teachers' classroom management strategies through the inter-cultural perspectives of both countries. The research questions are:

1. Are there cross-cultural differences in the beliefs of the U.S. and Korean elementary teachers with respect to their management of the instructional environment and student behaviors?
2. Are there significant differences in the frequency and types of student problem behaviors observed by elementary teachers in the U.S. and Korean school systems?
3. What cross-cultural differences and similarities are there in behavior management strategies used by the U.S. and Korean elementary classroom teachers?

In this study, classroom management consists of two components: Instructional management and student behavior management. Instructional management is related to any management regarding the instructional environment and methods while student management is related to any classroom behaviors displayed by students' and teachers' responses. This study will also measure if the teachers tend to display a teacher-directed or student-respected style in instructional and classroom management.

## Methods

### Participants

The participants of this study were 146 U.S. ( $N=67$ ) and Korean ( $N=79$ ) elementary classroom teachers in regular and special education classrooms. These classrooms were located in the mid-west area of the United States and in the city of Seoul, Korea. The grade system for elementary schools of the two countries was slightly different: Korea consisted of first through sixth grade, but the United States did kindergarten through fifth grade.

The student population in Korea was characterized by a single ethnicity, Korean, whereas that in the U.S was ethnically more diverse. According to the teachers' reports, many more Korean teachers denoted their schools as urban schools, but the criteria and characteristics of urban and suburban schools differed between two countries: Korean urban schools were purely based on the economic status of students without including the status of diversity, environments, and other issues we encountered in the U. S. The detailed demographic information is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information*

		American Teachers			Korean Teachers		
Gender	Male	4%(3)			11%(9)		
	Female	95%(64)			88%(70)		
Types of Classrooms	General Ed.	80%(54)			97%(75)		
	Special Ed.	19%(13)			2%(2)		
Types of Schools	Urban/Rural	10%(7)			44%(35)		
	Suburban	89%(60)			55%(44)		
The average # of Students in class		23			30		
The Average Years of Teaching		28 years			18 years		
Three groups by the years of teaching		1-6	6-15	16+	1-6	6-15	16+
The # of teachers in each group		15	30	22	10	30	38

\*% data do not add up to 100% due to deleted decimals.

## Measures

Participants from both countries were asked to complete three different survey questionnaires to answer the research questions. This included the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory, originally developed by Martin and Yin (1999), the Student Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ), adopted from Ahrens, Barrett, and Holtzman (1997), and Open-Ended Questions developed by authors. Small modifications on ABCC and SBQ were made by the authors to respond to cultural differences relating to the participants of this study. These modifications were shared in the discussion of each instrument used.

The ABCC was designed to examine differences in a teacher's instructional management style and student behavior management style, which was made up of 46 forced-choice ratings. For each item, responses were coded on a 5-point Likert Scale, where 5 represents "strongly agree," 4 for "agree," 3 for "medium (no opinion)," 2 for "disagree," and 1 for "strongly disagree." This inventory had three parts: The first part was comprised of 22 questions to measure classroom teachers' instructional management styles, the second part consisted of 24 questions to gather the information on classroom teachers' student behavior management styles, and the third part was made up of six demographic questions.

The ABCC used a unique series of statements to cross check whether a teacher preferred to be more in control of decisions in the classroom or if the teacher preferred to allow for more student choice as a management style. The first two parts (instructional and student management styles) of forced-choice items were divided into two types of management styles: Teacher-directed and student-respected styles in which questions of student-respected management styles were the same questions as the teacher-directed questions. For example, question two in the first section stated, 'I assign students to specific seats in the classroom,' but question 14 repeated it as 'I allow students to select their own seats.' Questions one through 12 of the instructional management questions were focused on teacher-directed styles and questions 13 through 22 focused on student-respected styles, which was same to the student management questions, question 23 through 35 were on teacher-directed management styles and 36 through 46 were on student-respected management styles. For the instructional management sub-scale, internal consistency alpha was .75; the mean of the inter-item correlations was .18. The reliability coefficient for the student behavior management sub-scale was .74 and the mean of the inter-item correlations was .21. The inter-correlation between the two subscales was .13 ( $p < .01$ ).

The six demographic questions consisted of information related to gender, category of their schools, types of classroom, number of years of teaching experience, grade level of teaching, and number of students currently taught. The question item originally asking the individual teachers' ages was replaced by a question asking to write their years of teaching experience.

The Student Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ) included 11 questions about the aspects of student behavior, which were designed to investigate differences in teacher perceptions of student behavior. At the end of each question, a blank space was provided for the teacher to report the percentage of the students with the types of problem behaviors seen in their classrooms. This inventory was modified by adding question numbers 1, 2, and 3 to the original questionnaire, and the format of the questionnaire was revised by the authors to make the questionnaire more structured.

In addition, five open-ended questions were developed by the authors and reviewed by two other researchers at two different universities for validity purposes. The open-ended questions included questions listing five problem behaviors they dealt with most; discipline procedures, behavior management strategies, classroom rules, and any additional comments they felt were relevant. The Korean version of the questionnaire used in Shin and Koh (2007, 2008) were adopted.

## **Procedures**

The authors of this study visited participating schools in Seoul, Korea and presented questionnaires and the consent forms in an envelope upon receiving permission from the principals of participant schools. The administrators of the schools distributed the envelope to each individual teacher and ninety percent of distributed questionnaires were returned. In the U.S., after attempting to obtain permission from the principals several times, the questionnaires were posted online using Survey Monkey, and a graduate assistant of the second author sent emails to approximately 251 teachers in one county's school districts, encouraging elementary teachers to participate in this study. No teacher's name was associated with any surveys completed except for the demographic information.

## **Data Analysis**

The first two research questions were involved in the cross-cultural differences in teachers' beliefs on management styles regarding the instructional environment and student's behaviors between the U.S. and Korea. To analyze data relating to these questions, two-way ANOVAs were used with independent variables identified as their nationalities (The U.S. and Korean) and participants' years of teaching. The dependent variables in each case were (a) instructional management and (b) student behavior management. As mentioned previously, the ABCC inventory consisted of pairs of questions with similar meanings, representing a response related to a teacher-directed management style and a student-respected management style. Thus, a two-way ANOVA was conducted twice with all of the ABCC Inventory questions and only the first group of questions confirmed the same results from both running. The individual questions were also analyzed by using a one-way ANOVA to see if there were any statistically significant differences on individual questions between two groups of educators.

The second research question was involved in a comparison of the frequency of student problem behaviors in the U.S. and Korean school systems. The quantitative data for this comparison were analyzed by using descriptive analysis, with a final comparison showing percentages converted to an average of each nation. In addition, participants were classified into three different groups by their length of teaching experience (e.g., 1-5 years, 6-10 years, etc.) and analyzed to see if there were any differences.

The open-ended questions (the responses of the second and third research questions) were analyzed using the content analysis developed by Neuendorf (2002), regarding problem behaviors and teachers' behavior management strategies. The content analysis involved justifying, coding, and categorizing patterns in the data. The responses of each open-ended question were sorted by main

themes that were analyzed then by frequencies and percentages. Each author separately grouped all listed behaviors by the similarities and then collaboratively compared and contrasted each one's results. Two other researchers, for reliability and validity purposes, reviewed the coded and categorized data.

### Results

There were three interesting findings with the demographic information. Firstly, the gender of the elementary school teachers from both the U.S. and Korea were similar, with less than 10% being males in the U.S. and a little more than 10% being males in Korea. Secondly, the average numbers of teaching years between the two countries showed a 10-year difference (18 for Korean and 28 for American). Thirdly, the average number of students in a classroom was 23 in the U.S. and 30 in Korea.

#### Cross-cultural Differences between Instructional Management Strategies

There were no statistical differences between the teachers in the two countries in terms of instructional management styles. The mean scores (U.S. mean: 3.42 and Korean mean: 3.46) demonstrated their beliefs leaned more toward the teacher-directed management style than the student-respected style. The teachers with different lengths of teaching experience showed different beliefs on the instructional management; the teachers with more than 16 years of teaching experience in both countries showed stronger beliefs on teacher-directed management than the teachers with one to six years of teaching experience. However, there was no statistical difference in instructional management styles based on the length of teaching experience by nationality. The result of the two-way ANOVA is given in Table 2.

Table 2. *The Comparison of Instructional Management for American and Korean Teachers.*

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Nationality	.020	1	.020	.000	.984
Experience	402.146	2	201.073	4.218	.017
Nationality x Experience	124.377	2	62.189	1.305	.275

\* $p < .05$ .

Even though overall instructional management did not show statistically significant differences, the results of the one-way ANOVA disclosed that there were statistically significant differences on 12 questions between teachers in the two countries. The biggest discrepancies showed in two questions: more U.S. teachers strongly believed that students needed the structure of a daily routine that was organized and implemented by the teacher than Korean teachers. Meanwhile, more Korean teachers were concerned about the student-respected style, such as a student sitting at their teacher's desks without permission than the U.S. teachers. Questions with significantly different mean scores between two groups are given in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Statistically Significant Differences in Instructional Management Strategies*

Questions	American Teachers	Korean Teacher
• I assign students to specific seats in the classroom	3.59	3.06
• The teacher knows best how to allocate classroom materials and supplies to optimize learning.	3.40	4.01
• I specify a set time for each learning activity and try to stay within my plans.	3.70	3.05
• When a student does not complete an assignment on time, I will deduct points accordingly.	2.24	2.94
• Students need the structure of a daily routine that is organized and implemented by the teacher.	4.36	3.22
• I would be annoyed if a student sat at my desk without permission.	2.70	3.66
• Students should judge the quality of their own work rather than rely on what the teacher tells them.	3.34	2.33
• When moving from one learning activity to another, I will allow students to progress at their own rate.	3.03	3.77

\* $p < .05$ .

### Cross-cultural Differences between Student Management Strategies

There were statistically significant differences between the Korean and the U.S. teachers and teachers with different years of teaching experiences on the student management style. More Korean teachers believed in teacher-directed student management styles than the U.S. teachers. Regardless of nationality, the teachers who had more than 16 years of teaching experience showed stronger beliefs in teacher-directed student management than the teachers with 7-15 years and 1-6 years. Also, there is a statistically significant difference based on the length of teaching experience by nationality. That is, more Korean teachers with a longer teaching experience believed in teacher-directed student management, but the U. S. teachers with shorter teaching experience believed in the teacher-directed style. The result of the two-way ANOVA is given in Table 4.

Table 4. *The Comparison of Student Management for American and Korean Teachers.*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Nationality	2021.49	1	2021.49	36.79	.00
Experience	398.96	2	199.48	3.63	.02
Nationality x Experience	361.62	2	180.81	3.29	.04

\* $p < .05$ .

In student behavior management questions, teachers from both countries showed discrepancies on the more individual questions (20 questions) than instructional management (12 questions). Between the questions on teacher-directed and student-respected management, more Korean teachers agreed on teacher-directed management than the U.S. teachers. Four questions showed the most variation in responses from teachers in the two countries. They were: 1) *During the first week of class, I will announce the classroom rules and inform students of the penalties for disregarding the rules,* 2) *When a student bothers other students, I will immediately tell the student to be quiet and stop it,* 3) *Class rules stifle the student's ability to develop a personal moral code,* and 4) *My responsibility as a teacher is to reward those students who do well.*

The U.S. teachers preferred to be more democratic in managing students. A greater number of U.S. teachers agreed on these two questions: 1) *Students will be successful in school if allowed the freedom to pursue their own interests* and 2) *During the first week of class, I will allow the students to come up with a set of classroom rules.*

### Cross-cultural Differences in Frequency of Student Problem Behaviors

The results in the percentages of students with problem behaviors revealed that U.S. teachers responded that their classrooms had higher numbers of students with problem behaviors than Korean teachers estimated in their classrooms. More discrepancies between the two countries were shown in the number of: 1) mainstreamed students with disabilities, 2) academically difficult to teach students, 3) behaviorally difficult to teach students, and 4) students who do not think before acting. The U.S. teachers had estimated higher numbers of these students in their classrooms than Korean teachers estimated in their classrooms. Both countries had comparatively less students with physical aggression than any other problem behavior. The detailed results are given in Table 5.

Table 5. *The Percentages of Inclusion of Students with Problem Behaviors.*

Questions	American Teachers (n=55)	Korean Teachers (n=62)
1. The mainstreamed students (Students with Disabilities)	20.78%	.63%
2. The academically difficult-to-teach students in class	26.42%	2.51%
3. The behaviorally difficult-to-teach students in class	21.82%	1.62%
4. The students do not have respect for themselves	12.48%	1.63%
5. The students have difficulty working in groups	19.18%	2.35%
6. The students are verbally abusive to others	10.80%	2.33%
7. The students are physically aggressive toward others	9.1%	1.80%
8. The students show little or no respect for other students	10.18%	2.79%
9. The students show little or no respect for adults	9.68%	1.41%
10. The students show little or no respect for property of others	9.93%	.34%
11. The students do not think before they act	24.34%	2.31%

To back up the quantitative data, the participants were asked to list five behavior problems that they dealt with on a daily basis in their classroom. Forty-one U.S. teachers listed 197 behaviors and 64 Korean teachers listed 225 behaviors in this open-ended question. Since the question did not ask them to rank the five listed behaviors, some participants listed less than five. The frequencies and percentages of total listed behaviors (197 for the U.S. and 225 for Koreans) on the extracted theme behaviors were calculated.

The results disclosed that similar classroom problem behaviors were displayed in both countries' classrooms even though the frequency ranks on each listed problem behavior were different in both countries. U.S. teachers highlighted disruptive, noncompliant, and disrespectful behaviors while Korean teachers noted self-centered and violent behaviors. The violence was the second behavior the U.S. teachers were most concerned with and the third ranked most worrisome behaviors by Korean teachers. More Korean teachers expressed their difficulties with unmotivated students in learning and stealing problems than U.S. teachers did. Table 6 shows the extracted themes of most frequently mentioned behaviors and the number of responses.



Table 6. *Classroom Problem Behaviors Displayed in Each Country.*

American (N=46, 197 behaviors)		Korean (N=64, 225 behaviors):	
Disruption during the class & Inappropriate Talking behaviors:	41(20%)	Not considering peer's mind, self-centered, self-control, lack of social skills	39(17%)
Incompliance and disrespect	27(13%)	Violent behavior	35(15%)
Violent behavior	24(12%)	Lack of motivation and work ethics	25(11%)
Off-Task and incompleteness of class work	21(10%)	Disrespect, no authority, & talking back	24(10%)
Oral or physical bullying	19(9%)	Disruption during the class, playful	20(8%)

### Cross-cultural Differences and Similarities of Behavior Management Strategies

A majority of Korean elementary teachers used negative methods, like punishment, as behavior management strategies, whereas, U.S. teachers used more preventative and pre-corrective strategies. One hundred and one strategies out of 115 listed strategies by Korean teachers were negative methods, but only eight U.S. teachers used negative methods such as the time-out. The physical punishments that most Korean teachers used were *making students stand up in the back or the front of the classroom while facing the class or the wall or kneel down on the floor while raising their arms*. The next method used by most Korean teachers was *making students write a reflection (remorse) essay about what they did wrong*. And yet another unique method used in Korean classrooms was that students were requested to *clean the classroom after school or pick up the trash from the classroom floor* as punishment.

For the U.S. teachers, the implementation of behavior management techniques and positive behavior support (PBS) were the most popular strategies, none of which were mentioned by the Korean teachers. Many U.S. teachers listed *behavior management techniques* as their strategies and cited brand name disciplines developed by individual researchers, such as Dr. Becky Bailey's *Conscious Discipline*, Chick Morman's *Natural Consequences*, Dr. Ross Green's *Areas of Weakness, Love and Logic*, and *Life Space Crisis intervention*, etc. Table 7 lists the strategies used by both countries' teachers.

Table 7. *Behavior Management Strategies and Techniques Being Used by Teachers in Both Country*

American Elementary Teachers	Korean Elementary Teachers
<i>Positive Behavior Management</i>	<i>Positive Behavior Management</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Behavior Support                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Token Economy</li> <li>○ Praise</li> <li>○ Establishing Positive Relationship with Students</li> <li>○ Cooling down Time</li> <li>○ Verbal Question</li> <li>○ Peer Intervention</li> <li>○ Classroom Meetings</li> <li>○ Conference with Students</li> <li>○ Collaborate with Family</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Proactive and Preventative Techniques                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistency</li> <li>○ Brand Name Discipline</li> <li>○ I-Messages</li> <li>○ Planned Ignoring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference with a Student</li> <li>• Cooling down Time</li> <li>• Peer Problem Solving</li> <li>• Token Economy</li> </ul> <p><i>Negative Behavior Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Reflection (Remorse) Essay about What I did Wrong (19 teachers)</li> <li>• Standing up in his/her Seat, front or back of the Classroom facing Teachers or the Wall, on a A4 Size Paper,</li> <li>• Holding two Arms to the Front or Up</li> <li>• Kneel-down Sitting on the Floor</li> <li>• Standing up/down while Touching Ears</li> <li>• Cleaning the Classroom after School</li> <li>• Response Cost: Reduction of Points</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Stop/Look/Listen/Zip your Lips</li><li>○ Heavy Lifting and Sensory Activities</li><li>○ Proximity Control</li><li>○ Nonverbal Cues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Take Advantages Away</li><li>● More Homework</li><li>● Scolding</li><li>● Closing Eyes for a While</li><li>● Stay Behind and Finish the Incomplete work</li><li>● Notice to Parents</li></ul>
<i>Negative Behavior Management</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Time out</li><li>● Think Paper</li><li>● Using Administrator Action</li></ul>	

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## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this cross-cultural study was to investigate elementary teachers' beliefs in instructional and classroom management strategies for students in public schools between the United States of America and Korea. This study provides a comprehensive description of educators' classroom management strategies as reported by participant teachers with their cultural perspectives.

The demographic information was one of the comparative factors of this study. The extremely skewed ratio of gender discrepancies were similar in both countries: The US had approximately 95% female teachers and only 5% male teachers and Korean elementary schools had 88% female and 12% male teachers. This is opposite finding from Korean high schools' gender ratio. According to Shin & Koh 2007, the majority (72%) of Korean high school teachers were male while the majority of U.S. high school teachers were female (78%). This study implies that more female teachers dominated elementary schools in both countries. This result supports that the elementary teaching profession is a popular field among females not only in the U.S., but in Korea as well.

In addition, the number of years of teaching experience was different in both groups of educators. The U.S. teachers had an average of 28 years of teaching experience, with 10 more years of teaching experience than Korean teachers. As mentioned in Shin and Koh (2007), the Korean school system limited teacher careers with a designated retirement age of 62 years. The overall average years of teaching experience for the U.S. and Korean elementary educators who participated in this study were longer than high school teachers (18 years in the U.S. and 12 years in Korea) in Shin and Koh (2007, 2008). With same retirement policies for elementary and high school teachers in both countries, it might imply that more elementary teachers stayed in their job close to their retirement age than high school teachers.

### Cross-cultural Differences between Instructional and Student Management Beliefs

The two groups of teachers showed similar beliefs in instructional management styles, but demonstrated significant differences in student behavior management styles. Overall, the Korean and the U.S. teachers tended to have slightly more teacher-directed instructional management styles. The mean score for Korean teachers demonstrated that they had a bit more teacher-directed student management style than the U.S. teachers ( $M=3.86$ ). However, the length of a teacher's teaching experiences was significant in their choice of instructional management. The teachers who had longer teaching experiences tended to prefer a teacher-directed management style to a student-respected style.

As seen in Levin and Nolan (2000), this study also supported that contemporary educators used two types of strategies that focused more on teachers' power and control than students' self-control and self-discipline. Even though the two groups of teachers had similar beliefs in instructional management, it is surprising to see that more U.S. teachers believed that classroom instructions needed to be more teacher-directed while more Korean teachers believed student-respected instruction was needed as seen in individual questions. This was particularly true regarding instructional management of seating assignment, feedback on students' work, controlling learning activities, and daily routines. These elementary teachers' beliefs that student input should be involved in these types of activities are similar to high school teachers' beliefs (Shin & Koh, 2007) in both countries.

However, teachers from the two countries held opposite beliefs regarding student management. Although Korean teachers housed strong feelings about involving students in instructional management decisions, more Korean teachers held greater belief in the teacher-directed student management than did the American educators. In order to understand the teachers' very different perspectives in viewing problem behaviors, the teachers' own k-12 background should be considered. The educational system in Korea is very academic-oriented, and the teaching position is highly competitive because of the high value society places on teachers and the restricted number of teacher's colleges (Shin & Koh, 2005). As a result, the entrance into a teacher's college is very competitive. The teacher candidates were academically very strong students who had few negative experiences in academics and rarely got in trouble while they were in grade school. This means that they may not understand students who struggle academically and behaviorally. Thus, the teachers are not likely to understand students' behaviors that stray from the social standard. They find it difficult to manage successfully any sort of problem behaviors. In the U.S., many states have teacher shortages, and there are different levels of teacher's colleges that accept most students regardless of their academic strength. This implies that there is a larger portion of teachers who are more empathetic towards students who display problematic behaviors and thus, can find successful strategies to address these issues.

### **The Frequency of Problem Behaviors**

The participant teachers' school types (urban and suburban) and class sizes showed a great difference between the two countries. Eighty-nine percent of U.S. teachers were in suburban schools, whereas fifty-five percent of Korean teachers were in suburban schools. The Korean elementary schools included in this study have more students per classroom (30 students) than the average of the U.S. schools in this study (23 students). A body of literature illustrated (Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Goldstein, H., & Martine, C., 2003; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Leestma & Walberg, 1992; Shimahara, 1998) that types of schools and the class sizes are two critical factors related to the severity and the frequencies of problem behaviors in the classrooms. This study showed that students can obtain more benefits from a smaller class size, thus, students who attended small classes demonstrated higher achievement and maintained good communication with their teachers. The teachers also had higher expectations towards their students and covered more materials effectively in the smaller classes. This previous research revealed significant correlations between the average class enrollment and student achievement and suggested a positive effect of small classes. Therefore, as class enrollment increased, it was more likely to be difficult for teachers to provide more individualized lessons as well as to monitor student behaviors and learning progress. Thus, these teachers tended to become more controlling and intervening in their classroom management that supports the results of this study. Korean teachers had a greater number of students and preferred to have more teacher-directed classrooms.

The results disclosed that the U.S. classrooms had higher numbers of students with disabilities. However, it is difficult to say that the U.S. practices more inclusion than Korea without considering each country's status of special education services. Currently, Korea has not yet completely recognized high incident disabilities. Only 85% of students labeled with disabilities are provided reasonable special education services in public schools or private institutes (Korea Beat, 2007). Approximately 2.4% of school age children in Korea are in need of special education, but only about half of these children are enrolled in special schools, and less than half of those with special needs are enrolled in special classes in the general education schools. The remainder receives education in the general education classrooms (International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Framework, 2005).

Regarding student physical aggression, American teachers reported 9.1% and Korea teachers reported 1.8% among other behaviors of concern. According to the qualitative data and the listings of problem behaviors reported by the teachers, American teachers listed more violent behaviors as the second most concerned behavior, and Korean teachers listed it as third among the problem behaviors.

It can be interpreted that violent behavior receives more of the teachers' attention and concerns, on behalf of its nature of severity.

The academically difficult-to-teach students were identified as those who had the most concerning behaviors by the U.S. teachers. Meanwhile, the students with little- or no-respect for other students were identified as those with the most worrisome behaviors by Korean teachers. Disruption was the number one behavior of concern reported by U.S. teachers, but it was listed 6<sup>th</sup> by Korean teachers. This difference may be attributed to the different student management styles, with Korean teachers being more teacher-directed than the U.S. teachers. Interestingly, none of the U.S. teachers mentioned a lack of self-motivation as a problem behavior they had to deal with, but this lack of motivation and work ethic were the third behavioral concern for Korean teachers. This may be attributed to the different focus on school education in both countries. Korean schools were more academic-oriented, but the U.S. schools were focused more on the 'whole human beings' education (Koh & Shin, 2006). Only one U.S. teacher and eight Korean teachers mentioned this behavior in their listing.

In Korea, elementary students have block schedules, like high schools in the U.S. The students' subject schedule is set up for 40-minute instructional time (45 minutes for middle schools and 50 minutes for high schools) and a 10 to 20 minute break (Park, 2003). According to the Korean Ministry of Education, these instructional times are set based on the natural attention span of children. Furthermore, each elementary grade level has different instructional block-hours and these instructional hours increase as the grade levels go up (lower grades have a shorter school day than upper grades). During the break, students use the restrooms and prepare for their next class while chatting and physically moving around the school. In addition, Korean elementary students had about an hour-lunch break without teacher supervision. After eating, they usually go out to play, engaging in physical activity. Thus, Korean elementary students have enough time to move around throughout the day. This can result in better attention spans during their 40-minute instructional time. However, in the U.S. schools, elementary students usually do not have divided schedules or official breaks between subject instructions. Many classrooms have their own restrooms inside the classroom, so there is no need for teachers to give students restroom breaks. Even if the restroom is outside of their classroom, the children are expected to be quiet and walk through the hallway in line, and required not to disrupt other classes. U.S. students usually have an adult monitor in the hallway during the transition period and lunchtime. American classes have lunch at different times of the day and these are much shorter than the lunch periods in Korea. Even though many teachers give recess time to students right after their lunch, it is short and this break is not enough for young elementary students to recover during the school day and to be able to focus on their subsequent academic work.

Even though Korean school's instructional time is limited to 40 to 50 minutes for each subject, South Korea has the longest instructional hours (545 hours, U.S.: 180 days) in the world and their math score in international competitions (for 5<sup>th</sup> graders) placed 1<sup>st</sup> (Drehle, 2010). This Korean elementary school's distribution of instructional periods, instruction hours, and breaks may positively influence their behavior and result in higher instructional success.

One interesting finding is that stealing is a prominent problem behavior in Korean elementary schools. However, Korea's geographical system should be considered in the interpretation of this phenomenon. Geographically, Korea's streets and buildings are very close to each other, crowded, and narrow. This country has a long history where roads and street systems were built before automobiles were developed. All elementary students walk to school by themselves without adult supervision (Koh, Shin, & Lewis, 2008), and there are many small snack and stationery stores that sell items appealing to elementary age children. Children usually carry cash for their little after-school snacks and appealing items. Consequently, stealing money from peers takes place frequently and has become one of the Korean teachers' concerns. Only one U.S. teacher shared this concern.

### **Behavior Management Aspects**

The adopted behavior management strategies showed the most contrasting features in both countries. Korean teachers are most likely to use post-correction, negative management methods like physical and punitive punishment after misbehavior has occurred while the U.S. teachers are in more favor of pre-correction, pro-active, and positive management methods. *Standing up while facing the wall* and *kneeling down on the floor while holding their arms up* were behavior management methods used by most Korean teachers. It is surprising to see most Korean teachers use negative behavior management methods. The teachers' notification to parents was also a part of the punishment because there is no teacher and parent collaboration or conferences to find alternative methods to encourage the children to behave. This negative methods included the different forms of punitive methods.

These behavior management strategies reported by the Korean teachers in this study were designed not to prevent the possible problem behaviors in the future, but to punish students for what already happened. Whether the management is positive or negative, the behavior management methods should be focused on preventing the inappropriate behavior. If one particular method used is not focused on shaping appropriate behaviors, and the problem behaviors are still being repeated as the teachers continuously spend their instructional time to deal with students' misbehaviors, that management strategy should be altered and the new method should be created and applied. Even though the efficacy of this negative management method in Korean classrooms was not measured in this study, the study results disclosed that Korean classrooms had fewer behavior problems than the U.S. classrooms.

According to the authors' observations in Korean classrooms, classroom management is a new field in the Korean teacher preparation program, and the strategies used in the U.S. are not common in Korea. Traditionally Korean classrooms had a larger number of students (50-60 students) than those of current classrooms (40-45), and corporal punishment was the number one behavior management method. While society has more nuclear family, gradually, younger parents tend to less number of children and their child rearing practice becomes more lenient and protective. Therefore, instead of allowing teachers to use corporal punishment for their children's maximum academic achievement, the parents have become more protective of their children and do not accept the idea of the corporal punishment. In this transition period between young parents and senior teachers who are accustomed to corporal punishment, Korean education is being met with a crisis in parents' confidence in teachers and education (Koh, Shin, & Reeves, 2008). The Korean teacher preparation program is not ready to train teachers on how to use effective and preventive classroom and behavior management strategies even though the frequency and severity of students' problem behaviors have been growing. Thus, the teachers do not know how to manage them by using positive and pro-active behavior support after ceasing to employ negative methods.

The U.S. teachers are more focused on positive behavior management and pre-corrective procedures. Most teachers said they used *positive behavior support* (PBS) and *behavior management techniques* without disclosing specifically how and what they did. The time-out is the only negative method mentioned by U.S. teachers. Interestingly, with positive methods, the U.S. teachers in this study reported having a much higher number of problem behaviors displayed than Korean classrooms.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Although this study contributed different perspectives to the field of education in both countries, there are several limitations to this study. First, this study relied on self-reported data from a small pool of teachers from both countries. With limited numbers and areas of participating teachers, this study might have limitations in generalizing the results of this study as representation of all the teachers' beliefs. Future studies should use various measures to investigate comparative beliefs of both countries' teachers. Secondly, the validity of this study may be suspect due to using a translated version of instruments. Even though four bilingual researchers were involved in the translation process, there might be a potential threat to internal validity from the translation effect.

## Conclusion

As foreign-born educators with different educational backgrounds between Eastern Asian culture and Western culture, the authors have observed some differences as well as common grounds in both educational systems. As every culture has developed its own unique tradition and values based upon its cultural inheritance, the educational field has also been developing its own values, morals, and norms to educate young students for a better future community. The outcomes of this study should be beneficial for both educational systems in order to compare and contrast educators' beliefs and practices regarding classroom management strategies between the U.S. and Korean public schools. In addition, this comparative study contributed an opportunity for both educational environments to reflect and improve student discipline strategies, speculating on the merits of each side, as well as the areas of concern. As educators, the biggest challenge we have is to step outside our own boundaries of orientation so that we can learn and develop more productive and successful ways of managing students' classroom behaviors from different perspectives.

As a developing country, Korea puts a high value on academic education. As shared by Korean elementary classroom teachers in this study, they believe teacher-directed student management was more effective and productive. They reported that their classrooms had fewer problem behaviors, recognizing their use of punishment as the major strategy for student behavior management. As a one of leading countries, the U.S. puts a high value on a more wholesome education. As shared by American elementary classroom teachers in this study, they believe that student-respected management was more effective, but still reported considerable behavioral problems even with positive behavior management strategies being implemented. However, as mentioned above, we cannot produce black and white conclusions on which country's educational system is better than the other. With these comparative results, we should consider each country's cultural aspects and educational systems. The U.S. may consider adopting Korea's elementary schools' blocked schedule (40 minute instruction time and 10 to 20 minute break time) and giving young students many short break periods throughout the day. Korean education may consider training teachers to implement more positive behavior support systems.

Future research could be useful in comparing the academic and social differences of Korea's elementary schools' blocked schedule and giving young students plenty of break time versus the elementary school schedules found in the U.S. Research comparing the perceptions of student management issues in schools that are using positive behavior support in the U.S. might shed some light on why elementary teachers, such as those in this study, feel that behavior problems are still so prevalent. Finally, research to follow the cultural changes occurring in Korean education and the decisions made by parents and teachers on the best type of discipline would be enlightening.

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