

Chapter 13

Rethinking Diversity in South Korea: Examining the Ideological Underpinnings of Multicultural Education Policies and Programs

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13.1 Introduction

G. Cameron Hurst II dubbed the cultural nationalism in contemporary Korea “uri-nara-ism” (Moon 2000, p. 156). “Uri” can be translated as “our” and “Nara” as “country” in English, so the term can be translated as “Our nation-ism.” “Uri-nara-ism” is a combination of Korean nationalism and collective identity that is so embedded in everyday lives of people in Korea. Uri-nara-ism contributed to Korea’s economic recovery (often referred to as the “Miracle of Han River”) from the devastation caused by over three decades of Japanese colonialism and the subsequent Korean War; it helped to inspire extraordinary self-sacrifices among Koreans who shared the common goal of nation-building. Korea emphasized the notions of “homogeneity,” “unity,” and “solidarity” in order to strengthen the state power, which was also sustained by “uri-nara-ism” or what the authors may refer to more generally as “uri-ism.” “Uri” promotes oneness and creates a boundary between “us” and “them.” In this context, notions such as “diversity,” “heterogeneity” and “difference” have been somewhat deemphasized in the sociocultural lexicon of Korea.

However, due to recent demographic and social changes, Korea now faces challenges to maintaining a national identity based on homogeneity. As unprecedented numbers of people participate in transnational migration, Korea has become an emerging hub for receiving migrants from all around the world, especially from the inter-Asia region. The presence of immigrants has challenged the existing notion of Korean peoplehood that privileges ethnic and cultural congruity among its people.

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In this chapter, the authors explore interplay between the ideological underpinnings that uphold the notion of “Korean-ness” and the discourse of “multiculturalism” in Korean education. We start by providing general information on urban education in South Korea, then, examine current educational policies and programs for migrant children, paying particular heed to how the Korean education system understands diversity and to how that understanding manifests in the development and implementation of policies and programs. Through policy analysis, we identify both progress and pitfalls in how the Korean education system serves migrants or children of migrants. In addition, we identify the ideological foundations underlying particular educational policies and programs, and delineate the philosophical tensions within them. We conclude with preliminary sketches of what equitable education for migrant students might entail.

13.2 Urban Education in South Korea

Urban South Korea (Korea hereafter) is an educational mecca. Private educational institutions (*hagwons*) are located on almost every corner in the residential and downtown areas of urban Korea. There are hagwons for subjects such as English and math and for enrichment activities such as taekwon do, fine arts, dance, and foreign languages. There are hagwons for almost every Korean—English hagwons for preschoolers, academic enrichment hagwons for elementary and secondary students, test-prep hagwons for high-school students and those who need to repeat their college entrance exams, and foreign-language hagwons for college students and even for adults who are already in the workforce. The ubiquitous presence of hagwons offers visual evidence both of Korean educational zeal or “fever” (Seth 2002) and of the privatization of education; all hagwons are private institutions where attendees spend time learning subjects of their choice in addition to their regular school or work.

In keeping with Korea’s national zeal for learning, Korean students have been widely recognized for their educational achievements. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessed 15 year olds in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries; the results, published in 2012, ranked Korea third in math and within the top 5 and top 10 in reading and science, respectively.¹ In the United States, President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have praised Korea’s education system and its academic achievements in multiple public addresses (Fenton 2015; Strauss 2014). But such congratulatory international recognition reflects only the rosy side of the country’s education. It does not reflect the fact that Korea’s extreme academic competition has many adverse side effects, such as the often overwhelming burden of paying for private education and the high levels of psychological stress and increasing suicide rates among students. The 2012 PISA report notes, for example, that the percentage

¹ In math performance, Korea was tied with Hong Kong and Taipei.

of Korean students who described themselves as happy at school was the lowest among students in all OECD countries (OECD 2013, p. 21).

Nevertheless, despite the costs of privatization and the psychological burden of competition, Korea has above-average equity in education opportunities. According to the 2012 PISA report, Korea's rates of school enrollment and of advancement to higher education have improved remarkably in the past few decades. Over 90% of school-aged children are enrolled in elementary, middle, and high schools, and the overwhelming majority of high-school students pursue postsecondary education. In 1990, only 27.1% of high-school graduates attended postsecondary institutions, but that percentage increased to 62% in 2000 and 75.4% in 2010. The rate declined to 70.9% in 2014, but this may be due to high college tuition and worsening prospects for employment even among those with a college degree (Statistics Korea 2015). Overall, the 2012 PISA report and school-enrollment data published by Statistics Korea indicate high levels of educational achievement among Koreans and equity in education opportunities in Korea.

In this context, issues of equal access and of securing educational rights might seem to have been relegated to the past. However, in the shadow of Korea's education empire is a cohort of students who do not benefit from proper educational opportunities and who are therefore becoming an undereducated underclass in urban South Korea: the children of migrants. Their educational attainments are in stark contrast to overall educational achievement in Korea. Many migrant children drop out of school or choose not to enroll in schools in the first place (Hong 2009). The dropout or non-enrollment rates of migrant students are startling: 15% in elementary school, 40% in middle school, and 70% in high school (Won 2008 cited in Hong 2009). As of 2009, 26,015 migrant students were enrolled in school, but an estimated 17,000 migrant children were not, for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, while educational policy allows children of illegal immigrants to attend school, many of their parents choose not to register or enroll them in school, fearing deportation once the system discovers their immigration status (Hong 2009). The educational status of migrant children presents an urgent dilemma for urban education in Korea, not only in terms of their right to receive a proper education, but also in terms of their foreseeable disadvantage in a country so obsessed with academic achievement that social mobility largely depends on it.

13.3 Changes in the Urban Ethnoscape

In the aftermath of the Korean War (1950–1953), not only did the country remain divided into North and South, but the entire peninsula continued to suffer the ravages of that war. Starting in the early 1960s, the South Korean government began to actively promote emigration to foreign countries, hoping to overcome its impoverished economy and to earn foreign reserves. Since then, close to one million Koreans have emigrated overseas and overall seven million ethnic Koreans live outside the Korean Peninsula, which includes diaspora Koreans, recent migrants and temporary

residents. However, the migration trend shifted from emigration to immigration in the 1990s as Korea acquired status as a developed country and experienced shortage in labor in manufacturing and service sectors.

As of 2015, Korea is home to approximately 1.74 million foreign residents, who thus comprises 3.4% of the total population in the country (Korea Immigration Service 2015). Although the proportion of foreign residents to the total population remains small, the dramatic overall growth of this population merits attention: in 1990, only 49,507 foreigners resided in South Korea (Korea Immigration Service 1990), but the registered foreign-resident population increased to 210,249 in 2000 and to 918, 917 in 2010 (Korea Immigration Service 2009; Korean Immigration Service 2015). Thus, the number of foreign residents in Korea increased by a factor of 35 between 1990 and 2015. Especially in the 2000s, the annual growth rate of the foreign-immigrant population in Korea was highest among all OECD countries. Among the 1.74 million foreign residents, migrants from China comprise the overwhelming majority—Chinese (259,166) and Korean Chinese (694,256) (Korea Immigration Service 2015)—followed by migrants from Vietnam (199,950) and South Asia (86,634). An increasing number of migrants also come from the Philippines, Japan, Cambodia, the United States, and the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS).

A unique feature of the migrant population in South Korea is the presence of ethnic Koreans from various diasporas. Approximately 50% foreign residents in Korea are descendants of Korean diasporans and have lived outside Korea for decades or even for multiple generations before migrating to Korea. These ethnic Korean migrants—who arrive from countries such as China, the United States, Japan, and the Commonwealth of Independent States—may possess different levels of affective connection to South Korea than do other non-ethnic Korean foreign migrants, and some of them have even acquired Korean language proficiency and cultural knowledge while growing up in diaspora.

Another unique feature of Korean immigration is the increasing number of North Korean border-crossers. Although the two Koreas still maintain the world's most fortified borders, and although illegal border-crossers risk imprisonment and even execution by the North Korean government, more and more North Koreans are escaping their country, mainly via the border between North Korea and China. Although the majority of North Korean border-crossers live in China as illegal migrants, some of them have successfully navigated the treacherous journey to South Korea. Although only 633 North Korean border-crossers made it to South Korea after the Korean War between 1953 and 1998, the number of border-crossers increased dramatically after 1998: an average of 1,000 North Koreans defected to South Korea annually between 2001 and 2005 and over 2,000 did so annually between 2006 and 2011. As of 2015, more than 28,000 North Koreans have settled in South Korea (Korea Hana Foundation). Although the South Korean government categorizes diaspora Koreans with foreign citizenship as foreign residents or as overseas Koreans residing in Korea, the government categorize North Koreans as *Bukhan ital jumin* (North Korean defectors) or *Saetaemin* (new settlers), not as foreign residents, and thus tends to grant these migrants South Korean citizenship

almost immediately after they pass background checks and complete resettlement training. The South Korean government also provides initial financial assistance for their settlement (although the amount of such assistance has substantially decreased in recent years in response to the dramatically increased number of border-crossers).

Just as foreign residents in Korea arrive from diverse countries of origin, they also have diverse reasons for migration. According to the Korean Immigration Service (KIS) Statistics (2015, p. 351), the largest group of migrants work in the unskilled and low-skilled labor sector: 270,569 non-Korean foreigners (E-9 visa) and 282,670 ethnic Korean foreigners (H-2 visa), which comprise approximately 32% of the total foreign-resident population. Another 289,427 ethnic Korean foreigners reside in Korea with the F-4 visa, which provides quasi-citizen benefits to overseas Koreans. There are also 150,994 marriage migrants (KIS 2015, p. 728).² Marriage migrants from China form the largest group (36,059 Chinese, 24,604 Korean Chinese), followed by Vietnamese (39,725) and Japanese (12,063).³ In 1990 the international marriage rate was a mere 1.2% of the total marriage rate, with only 4,710 such marriages, but by 2007, there were 37,560 such marriages (Lim 2009). Between 2004 and 2008, the international marriage rate was consistently over 11% of the total marriage rate each year (Seol 2009; Lim 2009). Korea also hosts an increasing number of international students, business entrepreneurs with all sizes of enterprise, and employees of multinational corporations.

According to 2015 foreign-resident population data published by South Korea's Ministry of Interior, the migrant population is concentrated in the Seoul and Gyeonggi region. Of 1.74 million foreign residents, 457,806 reside in Seoul itself, and 554,160 reside in Gyeonggi Province. In both areas, the foreign-resident population constitutes 4.5% of the total population, as compared to the national ratio of 3.4%. Among the six metropolitan areas in South Korea, Incheon Metropolitan City, which is within the Gyeonggi region, hosts the second-largest number of foreign residents (91,525), and Busan Metropolitan City hosts third-largest number of foreign residents (57,801). Thus, the Seoul/Gyeonggi Areas—Seoul Metropolitan City, Incheon Metropolitan City and Gyeonggi Province—hosts approximately 65% of the foreign-resident population. Considering South Korea's extremely high proportion of urbanites (over 90% of the total population), the concentration of foreign migrants in the Seoul Capital Area is not surprising, and the issue of urban education can therefore be applied to the majority of educational contexts in the country (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation 2013).

²Data on the foreign-resident population often differs by the institution that collected the data. For example, foreign-resident population data published by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 documents 608,116 foreign workers in total and 239,692 marriage migrants (147,382 marriage migrants hold foreign citizenships, and 92,316 are naturalized Korean citizens).

³Foreign-resident data published in 2015 includes both non-naturalized and naturalized marriage migrant population numbers. According to the data, Korean Chinese form the largest marriage migrant population, with 30,925 being non-naturalized and 34,678 naturalized, followed by Chinese (35,474/25,572), Vietnamese (38,661/20,100), and Filipino/a (10,427/6,926).

The increase in the foreign-resident population has predictably resulted in an increase in the number of children born in households where one or both parents are migrants. The Korean government categorizes them as multicultural (*Damunwha*) children. According to a report on current state of the foreign-resident population (Ministry of Interior 2015), 207,693 *Damunwha* children live in Korea, and 183,732 of them are from households in which one parent is a native Korean and the other parent is a foreign migrant; the rest are from households in which both parents are either foreign migrants or diaspora Koreans. Marriage migration tends to involve marriages between Korean men and foreign women, most of whom are from other Asian countries. Among *Damunwha* children, 57,856 are of Vietnamese heritage, 39,160 are of Korean Chinese heritage, 20,584 are of Filipino heritage, and 17,195 are of Japanese heritage. The phenomenon of international marriage between Korean men and foreign women is fairly recent; while there were only 20,180 *Damunwha* children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in 2008, the number of school-aged *Damunwha* children has rapidly increased since then, more than tripling, to 67,806, by 2014 (Ministry of Education). Although this number includes foreign-born students who have migrated to South Korea and students whose parents are both foreign, the overwhelming majority (57,498) are *Damunwha* students, that is, born in South Korea with one foreign migrant parent, usually the mother. Among children from multicultural families, 83.4% are enrolled in elementary school, 12.1% in middle school, and 4.5% in high school (Hong 2009).

Although an accurate number is hard to obtain, the Korean Ministry of Education estimates that 50–60% of children from multicultural families are not enrolled in school at all (Song 2012). The non-enrollment rate of *Damunwha* children is in stark contrast to South Korea's overall enrollment rate, which is over 90%, for general school-aged children. The high non-enrollment rate of *Damunwha* children is usually attributed to the undocumented status of parents and to the economic cost of education. However, these explanations are not satisfactory: not only has the number of undocumented migrants decreased substantially due to recent immigration reforms and amnesty campaigns, but education is compulsory through the ninth grade and provided by the Korean government at almost no cost to the families. As the phenomenon of foreign marriage migration matures in Korea, the number of *Damunwha* students is most likely to increase both rapidly and continuously into the future. Thus, it is urgent that South Korean urban education systems find ways to provide educational access to children of migrants. However, due to an extremely intense national focus on academic achievement and privatization of education, neither the Korean government nor urban education systems are equipped to handle issues of diversity or to provide equitable educational environments for children of migrants.

13.4 Educating Children of Migrants: Multicultural Education in the Korean Way

The demographic and social transformations Korea experienced during 1990s and 2000s were accompanied by changes in the country's education system, under the banner of "multicultural education" (*Damunwha Gyoyuk*). To respond to the needs of Damunwha children, South Korea's central and local governments rapidly instituted a variety of policies and programs. For example, between 2005 and 2008, the total budget to "support education of children from multi-culture (Damunwha)" increased 6,415%, and hundreds of new education programs emerged nationwide (Lee et al. 2008). Considering the fact that, due to the country's relative ethnic and linguistic homogeneity (Hong 2009), the term "multicultural education" was almost unknown and certainly considered irrelevant to the Korean context prior to the 2000s, the sheer number of multicultural initiatives and budget increases that have taken place since then is impressive although the efficiency and educational value of those initiatives still need to be thoroughly investigated.

According to article 2 of the Multicultural Family Support Act of 2014, "Multicultural Families" are families composed of either a Korean citizen and a marriage migrant, or a Korean citizen and a naturalized Korean citizen (Ministry of Government Legislation 2014). This legal definition failed to include not only the families of unskilled foreign labor migrants, who form the largest proportion of the foreign resident population, but also the families of two foreign-migrant parents, study abroad students, and unregistered migrants.⁴ By the offering a legal definition of multicultural family that specifies at least one Korean parent, the Korean legal system demonstrates the degree to which it privileges *jus sanguinis* (i.e. right of blood; ethnic heritage)—it does so even in imagining a multicultural and multiethnic society.

As Korea's history of multicultural education is still quite brief, there has been no thorough investigation of multicultural initiatives. A decade has passed since the first major multicultural programs were implemented, and the time is thus ripe for learning from the progress and pitfalls that have taken place thus far in Korea's efforts along these lines. In this section, we discuss multicultural education initiatives implemented by local and national educational systems, looking first at programs and policies implemented by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education.⁵ We then examine nationwide data on and analysis of multicultural education policies

⁴Migrants who have not established legal residence status are called *Mideungrok Ijumin*, which means "unregistered migrant." In this chapter, we adopt the term "unregistered migrant," which is translated term of Korean term rather than the term "undocumented migrant," which is more commonly used in the United States.

⁵We focus on Seoul Metropolitan City due to the density of its foreign-resident population and for its centralized educational system, which operates under one Office of Education even though there are lower-level, local, district-based education departments. A close examination of Seoul will be more fruitful and more suitable for the scope of this chapter than studying provincial areas with many different cities.

and programs at both the city and province levels, as published by Korea's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (renamed the Ministry of Education in 2013) (Park et al. 2010). By examining nationwide data we provide a macro and comparative picture of multicultural education in Korea.

According to information provided by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, multicultural education is provided only in selected schools. In Seoul Metropolitan City, "Designated Damunwha-education-oriented schools (*Damunwha Gyoyuk Jungjeom Hakgyo* in Korean)" provide multicultural program to both Damunwha and non-Damunwha students. Damunwha schools are chosen from among schools that both enroll a significant number of Damunwha students and have applied for the designation. As of 2015, 15 schools provide multicultural education in Seoul Metropolitan City: 7 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 2 high schools, and 2 alternative schools (an elementary school and a high school). Each one receives a different level of funding—5 million, 5.5 million, or 6 million Korean won (KRW)⁶ (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education 2014a; Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education 2015a). In addition, nine Damunwha preparatory schools (*Damunwha Yebi Hakgyo* in Korean) provide transitional programs for recently immigrated students to help smooth their transition to mainstream classrooms and schools; these schools receive approximately 28 million KRW to provide Korean language and culture classes and counseling services. There are also four research schools for Damunwha families (two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school), each of which receives approximately 10 million KRW for and conducting research and developing programs to strengthen Korean language education through Korean as a Second Language classes. Starting in 2015, Seoul Metropolitan City also provides approximately 7 million KRW each to six kindergartens for Damunwha programs (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education 2014b, 2015b).

The selection of the "Designated Damunwha-education-oriented schools" (Designated Damunwha schools hereafter) and funding amount for them changes every year. Funding for Designated Damunwha schools decreased from ten million KRW in 2014 to five million KRW in 2015, but the number of supported schools increased from 11 in 2014 to 15 in 2015 (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education 2014a, 2015a). The number of Damunwha preparatory schools increased from 6 in 2014 to 9 in 2015, but funding remained the same for both years. In 2014, seven different schools offered 20 special classes for students returning from foreign countries, but support for this program was eliminated in 2015. The number of research schools increased from 3 in 2014 to 4 in 2015, even though funding for each school stayed the same (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education 2014b, 2015b).

Analysis of Damunwha school locations suggests preferential educational support for certain groups of foreign residents. Foreign residents of the same nationality

⁶Based on the exchange rate as of November 23, 2015 (1 USD to 1,158.75 KRW), 5 million KRW is equivalent to 4,315 USD, and 5.5 million KRW is to 4,746.50 USD (<http://www.usforex.com/currency-converter>).

or of similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds tend to congregate in their own preferred areas within Seoul, which have created several distinct ethnic enclaves in the city (Kim and Kang 2007). As indicated by the population distribution of registered foreign residents in each “*gu*” (borough or district), the three largest foreign-resident groups have concentrated in separate metropolitan districts (Seoul Metropolitan Government 2015). The first- and second-largest foreign-resident populations—Korean Chinese and Chinese—have clustered in two districts in southwest Seoul (*Yongdeungpo* and *Guro*), while the third-largest foreign-resident population, Americans, live in central or south Seoul districts (*Yongsan/Seodaemun/Mapo* and *Seochol/Gangnam*). The majority of Damunwha schools are located in these districts as well: of 15 Damunwha schools, 5 are in southwest Seoul and 6 are in central Seoul. However, more than 70% of foreign residents in Seoul are either Korean Chinese or Chinese, while only 3% are American. Thus, the system of Damunwha schools skews to supporting American and other foreign-residents groups who reside in central Seoul—this is hardly representative of the current status and needs of the overall multicultural student population.

A report published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) (Park et al. 2010) shows that the number of Damunwha policies implemented and programs offered vary widely from one local education system to another, and that students are presented with an unbalanced offering of programs with different priorities. According to the MEST report, for example, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education allocated an overwhelming proportion of its Damunwha education budget to language education: 1.76 billion KRW out of a total budget of 1.85 billion KRW, or approximately 95.6%, in 2009 (Park et al. 2010, p. 48). This represented an increase from an already incredible 90% budget allocation in 2008 (ibid, p. 45). The other two areas of Damunwha education administered by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education—cultural education and multicultural understanding education—received a mere 2.6% and 1.7% of the total budget, respectively.⁷ In terms of the number and proportion of students who received Damunwha programs, 97% of the total budget of Damunwha programs was allocated to children of marriage migrants or labor migrants (no distinction between the two were made), with only 3% reserved for returned children from overseas.⁸

The Incheon Metropolitan Office of Education more evenly distributes its budget among three Damunwha education policies—language education (37.1%), cultural education (42.3%), and multicultural understanding (20.5%). Also, whereas Seoul provides eight programs that primarily emphasize language and cultural education for children of marriage and labor migrants, Incheon provides 14 programs with more emphasis on education for multicultural understanding.

⁷ Since the percentages calculated in the report (Park et al.: 48) are incorrect, the authors recalculated the percentage based on the budget amount given in Figure II-1 on page 49.

⁸ *Gyiguk Janyeo* (returned children) are mostly the children of study-abroad students or of employees who worked for the government or multinational companies and were thereby stationed overseas for long periods.

Examination of multicultural education policies, programs, and budget allocations in both Seoul and Incheon Metropolitan Cities suggests that on-the-ground understanding of multicultural families and children is far broader than the legal definition, which encompasses only families composed of one Korean parent and either a marriage migrant or a naturalized Korean parent. However, North Korean defectors are still neither classified nor perceived as multicultural, and the Damunwha education system therefore provides no budget for creating programs aimed at children of North Korean defectors or children who are themselves defectors. North Korean defectors and their children are supported under different policies and programs than are Damunwha children; for example, North Korean issues are overseen not only by the Ministry of Education, but also by the Ministry of Unification. It is worth noting that Damunwha children, too, come under the jurisdiction of programs that are developed and implemented by multiple ministries, including the Ministry of Government Legislation, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Communication between various ministries in order to develop consistent and efficient Damunwha programs and policies currently poses a great challenge.

Damunwha education programs and policies in Busan Metropolitan City are different in two main ways: first, Busan includes North Korean defectors as beneficiaries of Damunwha education; second, Busan's budget is well balanced in five different areas of Damunwha education—language, culture, (social) systems, vocation, and multicultural understanding. Not only is Busan's Damunwha education system more inclusive of diverse groups than are the programs of the other two metropolitan areas, but it provides the highest number of programs, 30 in total. However, like the other metropolitan areas, Busan still lacks programs that promote a better multicultural understanding of the general population. And while its overall fairness and inclusiveness are evident at the level of policy, a micro-level evaluation of program implementation is still needed.

Many multicultural families are struggling to provide proper education for their children, and “multicultural education” has become a pressing educational and social issue in contemporary Korea. Discussion needs to move beyond *whether* the educational system needs to provide multicultural education and toward *how* to provide proper education for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Thorough reflections on how the education system interprets the meaning of “multi-culture” and on how it approaches multicultural education are generally absent in both the policies themselves and in analyses of those policies. The term “multi-culture” has largely been interpreted to mean “celebration of difference” or “tolerance,” which leads to a superficial understanding of diversity. The programs implemented to provide multicultural understanding have focused on hosting “international festivals” and other similar events, and critical examinations of the lives and experiences of people with cultural and linguistic diversity are few.

13.5 Transformation of Korean Society Through Dynamic Interplays Between “Korean-ness” and “Multiculture”

Close examination of the Damunwha education policies and programs of three metropolitan areas has revealed a few important insights into the current state of multicultural education in Korea. First, Damunwha policies and programs vary widely with regard to budget allocations, prioritized areas of education, number of schools, and beneficiaries. Second, despite these differences, the programs largely focus on teaching Korean language and culture and on helping multicultural students to adjust in Korean society; these programs largely ignore the migrant heritage of these students, creating a void in heritage language and culture education. However, since the main beneficiaries of current Damunwha education are the children of marriage migrants, efforts to honor migrant parent culture and language could facilitate communication between migrant parents and their children, and thus positively influence family dynamics. Third, Damunwha education largely concerns itself with students who are already in school and does not address non-enrollment and dropout rates, which are serious issues. According to the MEST report (Park et al. 2010), children of Japanese marriage or labor migrants constituted the largest percentage of Damunwha students in all three metropolitan areas. In Seoul, for example, there were 60% more children of Japanese migrants enrolled in school than there were children of Korean Chinese migrants enrolled. Yet the Japanese foreign-resident population did not qualify in even the top five largest foreign-resident populations, while the Korean Chinese foreign-resident population was overwhelmingly large. The MEST report thus clearly indicates the existence of odd discrepancies between actual population numbers and school enrollment numbers, especially among children of Korean Chinese or Chinese migrants. Rather than investigating potential causes or otherwise drawing attention to this phenomenon, the report merely calls for the development of more bilingual materials, in Japanese and Korean, to serve the Damunwha students with Japanese heritage.

In Korea, educational systems and institutions have played a significant role in promoting and maintaining the ideal of Korea as a homogeneous society and in emphasizing the importance of national unity (Hong 2009, p. 388). At the same time, the Korean education system has repeatedly changed its approach in order to accommodate each new economic and political agenda set by the state. During previous eras, for example, anti-communist and pro-industrialization curriculums were integral to school programs. In the 1990s, when “globalization” and “internationalization” emerged as major state agendas, the Korean education system quickly adapted by expanding English education to all school levels, including the elementary level, and this was followed by a dramatic increase in the number of native English speakers hired in public schools and private Hagwons.

Given such mutability, what is the fundamental goal of multicultural education? What is revealed by the discrepancies among different educational programs in how they define multicultural students and family, as well as by the general discrepancy between such on-the-ground definitions and the legal definition of the same? Why

do multicultural programs overly privilege Korean language and culture? Why is there an absence of interest in promoting the heritage languages and cultures of Damunwha students? What might explain the apparent mismatch between the migrant population and the migrant student population, and why are there no programs or policies to address this issue?

The presence of immigrants has generated confusion and contradiction within the Korean populace, raising questions about who belongs to Korean society and who counts as Korean. The dramatic increase in the numbers of incoming migrants with diverse backgrounds has, for example, popularized the expression “multi-culture” as important to social, political, and academic discourse. “Multi-culture” has become an overarching concept that encompasses diversity, difference, and heterogeneity, most particularly challenging the bedrock notion of “Korean-ness” that emphasizes “purity of blood” and “homogeneity of culture” and derives from the constructed myth that all Koreans came from a single ethnic group (Shin 2006).

Thus, foreign migrants have not been readily accepted as full members of Korean society. They have been subjected to many layers of social, political, and legal discrimination, much of which is informed precisely by essentialized notions of Korean identity. According to Lim (2009), Koreans tend to conflate race and ethnicity, which has served to create an exceptionally rigid and narrow conceptualization of national identity, belongingness, and citizenship—to be considered an “authentic” or “pure” Korean, one must have Korean blood. Unlike the law of the United States, which grants citizenship based on *jus soli* (whereby any person born in a U.S. territory qualifies), Korean citizenship law is based on *jus sanguinis* (whereby any person of ethnic Korean heritage qualifies). Korea therefore strictly regulates the process of naturalization and citizenship for persons of mixed blood and for long-term foreign residents in Korea.

However, even having pure Korean blood does not guarantee social acceptance. The land of birth and upholding of Korean values, morals, and beliefs also influence how a person with Korean heritage is accepted in the society. For example, North Korean border-crossers are treated differently than other ethnic return migrants. Although the border-crossers face discrimination in the job market and social isolation, they are more likely to be considered authentically Korean than other ethnic return migrants.

Seol and Skrentny (2009) term Korea’s complex social and cultural system of intra-ethnic stratification “hierarchical nationhood.” While nationhood is usually understood as horizontal and equalizing concept, ethnic return migrants are stratified in South Korea according to their diasporic origins, thus, hierarchy within nationhood is formed; the hierarchy is legally determined by citizenship and immigration law and socially determined by acceptance of migrants by Korean citizens.

Before 1990, Korea had a tightly regulated immigration policy and extremely selective, largely patriarchal citizenship laws. For example, citizenship was granted only to children born in Korea to Korean fathers. In 1997 statutory revisions eased restrictions, granting citizenship to all children with at least one Korean parent, but prior to that change, mixed-heritage children of non-Korean fathers (e.g., children of American soldiers and Korean women) were denied citizenship and were not

fully accepted as Koreans. While unjust tradition that privileges patriarchy is abolished, unjust tradition still persists in the legal definition of Damunwha family, which again privileges having at least one Korean parent.

Though the legal definition of the Damunwha family encompasses coethnic migrants, social discourse often excludes coethnics from Damunwha status, as the popular image of the multicultural family involves one parent who is both ethnically and linguistically “foreign.” At least Damunwha programs are offered in the areas where Korean Chinese are concentrated. In contrast, North Korean defectors are not included in legal definition of Damunwha and they are even excluded from receiving benefits from Damunwha education in two out of three metropolitan areas, which can be a prime example of inconsistency among Damunwha programs. Thus, the term “multi-culture” functions not an inclusive term that denotes a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse population, but a differentiating term that primarily signifies socially and economically underprivileged migrants, thus embedding the notion of social hierarchy in the discourse of “multi-culture.”

What is interesting and unique in the Korean context⁹ is that Koreans stratify coethnics not only according to their biological and territorial ties to Korea, but also to the neoliberal logic that is based on relative degrees of economic and political development of their diaspora homelands. Through the process of stratification, Korea has created a complex and contradictory web of power and hierarchy that privilege migrants from the developed countries and discriminate against migrants from the less developed countries. The social system of stratification influences not only the everyday lives of Koreans and migrants in Korea, but also their economic, social, and political rights and their access to justice.

Rigid notions of Korean identity have resulted in a toxic hierarchical ethnic nationalism, lending credence to Lim’s (2009) warning that “identities based on a notion of ethnic and/or racial homogeneity can be dysfunctional and even dangerous.” Identity may provide national unity in a time of crisis, but it also can be used as a mechanism to marginalize, oppress, and subordinate people and groups who do not fit neatly into the “image” of Korea. By creating imaginary categories such as “foreign” and “other,” essentialist understandings of Korean identity have engendered xenophobia and racial and ethnic hatred. By privileging Korean culture and language, a commitment to narrow definitions of Korean identity has prevented recognition of Damunwha students’ heritage cultures and languages, forcing them onto the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. Such fundamentalism is apparent in the implementation of education policies. Although many Damunwha programs emphasize language and culture education, both philosophically and financially, what they actually provide is largely limited to Korean language and culture education. Indeed, these policies and programs, which are developed and administered top-down, are largely predicated on assimilationist beliefs. There is little emphasis on the heritage languages and cultures of immigrants and their children.

⁹Similar stratification has been reported in the Japanese Brazilian context, but the Korean context is complicated by the larger size of the diaspora and by the phenomenon of North Korean border-crossers.

In this context, the state's big push for multiculturalism may seem somewhat puzzling. To understand the burgeoning, but superficial, support for multicultural education, we need to understand South Korea's agenda of globalization (*Segyewha*). Globalization has been a major state agenda since the 1990s, and it had coincided with increasing rates of immigration. Korean understanding of globalization has been congruent with advanced industrialization, a policy of openness to foreign nations, and the cultivation of global competitiveness and competency. In order to become an advanced country worthy of respect, Korean politicians argued, Korea had to globalize. Korea's globalization campaign was an elite-oriented effort to strengthen the country's market competitiveness; its agenda was predicated on drawing global attention to Korea's cultural uniqueness and superiority (Kim 2000). However, the concurrent influx of migrant populations impoverished by the effects of the global political economy did not square with Korea's globalization plans. This discrepancy—between visions of globalization that privileged the cosmopolitanization of the citizenry and the reality of a multicultural Korea in which the majority of migrants were marriage and labor migrants from less developed countries—contributed to the emergence of ethnic and racial hierarchies in contemporary Korea.

Nonetheless, the Korean government could not afford to overtly discriminate against or ignore the welfare and educational rights of migrants and their children, as compliance with international human-rights standards was a nonnegotiable precondition for acquiring status as an advanced country. In this context, migrants are treated with generosity as seen in the increase of funding for Damunwha education, but they are socially positioned as inferior. As a result, the term “multi-culture” was popularized, Damunwha policies and programs emerged, and substantial fiscal resources were allocated to these programs. Yet multicultural initiatives have also been differentiated from elite-oriented globalization efforts; the latter are apparent, for example, in high-end international schools intended to attract affluent foreign migrants and foreign study-abroad students to Korea's elementary and secondary educational programs. With an increasing number of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds entering the Korean education system, it is imperative to develop and implement equitable and effective educational programs so that migrant children of all backgrounds have the opportunity to develop into competent, contributing, and respected members of society.

13.6 Rethinking Diversity and Envisioning Transformative Multicultural Education

Debate and study of multiculturalism have been largely Western pursuits, and the majority of multicultural theories and approaches have developed in Western contexts, such as the United States, Canada, and England. The conditions, social dynamics, and history of multicultural education are different in Korea and in other

Asian countries. Thus, the task is to develop multicultural education that is suitable for the Korean context, the major challenge being how to create and implement programs that reflect an expanded notion of Korean peoplehood, one that is inclusive and equitably represents diverse foreign residents and naturalized citizens. As Lim (2009) suggests, “The most viable route toward a ‘multi-ethnic’ society in Korea should be based on developing a more inclusive definition of who belongs to Korean society.” He also argues that the issue of belongingness does not necessarily arise from the migrants’ failure or unwillingness to “assimilate.” Instead, Lim asserts, the fundamental issue is the “impenetrable barrier of a rigidly and narrowly defined conceptions of belongingness and identity” (Lim 2009). Such strict boundaries cannot be eased or dismantled overnight. Only sustained, intentional, and practical efforts will lead to an optimal educational environment and social atmosphere for both minorities and majorities.

Another major challenge will be to design and implement multicultural education programs that are versatile enough to encompass the diversity that is unique to Korean society. In Western societies, especially in the United States and United Kingdom, migrants generally do not share ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic characteristics with the mainstream population. Furthermore, in those countries, the overwhelming majority of foreign migrants arrive from the Global South; the economic and political power imbalances between their departure and destination countries are substantial. In Korea, however, while the migrant population does include labor and marriage migrants from less developed countries, it also includes white-collar workers from developed countries. Moreover, the immigrant population includes not only foreigners of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, but also an unusually high percentage of “U-turnees”—coethnic diasporans who have re-migrated from long-term, often multi-generational, residence in foreign countries—and North Korean border-crossers. Finally, there is Korea’s unique challenge around multicultural families, in that the majority of “migrant” families are in fact of mixed-heritage involving one Korean parent, one migrant parent, and Korea-born children. Thus, intrafamily diversity must be considered in the implementation of multicultural programs.

Given these circumstances, we offer a preliminary, four-part vision of what an inclusive and fair multicultural education might look like and what it might take to achieve.

1. Multicultural education should be for all students, not just for Damunwha students. In order for social discrimination and injustice to be eradicated, every student needs to develop multicultural understanding and to be respected as a full member of the society. Whereas current programs in multicultural education are generally offered as separate educational support or as additions to the regular curriculum, a multicultural approach would integrate such programs into everyday study and school life.
2. Multicultural education cannot be achieved in the context of assimilation-oriented agendas or by a one-sided emphasis on improving multicultural understanding among minority students—yet current programs privilege Korean

language, lifestyles, morals, and values, making social and cultural membership in Korean society unreachable for minority students. Multicultural education could be improved by conveying equal importance and value for both Korean and non-Korean cultures and languages to students. Furthermore, multicultural education needs to function as a bridge between minority students' non-Korean heritage and Korean heritage so that they can build their transcultural competency.

3. Students must be recognized not merely as passive recipients, but as agents of multicultural education. They can and should be empowered to construct their own learning experiences through constant interplay with teachers and the educational environment. Whereas the existing top-down model leaves little room for participatory learning, multicultural education should instead be regarded as a social responsibility, as a process that engages students both in personal reflection and in social reflection through dialogue. Multicultural education calls for transformation of wider society through critical examination of power relationships. Personal reflections are important but are not, by themselves, sufficient.
4. Investment in teacher education is essential. The role of educators in promoting multicultural understanding cannot be overemphasized. Existing teacher-education programs will require active reorganization to provide training that is appropriate for the current realities of multicultural Korea.

Considering the short period in which they have had to respond to the effects of globalization, Korea's government and education system have made impressive progress on multicultural initiatives. However, it is precisely this lack of time and experience that has led to inconsistent, inefficient implementation of multicultural education programs. Now is the time for critical reflection, wherein we have an opportunity to reexamine current educational models in order to create more inclusive, equitable, and efficient programs that serve not only Damunwha students, but also non-Damunwha students, helping both groups to understand, accept, and interact with each other.

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