Reflections on the Formation of a Dependent Educational System and Ideology in Korea

Sim Seong-Bo

Abstract

Korean educational history following liberation has been marked by dependence on the Unites States. Around the time of liberation, pro-Japanese groups were allowed to keep their positions. Also, the American school system was introduced and American liberal democracy was adopted. Later, during the Park Chung-hee administration, human capital theory, which stressed efficiency and competition, was prevalent, and the New Community Movement, the ideological foundation of which was social evolutionism, was conducted. "Inquiry learning theory," which originated in the United States, was also blindly introduced.

Some pushed for critical education, or "concientization," and popular education, followed by group research activities, while resisting American influence. However, due to the downfall of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, this research trend began to decline. Along with globalization, Korean education has been shaped by neoliberalist educational policy, which aggressively pursues marketization. Thus, it is necessary to present visions and alternatives to the current trend of dependence in the Korean educational system.

Keywords: dependent educational system, world system of knowledge, human capital theory, modernization theory, critical education, conscientization neoliberal educational theory, popular education, privatization

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Raising the Issue

When Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, it faced two different roads: one was to establish a democratic and unified nation-state, ridding itself of the fetters of colonialism that it was previously unable to break, and the other to remain bound by the new fetters of influence from another foreign power. The most urgent task the country faced at the time was eradicating the vestiges of Japanese colonialism. Another important task was eliminating the remains of feudalism that had been used to reinforce colonial rule.

As is widely recognized, education has been greatly influenced not only by political and economical factors, but by the intervention of foreign forces. However, most studies of Korean education focus only on the institutions or policy shifts found in the history of Korean education, which makes a comprehensive understanding of Korean education impossible.

Accordingly, this paper attempts to examine what role educational institutions, policy, and practices played in forming the dependent educational system of post-liberation Korea. To that end, the macro perspectives offered by analyses of political economy and ideology are utilized. This should be of help in describing the overall history of the nation's educational system and preparing for a new future.

The Formation of a Dependent Educational System and Ideology

Upon liberation in 1945, Korea, overwhelmed by enormous external powers, had no alternative but to accept a path of subjugation to another foreign power. The three-year U.S. military government in the wake of liberation can be described as the epitome of the nation's 60-year contemporary history to follow, because after that point, in some sense, Korea underwent a process of repeating or reproducing the historical experiences and structure formed during that three-year period. The educational system was also unable to escape from such a general definition.

In the liberated Korea ushered in after hard anti-colonial struggles, a majority of the people and educators attempted to eliminate the vestiges of colonialism and establish an educational system conducive to the growth of a democratic nation-state, but were powerless in the face of the U.S. military government.

The Unites States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), which replaced Japanese colonial rule, rearranged the political order by reinstating pro-Japanese Koreans. They placed priority on resolving pressing tasks at hand under the motto of maintaining the status quo, which resulted in the re-employment of those who cooperated with Japan's plan of colonial education, and in so doing, directly or indirectly ignored the masses' call for educational reform. As a consequence, the educational views and system, along with its colonial vestiges, remained untouched. Japanese colonial habits, such as the emphasis on maintaining order, regarding obedience as a virtue, and demanding uniform collective actions did not disappear with ease.[1] There was no alternative under the U.S. military government for mainstream educational groups but to carry out a unilateral education reconstruction program without public support. These mainstream groups in education constituted primarily pro-American Koreans who had studied in the United States, as well as conservative rightists sharing an identical political background, who all failed to reflect the views of teachers themselves or gain their support.

Under the justification of filling a gap in educational manpower in the face of a rapidly rising population and demand for education, the educators and administrators employed during the colonial period, ranging from educational superintendents at the Japanese Government-General in Korea to teachers at simplified schools, continued to do the same jobs. They were given some training courses on American-style educational methodology at a teacher-training institute then deployed into Korean classrooms. They played a pivotal role in turning education into a political tool under the Syngman

1. O (1946, 7).

Rhee administration, whose main support base was former Korean collaborators with Japan.

In response to an energetic Sovietization of North Korea under the control of the USSR, the U.S. military government's educational policy shifted from the maintenance of the status quo to one of actual reform. In the process of implementing a series of educational reforms involving teacher re-education and an American educational assistance program, politically centrist educational experts or leaders needed to be removed or alienated, voluntarily or otherwise.[2] To carry out the minimum policy goal of preventing South Korea from being communized, the educational role of politicizing society was stressed from the beginning and political ideologies of American-style democracy were spread in multiple directions. With communist backgrounds serving as the primary criterion for rejection in teacher recruitment, political ideologies were strictly applied to education on the ground. Well-selected core members of the teaching profession evaded looking squarely at the limitations of cold-war ideologies, declined to acknowledge and respect the mode of living inherent to the nation and national traditions, and deliberately attempted to weaken national consciousness.

If system and ideology are regarded as the two pillars of education, the foundations of the two pillars can be said to have been laid during the U.S. military government. The unilateral import of the U.S. educational system did not suit the Korean situation. First advocated by Kim Seong-su, the 6.3.3.4 school system was not commonly adopted in the United States either; it was a system adopted in areas that were economically far better off than those that adopted the 8.4.4. system.[3] The adoption of a school system that only prevailed in

2. Lee Kwang Ho (1989, 62).
3. The 6.3.3.4 system was viewed as financially extravagant, since it presupposed the separation of middle and high schools. In contrast, although the 8.4.4 system was somewhat invalid, taking into consideration the educational and psychological developmental stages of middle and high school students, it suited the Korean educational situation by integrating middle and high schools into one educational unit. Kang (1984, 363).

wealthy parts of the United States for Korea, which was facing great economic difficulty, can be ascribed to the unrealistic idealism held by Koreans who had studied in the United States and forgot Korea's objective circumstances. Some socialists strongly called for the adoption of a 5.3.3.4 system on the grounds that the American system did not match Korea's economic and educational realities, but this was in vain. The formation of Korea's educational system by pro-American forces resulted in a system that was far from providing a free education, instead relying more on parents' paying for private tutoring than on formal outlays, thus making the poor poorer, and the rich richer.

Followed by the establishment of the Educational Aid Promotion Council in October 1945, an American educational survey team visited Korea and recommended that the Korean government set up teacher training centers, which would turn out thousands of teachers. A teacher re-education program, based on U.S. educational theory and methodology, produced over 7,800 teachers who were assigned to schools after having been granted political amnesty. At the same time, people with pro-Japanese backgrounds were trained as members of the teaching profession through such advisory organs as the Korea Education Commission and Korea Education Deliberation Council. The two agencies determined the framework of the Korean school system, curricula, and educational ideology, which are in effect even today.

The Korean War (1950-1953) provided the United States with the momentum to influence Korean education substantially in the name of educational aid. "Study in the United States," "professor exchange programs," and "study abroad programs," which were provided under the auspices of technical aid, functioned in particular as main routes for implanting American culture in the country. Ten U.S. educational delegations visited Korea from 1952 to 1961 to provide general guidance and advice on Korean education. The third educational delegation in particular played a decisive role in the 1955 curriculum reform.

Liberal democracy, which was pushed as educational ideology by the mainstream educational group at the time, was intended to forcibly incorporate South Korea into the world capitalist system cast

by the United States, and to protect the vested interests of the old ruling class centered around landowners.[4] Liberal democracy, thus intended, was liberal democratic in ideology, but system-friendly and pro-American in actuality.[5] Accordingly, this ideology had basic limitations in realizing the task of national history characterized by an anti-foreign independence and played the role of rejecting independent nationalism. This ideology was a logic centered on anti-communism, and it helped preserve the vested interest of the ruling class and suppress the people's movement. When seen from the perspective of national unification, the U.S.-centered liberal democracy, conforming to the interests of foreign powers and the ruling class, could not become the educational ideology of unification.

The group obsessed with the old colonial consciousness led education on the ground in the 1960s and 1970s as well, and its developmentalism represented by modernization and developmental education theories forced a pro-American orientation. Incorporating the semi-feudal idea of state supremacy into education under the name of nationalism, the group attempted to legitimize the regime in power. This educational theory was conducive to the production en masse of "no-nationality" modernization ideologues of internationalism, who held that "modernization equals Westernization." Modernization theory had it that a quest for a developed country like the United States, the benchmark of universality and the model system for Koreans, would eventually make Korea developed and prosperous. From the perspective of education, the theory had it that a prompt introduction and dissemination of the knowledge produced in the West and particularly in the United States is the duty of school education to accelerate the modernization process. If physical-power-centered military colonization constituted the main pillar of the logic of Japanese colonialism, a strategy of cultural colonization hidden behind ideology was the main marker of a new colonial situation produced by the United States after liberation.

4. Yi J. (1990).
5. Chung H. (1984, 437-438).

As a result, although the banner of "fatherland modernization" (*joguk geundaehwa*) was hoisted on the foundation of an education style unilaterally imported from the United States, they had absolutely failed to attempt to creatively graft tradition to modernity. It was in the 1960s that the term "modernization" began to be used in earnest in Korea. Although "enlightenment" (*gaehwa*) and "modernization" had been used sporadically previously, it was from the Park Chung-hee regime's push ahead with "fatherland modernization" in 1960 that modernization began to be used as a concept found not only in social practice but in the academic community and education on the ground. From the May 16, 1960 coup until 1963, the Park military regime forcefully pushed the "remaking the man" campaign (*in-gan gaejo undong*) under the banner of modernizing the fatherland. Terms like "modernization," "reconstruction," and "reform" swept the country for a while. The "remaking the man" drive was given so much emphasis that it was considered a prerequisite to social reform.

As a result, "programmed changes in human behavior," the definition of behavioral pedagogy, prevailed as a new educational view.[6] This view held that to achieve the task of accomplishing Korean national revival, "remaking the man" and reforming national character needed to be carried out through formal education. In fact, South Korea has suffered from the idea of "serving the great" (*sadae*) and an inferiority complex from the latter years of the Joseon dynasty. If the reform envisaged addressing these issues, the 1960s "remaking the man" movement can be said to fit in with the theory of "remaking the nation," advanced in the 1920s.[7] Slogans and propaganda for remaking the man naturally equated human beings with natural resources and defined them as an object of development. According to this view. the most abundant resources in the country were human, and the development of such human resources needed to become the most important agenda of education. To see the education only from the perspective of efficiency and competition eloquent-

6. Shon (1994, 299-300).
7. Pak (2004, 130).

ly conveys the spirit and trend of modern education, which can be symbolically verified from the fact that the "Culture and Education Ministry" was rechristened as the "Education Ministry" and then as the "Education and Human Resources Development Ministry." This neoliberal view of education sees social constituents as a means for competition rather than as human beings and subordinates them to the interests of the economy and industry, as revealed in the terms "human resources" and "human capital." The educational policy of developing countries, in line with the human capital theory, can be said to have served to deepen the subordination of the masses by expanding the profits of local subordinate corporations and multinational businesses rather than contributing to removing socioeconomic inequalities and promoting improved living conditions for the masses.[8] Such an educational theory came to define man's autonomy and critical capabilities as unnecessary for social development, and fostered the idea that the cultivation of students' autonomy must be reserved for the sake of social development. This was eventually utilized as a form of education to produce submissive subjects, and served a totalitarian educational system.

The National Education Charter, a distorted expression of self-reliance, and instituted by American modernism and state nationalism out of nostalgia for the *Imperial Edict on Education* under Japanese colonial rule, dominated the education scene in the 1960s and 1970s. To achieve national development, new factories and dams had to be built and new systems introduced. Men who staff such facilities and run such systems have to be so trained as to perform their tasks efficiently. "Education for production" was a political slogan that could be found in any school at the time.[9] Education had to accommodate not only economic needs but also the political needs of the state. Through the logic that traditional ethics should be observed even today under the slogan of "self-reliance" and "education with Korean identity," the order of a new colony persisted amid the equation that "loyalty (*chung*) and filial piety (*hyo*) equal order." With a national mobilization system thusly formed, a code of feudalistic ethics and morality that centered on loyalty and filial piety was further reinforced. Through reform of both the curriculum and textbooks, the educational administration reproduced this ideology of loyalty and filial piety and pro-Americanism, which were camouflaged as nationalism and modernization theory, respectively. Through the Saemaeul (New Community) Movement, or "new village" education movement, they infused the masses with various theories of social evolution and beliefs in economic development. As a consequence, mainstream groups saw education as being subordinated to politics and economics and stressed the role of education as a means, neglecting its intrinsic value.[10]

8. Lee Kyu-Hwan (1984).
9. Kim S. (1985, 104).

Dependence of Educational Theories

Keijo Imperial University was the sole university extant in Korea when the Japanese colonial rule came to an end in 1945. As can be seen from the founding philosophy of Berlin University, though it was a national university, Gyeongseong (todays' Seoul) University had the possibility of developing into a model institute of higher education by guaranteeing itself autonomy, autonomous administration for full professors, and autonomy in education and academic research.[11] But higher education during the founding period of the country's college education, as epitomized in the Seoul National University establishment plan, was characterized by bureaucratic control and the imitation of U.S. higher education. The Seoul National University establishment plan envisaged a basic reform of higher education by means of establishing a university integrating Gyeongseong University and eleven colleges scattered around Seoul and its vicinity into a single institution.

10. Kim S. (1985, 110-111).
11. See Altbach (1992).

The plan officially called for a variety of higher educational institutes inherited from Japanese colonial rule to first accommodate more students and improve their quality through an effective utilization of human resources; second, eliminate the vestiges of Japanese imperialism; third, promote rational use of state finance; fourth, insure an adequate training of scholars; and fifth, eliminate the closed nature of established institutions of higher education and the unnecessary competition.[12] In short, the Seoul National University establishment plan pointed to the inefficiency and irrationality in terms of management, system, finance, and personnel founded in the previous system.

But the proposal encountered strong resistance from the constituents. Professors launched an energetic opposition campaign citing inappropriate timing, lack of democratic procedures in the decision-making process, the bureaucratic and dictatorial nature of the proposal, and the unrealistic nature of an unconditional imitation of an American system. Students, too, fought against it, charging it as a vicious system aimed at controlling them bureaucratically and citing illiberal and undemocratic elements in the course of drafting the plan. Students who experienced the suppression of autonomous activities under Japanese colonial rule advocated campus autonomy no less strenuously than the faculty. Furthermore, the students complained that they would gain little benefit from the integration plan because some of them would have to commute to colleges located far from the center of the capital.

Despite violent resistance, the Seoul National University establishment plan, aimed at fostering American knowledge, ideology, and consciousness, was implemented through the strong physical power of the U.S. military government. This resulted in the control of the educational administration by pro-American bureaucrats, obliteration of campus autonomy and freedom of learning, and the colonization of Korean education by means of directly importing non-essential

12. *Jeseon inminbo* (Korean People News), July 13, 1946.

portions of a foreign system only.[13] The Seoul National University's inauguration under the U.S. military administration, with South Korea incorporated into the capitalist system as an anti-communist bastion, enabled Korea to organize its higher education as one that blended with elements of American higher education. The establishment of Seoul National University secured a base for America's cultural infiltration to and control of South Korean education, and provided the scholastic foundation for educational colonization through the centralization of education. The step executed under the name of eliminating vestiges of Japanese imperialism and efficiency paved the way for a new colonialism, replacing the Japanese educational system with an American one. The intention hidden behind the step, in essence, was laying a path of subordination for cultural transplanting, which resulted in a pedagogy that adhered to the concept of national division, because Korea's pedagogy has since repeated the persistent process of importing and applying American pedagogical theories. How Korean pedagogical theories are severely influenced by the United States is evidently plain in the self-reflection that Korean schools since liberation have seemingly played the role of a laboratory of Western and particularly American pedagogy.

As a result, professors at Seoul National University were reduced to knowledge salesmen, and a majority of competent and progressive faculty members resigned themselves to bringing about a string of lecture cancellations; meanwhile, intricate laws and rules, the object of rancor under Japanese imperialism, were reinforced. Many pedagogy scholars centered around Seoul National University established relationships of reference and deference with their American counterparts, giving rise to the strange phenomenon in which scholars are recognized not by their theoretical contribution but by degrees they attained in the U.S. Certain expressions, such as "good Korean universities are assessed as inferior to poor American universities, and foreign degrees are evaluated higher than their Korean counterparts"

13. Lee Hui-su (1990).

and "people who were students in the United States yesterday are hailed as great scholars in Korea today" are not exaggerated at all, considering the reality of Korean pedagogy. Also, theories not widely known in the United States were forced upon pedagogy scholars and teachers in Korea.

This educational pathology in Korea arose from the belief that the answers to all problems involving education can be found in the United States. Whenever they presented proposals for education, pedagogy scholars tended to hastily accept foreign examples as models with disdain for all things Korean. The excellence of foreign systems is achieved through the historical processes of the countries involved. Nonetheless, in Korea, the fact that educational excellence is the result of one's own cultural adequacy is overlooked.[14] They fail to notice that a system has to undergo many trials and errors before it is accepted as a living mode, and that the system is the life itself they have through their historical experiences, the spirit and reflection of their culture. The modern Korean educational system discarded tradition in favor of worship of the West, and Korean education has constructed its contemporary system within a context of having inherited this historical nature intact.

An important factor contributing to the dissemination of American pedagogical theories was the military dictatorships that, in collusion with the economic colonization of the country by the United States, guaranteed the profits of monopolistic conglomerates. Also contributing to the spread of such theories was the "inquiry learning theory" introduced by Korean scholars who had studied in America and returned home early in the 1970s and gained influence. The theory took root across the country by being disseminated uniformly through a centralized administrative structure.

Given this situation, it was almost impossible to develop and accumulate theories befitting our educational circumstances. In the past four decades, Korea has repeated a vicious circle of having a

14. Park (2004, 130).

prevailing theory in the education circles replaced instantly by a new theory. The legitimacy of any given new theory is almost automatically secured because it originates in the United States, the heart of the world system of knowledge. Accordingly, pedagogy scholars paid incessant attention to new trends in American theory and scrambled desperately not to fall behind. Prompt acquaintance with the conceptual systems used in a new theory was regarded as an indispensable ability. Hence a language gap between those who have studied abroad and are capable of acquainting themselves with new conceptual systems and those who have and are not has become the very standard with which to distinguish the illuminated from the ignorant. Only scholars who are able to deliver papers in English at international academic forums and contribute theses written in English to international academic journals are recognized as competent.

Of course, criticism of the influence exerted by the American educational system on Korean pedagogy was not totally lacking. The Joseon Gyoyuk Yeonguhoe (Korean Research Society of Education) under the U.S. military government emphasized the features and tradition of Korean education. Fed up with the introduction of completely American educational theories, members of the society, led by scholars who studied in Germany, introduced German and European pedagogy. But scholastic trends between the two could not be fused and accommodated; and the two were not able to escape conflicting with one other. Scholars who introduced the German and European educational theories were only critical of the mainstream educational groups in those days; with their academic competence limited, too, they stayed at the level of emotionally stressing what is "unique to Korea." Such criticism has since been repeated almost stereotypically.

Some criticisms of the dominance of U.S. pedagogy versus domestic pedagogy have persisted, despite being alienated. These range from the "methodology debate" at the Hanguk Gyoyuk Hakhoe (Korean Society for the Study of Education: KSSE)'s annual convention in October 1967, the "educational reform debate" through the medium of *Sae gyoyuk* (New Education) in 1972 and 1975, the grand debate at the 1983 annual convention of the society, convened under the theme

of "The Search for a Systematization of Korean Pedagogical Theory," to the debate on "The Colonial and Semi-Feudalistic Nature of Korean Education" at the society's 1990 annual convention.[15]

Some researchers who sensed problems embedded in the Korean education went to the United States to study critical scholarship, only to find upon their return home that this critical consciousness about Korean education had evaporated. Their way of thinking had become largely Americanized. They attempted to stress only the good aspects of the U.S. educational system and transplant them in Korea. They almost completely failed to fulfill the "role of critical introduction," in which foreign theories are introduced against a subjective judgment that considers our historical, political, economic, and cultural situations, along with the "role of re-creation," in which foreign theories are converted into Korean theories by revising them in a way to suit Korean history, reality, and future.[16] We were thus able to neither import foreign theories critically nor re-create them because pro-Japanese scholars and their successors, who could not secure pedagogy based on Korean historical and national consciousness transformed themselves into pro-American lackeys, indulged only in importing American theories blindly.[17] Given that pedagogy scholars deeply involved in government policy-making have mostly studied in the United States and that lately expert bureaucrats handling educational policy have mostly studied in the United States or Britain, it is no exaggeration to say that Korea has become a country in which American educational policy has been transplanted intact. What is more, the KSSE, the representative institute of pedagogy scholars, has been submissive to the government and rendered it more difficult to essentially resolve the problem of Korean education. The KSSE, despite its duty of keeping a critical distance from the government, has maintained a honeymoon relationship with the administration to stymie ordinary educational development.

15. Lee Hye-Young (221-222).
16. Lee J. (1992, 105).
17. Lee D. (2001, 80-83).

As seen thus far, the United States influenced Korean education in various fields, such as educational ideology, system, methods, content, and research. Influenced by everyday life-oriented education and child-centered education, the new educational movement emerged, and the systems of educational administration and autonomy, and the school system itself were influenced by those of the United States. Such developments can be affirmatively evaluated in regards to their respect for individuality, equal educational opportunity, and the introduction of new educational methods and theories. Negatively, however, they reveal the mismatch of these theories with Korean education, and a deepened cultural and academic submissiveness to the United States.[18] When Korea-U.S. educational relations are seen from the perspective of systems of knowledge, the Korean system of knowledge can be said to remain at the periphery of the American system of knowledge. The U.S. influence increased not because American intervention rose, but because submissiveness to the United States in the Korean system of knowledge expanded and scholastic autonomy continued to be lacking.

Critical Education as a Response to the Influence of American Education in Korea

Viewed from the influence of each discipline on the decision-making processes behind Korean education, educational psychology, educational administration, and educational evaluation were influential while educational sociology, which dealt with social structure and educational philosophy, handling education's essential issues, was conceived as insignificant. The former group of sciences was not effective enough in solving social problems because they tended to focus more on the security of the system than on society and ascribed social issues to individual responsibility. Even research in educational sociology with relatively strong critical tendencies leaned toward

18. Lee J. (1990).

functionalist or quantitative studies. Some scholars critically introduced Marxism and dependency theory as theories countering the suppressive conditions of the 1980s. But they did not actively develop their discipline from the perspective of a critical pedagogy, as a majority of them failed to follow up with social practice or remained at the level of observers.

One scholar of critical educational sociology was Professor Lee Kyu-Hwan at Ewha Womans University. He and his student, Prof. Kang Sun-won, jointly published translations of books authored by Bowles and Gintis and co-authored the work *Jabonjuui sahoe-ui gyoyuk* (Education in Capitalist Society, 1984). Research in educational philosophy was centered around Seoul National University, with a predominating tendency of favoring analytical philosophy. Research in educational philosophy indulged itself in ideal and metaphysical concepts and had little interest in exposing the contradictions faced by real people.

Scholars influenced by the Frankfurt school were critical of such scholastic trends. Professor Kim Jeong-hwan at Korea University published *Hyeondae-ui bipanjeok gyoyuk iron* (Contemporary Critical Educational Theory) in 1988 and introduced it into educational philosophy textbooks. Critical education philosophers who had formed a faction around him introduced the theory of "critical education," "popular education," and "conscientization," or consciousness-raising. Many educators at the time, influenced by British and American educational philosophy, tended to pursue clarification of the concepts, such as education and edification, and the inner world of individuals. Most pedagogy scholars, bent on the trends of individualism and pursuit of individual excellence, barely discussed the pursuit of equal opportunity in education and as a result made little contribution to democratization of education; they rather contributed to justifying the ruling philosophy of totalitarian administrations. Many pedagogy scholars failed to display a critical, philosophical view of man's contradictions in the face of reality, attempted to evade looking into social relations of human existence, and avoided discussing social class, a source of economic inequalities.

The quarterly *Minjung gyoyuk* (Popular Education), which noted problems in education on the ground, was published in the mid-1980s. The dismissals of a number of teachers who contributed articles to the journal or who participated in its debates awakened young people who aspired or hoped to be scholars in the field of education. In that process, young scholars easily exchanged ideas with educational activists and young pedagogy scholars. Dismissed teachers established the "Educational Publication Planning Office" for the purpose of publishing books that theoretically addressed education. Going a step further to acquire the capabilities of mounting a movement, some launched the Korean Council of Democratic Education. Then, to theoretically cope with the repressive educational environment of the 1980s, other young scholars formed the Korea Education Problem Research Society.

Possessing an interest in and affection for teachers involved in educational campaigns, the research society often invited progressive teachers to join its ranks. Composed of many graduate students taking doctorate or master courses in pedagogy, the research society conducted group studies on the education movement, the class-based nature of Korean education, education that was subordinate to the United States, and an independent pedagogy to overcome this subordination. Members of the society mainly made their theses public, conducted forums by university, and held forums in the provinces. The topics they dealt with included the political nature of national liberation and thereafter and the formation of a pro-American education force, the nature of the U.S. military government's educational policy, and a sociological analysis of the formulation of educational ideologies in early Korean educational policy. Also included for discussion were national division and the American educational system, the political nature of the opposition to the Seoul National University establishment plan during the formative period of the nation-state, American-style modernization and inequality in educational opportunities, the National Education Charter, and the formation of conformist ideology and socialist education advocated by Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and Paulo Freire.

Progressive teachers particularly interested in democratization, self-reliance, and the humanization of education subsequently launched a drive to organize the Korea Teachers and Educational Workers Union in May 1989, while others set up the Hanguk Gyoyuk Yeonguso (Korean Educational Research Institute) in April 1989 in a bid to back up their activism with theories. The Korea Educational Problems Research Society, a gathering of young scholars organized early in the 1980s, was automatically dissolved after a series of discussions, and most of its members participated in the establishment of the Korean Educational Research Institute. Researchers, eager to create theories for practical implementation, wanted to conduct research together with teachers, who, in turn, were keen to mingle with progressive pedagogy scholars. The research institute's founding statement displays a strong ideological orientation: "In order to strive to establish a native pedagogical theory and improve education on the ground through surveys and research on the reality of Korean education for the purpose of materializing national and democratic education." The institute intended to utilize practical theory and strove to find pedagogy designed to overcome the national division, with a particular interest in national and independent education. Dismissing quantification-oriented studies devoid of a critical stance as dangerous, the institute conducted a great deal of research exposing the question of the political and class-based nature of education that the established pedagogy circle had evaded. This was made clearly visible through group activities on educational theory, policy, ideology, history, finance, the educational system, education on the ground, and the education movement. In a bid to help implement its research outcome in education on the ground, the institute also carried out re-education programs for teachers and teacher candidates during vacations and school terms.

The institute sponsored symposiums on themes such as "International Trends in Teachers Unions," "What Are the Problems with Korean Education?" and "A Crisis in Korean Finance—Its Phenomena and Diagnosis." It published the quarterly *Gyoyuk bipyeong* (Education Criticism) and books entitled, *The Nature of Korean Education and the Korea Teachers and Educational Workers Union*, *Understanding and Misunderstanding True Education*, *Why Are Schools Poor?*, *A Crisis of Korean Educational Finance*, and *A History of Korean Education—The Modern Era*. These publications maintained a critical stance while probing into class inequality in Korean education and national subordination to foreign powers. With the leadership of the Korean Education Research Institute completely reshuffled, the quarterly *Education Criticism* is still being published by progressive educational practitioners, who remain critical of signs of rightists at the institute.

Regrettably, however, progressive pedagogy has all but withered to death since the collapse of the Eastern European socialist bloc. The downfall of Eastern Europe, a region that was once thought to be an alternative to Korean capitalism, deprived that region of power to act as an ideal for Korean education. Progressive scholars who pinned absolute hope on socialist education, in particular, fell into a spiritual panic because they were mentally disarmed. Some aggressive pedagogy scholars even subsequently converted to neoliberalist pedagogy. Although the Eastern European socialist bloc collapsed, there still remained some room for academic criticism of Korean education, which continued to be problematic. However, the socialist educational paradigm was summarily discarded. It represented a dependent academic attitude in that the socialist approach to education, which may have reached its limits within the real world of socialism, could still have played an important role in raising educational issues in Korea, for educational competition and inequality continues to plague Korean society and shows little possibility of being eliminated in the foreseeable future.

Such an academic trend, of course, was closely linked with the fact that the progressive pedagogy featuring criticisms of the government was losing its former stature, as the ruling elites of the nation were being gradually democratized and began co-opting certain elements of progressive pedagogy that advocated equality and democracy. The problem was, however, that since all successive governments were inherently inclined to maintain the status quo, the academy ought not neglect its critical role just as before. Thus, there arose the

idea that the academic community was not able to abandon its intrinsic function of criticizing the government's educational policy.

The Deluge of Neoliberal Educational Policies

The dependence of pedagogy theories became more serious when neoliberalism entered the stage. The educational policy, which was centered on the college entrance exam during the era of developmentalism, generated serous competition among students, making them see their peers as potential competitors, and dehumanized the school community into "factories" or "military barracks." To make matters worse, the clumsy imitation of the "third way," a neoliberal trend that did not take into account the realities of Korean history, drove Korean education into a blind alley of devastation. The British Labor Party government of Tony Blair proclaimed the "third way" as an election pledge in the mid-1990s, which was based on neoliberalism, an ideology that gave rise to this dangerous situation. But the fact that the tattered British educational reform carried out under the third way failed to effectively combine the market economy with democracy and devastated British education was overtooked.[19]

When classical liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a belief that a free market would lead the economy by eliminating premodern regulations and limitations, confronted the problems of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, as well as worldwide economic depression, John Keynes' "revised capitalism" emerged as an alternative. Revised capitalism argued that active state intervention could resolve imperfections of the market. Facing world economic recessions and accumulating financial deficits since the 1970s, however, the adequacy of Keynesian revisionism was seriously questioned, and an alternative called for curtailing excessive bureaucratic state intervention and again restoring self-regulating market functions. An attempt was made to return to Adam Smith's

19. Lee Byung-gon (2000).

free market system, departing from Keynes' economic theory that stressed government intervention in the market, and to adopt a deregulation policy. This can be said to be a return to a free market economy based on the classical liberalist understanding of economic capitalism. The first principle of neoliberalism is that of maximizing profit and minimizing loss by means of returning to market liberalism, the proposition of classic liberalism.[20]

In neoliberalism, the market, which contained the "problems" the state intended to resolve, returns as a "troubleshooter." Neoliberalism believes that the harmony of economic abundance with social equilibrium, the common goal of mankind in the twentieth century, can be achieved not by a new mercantilist, state-led economy, but through a market system of free competition. Many countries, in a bid to cope with the efficiency crises of welfare states, attempt to adopt neoliberalism, akin to liberalism, that envisages achieving community-building through the market and contracts.

Neoliberalism, after all, adopts a privatization strategy, holding that railroad and water industries run more efficiently when they are entrusted to the private sector rather than public corporations, or, to put it more precisely, when the public sector is re-privatized for the purpose of capital accumulation. Assuming that major principles of neoliberalism such as deregulation, decentralization, autonomy, and competition revitalize school education, neoliberal educational reform attempted to pursue improved bureaucratized school administration and educational excellence by entrusting formal education to market forces. More concretely, neoliberal educational reform takes various shapes, such as private school management on consignment, charter schools, voucher systems, and self-reliant private schools. Self-reliant private schools, special-purpose high schools, performance evaluation, and teacher assessment are all imported from the United States, which, in turn, originated in Britain. Korea attempted to unconditionally transplant United States and British seeds to its

20. Kim K. (1997).

educational soil while neglecting key Korean characteristics.

Neoliberalism, which believes that competition in the free market will result in the best outcome, however, is subject to the criticism that it only heightens social insecurity as manifested in the broadened wealth gap and increased unemployment, rejects social responsibility, and sets the narrow-minded philosophy of individual greed and avarice as the base of social development. Neoliberal consumer-centrism or market-centrism, while stressing individuals, choice, and competition, derives from the restructuring strategy aimed at boosting school efficiency and approaches schools excessively from the perspectives of engineering, science, and management. Such educational reform advocated by neoliberalism is liable to bring about the following risks.

First, neoliberal educational reform is vulnerable to the neglect of educational activities that address the students' whole personalities, as neoliberalism regards education as a "pseudo-commodity" circulated in the market and not as a public but a private commodity. If neoliberalism is applied to school reform, education is regarded as not a "public good" that the state should provide to the people equally, but a "private good," which is seen as possessions individuals have to secure according to their free choice. The philosophy of the private good sees children as general commodities. Regarding them as commodities means that children can be easily distinguished into good or poor products, and that products once judged as poor can be discarded. The education advocated by neoliberalism thus identifies the production process of goods, which are devoid of personality, with the education of children, who have personalities, and fails to recognize the essential differences between the two.

Second, the public good called education, when it is led by consumers, is liable not only to show the snobbery of the market and make it impossible for education to function as a rational judge influencing educational policy, but also to make one forget the publicness of education. The granting of the right to choose schools, while seeing educators as "managers," students and parents as "customers," and education itself as a "commodity," may result in a thoughtless

choice in which school choice brings about disadvantages to the weak by transferring "collective choice" to "individual choice." Neoliberalism does not guarantee human freedom in the real sense because it will eventually dismantle state-led welfare policy, slash the budget of the public sector, and introduce free market principles completely.[21]

Third, if the market is to operate by wont of an invisible hand, bureaucratic state control should be curtailed; but an expansion of the right to choose schools by consumers without the public mediation of the state increases chances to curtail teachers' "specialist autonomy" and destroy their solidarity. Neoliberal decentralization and delegation strategies appear to promote democratization, but aim at the central government's policy of marketizing unit schools on the ground, which seems to be an attempt to turn even the educational front into a market.

Fourth, thus relying simply on invisible market forces—without premising that individuals belong to communities—neoliberalism tends to not only promote indulgence in atomistic lives but also foster an all-pervasive psychology of "possessive individualism." Since consumers are basically inclined to pursue a pattern of materialistic lifestyles, they are apt to exhibit "antisocial" and "anticommunity" tendencies. Because a given community is viewed as a form of economic organization that one may join at will, the individuals living within a community are not necessarily altruistic or compassionate in ethical terms.[22] Neoliberalism antagonizes the relationships between human beings and deepens disunity and alienation. Customers bent on pursuing actions and politics of self-interest replace neighbors equipped with a community spirit, while abstractly-defined individuals replace real, live community members. Moreover, public issues are transformed into private questions. The community and the common good are thus fundamentally jeopardized.

Fifth, the market mechanism will further aggravate inequalities

21. Chung J. (1998).
22. Peters and Marshall (1996, 44).

and class division by allowing the right to choose schools to increase private advantages for "students of wealthy families" and decrease the public corner for "students of poor families." Market principles have the basic function of further reinforcing the rule of survival for the fittest, deepening the phenomenon of the rich getting richer and the poor poorer, and bisecting the social structure. They also tend to conceal unequal social relationships. The principle of the right to freely choose schools, grounded on the principle of turning education into a market, is highly likely to function as a mechanism of further favoring children of the wealthy while discriminating against those of the poor.

Sixth, the educational policy of neoliberalism, which emphasizes choice as defined by consumers, and the principle of decentralization, all in all, renders the existence of "common education" or "comprehensive schooling," designed to secure the homogeneity of the community, difficult. Excessive emphasis on the right to choose schools leads to separate education by community members, and may invite a social crisis undermining the community foundation of formal education by fanning enmity and conflict between the classes.

The neoliberal policy of education thus makes education more materialistic, devastates and dehumanizes it. This educational policy invites the creation of welfare and human rights problems that individuals cannot resolve, wear and tear on the environment, the fragmentation of society, dehumanization of labor, impoverishment of local culture, history, and local democracy, and the destruction of the family. As neoliberalism reveals a trend of disseminating extremely individualistic lifestyles and tends to praise technically efficient schools only, it makes it almost impossible for schools to exist as a community. This neoliberalism that places priority on efficiency, choice, and competition, stresses choices by the strong more than the community consciousness of living together and welfare for all.

Conclusion

This paper has thus far critically examined how Korean education has been under the influence of foreign countries, especially the United States. It has pointed out that foreign theories and systems have been uncritically introduced or imitated, and that foreign examples were unrealistically presented as a reference for evaluating Korean education. The advent of such education testifies to the fact that Korean education embodies the entanglement of Korean society's three contradictions—state power, monopolistic capital, and the influence of foreign forces.[23] Problems and realities of Korea's school education are not confined to education, but reflect structural contradictions flowing throughout Korean society. Contradictions in the educational system are really a reflection of Korea's greater social contradictions, and are depriving Korean students of their lives and happiness. To overcome this mass of contradictions, a new educational system must be constructed with the following steps incorporated.

First, a learning system utilizing a new pedagogy in which theories and practices are integrated must be built. Prescriptions for untangling Korea's education problems must be presented by constructing an objective learning system capable of theoretically explaining problems that have arisen particularly in primary and secondary education on the ground in Korea. Since only American pedagogy has rendered the resolution of Korea's education problems very difficult, it is necessary to analyze in detail worldwide trends of educational reform with a view to achieving diversity in learning.

Second, educational theories that transform an educational approach from one that is alienated from life into one inextricably linked to it must be presented. By transforming armchair educational theories into theories stuck fast to the realities of life, pedagogical theories can be developed that help students to lead happy lives.

23. Sim (1994).

Third, it is necessary to "re-communitize" schools to counter neoliberalism, which alienates and dehumanizes schools and renders the fostering of community consciousness difficult. With schools facing a community crisis, "communitarianism" and "communitarian education" have emerged as alternatives. If the leading ideology of the 1980s was individualism, then in the twenty-first century, communitarianism has emerged as an alternative to save us from an end-of-the-century crisis.[24] Communitarianism should provide special meaning to schools, namely a stronger meaning of community in an era overflowing with individualism, and a community strategy should stress group and social ideologies such as responsibility, welfare, and democracy. Given that the educational ideology of communitarianism is liable to emerge as oppressive, feudalistic, and conservative in Korean society, however, "democratic communitarianism," combined with concepts like human rights and autonomy, must be advocated.

Fourth, a free educational system for all people and particularly poor citizens must be promptly realized. An alternative must be offered based on research into free educational systems that are excelling in other countries and any difficulties they confront today.

Fifth, the establishment of an educational system geared to our territorial unification is urgently needed. Given that the inter-Korean joint declaration envisaging an eventual unification was issued in 2000, it is urgent to exchange pedagogy scholars between the two Koreas for the purpose of developing pedagogy conducive to overcoming the national division. Unification education must be discussed actively in terms of peace education, which acknowledges and accepts mutual differences. They should meet and exchange opinions on their mutually different views of values, modes of affection, families, and society.

Sixth, "liberation education" ideology fostering the capacity to both criticize society and cultivate the human mind must be developed. American pedagogy, bent on trends of psychological individualism, has made collective resolution of problems difficult. Educational theories permitting the co-existence of individuals and society must be created.

24. Wilcox (2000). Such communitarianism is presented as a "third way" ideology, transcending capitalism and socialism.

Seventh, the American- and British-style current of neo liberal educational reform must be blocked. We have to transcend the educational reform strategy that tends to deepen competition, discourage altruism, exhaust community consciousness, and destroy the ecosystem. A public education system in which all enjoy the benefits of education as a universal right must be secured as a means of overcoming the threatened educational reform of neoliberalism. The ideology of "social democracy," a major means of redistributing public goods so as to achieve social integration, must be the cornerstone of our nation's public education system.

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