Articles

Transnational Curriculum Studies: Reconceptualization Discourse in South Korea

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ABSTRACT
Creating transnational spaces of curriculum inquiry calls for dialogic encounters between East and West. This article makes visible, both for Western and non-Western curriculum scholars, the historical development of curriculum studies in South Korea over the last 3 decades. Focusing on reconceptualist approaches to curriculum, the article argues for a reconfiguration of Western discourses in terms of local and regional knowledges. Beginning with the initial translation of Western texts in the 1980s and moving into the contemporary production of Korean texts on Korean practices of curriculum and schooling, the paper offers a case study in the creative challenges of merging global and local priorities. Writing "regional tales," it is argued, sets a critical example for Western curriculum scholars while at the same time inviting links to curriculum studies and researchers in other non-Western countries.

INTRODUCTION
International curriculum inquiry might best be understood as a process of creating transnational "spaces" in which scholars from different localities collaborate in reframing and decentering their own knowledge traditions and negotiate trust in each other's contributions to their collective works. For those of us who work in Western knowledge traditions, a first step must be to represent and perform our distinctive approaches to curriculum inquiry in ways that authentically demonstrate their own localness.

Gough (2003, p. 68)

Oh, East is East, and West is West.
And never the twain shall meet.

Kipling (2008, p. 233)

In the aim of creating, as Gough suggests above, transnational spaces of curriculum inquiry that are collaborative, reflexive, and grounded in local knowledges, curriculum scholars in North America may be curious about the development of curriculum studies in non-Western countries. In particular, they might be interested in knowing whether Western reconceptualizations of curriculum theory (Kridel, 2000; Marsh & Willis, 2007; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) have travelled to Korea. Although detailed reports about curriculum studies in different regions of the world are not often available internationally, information is emerging from Brazil (Lopez, Macedo, & Paiva, 2006), Mexico (Diaz-Barriga, 2005), and other countries (Pinar, 2003, 2010; Trueit, Doll, & Wang, 2003).
This article tells the tale of Korea’s recontextualization of Western theories of curriculum studies and enables Western scholars to learn more about practices of curriculum outside their own sphere of influence. South Korea’s geographical location, its distinctive educational traditions, and its political relationship with the West make it a unique case. First of all, South Korea is geographically located in the “Far East”—far from Europe, and separated from North America by the Pacific Ocean. Its geographical isolation and distance afford some Westerners the impression that South Korea is “Oriental” (Said, 1979), psychologically separate, and culturally exotic. Perhaps our location also enables some Westerners to think of South Korea as a preserve of esoteric Eastern ideas and traditions. Korean culture has indeed been influenced by Eastern philosophies such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In particular, Confucianism has been a major part of Korean history, life, and culture. However, South Korea is today very much embedded in economic globalization and in the cultural, social, international, and interracial consequences that globalization brings.

This article looks specifically at the development of “reconceptualization discourse” (RD) in South Korea. By reconceptualization, I refer to the rethinking of traditional curriculum perspectives introduced by William Pinar in the United States in the 1970s (see Pinar et al., 1995, chapter 4)—a rethinking that continues to reverberate in contemporary curriculum studies (Janesick, 2003; Malewski, 2010; Marsh & Willis, 2007; Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000; Schubert, 1986). As non-Western curriculum scholars, we understand this shift in Western curriculum theory as a historical event that has grown to encompass a broad range of perspectives including postcolonial, poststructuralist, deconstruction, multicultural, feminist, and qualitative approaches. By discourse, I refer to the discussions inspired by this shift both in the West and the East, but more specifically by its introduction to South Korea in the 1980s and its current rearticulation in the Korean context. Michael Apple’s radical interpretation on reproduction of school knowledge was the first influence to stimulate the curriculum studies of Korea toward reconceptualization discourse. Clandinin and Connelly’s theorization of teacher experience, narrative inquiry, and curriculum as lived experience is, for example, understood as a major influence on the discourse of reconceptualization in Korea. Other significant influences include the analysis of school culture inspired by Paul Willis and Stanley Aronowitz’s (1982) Learning to Labor and Jean Anyon’s (1980) Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work, and the qualitative work of curriculum scholars such as Patton, Guba, Pinar, Lather, Eisner, van Manen, Bullough, and Merriam.¹

Writing this Korean tale not only offers Western curriculum scholars insight into international practices of curriculum, but it also constitutes an invitation to non-Western colleagues to investigate their own intellectual histories and present circumstances, especially as influenced by global flows of ideas, concepts, and practices. By reporting on the Korean experience, I hope to contribute to the establishment of a subfield on “national histories of reconceptualization discourse” as a specific instance of an apparently growing interest in disciplinarity (Anderson & Valente, 2002; Messer-Davidow, Shumway, & Sylvan, 1993; Pinar, 2007). Such tales of local regions enable us to understand how curriculum knowledge circulates globally and is recontextualized locally; that is, how it is creatively reformulated according to local traditions, needs, and aspirations rather than simplistically applied. Such tales also illustrate the significance of story and narrative as modes of curriculum inquiry (Clandinin, 2000; Grumet, 1988; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Knowles, Coles, & Presswood, 1994; Kridel, 1988; Sykes, 2001).

Such a specialty seems especially appropriate during a time of escalating globalization in education (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005; Spring, 2008; Suarez-Orozco & Quin-Hillard, 2004). Writing a regional tale, I argue, will contribute to the internationalization of curriculum studies and encourage curriculum studies scholars worldwide to investigate their regional histories toward the realization of curriculum studies as international text (Pinar et al., 1995). However,
I also argue that writing regional tales needs to go beyond the simple collection of historical developments or genealogical narratives. In this article, I offer a critical and reflexive approach to reconceptualization discourse based on postmodern and postcolonial paradigm inquiries (Lather, 1991; Pinar et al., 1995; Slattery, 2005). Similar to hooks’s (1993) “yearning” for “liberating scenes,” my yearning in writing this article is to position myself—and Korean curriculum studies—differently from previous “importers” of Western theories (RD included). I do not want to use RD as another panacea for Korean scholarship and schooling. Instead, I employ it as a catalyst for creating a Korean curriculum language opposed to traditionalist Western-influenced curriculum studies and for producing indexical and indigenous languages that are not imitations of those created by curriculum reconceptualists in the West. This seems to me to be the “spirit” of U.S. approaches to curriculum reconceptualization: to devise concepts particular to new situations that, while influenced globally, remain inescapably local.

As a Korean curriculum scholar of RD and a member of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, my research on Korean curriculum studies is broadly informed by four sets of questions that I hope will make my purpose more concrete and also inspire scholars in non-Western nations to discuss the local value, meanings, and contributions of curriculum reconceptualization in their own countries from a postmodern and postcolonial perspective:

1. What does it mean to do curriculum reconceptualization in non-Western locations? How can/should curriculum studies be reconceptualized locally and as different from Western curriculum studies?
2. What curriculum questions and topics are more worthy and valuable in non-Western locations? Which Western questions remain valuable and important in non-Western sites? How can Western questions be redefined and attuned to local contexts?
3. How and in what ways can Western curriculum discourses be questioned, even doubted? Should we choose a receptive or resistant academic orientation when we witness that Western RD does not address our local situation? At the same time, can we blindly believe in the trustworthiness of local narratives and findings?
4. How can we reconceptualize the meaning of “reconceptualization” in our local context? Reconceptualization discourse in Korea and elsewhere should be more than a simple mimicry of Western reconceptualization. It must be reborn as a field of liberation and postcolonial curriculum inquiry. If so, what might this field be called? “Post-reconceptualization” (Cary, 2007), “Reconceptualization of Reconceptualization,” or “De-Reconceptualization”? On what grounds (philosophical, sociological, and cultural) can it grow as a new field if we reject Western conceptions of reconceptualization and try to escape from the authority of Western RD?

These questions provide a broad context for the regional tale of Korean curriculum reconceptualization developed in this article. Divided into two main sections—(1) the historical context of RD in Korea and (2) the present terrain and new directions—the article examines the influence, recontextualization, and reconfiguration of Western discourses on curriculum inquiry in South Korea.

CURRICULUM STUDIES IN SOUTH KOREA: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Korean curriculum studies began in the early 1950s, after Korea was emancipated from Japanese colonization (S. Hur, 2002). In the published accounts of education before the emancipation, historians focus mainly on the philosophy of education in different periods, the
development of school subjects, and school activities (H. Jeong, 2005; D. Soh, 2009). They tend not to examine questions of curriculum.

The curriculum studies was established as a discipline of education after 1945 because Korean scholars who had studied curriculum field in the United States after emancipation, and began to disseminate the inquiry in South Korea as a new field in educational research. Thus, since then, South Korean curriculum studies have been influenced principally by U.S. curriculum studies. The first Korean curriculum scholar was Bummo Jung. A former advisee of Ralph Tyler at the University of Chicago, Jung (1956) wrote *Curriculum*, a book based on Tyler’s (1969) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Jung’s students and followers became university professors and established an academic group that promoted Tyler’s rationale for South Korean curriculum studies in the 1960s and 1970s.

S. Hur (2002) characterizes the 1970s as the “age of [the] shaping of Korean curriculum studies” (p. 7). During this period, many references to North American ideas and theories of curriculum were disseminated in Korea, prominent among them Jerome Bruner’s (1977) *The Process of Education* and Hilda Taba’s (1962) *Curriculum Development*, both of which were translated into Korean. These volumes have been taught as classics in South Korea ever since. Among the concepts imported was mastery learning based on Benjamin Bloom’s theorization on Mastery Learning (1973): It became very popular and circulated as new a form of teaching and learning. During this period, I was a middle school student and remember that my classmates and I studied science, mathematics, and English with complementary workbooks titled, “Mastery Learning.” Given the increasing emphasis on curriculum studies, the Korean Department of Education allowed universities to open the graduate major in Curriculum, and the first volume of the *Korean Journal of Curriculum Studies* was published in 1974.

In the 1980s, Korean curriculum studies focused on three areas: (1) school curriculum, (2) instructional design theories, and (3) non-Tylerian discourses. The first two areas were part of traditionalist curriculum studies; the third area was new. Scholars who returned from North America and Europe disseminated the sociology of school curriculum, also known as the new sociology of education. Given these circumstances, it was perhaps predictable that reconceptualist ideas would be imported in the late 1980s. The apparently gracious acceptance of these ideas is not surprising given that the history of South Korean curriculum studies has been influenced by shifts in North American curriculum studies (Y. H. Lee, 2002a). Carrying on the tradition, reconceptualization was initially read, shared, and circulated as a powerful new knowledge for Korean curriculum studies.

A number of curriculum scholars in Korea began energetically working to apply Pinar et al.’s (1995) definition of reconceptualization as “a shift in the field’s fundamental mission from curriculum development to understanding curriculum” (pp. 186–187). Indeed, reconceptualist ideas were taught, disseminated, and researched as a way of understanding Korean schooling. Korean researchers learned, for example, that based on new ideas from North America, curriculum could be improved and changed by analyzing school culture, the hidden curriculum, and the ideologies of textbooks. As a result, today Koreans appreciate that traditionalist curriculum perspectives are not the only discourse in curriculum studies.

The appearance of RD in South Korea led Koreans to question curriculum “development” as the single best system (Tyack, 1974). Today Koreans are surrounded by more complex and multiple approaches to curriculum (e.g., reproduction, lived experience, emancipation, and deconstruction) including the shift to counter-hegemonic practices akin to Lather’s (1986) postmodern formula: “Research as praxis.”

However, despite these important shifts, the major theme of curriculum studies in Korea has been “curriculum development.” It has been the main undertaking of curriculum inquiry in South Korea since the 1950s, and many educational researchers still think that curriculum only
involves developing curriculum. Scholars who are also curriculum developers influence most of the decisions made by the Association of Korean Studies for Curriculum Studies (KSCS), including annual conference themes, and research initiatives undertaken with the government Department of Education. In the next sections of the article, I look more closely at these differing perspectives through a discussion of the historical development of curriculum studies in Korea. The discussion is organized into three periods—the production of translated texts, the production of Korean texts, and the analysis of school curriculum.

Transcribed Texts

Korean curriculum studies was not a home-grown field; it was imported. The appearance of RD in South Korea began in the 1980s with translations of Western texts. This importation was consistent with earlier formulations of Korean curriculum studies, themselves borrowed from conceptions devised in the West (Y. C. Kim, 2005a). Because Korean curriculum studies after 1945, as mentioned previously, has been influenced by North America, it was not strange for Korean scholars to translate Western texts and introduce Western theory to Korean researchers and teachers. In addition, possessing advanced knowledge of the West through translation assigns local researchers with more academic power and prestige. In a relatively few years, RD became a “trendy” concept among some Korean scholars. The first wave of translators generally included scholars in the sociology of education or curriculum studies who had trained in the West (especially in the Unites States, Canada, and England). Thanks to these early translations in the 1980s, a considerable number of books first written in English have since been republished in Korean. These translated texts have been assigned to students of education and curriculum studies as required reading for graduate studies and teacher education. For some Korean faculty and students, RD became “the sign of the times.”

Table 1 lists significant Western texts that were translated and published in South Korea from the 1980s to the 2000s. Such a wide selection is direct evidence of a strong academic interest in Western concepts and scholarship; these texts have provided the intellectual stimulus for a reinvigorated Korean curriculum studies.

As this table shows, the texts translated were quite varied, ranging from the early work of Bowles and Gintis to the later work of hooks and Peters and Burbules. These translated texts are still read today; several will probably be read in the future. Apple’s (1990) *Ideology and curriculum* and Giroux, Penna, and Pinar’s (1981) *Curriculum and Instruction* have, for example, been used since the 1990s as textbooks in many universities such as Hanyang University, Yonsei University, and Seoul National University. These translated texts shaped the formation of a new academic community I might loosely term “scholars of RD.” These scholars participated earlier in various translation projects that disseminated reconceptualist ideas; their academic careers became associated with the fate of RD in Korea. Incumbent upon these scholars was the explanation of these texts and the adaptation of the ideas to the specificities of Korean education. The very act of translating Western knowledge constituted an accumulation and expansion of Korean curriculum knowledge. Through the explanation of Western curriculum concepts, even mimicry functioned as a productive cultural act in the creation of the new Korean curriculum studies.

Production of Korean Texts

The dissemination of Western reconceptualist ideas through translated texts also allowed Korean scholars to theorize RD from their own perspectives and publish books and articles based on their study of these texts (B. Kim, 2007; K. Lee, 2006; Y. H. Lee, 2007; M. Park, 2005).
This era of the production of Korean texts began in the late 1980s and continues to the present day. For example, Kiseok Kim’s historic book on cultural reproduction and schooling was published in 1987 and Young Chun Kim’s extensive qualitative research on Korean elementary schools was published in 1997. In addition, Young Chun Kim (2006) edited the book *After Tyler: Curriculum Theorizing 1970–2000*. The book’s contributors generously introduced Western ideas of reconceptualization to Korean audiences and elaborated their significance to the Korean curriculum field. Table 2 provides examples of Korean texts.

Korean scholars revised reconceptualist ideas by using their own knowledge and selecting better examples for Korean readers. I would argue that such creative “reconceptualization” advanced RD in Korea by introducing new themes and background knowledge including the diverse philosophical and sociological theories referred to in the translated Western texts. In effect, theorizing RD in Korean contributed to the reconceptualization of Korean curriculum studies, now increasingly linked explicitly to Korean contexts and experiences. Korean authors recognized the advantages and disadvantages of Western theories of reconceptualization, revising them so they could be more easily read by a Korean audience. Korean authors wrote Korean texts which consisted of content that included more persuasive and relevant examples, data, and stories.

This shift in Korean writing from “translation” to “creative production” was stimulated by two developments. First, using multiple imported resources not only augmented Korean knowledge of Western ideas, but also enabled Korean scholars to shift from a receptive and passive position to a more active and productive position. They were not simple imitators of Western texts anymore, but intellectually independent scholars who, like Western scholars, rewrote RD based on their own creative ideas. Second, this radical change in RD in South Korea quickly led to the composition of a second wave of texts focused less on translated works and more attuned

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**TABLE 1**

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<tr>
<th>Major Texts on Education and Curriculum Translated Into Korean</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ideology and Curriculum</em>. Apple, 1990</td>
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<td><em>Cultural Politics and Education</em>. Apple, 1996</td>
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<td><em>Educatng the “Right” Way</em>. Apple, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Schooling in Capitalist America</em>. Bowles &amp; Gintis, 1997</td>
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<td><em>Power and Criticism</em>. Cherryholmes, 1998</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Narrative Inquiry</em>. Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000</td>
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<td><em>Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of experience</em>. Connelly &amp; Clandinin, 1988</td>
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<td><em>Perspectives on Curriculum</em>. Doll, 1993</td>
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<td><em>Enlightened Eye</em>. Eisner, 1991</td>
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<td><em>The Educational Imagination</em>. Eisner, 2002</td>
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<td><em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em>. Freire, 1970</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals</em>. Giroux, 1988</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence</em>. Giroux, 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Theory and Resistance in Education</em>. Giroux, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Curriculum and Instruction</em>. Giroux, Penna, &amp; Pinar, 1981</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Sign of the Burger: McDonald’s and the Culture of Power</em>. Kincheloe, 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Poststructuralism and Educational Research</em>. Peters, 2004</td>
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<td><em>Understanding Curriculum</em>. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, &amp; Taubman, 1995</td>
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<td><em>What is Curriculum Theory?</em>. Pinar, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Education, State and Crisis</em>. Sarup, 1982</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Researching Lived Experience</em>. Van Manen, 1990</td>
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<td><em>Knowledge and Control</em>. Young, 1971</td>
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to the expectations of Korean students of education. Korean students had difficulties comprehending certain concepts, sometimes because they were too complicated, but sometimes because the translation was inadequate. Additionally, Western texts referenced Western examples, leaving some Korean readers feeling alienated by the context.

Confronting these difficulties, Korean scholars wrote according to their perception of the situated needs of Korean readers. As native speakers, they were able to explain reconceptualist ideas in local terminologies. Perhaps more importantly, they labored to make the texts more interesting to Korean readers through the juxtaposition of Western theories and Korean cases. Simple inclusion of Western theories without reference to Korean educational life rendered Western theories too difficult and too foreign. With copious reference to the Korean situation, this second wave of texts addressed Korean readers directly by engaging their everyday knowledge and rendering RD accessible.

Table 2 provides a list of selected Korean texts. As their titles make evident, each text emphasizes different elements of reconceptualization while providing a range of specifically Korean references recognizable to Korean readers. Their topics vary from critiques of Tyler’s approach (M. Kim, 1991) to the promotion of postmodernism (M. Park, 2005). I have listed the texts in three categories: general texts, texts on educational theory, and texts on curriculum. Notably, most of the texts were written as “general” texts providing introductions to RD and related knowledge. The main topics included definitions of RD and elaborations of the purposes of reconceptualization, including references to work by Western scholars. The texts listed under “educational theory” were more complex. Since theoretical knowledge has long been respected in Korean pedagogy, Korean scholars seriously studied the theories cited as supportive of reconceptualization. They wrote books on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and feminist theories. Kiseok Kim’s (1987, 1994) research is noteworthy as his two-volume work elaborated the concept and role of “cultural capital” in relation to modern schooling. Finally, the texts listed under “curriculum” focused specifically on curriculum studies. These texts

### Table 2
Major Korean Texts on Curriculum and Education

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<tr>
<th>General Texts</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Private Education of Korean Nation.</em> J. Han, 2005</td>
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<td><em>Theories of Korean Educational Capital.</em> J. Han, 2007</td>
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<td><em>Research on Sociology of Education.</em> W. Jeong, 1997</td>
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<td><em>Schooling and Inequalities.</em> W. Oh, 1990</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Theory</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Phenomenology and Education.</em> S. Cho, 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Habermas and Education.</em> K. Han, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Educational Hermeneutics.</em> S. Sohn, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Feminism and Educational Thought.</em> H. Yoo, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Hermeneutics and Education.</em> M. Choi, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Phenomenology and the Curriculum Reconceptualization Movement.</em> K. Lee, 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Postmodern Paradigm and Significant Issues of Curriculum Development.</em> M. Park, 2005</td>
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</table>

transnational curriculum studies
helped Korean readers to better understand the new terrain of Korean curriculum studies after the importation and recontextualization of RD.

Analysis of School Curriculum

Importing reconceptualist ideas not only stimulated academic production and the intellectual advancement of Korean curriculum studies, but it also inspired South Korean scholars to discuss the potential impact of these concepts on Korean school curriculum practices. In so doing, they began to analyze Korean curriculum from the perspective of reconceptualization. The interest in RD moved from translation to recontextualization to pedagogical adaptation to the Korean school curriculum. In this context, pedagogical adaptation involves the use of reconceptualist ideas and research to improve Korean schooling. Concepts such as the hidden curriculum, school culture, and gender discrimination enabled Korean teachers and practitioners to critique in new terms their own schools, curriculum, and teaching methods. Reading the experiential data generated by this research on schooling inspired teachers to change their classroom behavior, indeed the overall learning environment, and specifically student management. I still remember a classroom teacher’s e-mail stating that he would not use corporal punishment anymore after reading the portrayal of a teacher’s behavior in the book Tales of Four Schools: Classroom Life and Instructions in Korean Elementary Schooling (Y. C. Kim, 1997). He explained that this book had influenced him more than any other in-service training program.

This third approach was radical. Prior to RD, school curriculum practices had not often been studied as sites of curriculum inquiry. In this new perspective, the direction of curriculum studies in Korea slowly moved from “curriculum development” to “understanding curriculum” in classroom contexts and alternative practices. Drawing especially on the perspectives of interpretative and critical approaches, Korean scholars attempted to redefine and reinterpret the features and roles of Korean schools. Among these features were:

- curriculum implementation (M. A. Kim, 2007; S. Kim, 2008; M. Sohn, Y. C. Kim, & H. Kang, 2007)
- textbooks (J. Joo, 2006; Y. Yoo, 2004)
- classroom teaching (C. Hur, 2006a; S. J. Kim, 2006; Y. C. Kim, 1997)

The analysis of Korean school curriculum advanced the Korean field by producing local knowledge. This new effort to study “inside” Korean schooling allowed curriculum scholars to glimpse what had not been systematically studied before. Through thick description and sophisticated analysis, the familiar world of Korean schooling became unfamiliar. Using post-positivist curriculum methods, Korean scholars began to observe, describe, and analyze Korean schools and curriculum, and engage in a wide range of research approaches on curriculum practices. Such increased scholarly production changed the field from a discussion of traditionalist curriculum ideologies at somewhat superficial levels toward a genuine understanding of the meaning of curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2005 [1985/1991], pp. 231–232). New understandings of Korea school curriculum emerged from site-based research. To illustrate this new development, I review three major research trends that have occupied school research in South Korea from the 1990s to the 2000s. These trends
understand curriculum variously as 1) ethnographic text, 2) reproductive text, and 3) teacher text.

Researching Curriculum as Ethnographic Text. As the title implies, this type of research employs ethnographic methods to understand school curriculum and includes concepts such as thick description, everyday life, and school culture. Because the “inner life” of Korean schooling had never been a prominent research concern in the past, ethnographic portrayals of Korean schooling and curriculum provided opportunities to learn about the experience of teachers and students inside classrooms (Y. C. Kim, 1997; Y. H. Lee, 2002b). “Mundane” knowledge of classroom settings and school life now merited academic attention, providing important resources for critically examining the everyday problems of Korean education. An important example of research conducted in this field can be found in Qualitative Research in Education: Methods and Applications (Y. S. Lee, & Y. C. Kim, 1998). The ethnographic research on Korean schools in this volume helps Korean scholars and students to advance their knowledge of both research methods and Korean schools.

The major contribution of ethnographic research was a new understanding of the everyday life of school curriculum and teaching. For the first time Korean curriculum scholars appreciated how students learn inside classrooms and how teachers teach in actual schools (Y. Cho, 2001; Y. S. Lee, 1991). Also, they were able to discern the significance of the physical, cultural and social structures of Korean schools for students’ learning and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). More specifically, the elaboration of the “hidden curriculum” in Korean schools helped educators to recognize that students learn values in addition to school subjects, especially competition, compliance, and passive ways of thinking. The research findings (C. H. Kim, 2001; M. Kim, 1986; Y. Lee, 1990, 1992) required Korean educators to be more attentive to school life and culture, thereby extending their inquiry beyond the formal curriculum. For example, Y. S. Lee’s (1992) study of Korean elementary schools was the first to recognize the influences of the hidden curriculum on classroom teaching and student learning in Korean schools. It identified the following predominant traits: uniformity, authority, obedience, outcome-based evaluation, a culture of corporal punishment, and a culture of competitive learning. Table 3 provides a list of key ethnographic studies of Korean school curriculum.

Researching Curriculum Through Reproduction Theory. School-based studies using reproduction theory made clear the extent to which Korean schools were engaged in social reproduction (Institute of Elementary Schooling Culture, 2003, 2005; M. Kim, 1986; I. Lee, 1991). Guided by the question “Whose knowledge is surreptitiously reproduced and reinforced as dominant and normal?” Korean scholars observed and analyzed classroom discourses. As in the West, various aspects of the Korean curriculum (student experience, textbooks, teaching practices,
classroom activities) were critically examined and reinterpreted through Marxist and Neo-Marxist critical theories (K. Kim, 1994; H. Koh, 1990).

This research showed that the Korean school curriculum played a crucial role in reproducing the dominant social order. Specifically, it indicated that the political ideologies associated with Korean governments during specific periods were strengthened through forms of indoctrination in the content of the school curriculum (Y. Jang, 2005; C. Park, 2007). I was a student during the 1960–1980 period when Korean nationalism was strongly emphasized in many textbooks in many subject areas. To demonstrate loyalty to South Korea, we had to take a formal class called “Military Practicum.” Values such as cooperation and showing respect to South Korea were major themes of Korean language, social studies, and other subjects. In extracurricular classes, we were asked to sing the national anthem before the first class began; we had to bow to the South Korean flag at the beginning of every lesson. Indeed, since 1945, Korean national curriculum reform has been driven by the ideological commitments of each new government. These commitments were included in newly developed school curricula, especially in new textbooks and curriculum guides. As in the United States (see T. Yu, 2003), “moral education” was devised to inculcate group solidarity and anti-communism among South Korean students (J. Yang, 2008, p. 9). In addition, values that sustained the dominant social order were emphasized in social studies, Korean language study, and other related subjects. The idea of nationalism was extensively emphasized as the primary virtue of Korean citizenship.

Gender-related issues were also now researched in Korea; for example, analyses of textbook content, subject matter construction, and classroom management. The major findings indicated that the daily lives and educational development of women are considered less important than those of men (K. Choo, 1985; C. Hur, 2006b; J. J. Kim, 1985; M. Min, 2002; Y. Yoo, 2004). In addition, Korean female students are indoctrinated to be passive and docile by internalizing and representing desirable behaviors such as obedience, patience, and respect for their husbands. Such discriminatory and oppressive practices are still evident today, even in the first year of Korean elementary schooling (Y. C. Kim, 1997). In addition, using Thorne’s approach to gender analysis (1993), Changsoo Hur (2006b) also documented Korean women’s experiences of gender stereotyping in secondary schools.

The problems arising from a gendered curriculum have been recognized since the 1990s by the Korean government. One of the major projects administered by the Department of Women and Welfare is to critically assess the discriminatory content and practices taught in Korean schools and replace them with a more “gender-fair curriculum” (J. Kim & S. Wang, 1999). However, even though the formal curriculum emphasizes gender equity, the deep-rooted preference for boys remains embedded in the cultural life of Korean schools. Interestingly, the historical doctrine of Korean Confucianism (which considers boys superior to girls) is still delivered and reproduced through classroom interactions between teachers and students by means of a not-so-always-hidden curriculum. The emancipatory voices and actions for women’s rights have become, however, one of the leading discourses in Korean society in the 21st century.

Researching Curriculum Through Inquiry on Teachers’ Lives. As the term teachers’ lives implies, the purpose of this method is to study Korean teachers’ lives and their lived worlds from post-positivist perspectives. These perspectives differ dramatically from “process-product” research paradigms (Floden, 2001). The process-product approach to classroom teaching behaviours has been prevalent in Korean quantitative research, educational administration, and teaching effectiveness research. It is still one of the most important topics in Korean curriculum research. It is common to read research that purports to measure teachers’ effectiveness through program implementation and teaching behaviour.
The new paradigm is not concerned with the “effectiveness” of teaching behaviour but rather with the understanding of teachers’ lives and worlds. Researchers believe that classroom teachers’ attitudes about what and how to teach are seriously influenced by their everyday school environment. For example, Y. C. Kim’s (2005a, 2005b) books *Starry Night: Korean Teachers’ Lives and Their World I* and *Starry Night: Korean Teachers’ Lives and Their World II* include reports that teachers with high expectations abandoned their educational philosophy due to peer pressure and the hierarchical order of the school administration. Korean researchers have come to recognize the significance to teaching of teacher’s lives in large part due to reading Western scholars such as Ayers (1993), Bullough (1989), Goodson (1992), and Sykes (2001). Reading the work of these scholars enabled Korean scholars to recognize that teachers themselves can be understood as “curriculum makers” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Furthermore, studying teachers’ lives and learning about their professional expertise is considered very significant to understanding the classroom dynamics of school curriculum and, therefore, in utilizing “understanding” for curriculum improvement. Finally, curriculum scholars recognized that the classroom teacher is not simply a passive implementer of curriculum but a key decision maker in the enactment of school curriculum.

Without knowing about teachers’ individual, social, and cultural lives, it is not possible to formulate suggestions that might lead to curriculum improvement. Since 2000, Korean researchers have paid sustained attention to studying teachers’ lives and their teaching profession (D. H. Kim & K. Park, 2003; S. J. Kim, 2006; Y. C. Kim, 2005a; Kim, 2005b; Y. C. Kim, J. Jung & Y. Lee, 2006; J. Lee & Y. Choi, 2007a, 2007b). The areas studied include 1) Korean school culture, 2) teachers’ responses to the pressures of national educational reform, 3) teaching for university entrance examination, 4) teachers’ lives in isolated regions, 5) marginalized teachers’ stories, 6) successful teachers’ stories, 7) first-year teachers, and 8) Korean teachers’ personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). In addition, Kwangju National University of Education has established a Center for the Culture of Elementary Schooling that has produced considerable research on classroom teachers’ lives (J. Lee & Y. Choi, 2007a). Teacher development has been heavily researched in curriculum studies, teacher education, and educational administration through life history approaches (Y. C. Kim, J. Jung, & Y. Lee, 2006; H. K. Lee, 2005; J. Lee & Y. Choi, 2007b; J. W. Lee, 2008).

As a consequence of these research initiatives, many teachers have been encouraged to share their classroom stories, students’ stories, and school stories based on their autobiographical experiences (W. Jang, 2009; S. J. Kim, 2006; C. Lee, 1998). These revealing tales are chiefly negative, often critical of working conditions in schools. The most representative tale in this genre is *The Death of a Baby Bird* by Chiseok Lee (1998). Lee candidly reported teachers’ practices of categorizing students and the prevalence of misunderstandings, even conflict, among many teachers. As the subtitle, *A Shameful Diary of Teaching by a Classroom Teacher*, foretells, the book reveals various negative cultures of Korean schooling: principals’ apparently omnipotent power, sexism, and the inappropriate or questionable use of school budgets. This book reminded readers of Western texts such as Alex Kotlowitz’s (1991) *There Are No Children Here* and Jonathan Kozol’s (1967) *Death at an Early Age*.

Inquiry into teachers’ lives seems destined to become even more popular in Korea as many classroom teachers cite such studies as contributing to their professional development. Indeed, research on teachers’ lives has received considerable attention from classroom teachers as well as from scholars of education. Classroom teachers have used action research to study their schools and classrooms and have reported on ideas for improvement in master’s theses, doctoral dissertations and professional books (D. S. Lee, 2009; O. Kim, 2010; S. Kim, 2008; Park, Park, & Moon, 2008).
The use of qualitative methods such as ethnography, action research, narrative inquiry, autobiography, and participant observation indicate the extent to which reconceptualist ideas have been both historically incorporated into South Korean curriculum studies and creatively recontextualized. Combined with critical inquiries into curriculum as a means of social production and reproduction, these methodologies have helped Korean curriculum scholars to uncover local practices of school knowledge and determine new focuses of research. In the next section, I turn to the present context of Korean curriculum studies and trace the reverberations of RD through postcolonial and multicultural perspectives. I also consider the place and future of RD in relation to traditionalist curriculum studies in South Korea.

Korean Curriculum Studies: Defining the Present Terrain

Despite its genesis in the West, RD has enabled Korean scholars to shift their attention away from Western curriculum theory to the formulation of Korean theory focused on Korean practices. As suggested in the previous section, reconceptualist ideas have contributed to Korean curriculum studies in three main ways: (1) stimulating a more complex and diverse understanding of curriculum, (2) generating alternative research methodologies, and (3) inspiring a general increase in research on curriculum practices. These contributions have been crucial in shifting the long tradition of Tylerian approaches to curriculum in South Korea and in opening new research directions. For example, curriculum is now being studied as phenomenological experience (D. H. Kim & H. Kim, 2003; K. Lee, 2006), as currere (H. Han, 2009; H. Lee, 2002), as emancipation (C. Hur, 2006b; B. Kim, 2007) and, from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives, as the reproduction of “white” knowledge and culture (J. Joo, 2006; Y. C. Kim, 2005). These new orientations are well represented in major journals of education in Korea through research based on three central RD concepts: currere, lived experience, and praxis.5 The popularity of qualitative methods is also evident in conference presentations. The 2008 fall conference of the Korean Curriculum Studies Association (KSCS, 2008) was, for example, the first formal conference in Korea to choose post-positivist curriculum methods as the conference theme and to support presentations on autobiographical, phenomenological, and arts-based research methods.

The three major influences of reconceptualization mentioned above suggest the “Koreanization” of RD. What I mean by the “Koreanization of RD” is the development of an indigenous or context-specific theme for Korean curricular practices alongside the ideas of Western RD. Koreanization is the search for new language, concepts, and terminologies to help Koreans understand Korean practices differently from the perspective of Western RD which some regard as a meta-narrative implying totality, universality, and absoluteness. What I dream for the Koreanization of RD is the development of regional/local curriculum discourses and methodologies which better understand, represent, and analyze Korean practices.

Postcolonialism and the Koreanization of RD

Reconceptualization has itself been reconceptualized from a postcolonial perspective, enabling its theorists and practitioners to search for more situated and indigenous forms of knowledge. In this redefined field, Korean researchers work to formulate/discover topics of research that might be able to answer questions specific to Korea’s own curriculum phenomena. In addition, these researchers now feel authorized to relate Korean intellectual traditions to Western curriculum theory. Driven by postmodernism and postcolonialism, this latest trend is taking
Korean conceptualizations of curriculum studies in new directions that include respecting the Korean context, creating curriculum questions that are meaningful for this context, and constructing situated answers without Western references.

Using Western references is connected to conventions of writing. According to Laurel Richardson’s (1990) *Writing Strategies*, the convention in academic writing is to begin by naming major figures and theories in the field. It is the most common strategy in human and social science writing (Bazerman, 1987). As Korean curriculum researchers, we follow this perspective. We start our writing with the ideas and names of recognized scholars and possibly conclude with ideas similar to these scholars. However, this practice of writing can make it difficult for Korean researchers to transgress the boundaries of curriculum research and to see Korean practices differently from the West. I dream of a day when we Koreans do not need to start with Western curriculum scholars’ names and their theories in order to legitimize our own academic writing. Curiously, this alternative practice of writing, as with other postcolonial practices, has been stimulated by Western ideas of multiplicity, difference, and deconstruction.

I would suggest three leading examples of postcolonial research that illustrate the Koreanization of RD. First, J. K. Lee’s (2003) work problematizes the cultural practice of *Hakbeol* in Korean society. According to Lee (2003, p. 17), *Hakbeolism* means that people judge each other on the basis of educational background rather than on ability or point of view. In Korea, *Hakbeol* is an important form of social capital that influences career achievement and social success, but is also a mechanism that establishes and reproduces inequality. The major idea here is that social networking and communication are determined by the degree of formal education a person has and, specifically, by the prestige of the university attended and whether it is foreign or domestic. *Hakbeol* is an indigenous practice that influences social and educational networks within Korean society.

Since *Hakbeol* is one of the most powerful forms of social capitals in South Korea, Korean parents want to send their students the prestigious universities because entering the universities guarantees their future success in Korean society. Korean parents’ perpetuation of the social function of *Hakbeol* has pushed their students to study harder. They devote a significant portion of their salaries to private tutoring for their children.

From middle to high school, the emphasis is on preparing students so that they will receive satisfactory SAT scores. Students’ life and learning at school is characterized by learning about test taking skills, excessive competitiveness, and rote learning.

Social recognition and appreciation of *Hakbeol* has also changed how the school is organized. The most common example is the establishment of a “superior class.” Even though such teaching is not permitted by the South Korean Department of Education, it is used extensively, albeit secretly, in South Korean schools. Students in South Korea prepare to become candidates for these superior classes from the moment they enter elementary school. The student in the superior class are chosen and taught by a particular school’s selection system, and receive special tutoring programs for entrance into prestigious universities.

South Korea is a country in which excessive competition is prevalent to obtain the social capital of *Hakbeol* and students’ school lives are structured for that purpose. Even though school teachers and administrators acknowledge the “whole child” or “educated person” as the purpose of South Korean education, they feel the need to satisfy parents’ request, and pressure, to prepare their children for prestigious universities.

When considered as a postcolonial area of research, the following questions become important: (1) How does the idea of *Hakbeolism* influence Korean schooling and curriculum implementation? (2) What is the students’ currere under the influence of *Hakbeolism*? (3) What kinds of indigenous research concepts and methods should be used to study schooling driven by
(4) If Hakbeolism is an indigenous concept, how did it develop through Korean history? (5) How can postcolonial Korean curriculum researchers reconceptualize Hakbeolism within or beyond the bounds of social and cultural reproduction of education? (6) How can Korean scholars create international discourse and dialogue? (7) How can Korean scholars Koreanize the discourse about Hakbeolism when their scholarship has been so heavily influenced by Western curriculum researchers and writers?

The second example is Young Chun Kim’s (2007) research on Hakwon titled “Secrets of academic success of Korean students: Stories of Hakwon.” Hakwon are private institutes of education often referred to as “cram schools” or “shadow education.” The issue here is that even though most Korean students from elementary to high school attend Hakwon every day after school to further their education, this national phenomenon has never been researched in curriculum studies, perhaps because it has never been discussed as an important theme in Western fields of education. However, the real issue is that Korean students evaluate these institutes as better places of learning than school (Y. C. Kim, H. Song, Y. Joo, & I. Hwang, 2008). I judge that these institutes offer a very unique site for developing new methods of learning and evaluation that can improve students’ academic achievement. Following year of fieldwork, Kim has discovered what makes Hakwon (private institutes) better than Hakkyo (public schools). According to Kim’s analysis (2007) there are four major characteristics regarding the effectiveness of Hakwon education: (1) the importance of learning by repetition; (2) a tracking system based on the idea of individualized instruction; (3) continuous assessment; and (4) sharing ideas and information on student’s progress between the Hakwon and the student’s parents. As an indigenous educational practice in South Korea and in other countries such as Japan, Taiwan, China, and Singapore, Hakwon needs to be studied as an important regional curriculum issue.

A third area of postcolonial research by South Korean scholars focuses on alternative forms of schooling. The research is based on some South Koreans’ consciousness of the crisis in, and diagnosis of, the pitfalls of Korean schooling, and active aspirations to search for alternative schools to realize the original purpose of public schooling. Some South Korean parents and students do not believe that objectives related to the “whole child” or “child with creativity, imagination, and problem solving skills” can be reached within the current South Korean public school system, and therefore seek new kinds of schools and alternative teaching methods. There is a belief among these South Korean citizens that students’ school lives in these alternative learning environments will be more educational, happier, and less competitive, and thus more likely to realize the aforementioned educational objectives.

As a practical response against the current state of the Korean public school system, various types of schools have appeared during the 2000s. Some examples are as follows: (1) small informal schools in rural areas, (2) home schooling, or (3) schools based on real-life experience and freedom. Some parents have chosen to immigrate to the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand for their children’s education. Often mothers stay in these foreign countries to care for their children while fathers stay in South Korea to earn the money needed to support this two-country alternative. A few studies have documented this exodus for education (W. Oh, 2008; N. Park, 2003).

With this new wave of knowledge emerging from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives, some South Korean scholars have begun to reject Western curriculum theories as meta-narratives. For some time, South Korean scholars have turned to these theories with the hope that they would provide the answers to the matters of curriculum in South Korean schooling. Instead, They are beginning to appreciate the value and importance of Korean references and knowledge. They are now studying the old Korean scholars in educational philosophy and other related disciplines (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, etc.) to uncover earlier ideas.
about curriculum-related topics. For example, they conduct research in Korean history, and try to recover the philosophy, social thoughts, and political theories relevant to curriculum knowledge, and relate its meaning and significance to the new scholarship of postcolonial curriculum theorizing in South Korea.

From that perspective, they question the relevance of Western curriculum theorise to Korea, again by employing Western ideas. For example, Y. C. Kim (2005) questioned the validity of RD in Korea by introducing Lather’s (1993) concept of “postmodern validity.” Kim used the concepts of “ironic validity” and “simulacra validity” to emphasize the importance of local discourse, which is, studying/answering Korea’s own curriculum questions. J. Joo (2006) analyzed South Korean history textbooks and concluded that images of “Oriental” societies (Said, 1979) were described as negative and inferior. J. J. Lee (2006) and M. Oh and J. Lee (2004) applied ideas of Neo-Confucianism in South Korean curriculum discourse to Western postmodern curriculum theorizing. this courageous analysis represented one of the first attempts by Korean scholars (with non-Western philosophical backgrounds) to participate in Western curriculum studies. the authors studies Zhu Xi’s Eastern philosophy and related his concept of human subjectivity to postmodernism. Zhu Xi was the pioneer philosopher of Neo-Confucianism: he theorized that human are not “rational and complete” but “incomplete, emotional, and relational.” The best way to characterize his theory of life, reality, and the world is with the term “Ge-Wu-zhi-zhi” (self-cultivation). According to Zhu Xi, the mind is always restrained by diverse forces from within and without. For restoring the mind, we need continued efforts to govern the internal and external forces that sway our mind. Ge-Wu-zhi-zhi is the way to overcome the limitations of the mind. Thus, for Zhu Xi, the purpose of education and curriculum studies is to guide students to uncover their true selves and to understand the world through self-cultivation (M. Oh & J. Lee, 2004, p. 103).

Multiculturalism and the Koreanization of RD

The position of RD in South Korean curriculum studies will likely be strengthened in the near future because topics related to RD (such as race, gender, and culture) increasingly attract South Koreans’ attention. Owing to the increasing number of multicultural families in South Korea, multiculturalism and globalization in education are now becoming very practical issues in South Korean society. Since the 2000s, South Korea has been experiencing social and demographic changes, among them international marriage, an increase of foreign workers from south Asian countries, and a more internationalized market.

These social and cultural changes require educators and curriculum scholars to discuss multiculturalism as the most pressing inquiry for South Korean schooling and society. In this context, critical issues such as race, ethnicity, culture, and equality are being more widely and intensively researched in South Korean curriculum studies. As a local response, Western books on multicultural education (Banks, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2009) have been translated into Korean (O. Kim, J. Kim, & I. Shin, 2009; K. Mo, C. Choi, & M. Kim, 2008; S. Moon, Y. C. Kim, & J. Jung, 2009). Generous funds have been given to a project on the educational issues facing children of international marriages. A number of international conferences on multicultural education and globalization were held in 2009 (Ansan Multicultural Education Forum, 2009; Conference of the Department of Education of Kyungnam Province, 2009; First Annual International Conference of the Korean Association for Multicultural Education, 2009). Starting in 2010, a new course called “Understanding Multicultural Education” will be a required class for all elementary school teacher candidates at the 11 National Universities of Education.
Traditionalist Paradigms and the Koreanization of RD

The emergence of new research directions will enable Western scholars to recognize that RD has played important roles in extending, changing, and redefining previous curriculum discourse in South Korea. However, tracing the historical contributions of RD does not imply that it has become a dominant discourse. Due to its long history of traditionalist curriculum studies, Korean curriculum studies are still primarily occupied by traditionalist scholars.

In spite of these disciplinary circumstances, the historical and social geography of Korean curriculum studies is slowly changing over time. Many will agree that Korean curriculum studies is experiencing a proliferation of paradigms. RD has played a key role in changing the way Koreans think about what constitutes curriculum studies. Even so, it is not clear if détente after the “paradigm war” will arrive any time soon (Gage, 1989). Perhaps there will be traditionalists who will switch allegiance to RD. There is at least one instance of this: Since the early 2000s, Professor Daehyun Kim at Pusan National University has been using phenomenology to study students’ lived experiences of the formal curriculum (Y. C. Kim, 2010). Several traditionalist curriculum researchers also participate in RD by translating Western books on reconceptualist ideas (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly, 1988; Pinar et al., 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988) into Korean and by writing on topics of reconceptualization in Korean journals (H. Kang, 2007; K. J. Lee & K. J. Kim, 2005).

Other forms of intellectual engagement with RD among traditionalist curriculum researchers surface in textbooks, as well as in public conversations at conferences. One telling piece of evidence was the October 2009 newsletter of the KSCS Association in which plans were announced to publish two types of books: 1) those focused on developing curriculum, and 2) those devoted to understanding curriculum. In these ways, traditionalist curriculum researchers also contribute to the dissemination of RD in South Korea.

CONCLUSION: DECOLONIZING CURRICULUM STUDIES

We could never guess whether our transnational encounters were by chance or predetermined in the legacy of colonialism. However, what we do know is that we (have) desperately needed each other to decolonize and mobilize our academic works for us, our communities and the politics of living together harmoniously in transnational localities.

Rhee & Subreenduth (2006, p. 545)

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the ends of the earth.

Kipling (2008, p. 233)

This tale of South Korea offers Western scholars a case study in the reconceptualization of curriculum inquiry elsewhere. To portray the history of RD in South Korea, I identified three key periods: 1) production of translated texts, 2) production of Korean texts, and 3) analysis of school curriculum. Reconceptualist ideas are, then, not restricted to the West but have been imported into South Korea. I hope this tale functions as an invitation to curriculum scholars in other non-Western countries to narrate their local histories for scholars East and West as part of a new research field in global curriculum studies (Cary, 2007; Eppert & Wang, 2007; Pinar, 2003).
Composing non-Western narratives of curriculum reconceptualization presents local discourses; in so doing, it advances the field of curriculum internationally. The value of composing local tales goes beyond the simple narration of intellectual history and advancement; potentially, it functions to usher in a future era of post-Western curriculum studies. Since curriculum scholars from different regions will bring diverse ethnic and indigenous perspectives to understanding curriculum (and RD specifically) internationally, composing an intellectual history of RD from a non-Western site constitutes, I hope, an act of critical examination, questioning, even transgressing fixed boundaries between Western and Eastern discourses. Curriculum studies scholars in ignored regions such as Asia and Africa must tell Westerners that there are particular knowledges and traditions, perhaps not appreciated in the West, that comprise major resources for Asian and African thought and imagination on curriculum.

In addition, the theorization of non-Western experience can constitute projects of self-discovery, enabling one to appreciate and develop one's own situated ideas and perspectives in the formation of new curriculum knowledge. In recent Western curriculum studies, indigenous knowledge and research methods within postcolonial and multi-cultural perspectives have been emphasized (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Eppert & Wang, 2007; Johnston, 2003; Kanu, 2006; Timothy, 2005). Such postcolonial efforts are acknowledged within discourses of globalization as well (During, 1998). For instance, chapter 2 of Kanu’s (2006) book is titled, “Indigenous Knowledge as Postcolonial/Anti-Colonial Resistance.” Semali and Kincheloe (1999) also discuss the possibilities of using indigenous knowledge in reviving the story of research and in developing critical voices in non-Western regions. Smith (1999) has analyzed the “positional superiority” of Western knowledge and requested scholars in other countries to search for alternative knowledge bases and research methods. She illustrated 25 research techniques in studying the Maori in New Zealand. Finally, Eppert and Wang’s (2007) Cross-Cultural Studies in Curriculum is an insightful and landmark volume in the area of postcolonial curriculum theorizing. It is helpful, I think, for Western scholars to advance their ideas on curriculum and teaching based on Western legacies and on triangulation with different nationally distinctive theories of curriculum.

This tale of Korea has certain limitations as well. First, it is not comprehensive: Other Korean traditions of education and their influence on curriculum studies have not been addressed here. For example, I have not discussed the powerful cultural meaning of education in Korea. Nor have I addressed in adequate detail the specific conditions of school life in Korea. For example, unlike Bullough’s (1989) observations in First Year Teacher, the major dilemma for Korean teachers is not classroom management, but rather the psychological stress of respecting the traditional hierarchical order of Korean schools in which the rights and choices of senior teachers and administrators are predominant. In another example, C. Hur (2006) found that private education played a key role in influencing students’ gender development in Korea.

Finally, I hope that my article will encourage Korean scholars and scholars in other non-Western regions to theorize their indigenous knowledge and to use this knowledge to critique Western meta-narratives, no longer accepting them uncritically. Ironically perhaps, RD encourages us non-Western scholars to respect our regional studies as more relevant and critical. As Lather (2006) notes:

Here hybrids make productive use of being left to authority and legitimization as we search for practices that open to the irreducible heterogeneity of the other. Facing the problems of doing research in this historical time, between the no longer and the not yet, the task is to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently. (p. 52)

Thus, the Korean disposition of respecting Western knowledge (and specifically reconceptualization) as unquestioned truth and always trustworthy must be reconsidered and consistently
questioned. Writing this non-Western tale can constitute a moment of cultural resistance in the worldwide effort to decolonize curriculum studies, ushering in, perhaps, a post-colonial era in which the “empire writes back” (Aschcroft, 2002).

Reading non-Western tales may present a challenge not only to scholars of curriculum in the East. It might well constitute a challenge to scholars of the West, encouraging a process of deconstruction and self-reflectivity on “objective” positions of Western knowledge and theorization. The cosmopolitan spirit of postmodern and postcolonial sciences requires all to consider what might have been excluded, decentered, and marginalized in present Western knowledge. Scholars in the West might pose questions such as: “Why is Western curriculum knowledge not valid in this case (country)? In what ways should Western knowledge and ideas not be considered a grand narrative?” When Western scholars of curriculum try to find answers to these questions, then RD—and curriculum studies generally—can be characterized as more culturally expansive, globalized, and situated, and begin to emerge as truly transnational.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author deeply appreciates the academic suggestions and advice of Professor Dennis Thiessen and the other editors of Curriculum Inquiry. This article could not be qualitatively improved without their professional expertise and insights on this topic. In addition, the author as a non-native speaker of English, is very thankful for Ms. Arleen Schenke’s editing assistance. Her wonderful editing work allowed the original manuscript to be reborn as a journal article for English readers.

NOTES

1. RD has been criticized by traditional curriculum researchers (Hlebowitsh, 1995; Jackson, 1992; Wraga, 1998). It should be pointed out here that although W. F. Pinar—the architect of reconceptualization—was included as a contributing author in Jackson’s (1992) Handbook of Research on Curriculum, a series of references related to reconceptualization (school culture, teachers’ and students’ experiences, class, and gender issues) were made in the handbook, including by Jackson himself (1992, 32ff.).

2. As a representative of South Korea in the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, I have participated in international conferences since 2002, and especially at Shanghai (2003) and Finland (2006). Seventeen Korean curriculum scholars attended the Shanghai Conference. I recognized that knowing about curriculum studies in Asian, African, and European countries in addition to North America would be important for the future. Sharing my ideas with foreign scholars from around the world and listening to their research stories fueled me to realize that my future direction in curriculum studies was not to follow the path of Western curriculum scholars but to create a new path of curriculum theorizing based on my local experiences and indigenous knowledge. Since then, I have been engaged in studying local phenomena and practices of Korean schooling.

3. According to Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981, pp. 14–18), traditionalists ask what goals schools should seek to attain but not what goals specific socio-economic classes should seek to attain and in what ways schools as presently organized block the attainment of class goals. The traditionalist framework raises questions about the best and most efficient way to obtain a specific kind of knowledge (e.g., “cultural heritage”), create moral consensus, and provide a curriculum that keeps the existing society functioning. The phrase curriculum development refers to developing plans for an educational program, including the identification and selection of educational objectives, the selection of learning experiences, the organization of learning experiences, and the evaluation of the educational program.

4. While Clandinin and Connelly have clearly contributed to the reconceptualization of curriculum, they not do see their work as similar to the reconceptualists described in Pinar (1975). The work of
Clandinin and Connelly is understood in Korea as a major influence on RD due to their theorization of teachers’ experience based on narrative inquiry and curriculum as lived experience.


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