School Reform for Multicultural Society in South Korea

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https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.828

Published online: 19 November 2020

Summary

The advancement of globalization around the world shifted South Korea’s rapid change into a multicultural society. As a result, the characteristically homogenous school environment in Korea has seen an increase in students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Currently, the total number of multicultural students is 109,387 (1.9%), a large comparative shift from previously when there were solely Korean students in classrooms. In addition, multicultural areas with schools where over 50% of students are multicultural are increasing in Korea. However, because of the national curriculum guidelines in Korea, all classrooms operate in the same way regardless of student backgrounds. The language barrier and other cultural differences pose difficulties for multicultural students to keep up in coursework.

Overall, schools that are accustomed to the traditional national curriculum have difficulties in school reform regardless of the changes in student demographics ratio. However, in an endeavor for school reform, the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education has designated for school reform multicultural international innovation schools where multicultural students make up over 30% of the students. These schools have at least 50% autonomy in curricula, whereas other Korean schools have to follow the national school curricula. There are three elementary school curricula designed as multicultural international innovation schools in Gyeonggi-do. This article examines school reform in a multicultural society by focusing on how three primary schools are designated as multicultural international reform schools.

Keywords: school reform, multicultural education, multicultural international innovation school, curriculum analysis, multicultural policy in Korea

Transition to a Multicultural Society in South Korea

The globalization of the world has rapidly transformed Korean society into a multicultural society. The number of foreign residents in Korea increased from 720,000 in 2007 (1.5% of the total population) to 1.76 million (3.4%) in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2018). According to the Education Statistics (2018), the total number of multicultural students is currently at 109,387, with 82,086 (3.1%) elementary school students, 15,983 (1.2%) middle school students, and 10,589 (0.6%) high school students. The total number of students in the last five years has
declined by an average of about 180,000 per year, and the decline in the school-age population (ages 6–21 years) will continue to decline due to low fertility rates. On the other hand, the number of multicultural students in the last five years has increased by more than 10,000 per year (Ministry of Education, 2018). The number of students from multicultural families is steadily increasing compared to the number of Korean students, and a few policies specifically related to multicultural education have been implemented, suggesting a need to also change school policies and the direction of multicultural education in Korea.

Multicultural students in Korea can be classified in various ways. In Korea, they are distinguished from their parents’ nationality as either from international marriage families or foreign families. A person from an international marriage family has one parent who is a foreigner, whereas for a foreign family member both parents are foreigners. Students from international marriage families are divided into domestic birth children and middle-entry children, depending on their place of birth. Currently, 89,314 (82%) are domestic birth children, which accounts for the majority of multicultural families, compared to 7,792 (7%) middle-entry children and 12,281 (11%) children from foreign families (Education Statistics, 2018). Domestic-born multicultural children experience discrimination and prejudice because of their appearance, and middle-entry students and foreign children also have difficulties adapting in schools because of the lack of proficiency in the Korean language and because of other adjustment transitions (Chang, 2015; Chang & Cho, 2018). In recent years, the number of multicultural families has increased in vicinities near industrial complexes. Thus, elementary schools with more multicultural students than Korean students have also begun to emerge in Gyeonggi-do. In this way, the characteristics of students in Korea have become more diverse, but the composition of teachers, curriculum, and the school system still continues in the same way.

In Korea, although academic research on multicultural education began in the 1980s (Kim, 1984), government involvement and the institution of policies did not begin until 2006. Since the late 1980s, with the influx of international marriage immigrants and foreign workers, Korean society has transformed into a multicultural society. However, during this time, the only references to multiculturalism were in newspapers related to the legislative process of the employment licensing system of foreign workers, and there was almost no interest in multicultural education at the government level. In February 2006, Heinz Ward, MVP of the U.S. Super Bowl, brought the term “Ward Syndrome” to Korea. In April 2006, he came to Korea and raised social awareness on mixed-race children, as his father is African American and mother is South Korean. This “Ward Syndrome” was developed because of the prejudice and racism against mixed-race individuals. In 2006, the Ministry of Education began to pay attention to issues of educational support for international marriage children and their adaptation to schools. At that time, the Ministry of Education established the Educational Support for Children of Multicultural Families for the first time.

Since 2006, multicultural education has received more attention in schools. However, the main subjects taught in school for multicultural students are the Korean language and Korean culture. Furthermore, only some schools provide instruction in students’ native language with multicultural language instructors. By contrast, for Korean students, schools operate with multicultural education courses such as cultural understanding education, multicultural experience education, and multicultural festivals.
Depending on the region and school, the student demographics and nationalities can vary drastically, with large differences in Korean proficiency. Therefore, it is difficult to expect positive outcomes from the current national multicultural curriculum, as it does not consider local and school characteristics of multicultural students. As of 2015, 1.15% (159) middle school students of multicultural families stopped studying, which is twice as high as general students (0.65%; Ministry of Education, 2018). Despite the fact that many budgets and supports have been provided for multicultural education efforts, the fact that multicultural youth are dropping out of school because of poor learning, bullying, and violence suggest new directions for multicultural curriculum management (Park, 2012).

According to the (Education Statistics, 2018), the number of multicultural students in Gyeonggi Province is the largest nationwide with 23,723 students. In Gyeonggi Province, 3,020 students reside in Ansan; 19,861 reside in Suwon; 1,619 students reside in Bucheon; and 1,405 students reside in Siheung City. In Ansan, more than 90% of students in schools are multicultural students. One school in Siheung is not able to operate general classes because of difficulties in the Korean language for the students. As multicultural education research has focused on Western theories and curricula or on developing practical and experiential programs (Joo & Kim, 2014), schools cannot respond appropriately to these changes. Although schools conduct multicultural education, they often do not adequately address the dropout rate of multicultural students who cannot adjust to the Korean language or Korean cultural education (e.g., assimilation). Thus, the current issues in multicultural schools reflect the necessity of changes in the current multicultural education and school system. In addition, new perspectives on school reform with an emphasis on curriculum reflective of characteristics of the local community are needed.

Many scholars argue for the necessity of curriculum reform in multicultural education. Banks (2008) defines multicultural education as an educational reform movement aimed at restructuring curricula and educational systems so that students from various social, racial, ethnic, and gender groups have access to equal opportunities. Therefore, school curriculum reform is necessary to provide equal opportunities for all students. Sleeter and Grant (2007) criticized the dominant emphasis of the majority group in a school curriculum and suggested that multicultural education is a transformative reform that provides equal opportunities for all students. Nieto (1992) defines multicultural education as a basic education for all students and a comprehensive school reform process with emphasis on the importance of curriculum reform. Chang (2015) indicated that the direction of multicultural education should orient not only to adaptation for multicultural students but also to curriculum reform for all. Although scholars have slightly different views on multicultural education, they share a common opinion that multicultural education needs to include a change in curricula to address equal education for all students.

This viewpoint is very important for multicultural education in South Korea, which has focused on support for adaptation and mutual cultural understanding of multicultural families. Multicultural education should operate from the viewpoint of equal education for all rather than education for specific groups of people. In addition, multicultural education needs to be integrated into curricula rather than a specific, one-time program. In particular, if multicultural families are more concentrated in a particular area or school, a more reformed curriculum should be established to attain educational equality and learning. Even with a small percentage of multicultural students, many do not have the opportunity to fully learn
because of language barriers. At the same time, in schools with high proportions of multicultural students, ethnically Korean students are not able to receive appropriate learning in classes.

In order to raise awareness of such problems, the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education has designed some schools in multicultural districts as multicultural international innovation schools, which are defined as schools that have autonomy to develop their own curriculum and textbooks to cultivate global talent and guarantee students’ rights to learn and prepare for a multicultural society (Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education, 2017). Currently, Korea operates on a common national curriculum where all students are taught the same curriculum with the same textbooks regardless of their abilities. This reality implies that the same curricula should be run in classrooms—even in schools with a high concentration of multicultural students who lack Korean language skills. Thus, the current article examines the curriculums of multicultural international innovation schools to address how school reforms are being implemented. In addition, it provides suggestions for increasing the number of multicultural students in the education system.

“Multicultural Education Policies in Korea” first examines the direction of multicultural education in Korea by analyzing the Ministry of Education’s policies of multicultural education. In addition, we will describe the changes in schools in response to the multicultural society by analyzing the curricula of three elementary schools designed as multicultural international innovation schools in multicultural districts. With this basis, we will suggest future directions on how policies can address school reform in relation to the transition to a multicultural society.

**Multicultural Education Policies in Korea**

Since 2006, the Ministry of Education established the “Education Support for Children of Multicultural Families” and other relevant policies to address the change in multicultural individuals in the past 10 years. In 2006, the number of multicultural students was approximately 10,000, but as of 2018, this figure has increased by about 10 times, to 109,397 (Education Statistics, 2018). Currently, the number of multicultural students who are born in Korea is still similar to previous statistics; however, the number of multicultural students born overseas, such as multicultural students who were born abroad and children from foreign families, is steadily increasing. As multicultural families live in specific regions of Korea, there are some schools where multicultural students account for more of the population than ethnically Korean students. In order to accommodate these social changes, the Ministry of Education establishes and publishes policies on multicultural education every year. Thus, we will analyze how the Ministry of Education’s multicultural education policies have changed and to also suggest the direction of school reform in a multicultural society.

The initial educational policy of the Ministry of Multicultural Education started with the project name “The 2006 Educational Support for Children of Multicultural Families.” As reflected in its name, the policy’s main goal was to support the educational goals for the children of multicultural families. The policy vision was aimed at discounting multicultural individuals’ backgrounds and assimilating them into the Korean “cultural furnace” by “transforming the democratic cultural integration into a cultural melting pot” (Yang, Kim, &
Thus, the policy focused on supporting the children of multicultural families through assimilation, such as helping students adapt to the Korean language and considering minority groups in the mainstream culture rather than the recognition of equal human rights. Nevertheless, this policy initiated discussions on the problem of the Korean values of being "pure blood" and the emphasis of a single, homogenous nation.

In 2007, the policy name changed to "The 2007 Educational Support for Children of Multicultural Families." Compared to 2006, the goal of the policy addressed stereotypes about language and cultural deficits multicultural students experience through its goals of "eliminating language and cultural barriers" and "increasing multicultural sensitivity." The main policies that were outlined were to reinforce school-centered multicultural education and a general understanding of multiculturalism. From this period onward, the phrase "strengthening school-based multicultural education" was used for multicultural families and the phrase "understanding multicultural education" was used for ethnically Korean people. By using these terms, the concept of multicultural education as a whole was reduced to targeting education for multicultural families. However, multicultural education emphasizes students from all backgrounds having equal opportunity through restructuring curricula and educational systems (Banks, 2008). The concept of multicultural education itself is not solely education for multicultural students but education for all. Therefore, in order to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, school reform and appropriate curricula are necessary.

In 2008, the policy name changed to "Education Support Plan for Strengthening the Capacity of Multicultural Students," and the government developed the "Plan of Multicultural Family Educational Support" from 2009 to 2012. The policy’s goal was around two major areas: one, to strengthen the educational capacity of multicultural students and parents and two, to promote an understanding and acceptance of a multicultural society. As there was still an emphasis on helping multicultural students improve their Korean language and academic abilities, the policy recognized and promoted the importance of parents’ education and to strengthen the parental educational capacities. At the same time, with the implementation of policies for the understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism, the 2008 plan was the basis for the Ministry of Education’s current multicultural educational policy: “Support for multicultural students” and “Multicultural education for all.”

The policy then became the “2009 Educational Support Plan for Multicultural Students” and the national government worked together with regional education governments. Up until that point, the national government focused on solving the educational gap among multicultural families, strengthening the social capacity of parents of multicultural families, strengthening the foundation of multicultural education, and spreading an awareness and understanding of multiculturalism. In order to strengthen the educational capacity of multicultural parents, highly talented individuals from highly educated multicultural families were selected and educated as bilingual lecturers. For the first time in the history of multicultural and bilingual education, multicultural parents were dispatched as lecturers to multicultural education-based schools.

The “2010 Multicultural Students Educational Support Plan” policy objectives were similar as in 2009: to resolve the educational gap among students of multicultural families, strengthen the capacity of parents of multicultural families, and strengthen the foundation of
multicultural education. However, the contents of the major policies and projects drastically expanded and were segmented (Yang et al., 2017). For example, they developed one-to-one mentoring programs with multicultural students, teachers, and alternative students, expanded multicultural education courses at colleges of Education, helped expand support systems (e.g., caretakers) for those with infants, and provided support for career and vocational education.

In 2011, the “2011 Multicultural Students Education Support Plan” was implemented with the same policy goals as 2010. A new program called the Global Bridge Program was launched in 2011 aimed at cultivating the development and talents of multicultural children. Previously, the majority of the existing multicultural education projects emphasized the weaknesses of multicultural families. However, the Global Bridge Program, as well as another project (the Bilingual Lecturer Project), focused on the strengths of multicultural families, such as their abilities to speak two languages. It can be argued that this was the start of a new direction in multicultural education.

In 2012, the policy name changed to the “2012 Multicultural Educational Advancement Plan,” aimed at fostering multicultural friendly schools without excluding any students. The policy provided a one-stop service to help middle school students and multicultural children transition, expanded bilingual lecturers, and developed the Dasom school, a vocational educational institution for multicultural students offering vocational and career support courses. However, given that the majority of Koreans still held the belief of assimilation for multicultural students, multicultural education linked to specific curriculums were still not developed (Yang et al., 2017).

In 2013, the policy name was the “2013 Multicultural Student Educational Support Plan,” which did not differ significantly from the 2012 program. The policy promoted improvement and expansion of existing programs. In order to strengthen the multicultural education for Korean students, the policy focused on ways to implement learning in curriculums. They created a “Multicultural Education Week” in all schools to conduct various cultural experience activities such as multicultural festivals and club activities once a year. However, multicultural education was still limited to one-time events rather than linked to the entirety of curriculums. At the same time, this was a large step forward at this time period. The policy allowed grounds for the operation of specific multicultural education classes, multicultural language instructors, and to allow multicultural students who had difficulty attesting their academic records be recognized for their academic achievements through the Education Review Committee.

In 2014, the policy name changed to the “2014 Plans for Activating Multicultural Education” and aimed at creating a multicultural friendly school with a focus on growing together with dreams and talents. As indicated by its name, the policy’s goal was to strengthen multicultural education for all students. During this period, the project “Global Leading School” was reorganized as a “Multicultural Education Core School” that emphasized multicultural education for all and customized support for multicultural students.

In 2015, the “2015 Multicultural Student Education Support Plan” was developed with the objective as “realization of equality of educational opportunities through multicultural education” and “upbringing multicultural talent students.” This was a time period in which some of the original multicultural policy goals began to emerge as realities, with phrases such as the “realization of equality of education” and “upbringing multicultural talent students.” In
particular, the term “multicultural talent students” has great significance in reflecting the change in the viewpoint from weaknesses of multicultural students to their strengths. However, there are still not many projects that reflect this view. In addition, they developed a pilot project for preschool-aged multicultural children. Furthermore, the government tried to establish a multicultural policy cooperation system at the Ministry level, because there were multiple similar ongoing projects at the same time.

In 2016, the policy and policy goals were the same as in 2015: “Realizing educational opportunities through customized multicultural education and fostering multicultural talent students.” The support plan for multicultural education was to “support the entry and application of public education into customized education,” “expand education for understanding multiculturalism,” and “collaborate with ministries and strengthen regional links.” The 2015 projects on educational equality and the concept of multicultural talent students were still maintained. In order to improve the Korean language education for multicultural students, the Korean language education course was revised to promote supporting the operation of the Korean language (KSL) curriculum by developing standard Korean textbooks. The textbooks were revised through consultations with the National Korean Language Institute.

In 2017, the policy name was the “2017 Multicultural Educational Support Plan,” and the policy goal was to “educate people who are different and to nurture talented students in the multicultural era.” The core tasks were to strengthen support for customized education for multicultural students, enhance an understanding of multiculturalism within schools, and establish a basis for cultivating multicultural education. In addition to expanding multicultural education in kindergartens, they supported basic education for multicultural students, operated Korean language courses, and designed the “Wee Center for Multiculturalism” as support for multicultural students’ emotional counseling needs.

In 2018, the policy name is the “2018 Multicultural Educational Support Plan,” with its objectives as “establishing a mature educational environment in which various cultures coexist” and “guaranteeing educational opportunities for multicultural students and resolve educational gaps.” In 2018, the themes of the main project were the expansion of participation of school members in multicultural education, improvement of customized educational support for multicultural students, and helping multicultural students who were born abroad. These projects exemplify differences from previous policies in that the tasks are divided by subject matter, student development, and topic.

2006 marked the beginning of the multicultural education policy in Korea with a focus on education for multicultural students. However, recently it has transformed into multicultural education for all. It is changing from the overall support for multicultural students to customized education policies. In addition, rather than an emphasis on weaknesses, policies are currently underway to cultivate the strengths of multicultural students. Furthermore, multicultural parents and teachers are becomingly increasingly aware of the importance of the educational policies and environment for multicultural students. Nonetheless, there still exists limitations of these multicultural policies and concrete programs are not developed in connection with school reform.
Study Methods

Participants

In response to problems that school reforms had not previously addressed, in 2017 the Gyeonggi multicultural district developed designated multicultural international innovation schools. Three elementary schools and one secondary school were created, but here the focus is only on the three elementary schools in the current study. The first elementary school (A) is located in the industrial complex of Siheung with 310 children from multicultural families, accounting for 51% of all students. Most of the multicultural students are Chinese nationals. The second elementary school (B) is located in Ansan, with 220 multicultural students out of 322 total students, which accounts for 60% of the total student population. The majority of the students are Russian, and compared to other schools, the Korean language barrier and communication issues are more prominent. Last, the third elementary school (C) is located in Siheung City, which has steadily seen an increase in the number of multicultural families. Of the total number of 419 students, 160 students (40%) are multicultural students with Chinese nationality. Many of the students face difficulties in classes because of the lack of understanding in the Korean language. Because of the regional characteristics of the three schools, the nationalities of the students, and the different learning levels, there are difficulties operating the standard national curriculum in these schools.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to analyze the direction of school reform based on the analysis of three elementary school curricula. Analyzed here are the school curricula of the three schools, the school reforms centered on the change in the curriculum after being designed as multicultural international innovation schools; then the directions of school reform in a multicultural society are examined. This article utilizes a qualitative research approach using case studies. A case study is a study focusing on a particular phenomenon in real-life context by describing it descriptively to help understand the process of the phenomenon (Kim, 1997; Yi, 2017). An embedded design of three different cases is used to answer questions about school-based reform in South Korea (Yi, 2017) Based on the three schools, future directions of school reform in a multicultural society are proposed, as the case study facilitates an understanding of the process of the phenomenon and uncovers the context in which it arises.

Results

In 2017, the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education designated multicultural international innovation schools as those with more multicultural students than ethnically Korean students. These schools are current models for school reform of multicultural society in Korea. Although the three schools have different multicultural curricula, the curriculum is similar in terms of the larger framework. The three schools operate using a multicultural education curriculum with common programs of language education, basic education, multicultural sensitivity education, strengthening teacher capacity, and culture and arts education.
Multicultural International Innovation School Curriculum Analysis (School A)

About half of elementary school A is composed of multicultural students, with most of them from Chinese backgrounds. In 2017, the curriculum emphasis was on Chinese basic language classes and after-school Chinese classes for language education. However, in 2018, systematic Chinese classes and presentations began being held for all students, with dedicated Chinese-speaking teachers. The course was designed to motivate students to learn the Chinese language. In addition, the school not only operated Chinese language classes after school but also offered Russian and Vietnamese classes to accommodate other multicultural students, in an effort not to neglect some students while providing opportunities for heritage language education. Park (2007) argues that bilingual education should be conducted for not only minority groups but also for mainstream groups as a resource. Bilingual speakers possess global talents and can work in many countries in various environments and live as global citizens. In this respect, the systematic Chinese classes of elementary school A exemplify multicultural education for all, as positive educational outcomes for both multicultural and Korean students can be expected from them.

The customized curriculum in the 7th National Curriculum Reform did not see an increase in self-efficacy; additionally, it demonstrated a lack of level-specific training and learning materials, and difficulties arose with learning assessments (Sung, 2008). Although elementary school A customized Korean language classes for each student, the curriculum differs from previous national curricula, as it is more suited toward multicultural students who do not understand Korean. The elementary school divided the Korean course into five different classrooms that operate at the same time. Students are able to take Korean language classes based on their own language levels. The customized Korean language courses are not only for the multicultural students; Korean students are also able to receive Korean language courses that are suitable for their level. Many Korean people hold the belief that they are discriminated against if they take different courses depending on their ability, making it difficult to operate this customized curriculum. However, in schools with high rates of multicultural students, customized education in accordance with the student levels is needed. Elementary school A can be a model for other schools with a high concentration of multicultural students.

Second, the general education was developed mainly for multicultural students who lack proficiency in the Korean language. The same program was run in 2017 and 2018. The program helped mid-entry multicultural students by developing a student adaptation classroom, or a stepping stone, to help with the Korean language. In addition, there is a classroom for elementary school students for multicultural students who can speak Korean but lack other academic skills.

Third, in order to educate students about multicultural sensitivity, in 2017, a eulim festival (multicultural festival) was held in neighboring elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and local communities. According to Banks (2008), although a multicultural festival is just a contribution approach, it is necessary for improving early multicultural awareness. In 2017, the program aimed at increasing multicultural sensitivity was called Ollybolly Multicultural Fairy Tale. In 2018, a book café opened to focus on reading various multicultural books. Multicultural books help students understanding the perspectives of people from different cultures and backgrounds, enhance reflection on their own culture and experiences,
reveal cultural differences and diversity, and help them discover and eventually communicate with people in other cultures (Park, 2007). Also, in 2018, fourth- to sixth-grade students were taught the Global Citizen Education Through Reconstruction of Curriculum, aimed at attaining one further step in Banks’s contribution as an additive approach.

Fourth, in order to strengthen teacher capacity, the school is operating a professional learning community related to multicultural education for each grade level. All teachers except those for the second grade were taught counseling for multicultural students. The second-grade teachers conducted their own training by creating a happy class culture by reading multicultural picture books.

Fifth, rather than solely focusing on academics, elementary school A developed multiple activities by utilizing culture and art education. In order to develop children’s talents and dreams, they offer programs such as ocarina, coding, K-pop dance, music jump rope, pop, calligraphy, and so on. In schools where many students lack proficiency in the Korean language, there are a number of plans for various activities outside the classroom. This provides opportunities for students to do well and reach their potential, which can help multicultural students adjust to the school.

**Multicultural International Innovation School Curriculum Analysis (School B)**

Elementary school B is located in Ansan and is composed of about 240 multicultural students who account for 60% of the total number of students. Most students are nationally Russian, and many have more difficulties in communication compared to other schools. Education focuses on language, general education, multicultural sensitivity training, teacher capacity enhancement education, culture and art education, and career education for both Korean and Russian students. The school also conducted surveys on the needs of Korean and Russian parents and students to complement and improve current concerns about the multicultural international innovation school. In 2018, they developed a foundation for the school’s curriculum.

First, in relation to the goal of language education, Russian language and culture classes are offered to all students. For first-graders, there is controversy because of the law of normalizing public education, which states that students should first focus on academic, entry-level education and adapting to school. However, for second- to sixth-grade students, the school operates Russian language courses through creative experiential activities as education not just for multicultural students but for all. The Russian basic conversation program runs for Korean and multicultural students during and after school. This bilingual education program recognizes school parents as a strength of being able to learn other cultures and languages in a global era while also reflecting their wishes to preserve their native language and culture. In an increasingly globalized world with individuals from various backgrounds, career development is increasingly becoming more competitive. Being a bilingual speaker makes individuals more competitive in terms of career prospects (Baker, 2014).

Second, the school emphasizes general academic education for multicultural students. The school developed a basic scholastic ability improvement program based on multicultural students, but the program would be beneficial for both multicultural and Korean students that
face difficulty in coursework. Elementary school B has tried to carry out bilingual math courses since 2017, but it was not able to obtain a Russian teacher at the time. However, for 2018, they were able to obtain an assistant Russian teacher for the class. Failure to provide equal educational opportunities for students who cannot speak Korean is a violation of basic education and equality education. Therefore, when there is a lack of proficiency in Korean, it is necessary for the school system to be prepared to adapt in terms of how subjects are taught.

Third, for the goal of multicultural sensitivity education, all students take a multicultural education class and a world culture experience class. In addition to a one-time event such as the week of multicultural education, multicultural sensitivity education is being carried out through the restructuring of the thematic-oriented curriculum using global citizen education. Furthermore, all students participate in a bilingual (Russian) speaking contest to raise awareness of other cultures and to eliminate bias in order to cultivate a global mindset.

The fourth was to strengthen the capacity of teachers by promoting more autonomy. Teachers developed scholarly colleagues for their own professional development. They conducted research on joint grade classrooms through learning-centered classroom supervision. In order to communicate with Russian-speaking multicultural students, the teachers developed a Russian language club among teachers. They published a dictionary of Russian language terminology for students and teachers to refer to when needed. They also promoted the use of Russian and Chinese language books for teachers. They actively participated in research projects and tried to develop their own competencies, for example, by taking various training courses. The school is focusing its efforts on enhancing the competence of its teachers by conducting training on professional learning community activities related to multicultural education.

In order to cultivate cultural sensitivity in culture and arts education, all students in first and second grades take a class on ocarina and from third to sixth grades, students take classical guitar lessons. Students also participate in school sports clubs that they are interested in, such as jump rope. Also, first- and second-grade students receive Korean traditional music education programs through the ARTE program of the Korean Culture and Arts Promotion Agency. This will increase Korean students’ pride in traditional Korean culture and promote understanding of Korean culture for multicultural students.

Sixth, elementary school B provides systematic career education dependent on the students’ developmental stage. Career guidance is based on the students’ grade level and subject matter. In addition, enhancement of career education is promoted through creative experiential activities. Students search for careers through club activities and then present their results at a school event. In addition, the school promotes career education through various activities such as morning broadcasts, a career aptitude test, a day of career experiences, dream talent week, and other educational career-focused programs. The curriculum is structured so that students are thinking about their careers starting from elementary school. Parent-related career education is also provided, and parents can even directly receive career counseling. Through these activities, students are able to select career paths based on their understanding of the career world and their own personal interests.
Elementary school B has currently established a four-year school reform plan. For Russian culture and language fluency training, from 2018–2019, it reorganized the lesson content of each grade, and decided on reconstruction by grades in 2020–2021. It created block courses to deepen educational learning. The purpose of reconstruction was also to gradually add and expand on multicultural careers, ecological realms, and democratic citizen realms. The school organized multicultural international education through global etiquette training, global cultural and artistic sensitivity education, and creative experiential activities. In addition, Russian as a second language is offered for Korean first- to sixth-graders to provide an opportunity for communication with Russian friends in class. The after-school program also offers classes for Korean language education for Russian and multicultural students. There is also a plan to cultivate multicultural sensitivity through global cultural exploration and the revitalization of creative clubs. As school members are changing in a multicultural society, the school developed not only a short-term plan, but also shows efforts at establishing a long-term plan for future directions.

**Multicultural International Innovation School Curriculum Analysis (School C)**

Elementary school C, located in Siheung, has seen a steady increase in the number of multicultural families, with about 36% (approximately 150 students) as multicultural students. The majority of the students are Chinese. Elementary school C presented the task of operating the multicultural international innovation school with the theme of understanding and coexistence. For this purpose, language education, general education, multicultural sensitivity training, teacher competence education, and culture or art education efforts were implemented.

First, for language education, elementary school C selected first- and second-grade students to learn mathematics in Chinese. This type of class is desirable because it provides language opportunities for both multicultural and Korean students. It also represents a positive curriculum because it not only helps multicultural students with their education, but it also provides second-language learning to Korean students. Hwang (2012) indicated that this kind of curriculum gives multicultural students more opportunity to keep up their native language and contributes to establishing an identity while increasing their self-esteem. In the classroom, both elementary school teachers and Chinese instructors work together. Although elementary school C consists of majority Chinese students, because of the limited number of Vietnamese students, the school offers Vietnamese language classes after school. For students who lack proficiency in the Korean language, they also offer Korean classes after school.

Second, to improve academic ability, the school runs an afterschool improvement class for students in the third to sixth grades who have difficulties with their general coursework. In addition, the school operates with customized Korean language classes that are taught dependent on the students’ language levels. This plan was piloted in the second semester of 2018 for first- and second-graders. Although there may be large differences in the Korean language in the lower grades in elementary schools, this gap decreases in the older grades. Gathercole, Thomas, and Hughes (2008) found that bilingual individuals’ language abilities were lower than those of their peers at lower grades but did not show any difference or decrease as they reached the upper grades. Thus, it is more efficient to run customized language level courses at lower grades rather than for all students.
Third, to enhance multicultural sensitivity at each grade level, Korean culture experience, multicultural experience, and international understanding education classes are built into the curriculum. Instead of a one-time education program, multicultural sensitivity is structured into the curriculum and taught through textbooks and readings. Elementary school C recognized the need for subject-oriented curriculum based on student-centered education, so the curriculum for each grade was restructured with topics related to multiculturalism.

Fourth, elementary school C conducted training related to multicultural education to strengthen teachers’ capacity. They operated an in-school professional learning community to increase teachers’ expertise in multicultural education. The school conducts class supervision once a year with a supervisor, operates a public class for every teacher once a year, and provides peer supervision for reflection and feedback. Also, once a week, through same-grade council meetings, teachers discuss future directions for classroom development.

Fifth, cultural and arts education provide opportunities for both multicultural and Korean students. Jun (2015) found that cultural arts both contain universal and cultural elements, an easy method of finding cultural similarities and for individuals to be more open to various cultures. Thus, it is meaningful to utilize culture and arts in multicultural education. Elementary school C planned and managed the arts and physical education convergence program for all students to foster self-directed mental and physical health ability and democratic citizenship in the world. In particular, through “Korean-style Taekwondo,” students have the opportunity to understand Korean culture in the course of learning traditional Korean martial arts. The learning with physical movement provides a space for harmonious convergence of both multicultural and Korean students. Students also have opportunities to be involved in other activities such as ocarina, the recorder, Danso, and Korean traditional music. Through these activities, the school also organized a performance based on traditional world music to appreciate and cultivate multicultural sensitivity. A systematic and continuous arts and cultural education program not only has a positive impact on the understanding of multicultural and Korean students, but it also provides students opportunities to develop their own talents and unique qualities.

In conclusion, all three schools have presented reform efforts in response to the increasing number of multicultural students. School A focused on developing customized Korean language courses, professional development for teachers, culture and art education, and festivals. School B emphasized Russian courses, general academic education for multicultural students, a multicultural course, teacher autonomy, culture and art, and a customized career education. School C included multiculturalism in its curricula, provided teacher professional development, included an afterschool improvement class, culture/art education, and had math courses in Chinese.

Although each school has specific programs dependent on school, regional, and community characteristics, they also have common frameworks such as language education, general basic education, multicultural sensitivity education, strengthening of teacher capacity, and culture and arts education. After the three schools were designated as multicultural international innovation schools, school reforms were implemented with teacher efforts. Thus, it is both important to consider context (e.g., language courses adapted to each region, curricula designed for first- versus sixth-graders) while using best practices for multicultural education. However, there is still an emphasis on majority groups in school reform. Thus, this
article suggests future directions of school reform in a multicultural society that is based on the Ministry of Education’s direction on multicultural policy and the multicultural international innovation schools’ concrete school reform plan.

Conclusion and Discussion

The Korean government and schools are responding in order to adapt to a changing multicultural society. This article analyzed the directions of the Ministry of Education’s multicultural policy and the specific directions of school reform with the multicultural international innovation schools to exemplify Korea’s efforts. Since 2006, multicultural policies have been implemented under the government, but rather than school reform, there has been more of an emphasis on supporting multicultural students. Based on the analyses of government policy and curriculum of multicultural international innovation schools, future directions of school reform are discussed here.

First, Korea’s policy of multicultural education has shifted away from education for multicultural students to “education for all.” However, the reality is that schools still focus on teaching multicultural students. This is because multicultural education emphasizes “welfare” for multicultural students rather than school reform. In addition, the focus of multicultural education is on the assimilation of multicultural students to Korean society.

When analyzing the Ministry of Education’s policy, although it has moved forward in its goal of multicultural education for all, most projects still only target multicultural students. Although several studies have identified this issue (Cho, Park, Sung, Lee, & Park, 2010; Jeon, 2012), multicultural students are still at the forefront when thinking about school reform. One study found, after analyzing multicultural education programs in 21 elementary schools, that the main subjects were multicultural students, and the content of multicultural education emphasized assimilation through the Korean language and culture (Cho et al., 2010). As evident in the definition of multicultural education, it is not a specific program for solely minority groups, but rather one in which all students learn knowledge, values, attitudes, and functions, to understand multicultural societies (Min & Choi, 2009).

Even in the case of multicultural international innovation schools, the majority of the language courses are about Korean language education. However, all three schools are attempting bilingual education through creative experience activities or after-school education for all students. It is beneficial to provide opportunities for not only multicultural students but for all children to learn and acquire more than one language. Similar to multicultural international innovation schools, in schools with many multicultural students, it is especially important to offer various language courses with the goal of equality in education. Berry (1997) indicated that for healthy growth, development, and integration into society, learning other languages is necessary. When assimilation of the main language is enforced, many ethnic minority children drop out of school and have difficulties with social adjustment and other related problems.

Furthermore, elementary school A utilizes a new curriculum method compared to existing schools with its customized Korean language classes. This method allows students with limited Korean language abilities to be taught appropriately. Ideally, all subjects should be taught in customized classrooms, but it is extremely difficult to do so in institutions. Curricula based on Korean language abilities are critical, especially in schools with many multicultural
students. These customized curricula represent education for both Korean and multicultural students so that all individuals can receive Korean language classes suitable for their own level.

Second, multicultural policies and school reforms should be implemented to focus on strengths rather than weaknesses of multicultural students. From a policy perspective, most multicultural policies, except for the Global Bridge Project and the Multicultural Language Instructor, operate in support of the weaknesses of multicultural families and students. Since 2015, the Ministry of Education policy emphasizes the cultivation of multicultural talents, but programs still focuses on Korean education and the weaknesses of multicultural students. Although this article does not deny that Korean language and general education are important for adapting into Korean society, it is difficult for a multicultural student with more barriers and different viewpoints to fairly compete with Korean students. Furthermore, education that emphasizes only learning of the Korean language does not help multicultural students become productive members of society. Thus, it is necessary to provide the same opportunities for them to succeed in school by diversifying the required curriculum.

These educational changes not only highlight second language skills and emphasize academic success, but also help students with their own dreams and talents. These changes to the curriculum benefit both multicultural students and Korean students who may not be passionate about academics. In addition, the current system does not delay curriculum until multicultural students can be proficient enough in the Korean language, but it is one in which multicultural students can receive education in a language they can understand. Thus, school policies include the use of multicultural language teachers, bilingual textbooks, bilingual immersion education, and so on.

Elementary school C provides Chinese bilingual mathematics lessons for multicultural students and for Korean students as a second language. Although this program is not a complete bilingual immersion education program, it is an example of educating students about the strengths of multicultural students. In the United States and other countries, bilingual immersion education is actively being carried out in schools. In this global era, language ability is fundamental to communication and an important factor to be competitive. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize the strengths of multicultural students and cultivate their global talents when thinking about directions for education policy.

Third, it is necessary to move away from a one-time policy and one-time education to transition to sustainable educational policies. Because the effects of education policy take time, the government’s multicultural policies and school reforms should be based on long-term goals rather than short-term achievements. Early multicultural sensitivity training is based on “multicultural event experiences” and focus on understanding other countries and multicultural festivals. Although there has not been a significant improvement, research on multicultural international innovation schools highlight how multicultural sensitivity education is being carried out through the reconstruction of curriculums and breaking away from this “one-time event” as the basis for multicultural education. Multicultural education is not limited to a one-time cultural introduction but stresses the importance of educating students to develop cultural openness and empathy through curriculum reconstruction. Chang (2015) suggests that Korea’s multicultural education remains a contributions approach that simply introduces cultural elements such as food, dance, holidays, anniversaries, and festivals in
other countries. In recent years, although multicultural elements are slowly being added to the curriculum, they do not reach a transformational approach in which students try to critically reflect on the problem of societal discrimination, but rather seek concrete solutions for themselves.

In order for multicultural education to move toward a transformative approach, current textbooks with limited information about multiculturalism need to be adapted by including more multicultural elements (Chang, 2015). All three schools recognize the necessity of reconstructing a multicultural-themed curriculum and implemented them through a professional learning community rather than a one-time event program. Although scholars have promoted multicultural policies at the national level (Cho, Choi, & Lee, 2015), it is also important to realize that reform at the school level is vital as students are directly being exposed to multicultural education through curriculums and classrooms.

Fourth, as mentioned above, teachers should also adapt in order for multicultural education to take place. Thus, multicultural education for both preservice and in-service teachers should be assessed and strengthened. However, multicultural education in Korea for teachers is not a mandatory subject, but rather an elective course at some universities. Thus, many preservice teachers attend school without being prepared for a changing multicultural society and classroom. In addition, teacher training should operate so that multicultural education is linked in the curriculum while avoiding a one-time theory-oriented training. For preservice teachers, multicultural education should be a required mandatory course in order to become a teacher who can accommodate to the changing demands of the school and society.

The multicultural international innovation schools all run programs to strengthen teacher capacity. All three schools focus on this by conducting their own training through professional learning community activities. In the case of elementary school B, a teacher’s Russian club was organized in response to the number of Russian students. In order to communicate with Russian-speaking students, teachers also made efforts to develop a dictionary of Russian language terminology. In addition, they published Russian language and Chinese classroom language handbooks. Each school has a customized teacher capacity-building program. Elementary schools A and C are also making efforts to make multicultural education the focal point by reconstructing the curriculum of each grade to reflect multicultural themes.

Fifth, multicultural education policies that are connected with multicultural schools and the local community are needed. Although the 2018 multicultural policy refers to connecting with the local community, there is still a disconnect between the two. This becomes especially important in schools in Ansan City and Sihieung City in Gyeonggi Province with a high number of multicultural students. Rather than transferring students to local schools, it is necessary to establish a systematic method, such as networking with regional centers and nearby schools, so that more effective and efficient education can be developed and implemented.

In the case of multicultural international innovation schools, elementary school A is forming a close network with the local community by holding a festival with the local elementary, middle, and high schools, and the community members. In addition, all multicultural international innovation schools conduct cultural and arts education tailored to the characteristics of each school. This helps students develop their own talents, goals, and
dreams. It also helps both multicultural and Korean students by providing various activities outside of the classroom. However, because arts and culture education programs are limited in schools in Korea, it is necessary to provide programs with the local community.

As Korea is becoming a multicultural society, schools are also rapidly changing. Given the increase in multicultural regional areas, there are schools with over 50% multicultural students. However, schools are becoming problematic in that multicultural students have difficulty attending school given the lack of fluency in the Korean language. Korea’s current curriculum operates at a national level and does not guarantee autonomy in accordance to the students’ level. Thus, current classrooms often neglect multicultural student needs and backgrounds. This raises questions about who the curriculum is designed for. If the aim of multicultural education is to realize educational equality through curriculum reform (Bennett, 2007), educators need to reflect on whether they should be teaching all students the same content as the current national curriculum or whether they should tailor education to the students’ levels to achieve this goal. The current reality of the Korean education system is that it is not yet ready for each grade to conduct different curriculums and assessment. In addition, there are many prerequisites for implementing this policy. Nevertheless, ultimately, this article suggests a rethinking of current multicultural directions and Korean multicultural policies to pursue the aforementioned recommendations.

Further Reading


References


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