

An Inquiry for Future Direction of Education in South Korea through Critical Pedagogy and Bricolage

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Abstract

Korean society is currently under the 2017 system. It pursues a society that values democracy, human rights and peace. To that end, the goal is 'JeokPaeCheongSan' (rooting out bad practices of the past or liquidating great accumulation of corruption) that Korean society has due to historical rea-

sons. Education is also moving along with these social and political changes. Indeed, education has already been rooted in alternative education for a decade, and it is trying to change the major paradigm. On the other hand, the discussion of the theoretical discourse that can support this paradigm shift is very passive. However, discussions of this discourse can play an impor-

tant role in eliminating the confusion that may arise due to change, as they can prove the validity of the change and its sustainability. In this article, I suggest critical pedagogy as a theoretical discourse for South Korea's educational paradigm shift. Critical pedagogy, which seeks a conscious emancipation, offers educational directions for the elimination of corruption. In addition, I am offering the notion of bricolage as a praxis to overcome theoretical limitations

and provide a more practical direction. In the article, I discuss the suitability of this inquiry not only to 'JeokPaeCheongSan' but also to the development of diverse capabilities, including but not limited to creativity and cooperation, which can also support future changes in society.

Keywords: *the 2017 regime, 'Jeokpae-cheongsan', critical pedagogy, bricolage*

Time for Transition in South Korea

Korean society is at a great turning point (Tikhonov, 2018). It is struggling to become a society that pursues democracy as well as promotes human rights and peace by removing the contradictions between hierarchical class structure, militarism, neoliberalism and capitalism. Although fragmented changes in the social system have been attempted before, it is the 'candlelight revolution' which started on October 26, 2016¹ that served as the driving force for the full-scale change movement. Although the process is still ongoing, it needs to be accomplished for 'JeokPaeCheongSan'² (rooting out bad practices of the past or liquidating great accumulation of corruption) to be completed. Due to these fluctua-

tions, the present reality of South Korean society is often referred to as 'Oijul-TaGi' (= walking on a tightrope).

On 10th May 2017, a new government was launched. This government, also called the 'Candlelight Government', is known as the 2017 regime (Sonn, 2017) in social and political context. Whether it can be called the civil revolution government remains to be seen. What the government seeks is democracy, human rights and peace. However, it is for the Korean citizens to judge the competence or incompetence of the so-called 'Lee-Myung-Bak-Geun-Hye'³ government.

Going backwards, the current situation is strongly linked to Korean modern history. After liberation, which began in year 1948, the Ryee Syngman regime was an anti-communist system in the extreme right, the Park Jung Hee regime was a de-

¹This revolution is sometimes referred to as the 'candlelight revolution in November' and as the 'revolution that started in October'.

²Korea has a unique Hangeul character. The origin of Hangeul was created to solve the communication difficulties caused by the difference between spoken and written words. Previously, the written characters used were Chinese, and the spoken language Korean, which had no characters. The way of pronouncing a Chinese character in Korean, is called Hanja. In spite of the existence of Hangeul, which is a character that can still be used as it is, there is a common use of Korean characters mixed in Chinese characters. Although the word "JeokPaeCheongSan" comes from Hanja, it is expressed using Korean pronunciation. 積弊清算 [jibiqingsuan].

³A slang word used by citizens when referring to the Lee Myung Bak government and Park Geun-Hye government together.

velopment dictatorship since year 1961 and, after year 1972, there was a 'YuShin' regime⁴. The first appearance of democracy was the 1987 regime, a so-called imperfect democracy. It was a part of the class struggle centering on the labor movement and managed to achieve the democratization of the constitutional system. The 1997 regime, which started with the economic crisis, once again changed the Korean society, which was at the time centered on the ruling class, neoliberalism and capitalism. Since then, militarism has risen and the turmoil of the financial economy – especially global financial crisis in 2008 – as well as U.S. unilateralism have greatly affected Korean regimes. However, these social, political, economic and cultural shifts were moving against democracy, human rights and peace. For example, on 16th April 2014, various factors led to the sinking of MV Sewol near Jindo area costing 304 lives. The tragedy raised questions about where Korean society was going and partly led to the candle-light citizen movement on October 2016, which in turn forced the regime to make systematic changes.

There is another big transformation going on in Korean society. This is the age of the fourth industrial revolution which includes internet of things, cloud solutions, big data, artificial intelligence as well as virtual and augmented reality. In fact, the 4th industrial revolution is the leading change trend in Korean society (Schwab, 2016; Yu, 2017). The fourth industrial revolution, as proposed by K. Schwab at the World Economic Forum (WEF), has characteristics such as interconnec-

tion, transparency, decentralization and interoperability (Son et al., 2009). The revolution won't be limited to economic growth. Although difficult to predict, it will also attract a myriad of changes in various contexts, and a great shift in society, politics, economy and culture is to be anticipated as well. In particular, the meaning of transparency and decentralization is related to the important characteristics of democracy, human rights and peace. However, a voice of concern over emphasizing the technological characteristics has been vocalized among scholars (Son et al., 2009).

So, what orientation should education take in this 'zeitgeist'? The academic discourse proposed in this article is one possible answer to this question. I will begin with a description of the current situation 'a paradigm shift' in order to show that Korea has been relying too heavily on the fourth industrial revolution in the economic context as a sole response to society's need for a change (Son et al., 2009). Then, I will discuss critical pedagogy to emphasize the changes needed in the educational system (Yu, 2016; Yu, 2017; Kim, 2018). In other words, the purpose of this discussion is to examine surface level changes from a critical point of view, ask questions in the terms of ontology and epistemology, and discuss the theoretical discourse forming the foundation for the current educational paradigm. However, the disadvantage of a theoretical discourse is its lack of practicality. Therefore, I take the concept of 'bricolage' to explore how theory can be applied into practice.

⁴Korean word 'YuShin' means to redefine the old system. It is an alias of the Fourth Republic. On October 17, 1972, President Park Chung Hee made a constitutional emergency action which declared and established emergency martial law throughout the nation. This is called the October Restoration. Park Chung Hee, who had difficulties in maintaining the regime at that time, suspended the normal functions of the state in order to maintain his power and formulated a new constitution called the "National Reunification Body".

A paradigm shift in education

The 2017 regime pursues an education of democracy, human rights and peace. Current societal changes also form a rich background for the acceleration of these educational reform attempts. This is mainly due to a new government-sponsored education policy since 2017. In 2018, progressive-oriented superintendents were elected in 14 out of 17 districts, along with progressive-oriented politicians and governors in local elections. So, progression of changes can be predicted, and thus the socio-political 'JeokPaeCheongSan' put into action. It can be observed that South Korean education is currently going through a paradigm shift, which is to be understood as the flow of modern education directed by the former accumulation of corruption. The contradictions of social, political, economic and cultural ideologies before and after the appearance of modern education in Korea did not differ greatly. Educational system that played the role of hegemony to uphold the ruling class of the ChoSun dynasty (1392–1910), while accepting modern education, was soon restructured in inequality (Choi, 2013; Yoon, 2006). Militarism became a major ideology in the aftermath of the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945). After liberation, the United States attempted a change with a form of public education based on an American model. However, without the elimination of militarism left by Japanese colonialism, authoritarianism left by the hierarchical structure of feudal society and bureaucracy based on admin-

istrative convenience, school education was distorted into a strange form with an emphasis on 'predatory scholastic ability'⁵. These ideologies have moved education away from the meaning of democracy, human rights and peace. Therefore, in the education, the liquidation of the great accumulation of corruption should be going towards education for democracy, human rights and peace, which all weaken the existing ideology.

A shift in Korean education became visible before social and political change. Its origins can be traced back to the alternative education movement. Alternative education was a civic movement that began in the mid-1980s in order to shift the nature of education to human-centered. In fact, although alternative education has been present even before modern education in different forms (Jung, 2017), the beginning of the change centered on education innovation has been seen as the mid-1980s, which is universally called the alternative education movement (Song et al, 2017). Alternative education has spread since the 1997 economic crisis, advocating education for all regardless of school age. Alternative education with a historical flow is beginning to be applied in public education now, and it is becoming visible and accelerating in earnest. Two exemplary educational policies to understand this phenomenon are the innovation school policy introduced in the Gyeonggi province and 'Jayuhakgije', the free semester school system⁶, introduced by the 'Lee-Myung-Bak-Geun-Hye' administration. Innovation school policies

⁵This means that the system evaluates the relative abilities rather than evaluating the abilities themselves by over-emphasizing the evaluation scores.

⁶During this semester, the school has separate curriculum for career exploration. Also, most classes focus on experience rather than academics. Teachers use alternative teaching methods e.g. discussion, cooperative learning and project work including various field trips. There are no exams. It started for all middle schoolers in 2016 and will expand to two semesters in 2020.

that started in Gyeonggi province in 2009 are currently expanding to 17 cities and provinces nationwide, and by 2017, there will be more than 10% of designated innovation-type schools (Park, 2018). It is hard to deny that Korean education is at the moment in a paradigm shift.

Theoretical Discourse, Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy should be discussed first to validate the reasons why it should be the theoretical background. This can be explained in two ways. First, as mentioned, the 2017 regime seeks to liquidate the great accumulation of corruption in society, politics, economy and culture – including education. It is a diverse ideology in education. As exemplified, former ideologies have resulted in scholasticism, capitalism and neoliberalism, militarism and colonialism, authoritarianism and bureaucracy. In order to eliminate them, education should pursue conscious emancipation and produce a counter-subject to current hegemony. Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy that responds to changes in society, emphasizes democracy, human rights and peace, and centers on citizens. Second, it is in the search of the most talented person in the era of the 4th industrial revolution that has attracted the most attention and resources in education in recent years. Thus, competency-centered education is emphasized (Yu, 2016, 2017). Critical thinking, creativity, cooperation/collaboration and communication skills are the priority among these competencies (Yu, 2016, 2017; Kim, 2018). These competencies or abilities are directed at critical pedagogy. In other words, the process of achieving conscious emancipation through critical thinking is to disman-

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tle and reconfigure existing knowledge, and to birth new awareness by a communicative, collaborative and creative way. For these two reasons, critical pedagogy is suitable as a theoretical background for future education in South Korea.

In order to understand critical pedagogy, meaning of the word should be examined. Critical pedagogy is a combination of two words: ‘critical’ and ‘pedagogy’. The ‘critical’ in this sense must be conceptualized with respect to the way German philosophers used it. It originates from the term used by scholars in a social research institute founded in Frankfurt in 1923 who tried to understand the human existence and awareness through reason and rationalization. In critical theory, the meaning of ‘critical’ is a dialectic which is often understood as a continuous and endless movement of opposites. Especially, in connection with the hermeneutical viewpoint, the hermeneutic dialectic is the critical. In other words, movement through hermeneutical dialectic, a method of thinking and logic, is the role of human reason, and through it, human being’s existence and perception can be understood (Hur, 2017a).

The second is the meaning of ‘pedagogy’. P. Freire defines the concept of education, which is commonly used, as a knowledge transfer from the oppressor

who operates curriculum like a banking system to a structure of oppresses, and thus oppression is produced. The concept of education has been reconceptualized through pedagogy (Freire, 1970). If educational pedagogy emphasizes emancipation, its methods result in conscious awareness, awakening and reflection in praxis or practice.

The essence of Freire's emphasis on education is in praxis (theory + action) (Freire, 1970). The ultimate goal of education lies in conscious emancipation. The state of consciousness that is empowering activeness, autonomy, self-reliance and self-determination is the emancipation. Praxis can be defined as this conscious awakening, in other words, practice as a process of escaping from a passive subject, that is, from a passive being that depends on the oppressors. The curriculum should include this. The application for this is, of course, language. The main means of transferring human consciousness to behavior, action and practice is language, and the practicality of the process having its own language together with social and political participation is another extended meaning of praxis. It emphasizes that education should be a place for contribution and cultural politics.

J. Kincheloe (2012, pp. 176–181) suggests 8 features for critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: 1) the development of a socio-individual imagination, 2) the reconstitution of the individual outside the boundaries of abstract individualism, 3) the understanding of power and the ability to interpret its effects on the social and the individual, 4) the provision of alternatives to the alienation of the individual, 5) the cultivation of a critical consciousness that is aware of the social con-

struction of subjectivity, 6) the construction of democratic community-building relationships between individuals, 7) the reconceptualization of reason-understanding the relational existence of which applies not only to human beings but concepts as well, and 8) the production of social skills necessary to active participation in the transformed, inclusive democratic community.

McLaren (2009) explains the concept of critical pedagogy being used in 12 features in four areas. First, knowledge is a social construct, and it is not free from form, class, culture (domination / subordination / subculture), hegemony, ideology or prejudice. Second, the formation and practice of power relations should be understood as a discourse. Third, a curriculum is a form of cultural politics. Fourth, schools should be understood by the basis of the social and cultural reproduction and resistance theory.

In order to understand these concepts, we need to critically examine the ideology of 'claiming the great accumulation of corruption' in Korean education. Korean education contains ideologies such as academic achievement, authority and competition. This has been socially influenced by the flow of political, economic, social and cultural contexts since the modern era. These ideologies have played a major role in forming and maintaining the current structure which is based on power relations through applied knowledge and culture in education. The school curriculum has been organized and operated for cultural politics, and therefore, the educational system has failed to fulfill the role of producing social justice, equity and equality. Finally, school education has even contributed to the conservation of

the current status of Korean society. Critical pedagogy emphasizes the need for conscious emancipation through the criticism of the current ideologies in Korean education. Colonialism in particular has played an important role in shaping the social structure. Citizens must also understand these various ideologies through conscious reflection, deconstruct and reconstruct them in order to move towards a society that successfully pursues the 2017 regime and the fourth industrial revolution.

Praxis and Practical Discourse, 'Bricolage'

I take the concept of bricolage and discuss its relevance to the meaning of praxis in critical pedagogy. Initially 'bricolage' was related to traditional arts and referred to producing images through the process of dismantling various materials. Later on, the term was also applied to meanings. In accordance with this orientation, C. Lévi-Strauss (2011) used 'bricolage' as a concept to explain the formation process of knowledge. Since then it has been used in the field of social science as a methodology. Especially in the educational field, this concept became a qualitative research method and an alternative methodology against quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). If the characteristics of bricolage are expressed in Korean, it can be understood as a 'JJaGib-Gi' (Quilt-making of critical reflection) (Hur, 2017b). Critical reflection can be an option in viewing the methodology, but critical educators have conceptualized it as a 'hermeneutical dialectic patchwork', emphasizing it as a necessary factor (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). The concept of bricolage, including the inevitability of critical reflection as in critical pedagogy,

is also acknowledged in the academic qualitative research area. Therefore, similarities can be seen in both bricolage and critical pedagogy (Hur, 2017b). In order to understand the collectivity of critical reflection and dismantlement, it seems necessary to expand the viewpoint to the ontological and epistemological aspect. Critical pedagogy has taken a crucial role in this (Kincheloe, 2005, 2011).

Bricolage is quilt-making. The subject that does this is called a bricoleur. For example, scholars and artists themselves, in various fields, can become bricoleurs. Bricolage is the process of producing something new by using existing tools. However, for such an action, a discourse is needed. This is a reconstruction through understanding and deconstructing through the reflection of qualitative research methodology. The process must include empowerment, such as the existence of activeness, autonomy, self-reliance and self-determination. Therefore, it is not bricolage to understand and reproduce something that is already existing. Thus, as in the case of critical pedagogy, the practice of critical reflection using the hermeneutic dialectic is very similar to bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Kincheloe et al., 2011). Bricolage is summarized in academic terms as follows: 1) expression and embedding of reality, 2) questions about universality, 3) perception of diversity, 4) understanding of life process as cultural politics, 5) existence being connection to each other, 6) contextual interchangeability, 7) multidimensional and multilogical epistemology, 8) intertextuality, 9) contextual organization of discourse, 10) interpreting characteristics of knowledge, 11) creativity of production, 12) knowledge as cultural production, 13) understanding and practicing between knowledge and power.

The ultimate goal of critical pedagogy is conscious emancipation

er relations (Hur, 2017b; Kincheloe et al., 2011). The methodological process of bricolage and the character of the bricoleur can be seen in the attitudes of the educator as well as in putting a curriculum, produced by critical pedagogy, into practice (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Bricolage contains the meanings of various praxis that are produced by versatile and multifaceted understanding as well as practical aspects of situations and phenomena through theoretical reflection.

Educators in critical pedagogy can be described as bricoleurs, whereas praxis and practice produced by educators is part of bricolage. It is a process that takes place in the relationship between teachers and students as well as other subjects participating in the curriculum (parents, employees, environment etc.). Bricolage is conscious reflection; a deconstructive, reconstructive, and emancipative process. From student's viewpoint, this is something that they have received from the teacher, but which they utilize in the course of their lives. The new knowledge, culture and existence they themselves produce is a kind of bricolage that educators want in critical pedagogy. Desired outcomes are empowerment, such as activeness, autonomy, self-reliance and self-determination; an education resulting in various possibilities and linked to creativity. For example, novels composed with many participants, such as fan fiction, are written by borrow-

ing characters from a drama or a movie to produce a new creative output, just like collective intelligence formed by various participants. In this case, cocreation is producing bricolage, a creative competence, and a communication channel of cooperation (Kincheloe et al., 2001). Quilt-making is not a pursuit of fulfillment through competition, but a combination of existing tools to create new things. Such has been shown by Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui who creates his art from abandoned product packaging materials (Hur, 2017b).

The ultimate goal of critical pedagogy is conscious emancipation, and its process should be reflection through the hermeneutic dialectical thinking. What it aspires to produce is an active, autonomous, self-reliant and self-determined individuals with a capability for critical thinking. It is pointless to discuss creativity and cooperation without these attributes. Cooperation, for example, should be joined together in a structure of equal power, which requires the dissolution of the hierarchical power structures. This is only possible if the member is an emancipatory being with a critical consciousness.

Conclusion: Critical Pedagogy for 'Zeitgeist'

At the moment, Korean education is in a paradigm shift. The history of the change movement is old, but it has been on the surface for approximately ten years and has progressed very slowly due to differences in political views of mainstream groups. However, with the candlelight revolution of the citizens, the start of the 2017 regime and the change of political mainstream groups, the change in education is accelerating. What is being

pursued is 'the liquidation of the great accumulation of corruption' referring to the various ideologies formed in and because of the past. In addition, the Korean society is currently in the age of the 4th industry revolution.

Education should be directed towards the future and discussed with a specific theory and practice discourse. Society emphasizes democracy, human rights and peace, and pursues a change. This article argues that critical pedagogy is valid as a theory and practice (or praxis) discourse for deconstructing prevailing ideologies. Critical pedagogy is an educational discourse to understand, deconstruct, reconstruct and emancipate consciousness through reason and rationality based on hermeneutic dialectics. That is, education for an active, autonomous, self-reliant, and self-determinate beings. I argue that this is a theoretical discourse suitable for the 'zeitgeist'.

The emphasis of the theoretical discourse produces criticism that there is no practice. The 'bricolage' is proposed as a proper discourse based on the characteristics of critical pedagogy emphasizing practice as praxis. Bricolage can conceptualize critical reflection as hermeneutics quilt-making, and its implementation has already been actively used internationally as a qualitative research method. In this article, I discussed the concept of bricolage as a practical discourse for critical pedagogy and strongly argue its validity.

Finally, the theoretical background for pedagogy which contains the 'zeitgeist' is very important especially during a period when the present educational paradigm shifts. This article acknowledges 'JeokPae-CheongSan' as an important change fac-

tor in South Korean education, and at the same time proposes critical pedagogy is its theoretical, ontological and epistemological discourse and bricolage its praxis.

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