

# New multicultural education demands for the children with migrant background in Korea

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Synergies Corée n° 2 - 2011 pp. 123-131

## Vers de nouvelles exigences dans l'éducation multiculturelle pour les enfants issus de l'immigration : le cas sud-coréen.

**Résumé :** Ces dernières années, les politiques sud-coréennes pour l'éducation multiculturelle se sont principalement attachées aux enfants d'origine multiraciale nés en Corée du Sud. Néanmoins, la recherche sur les stratégies de soutien pédagogique pour les enfants nouvellement arrivés sur le territoire sud-coréen revêt également une grande importance, car ces enfants sont nés à l'étranger mais de parents sud-coréens. Ils représentent donc, désormais, la population cible d'une politique éducative qui exige pour eux une attention toute particulière. Les politiques éducatives précédentes et les études sur le sujet effectuées jusqu'alors, n'ont fait qu'observer les enfants nés en Corée suite à l'immigration de leurs parents pour des raisons professionnelles (travail, études) ou ceux nés en Corée de famille mixte. Cependant, les enfants des Sud-Coréens vivant à l'étranger sont différents de leurs parents puisqu'ils ne sont pas nés en Corée mais qu'ils y reviennent avec leurs parents et découvrent alors un nouvel environnement. La question de l'éducation, autour de cette population particulière, est donc une question spécifique et complexe, à laquelle le modèle dichotomique existant de catégorisation de la population multiculturelle soit issue de l'immigration soit issue de la mixité ne peut s'appliquer. Une politique multiculturelle de soutien à l'éducation pour les enfants nouvellement arrivés en Corée du Sud devrait donc également voir le jour aux côtés de la prise en compte des besoins langagiers de ces enfants.

**Mots-clés :** enseignement multiculturel en Corée, enfants nés de parents coréens à l'étranger, politique d'enseignement multiculturel en Corée

**Summary :** In the past years multicultural education policies in Korea have focused on the multiracial children who were born in Korea. However, the research on educational support strategies for 'accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children' holds also great importance. Accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children are a policy target population who requires special attention rather than general attention at the national level. The past policies and research only looked at the marriage immigrant family students and labor immigrant family students when dealing with issues around multicultural (multiracial) or immigrant families. However, the accompanied/midway arrival immigrant children are different from them in that they were not born in Korea and have entered the country following their parents, or have come upon the invitation of their parents who have already been living in Korea. The educational issue around this particular population is a complex and specific one that cannot be explained by the existing dichotomous model of categorizing the multicultural population as either being marriage immigrants or labor immigrants.

Multicultural education support policy for the midway-arrival children should also incorporate multilingual needs which will help them to develop more abundant cultural asset for themselves.

**Keywords :** multicultural education in Korea, accompanied midway arrival immigrant children, multicultural education policy in Korea.

### Introductory understanding of multicultural phenomena in Korea

Korea is rapidly becoming a multicultural society. Despite a large inflow of foreigners and growing number of families with migrant background, many Koreans are yet unfamiliar with the co-existence of foreign population due to their time-honored tradition of pure-blood nationalism. Unlike North America, a nation of immigrants from the outset, and Europe with its multi-ethnic background, Korea faces serious challenges to cope with a migrant population (cf. Seong 2008). Creating a multicultural society is still a challenge. As democratic citizens, Koreans should make every endeavor in various areas to live in harmony with foreign migrants on the basis of a mature citizenship.

Recently, the multicultural phenomenon has come under the spotlight in Korea. 'Multiculturalism' represents a kind of ideology applicable to racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity, which is mirrored in the actual demographic statistics of a certain region. Korean ways of thinking and the daily lives of Koreans were traditionally dominated by the mechanisms of the 'national state'. Under such premises, Korean laws, education, and social norms have been formulated and implemented, making Korean people somewhat unaccustomed to the concept of 'multiculturalism'. However, globalization and the concept of universal human rights cannot be ignored any more.

Today this phenomenon is undermining current values of national sovereignty, citizenship and traditional borders. With a huge increase in cross-border migration, the world is focusing on national policies tailored to social inclusion of foreign migrants and protection of their human rights. Korean society is no exception to current global trends: we are experiencing globalization, human rights issues, and a shift towards a multicultural society in the wake of cross-border migration. The era of migration was introduced with economic globalization and remarkable breakthroughs in transportation and communications.

As of 2010, cross-border migrants worldwide amounted to about 214 million people, representing nearly 3% of the global population (IOM World Migration Report 2010). According to the statistics from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the number of foreign residents in Korea was 49,000 in 1990, 485,477 in 2005 and over 1.2 million as of July 2010, recording a 251.2% growth in five years. If this trend continues, the number is expected to reach 1.57 million in 2012. The more foreigners live in Korea, the more diverse their type of residence will be. In 2005, over 35,000 international marriages (13.6% of nationwide marriages) occurred in Korea. This was nearly a seven-fold rise compared with over 5,000 international marriages (3.7% of nationwide marriages) in 1991.

Particularly in fishing and farming areas, international marriages amounted for 35.9% of all marriages across the region (as of late 2007, the total of marriage migrants were 146,508, which consist of 44,291 naturalized migrants and 102,217 non-naturalized migrants).

Korea has already made great strides in becoming a multicultural society. Thus, its pure-blood nationalism based on the tradition of being a homogenous nation does not sound plausible at all. Since the 1990s, migrant workers and marriage migrants have substantially increased in the wake of the aging population and declining fertility rate, enabling multicultural and multiracial families to increasingly play a crucial role in the Korean society.

According to the MOJ statistics, Korea's composition of foreign migrants stood in stark contrast to that of advanced nations. As of June 2008, migrant distribution by residence type is as follows: 297,329 overseas Koreans on Korean work visa (26.0%), 212,778 manual laborers (unprofessional employment) (18.6%), 118,421 marriage migrants (10.3%), 29,895 skilled workers (2.6%) etc. The ratio of manual laborers will be the highest, if Korean Chinese are included. Based on these statistics, Korea has a long way to verify the viability of the government's pledge - strengthening Korea's global competitiveness through national opening - which is stipulated in the '1st Policy Master Plan on Treatment of Foreigners' announced in December 2008. In fact, as of July 2010, only about 40,000 are classified as 'professionals'; the others would mainly be laborers, students and immigrant wives. Furthermore, about 20,000 English native speakers teaching English are also included in the statistics of professionals, showing that non-Koreans working in Korea in professional jobs will shrink.

At this critical juncture, we should consider how to embrace and unify the growing multiracial families or families with migrant background following the demographic changes in rural areas or the declining child birth along with the potential poor class.

### **Critical assessment of multicultural education research and practice in Korea**

Given the rapidly changing multicultural environment in Korea, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Korea has started dealing with multicultural education issues policy-wise. Within the past four years, the first year focused on figuring out the reality of multicultural education policies. The findings of the first year's research displayed heightened importance of multicultural education on site, which once was ignored in the policy arena. Another issue found was that the NGOs and the local governments have been facing difficulties with multicultural education without a clear direction or programs to resolve the problems. Especially the NGOs that were thought to be most fond of multicultural population's difficulties have started showing their limits in human and physical resources. The local governments were not operating policies with clear educational goals, but were focusing on temporary and exhibitory aspects rather than practical ones. Even though schools have the primary responsibility for multicultural education, it was found that they do not have the capacity to deal with this issue due to lack of professionalism in the area (Park & Seong 2008).

During the second year, various on-site issues have been found out and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has started accepting multicultural education policies. In fact, it was especially difficult to deal with this issue in the past, since multicultural/ multiracial family issues had been complicated by a mixture of problems occurring in different fields including public health, human rights, and education. For these reasons, multicultural education policies have been duplicated among government agencies, centers, regional governments, NGOs and schools. In turn, multicultural

education policies have caused political complications and budget inefficiency. During the second year, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has shifted its focus to multicultural education and policies at schools. They have also been putting effort into gathering various opinions around multicultural education that was dispersed throughout different societal areas. In order to accomplish this, various multicultural educational programs have been developed and implemented in the field through reinforcing the research functions of the National Center for Multicultural Education at SNU and other regional core research centers and analyzing foreign policy case studies and developing human resources who will be responsible for multicultural education at schools (core teacher development) (Park et al. 2008).

During the third year, on-site multicultural policies were implemented based on the research accomplishments in the past. Especially, multicultural education teacher development and mentoring programs that were high in practicality have been distributed widely and the implementation strategies for multicultural education have been established around the city and provincial offices of education.

The policies operated during the past three years have brought positive changes in the field of multicultural education. The major accomplishment was having created more detailed program operation through removing confusions in strategies, operation entities and goals of multicultural education while propelling policy issues. The strong will of the central government for operation and support has catalyzed the research among the core center and regional centers. They have also flourished the discussions among related academia, thus, contributing in promoting dialogues regarding multicultural education overall.

Along with the positive changes, however, there have also been negative changes as well. It is assumed that these problems have occurred due to the fact that these policies are all unprecedented, and this fundamental policy limit from the central government should be considered. These policies can only focus on general issues at the national level rather than on understanding and caring for specific issues. However, problems regarding multicultural education embrace a great variation depending on individual school's characteristics, multiracial family students' background variables. For example, some regions have high interest in multicultural education because there is a large number of immigrant population (e.g., Ansan City in Kyungki Province). On the other hand, other regions do not even feel the need for multicultural education because there are no multiracial or immigrant family students. Moreover, some multiracial family students are born in Korea so they have no difficulty in speaking the language, while others enter the country during their adolescence and have trouble even with the most basic communication.

Other issues are around the limits of the policy entity, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The targets of the policies from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology are the regional school district offices and schools. Therefore, the multiracial family children, parents and educational programs that are outside the physical boundary of schools are in fact hid behind the blind spots of these policies. The problem occurs when the actual multicultural education issues are not only manifested at schools but also visible outside schools. The multicultural education issues occurring beyond the scope of the school system need to be addressed with various policy entities' cooperation and mutual interactions. However, the efforts have not yielded desirable results so far. Some of the urgent educational issues are presented in the following chapter.

### **Multicultural education demands for *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children***

Based on these critical points, 'the research on educational support strategies for accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children' holds great importance (Seong et al. 2010). First, accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children are policy target population who require special attention rather than general attention at the national level. The past policies and research only looked at the marriage immigrant family students and labor immigrant family students when dealing with issues around multicultural (multiracial) or immigrant families. However, the accompanied/midway arrival immigrant children are different from them in that they were not born in Korea and have entered the country following their parents, or have come upon the invitation of their parents who have already been living in Korea. The educational issue around this particular population is a complex and specific one that cannot be explained by the existing dichotomous model of categorizing the multicultural population as either being marriage immigrants or labor immigrants.

First, the age of the midway-arrival immigrants has a great influence on education. Those who enter the country at a relatively young age may adapt to the Korean society easily. However, those who enter during their adolescence may experience more difficulties in adjusting to the new culture.

Second, in the case of accompanied/midway-arrival, their family members have suddenly changed. Due to this reason, there may be additional conflicts in their own families. It is usually not a problem, if the foreign parents invited the children from their country of origin. However, when the marriage immigrant husband or wife invites their children who were born from their marriage with their previous spouse, it may easily cause familial conflicts. In fact, problems such as these do call for family disintegration at times.

Third, problems regarding legal status occur as well. The accompanied/midway-arrival immigrants usually receive the F-1 visa (visiting co-habitation visa) that only guarantees residence and prevents them from receiving any other social benefits. Currently, there is no statistical data that specifically shows the current state of the multicultural family children's accompanied/midway-arrival immigrants. Therefore, the current research has attempted an analysis on the F-1 visa immigrants through annual and monthly statistical reports from the data on immigration and policies for foreigners collected by the Ministry of Justice. Moreover, we have attempted to find out the families with accompanied/midway-arrival immigrants among the current multicultural families by adding to the data from complete enumeration survey on multicultural family reality conducted by Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2009. After examining the F-1 visa immigrants' current status, we have learned that the number of F-1 visa immigrants is increasing. Furthermore, countries such as China, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam and Russia show high number of F-1 immigrants. Overall, there are greater numbers of women than men, which shows many cases of marriage immigration. After examining the research from the Ministry of Public Administration and Security on different types, nationality, and gender of foreign residents in 2009, the portion of the foreign population which includes the accompanied/midway-arrival immigrants in their families amounts to 9.7% of the entire foreign residents in Korea. This is a 79.4% increase from 2008. Especially because

foreigner residents' children below the age of 7-12 are 86.3%, the educational support of the young children is desperately needed.

Given these three factors, it seems natural that the educational problems that these accompanied/midway-arrival immigrants face have been hid behind the blind spots of policies. However, there have been continuous requests for necessary on-site policy alternatives for them. It is true that the policies from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology did not put the fullest effort into bringing out alternative policies by merely focusing on general issues at the national level and school-focused multicultural education. However, we cannot put this problem aside when the number of this population is growing fast. This should be an important opportunity for turning the quantitative expansion into the qualitative intensification of the policies of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

### **How to meet the educational demands for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*: Language education and tailored programs**

The use of the term “accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children” may be unfamiliar to many. However, this population, part of *multicultural family (immigrant) children*, has gradually been increasing in number in the current Korean society. Since these children display different characteristics from the *marriage immigrant children* who were born in Korea, the same educational programs cannot be applied to both groups. As a result, the demands for multicultural education for *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* have occurred, and the development and implementation of appropriate educational programs and policies for this population became urgent. The current study examined this newly emerging population in depth by analyzing various statistical data. Based on this analysis, a conference was held for the teachers who work with the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* at various schools including alternative schools for multiracial or immigrant children and schools that offer special classes for this population. The data for this study was collected on *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children's* needs and demands that are essential for multicultural education during the beginning stage of their immigration into the Korean society.

According to the data, there is an immense need for a systematic analysis on the reality of the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*. Even for this study, multiple attempts were made to gather any data on this population using multicultural family fact findings, statistical data on immigration and policies for foreigners collected by the existing organizations such as the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and Ministry of Justice. However, there were no data that explicitly captured the current situation of the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* and, thus, we could only draw hypothetic conclusions from the existing research. In order to prepare for educational policy alternatives, the primary task should be to examine the reality of the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* based on accurate understanding of their statistics. The second point mentioned in the data is the need for a designated management of the stronghold schools for *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*. The data also suggest that there are almost no alternative schools that recognize the unique qualities of the multiracial or immigrant students and offer education from elementary through high school. Moreover, since many of these schools are managed by donations

and support from religious organizations, there is a possibility that their systems may not operate properly due to external causes such as lack of teachers and budget deficit (cf. Oh, 2010). Even worse, while many of these *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* are school-aged, there are not many schools that are ready to offer admissions to these children. A number of them do not end up obtaining the Korean nationality, which continues to thwart them from receiving proper school education. Therefore, stronghold schools that help these children's initial stage of immigration should be established in respective regions so that these students could be eventually admitted or transferred to regular schools without difficulties.

Thirdly, there should be unique educational programs for *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* that are different from the ones that have generally been used for the existing *multiracial or multicultural family children*. The *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* display different characteristics from other multicultural children who were born in Korea. Moreover, there are differences in school adjustment patterns depending on their time/age of accompanied/midway-arrival to Korea. Some of them may have already started receiving formal education and forming their national and self-identity from their country of origin based on the societal and cultural background of the respective countries. This cognitive, emotional and psychological development could, in turn, heighten the confusion and anxiety at the time of their arrival (Short 2010). The students who arrive before the age of adolescence (during the elementary school) often regain security in the Korean society and become adjusted quite easily. On the other hand, students who arrive after the age of adolescence tend to display much slower rate of adjustment and acquisition of Korean. Due to these difficulties in adjustment as well as confusion and anxiety in the new society, some of them do not attend schools and end up wandering around or staying home to help with housekeeping work, not being able to participate in any social activities. Consequently, among the multiracial children or children of immigrants, a closer attention and a broader perspective are required for these *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* than the existing ones who were born in Korea. For more specific responses to the current situation, educational programs that help these students with their identity development and psychological security should be provided. For those who have already adjusted to the language of their origin, opportunities for them to learn Korean systematically as a second language (KSL) should be available.

Furthermore, since the educational programs for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* have not been systemized by age, they require reorganization. The existing Korean educational programs have been developed according to students' age. If the same standards were applied to *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*, it would be difficult for them to become adjusted to the current educational programs. Therefore, even for other multicultural or multiracial children, there is a strong need to develop appropriate programs for different age groups and qualities. For example, as mentioned earlier, for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* who have already acquired the culture and language in their country of origin, their education should receive special attention that is distinguished from the one received by other multiracial children born in Korea. For those who are at the age of adolescence, there should be a greater educational emphasis on developing self-identity and the ability to form social relationships than those who are below the age of adolescence. Moreover, the current school programs for the multiracial family students should be examined further. Nowadays,



schools tend to focus on English for the bilingual education requirement. However, this may merely be an alternative exit for solving problems such as lack of human resources for bilingual education. For these reasons, professional teacher development for [heritage] language education is immediately called for in order to carry out effective bilingual education for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*.

Oh (2010) suggests operating classes on Korean language acquisition and Korean school adjustment as a stepping stone, specifically for the students who do not speak fluent Korean language. Through operating these stepping stone classes, students should be able to receive a 1:1 personalized education that suits their Korean language level and learning ability. For these classes, differentiated educational curriculum for each level should be developed. Furthermore, taking into account the unique qualities of the multicultural children including their experience of living abroad and their level of Korean language, a reference to the “*no-grade-level operation*” may be necessary in order to make graded education easier. Here, “*no-grade-level operation*” would need to examine the way in which it chooses one’s grade level depending on students’ time of arrival and educational level.

In order to enhance personality development and self-esteem of the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children*, effort should be put into creating a cooperative and integrative learning environment with the current Korean students. It can be done by cultivating students’ affect through strengthening the arts and physical education sector such as fine arts, music, and physical education.

The fourth point to make is the need for providing education not only for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* but also for their parents (Cho, 2007; Lee et al, 2009). Recently, the number of *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* has been increasing as many children come after their parent who got remarried in Korea. As they arrive in Korea, these children encounter great anxiety upon the arrival of a new country on top of an already stressful new environment, a remarried family. All of these factors accumulate into a massive amount of stress, and sometimes it can be even worse because it is highly likely that these children are going through a major emotional and cognitive development during this time. In order to help the situation, education is necessary for both the children and the parents. These educational programs should provide information on what parents need to know in order to support children’s emotional security and their school admissions, career development and socialization. Most of the times, both the mother and the father of *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* need to work because these families are often economically disadvantaged, which makes it even more difficult for them to find resources for their children’s education. In response to this demand, providing information on how to transfer or be admitted to schools as well as giving a general picture of children’s school days would be essential. By educating parents on parents’ role and family environment in remarried families, the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children’s* socialization in the Korean society upon the arrival in a new country would become much easier.

Another point is the need for counseling programs to assist for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children’s* emotional security. Some of these children may have immigrated to Korea after their socialization strategies have already been developed in their country of origin. Additionally, many of them have come to Korea through adoption



of parents' remarriage. Due to these factors, and especially if these children are in their adolescence, their psychological and emotional anxiety would peak around the time of their first arrival. Consequently, it is urgently required that school counselors be distributed through counseling support programs for the *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* so that their confusions created while maintaining their identity and adjusting to the Korean society would be reduced.

Finally, government support for the education of *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* would be crucial. Currently, many of the schools that *accompanied/midway-arrival immigrant children* attend are non-authorized alternative schools. Besides, many of these children are not able to obtain admissions even to these schools and be prevented from receiving higher education. This is because these schools do not have special teachers to meet the needs for these children and also because they are worried that these children would drop school's educational achievement level. In practical response to this situation, 'consigned alternative schools' can be suggested. This system will be carried out by leaving students' records in regular schools and having the students attend alternative schools in order to develop necessary skills to eventually receive standard education from regular schools. This would be a sensible strategy that considers both the school and the students.

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