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Number 2 of selected publications

Chung, S., 2022. "An Autoethnography of a Teacher's Efforts for the Children of North Korean Defectors". *Munhwagyoryuwa Tamunhwagyoyuk, 11*(3), 485-511. ISSN 2765-5040 (written in English)

Only for the part including the journal information, consistent of 5 pages.

Incheon, Republic of Korea, 26/06/2023

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* The original text follows directly after the translated version.

(Cover Page)

CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

May, 2022

CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Vol 11. No. 3

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Cultural Exchange and Multicultural Education

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An Autoethnography of a Teacher's Efforts for the Children of North Korean Defectors

Somin Chung[*]

ABSTRACT

With regard to immigration, the migrants that reflect the uniqueness of the South Korean context are North Korean defectors. The Ministry of Education established the "Education Support Project for North Korean Defector Students" in response to the increased number of North Korean defectors and their children in South Korean classrooms. Since the mid-2000s, each public school has been allocated funds to conduct a project for students identified as North Korean defectors or their children. This study examines the educational practices of an elementary school teacher who is on the front lines of implementing educational agendas, as well as the challenges that arise as a result of structural constraints. As a teacher-researcher, drawing on autoethnography by borrowing Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic violence as the theoretical lens, I illustrate the invisible structural constraints inherent in educational practices with respect to the children of North Korean defectors. This paper also explores how caring teachers might be victimized in public education as well as how the educational practices are transformed into individualized caring activities. By critically reflecting on such personal educational experiences, the researcher attempts to call into question the educational practices that many teachers take for granted.

Key words Autoethnography, North Korean Defector Students, Bourdieu's Concepts, Multicultural Education

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I. Introduction

As the numbers of international marriages and migrant workers (including their children) has increased since the 1990s in South Korea, significant changes have developed in the field of education, for example, the incorporation of new terms such as "multicultural students". In addition to migrant workers and married migrants, another type of migrant found in South Korea that arises from its unique regional characteristics is the North Korean defector. Unlike other immigrants, North Korean defectors automatically earn legal citizenship when they enter South Korea, as stipulated by Article 3 of the Constitution: "The territory of Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean Peninsula and its islands". Around 1,500 North Korean defectors per year have entered South Korea since the mid-1990s. Of these, more than 70 percent are female, and most come to Korea via third countries such as China (Korea Hana Foundation, 2021). As a result, the number of defectors who bring along children born in a third country is increasing.

〈Table 1〉 The number of North Korean defector children (Ministry of Education, 2021)

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
total #	2,183	2,475	2,517	2,538	2,538	2,531	2,437	2,287
Percentage of born in 3rd country (%)	44.8	50.5	52.3	56.6	60.3	61.2	62.8	65.5

The development of the concept of education welfare lead to the "Education Welfare Priority Aid(교육복지우선지원사업)", implemented in 2003 (KEDI, 2008). This project is designed to provide comprehensive support to improve the quality of life and academic achievements of vulnerable groups of students. Initially, the project was aimed at students from low-income families, but gradually expanded to encompass a wide range of marginalized groups. Students from multicultural families and "North Korean defector students"(hereafter, NKDS) were regarded as marginalized groups in terms of education policy. As a result, subordinate projects were designed to provide them with educational support. The Ministry of Education

launched a project called the "Education Support Project for the North Korean defector students(탈북학생 교육지원 사업, hereafter, NKDS Education Support Project)" in 2009 in order to assist North Korean defector students in their assimilation into South Korean society (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2014).

As shown in Table 1, the category of NKDS has diversified due to a growing influx of children born in third countries. Nevertheless, NKDS Education Support Project is based on nationalism.

Although the North Korean defectors have some multicultural characteristics in that they had lived in different life modes in accordance with different political system, we cannot say they are inherently multicultural families in terms of the reunification of the two Koreas. The North Korean defectors are the future reunification resources in that they can play a leading role to build a reunified Korea returning to their home when the two Koreas are reunited (Ministry of Unification, 2017: 12).

NKDS Education Support Project aims to help all NKDS to settle down in society in a stable manner by finding their dreams and talents. It also aims to foster them as personalized human resources after the reunification (Ministry of Education, 2014).

As shown above, the education policy for NKDS is justified in the context of the reunification discourse, which is related to the separation between the education policy for NKDS and the multicultural education policy. In other words, North Korean defectors are perceived as being assimilated into South Korea as "compatriots" who share the same blood. This logic is applied equally to the education of their children. The children born to North Korean defectors in third countries also fall under the category of NKDS in the education policy. The policy calls for comprehensive perspectives in the discussion of education for NKDS (Chung & Yoon, 2016). As Kang et al. (2014) reported, some of NKDS possessed transnational identities, in that the NKDS consist of disparate groups. This finding introduces a shift in the view of assimilation for NKDS who are believed to accept

South Korean culture and values without question.

Reports have shown that many NKDS have difficulties with studying, developing peer relations, and establishing a career path. The learning gap, language barriers, and poor institutional supports have been pinpointed as some of the roots of these problems (Jeong, Jeong, & Yang, 2004; Kim, 2009; Lee, 2002). Although discussions surrounding these issues could help develop educational measures to support NKDS, there is a limit to the effectiveness of such measures as they do not address the structural limitations surrounding the individuals. Also, they focus mostly on the various aspect of personal deficit occurred during the process of migration and socializing (Chung & Yoon, 2016).

Over 10 years have passed since two separate education policies—the multicultural education and NKDS Education Support Project—have been implemented in public schools. Since education welfare projects use a selective approach—of providing intensive services to specific groups—problems of stigmatization have inevitably been raised. Many researchers have pointed out that the labeling of "multicultural students" through the introduction of multicultural education in schools, generated limitations on the type of educational aid provided to certain kinds of students. Beyond asserting blame, how can we explain that these types of educational practices still exist?

Public schools generally handle multicultural education and the NKDS Education Support Project in a hybrid form beyond separate educational agendas. In addition, public school teachers' roles include not only teaching in class but also managing and handling the assigned tasks as administrators. Teachers' educational practices are influenced by the social systems and structures in which they are performed, rather than by entirely independent choices. Accordingly, questions arise as to what happens to the educational practices of teacher in charge of assisting NKDS as part of the NKDS Education Support Project, and what kind of educational practices are imposed by the surrounding structure?

Based on these critical and reflective questions, autoethnography appeared to be a way for me to examine more closely and vividly at the taken-for-granted mundane processes and practices at school as a teacher. This paper aims to

challenge to reveal how a caring teacher can contribute to the oppression of culturally devalued and excluded students as well as how educational practices are transformed into individualized caring activities.

Ⅱ. Bourdieusian concepts as a theoretical lens

Bourdie's habitus is a concept that connects social structures and individual practices to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the two. It helps us to understand the persistent structure of values and attitudes accumulated in "a habitual state". Habitus means "a system of dispositions" and "a way of being" (Bourdieu, 1977: 214), not a personal habit. According to Bourdieu's theory, an individual acquires habitus from an objective structure, and this acquired habitus produces personal practices of the actor.

> Each agent … is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. … The schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation. … One of the fundamental affects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning of practices and the world. … The homogeneity of habitus is what … causes prctices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted (Brourdieu, 1977: 79-80).

Accordingly, despite the fact that the practice of actions is strategically intended, it is carried out under the influence of the actors' propensity or preference by the embodied habitus.

In Bourdieu's philosophy, symbolic violence is embedded in an individual's habitus. Symbolic violence is "exerted for the most part … through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition … recognition or even feeling" (Bourdieu, 2001: 2). As symbolic violence is subtle, insidious, and concealed, the actors cannot recognize the symbolic violence that exists in the fields of everyday

life. Its invisibility demonstrates how social hierarchies and inequities are perpetuated and gradually accepted by symbolic domination rather than physical force. That is, domination resulting from symbolic violence is the result of those who are dominated ceasing to question established power relations because individuals regard the world and social practices as natural, immutable, and predetermined. Since a way of being that is experienced seems to be legitimate, individuals do not question their own involvement in the production and reproduction of domination and subordination (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

In particular, Bourdieu stresses the use of habitus as a conceptual tool for empirical studies. Although it is important to consider that individuals act with subjectivity to create their own world, habitus, as a conceptual tool suggested by Bourdieu, emphasizes the way in which the structure of the world is affected by more macroscopic relationships (Reay, 2004: 439). In this respect, habitus is a useful tool for analyzing the actor's experience and the structure that enables it. For Bourdieu, the actor is an autonomous entity that has the potential to create new products using different strategies in their fields (i.e., networks). However, rather than being a simply network, it is a stage upon which people choose an act and practice based on the constantly embodied propensity within the relationships to which they are connected.

Bourdieu (1993: 271) comments that "one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality". As the social world consists of more than individuals, social systems are not merely collections of individuals. In this sense, in order to glimpse the inmost "empirical reality" of education for these culturally devalued and excluded students, I have adopted Bourdieu's way of asking questions about obscured everyday practices.

Ⅲ. Research Methodology

1. Research context

I, as an autoethnographer, am an elementary school teacher with 10 years of teaching experience(as of 2018). After receiving my doctorate degree, I became a qualitative researcher advocating for critical multicultural education and critical pedagogy. I took a break from teaching for three and a half years but was reinstated in September 2017. Following the departure of a teacher who was in charge of the NKDS Education Support Project and multicultural education at the elementary school, I was assigned to work on those projects from September 1, 2017, to February 9, 2018. I was also a homeroom teacher of 23 fourth-graders.

The elementary school was a small-scale school with 17 total classes, located in new town of Zone A in Rainbow City; this name is a pseudonym, as are all the names appearing in this text. Due to the construction of apartments near the school, the nearby population grew. The apartments ranged from small-sized rental apartments constructed by the government to those constructed and supplied by private companies. In Rainbow City, the population of North Korean defectors is the third largest in the country. Zone B of Rainbow city, adjacent to Zone A, has a residential community for North Korean defectors and a public elementary school with the highest attendance rate for NKDS among schools in Rainbow City. Although they can receive government subsidies as low-income residents in an enclave of Zone B, there is apparently an increasing tendency for some to move to nearby towns for better educational opportunities for their children and to escape their neighbor's prejudices (personal communication, Feb 21, 2018). It is based on information given by a professor who joined in an expert examination for this study. He has lived in Zone A of Rainbow City since 2007 and has studied the North Korean defector community.

2. Autoethnography and research procedures

Being at the forefront of the education, teachers can understand the context of the site in-depth and express it vividly as insiders. I conducted an autoethnography in order to transform my personal narrative of managing the NKDS Education Support Project into a "scholarly personal narrative" (Kim & Lee, 2011). Autoethnography is suitable as a research method for this topic as the teacher, who has these vivid experiences on the research site, becomes both a researcher and a research participant. Based on the post-modern philosophical perspective that experiences do not come from a social vacuum, this research method emphasizes the voice of the individual and reflexivity (Duncan, 2004; Wall, 2008). Even if the outside researcher conducting a traditional ethnography tries rigorously to become familiar with something unfamiliar or to become unfamiliar with something familiar, the reality can be reduced in the process of analysis and interpretation (Kim & Lee, 2011: 6).

In contrast, the autoethnography provides a critical description of subjective experiences and reflections of the researcher, thereby contributing to a theoretical and practical understanding of aspects of the life of a social, cultural, and political being (Jones, 2005). Autoethnography allows socio-cultural analysis and interpretation of the individual life stories by critically describing the reflective experiences of the self in culture. As an elementary school teacher, I analyze and interpret not only the experiences directly related to the NKDS Education Support Project but also the various experiences surrounding the schooling.

Data collection was carried out from August 22, 2017, to February 9, 2018, using the methods outlined by Duncan (2004) and Chang (2008). For personal internal materials, I have compiled personal memory, self-reflection, and field notes for observation, totaling 33 pages in word program with font-size 10. These internal data are vulnerable to reliability issues, as they rely on the researcher's personal memories. To compensate for this weakness, cultural artifacts and literature were used to connect individual internal data to the external world. For example, I collected 40 instances of phone calls and text messages with the mothers of NKDS,

approximately 109 samples of officially approved documents and papers related to the NKDS Education Support Project, an academic calendar, 20 pages of memos, textbooks for fourth grade, 10 cases of written data issued by the Ministry of Education and of Unification, and 23 examples of class activities (images and videos) and other materials.

To analyze the data, I tried to extract the Critical Incidents, a method Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) proposed to visualize symbolic violence. The research results were narrated using descriptive-realistic writing and analytical-interpretive writing, among the four methods of autographic writing presented by Chang (2008). By presenting personal experience as the way it is through descriptive and factual writing, and analyzing these experiences through theoretical lenses, I attempted to connect personal narratives with macroscopic socio-cultural discourse.

As Judith (2017) discussed, there are tricky ethical challenges in conducting autoethnography. As my own name is revealed, it is especially difficult to protect the anonymity of the people and places in this study. Therefore, this manuscript was written in 2018, but I deliberately delayed the publication of the manuscript a few years later. Obtaining consent was ethically problematic on two fronts: because the study included the stories of children and because it raised issues of power relations. I repeatedly reexamined and made ethical decisions about what should be said and what left unsaid, focusing on the disclosure of my innermost feelings, thoughts, and reflections as a teacher.

To ensure the authenticity of the study, the data and conclusions were examined by three fellow teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience and experience of managing the NKDS Education Support Project or multicultural education. These teachers discussed how useful the findings were. In addition, to minimize the subjectivity of and distortion by the researcher, the result and process of the research was examined by two qualitative Post-doctor researchers and a professor who is a qualitative research expert and has published many papers on multicultural education and education for NKDS.

Ⅳ. Educational Issues and Dilemmas

1. Bureaucratic labeling without critical consciousness

Public schooling in Korea is government-led, and all public teachers are national government officials who have government-approved teaching certificates and have passed the national examination for teacher recruitment. When the Ministry of Education announces national curriculum or presents its educational policies, the local Education Offices provide specific guidelines based on the policies to the district schools. In this sense, the teachers are at the forefront of implementing government-led education policies and curriculum.

Five students were reported to be NKDS out of approximately 300 in my school, and the school received 800,000 Won per student from the local Education Office. While the label used for the budget by the school's accounting department was "Reduction of Educational Disparity Support Project", official documents from the local Education Office included "NKDS". Therefore, among school officials, this assigned task was referred to as "T'albuk" in Korean, short for NKDS, which literally means "Defection from North Korea". Students were then referred to as "T'albuk" or "NKDS" by teachers.

The task name originated out of bureaucratic convenience for school officials to clarify the source of the budget. When drafting a document on spending expenses to cover the school's budget, I had to obtain approval from four officials: the chief of administration, department head teacher, vice-principal, and principal. Even though I suspected that the term "T'albuk" was inappropriate, for ease of communication, I could not help but use it when conversing with school staff. Eventually, it was explained that naming the work "T'albuk", whether done intentionally or not, was not a rational practice, but rather a behavior affected by structural factors. These factors included customs of the educational authorities, in particular, using "NKDS" on their official documents, and for the convenience of budget recipients, as such an explicit label made it easier to effectively implement their duties. In this way, I became an actor for habitus as a teacher working within

bureaucratic school cultures.

On the other hand, except when talking with school staff, I did not use the term "NKDS" when writing school letters or talking with parents on the phone. Instead, I used the term "Academic Support Project". The term "Reduction of Educational Disparity Support Project" was also not used as it seemed to be addressing the economic status of the task targets.

The term "NKDS" was frequently used in titles and text in the school letters produced in the first semester. Whenever I handed out school letters to certain students in the classroom, curious students near them approached and, wondering about its contents, asked "What is it?" By using "NKDS" in school letters, it cannot be ruled out that the information on NKDS was exposed against their will. For this reason, I tried not to use the term "NKDS" in school letters. For example, I deliberately used the word "Academic Support" in order to avoid using "NKDS", but while approving the document, one official changed the term to "NKDS" in order to clarify the target of the school letter.

It was a force of habit for a teacher who embodied a bureaucratic public school culture. However, when repeated, the students were tagged as "NKDS" and alienated, and eventually, the administrators and teachers became complicit in promoting an oppressive structure. Even though teachers who used "NKDS" in school letters did not intend to distinguish this group of students with prejudice, their practices may have functioned to put pressure and prejudice onto the students. As Bourdieu asserts, the habitual practice was not chosen strategically for a rational reason. As in the above example, such practices are automatically and unconsciously practiced by persons whose individual history, environment, and experiences help precondition them to carry them out. In the light of the unintentional characteristic of habitual practices, those that enact those practices are not aware of the practice as such and feel no guilt when employing them.

Although the composition of students targeted by the NKDS Education Support Project varies, all target students were tagged as "NKDS" because of the name of the project. With respect to the elementary school, only one student, Hana, can be referred to as "NKDS" because two of the five (Duna and Sena) were born in and

have lived in South Korea, and the other two(Hansol and Dusol) were born in and had lived in China. Of the two born in China, one (Dusol) can speak only Chinese, and the other (Hansol) speaks Korean even though he was born and raised in China. During the first semester, three students (Hana, Duna, and Sena) were reported as NKDS, and funds were allocated to the school. During the second semester, an additional fund was allocated to the school as two more students (Hansol and Dusol) were reported as NKDS.

How did Duna and Sena, who were born and raised in South Korea, feel when, in their first semester, they received school letters that included the term "NKDS"? They are technically unsuitable for this project, but they were included due to a misunderstanding of the project by the first semester's teacher. It continued into the second semester because the budget had already been received and implemented. They were less likely to participate in the programs funded by the budget, and I suspect that a sense of self-stigma had some effect. Hansol came to know that his mother was from North Korea after he came to South Korea. The fact that it took a long time for a mother to identify herself as North Korean even to her child suggests that the term "NKDS" should be handled delicately.

Although Hansol attended the elementary school during the first semester, the school did not receive special funding for him because the previous teacher did not know his mother was from North Korea. Dusol enrolled in the school in mid-September, and his homeroom teacher did not have any idea where his mother was from, but, when I asked, the homeroom teacher said he seemed to be NKDS. Because at least one parent must be from North Korea in order to receive support from the project, I had to call and ask them carefully "Did you come from North Korea?" Both of their mothers answered yes, then I explained that their children could receive support if they agreed to report their children's information to the local Education Office. I wondered, though, why do I have to call and ask for this information directly, even though information regarding the North Korean Defectors is managed by the government? According to Buroudie's theory, distinction is established naturally without recognizing whether it is the result of the ruling groups' power performance. Moreover, it is maintained and internalized by

collusion and accommodation of the ruled groups. Whether intended or not, by informing the parents that the direct disclosure of their origins is the precondition for receiving support for their children, a power disparity transpires. This contributes to the natural acceptance of labeling the children "NKDS".

After confirming the children's status, I never mentioned "North Korean Defectors" in phone calls to the parents, using instead "Academic support". When asking the parents' opinions in an end-of-the-year questionnaire regarding not using the word "NKDS", all of the parents answered that they were "very satisfied", and one parent explained:

> I like it because a specific kid is not singled out. (Feb.8.18, the parents' questionnaire)

With respect to labeling NKDS, I have used fluctuating strategies by using the term generally accepted by the school staff as well as the alternative term for parents and the students. These strategies were either unconsciously or consciously conducted. I followed the tacit naming convention for efficiency and excellence in task operations in the highly bureaucratic school culture. At the same time, the intentional naming was selected to avoid an imbalance of power. This effort has been limited by the fact that I have not been able to reach an agreement on the use of the alternative term with the school officials, by responding passively.

2. Personalized caring practices

As the Educational District Office requires a final report on NKDS Education Support Project implementation, which evinces that the balance of the project budget is zero, teachers who are in charge of the assigned tasks feel burdened. Therefore, the project is often organized to offer one-off out-of-school activities as a facile method to decrease vexatious budgetary concerns. For example, the year plan for the project designed by the former teacher included supplementary lessons after school, trips to a musical theater or Chinatown, and some arts and crafts

classes.

Since I was skeptical of a one-off event for a cultural experience, I decided to revise the plans and open a Chinese class to improve the bilingual ability of the two students from China. I also employed a Chinese-speaking Korean language instructor for Dusol by applying for additional funds. However, the administrative procedures in selecting out of school instructors and managing the program were very complicated and involved in a lot of paperwork. From September to December 2017, I wrote 46 documents and 55 attachments. In addition to those 101 official documents, I included unofficial documents, such as a timetable, producing on average one document per day. Bureaucratic administrative procedures in which all communication is carried out through documentation and approvals led me to physical and mental exhaustion. Furthermore, I also had to make extra personal efforts to manage a program. In order to avoid these complex and tiresome administrative procedures, teachers tend to prefer one-off events and, as a result, are not able to provide individualized educational support to meet each student's needs.

With respect to Hansol, even though he spoke Korean well, his pronunciation was not clear. According to his homeroom teacher from the first semester, when he spoke in public, his classmates said, "What is he talking about?" Later on, it became a habit, and his classmates gave up on trying to understand what he was saying. This problem continued into the second semester. I recognized the serious nature of this problem and searched for proper assistance for him. While I was surfing the net on the language clinic, I found a program called "Articulatory therapy". However, his parents could not take him to the language clinic. His father worked as a day laborer on construction sites and, as a result, leaves the house for several days at a time. His mother usually left work at 8 p.m. I gained approval for a business trip in order to take Hansol to the language clinic in my own vehicle every Thursday. In this way, educational support for NKDS sometimes requires a variety of resources that cannot be covered within the school.

As Hansol's circumstances revealed, in the midst of utilizing a variety of resources, a teacher not only encounters the structural constraints in the field of

education but also faces the structural problems in society. The fact that Hansol's parents could not take him to the language clinic is not just a personal problem as these precarious job positions, which may require employees to work late into the evening, are related to the nation's job structure, which is a problem outside of the education realm. Therefore, this problem should be transformed into a matter of welfare and social structural changes. As the duty of welfare is imposed on schools, however, and individual teachers have to perform those welfare tasks, the teachers must fill gaps caused by problems outside of schools. In this context, the teacher places herself within the role of providing caring for the students.

This role of the teacher is also reinforced by institutional factors within the school. For example, I planned a special program for NKDS for a week during winter vacation, which included taking them to the cinema. Initially, I planned for the program to include many other students to give the NKDS a chance to get along with their non-NKDS classmates. However, due to the complex administrative protocol for student safety, I took only Hana, Hansol, and their two friends, as I could only fit four students my car. When I bought tickets in the cinema, Minho asked me, "Why did you bring only us?" I was suddenly speechless, answering "Because you guys studied hard and were good students." This scenario shows how the educational action of a teacher can transform into a personal level of care.

Similar to the instance above, the day after watching the movie, I went to the convenience store in front of the school with Hana and Hansol to buy some snacks. Hana said, "You paid for us yesterday. You don't need to pay for us today." I answered, "It's okay. I paid them with the money from school." I could not explain to her what kind of money it was. Should welfare for the minority be the object of gratitude? If they are appreciative, should the target for gratitude be the schools or society? However, as the caring practice was the teacher's choice, it was the teacher who received praise and gratitude. For instance, the Korean language instructor praised me, saying "You are great. I was surprised to see you try so hard for one student." The director of language clinic said, "How great you are. I hope Hansol will appreciate your efforts." Hansol's mother sent me a thank you message every Thursday.

The problems students face are not just matters of personal deficiency, as they are also related to the social structure. Nevertheless, as the institutional logic transforms the problem into a matter that individuals must solve with the assistance of a caring teacher, the teacher reproduces these structures by becoming an actor who practices caring for students rather than engaging in painful struggles against the social structures. The teacher perceives institutional limits, encounters inconsistency with institutional practices, and doubts the legitimacy of these practices. This is a critical point to understanding how the teacher is involved in symbolic violence. The teacher has a significant responsibility for these students, which not only obscures the symbolically violent institutionalizing practices, but also drives the teacher to ponder what more could have been done for those students, positioning oneself within an ethic of caring.

3. Disjunction between reflection and teaching activities

Schools with fewer teachers usually combine tasks that seem to have similar characteristics. My duties included, as written on the paper issued by school, Multicultural Education (including NKDS Education Support), Reunification Education, and Democratic Education. What is the scope of responsibility for the teacher who takes charge of these three organically related duties?

I often observed problems faced by my students while teaching. It is worth noting that such reflections are only practiced as personalized caring actions, but are not converted into teaching activities. The problems that students faced were linked to cultural differences and identity matters arising from the issues related to their migration experiences and their lack of common cultural and human networks rather than from their personal qualities. For example, when Hana and Hansol were asked about the difficulties they faced in Korea, they answered that they did not know how to make friends. In their own language, they stated "what the other children play with" or "what kind of dialogue they share."

Hana, who was born and raised in North Korea and came to South Korea in April 2017, attended kindergarten in North Korea until she was six or seven. Until she

came to South Korea, she had not attended school beyond the kindergarten level. Her mother came to South Korea first, and Hana stayed with her grandmother in North Korea. She was actually a year older than the other fourth-graders. Hana deliberately controlled herself in response to the capitalism in Korea and did not even share her real age, even to her best friend. She has told me many times that she behaved differently here than she did in North Korea.

> Hana: I didn't tolerate it when I was in North Korea. But here, I restrain myself.
> Me: Why?
> Hana: In order not to fight.
> Me: Why not?
> Hana: It takes money if I have a fight.
> Me: What do you mean by that?
> Hana: In North Korea, if I fought with my friends, it wasn't my fault, so I had something to say when their parents came to me to claim. But it's a matter of money if I fight here. (Feb. 1. 18, personal memory)

It seems that her previous knowledge, rather than actual experience, has formed her flawed understanding. Before entering Korea, she had stayed in China and met a pastor who may have told her about life in South Korea. In addition, as Park (2016) depicts, it seems that the training in the Settlement Support Center for North Korean Refugees, commonly called Hanawon, and the education in bridge public schools also offer certain information on economic and political systems in the form of warning.

On a different note, Hansol was born in and attended kindergarten and elementary school in China. He was also a year older than the other students. In China, he spoke Korean at school, but he learned Chinese language using Chinese textbooks. In China, he spoke with his friends by mixing Chinese and Korean languages. He was constructing his own identity in fact, he believed that "If you are in China, you are Chinese, and if you are in Korea, you are Korean" (Nov. 3. 17, observation notes). As indicated by this belief and the excerpt below, it seems that his identity was flexible and is also likely to change in the future.

> Me: (…) So do you mean that you used to think you were Korean when you were in China, but you think you are Chinese since you came here?
>
> Hansol: Yes.
>
> Me: Why do you think so?
>
> Hansol: I've been thinking Chinese when I was in China from certain moment.
>
> Me: Since when?
>
> Hansol: When I was asked to have been to Korea, I thought I had never been to Korea, and realized that I was Chinese. Come to think of it, the fact that I had never been to Korea and that I wasn't born in Korea meant that I was Chinese.
>
> Me: I see. Then why do you think you were Chinese when you came here?
>
> Hansol: To give a second thought, I wasn't born here (Jan.8.18, personal memory).

The identity issue was related to Koreanness. In addition, what is often overlooked in the issue of relations between students is that it cannot be solved simply by what students learned from textbooks, "to respect and understand other cultures". In the case of the classroom in my charge, students who lived in the same apartment complex tended to be close friends. For instance, Hana lived in a rental apartment and had only two best friends, and they lived in the same apartment. Hansol also lived in the same apartment as Hana, and had no close friends. There were no boys in my class who lived in the same apartment as Hansol. It is no coincidence that Hana and Hansol lived in rental apartments, considering government policy on housing support for North Korean defectors.

Furthermore, in the daily lives of students, the North Korean leader and the unique North Korean accent often became the objects of amusement. For instance,

> Students washed their hands and lined up in the corridor in order to go to the cafeteria. Some male students in other classes were chatting noisilyin the toilet. The boys in my class standing in front of me were laughing out loud. "Teacher, they are saying 'Kim Il-sung, Kim Il-sung!'" (Feb.6.18, personal memory).

It was a Korean class. The students giggled as I was about to let them

read the textbook. I asked why they laughed. Some boys replied, "The antagonist's name in this book is Jung Eun". I said "Oh, yeah. Let's read another of Jung Eun's story". Children started to read with an impish smile (Dec.7.17, personal memory).

At the end of class, one student said, "I did. I did," with an intonation and style of North Korean. I asked him during a break time, "Why did you suddenly imitate the North Korean way of speaking?" He chuckled, saying nothing (Oct.19.17, personal memory).

These instances may have been indirect threaten against NKDS. However, I responded to them with neglect or avoidance. I wonder why I did not use these moments as opportunities for meaningful educational experiences.

There were frequent media reports on North Korea in 2017 due to the country's missile launches and execution of high-ranking officials. In addition to covering the news, the media has recently invited North Korean defectors for interviews on talk shows. Given that all but one of my students had smart phones, students were readily exposed to this information via the internet and social networking services. This information to which the students had access seemed counter intuitive to what the students learned from the current national elementary curriculum, as the curriculum conveyed support for reunification, while neglecting to include content about North Korea (Kim & Lee 2014). In other words, the curriculum emphasized this vision and the students' will for reunification, but offered limited content regarding North Korean itself or the North Korean socio-political system. Although there is no content directly related to North Korea, the concept of minority is introduced in the fourth-graders' social textbook, using examples of people with disabilities and North Korean defectors. Thus, the curriculum discusses North Korean defectors, but neglects to discuss North Korea as a subject for reunification.

Teachers are allowed to teach content not covered by subject courses; however, the direction of education for North Korea and unification is not free from political influence. For example, Ham and Lee (2016) assert that North Korea has been described as a partner for the reunification since the 2007 national curriculum was revised under the influence of the Rho Muhyon Administration based on the

peaceful coexistence policy and the Inter-Korean Summit. Meanwhile, under the Lee Myongbak Administration, after intense confrontations between North and South, the 2009 national curriculum emphasized security.

Aspects of North Korea that students were curious about had been excluded from the curriculum, but it was not impossible to teach about these matters because there remained some room for teachers' autonomy. Nevertheless, I was not courageous enough to transform those moments into meaningful educational experiences. I also have to admit that I was afraid to deal directly with the issues related to North Korean defectors, feeling burdened that I had to consider ethical issues by having Hana in my class. This shows how a teacher positions oneself in a system that enables and forces the teacher to exist as a teacher who have to follow the national curriculum.

The discrimination and exclusion experienced by North Korean defectors in South Korea is prompted by group-think rather than by individual actions or beliefs, demonstrating the influence of the social structure (Kim, 2014). In an article that analyzes the school curriculum of NKDS education policy research schools, I contended:

> In regular public schools where all kinds of students are taught, beyond providing educational assistance to NKDS only, we need to provide students in mainstream culture with an opportunity to critically reflect on their own perspectives of North Korean defectors and structural constraints surrounding them (Chung & Yoon, 2016: 532).

Ironically, it was difficult to offer those opportunities. At the end of school year, the students were asked what they thought of North Korean defectors most of them considered them to be "Koreans whose hometown was North Korea." As such, it is clear that "the trauma of territorial division and war caused South Koreans to define North Koreans as others by identifying the confrontation between North and South Korea with themselves" (Kim, 2014: 216). That is, the mechanism of establishing North Koreans as others is maintained by internalizing the reality of division on the one hand. On the other hand, the habitus that otherized the North Korean defectors

contributes to reproducing the structure for the mechanism. Because these issues have been excluded from the national curriculum, a teacher finds it difficult to convert her own reflections into educational activities.

Rather than offering students the opportunity to explore closely the social and personal issues they are struggling with that are not appropriately handled in the textbook, the teacher places the burden of caring on oneself by doing administrative duties. Without addressing the very social and systemic processes and ideologies as an educator, the researcher not only feels self-alienation from the ontological reason as an educator, but also unintentionally contributes to hiding institutionalizing practices that need to be questioned. In this sense, the teacher becomes complicit in one's victimization via symbolic violence.

Ⅴ. A few words by way of conclusion

My credo as a teacher in charge of the NKDS Education Support Project was "Do your best for the sake of even one child." This is derived from the philosophy of multicultural education. However, it was the faithfulness and purity of the children that kept me in control when I was shaken by physical fatigue and frustration. Also, I had experienced living abroad apart from my children for one year, I could sympathize with the students who missed their mothers. Their memory of longing for their mother was expressed in their own languages, and I understand that they each stifled the memory in their own way. The empathy I felt is what might have naturally driven me to care for these students.

As Noddings (2005) regards caring as the foundation of a successful education, sincere caring is critical because education is based on human interactions. In addition, as Yoon (2017) reports that elementary school teachers determined that the mentoring program for NKDS had certain positive effects on the targeted students, it is true that these students appeared significantly more stable since the first time I met them.

This study, however, is not claiming that I tried to become a dedicated teacher.

Even if a teacher performs her duties with the best of intentions, the question still remains as to how the choices the teacher makes in the course of her job contribute to the oppression of these students. Even though most educational practices geared toward these culturally devalued students have been reduced into personalized caring practices, I wanted to explore why teachers are rarely suspicious about this and why they regard it as natural, including, remarkably, me before I was awakened by multicultural education concepts. In one sense, this study began with a reflection of my 10 years teaching experiences.

As I discussed above, the educational actions of a teacher are not free from certain educational constraints, including one's own status as national official, the bureaucratic system, and the national educational agenda. The embodied practices of habitus acquired through these factors arise unconsciously and invisibly. Educational issues and dilemmas surrounding assigned tasks on NKDS were connected with the education welfare policy in Korea, especially NKDS Education Support Project. However, from an enlarged perspective, the policy of the NKDS Education Support Project is also based on the macroeconomic and historical context of Korea.

The introduction of the concept of education welfare, paradoxically, coincides with the introduction of neoliberal principles into education in Korea. A way of achieving maximum efficiency on the scant budget provided to support NKDS would be to make the best use of dedicated teachers. In other words, the role that teachers are being compelled to play—that of savior for marginalized children—has gained institutional mandate. In addition, by managing the issues of NKDS under the name of education welfare, the filling of achievement gaps is considered to be an individual effort on the part of teachers. Moreover, the habitual bureaucratic practice of referring to target students by a project's name reflects a socio-structural awareness that considers it natural to distinguish and label these students. The way the students have been labeled separates them from the "we", regarding them as remediable, unlikable, or beneath "our" standards. Even if the teacher in charge of the NKDS Education Support Project provides assistance to the students who are excluded, can we ensure that her assistance successfully achieves the educational

aim that ought to be pursued? In a bureaucratic system, responsibilities are diffuse, divided and assigned to individuals and ultimately held by no one in particular. Oblivious individuals perform assigned duties without animosity but also without seeing clearly that they have anything to do with continuing patterns of oppression.

No matter how dedicated a teacher is to marginalized students, as long as the teacher participates in social systems, one cannot help contributing to the consequences those systems produce. Although Allan (2004) mainly focuses on the perpetuation of privilege, the researcher finds his contention provides a critical message:

> To perpetuate privilege and oppression, we don't even have to do anything consciously to support it. Just our silence is crucial for ensuring its future, for the simple fact is that no system of privilege can continue to exist without most people choosing to remain silent about it (p.88).

As "transformational intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988), one of the teachers' social responsibilities is to teach students how to think critically and to recognize the necessity of striving for a more just society that boosts solidarity with others. Switching from political matters to educational activities is as important as providing care, and it is one of the most creative practices in which teachers can participate. Moreover, this guarantees an ontological reason for their existence.

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〈국문초록〉

한 교사의 탈북학생 교육지원 경험에 대한 자문화기술지

정소민*

　이주와 관련하여, 한국의 독특한 맥락을 보여주는 집단은 북한이탈주민이라고 할 수 있다. 북한이탈주민의 자녀가 교육 현장에 증가함에 따라 교육부는 '탈북학생 교육지원사업'을 수립하였다. 이에 따라 2000년대 중반부터 '탈북학생'으로 보고된 학생이 있는 학교에서는 관련 사업을 수행하기 위한 예산을 책정 받아 운영해 왔다. 이 연구는 이러한 교육 아젠다를 실행하는 최전선에 있는 한 초등학교 교사의 교육적 실천과 실천의 과정 중 구조적 제약으로 인해 직면하게 된 도전들을 탐색하였다. 나는 교사-연구자로서 브루디외의 아비투스와 상징적 폭력을 이론적 렌즈로 하여 자문화 기술지를 수행하였으며, 이를 통해 '탈북학생'과 관련한 교육적 실천에 내재한 불가시적인 구조적 제약을 파헤치고자 했다. 또한 교육자이자 할당된 업무 행정 관리자로서의 이중적 역할을 맡고 있는 공교육 현장의 교사라는 점에서 어떻게 교육적 실천이 개인화된 '돌봄'의 행위로 전환될 수 있으며, 최선을 다해 '돌봄'을 수행한 교사가 어떻게 희생될 수 있는가에 대해 논의하였다. 연구자는 이와 같은 개인적인 교육적 실천 경험을 비판적으로 성찰함으로써 많은 교사들이 당연하게 여기는 교육적 실천들에 대해 의문을 제기하고자 하였다.

주제어 자문화기술지, 탈북학생, 브루디외, 다문화교육

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