

FIVE

Makeshift Multiculturalism

The Transformation of Elementary School Teacher Training

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In this ethnographic study of a South Korean teacher-training university's early adoption of a multicultural curriculum in 2009, we make observations about the manner in which South Korean institutions and individuals are enacting or inhabiting the country's multicultural regime, or what EuyRyung Jun in this volume calls the "*tamunhwa* (multicultural) apparatus," to indicate a state-orchestrated effort at transformation.¹ We observed what we have come to think of as "makeshift multiculturalism," namely, the speedy adoption of a project that is not yet clearly defined or delimited. We analyze the process of election in which institutions, units, and individuals are elected to serve as the vanguard of the promotion of multiculturalism, even as that project remains vague. We found that those elected largely embrace their leadership as a veritable moral calling for a "higher (national) good," even as they are often quite perplexed as to what exactly that calling entails (c.f. "alternative value" in G. S. Han 2007). In the field—in the college classroom, in the activities of a multicultural club, and in a summer grant elementary school mentoring program—we found faculty and students confused about the meaning and mandate of the multicultural project. We found people to be most ambivalent not about their election itself but rather about the bureaucratic organization of the multicultural apparatus—one that sometimes seemed to be antithetical to higher principles. If at some moments the makeshift project seemed to allow for something creative or productive to emerge, at other moments it

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struck some as a fundamentally empty signifier, one that seemed to point to nothing more than the bureaucratic apparatus itself.

An already considerable secondary literature, including a number of chapters in this volume, has variously decried the “hypocrisy,” “paradox,” and “fiction” of South Korea’s multicultural regime as nothing more than a bid for elite global membership (Jun, Lim, and N. Kim in this volume; G. S. Han 2007); an aggressive assimilationist and even violent project masquerading as liberal and enlightened (N. Kim in this volume; Kang 2010; Hong 2010); a program designed to do no more than solve South Korea’s fertility and marriage crises (H. M. Kim 2007; U. Cho 2007) or enhance national security and economy (Watson 2010); and finally as a project that obscures the neediest migrants (e.g., the undocumented, the unmarried, and so on) (N. Kim in this volume). We appreciate these critiques and the careful discourse analysis of the mid-2000s “multicultural explosion” (N. Kim in this volume; Jun in this volume points to 2006 as the moment of explosion; N. Kim in this volume to the 2005–2008 period), but nonetheless argue here that “hypocrisy,” “paradox,” and “fiction” do not entirely do justice to the complicated social field that, as Jun describes in this volume, “has grown to encompass provincial and municipal governments, institutions of higher and secondary education, and a variety of civil society groups and NGOs” (chap. 4). We are thus interested in the often considerable and honest confusion of the scores of South Koreans who have been variously mobilized in the name of multiculturalism. This confusion indexes, we argue, the makeshift character and sometimes progressive potential of this intensive and state-supported project.

In this vein, we concur with Timothy Lim in this volume, who notes that even a largely “lip-service” embrace of multicultural rhetoric can make for “real effects,” and can even have “unintended consequences” (chap. 2). Lim outlines South Korea’s “late migration regime” in which people are sensitive to international (justice) norms, and thus respond in a “compressed” and accelerated manner. We suggest that it is as relevant to speak of South Korea’s “late multiculturalism” regime such that the imperative is widely embraced, even as the meanings remain somewhat unmoored. In a related vein, Jun (chap. 4) describes South Korea’s developmentalist approach to multiculturalism—“achieve tolerance or fail”—and unpacks the social logic of the “tolerant they” and “yet intolerant us.” For Jun, this “narcissistic project” (i.e., the transformation of the South Korean citizenry) makes “objects” of migrants and racially mixed people and families.

While we concur with Jun’s argument about the social logics at hand, our findings echo Lim’s openness to a social field that is emergent; thus we remain cautious about fixing the political character of these developments.

This is equally a U.S. story: since the notion of multicultural education received explosive attention in the 1980s, its meaning has been an object of controversy (Sleeter and Grant 1987, 2003). South Korea accelerated this discussion, negotiating a local model of multiculturalism in only a few years, while the United States has been debating the matter for several decades. We thus consider the makeshift multicultural society we found in our field as a state of productive confusion, the process of fashioning a social logic rather than a binary logic, as Jun suggests.

This chapter's ethnographic subjects include faculty members, students, and bureaucrats, while the venues include bureaucratic meetings, student club sessions, and a summer orientation. With these subjects and venues we highlight the tension between apparently empty signifiers on the one hand and substantive debate on the other. We settle neither on hypocrisy nor profound debate, observing instead their interesting coexistence. We begin with a discussion of how members of the faculty of Seoul National University of Education (SNUE) were called to action in the name of multiculturalism, observing the manner in which they navigated this often inchoate yet enormously consuming imperative.

“The Control Tower”: Seoul National University of Education

In South Korea, almost all elementary school teachers earn their teaching credentials at national universities of education (*kyodae*). As South Korea took stock of what appeared to be precipitous increases in so-called international marriages—and the multicultural families and multicultural children to which they give rise—considerable public concern emerged about the new generation of children beginning in the early 2000s.² At issue were both how these children would navigate South Korean schooling and how South Korean schooling would manage their diversity.³ It was in answer to these concerns that national universities of education were elected to be a natural beacon for imagining a transformed South Korean elementary school and elementary school education that could accommodate these children. In 2009, the students in these universities were thus envisioned as a vanguard who would serve this new population. As the most prestigious national university of education, SNUE was elected to lead this

² As Gage reviews in this volume, there has in fact been diversity in South Korean schools for quite some time, including the mixed-race children resulting from the long-standing U.S. military presence, long-standing Chinese ethnic communities, and so on. Gage makes the important point that the contemporary multicultural discourse obscures the existence of the long-standing Amerasian population.

³ Obscured in these discussions and in multicultural discourse at large is consideration of undocumented children and migrant children (i.e., in comparison with those children born of international marriages with Koreans, most often Korean men).

initiative, serving, in the words of one Ministry of Education bureaucrat, as a “control tower.”

Multicultural education was organized by a number of government units including the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), as well as provincial government bodies.

In 2008, SNUE was designated as one of the twenty Active Brain Tower (ABT) universities in the nation by the MOJ. In the announcement of the final list of selected universities, the ministry stated that it would give support to the ABT universities in order to “provide outstanding universities with opportunities to take part in developing policies for the facilitation of multicultural understanding and the making of a migrant society, as well as to pioneer new academic fields in relevant disciplines” (J. Chung 2008). Under this project, universities were expected to develop and research policies for South Korea to adopt as it moves toward a multicultural society; to establish courses and graduate programs for research on multicultural society; and to provide language and cultural education to migrants.

The program we focus on here is the “Multicultural Family-Student Education Support Project,” a two-year project launched by MEST in 2009 in conjunction with the country’s national universities of education.⁴ The goal of the project was to prepare “pre-service multicultural teachers” for the “multicultural classrooms” they would experience in a “multicultural society.” Three projects made up this program. The first was the creation of multiculturalism-related courses to equip future teachers with an understanding of multicultural education and to provide them with experiences of multiracial and multicultural “classrooms of the present or the future.” To promote these classes, MEST offered \$10,000 per year to each participating university. The second project was to establish multiculturalism student clubs on each campus. Each university was expected to organize clubs for students with interests in multicultural education so as to nurture “voluntary participation.” MEST budgeted \$3,000 per year for each campus to support these activities. Finally, universities were expected to develop Summer Mentoring Programs (SMP) in which college students would visit elementary schools during school breaks in order to work closely with multicultural children. Students were to be selected from those participating in the multicultural education courses or clubs. Participants in the mentoring program would be compensated with wages, and their hours could count toward the forty hours of community service required for graduation. Further, students appreciated that this experience

⁴ With the exception of Ewha Womans University, training to become an elementary school teacher in Korea is available only at specific national universities.

would enhance their employability; the local office of education that oversees the employment of elementary school teachers set a policy to include questions related to multicultural education on the selection test. Travel costs and wages for the students would be shared by the university and MEST. MEST invested approximately 1.4 million dollars in the program, more than one-fourth of the total budget for multicultural children in 2009 (MEST, 2009).

SNUE took part in all of these programs, beginning with the 2009 spring semester course “Understanding Multicultural Education,” which was open to eighty students and would be offered every semester. It was cotaught by eight professors.⁵ Forty-two students were selected for the multiculturalism club. The club was organized by the faculty, who selected students on the basis of an essay and interview. We learned that one of the professors in charge was himself worried about the top-down approach of this government project, an approach at odds with the necessarily voluntary nature of what the professor called genuine student activities.

The 2009 project report on the program articulates that the purpose of the club establishment is: (1) to facilitate preservice teachers’ understanding of and “voluntarism” for multicultural education and the children of multicultural households, and (2) to train experts who could later

⁵ Course Title	Understanding of Multicultural Education
Week 1	Multicultural Society—The changing of Korean society and understanding of multiculturalism.
Week 2	Theories of Multiculturalism 1—Meaning and Situation
Week 3	Theories of Multiculturalism 2—Theories and Methods
Week 4	Multicultural Families and Children 1—Types and Characteristics
Week 5	Multicultural Families and Children 2—The development and emotion of multicultural children.
Week 6	Exploring Multicultural Society—Discovering and reading of multicultural field.
Week 7	Understanding of Multicultural Field—Special Talk
Week 8	Language Education in Multicultural Society 1—Korean Language Education
Week 9	Language Education in Multicultural Society 2—Methods of Korean Language Education
Week 10	Language Education in Multicultural Society 3—Bilingual Education
Week 11	Realities of Multicultural Education 1—Peer Group Relationship and Personality Education
Week 12	Realities of Multicultural Education 2—Development of understanding of multicultural education (mutual understanding, tolerance, and solicitude)
Week 13	Multicultural Art Education—Approaching by Art Education
Week 14	Multicultural Society and Consulting—Problems of Consulting and Experiences in School
Week 15	Final Exam

contribute to the multicultural student mentoring project. According to the report, the club had to run study groups on multiculturalism under the instruction of the professor in charge and also conduct voluntary services for multicultural family students through cooperation with the local Multicultural Family Support Center.

Finally, a planning team for the mentoring program was established in March 2009, and the following month students were recruited through an essay test and interviews. Prior to working in the field, students received training in May and the university also held orientation sessions with newly designed mentoring manuals. In this program, mentors would visit their mentees' schools and provide mentoring for one or two children at a time. In order to be informed about the mentees in advance, they were also required to spend three hours with the teacher in charge before meeting with the kids. They also had to consult with the school about the mentoring schedule and methods and conduct a total of sixty hours of mentoring.

The Faculty

We begin with a discussion of three faculty members' understanding of their own election as multiculturalism emissaries at SNUE and more broadly in the South Korean educational college system at large. Even as they wrestled with the meaning of this election—that is, the real nature of the imperative—they were nonetheless sincerely committed to a multicultural imperative that could make for meaningful and positive transformation. We then introduce two meetings: the first on a draft of the handbook to be used in the training of college students who would participate in the SMP (Summer Mentoring Program), and the second a meeting of representatives from nearly all of the national universities of education to demonstrate the on-the-ground workings of South Korea's late migration and multiculturalism regime. As mentioned earlier, for those elected to realize a multicultural transformation, the execution was often quite unstable, confused, and even conflicted; most alienating was the close-up encounter with the workings of the bureaucracy. In line with Jun's arguments in this volume, these faculty members were indeed embracing a self-disciplinary regime in which they were attempting to become a "tolerant us," but we suggest that the on-the-ground workings were productive in their own right.

Both Dr. Bae, who was deeply involved in the Mentoring Program and the College Club at SNUE, and Dr. Cho, who was active in the institute that housed the South Korean MEST funding, were somewhat surprised to reflect on their own quite sudden and yet intense involvement in the MEST-funded activities. Indeed, they had no training in or research

experience with multiculturalism when they were elected to become agents in the SNUE multiculturalism vanguard. Nonetheless, by the time we spoke with them, each was working hard to fashion a coherent story about the rationale and importance of the quite taxing work that they had shouldered in the name of multiculturalism. Appreciating that they, not unlike the students we will turn to later, found themselves swept up in activities about which they were not entirely clear, we are interested in understanding how they navigated their election.

Dr. Bae explained that prior to beginning this work, he had in fact had no interest in multicultural education. He spoke of the serendipity of his having become—quite in spite of himself—a founding member of the Research Institute for Multicultural Education through which he was later chosen to play a leadership role in the Multicultural Club and Summer Mentoring Program (SMP). As a scholar in a philosophical field in education, a field understood to be largely devoted to the fashioning of “Korean” citizens, multiculturalism, he admitted, was quite far from his expertise. But by the time we talked to him, he had come to think that the concerns of multicultural children could in a broad sense be thought of in relation to human rights. He had even begun to imagine ways in which multicultural education might share the foundations of the traditional field of education in South Korea. His turning point was when he encountered a MEST representative who instructed him that in order to succeed in multiculturalism, one has to really immerse oneself, which is exactly what he had decided to do.

In these ways, Dr. Bae documented his nearly chance encounter with multicultural education, but elaborated on the quite easy way in which it had come to motivate his activities and even his sense of his own academic future. We are particularly interested in the compressed manner in which he came to embrace the urgency of multiculturalism and in turn the imperative for a full-fledged commitment.

Dr. Cho, a health scientist by training, had little preparation for the activities she would find herself swept up in. In our conversation, she echoed what many people told us about the escalating numbers of multicultural children in elementary schools. Although by international standards the numbers are very small (see Lee and Skretney in this volume), the percentage increases and even the raw numbers were impressive to her, as they were to many South Koreans and to the South Korean media in particular. She told us, for example, that within a single year a 40 percent increase had brought the Seoul number to 2,064 children (for a city of roughly 10 million, one might instead be underwhelmed by this number). In describing how she came to serve as the director, she first stressed that although she had not volunteered herself, she had nonetheless developed a “sense of

crisis" (*wigi ūisik*) and "a feeling of duty" (*ūimugam*). She then talked more substantively about multiculturalism, describing the "demands" of multicultural families and suggesting a grassroots imperative. She described her sense that in the beginning there "were no experts," implying that *someone* needed to forge ahead in these uncharted waters.

After nearly two years at the institute, Dr. Cho stressed her sense of the importance of "this [historical] moment" as one of critical social transformation. As did Dr. Bae, Dr. Cho had even come to see a health connection to the concerns. She spoke of her field's increasing interest in "well-being," of "achieving a healthy and happy life even in the midst of fast change," and drew the parallel to "an education curriculum that makes people fulfill their dreams without being discriminated against." Like Dr. Bae, Dr. Cho had managed to make sense of her election and to weave the multicultural imperative back to her own training and research expertise. We noted both professors' deep-seated embrace of the urgency of their assigned task and in turn their efforts to consider the implications of multicultural education for their own areas of expertise.

Finally, we introduce Dr. Song, whose election narrative is somewhat different because she did in fact bring prior expertise to the issues at hand. What she shared with the other faculty, however, was awe at the imperative of this new regime, an awe that she in fact articulated in religious terms. As a scholar with an early interest in bilingualism and who had spent time abroad, it made sense for people to turn to her on matters of multiculturalism and particularly language. However, she devoted most of her conversation with us to her ceaseless awe at the speedy manner in which South Korea was adopting multiculturalism and even bilingualism; the refrains of our conversation with her were "Korea is such a fascinating place" and "Korea is so dynamic."

We get ignited really quickly—the U.S., in contrast, is so slow. Living in Korea is like riding a roller coaster. When someone says, "We need something!" the entire society "mobilizes." This can be a real strength. Multicultural education is spreading so fast.

As our conversation continued and she began to describe the extent of her own quite remarkable election as a veritable multicultural architect, particularly in the MEST, she spoke of the working of "God's hand." Part of her "surprise" at the "dynamism of Korean society" was at the nearly effortless way in which government officials and teachers could so easily adopt the multicultural mandate. Like Dr. Cho, she stressed the impressive numbers and thus the urgency of the matter: she recalled her concern that "we're in trouble, teachers are not at all prepared for this type of student."

Furthermore, she was forthright about her own role in the transformation of SNUE into a veritable control tower for multicultural education.

When we asked her about her own active and reportedly effective role in galvanizing support for multiculturalism, we were interested in the way in which she described herself as a rainmaker for multiculturalism. She reported having repeatedly told a particular story from the years she spent as a mother in the United States (where she was giving her children a precollege study-abroad experience). The story goes that she was pulled over by a policeman shortly after getting her driver's license. The policeman took her license and left her waiting for what seemed an interminably long time, so she decided to get out of the car and suggest to the policeman that she move her car to the curb. At which point, she continued, "the officer pointed his gun at my head and said, 'don't move.'" To South Korean audiences she summarized dramatically that her cultural ignorance—not knowing the dangers of confronting the police in the United States—could have cost her her life (i.e., given that the police can act in the name of self-defense) and that hence South Korea was in dire need of multicultural education. The power of this story was apparent, even if we weren't her usual audience. That South Koreans were "quickly swayed" by her story spoke, she told us, to "South Korea's dynamism." The details and efficacy of this story aside, we were struck by her simultaneous surprise at "South Korea's dynamism" and this candid account of her own hand in the making of what Dr. Cho described as Korea's sense of crisis with regard to multiculturalism.

All three professors thus spoke to the urgency of multiculturalism, whether to highlight the odd contingencies of their own election (Bae and Cho) or to marvel at their own role in the election at large (Song). In these professors' accounts we observe that although they were assigned to be the keepers of the control tower, they were quite silent on the message and content. Nonetheless, because they were compelled by a sense of urgency, a constant across our interviews, they were motivated to cobble something together in the name of multiculturalism, hence the productive nature of their confusion—their real willingness to do something, even as it might appear quite makeshift.

Troubles in the Control Tower

We now turn to a meeting at which Dr. Bae made a formal presentation of the draft of the Summer Mentoring Program Handbook to a representative from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Oddly, the MEST representative very quickly made it clear that he was not the person in charge of the project administration, but that he had been a very early advocate for multicultural education programs and referred to himself as

“having been nearly crazy” on these issues. Also present at this meeting was one contributor to the handbook. In fact, the meeting was a bit slow to start because Dr. Bae was nervously phoning several other contributors and busily making apologies to the MEST representative for the modest showing of coauthors. The MEST representative did in fact ask why so few people were present. Dr. Bae then asked our then three-person research team—we had expected to sit outside the circle at the large table—to come to the table. As we made up half the number of the people in the room, at first we worried that our presence might get in the way, but within moments it was entirely clear that the MEST representative had absolutely no interest in us.

Very early in the meeting, Dr. Bae indicated his sincere hope that the handbook draft would be circulated to all the universities of education that were to participate in the Mentoring Program. However, he added that in order to respect local specificities and the particular needs of other participating provincial universities, it would be important for them to tailor the handbook and perhaps cut chapters or even add other discussions. In his words, he anticipated “editing that would conform to regional circumstances.” Ignoring these remarks, the MEST representative proceeded instead to a page-by-page review of typographical errors, formatting inconsistencies, and other minor editorial issues in the over two-hundred-page document. At one point he exclaimed, “a document like this one [i.e., with its many editorial errors] truly infuriates people like me from the MEST.” Dr. Bae remained respectful and controlled and subserviently indicated his intentions to correct the document.

Nonetheless, Dr. Bae did persist in his attempts to bring up his primary concern that the manual be adapted to the needs of other universities. Eminently clear was that Dr. Bae was foundationally ill at ease with his own responsibility for editing a book that would serve the entire country. In some sense, he was abdicating his “national” election, hoping to retreat in the name of regional conditions and autonomy. We nervously observed the MEST representative’s dismissive posture as Dr. Bae sheepishly brought up these issues again and again. Eventually, however, the MEST representative unequivocally dismissed Dr. Bae’s concerns:

Let’s face it—even if you were to send this draft to the provincial universities of education, it is unlikely that they would offer any editorial opinions. What’s more, we need to consider the costs of such a process. It would be a problem if each and every university were to be printing different books.

He continued, without skipping a beat, to remind Dr. Bae and the others of the fragility of the project funding by telling them that although many

other divisions of the MEST had been cut that year, this multicultural project had been spared.

Further disrespecting Dr. Bae's concerns, the MEST representative went on to discuss the economies of scale and renown that could be achieved by publishing this handbook not only for use by the universities of education, but also for the general public. It was apparent that the MEST representative, in a very different vein, was appealing to what he imagined was the ego or pride of the SNUE representatives' leadership role in this initiative. By the end of the meeting, a browbeaten Dr. Bae literally had no choice but to stand by defeated as the MEST representative took charge by phoning a budget officer at SNUE (having first demanded officiously that someone bring him the phone), someone who he clearly had worked with on many occasions. Instantly this financial officer appeared and was mobilized to inquire about various printing efficiencies. By then it was late in the day, and the budget officer reported that he would have to supply the figures later.

As for the matter of the other universities of education, the MEST representative imperiously humored Dr. Bae, announcing that he would take charge of the other schools' approval of the handbook. The meeting quickly dissolved as the MEST representative inquired as to the restaurant where they would dine.

We understand these to be on-the-ground negotiations in which Dr. Bae attempted to mobilize multiculturalism as a necessarily grassroots initiative, but was thwarted in the name of both bureaucratic efficiency and the power invested in SNUE (i.e., by the MEST). The singular handbook would be efficiently mass produced and would bring glory to the multicultural mandate that the MEST representative had proclaimed to be "crazy about."

We note the disjuncture between the ideals of the multicultural mandate for the three faculty members and the on-the-ground negotiations over these state-supported programs. While our conversations with the faculty members revealed the productive and creative potential of even a state-supported top-down initiative, this meeting with the MEST representative calls attention to the state-orchestrated piece of that equation, one that in this case foreclosed an arguably more progressive agenda.

Progress Report: Provincial Talk-Back

We fast-forward now to a gathering a month later of representatives from nearly all of the universities of education that were to participate in the Summer Mentoring Program. The agenda included short presentations from all of the representatives about their multiculturalism courses the preceding spring and about their plans for the SMP. The meeting also

included a presentation by this chapter's coauthor Nancy Abelmann who shared her provisional reflections on South Korean multiculturalism. Professor Abelmann felt that she could not say no to Dr. Bae's request, given that he was kindly exposing his own activities to her ethnographic scrutiny. A young female administrator from MEST who was formally involved in the administration of multicultural projects was also present. With our discussion of this meeting we highlight the tension between an apparently empty bureaucratic initiative and an urgent, compelling social imperative.

Some of the reports were honest about the failings and limitations of both the spring course and the Multicultural Club. For example, the representative from the Kyonggi University of Education, the area of South Korea with the largest number of multicultural families, described difficulties in recruiting for the club: unless students were participating in the SMP in order to secure a summer stipend, they were not interested in joining. The representative from the North Chölla University of Education, in a very different vein, shared his concern that those in the SMP be properly selected and prepared, stating that "poor mentoring [i.e., of multicultural students] is worse than no mentoring." He also discussed some practical matters, including the problem that the neediest area in his province was quite far from the residences of the college students and that it would be nearly impossible for them to do the mentoring activities twice a week as prescribed. He inquired as to the possibility of special provisions, including additional funds to cover transportation costs. We were particularly interested to hear him tell the group that they planned on adopting a manual that they had written themselves (i.e., not the standardized one).

The meeting took a sudden turn when it was time to hear from the representative from the University of Education in South Kyöngsang Province (KNUE). After describing their own quite robust program and noting that there had in fact been little information shared among the universities (indeed, we were struck that many of the other universities had more far-reaching programming), the representative, the most fancily clad of the group, went on to say the following:

Even if SNUE is not in charge of this project, in reality it is at the center. But the circumstances of each university of education are in fact all very different. But this project is so very centralized. I simply can't understand why I had to make my way in the rain to come here [i.e., to Seoul, a roughly five-hour trip—and it was a truly rainy day].

It was apparent to us that Dr. Bae was quite taken aback at this sudden and quite aggressive comment. Compelled to respond (and recalling his painful meeting concerning the manual discussed earlier), he replied,

Really, it is only housecleaning matters that we have taken on; we have nothing to do with evaluation. As for the standardized manual that does not take regional variation into account, that was really a decision on the part of MEST for budgetary reasons. As for information sharing, I guess that is what this meeting is about.

With these remarks, Dr. Bae had matter-of-factly described what we knew was his considerable disappointment at the meeting the month earlier. We could recognize that he was gingerly reserving criticism of MEST and defending himself on the matter of communication by referring to the meeting itself.

It was shortly thereafter—in a room that was by then quite tense—that the MEST representative spoke up. She began by addressing the earlier query about the possibility of extra funds for mentoring projects in more remote areas and continued:

Let me comment on the matter of the role of SNUE. We at MEST have been working with the provincial departments of education, but this is our first collaboration with universities of education. *We have had to accomplish this project very quickly*, and actually there are only two of us at MEST responsible for these activities. The reason that we have primarily worked with SNUE was in order to be able to communicate with all the universities of education. It has nothing to do with any evaluation [i.e., of valuing SNUE more]. *It is only a matter of SNUE passing on the information. . . .* And SNUE's role is to serve as a messenger for the other universities. In this way [SNUE] is [nothing other than] *a communication channel and a control tower*. It isn't that SNUE is monopolizing this project; only that it is a nearby partner. And in the future we plan to take each region's particularities into consideration. (Emphasis added.)

It would have been hard for any listener that day to not have picked up on the contradictions in even these short remarks. Her comment that SNUE was merely a communication channel and a control tower perhaps best epitomized the contradiction; these mixed metaphors at once minimized and elevated the role of SNUE. The speedy imperative and short-staffing were meant to convince that arrangements were makeshift. No doubt for the well-dressed representative who had made her way in the rain, the control tower metaphor rang most true.

The colleague from Kyönggi Province picked right up on the MEST representative's remark by calling for greater regional autonomy, particularly on budgetary matters. He particularly discussed the provision that prohibited any funds to be used toward faculty salaries, offering that without incentives it was difficult to get faculty buy-in for multicultural programs. He also asked that MEST send its work orders with more lead

time. And finally he reported that a number of elementary school principals had told him that they would much prefer that no one came (i.e., to the SMP), saying, "What are we [i.e., our schools/children], an exhibit?" In what would prove to be the only statement that day that questioned the very foundation of the project, he went on, "I must admit I have come to think that these sorts of programs might, on the contrary, be scarring these multicultural children. I think this program should not only target multicultural children but instead all children [i.e., including ethnically Korean children]." These were pregnant remarks: indeed, the question as to the proper target of multicultural programming—all Koreans versus multicultural Koreans—is, as many of the chapters in this volume indicate, a sensitive issue. We will see later in this chapter that this was also an issue for the students.

Further critique was lodged by another representative about the structure of funding that went nearly exclusively to the students carrying out the mentoring. He complained both that universities were not sufficiently supported to orchestrate these activities and worried that the quite generous stipend for students would propel some to join for the money alone. With these two outbursts, the provinces had clearly voiced their displeasure—to contest SNUE's election and, in these last remarks, that of their own universities and students as well. Echoing the meeting about the manual, this gathering too draws our attention to the vexed line between the compelling imperative of multiculturalism on the one hand, and the lifeless bureaucratic structure of the endeavor on the other.

Together, these two meetings reveal the features of South Korea's makeshift multiculturalism and of the ways in which people are elected by and inhabit this regime. For MEST, it was clear in both meetings that the efficient management of this urgent project was premium and that centralization would best serve that task. As a special elect, SNUE was a link in this efficient chain: it was the control tower, the messenger. As we saw from the first meeting, however, this role was an ambivalent one for SNUE. And as the events in the second meeting reveal, it was not lost on provincial representatives that their own election was partial at best. What was fascinating about both meetings was how very little was mentioned about the grist of multiculturalism or interventions in the name of multicultural children or the education of future teachers. The final comments of the second meeting were in fact remarkably similar to the first, asking foundational questions about the multicultural children themselves and about the university students who had been elected to serve in the name of these multicultural programs. In these meetings, then, we find again the tension between the progressive potential of still unmoored multiculturalism and the bureaucratic shell game of what seemed at times a hollow project.

Student Election

As we have discussed, the structures of election speak in fact to the makeshift nature of South Korean's hurried multicultural project. This was perhaps nowhere more apparent than for students, whose own election was multiply mediated through a series of mandated MEST programs administered by the faculty.

Like their professors, many students also quickly embraced the mandate, loosely speaking with conviction that diversity and tolerance were befitting of a transforming South Korea that could then in turn more fully belong to the panoply of the world's advanced nations. What this late migration/multicultural society should look like, however, was entirely unclear to them. Likewise, they too at moments bristled at the bureaucratic infrastructure itself, which seemed to have a life of its own, an empty imperative that pointed to nothing at all.

The Multicultural Club

We attended four sessions of the first season of the Multicultural Club and followed up with individual meetings with some of the students (and in one case a meeting with five students). The very organization of the club—namely, a requirement for people who would participate in the SMP—speaks to the tensions between an embrace of the multicultural imperative and skepticism about the structure of the bureaucracy-led project.

The first meeting of the club was telling. Dr. Bae began by telling the students that they should give their group a name. Even as he orchestrated the meeting, he was a bit sheepish about his role: several times he apologized to those present that ideally they should be the authors or architects of the club (here we can recall his own interesting parallel relationship to MEST). He put this thought into words this way: "If I end up leading this group it will be as if I have forced you to be here. . . . So my role should simply be to support you—to be a shield for you. So this is why we need a president and vice president as well." With "shield," we think he meant to indicate that faculty authority would allow, if ironically, students to fashion their own safe space for honest conversation. Dr. Bae then introduced Jun as the club president, admitting however that his first selection was not Jun, who was a sophomore, but a more senior woman. Jun began his sincere remarks by saying that he was "completely puzzled" about the whole thing and that he could have never imagined becoming the leader of such a club, or for that matter even being accepted in the SMP (he had applied). "But," he continued, "the club is a good thing, I'm very happy to be a member, and I'll work hard for the club."

Employing the metaphor of birth, Dr. Bae closed the meeting by again charging the group to take ownership of the club. "To reiterate, I'm sort

of a delivery boy—you are the people who will give birth to the baby. . . . You have the responsibility to raise this [club] beautifully. Your leaders are the ones who should sacrifice.” The birth metaphor is perhaps apt for a multicultural project that points foundationally to a new and transformed South Korea. That the first meeting had managed to skirt the issue of multiculturalism itself struck us at the time as rather remarkable, but with hindsight speaks to structural aspects of makeshift multiculturalism—to an inevitable solipsism in which the apparatus can seem to point nowhere other than to its own bureaucratic exercise.

Dr. Bae again dominated the second meeting of the club, giving a very similar overview to the one he had provided at the first meeting and showing a film on human rights. Interestingly, although the students had been assigned a reading (on multiculturalism), the grist of the meeting was again not all that substantive. After perfunctorily summarizing the chapter, Dr. Bae told the students, “You can find everything you need about multiculturalism on the Internet” and encouraged them to “study more so as to become specialists.” Inadvertently, he managed to fashion multiculturalism as an instrumental tool with which to secure jobs (after first browsing on the Internet): “You should volunteer to put what you learn into practice. This is especially important for seniors because the Seoul City Education Department is really keen on multicultural education these days.” Continuing with an insider nugget, he reported that a Seoul official had told him privately that SNUE students would be able to get jobs in Seoul if they were well versed in multicultural education, because the city exams and job interviews would touch on the matter.

Although Dr. Bae was committed to the ethical imperative and good of multiculturalism, students that day might have felt that multiculturalism was being sold as an employment commodity. Furthermore, he reviewed all the details of their financial compensation for participating in the SMP, assuring them that if they ended up, for example, assigned to a school that was harder to travel to they would be further compensated. In our conversation with him, however, Dr. Bae had admitted that he worried that students were in this “only for the money [i.e., the SMP wages].” We were intrigued by the necessarily contradictory functions that Dr. Bae had been elected to play: on the one hand, his own election mandated the election of students and more specifically the peopling of particular funded projects, such as the club, while on the other hand, his sincere commitment to multiculturalism motivated him to make something real of it. It was this tension that dogged him as he felt compelled *both* to sketch the emergent reward structure for those electing multicultural training *and*

to ask students to participate from the heart, in precisely a disinterested manner.⁶

The third meeting was the first meeting without Dr. Bae. Jun began by calling for a “female volunteer” to serve as vice president of the club. A junior in English Education quickly volunteered, and bowing to the group admitted that she had “no idea about what she needed to do.” Jun seemed determined to spark a debate and began by provocatively inquiring as to what students thought about the relative needs of multicultural versus poor children. He prodded them, “What about half-white multicultural children, where do they fit in?” It was somewhat apparent that Jun himself seemed more convinced that the state should extend its services to the neediest children, their multicultural (i.e., racial) characteristics aside. Having sparked little conversation, he went on, perhaps obviating the very topic (of the club itself), to say that “I would rather think of them [i.e., multicultural kids] as simply poor kids. . . . I feel more comfortable thinking of those kids as just like us—no different.” And he prodded them again by asking about refugee (ethnic) Koreans from China and North Korea, wondering if they would count as multicultural. In a quite tentative conversation, students admitted that their knowledge of multiculturalism was pretty shallow, and that in most cases that it began only when they learned that the SNUE entrance examination would include questions on the topic. Indeed, from the outset their multicultural election was in a sense hollow, in the way in which we have been using that term.

That Jun had prodded the group by asking about what sort of difference should matter spoke to a resounding theme of the semester-long “Introduction to Multiculturalism” course that many of them were taking that semester. Each session of the course was taught by a different faculty member, and students told us that little had been done to integrate the often confusing and hugely repetitive information. Furthermore, a number of students complained that the course had been impractical, telling them very little about how to actually deal with these kids in real life. As

⁶ Dr. Bae was in fact concerned about the SNUE students’ ability to understand the situation of less privileged students, multicultural children among them. He told us that he had recently been “shocked” to learn that 30 percent of SNUE students had attended elite specialty high schools (e.g., foreign language and science high schools). Furthermore, he told us that many SNUE students hailed from Seoul’s most prosperous neighborhoods south of the river. He worried whether they could really understand “difficult children” (*ōryōun haksaeŋdūl*), referring both to children from difficult backgrounds as well as children who can be challenging to teach. In this way, Dr. Bae was both suggesting that multicultural children stand in for the ideal or neediest educational subject, while at once calling attention to the increasingly middle-class contours of the secure teaching profession.

one student put it, "thinking and reality are entirely different matters." Another put it, "mostly I really wanted cases and solutions." They nonetheless felt that a resounding theme was the somewhat paradoxical lesson that "multicultural students are *no different* and should be treated *just like all other Koreans*."

"Like *regular Koreans*" was how another student put it. As was the case for Jun, however, this seemed to some of them to pose a fundamental challenge to South Korean education itself, as they wondered during the follow-up interviews how in fact these multicultural children would fare under South Korea's extreme educational competitiveness (e.g., in South Korea's after-schooling or shadow education market). One student reflected on his own teaching in a gifted class this way: "I can't even imagine *my own* [future] children fitting in, let alone these multicultural kids. So, I think we need to think about what they need, whether they need extra help, and also how to help them develop a fondness for Korea." With this comment, this student upset the implicit "Korean/multicultural person" binary by asking who, after all, really counts as Korean. "Would his children's lives," he hinted, "be any different than those of the multicultural children at the heart of these programs?"

A provocative remark by another student similarly called attention to the fuzzy borderland of the "us" and "them" of multiculturalism. At one of the club meetings, a student who actually was there as a girlfriend and was not participating in the club or SMP spoke up to say that during her student teaching in Seoul, she had been chided for her inappropriate clothing. Adding that "Korean" children are prohibited from even dyeing their hair, she wondered about whether there is any "real tolerance of difference" in South Korea, and asked, "How can we really even talk about multiculturalism?" Although she laughed as she spoke about this, as if to say, "I'm a bit of a renegade here," it appeared to us that many students wondered about how easy it would be to treat these kids no differently in light of South Korea's own regnant systems of normativity. Furthermore, although with a quiet voice, some students admitted to their own fears about accepting these kids as "regular students" and more generally about the sort of society South Korea was becoming. In this way, students were registering powerful contradictions: a formal curriculum in the name of difference that seemed to downplay it; their own hunches of real differences that they might have to deal with in the field; and, finally, multicultural children aside, their recognition of the powerful sway of normative culture in South Korea.

These sorts of tensions were ones that surfaced again, both during the summer training retreat and during their summer mentoring itself.

Multiculturalism in the Field

Not dissimilar from student experiences within the class and the club, the summer activities were again at times confusing for students as they navigated largely unspoken competing visions of a multicultural society: one that spoke of difference, and another that largely remained silent and imagined in U.S. terms a postracial social order of sorts.

The training day began with formal presentations that echoed their coursework with a focus on multicultural kids as “no different.” Students, upon reflection, spoke of their difficulties in understanding how it was that difference could matter so little, thinking again about the intensive educational system and about the difficulties of “learning Korean culture.”

Students were then divided into twenty-five-person teams (with a professor on each team) and charged to discuss four questions: Why is multicultural mentoring necessary? What will I do as a mentor? How can I connect with these kids? What kinds of curricular and extracurricular activities should I do? While some groups were lively, the conversation dragged so much in one group that they finally decided to just pass the questions and let people silently add their thoughts on paper. There was considerable consensus among the groups: that the schooling system is not equipped to deal with multicultural children (hence the necessity of this program); that these children need to be guided in order to build their “self-esteem” and to “be able to actively participate in South Korean society” (to counteract their “passivity” and “negativity”); that they should, on the one hand, respect these children’s unique cultural backgrounds (e.g., the countries that one of their parents are from), but on the other hand treat them as “no different” and in a “natural” manner while also educating them in “Korean etiquette and culture”; and that they should cater to the particular needs of the kids in their activities.

We suggest that these students were walking—and being asked to walk—a fine line: they were not to call attention to these students’ differences, but the differences (of background and need) had motivated the inception of the very programs themselves. We appreciate these conversations, however, as meaningful ones—ones that engaged the grist of the matter, even as they touched on the contradictions entailed in makeshift multiculturalism. Perhaps it can be said that self-consciousness about the apparatus itself *can be* productive: compelling faculty and students alike to query the *name* in which they have been activated/mobilized, as well as the apparatus of that very mobilization.

We have asserted here that South Koreans, in this case the faculty and students at teaching training universities, were navigating the challenge of their election as multicultural agents. While appreciating with many

observers that compressed multiculturalism in South Korea does ring of “hypocrisy,” “paradox,” or “fiction,” we nonetheless assert that this conclusion does not do justice to the complex social field that is multiculturalism in South Korea today. With “makeshift” we have indexed both a considerable confusion and a space for generative activity, honest reflection, and what Lim in this volume writes of as “real effects” or even “unintended consequences” (chap. 2).

We have thus called for a simultaneous acknowledgment of particular organizational or bureaucratic features that characterize South Korea’s “late multiculturalism,” and of the productive potential of this system with its still open signification.

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