

Development of Educational Content in Multicultural Education for Marriage Immigrants: Focus on Educational Capital

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Abstract. This study aims to develop educational contents for marriage immigrants by analyzing the programs of the multicultural family support centers and developing the curricular appropriate for them. A number of the programs intend to intensify social welfare for the marriage immigrants by promoting Korean proficiency. Therefore, it is essential to establish a comprehensive educational system for marriage immigrants, who are more likely to face complex circumstances in a variety of fields such as child-caring and job hunting. Educational capital is one of the most significant qualities in life in Korea. In this context, this study suggests that the measures for expanding education capital should help marriage immigrants sustain their cultural identity and heighten self-esteem. Accordingly, Air and Correspondence High Schools can be utilized by devising the curricula customized for marriage immigrants.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background and objectives

According to statistics provided by the Korea Immigration Service, the number of immigrants currently (May 2012) residing in Korea is about 1,440,000, with a 6.4% growth rate compared with the same month last year. In light of the fact that a low birth rate in the country could have a serious impact upon the size of the future work force, the rise in the number of immigrants can be one of the measures of demographic and sociological changes in Korean society. Therefore, with in such spheres as politics, society, education and culture, shifts in strategic paradigm are being implemented. Also, in academia, areas regarding multicultural phenomena are being studied in greater detail. The discussion surrounding multiculturalism has generally revolved around the multicultural family in recent years. The education of marriage immigrants' children has thus been studied extensively during the past few years, considering the fact that the zeal for children's education is extremely high in Korean society.

Despite these efforts, current multicultural education policies have been established in a short period of time rather than being derived through careful data collection and

analysis, which might have established more applicable policies. Furthermore, it is not an overstatement to suggest that current multicultural education is more like 'social adaptation education'. In other words, multicultural education in Korea is not based on a mutual understanding of and respect for different cultures. It is, in contrast, to encourage adaptation to the Korean language and Korean culture. It has thus degraded to become 'adaptation education'.

In extreme cases, even marriage immigrants who have lived in the country long enough suffer from conflicts that are beyond the level of inconvenience they often experience in their daily lives. They are often in desperate need of help for their children's education. According to the report 'the Status of Multicultural Population' released by the Korean Statistical Information in 2011, the number of divorce cases in multicultural families is now 14,319, which rose by 4.9% from the previous year. The average length of marriage for these families is 4.7 years, which includes both newly moved couples and adapted couples. That proves that they are in need of attention and consideration from wider society. Most of them also carry the issue of their children's education, which could be an element of social unrest. Arguably, such problems that occur with multicultural families cannot be resolved, in many different ways, by one-sided education that simply asks for 'social adaptation'.

For instance, according to the Survey on Multicultural Families in 2006, the need for social services regarding Korean language education was notable; however, in the same survey conducted in 2009, the need to support child learning - such as providing a tutor service to help children work within the basic curriculum - and strengthen services regarding employment and the improvement of academic backgrounds, was far greater. Consequently, most of the multicultural policies revolving around the two big frames - social integration and social adaptation - should shift toward establishing a service system that can answer to these different, growing needs.

This study aims to focus on measures of marriage immigrants' education improvement. The rationale is that one's academic background as a cultural capital has actual impact on their sustainable development and reinforcement of their capabilities. Research data is in the form of educational content for marriage immigrants provided by the multicultural family support center, established by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Families. Also, by working side by side with relevant educational institutes, we hope to come up with measures that will help solve the problems mentioned above.

1.2 Literature review

With a sudden rise in the number of marriage immigrants since 2000, recent studies regarding multicultural families have been conducted extensively from different angles. To find relevant literature, a search engine for academic journals - 'dbpia.co.kr' - was utilized using relevant keywords. In terms of quantity, keywords were narrowed down to: 'marriage immigration', 'marriage emigration', 'multicultural family' and 'multicultural home'. Results showed that there were 119 research papers on 'marriage immigration', 133 papers on 'marriage emigration', 111 papers on 'multicultural family' and 159 papers on 'multicultural home'. In terms of publication dates, 7 papers were published in 2007 and the number grew in subsequent years, with 32 in 2009 and 46 in 2011. This is only natural, since the number of marriage

immigrants is rising. Among these research papers, ones that deal with the improvement of academic backgrounds are small in number: 8 out of 119 papers on 'marriage immigration', 6 out of 133 papers on 'marriage emigration', 11 out of 111 papers on 'multicultural family' and 4 out of 159 papers on 'multicultural home'. Even among the ones that do deal with the subject, the majority of the work revolves around educational support for marriage immigrants' children.

In terms of content, since immigrant women face a number of social problems in their early years of immigration, much work has been done on providing support for these women. Therefore, present analysis and discussion on: the measures of the support for these women's job skills; business start-ups; and the support policies of the Government and local governments have been a main focus of this study.

Current research subjects regarding marriage immigrants can be broadly classified as support and education. This notion shows that immigrants are regarded as a vulnerable social group who need benefits, rather than human resources, that can be utilized. Particularly, previous studies on educating marriage immigrant women are limited to the education needed during the early years of immigration such as Korean language education, Korean culture education and social adaptation education. Therefore, the main focus of this study - discussion of the extension of educational capital - has been almost nonexistent in literature to date. Previous studies on the relationship between parents' academic backgrounds and their children's educational and social status were conducted on the general public, not multicultural families.

Marriage immigrants number over 140,000 at the present time, and the number of their children is reaching 200,000. Enhancing the social status of marriage immigrant women who have more or less adapted to Korean society is a critical issue that can affect the future competitiveness of society. In this respect, educational programs for these immigrants should be developed to reflect different needs, and suggesting measures to improve these people's academic backgrounds will be a starting point.

2 The multicultural family support center

2.1 Current situation and management programs

The number of marriage immigrants in South Korea was about 146,000 in May 2012, which had risen by 1.9% compared to last year. The number of people who have changed their nationality has risen by 7.5% compared to last year to become 65,000. Women account for 86.2% of this figure, and men, for 13.8%. Judging from the figures, multicultural education for marriage immigrants is mostly for immigrant women. In this section, learning programs provided at multicultural family support centers across the country are discussed. In 2008, the government launched the Multicultural Family Support Act. In August 2011, the Korean Institute of Healthy Families was established in order to develop and implement effective and coherent policies regarding multicultural families. Therefore, the Korean Institute of Healthy Families is serving as a window connecting the Ministry of Gender Equality and Families, 138 Healthy Family Support Centers and 201 Multicultural Family Support Centers.

The support programs provided by Multicultural Family Support Centers include development and distribution of the program, implementing pilot projects of major multicultural family policies, educating center employees, publishing educational magazines, public relations and management support. Their basic learning program includes Korean language education, family counseling and children's bilingual education. There are also different projects that exist such as translation and interpretation services, education and skills for jobs and business start-ups, self-help groups, drama clubs and choirs. These projects have been established in order to support and strengthen the networks in the local community. Within the Korean language education, instructors who have obtained a Level 3 license for teaching Korean (or above) are preferred for specialized education. Attendees take a placement test and are placed in classes from Level 1 to 3, with 80 credited hours of study needed to complete each level. Advanced learners are placed in Level 4 classes and above, with 40 credited hours needed to complete these advanced levels. Self-help groups, operating voluntarily before 2012, have now been declared as a mandatory project. Instructors and coordinators for these groups are obliged to take 6 hours of training in order to enhance the level of work completed by each relevant work force. The programs operated at the centers are either offered for free or at a cost, with the quantity of services on offer depending on demand. In districts where the number of residing foreigners is relatively high, such as Guro-gu and Youngdeungpo-gu, large programs are run due to popular demand.

2.2 Improvement of multicultural education programs

Multicultural Family Support Centers have successfully helped marriage immigrant women at an early stage of immigration adapt to their new environment. However, in terms of improving their academic backgrounds, there is room for improvement. First of all, overall learning programs are focused on Korean language education and social adaptation education. To provide a foundation for immigrants to continue their education, specialized learning courses, such as preparation for all school qualifications, should be set up. Some of the support centers are providing such courses; however, lack of publicity has resulted in low demand. Also, the existing courses are limited to qualifications through examinations at secondary school level. Special crash courses for these examinations should be offered for more tangible results. Furthermore, after successfully passing such exams, students should be encouraged to continue their education at higher grades.

Secondly, some programs are not offered equally to everyone with regulations limiting places to immigrants who are 40 years old or younger and who have had 5 years of residence or less. With some programs for immigrants' children, the children should be 12 years old or younger to be eligible for the service. These regulations should be more flexible while considering different learning capabilities among the individuals. As the number of multicultural families grows, the number of children of multicultural families who are attending elementary, middle or high school is reaching 35,000; therefore, support programs should be offered to mothers with adolescent children as well.

Lastly, support programs provided by the centers tend to neglect marriage immigrant men. This may be due to the fact that the highest authority is the Ministry

of Gender Equality and Families and that the majority of immigrants are women. Simply, it must have been more efficient to implement projects that have more demands. However, patriarchal culture still remains in Korean society, and men are expected to play their part as a responsible head of the household. Unlike certain western men, who are relatively freewheeling and familiar with the idea of gender equality, immigrant men from conservative societies, such as those that are predominantly Islamic, therefore have difficulty in getting assistance to resolve cultural shocks and conflicts that can be brought about during their marriages. Consequently, support centers should consider measures to embrace these men, who account for 13% of marriage immigrants. In doing so, they can serve as an advanced base in moving toward a multicultural society. That is since an ideal multicultural society should be based upon acceptance and understanding rather than neglect.

3 Improving the academic backgrounds of marriage immigrants and utilization of Air and Correspondence High Schools

3.1 Definition of 'educational capital'

When education is intangible capital that one owns, educational capital is a form of embodied culture, thus institutionalized cultural capital, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu. Unlike embodied cultural capital such as manners or objective cultural capital such as books or music, educational capital is a certificate that is issued to a person who has completed a curriculum that is institutionally regulated. However, education in the form of a certificate does not guarantee quality of life. In other words, the era when college degrees and different certificates guaranteed better jobs has gone. Still, education is an important criterion that affects one's successes and failures in life. Indeed, a degree is not a selective option but an indispensable option that one has to take to gain authority and power.

Degrees are not only a way to find a good job, which is the first condition for a better life, but are also an objective indicator for broadening one's network and entering into an upper class in the hierarchical structure of a society. In this sense, education is an important cultural capital in order to exercise societal authority. Despite the high unemployment rate and economic recession, the zeal for educational capital is still strong. According to the 2010 Social Index, the average, monthly, private education cost for Korean high school students was 253,000 won, with 76% of students participating in private education. Dependence on private education was higher with special purpose school students, who showed 87.5% participation. Despite the fact that many parents (78.4%) expressed some kind of burden in providing their children private education, 58.9% of parents wanted their children to study abroad. This has led to a higher completion rate of high school education. In 2000, college enrollment rate was 68%, and in 2010 it rose to 79% - the highest among the OECD member countries.

In this respect, it is not an overstatement that the number one obstacle that marriage immigrants face while adapting to Korean society stems from a lack of educational capital. Research shows that the academic background of parents has an

impact on children's academic achievement. This tells us that the educational capital of immigrant parents is a crucial factor in determining whether or not their children can have a successful future.

This leads us to believe that in addition to the existing programs run by the support centers, degree courses should be established in order to integrate immigrants into society and therefore achieve the sustainable goal of improving their educational capital. This will encourage the sustainable development of both individuals and the country. Having said this, establishing degree-earning courses at support centers will bring about a few problems. First of all, management staff, instructors and classrooms for college degree courses should be secured. However, limited budgets make it impossible to recruit teachers. Different support centers also have different scales of human and material support. For instance, unlike Dongdaemun-gu Multicultural Family Support Center, which can use the facilities at Kyunghee University, centers are not equipped with different facilities that can separately hold management work, family counseling, classes and self-help gatherings. Therefore, considering this lack of infrastructure, it would be necessary to establish a support system for degree earning courses that mainly deal with advertisement, affiliation with educational institutes and post management. This study suggests utilization of Air and Correspondence High Schools, which are already running secondary education courses with local citizens.

3.2 The present status of Air and Correspondence High Schools and their curriculums

Air and Correspondence High Schools¹ were established for people who did not have a chance to enter a typical high school for economic reasons and for office workers who wish to develop more skills and knowledge in this ever-changing, information-oriented society. Their objective is to spread the notion of life-long education and to enhance the level of education of citizens. In 1973, the Government established 11 Air and Correspondence schools affiliated with public schools in Seoul and Busan. There are 40 of these schools in 27 cities across the country at the present time. Since 2008, all courses are available online, which enables people who did not have a chance to learn in the past to earn a degree more easily.

Students are not burdened with strict attendance. Participation in extracurricular activities and experience programs is regarded as being optional. When students are physically unable to attend classes for various reasons, they are allowed to take online classes. An academic bank credit system, adopted at some universities such as Cyber University and Air and Correspondence University, has also been implemented. Such self-education systems can help marriage immigrants improve their educational capital, who otherwise cannot get formal education due to childcare commitments and employment.

¹Air and Correspondence High Schools were established in Seoul and Busan on March 23, 1974, with affiliation with 11 public high schools in order to provide education for the underprivileged and realize educational equality. The number has grown to 40 across the nation, and online courses are available for all curriculums to help provide students with a high school education.

3.3 Measures to operate Air and Correspondence High School courses for marriage immigrants

Affiliation between multicultural family support centers and the high schools has become possible since high schools have certainly made degree earning more affordable and easier for underprivileged people. However, personnel and administrative structures should be properly established to bring about actual support. For instance, a communication network should be set up between staff at the support centers who are in charge of advertisement and curriculum management and the administration teams at the schools. Unlike typical adaptation education courses, degree courses are granted by public confidence in the government, and therefore, the courses should be carefully monitored in terms of credibility and principles. Management staff at the centers should be fully supported through relevant training and education.

Online courses that connect social adaption and the curriculums of Air and Correspondence High Schools are essential for marriage immigrants who are not competent Korean language users. This would prevent organization of similar learning courses and help marriage immigrants who cannot attend classes regularly continue their education. In addition, instructors should be aware that the target students are immigrants who are not fluent in Korean and therefore prepare different materials and course content to enhance efficiency within the classroom. They should also keep a steady pace when delivering lectures and provide the students with feedback on the class materials and content. This requires more attention and care compared to teaching locals. If the class operates based on the performance of native students, then the objectives of the program will not be achieved. That would result in immigrant students losing confidence in the class. Also, instructors and staff who are in charge of education and managing the programs should have a fundamental understanding of multiculturalism.

The screening process should be operated as a binary system. The difference between the Korean education system and the marriage immigrant's country's system should be acknowledged, and admission should be offered as long as one fulfills a minimum condition. However, whilst admission conditions for North Korean defectors, foreigners and overseas residents are clearly stated in the admission policies of Air and Correspondence High Schools, admission conditions for marriage immigrants are not mentioned.

The study further suggests different completion courses in the form of university-affiliated, life-long education other than 3-year formal degree courses. For marriage immigrants who have a low level of education or who have not participated in learning for a long period of time, it would be difficult to complete a degree course whilst facing language barriers and culture shocks. In order to boost their motivation to learn, 6-month or 1-year curriculums should be designed, and certificates should be issued. This will give learners a sense of achievement and enable them to set new goals and face new challenges.

4 Conclusion

Korea has long adhered to the national paradigm of being a single-race nation, and was not prepared for the new concept of multiculturalism. Now the subject has created active discussions on various media platforms. These discussions have led to the changes brought about in all sectors of society such as policies, legislation and education. Since the launch of the Multicultural Family Support Act in 2008, government policies surrounding multicultural families in particular, are growing. However, these policies revolve more around dispensation such as providing Korean language education or social adaptation education. Instead of acknowledging each immigrant's cultural identity and providing support for their different needs, the existing policies are unitary, regarding immigrants from different backgrounds and cultures as one big group. The way most people identify immigrants is based upon their nationality and region such as South East Asian, Chinese and Indian. Indeed, the variety of different groups that could immigrate to Korea is vast. For instance, Vietnam is a multi-racial nation with more than 54 different recognized races including Viet, Thai and Han. India also has different climates in different regions and thus different cultures and customs across the country. In order to provide more efficient services, immigrant groups should be more finely classified.

This study has suggested an improvement scheme of the programs provided at the Multicultural Family Support Centers for immigrants in local communities. In 23 centers scattered across Seoul, various services are being provided including Korean language education, bilingual education, skills for jobs and business start-ups, drama clubs and choirs. However, their educational work is mainly focused on social adaptation and understanding the Korean language and culture. The programs are similar in different centers, and they are not regionally specialized. Some centers provide degree courses for marriage immigrants to improve their academic backgrounds. Their significance lies in the fact that they have come up with measures to improve immigrants' academic backgrounds, which are more sustainable and elevated than the courses designed to help immigrants with their daily lives. Still, not many people are aware that these courses are available. In addition, available courses are limited to a few subjects including English, mathematics and ethics. Furthermore, in order to implement a successful degree program, administrative support should be guaranteed.

This study, therefore, suggests that degree-earning courses provided by Air and Correspondence High Schools should be affiliated with the Multicultural Family Support Centers and offered to marriage immigrants. In a country where academic background defines one's status and power, improving the academic background of marriage immigrants, who are mostly neglected from education, is crucial for the stable settlement of multicultural families, who number almost 200,000 to date. The growing number of divorces in multicultural homes is circumstantial evidence that the support system focused on in the early stage of immigration needs improvement. Immigrants who have, to some extent, adapted to their new environment in both their homes and society still face different conflicts that range from educating their children, seeking jobs and also relationships with their Korean in-laws. In order to help solve these problems, more elaborate and continuous support is needed beyond the early stages of immigration. Therefore, the multicultural family support centers

should move beyond social adaptation education and help immigrants with self-realization and equip them with problem-solving skills. With this viewpoint, improving marriage immigrants' academic backgrounds can be a stepping-stone.

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