

The Ecology of Religious Education to Consider Carefully the Pedagogy of Difference in the Korean Context

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Abstract

This study aims to consist of a human rights education program for children to encourage teacher-child interactions as liturgical practices in light of the pedagogy of difference. The liturgical practice for children means constitutive practices to reconstruct the relationship between adults and children and then to produce a transcendental difference as God's children in Christian faith lives. The researchers consist of the sacred and secular examples for the pedagogy of difference in Korean contextual environment, using the qualitative and quantitative studies.

The Pedagogy of Difference at Jangdaehyun School for North Korean Refugee Students in South Korea



Jangdaehyun School

The Jangdaehyun School in South Korea is the alternative school for the young refugees from North Korea. The Demilitarized Zone lined after the Korean War (1950-1953) divided currently the worldview, ideology, the way of life, traditions and customs between North and South Korea.

The curriculum of the Jangdaehyun School focuses on the educational goal for young North Korean refugees to prepare the unified Korea. The Jangdaehyun School recognizes seriously the qualitative differences of culture, value, and ideology which young North Korean refugees experience in South Korean society in order to reestablish free North Korean society after the unification of North and South Korea. Therefore, the supplementary after school program and parent educational class by the Jangdaehyun considers carefully the pedagogy of cultural and ideological differences between North and South Korea in Christian educational environment on the basis of Ruth and Naomi's identity recovery program in the Bible. This identity recovery program will provide the Korean model of religious education as a pedagogy of difference to consider thoughtfully cultural, ideological, economical, and political diversity. Here the pedagogy of difference means an alternative way of life to initiate and respect learners' liberal choices in mutual encountering between the self and the other (Alexander 2015, 136-137).

At Jangdaehyun School, the unification of the Korean Peninsula can be understood in the perspective of vocation. The young people in that school understands the unification in the time of *kairos* in which it can be attained purpose and idea in our lives. Baker and Mercer understood a period of *kairos* as the time to recognize "God's presence and calling" in which they encountered with their "sensitivity and openness" toward God (2007, 155). The young students in Jangdaehyun understand that a true harmony in the relationship can be arrived at through recognizing the difference with other. They recognize the separation between South and North Korea after the Korean War (1950-1953) as suffering injuries of the peoples who are living in these lands. The teachers and students in the Jangdaehyun solve the problems of difference through realizing the cooperative and mutual dialogues in their learning environment. Especially, the unification education of that school becomes the agent for such dialogues. We need to consider Susanne Johnson's insight to find the image of God in the "conduct of mutually respectful dialogue" (Johnson 2018, 280). The mutual dialogue to "heal enmity, reduce prejudice, foster mutual understanding, and cultivate a more civil society" is therefore very effective for the unification education at Jangdaehyun School (Johnson 2018, 280). In such educational environment, any conceptual differences can be understood as the momentum of dialogue rather than its barriers.



Principal of Jangdaehyun School, Dr. Changho Lim

The Principal of Jangdaehyun School, Dr. Changho Lim, who is Vice-President at Kosin University in Busan, South Korea and Professor of Christian education, manifests that the educational purpose of that school is toward North Korean children as well as South Korean students such as the following:

Not only is Jangdaehyun School for North Korean children, but it is also open to South Korean students who wish to prepare for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Jangdaehyun School aims to educate student at their individual level and teach them to serve the world with love and Christian faith. As a boarding school, the students' daily lives consist of a well-rounded curriculum and communal living experience based on respect, cooperation, trust, and love. While continuing to uphold excellence in core academics, a balance of art, music, and physical education electives are a priority as well.

We have prepared an educational curriculum that meets the standards of globalization. Native English speaking teachers will also take part in school life with the students, increasing their sense of the international world. By inviting prominent guest speakers to share their experiences, the students have ample opportunities to broaden their perspectives and challenge their vision of leading a unified Korea in the future.

Through Dr. Changho Lim's contributive works, Jangdaehyun School was chosen as notable school by the State Department in Washington D.C., the United States of America on January 12-17, 2016 and was firstly designated as a North Korean refugee students' school for Fulbright ETAs (English Teaching Assistants) by the State Department, too. In order to effectively support Jangdaehyun School, Dr. Lim had already established The Alliance of Action Movement for North Korean Human Rights and Democratization, Foundation (NKHRD) and received the approval from the Ministry of Unification of the South Korean Government on December 10th, 2012. For Jangdaehyun School, Fulbright ETAs Program is working as the global networking channel. In addition, Mr. Walter Douglas, who is Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the United States of America, encouraged Jangdaehyun School's global challenging, visiting directly that school in Busan, South Korea on May 3rd, 2016. The Principal of that school, Dr. Changho Lim's educational intention for globalizing Jangdaehyun School can be understood in a concrete practice of the pedagogy of difference. Dr. Lim does not confine Jangdaehyun School's students and teachers' perspective within the local horizon and let their "desires, beliefs, and behaviors" encounter the liberty in the global openness and relativity. Hanan Alexander describes how religious traditions are working as the agents for encouraging the teachers and students' democratic capabilities such as the following:

Traditions of this kind are not merely stagnant bodies of knowledge and culture to be transmitted, but dynamics and evolving webs of belief and behavior to be transformed; and in the process of transformation they form and reform the teachers and students engaged in the pedagogic process. The citizens that emerges from such an education are nor mere reproductions of that which came

before, but autonomous selves capable of the responsible and creative decision making that liberal democracy and open society require. (Alexander 2015, 105)

In fact, Kosin University led by Vice-President Dr. Changho Lim is famous for very conservative and foundational Presbyterian heritage. For example, Dr. Changho Lim who teach the academic courses of Christian education at Kosin University has strongly evangelical confidence in Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch in the Bible. Jangdaehyun School in which both foundational fundamentalism and globalized liberalism are mingled in the pedagogy of difference therefore shows the crystallized consequence of religious education for liberal democracy and open society.



Teachers and Students of Jangdaehyun School

The Pedagogy of Difference in Early Childhood Education

The second part of this paper focuses on human rights education program for children in light of the pedagogy of difference. The researchers start their study with a presupposition that the human rights awareness of early childhood teachers may be working as a significant influence for social rights, liberty, and equality of the child. They aim to design the draft of teacher training program for encouraging children's human right. In addition, this program entails the transformative change of early childhood teachers' attitude and awareness about children's human rights. Such change is closely related to the vocational transformation to regard "children as agents, children as participants, and children as *already* expressive of the purposes of God" (Mercer 2005, 67). That teacher training program consists of four educational resources: teachers' self-understanding as a subject, understanding of children as other, understanding of children's human right, and improvement in teachers' sensitivity to children's human right. The teaching and learning process of that program considers thoughtfully the diverse educational methods such as lecture, presentation, discussion, and group activities. Most of all, in order to study early childhood

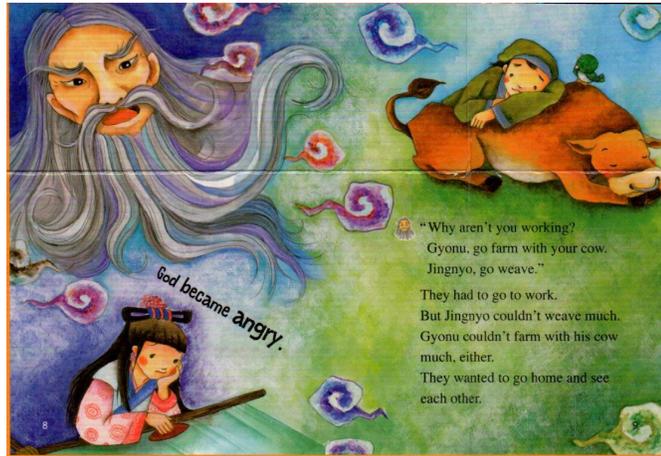
teachers' human right sensibility and perception for children, the researchers will conduct the questionnaire survey in child care centers located in Seoul, Daejeon, and Jeonju. These three cities have each distinctive characteristics to describe South Korea for foreigners. The metropolitan city of Seoul is the capital and the center of culture, economy, politics, foreign affairs such as New York in U.S.A., Daejeon is the center of administration such as Washington, D.C., and Jeonju is the traditional center of South Korea such as the regions of New England.

In August 2019, the researchers visited two kindergartens in the cities of Sejong and Daejeon in South Korea. These early childhood's educational institutions are educationally administrated by Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary in Daejeon, South Korea. One is *Allgoun* Early Childhood Learning Center in the city of Sejong and the other is *Chimshin* Kindergarten in the city of Daejeon. The Korean word of *Allgoun* means "to be always good and kind" and the word of *Chimshin* is the Korean characters to designate "Baptist Theological" in the school name of Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary. It takes 10 minutes by car from Sejong to Daejeon where these cities are located in the central part in South Korea. The Sejong is the city to be newly designed for the administrative-intensive affairs of the Korean Government. Therefore recently many administrative ministries and institutions are moving into the city of Sejong from Seoul Metropolitan City in South Korea. It takes two hours by car from Seoul to Sejong. Even though both cities of Sejong and Daejeon are sharing many roles of city due to their close distance, the city of Sejong records the first rate of increase in population in South Korea. But it does not doubt that Daejeon has the distinctions of old city areas. For the basic study about children's human rights, we implemented the quantitative survey with 5 or 6 years children in these two kindergartens, using the Korean traditional folk tale, *Gyonu and Jingnyo*. The following is the simple story of *Gyonu and Jingnyo* to share with these kindergartens' students:

There was a woman in Heaven. Her name is Jingnyo. Jingnyo was a beautiful woman. She was good at waving. She wove beautiful clothes. Many stars came to see her clothes. Sometimes she was bored of weaving. Then she looked outside the window.

There was a man in Heaven. His name was Gyonu. He was a handsome man. He farmed with a cow in Heaven. One spring day, Jingnyo was looking out of a window. She was Gyonu walking with a cow on a hill. He saw her, too.

Gyonu and Jingnyo fell in love at first sight. They loved each other and got married. They always wanted to stay together. Gyonu stopped farming with his cow. They became short of food. Jingnyo stopped weaving. They became short of clothes.



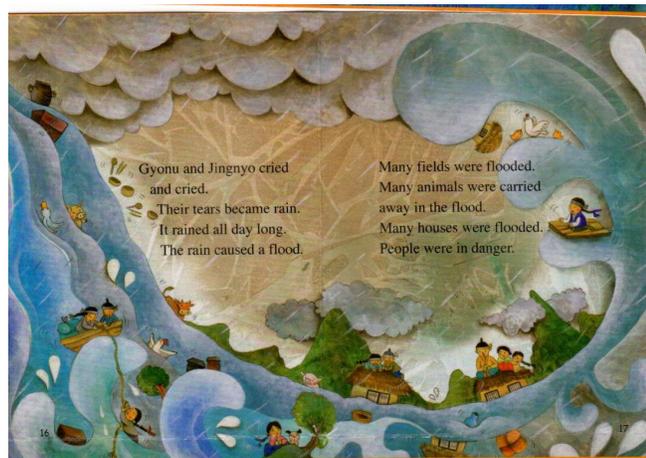
God became angry. “Why aren’t you working? Gyonu, go farm with your cow. Jingnyo, go weave.” They had to go to work. But Jingnyo couldn’t weave much. Gyonu couldn’t farm with his cow much, either. They wanted to go home and see each other.

God became very angry. “Why didn’t you listen to me? You can’t live together. Gyonu, go east. Jingnyo, go west. And work hard there. You can only meet on July seventh.” God forced them out of Heaven.

Gyonu had to go east. He had to farm with his cow there. Jingnyo had to go west. She had to weave there. They missed each other very much. They waited all year for July seventh. Because they could only meet then.

Finally, it was July seventh. Gyonu ran to Jingnyo. Jingnyo ran to Gyonu. But they couldn’t get to each other. There was a big river between them. But no bridge was over the river. They couldn’t cross the river. They became very sad and cried.

Gyonu and Jingnyo cried and cried. Their tears became rain. It rained all day long. The rain caused a flood. Many fields were flooded. Many animals were carried away in the flood. Many houses were flooded. People were in danger.



Tiger says, “Why has it been raining all day long?” Magpie responses, “Gyonu and Jingnyo are crying.” Tiger asks, “Why are they crying?” Crow says, “They can’t cross the river.” Rabbit

questions, “Why don’t you make a bridge for them?” Magpie says, “How?” Rabbit responses, “You can make a bridge over the river with your bodies.” Crow agrees, “That’s a good idea.”

The magpies and crows flocked to the river. They made a bridge by connecting their bodies. Magpies and crows say, “Step on our bodies and go see each other.” Gyonu and Jingnyo crossed the bridge of magpies and crows. Finally, they met. They cried with joy.

It is rainy or cloudy every July seventh. Do you know why? The reason is that Gyonu and Jingnyo are crying with joy. Magpies and crows have no hair on their heads. Do you know why? The reason is that Gyonu and Jingnyo step on their heads every year.

After reading this Korean traditional folk tale, the researchers suggested some questions in order to check kindergarten children’s human rights awareness. About our questions, children can express their responses from 1 scale (strongly disagree) to 5 scale (strongly agree), putting on their stickers on the board.



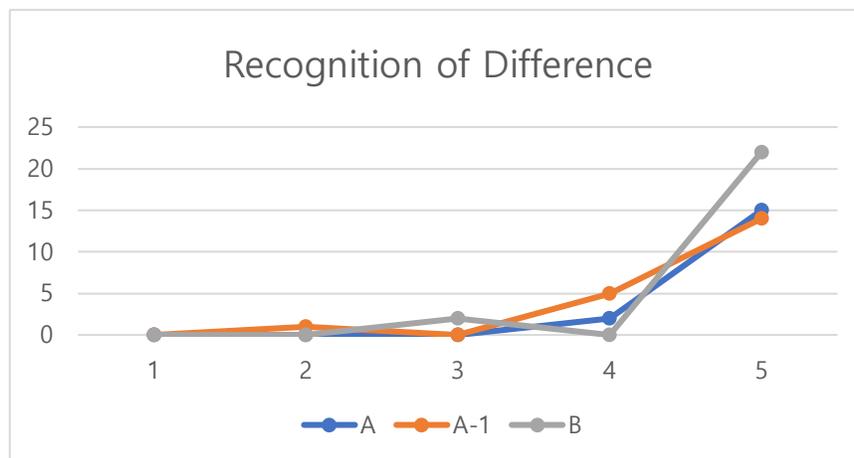
The first question is to look into children’s attitude about Jingnyo’s weaving work to be understood in the perspective of self-awareness. The following is each class respondents’ number table in two kindergartens:

Class	Kindergarten	Respondents’ Number
A	<i>Allgoun</i>	17
A-1	<i>Allgoun</i>	19
B	<i>Chimshin</i>	24

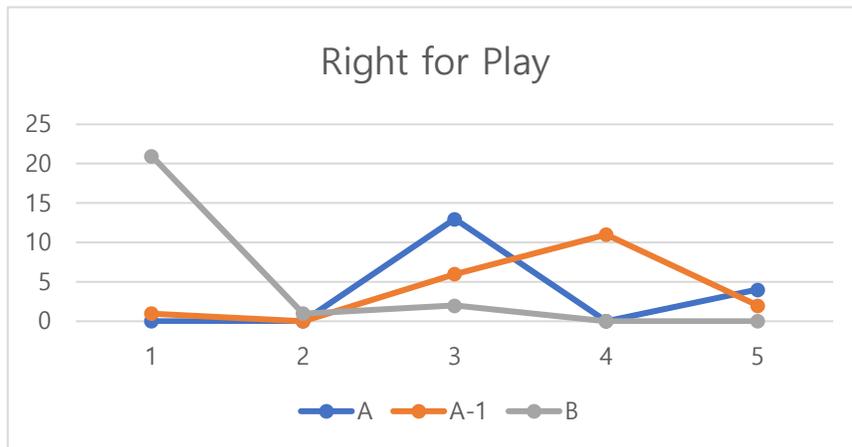
The kindergarten students’ attitude about the 1st question to consider their self-awareness scale shows the similar pattern in two preschool institutions such as the following:



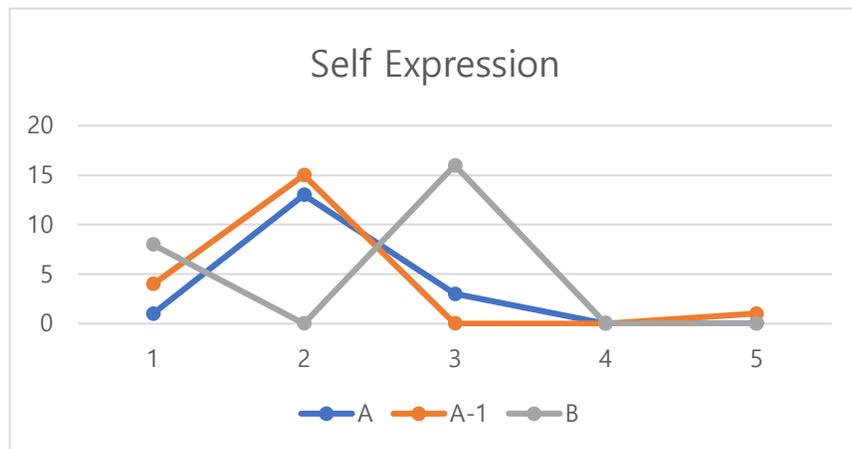
The researchers have the basic understanding that preschool children also recognize labor as the sound channel to realize their selves. In the second question about their works' difference between Gyonu's farming and Jingnyo's weaving, they shows the similar pattern's respond with the 1st question. The researchers interpreted these children's responds as the harmonious balancing attitude toward gender difference. In addition, children generally recognized Gyonu's farming and Jingnyo's weaving as the importance of labor itself.



However, in the third question to ask children's belief that Gyonu and Jingyo fell in love and were absorbed in play but stopped each farming and weaving, two kindergartens' patterns were different such as the following figure:



Lots students in *Chimshin* Kindergarten chose Gyonu and Jingyo’s responsibility of labor rather their right for play. Instead, many children in *Allgoun* Early Childhood Learning Center regarded Gyonu and Jingyo’s right for play with the positive perspective. The contrary belief between *Chimshin* and *Allgoun* early childhood institutions can be found in the index of “self-expression,” too such as the following figure:



With Gyonu and Jingnyo’s separate scene, the researchers provided the question about self-expression of sadness. In that question, students in both early childhood learning institutions could choose the properness of self’s emotional expression about sadness. In the above figure, children in *Allgoun* institution understood that not to express the sad emotion in such situation was not proper but children in *Chimshin* institution favored that not to express the sad emotion was better. The researchers interpreted both institutions’ difference with the perspective of rightness about God’s judgement. We recognized that Christian religious education in *Chimshin* had been practiced in the conservative and evangelical perspective. But *Allgoun* did not provide students with religious education due to the public issue about the separation between the State and the Church.

In the end, we recognized that children in *Chimshin* expressed more sensitive response about God's judgement due to their religious education. And we could recognize that such attitude influenced the basic human right for children such as the right for play. Moreover, our research shows that the pedagogy of difference for the human rights for children needs to be encouraged in Korean religious educational context.

Furthermore, in this study the researchers will include the correlational analysis between early childhood teachers' awareness about children's human rights and four factors' teacher-child interactions: emotional, linguistic, behavioral, and spiritual interactions, using the statistical analysis methods. And they will suggest a human rights education program for children with five phases of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation to encourage children's human rights consciousness and to provide the larger world of human social interaction as "liturgical practices" for children (Mercer 2005, 223). The alternative practical model in the pedagogy of difference reflects critically some pattern of "cultural homogeneity" which is a stereotype of adult as a leader and children as followers (Beaudoin and Turpin 2014, 267). The ecology of religious education as liturgical practices for children that guarantees children's participation and does not marginalize them therefore can be regarded as the alternative practice to deconstruct "exclusionary or oppressive social practices" (Mercer 2005, 224). The pedagogy of difference encourages a narrative immersion of encountering between myself and the other (Alexander 2015, 137). In this ecology of religious education, the "powerlessness, dependency, vulnerability, and weakness" of children can be understood as "the nature of humanness" in God's image rather than as the other of consumerism to be abused (Swinton 2014, 448).

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