
Diversity in Korea A Multicultural Pedagogy

Jeremy Schramm - 2017, April 23
University of Florida
Contemporary Issues in Art Education (ARE6641)

Introduction

Diversity is growing in populations across the world and people are being exposed to diverse cultures due to technological advancements and globalization. Korea, mostly homogenous until quite recently, is also experiencing a sharp increase in diversity and with multicultural families. It is important for teachers to learn as much as they can about the different racial and ethnic groups in order to better delivery information and develop cultural sensitivity (Weiner, 2006). It is my aim to learn about diversity in Korea by exploring historical events leading to today and common stereotypes and biases held by some Koreans. I will also explore multicultural pedagogy to better understand how I can be a positive force for combating racism in the world. With a better understanding of Korean history and racial biases, I hope to lead discussions and teach with a multicultural pedagogy through my personal artwork as well as in the classroom.

History

The Choson (Joseon) dynasty ruled Korea from 1392 to the late-nineteenth century (Strand, 2004). Korea suffered invasions from the Japanese between 1592 to 1598 and from the Manchus from 1627 to 1636 (Strand, 2004). After these invasions, the Koreans decided to close their borders and they earned the nickname, *the Hermit Kingdom* (Strand, 2004). In the mid-nineteenth century, the West was interested in establishing trade routes and tried to force Korea to open after China (1842) and Japan (1854) opened for trade (Strand, 2004). The British attempted trade negotiations with Korea in 1832 and 1833, as did the Russians in 1864 and 1865 (Strand, 2004).

Americans sailing on the *General Sherman* in 1866 but under a British flag tried to establish trade with Korea (Strand, 2004). However, when Korean officials boarded to

tell them they could not, they were taken hostage (Strand, 2004). As a warning, the *General Sherman* fired off a shot which caused some Koreans to shoot arrows and throw stones because their officials had not returned (Strand, 2004). To retaliate, the *General Sherman* shot and killed some of the Koreans (Strand, 2004). The *General Sherman* got stuck while trying to flee and the remaining crowd of Koreans rescued their officials and burned the ship with everyone on board (Strand, 2004).

Also in 1866, the French sent ships to attack Korea for killing Catholic priests (Strand, 2004). They were fought back and victory was declared by Korea (Strand, 2004). Strand (2004) states that the acting leader of Korea thought Christianity was “a foreign disease that needed to be stamped out before his people, the cultural descendants of the Buddha and Confucius, were contaminated” (p. 22).

In 1871, the Americans tried once again to peacefully make a trade agreement however, Strand (2004) says that “Ulysses S. Grant, elected in 1868, directed Rear-Admiral John Rodgers to provide that show of force if peaceful means were not sufficient” (p. 25). As Strand (2004) states, Korea “declared that there was no need for the Americans to come since Korea was a poor nation with nothing to trade. It would continue to befriend foreign sailors in distress but would destroy any foreign ships that threatened its rulers or were violent” (p. 25). Unfortunately, this message arrived too late (Strand, 2004). The Koreans fought the Americans off, reinforcing their views that foreigners were bad (Strand, 2004).

In 1870 and 1872, Japan tried to peacefully start trade with Korea (Strand, 2004). Without any luck with peaceful negotiations, they incited an incident in 1876 and forced Korea to sign a treaty (Strand, 2004). America jumped at the chance to start trade and negotiated, without military backing, a treaty in 1882 (Strand, 2004). The Queen of Korea was distrustful of Japan, thinking of them as a threat (Strand, 2004). In 1895 Queen Min was murdered by the Japanese (Strand, 2004).

Japan, wanting to expand its territory to China, occupied Korea during the Sino-Japanese conflict (1894-95) (Strand, 2004). The king asked Russia for help because Japan was forcing changes to the Korean government (Strand, 2004). This sparked the Russo-Japanese conflict (1904-05) during which time Japan again occupied Korea (Strand, 2004). From 1910 to the end of World War II, Japan declared Korea as part of

its territory (Strand, 2004). During the Japanese occupation of Korea, Japan destroyed cultural heritage, forced Koreans to speak Japanese, outlawed Korean language, forced landowners and business owner to hand over their properties, and kidnapped Korean girls to work as sex slaves known as comfort women (pp. 328-329).

Difficulties with Diversity

Considering the history Korea has with Japan, it is easy to see why there might be some tension between the two. Children easily pick up on the views and opinions of the adults around them. I have noticed that some of my students in Korea have a disdain towards Japan. There is a general store here that is owned by a Japanese company and while all my students shop there, they talk very negatively about it being a Japanese company. I try to teach my students that we should not forget our past, but we should consider that the Japanese students that are growing up today are not the ones that committed those crimes against Korea.

Although claiming to be ethnically homogenous, Korea might not be as 'pure blooded' as it might think. Heartbreakingly, Korean women have been taken dating back to the Goryeo Dynasty from 918-1392 (Lee, 2014). The ideas of 'pure blood' and 'half-blood' can have a huge impact on the lives of children who are Korean-American, Korean-Japanese, etc.

While in Korea, I have been both privileged and discriminated against. Choe (2009) points out that, "Today, the mix of envy and loathing of the West, especially of white Americans, is apparent in daily life" (para. 15). I have been accused of being in Korea to take advantage of Korean women and that I am unqualified to work in my own country. Due to my white skin and American accent I have had no problems getting jobs. However, those who speak English as their native tongue have been denied jobs because they are not white enough (Lee, 2014). Comedy shows in Korea have been known to use 'black face' which has received a lot of disapproval from the foreigner community as well as the global community via social media (Lee, 2014). Racism such as 'black face' can be credited to ignorance, but this is not the first time Korean media has been criticized for the use of 'black face.'

Racism in Korea is largely directed to other Asians, which make up 80 percent of all the immigrants living in Korea (Lee, 2014). Choe (2009) states, "Amnesty

International criticized discrimination in South Korea against migrant workers, who mostly are from poor Asian countries, citing sexual abuse, racial slurs, inadequate safety training and the mandatory disclosure of H.I.V status, a requirement not imposed on South Koreans in the same jobs” (para. 9). The children of immigrant workers also suffer. They are sometimes refused admission to Korean public schools because of protests from Korean parents (Olneck, 2011).

Multiculturalism Pedagogy

When considering a multiculturalism pedagogy, I think it is good to start by thinking about what our goal should be. I think Kim (2014) puts it best when describing third-order multiculturalism:

That is, the aim of a multiethnic and multiracial society to peacefully coexist and actively promote intercultural understanding, respect, and deference, without losing sight of justice and equality (p. 407).

It can be easy for educators to take the easy path and avoid the discussions about race, power, and privilege, but it is certainly a necessary path that we must take in order to help our students become global citizens (Knight, 2006). I would like to outline some of the ideas I have found to be important while considering a multicultural pedagogy.

First, I think we should familiarize students at an early age with respect for different cultures. Weiner (2006) states, “race should be introduced in the early elementary grades to develop racial literacy and awareness fully” (para. 8).

Second, I have noticed several authors discussing the idea of setting rules at the beginning of a course that deals with issues of race. Lee (2013) says that, “a good first step is to establish and discuss the ground rules for class dialogue” (p. 155). Hogue, Parker, and Miller (1998) also discuss how ground rules from the beginning help show students what is expected of them and sets the atmosphere for the class. It is important that students to understand that they will not be judged on their views but there are rules to protect each other. Lee (2013) suggests that, “teacher educators should explain to the class that each student participating will have a different level of racial understanding and all levels of understanding are welcome” (p. 155). If teachers

discuss this point at the beginning of such a course, I feel that students might be more understanding of the individual views of others.

Third, when teaching a multicultural pedagogy, teachers must be ready to face their own bias as well as be ready to face any conflicts that may arise (Hogue, Parker, & Miller, 1998). We cannot be prepared for everything and every instance will may have a different set of actions. These are issues that hit at the core of us and evoke emotional responses. We must be prepared for dealing with conflicts or not discuss such issues.

Reflection

Korea may have entered globalization due to military force but today it remains due to the global economy, technology, and the interests of the Korean people for other cultures. Delacruz (2009) sums up this idea by stating:

...globalization is fueled by economic and military quests for territory, resources and domination made possible through creation and maintenance of transportation and communication infrastructures, through investments in the acquisition of knowledge about the world and the education of those in need of such knowledge, and through technological advancements” (p. xii).

It seems to me that Korea has been bullied by its neighbors and wants to show the world how well they have done for themselves in the face of so much adversity. There are bound to be some growing pains along the way, especially when they are advancing at the speed that Korea is. Korea is at an important stage where it should utilize a multicultural pedagogy to a raise culturally aware public.

References

- Choe, S. (2009, November 1). South Koreans struggle with race. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/02/world/asia/02race.html>
- Delacruz, E. M. (2009). Mapping the terrain: Globalization, art, and education. In Delacruz, E. M., A. Arnold, M. Parsons, and A. Kuo, (Eds.), *Globalization, art, and education* (pp. x-xviii). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Hogue, C., Parker, K., & Miller, M. (1998). Talking the talk and walking the walk: Ethical pedagogy in the multicultural classroom. *Feminist Teacher*, 12(2), 89-106.
- Jung, Y. (2015). Post stereotypes: Deconstructing racial assumptions and biases through visual culture and confrontational pedagogy. *Studies in Art Education*, 56(3), 214-227.
- Kim, J. K. (2014). The third-order multiculturalism: Civil rights, diversity, and equality in Korea's multicultural education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 15(3), 401-408.
- Knight, W. B. (2006). Using contemporary art to challenge cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions. *Art Education*, 59(4), 39-45.
- Lee, C. (2014, September 4). Defining racism in Korea. *The Korea Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140904001088>
- Lee, N. P. (2013). Engaging the pink elephant in the room: Investigating race and racism through art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 54(2), 141-157.
- Meinecke, S. (2016, February 24). South Korea's struggle with cultural diversity. *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/en/south-koreas-struggle-with-cultural-diversity/a-19069733>
- Miller, L. (2000). Japanese colonialism in Korea 1910-1945: A document-based essay exercise. Retrieved from http://www.koreasociety.org/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&id=147
- Olneck, M. R. (2011). Facing multiculturalism's challenges in Korean education and society. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 12(4), 675-690.
- Strand, W. (2004). Opening the hermit kingdom. *History Today*, 54(1), 20-26.

Weiner, M. F. (2006). Talking race in the classroom. *Teachers College Record*, 108(1), 29-32. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/library/content.asp?contentid=12068>