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Re-envisioning Diversity Discourses and Practices in South Korean Higher Education through Curricular Interventions

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Abstract

Despite increasing racial/ethnic diversity on Korean college campuses and the society as a whole, few educational spaces exist for Korean college students to meaningfully and critically engage with the issues related to race and diversity. Drawing upon the literature on diversity in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States as a conceptual roadmap, this study explores the potential utility and applicability of curricular diversity in the context of Korean HEIs and argues that more intentional efforts need to be made to raise critical consciousness about race and diversity among Korean college students through curricular interventions. To this end, this paper first examines the dominant diversity discourse and practices in Korean HEIs to set the context for the current paper's argument. Then, the paper discusses the implications of curricular diversity on Korean college campuses at the individual and societal levels and provides recommendations for implementing such curricular strategies at the classroom level. The paper concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the current inquiry and suggestions for future research.

Introduction

Diversity has been a major driving force of change in the landscape of higher education institutions (HEIs) across the globe as a result of both international and domestic factors (Kezar, 2018; Smith, 2009). Thus,

the success of HEIs in this century is contingent upon their ability to effectively integrate diversity into their core institutional and educational missions (Smith, 2009). This trend has been no exception for traditionally racially/ethnically homogenous countries such as South Korea (hereinafter, Korea) (Moon & Shin, 2016). In particular, reflecting the rest of society, HEIs in Korea have witnessed an increasing racial/ethnic diversity brought in by governmental and institutional efforts to recruit students and faculty from abroad under the banner of internationalization (Jon, 2013; Moon & Shin, 2016).

Thus far, much attention has been paid to the increasing numerical diversity on college campuses with little regard for curricular/co-curricular and interactional diversity that is essential for realizing the transformative enterprise of diversity (Chang, 2002a). In particular, few structured opportunities exist for Korean college students to critically and meaningfully engage with the issues of racial/ethnic diversity despite the increasingly diversifying demographic and socio-cultural landscapes and the prevalence of racism and xenophobia across different social institutions in Korea. Thus, as a way to make a conceptual and practical contribution to address such a gap, this paper proposes curricular interventions aimed at raising critical awareness and consciousness among Korean college students on the issues of race and diversity, drawing upon the model of diversity courses in colleges and universities in the United States (U.S.).

To this end, this paper will first provide an overview of research on diversity in US HEIs that guided the analysis of Korean HEIs' numerical approach to diversity. Then I will discuss the implications of institutionalizing curricular diversity in the Korean context and provide several recommendations for locally adapting curricular diversity at the classroom level. It is important to note that the current paper does not argue for a blind and uncritical application of the US models to the Korean context, given the vastly different socio-cultural and historical contexts in which HEIs are situated as well as specific components and functioning of the HEIs themselves. Yet, given that diversity is a relatively new con-

cept in Korean society and HEIs, there may be useful insights that can be adopted from research and practices on diversity and social justice in HEIs in the U.S., which has a longer history of reckoning with racial and social injustice. By doing so, the current paper hopes to contribute to ongoing conversations on what transformative and holistic diversity, in general, and curricular diversity, in particular, may look like in Korean HEIs.

Conceptual Framework

Three forms of diversity in higher education

In this paper, unless otherwise specified, I use the term diversity to refer to racial/ethnic diversity. Additionally, it is important to provide a rationale for utilizing diversity research in US HEIs as the main conceptual roadmap for the current analysis. Diversity studies in US HEIs emerged in response to the increasing diversity and enduring racial injustice and inequalities in US HEIs and society as a whole, which prompted colleges and universities across the country to implement a wide range of diversity-related policies, programs, and initiatives (Chang, 2002b; Hutardo, 2007). Such socio-cultural and historical backdrop resonates with the larger social context in which the current paper's proposal to implement curricular diversity in Korean HEIs is situated. In particular, there have been growing anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism sentiments, racism, and xenophobia in response to the increasing diversity in Korean society and HEIs (Jun, 2019; S. Kim, 2012; Lee & Yoon, 2020). Thus, underlying mechanisms can be found in the well-established body of theoretical and empirical research regarding diversity in US HEIs that can be applied to Korean contexts.

Decades of research on diversity in US HEIs has identified three forms of campus diversity that are distinct yet interrelated: structural diversity, curricular/co-curricular diversity, and interracial diversity (Denson & Chang, 2009). Structural diversity refers to the numerical rep-

resentation of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in a given institution. Curricular/co-curricular diversity refers to the diversity experienced or understood either through formal courses (e.g., ethnic studies, women studies) or other programmatic efforts and initiatives on college campuses, such as cultural awareness workshops, multicultural campus events, and intergroup dialogs. Interracial diversity refers to the frequency and quality of interactions between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds in both structured and casual settings (Denson & Chang, 2009). While each form of diversity is important on its own in advancing racial and social justice and promoting positive learning outcomes for college students (You & Matteo, 2013), studies have shown that it is critical for HEIs to pursue all three types of diversities simultaneously to 1) maximize educational benefits that diversity offers; 2) create positive and affirmative campus environment and climate; 3) realize the transformative and multifaceted enterprise of diversity; and 4) achieve institutional excellence (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

The current study specifically focuses on curricular diversity to argue for the need to provide formal, institutionalized, and long-term educational spaces to learn and critically think about race and diversity on Korean college campuses. In addition, institutionalized curricular diversity can potentially impact a greater number of students and offer experiences of diversity to those who have limited opportunities to engage with them.

Diversity courses in higher education

Diversity courses are a representative example of curricular diversity that originally emerged to address issues of race and racism in American society and have expanded to include other forms of diversity, including class, sexual orientation, and physical disabilities, to name a few (Chang 2002b; Denson, 2009). According to a 2015 survey of 325 chief academic officers at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 60% of the respondents indicated that their institutions offer diversity courses

in their general education programs and 34% of them indicated that their institutions require all students to participate in diversity courses and experiences (Denson & Bowman, 2017).

No single definition exists regarding what constitutes diversity courses, as there are numerous ways diversity is conceptualized and incorporated into the curriculum (Denson & Bowman, 2017; Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011; Nelson Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005). Yet, one of the most widely used definitions states that diversity courses "have content and methods of instruction that are inclusive of the diversity found in society" (Nelson Laird et al., 2005, p. 450). Other definitions also emphasize integrating diverse contents, perspectives, and people into curricular approaches to develop students' critical thinking and social justice orientation toward various forms of diversity (Bowman, 2010; Chang, 2002a). Under these broad definitions, diversity courses are implemented either as a part of general education or in broader departments such as ethnic studies or women's studies (Hurtado, Mayhew, & Engberg, 2012). As such, there is much variation in specific implementations, structures, and contents of diversity courses across US colleges and universities (Hurtado et al., 2012; Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011; Parker, Eugene, Barnhardt, Pascarella, McCowin, & Jarvis, 2016). Nevertheless, their overarching goals are to cultivate essential skills and mindsets, critical consciousness, and civic responsibility among college students, who will be the future leaders of a diverse and pluralistic democracy (Bowman, 2010; Denson, Bowman, Ovenden, Culver, & Holmes, 2020; Parker et al., 2016).

At the same time, diversity courses are contentious political issues, and their values and utilities are debated for several reasons. These reasons include the superficial, nebulous, and performative nature of diversity courses (Vianden, 2018), resistance from students, especially those who are in privileged social positions (Bomwan, 2010; Vianden, 2018), inconclusive evidence regarding the long-term benefits that accrue from taking diversity courses (Hogon & Mallott, 2013), and practical difficulties surrounding facilitating politically charged topics and accom-

modating students' diverse backgrounds and lived experiences (Denson et al., 2020). In contrast, alternative perspectives suggest that diversity courses lead to a number of positive learning outcomes among college students, can potentially contribute to improving and maintaining a positive and inclusive campus climate (Parker et al., 2016), and are a vital part of a long-term effort to transform undergraduate education (Hurtado, 2007).

The Landscape of Diversity in Korean Higher Education

Focus on structural diversity

HEIs in Korea have witnessed increasing diversity brought about by governmental and institutional efforts to recruit students and faculty from abroad under the banner of internationalization (Moon & Shin, 2016). However, Korean HEIs pay disproportionate attention to increasing structural diversity while overlooking curricular/co-curricular and interracial diversity (Jung & Park, 2014; Moon, 2016; Moon & Shin, 2016; Park & Ko, 2015). While efforts to increase structural diversity are important, prior research has illuminated the negative consequences that can result from a piecemeal approach to diversity from educational and campus climate perspectives. For example, when diversity is pursued merely as a demographic outcome and as an end in itself, it can overlook the multitude of valuable educational outcomes that can accrue from engaging with different forms of diversity (Chang, 2002a; Chang, 2013; Milem et al., 2005). Indeed, studies have shown that structural diversity is a necessary yet insufficient condition for desirable educational outcomes to transpire (Denson & Chang, 2009; Denson & Bowman, 2017; Hurtado, 2007). Moreover, research on campus climate has suggested that structural diversity should be accompanied by concomitant efforts to examine other dimensions of campus climate such as psychological (perceptions and attitudes between different groups) and behavioral (intergroup relations on campus) dimensions (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-

Pederson, & Allen, 1998). Otherwise, prioritizing numerical diversity can create a host of problems detrimental to inclusive and hospitable campus climate, including racial tension, isolation, and discrimination (Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003) and hostility between the dominant and minority groups (Strachan & Owens, 2011).

Similarly, a handful of studies have reported the incidences of discrimination, exclusion, and isolation experienced by foreign students on Korean college campuses, as well as tensions between foreign and native Korean students (Dos Santos, 2020; J. Kim, 2016; Min, Xie, & Park, 2019; Moon, 2016). For instance, in addition to linguistic and cultural barriers, international students in Korean HEIs have been found to experience hardships due to the pervasive and exclusionary sentiments of ethnic homogeneity (Min, Xie, & Park, 2019; Moon, 2016), colorism (Min, Xie, & Park, 2019), neo-racism (Dos Santos, 2020; Lee, Jon, & Byun, 2016), and neo-nationalism (Lee et al., 2016) that are deeply rooted in the Korean society, institutional culture, and individual interactions. Additionally, in a study that examined the perceptions of 77 university stakeholders, including faculty, students, and administrators, across ten universities in Korea regarding a governmental and institutional approach to internationalization, Cho and Palmer (2013) reported Korean domestic students' antagonistic feelings toward foreign students and a sense of neglect by their home institutions because of the widespread notion that foreign students receive preferential treatment by the Korean government and HEIs, one notable example being lower admission standards set for foreign students. These reports resonate with previous studies that have discussed the negative consequences that can result when colleges and universities fail to provide proper guidance and take necessary measures in response to changes brought about by structural diversity (Strachan & Owens, 2011). As such, critics have noted that Korean HEIs and society as a whole are not ready to fully embrace the intrinsic value of diversity due to exclusionary ethnic nationalism centered around the ideologies of pure Korean blood and ethnic/racial homogeneity that have defined the country's national identity for centuries (Lee & Yoon, 2020; Moon & Shin,

2016; Shin, 2012). As a result, a small yet growing number of studies have argued for the need to provide more experiences of diversity to Korean college students to equip them with necessary mindsets and orientations in the increasingly diversifying Korean college campuses and society as a whole (Cho & Kim, 2017; In, 2009; Jung & Park, 2014; Lim & Kim, 2011; Park & Ko, 2015; Tanghe, 2016). However, scant attention has been paid to the curricular diversity in Korean HEIs.

Curricular diversity in Korean higher education

Parallel to US universities and colleges' curricular restructuring in light of growing diversity and interracial tension, Korean colleges and universities have implemented curricular changes under the banner of multicultural education in response to the shifting demographic and socio-cultural landscapes. In general, however, research on multicultural and diversity education in the context of Korean HEIs is sparse because most of the relevant scholarly attention has been focused on the K-12 level (S. Lee, 2011; M. Lee, 2014; Park, 2015). Additionally, within the Korean HEIs, contents related to diversity and multicultural education are heavily concentrated on teacher education and training programs as a result of the Korean government's multicultural education policies aimed at improving the academic performance and educational experiences of multicultural students in the K-12 system (S. Lee, 2011; M. Lee, 2014). As a result, the issues of diversity and multiculturalism are not sufficiently integrated into the undergraduate general education curriculum in Korea, which limits opportunities for a greater number of students to engage with these issues (M. Lee, 2014).

In addition to the lack of diversity-related courses on Korean college campuses, there are a few limitations of the dominant paradigms and approaches prevalent in the existing courses on diversity and multiculturalism. For example, in a study that examined structural, educational, and interactional diversity at the three leading elite universities in Korea, Moon (2016) pointed out that diversity-related courses at those

institutions tend to offer decontextualized and abstract coverage of diversity and racism in other countries. This reinforces the notion that these issues are not as relevant or urgent for Korean society, and it appears that there is a paucity of content that critically discusses racial/ethnic minority groups, diversity, and the myth of racial/ethnic homogeneity and pure-blood ideology within the Korean society.

This is a critical omission, given that acquiring a robust understanding of a given concept requires the "development of context-specific ways of seeing and using the concept across a variety of situations" (Philip, 2011, p. 305). This principle is also captured in the concept of a pedagogy of practicality (Tanghe, 2016) that emphasizes the need to develop context-specific pedagogies. The scarcity of more localized applications of diversity and race in the Korean context is further corroborated by the absence of courses that specifically focus on the issues of race and racism in the Korean society from the list of diversity courses available on the websites of diversity councils at Seoul National University and Korea University. While these two are not representative of all HEIs in Korea, the fact that they are the leading institutions in Korea and among the first to establish diversity councils among Korean HEIs implies the potential impacts they may have on shaping diversity discourse and practices in the field of higher education and society as a whole.

Furthermore, Moon (2016) found that a celebratory and integration approach to diversity and multiculturalism dominates the reviewed diversity-related courses, which emphasizes harmonious co-existence between different groups. This pattern is consistent with the dominant celebratory and assimilation approach underlying the current multicultural education paradigm in Korea, which has been critiqued from multiple perspectives, including post-structuralism (Jahng & Lee, 2013), politics of inclusion/ exclusion (J. Kim, 2014), internal orientalism (J. K. Kim, Basile, Jaime-Diaz, & Black, 2018), and critical multicultural education (E. Kim, 2015). As such, it is evident that a more critical approach to diversity and multicultural education is needed in Korean society in general and

HEIs in particular. In fact, Warikoo and Deckman's (2014) study examined how two elite US universities' different approaches to enacting diversity—mainly power analysis and minority support approach and an integration and celebration approach—shaped students' perspectives on diversity and multiculturalism and illuminated the importance of striking a balance between the two approaches. In particular, the authors found that the power analysis and minority support approach promotes social justice orientations and greater awareness racial and social inequalities, and the integration and celebration approach leads to cosmopolitan views of diversity and multiculturalism among the students. Thus, curricular interventions that can cultivate context-specific understanding and critical consciousness regarding race and diversity within Korean society may yield positive outcomes for individuals, institutions, and society as a whole.

Implications of curricular diversity in the Korean context

This section will discuss the ways in which curricular diversity aimed at raising critical consciousness regarding race and diversity among Korean college students can help: 1) advance racial and social justice in Korean HEIs and society as a whole, and 2) reap the educational benefits of the experiences of diversity among college students.

Advancing racial and social justice in higher education and society as a whole

One of the central goals of diversity works in US HEIs, including curricular diversity, is to advance racial and social justice on college campuses and the society as a whole. In particular, colleges and universities are believed to be well-positioned to advance these goals and provide opportunities for college students to meaningfully engage with diversity and develop critical consciousness and pluralistic orientations, given the relatively racially/ethnically homogenous educational and

neighborhood environments students grow up in before entering colleges (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Denson & Bowman, 2017).

While it is important to note that the issues of race and racism are not as conceptually and structurally rooted as they are in US society and other settler countries, Korea is certainly not an empty vessel when it comes to issues of race and racism. However, a lack of discussion and discourse on race and racism in Korean historiography and popular imagination is often conflated with Korean racial naiveté (J. Kim, 2015). On the contrary, critics suggest that such scarcity can be attributed to a socially constructed and commonly held belief that Korea has historically been immune to and devoid of racial problems due to its racial/ethnic homogeneity (J. Kim, 2015). A similar line of argument is that race has become relevant in Korean society only recently, with its transition to a multicultural society (Yuk, 2016). In addition, Korea's conceptualization of racism is limited to extreme forms of overt racism seen in other countries, which further reinforces the notion that race is irrelevant in Korean society due to the absence of major racial violence and conflicts in Korean history (N. Y. Kim, 2008; Yuk, 2016). However, it is argued that race and racism in Korea is "complex product of the country's colonial history, post-war American influence and military presence, rapid economic development as well as patriotism that takes a special pride in its 'ethnic homogeneity'" (Yi, 2017, p. 420).

As a result, various forms of exclusive racial ideologies exist in Korean society, including racial/ethnic nationalism centered around Korean pure-blood ideology, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, colorism, and GDP racism, which tend to be muted in both popular and official discourse (J. Kim, 2015; N. Kim, 2015; Tanghe, 2016). While discussions around these issues have become more visible and frequent in Korean society with the Korean government's adoption of the multiculturalism agenda beginning in 2005, exclusive nationalism premised on Korean blood purity continues to prevail in Korea (Lee & Yoon, 2020), and anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism sentiments are on the rise (Jun, 2019; Kim & Jeon, 2017). As a result, scholars have raised the need

to pay explicit attention to ethnic nationalism, racism, and racial ideologies that are deeply embedded in Korean society, institutional culture, and individual beliefs (Moon & Shin, 2016). For example, Professor Gi-Wook Shin (2021) at Stanford University argues that Korea's progress with racial justice far lags behind the efforts that are being made to provide legal and social protection against gender and sexual discrimination despite the long-standing presence of exclusive racial ideologies in Korean society.

While implementing curricular diversity alone will not lead to a transformative change, previous studies have demonstrated the critical role that the institutional contexts of HEIs play in shaping college students' worldviews and learning outcomes. For example, controlling for student background characteristics, campus characteristics, and students' college experiences, Barnhardt, Sheet, and Pasquesi (2015) reported that students' commitment and skills for contributing to the larger community were positively shaped by the degree to which students perceived that campus climates advocated for students' active involvement in civic activities. Specific to the issues of race and diversity, Warikoo and de Novais (2015) found that students' understanding and framing of race and diversity on college campuses and in society were shaped by an institutional approach to diversity-related policies and practices. As such, implementing curricular diversity can signal to students the institutional commitments toward promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, which may positively shape students' orientations to these issues and potentially have impacts beyond the walls of HEIs.

Educational benefits of curricular diversity

Proponents of diversity works in US HEIs have advanced "the educational benefits of diversity" (Hutardo, 2007, p. 85), which have been supported by both theoretical and empirical research that illuminate specific mechanisms through which experiences of diversity promote positive learning outcomes for students. In terms of the theoretical framework,

Gurin et al. (2002) proposed a model of diversity learning and experiences for college students based on Piaget's (1971) cognitive disequilibrium theory, which suggests that encountering diverse people and perspectives that are inconsistent with one's preexisting stereotypes and worldviews will likely lead to complex mental processing and spur cognitive learning and growth. Applying this theory to the higher education context, Gurin et al. (2002) posited that college students are more open to diversity-related learning and growth as they are at a critical developmental stage and, thus, can benefit significantly from various diversity-related experiences. As such, Gurin et al.'s (2002) framework provided robust theoretical foundations for numerous studies that have examined how campus diversity learning, including courses on diversity and experiences of diversity, facilitates positive learning outcomes (Denson & Chang, 2009).

While mixed findings exist regarding the impact of diversity courses on learning outcomes (Hogan & Mallott, 2005; Denson & Bowman, 2017), on the whole, an array of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies have reported various positive cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal learning outcomes that accrue from taking diversity courses. These include diversity-related outcomes such as positive attitudinal and belief changes regarding race, diversity, and multicultural education (Nelson Laird et al., 2005), reduced racial bias (Bowman 2010; Chang, 2002b; Denson, 2009; Hogan & Mallott, 2005), openness to cultural awareness and a greater appreciation of other cultures (Chang, 2002b; Gurin et al., 2002), and more positive interactions with peers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Nelson Laird, 2005; Nelson Laird et al., 2005). Other positive learning outcomes include moral development and reasoning (Hurtado et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2016), increased social action, civic engagement, and civic-mindedness (Castellanos & Cole, 2015; Nelson Laird et al., 2005), and cognitive and academic development, including self-confidence, critical thinking, complex thinking, and problem-solving skills (Nelson Laird, 2005).

Thus, diversity courses can be beneficial for Korean college students

in at least two ways.

First, they can foster students' critical consciousness regarding racial/ethnic diversity and other forms of diversity, which might be especially important and relevant learning outcomes in light of the ongoing debates over the anti-discrimination law in Korea. In particular, some diversity courses in the US are designed with an assumption that learning about one type of difference can facilitate thinking about and tolerating other forms of differences and oppressions (Chang, 2002a) and lead to a moral consciousness on "human dignity and respectful conduct across a range of differences" (Parker et al., 2016, p. 395).

Second, additional learning outcomes, such as critical thinking skills, which can accrue from taking diversity courses, may be beneficial for Korean college students, given that the Korean education system subjects students to rote memorization and passive learning toward a singular goal of acing examinations and entering a prestigious university (M. Kim, 2019). Therefore, colleges and universities may offer unique opportunities for students to engage with issues related to diversity and broaden their worldviews, values, and purpose of life. These learning outcomes, such as critical thinking, commitment to civic engagement, and ability to think across differences, also resonate with certain goals of liberal arts education (Chang, 2002a). Thus, implementing curricular diversity can further advance the missions of liberal arts education, which have become an integral part of many Korean HEIs (Ka, 2016).

Implementations of Curricular Diversity in the Korean Context

Based on the individual and societal benefits that can accrue from implementing curricular diversity in the Korean context, this section will draw upon the syllabuses from three diversity courses at one of the leading public universities located on the West Coast of the U.S. and discuss several components from those courses that can further inform diversity and multicultural education in the Korean HEIs.

Course structure

The three diversity courses are part of the general education curriculum and housed in the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Education Studies, and the first-year college students writing program, respectively. These three courses were chosen because they meet the diversity course requirements mandated for every undergraduate student at the institution and address the issues of race and racism either as a major or minor topic of the course, which can provide some insights into the different ways in which those topics can be integrated into a course. For example, a course housed in the Department of Anthropology examines race and racism as a major theme of the course, specifically the historical origins of racism rooted in Western imperialism and colonialism and its impact on a global stage and within the U.S. A course within the first-year college writing program uses writing as a pedagogical tool to critically interrogate racial/linguistic hegemony that prevails throughout US colleges and universities and examines how these forces shape individual identities and educational trajectories. Lastly, a course within the Department of Education Studies examines the role of US schooling and education in perpetuating educational inequality and inequity along racial/ethnic, gender, and class lines. As such, the topics of race and diversity can be taught as a stand-alone class or integrated into a course as tools of inquiry to examine various aspects of a given society.

A review of the syllabus from these courses revealed two recurring themes that might be useful in the Korean context, given the aforementioned limitations of current diversity and multicultural education: 1) a context-specific understanding of race and diversity and 2) a critical approach to diversity.

Context-specific understanding of race and diversity

All three courses examine the pressing racial and diversity issues within US society. For example, the education studies course examines

how various aspects of the educational system, including policy, curriculum, and school culture, as well as specific educational issues affecting different minority groups, perpetuate educational achievement and opportunity gaps along racial/ethnic, gender, and class lines. Similarly, a course within the writing program looks at how the racial/linguistic hegemony deeply embedded in US HEIs, and the educational system shapes educational trajectories of linguistic and racial minority groups. The anthropology course that specifically focuses on race/racism explores the impact of race and racism in shaping American society in general and the unique experiences and identities of different racial and ethnic minority groups.

As such, there may be value in providing a context-specific understanding of race and diversity within Korean society when implementing curricular diversity in the Korean context.

This is not to promote parochial views but rather to help students see more clearly the relevance of discussing and thinking about these issues. In the Korean context, some potential topics that can be explored include, but are not limited to, the history of race and racism, contemporary racial issues, and the experiences and identities of different racial and ethnic minority groups within Korean society.

Critical approach to race and diversity

Additionally, the three courses examine the issues of diversity and race beyond celebrating cultural differences. Such an approach is manifested in the courses' emphasis on 1) the socially constructed nature of race and racism, 2) systemic privilege and marginalization based on gender, race, social class, nationality, immigration status among others, and 3) various forms of racism, such as anti-Blackness, colorblind racism, modern racism, and deficit perspectives toward racial/ethnic minority groups.

As such, some possible topics that can be incorporated into curricular diversity in the Korean context include critically examining the myth of racial/ethnic homogeneity and Korean blood purity, the notion of authentic Koreanness, various forms of exclusive racial ideologies in the

Korean society including, anti-Blackness, colorism, neo-racism, and valorization of whiteness, and the origins and the dominant discourses of multiculturalism in Korea. Learning about diversity that goes beyond celebrating cultural and human differences can potentially help students develop critical consciousness regarding various forms of diversity from structural and historical perspectives and revisit their existing assumptions and worldviews, implicit biases, and stereotypes.

The learning goals and objectives of the reviewed courses were further aided by specific pedagogical approaches that previous studies have demonstrated to be conducive to student learning in courses on diversity, including student-centered pedagogy, active learning strategies, and safe classroom environments (Hurtado et al., 2012; Nelson Laird et al., 2005; Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011). In practice, for instance, diversity courses utilize experiential learning methods to facilitate peer interaction and student participation through various group activities, such as small group discussions, debates, role-playing, and student paper exchanges, which are believed to stimulate students' meaning-making processes of novel information and perspectives (Hurtado et al., 2012; Marin, 2000; Nelson Laird et al., 2005; Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011). Another related component of diversity courses is an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which students feel safe to share their opinions and questions and challenge each other (Denson, 2009; Marin, 2000; Nelson Laird et al., 2005).

Similarly, the reviewed courses employed various activities, including collaborative learning through online discussion boards and group projects, self-reflective writing, such as personal narratives, racial bias exercises, and the application of key theories and concepts to current events, movies, and documentaries. Indeed, studies have shown that pedagogical strategies such as self-reflection, journaling, collaborative learning, and learning tied to real-world problem solving can also be effective in mitigating student resistance to learning about race and racism (Winkler, 2018). In Korea, for example, the issue of race and racism has received much attention in media studies (Ahn, 2018, M. Kim, 2019).

Thus, incorporating media analysis can be a powerful way to facilitate context-specific understanding of race and diversity and provide opportunities to connect the concepts learned in class and to real-world problems.

Limitations and Recommendations

It is important to discuss a few limitations of the current study's proposal to implement curricular diversity in Korean HEIs. First, it was beyond the scope of current inquiry to fully and deeply engage with the important contextual differences in which diversity works in HEIs situated in the US and Korea. For example, considering a multitude of external factors, such as political/legal imperatives, shifting demographics, and persistent social inequalities along racial grounds, that made diversity works in US HEIs compelling issues (Milem et al., 2005), critics may question what factors would compel the Korean HEIs to address the issues of diversity and implement curricular diversity, their relevance in the Korean context, and organizational readiness and capacity. In fact, one of the main reasons why educational change does not occur is simply because people fundamentally do not understand the reason for the change (Fullan, 2016). Another important contextual difference is change agents. In the US, diversity works in HEIs emerged through committed activists and bottom-up movements rather than being institutionally initiated. Thus, future research should consider these contextual differences when designing curricular diversity in the Korean context.

Second, the current study is not a comprehensive review of the curricular diversity in US HEIs. Rather, the study aimed to identify broader themes, principles, and goals underlying curricular diversity in US HEIs that may be usefully adapted to fit the Korean contexts. However, studies have shown that the impacts and benefits of diversity courses vary significantly depending on nature (e.g., required/non-required), type and content matter of courses in question, number of courses taken, specific outcomes examined (e.g., attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral), student

characteristics, including their gender and racial/ethnic identities, and re-
search design employed (Denson & Bowman, 2017; Denson et al., 2020;
Nelson Laird, 2011; Parker et al., 2016). Thus, the current inquiry may
have overlooked important micro-insights and components that constitute
curricular diversity. Further research that examines specific policies, prac-
tices, and implementations regarding curricular diversity that are re-
sponsive to the particular socio-cultural contexts of Korean HEIs is
warranted.

Conclusion

This paper examined the implications and utility of curricular diver-
sity in Korean HEIs as a way of cultivating necessary social justice and
equity mindsets and critical consciousness among Korean college students
to live and work in an increasingly diverse and global society. By doing
so, the current study can contribute to expanding conversations on curric-
ular diversity and the analytical and conceptual focus of existing diversity
and multicultural education in Korean HEIs. Furthermore, the current
inquiry hopes to inform the efforts of higher education educators, poli-
cy-makers, and researchers to pay more explicit attention to other aspects
of diversity in Korean HEIs, such as curricular/co-curricular diversity
and interactional diversity beyond surface-level demographic changes.

What this paper does not argue for is the blind application of the
US model in the Korean context because scaling up educational changes
at both local and global levels is a multifaceted issue that goes much
deeper than mere adoption and replication. Instead, scaling up requires
being "a critical consumer of external ideas, while working from a base
of understanding and altering local context" (Fullan, 2016, p. 92).
Similarly, cross-national and cultural borrowing of educational practice
is a complex undertaking that requires contextualized and committed
strategies and endeavors (Coburn, 2003; Lewis, 2015). Thus, the current
study hopes to serve as a conceptual and practical springboard for future
studies that may further explore curricular diversity in Korean higher

education.

Additionally, diversity-related work in higher education requires fundamental changes in existing institutional beliefs and assumptions, practices, arrangements, and power structures to move toward equity, diversity, and inclusion (Chang, 2002a). This type of educational change can be described as a second-order change, which refers to a "transformational or more radical change and innovation" (Finnigan & Daly, 2012, p. 44). The second-order change is inherently difficult to implement and less common compared to the more routine nature of the first-order change since it is about changing deeply held beliefs and values, and individuals and organizations tend to firmly adhere to familiar patterns and practices (Kezar, 2018).

However, despite the challenging nature of implementing diversity works in general and curricular diversity in particular, attending to this issue is important and opportune at this critical juncture when Korea is becoming an increasingly diverse society and emerging as a regional and global power. Thus, the Korean government and HEIs must critically investigate and employ the language and practices of diversity and renew their civic roles and responsibilities to cultivate equity-minded and socially responsible future leaders instead of merely preparing them for the job market. Such critical self-reflection may be the first step toward realizing the transformative enterprise of diversity on college campuses that will have impacts beyond the walls of colleges and universities.

Acknowledgement

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