Implementing Pedagogy of Cultural Studies
to Service Learning Project:
Service Learning at the Korean School in the U.S.A

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The purpose of this study was to find the existential meanings of the culturally marginalized community organization. Based on the findings, the study examined the issues related to operating the organization and found the ways of helping such organization through service learning programs. For the study, the researcher chose the Korean school of Knoxville in the USA as a service community organization. This study used a qualitative method using narrative construction in the nature of the text shapes with first-person point of views. The research findings were discussed based on the observations and participation in the organization. The study found that the Korean school plays a role as a cultural liaison connecting the Korean culture to other cultures while enabling students to critically accept their native systems, values, and customs through understanding of their native language. However, problems were found in operating the school due to the lack of skills and knowledge of the school administration. Suggestions were made and implemented to the school in order to improve the performance of the school.

Keywords : service learning, cultural studies, language minority population, cultural liaison

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Introduction

Background

"Cultural studies" is a way of looking at previously neglected subjects and talking seriously about the perspectives of marginalized groups in society. It provides a means of getting better knowledge about a specific context by asking and answering intellectual questions about how individuals are positioned in the society (Wright, 2000). As one aspect of cultural studies, the pedagogy of service learning promotes students' learning through participating in actual issues in the community that they belong to. In the service learning program, learning is promoted by being an active participant and students apply theories of cultural studies to the field study. Williams and Ryba (2001) claim that critical analysis illuminating issues of social inequality makes service learning distinct from experiential learning or phenomenology, in which naturalistic observations and descriptions are encouraged without critiquing the phenomena.

For a partial fulfillment of the cultural studies course at the University, I had a chance to participate in a service learning project in a community organization. I chose to work at the local Korean School for the service learning project because it is a social group of "others" that are marginalized culturally, ethnically, and racially. These social differences result in a form of domination and subordination that generate suffering, resistance, and conflict (Koegel, 1995). Therefore, the Korean school was the place that I could incorporate the theories of cultural studies with praxis, pursuing social justice for a socially oppressed group, particularly a language minority population.

The Korean school is a non-profit community organization where community members can learn Korean language and culture. The school is designed for Korean populations, especially children in the local area, to help them to appreciate their own cultural heritage as well as others', and enhance their self-esteem through

pride in heritage. The Korean school plays a role as a cultural liaison connecting the Korean culture to other cultures while enabling students to accept critically their native systems, values, and customs through understanding of their native language. While I have been working as a teacher at the Korean School for 3 years, I felt that this is not a continuum but a new start since the job was approached with totally different perspectives. The theories of cultural studies and the critical pedagogy of service learning reinforced my responsibilities and roles as a community member.

Purpose of the study

The purposes of this study were to examine the existential meanings of the culturally marginalized community organization and the issues related to operating the organizations in order to find the ways of helping such organizations through service learning programs. Based on these purposes, the focus of service was to help the school to meet the goals of mission statements, develop various programs that might embed issues of multiculturalism, and fulfill my responsibilities as a community member. For accomplishing the purposes, I approached the service with the inquiries such as (1) why does the organization exist? (2) how is multiculturalism realized in this organization? (3) does this organization consist of a group that is socially oppressed and marginalized? (4) can the social justice be claimed through the organization? (5) what kinds of problems does the organization have? (6) how should these problems be approached and handled? (7) what can I do for the organization? To find out these inquires, research questions were formulated. The research questions are as follows;

   1) Why does the Korean school exist?

   2) How is the Korean school operated ?

   3) What kinds of problems that the Korean school pertains?

   4) How these problems can be solved?

Theoretical Background

Cultural studies and service learning

Hytten (1999) defines cultural studies as a field that seeks for links between culture, knowledge, and power with the purpose for bringing together educational practices with social practices. Cultural studies criticizes that education does not provide equal opportunity but generates a privileged narrative space for some social groups. It also creates an unequal space and subordination for others who are powerless and culturally marginalized people. Therefore, the challenges for schools are to rearrange the distribution of the power by teaching children to appreciate other cultures (Hytten, 1999).

Cultural studies suggest that educational practice should participate in a social transformation that is aimed at securing fundamental human dignity (Hytten, 1999). As stated above, service learning is one aspect of cultural studies that pursues a critical pedagogy to promote students' learning participating in community activities (Writes, 2000). According to the National Commission on Service Learning (2008), service learning is a strategic teaching method that community service is integrated with instruction and reflection in order to teach civic responsibility while enriching learning experiences. In the classroom, service learning objectives are combined with learning objectives and learning experiences occur through self-reflection and acquisition of values, skills, and knowledge content. Jacoby and Associates (1996) define service learning as a pedagogy that is based on experience and intentional reflection in the manifestations of cultural studies. Furco (2001) describes that service learning is grounded in constructivism and experiential strategies in which students identify the needs of community and apply their knowledge and skills to resolve the identified problems by engaging with authentic activities. Speck(2001) claims that the purpose of service learning is to connect classroom learning with real world situations. In particular, students learn the concept in the classroom and

implement those concepts to both inside and outside the classroom by participating in the community activities.

Weigert(1998) proposes that before defining service learning, the meaning of "service" should be clarified since it is a complex terminology to contest. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, service is defined as "pushing the welfare or advantage of another" and "supply of the needs of persons". In addition, there are 38 more definitions presented in the dictionary and the definitions focus on help, benefit, and advantage. Troppe (1995) claims that service learning courses adopt service as a form of assignment and reflection is required as a part of learning. Since students do not receive sufficient opportunities for learning academic content merely by working at a community, structured learning activities should be required by reflection in order to accomplish course objectives.

Service learning in education

Service learning has been reported to have positive impact on students' learning since it has been implemented in educational settings. Based on the report by the National Commission on Service Learning (2008), service learning has spread throughout communities, institutions, and colleges and 9% of the universities that participated in the NCSL survey required serviced learning courses for graduation. Service learning can be used in any subject area as long as it is appropriated to learning goals. In addition, it is beneficial to both universities and communities in a way that it links to academic content and standards by making young people be involved in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs. Students can be positive and meaningful participants in community projects while involving in the projects with teamwork. Service learning experiences provide students with opportunities to engage in problem-solving by requiring them to gain knowledge of the specific context of their service learning activities (NCSL, 2008).

According to Austin and Sax(1998), students improved their academic development, life skill development, and sense of civic responsibility by

participating in service learning activities. Eyler, Root, and Braxton (1998) also report that service learning programs provided students with opportunities to think of social issues by influencing students' attitudes, values, and skills in a short period of time. Service learning is different from voluntarism or community service. The pedagogy of service learning is to advance students knowledge and help to remedy deficiencies in our common life through forming partnerships with community (Weigert, 1998).

However, service learning itself does not bring benefits to students and the class. For successful service learning programs, the course should be well designed and systematically implemented. Rubin (2001) suggests five steps for designing successful service learning such as (1) defining student learning outcomes, (2) defining personal scholarship outcomes, (3) planning community collaboration, (4) designing the course, and (5) arranging logistics and creating forms. According to these steps, there are certain considerations when preparing service learning courses. First, there should be a clear explanation of the connection between the academic content and the service component in the course syllabus and course objectives that are related to the service. Second, there should be a description of the service requirements, including specific information about participating community organizations. Third, clear information about requirements for reflection, critical analysis, or deliverable projects are necessary. Fourth, a concise description of the evaluation process, including details on what will be evaluated and how the service experience will be weighed in the final grade should be determined and described in the course syllabus.

Smith (2008) claims that students learning outcomes are significantly influenced by four factors while they participate in the service learning activities. The four factors include duration, scope, intensity, and reflection. Duration means the time-on-task. Time is an important factor for learning outcomes. Usually, service duration greatly affect cognitive, moral, and psychosocial learning outcomes. However, most service learning courses provide limited time for working with community. Scope means the depth and the level of involvement in which students

are engaged. It is an important factor to motivate students to enhance their own learning. Intensity means students' affective reactions to service learning. When students are emotionally engaged, it contributes students remember more things. Reflection is the process for students to evaluate their actions and learning outcomes from the service learning project. Systematic and well-structured reflection helps students for the better learning process.

As described above, when service learning is successfully implemented in the course, it is beneficial for both students and institutions (Astin, Korn., & Sax, 1998 Eyler, Root, and Giles, 1998, Furco, 2001 Rubin, 2001). Service learning programs help faculty members enhance their teaching practice sand collaboration with communities and help institutions have close connections with communities as well.

Multiculturalism in education

Cultural processes involve forming of social relations with different classes and oppressions as a form of dependency within social differences and struggles (Storey, 1996). Cultural studies provides us with an understanding those conflicts and struggles in relation to the power structure in society. Multiculturalism as one theme of cultural studies deals with social justice by looking at the factors to support the rights of oppressed groups. "Multiculturalism is premised on the notion that social life is multi-authored and that we as individuals and citizens become more open-minded when exposed to the point of view of the other" (Gibson, 1998).

As an ideal, multiculturalism celebrates (1) recognizing that everyone belongs to a cultural group, (2) accepting and appreciating cultural diversity as a positive feature of our society, (3) affirming that all ethno-cultural groups are equal within our society, (4) Understanding that education of multiculturalism is for all students, (5)recognizing that similarities across cultures are much greater than differences, (6) recognizing that cultural pluralism is a positive aspect in our society, (7) affirming and enhancing self-esteem through pride in heritage, (8) providing

opportunities for individuals to appreciate the cultural heritage of others, (9) promoting cross-cultural understanding, citizenship, and racial harmony (Benson & Harkavy; 1997; Johnson, 1996; Storey, 1996; Torres-Guzman & Carter, 2000). In contrast, current public school systems take a contradictory position against the ideals of multiculturalism by reinforcing popular culture as a set of aesthetic objects (Wright, 2000).

In particular, according to Gibson(1998) and Wong-Fillmore(1991), using English only classrooms do not embrace the equality in education for language minority. English only policy would inhibit the academic achievement of many language minority students. Furthermore, it threatens students' relationships with family and community members in the long run. Usually, children lose their mother tongue before they fully master their second language. English is an essential and common language for social life; it is a tool for joining to the American society. In fact, they are encouraged to do that rather than remain a part. However, the English only environment may be an insult to the heritage of language minorities and a threatening to civil rights, educational opportunities and free speech (Harklau & Zuengler, 2004; Schutz & Gere, 1998). In that sense, activities resisting to the interest of dominant group through community is a practice of democracy. Cultural studies provided the researcher with a standpoint to examine issues of social justice connected to multiculturalism by doing the service learning project at the participating organization.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method using narrative construction in the nature of the text shapes with first-person point of view (Creswell, 2008). The research findings are based on the observations and participation in the organization for three years.

Data collection and analysis

Participation, observation, document analysis, and interview methods were used for data collection. The researcher participated in the school activities as a teacher and parent, and observed the activities during the research study period. Unstructured open-ended interviews with 4 students, 3 parents, and the school principal were conducted and interview data were recorded for the data analysis. The school documents related to the administration and management were collected and reviewed.

Participants

One of the Korean schools in the southern USA area was selected as a service learning place for the study. Participants in this study include the principal, students, and parents who joined the Korean school. The principal has lived in the USA for more than 20 years and she has a leadership of the Korean community in the local area as well. The student participants in this study are mostly the second generation of Korean immigrants and their ages are between 5 and 20 years old. The participating parents are mothers of the students who have lived in the U.S.A for more than 5 years.

Research instruments

Interview questions for the participating students, parents, and principal were formulated based on the research questions such as why the organization exists, how multiculturalism is realized, what kinds of problems the organization has, and how to solve the problems. Interviews were conducted in the naturalistic inquiry approach (Creswell, 2008).

Table 1. Interview participants and questions

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Question
Principal	Female	48 years old	Why does the Korean school exist? Is there any problems in operating the school? If there is, how can you solve the problems?
Parent A	Female	36 years old	What are the reasons for parents to send their children to the Korean school?
Parent B	Female	40 years old	
Parent C	Female	39 years old	
Student A	Male	7 years old	Why do you attend the school?
Student B	Male	8 years old	
Student C	Male	15 years old	
Student D	Male	16 years old	

Data analysis

For analyzing the data, the narrative and phenomenological research analysis and representation method (Creswell, 2008) were used. Interviews, conversations, and documentation collected were described in a thematic sequence incorporating the research questions. Observations were described in a phenomenological way with an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences so that the focus can be directed to the phenomenon and participants in the study.

Findings

Why does the organization exist?

In order to answer this question, the school documents were analyzed and interviews with the students and principal were conducted. According to the

principal, over the years, Korean children have grown up without the benefit of Korean language and cultural education in the community. Parents of the children have realized the needs for preventing children from making assumptions about any simple distinction between the Korean and American cultures. Having acknowledged the needs, the school was established by the local community members to serve as the main educational institute, offering instruction and encouragement for Koreans living around the area. Children and youths who are the second generation of immigrants were the target populations of the school. According to the interview with the principal, the Korean school has to exist because of the following reasons:

> If children do not know their traditions and customs, they will not appreciate their own culture and heritages. The Korean school was established to provide community with education of Korean language and culture and help students with developing an understanding of and appreciation for their Korean heritage. We want to help our children with building up their self-esteem and a solid sense of identity as a Korean in the multicultural American community. (principal)

According to the interview with the students, the Korean school was a place where meaningful learning and vivid social interactions among children and parents took place in the area. Children seemed to enjoy learning and coming to school. When I asked the reason why they came to school, the children (7years and 8 years old boy) said as follows;

> The Korean School is fun. I go there because I like to study and practice Taekwondo. But I do not like to go to Time Out. So I will try to do my best. And I like those boys who are in my class. (Student A)

> I like to do Karate and I like my Karate uniform. It was first time to wear my uniform. I know how to do Korean language. And I like my friends in my class. (Student B)

Parents were also very cooperative in assisting the school activities and preparing for snacks and volunteering for classroom helpers. One of the parents said that

> After working all day long, I am too exhausted to bring my kid to the school but my kid hates skipping the class. So I am bringing him here every Friday. And when I come here I can meet other parents and thus, make friends. (Parent A)

In addition, the Korean school was a bridge for students to connect to their family membersand the Korean community. The interviews with the other two students (15 and 16 years old) revealed that their main concerns are communicating with people, especially with their parents and the same ethnic group as follows;

> I joined the Korean school because I wanted to learn the language. So when I go to Korea, I can speak the language. It is important to me, because I can actually talk to my mom. (Student C)

> I joined to learn Korean so that is beneficial to me when I travel to Korea. Then, I will be able to talk to somebody and ask questions. That's probably the best thing in my life that I will be ever doing. (Student D)

However, in reality, since the class met only once a week, it was difficult for both teachers and students to cover the lessons as they planned. According to parents (parents B & C), students also are busy with their regular schools during the week and they did not have enough time to practice the language and worked on assignments.

How is the Korean school operated?

The document analysis and observations are used to answer how the school operates. The school is structured with a principal, eight classroom teachers, a

Taekwondo master, PTA members, board members, and sponsors. Sponsors donate money once a year, but did not engage in any activities. The board members are responsible for working for the development of the school by evaluating the programs and guiding the staff through the steps to accomplish the goals of the school. However, they also were not involved in the actual practice either. The teachers and the principal are all females and they are the only active members participating in the organizational activities among other staff. Principal is in charge of managing the school, being the most powerful person in the decision making process. Eight classroom teachers teach language and two teachers collaboratively work for each extracurricular activity. In addition, the PTA exists as a supporting group. The PTA consists of parents volunteers. They help class activities and provide snacks for students and teachers.

The class meets three hours every Friday from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., following the academic schedule of the local county school systems. During the first two sessions (6:30–7:15, 7:30–8:15) Korean language instruction takes place, and the last session (8:30-9:30) is for extra -curricular activities. At the beginning of each semester, new students are placed according to the placement test along with the age group, and existing students go to the next level every three semesters. When there is a conflict related to a placement, the principal adjusts the cases through meetings with parents and teachers.

The class size varies depending on the classes. Mostly the range of students is from seven to thirteen and there are eight classes with different levels. One teacher is assigned in each class, but two classes with young children (4 years and 5 years) always need more hands, thus, one or two parents take turns to help the classes. For extra -curricular activities, Korean culture, history, mathematics, arts, and Taekwondo are offered. Students can join any class based on their needs and interest, but generally girls choose to join the art class, boys choose to join the Taekwondo class, and students who prepare for the SAT usually join the SAT math class.

What are the problems that the Korean school pertains?

According to the observations and participation, the Korean school is working towards social justice by (1)working for local community, (2)working for a language minority group, (3)protesting against a certain form of cultural hegemony created by an English-only environment, and (4)providing environments with learning to appreciate diverse cultures, values, and traditions. However, the school was not operating as it should be because of the problems that have resided in the organization for a long time.

First, the biggest problem of the school was a lack of written record, especially mission statements and educational philosophies. As an educational organization, it is important to have a mission statements or educational philosophy that addresses their needs, purposes and the direction of the school. Furthermore, mission statements provide a foundation by which the organization should operate and create goals. Documentation of the school events is also crucial to maintain the school system and to enable people to access the information across time. In addition, documentation is the key to success when dealing with difficult situations since it calls for accountability when things go right (Carter, 2000). It will also assist teachers for developing their lessons with a continuum of previous lessons and prevent malpractice.

The second problem was a lack of systemic management and curriculum resulting from the organizational structure and a lack of responsibilities. The school consists of board members and principal for administrative staff as well as instructional leader, teachers for instructional parishioners, and the PTA for a supporting group. Nobody was aware of their organizational positions and roles. A member of school boards is responsible for helping to place the school curriculum and school personal principal, as instructional leader, is responsible for ensuring that the school's curricular and extracurricular programs are being planned for and implemented in compliance with students' needs. They also observe and evaluate

the school's total educational program to improve the academic environment of the school. However, the board members were not involved in school matters and the school curriculum was changing spontaneously based on teachers' decision without having an appropriate process of review and evaluation.

Third problem was a lack of diverse programs that facilitate both adults and children. The multiculturalism promotes accepting and appreciating cultural diversity as a positive feature of our society and recognizing that similarities across cultures are much greater than differences (Benson & Harkavy, 1997). However, the current curriculum and activities were focused on language and culture sensitive events for school age children. It may be viewed as the opposite of assimilation to the American culture (Koliba, Campbell & Shapiro, 2006) and raise cultural bias by reinforcing and celebrating the Korean culture only.

A lack of facilities and resources was a significant problem too. Since the school rents the church building there was a limitation in the use of facilities. The classrooms are too small or too large compared to the class size. Facilities such as the black board, copier, chairs, and tables are lack or not appropriate in size. However, the school can not claim a better environment as a renter. In addition, a teacher had to bring her own equipment such as a computer, a projector, a cassette player, etc. as needed. However, teachers did not have access to the equipment; most instruction is traditional paper-based, restricting teachers implementing a variety of teaching methods.

Lastly, a lack of teachers and teacher training was another problem. The Korean society in the studied area is composed of students and immigrants. Since students and immigrants are busy with school and business, people available for teachers are house wives who are limited in their English proficiency. Even though all the teachers are highly educated, they have not been exposed to American culture enough to discuss cultural differences of both countries. In addition, most of them are not familiar with the American school curriculum and systems; it may be difficult for them to naturally connect students' regular school lives to the Korean

school classes. Therefore, students may feel cultural gaps between two types of schools.

How these problems can be solved?

Based on the analysis, a few actions and suggestions were made to the principal and were discussed in staff meetings. First, I volunteered to work on a school brochure in Korean and English, containing information such as mission statements, history, organizational structure, regulations, rules, enrollment guidelines, curriculum and special events. The detailed contents were decided by staff meetings. The brochure was used to inform its visions, functions, and activities to community members so that the people have a better understanding about the significance of the school. Furthermore, it helped to resolve some issues related to administration and managing the school in more organized way.

Second, the school has to encourage more involvement of community members, especially, the Korean faculty members in the local university. Civic participation may bring changes in the organization making links between the school and the community. Currently, there are thirteen professors at the local university who are members of the Korean Society. Their involvement may influence the development of the Korean school in many ways including funding and school management. They can provide advice for the school with funding resources, curriculum guide, instructional strategies, programs, and systematic school management. In particular, the professor in the Teacher Education Department may provide workshops or training for teachers so that they can meet diverse needs of students. Teachers at the Korean school need to be more exposed to other cultures to have more comprehensive conceptions about similarities and differences among cultures so that they can adequately promote multicultural equity in class. In order to bring a collaborative learning environment combined with home culture and other cultures, teachers should have experience and knowledge about different cultures (Benson &

Harkavy, 1997).

Third, the school needs to facilitate diverse populations by more providing programs for different age, racial, and ethnic groups (i.e., adults and non-Koreans). Currently, the Korean school tends to reserve the school for a private area for Korean people only, as a site of resistance to U.S. cultural hegemony and assimilation (Williams & Ryba, 2002). However, it should be open to broader populations to achieve its' unique role of promoting multicultural sensitivity and providing an effective and supportive services to community members.

Discussion & Conclusion

The study results revealed that the Korean school exists to assists children to grow up in the multicultural American community while developing an understanding of and appreciation for their Korean heritage through awareness of existing different culture, ethnicity, and race. However, the school was operated with several problems. The biggest problem was a lack of written record. The school did not posses any clear written mission statement, foundational philosophies, and manuals. In addition, the school was suffered from a lack of systemic management, curriculum, diverse programs, facilities, resources, teachers, and teacher training systems. In order to solve these problems, a few actions and suggestions were made to the principal and were discussed in staff meetings. The participated Korean School has been operating as an independent educational institution without being associated with any religious organizations as many other regional schools branches do. It also has been fulfilling its' goals for community members to realize social, cultural, and self-identification by enhancing cultural competency in meaningful learning environments.

Generally, language minority populations have two-faceted problems; assimilating them to the American society while maintaining their native tongues for family and

community relationships. Disappointedly, once people lose their native tongues they tend to be marginalized by their own ethnic community. According to Wong-Fillmore(1991), "where parents and children do not share a common language, communication is often limited to the basic necessities, preventing parents from transmitting to their children the complex set of values, beliefs, wisdom, and understanding which provide the foundation for their children's learning and development." Furthermore, it is easy to lose their standpoints as individuals in society when rejecting their own heritage and relationships within the community.

Based on the study, the Korean school is a place where meaningful learning and vivid social interactions among children and parents took place in the area. It also plays an important role to help students to build up self-esteem and identity as a Korean, so that they can recognize the differences among cultures, accepting and learning how they are able to get along with others with different looks and backgrounds.

English language-only policy in public schools affects disconnection between family members. Furthermore, the policy might inhibit students whose mother tongue is not English, the academic advancement and depriving these children of the many social advantages. Students are limited in their improvement of language skills because they have less opportunity to use their own language under the English-only policy in public school systems. According to the conversations with the parents, their biggest concerns were the risky situations of losing their mother tongue before they fully master their first language.

In many cases, the second generation of immigrants loses their Korean heritage in their attempt to assimilate in society and suffer a serious identity crisis when they discover that they are different. Identity is another aspect of culture and reality of everyday life (Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, & Kursweil, 1984). It is effective to start this education at a very early age in order to help them to be successful in managing those issues. Nowadays, public schools have been called for changed in their policy and practice responding to the shifting racial-cultural realities (Carter,

2000). There are many students who successfully go on to pursue their live, recognizing cultural pluralism as a positive aspect of society. Thus, the existence of community-based education that promotes changes idealism and commitment of well-being for citizens (Boyle-Baise, 2004).

Everybody belongs to a certain cultural group (Storey, 1996), thus we need to learn to accept and appreciate cultural diversity as a positive feature of our society(Benson, & Harkavy, 1997 Masud & Morton, 1992). Cross-cultural understanding brings about harmony in citizenship and illuminates issues of social inequality and social justice in ethno-cultural groups. In that sense, organizations that provide community members with opportunities to expose themselves to different cultures cultural heritage have legal and ethical rationale in their existence.

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