

Area Based Initiatives in Korea: Issues of Redistribution and Recognition

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Miyeon Kim

1. Introduction

In this paper, I want to examine the development of Educational area-based initiatives (ABIs) in Korea. The reason for this particular focus is that, over the last two decades, the Korean government has provided enhanced funding to low-income group students and poor urban areas. After the financial crisis in 1997, the Korean economic system was reorganized and it deepened the income gap between the rich and the poor. Under these circumstances, the Educational Welfare Priority Project (EWPP, 교육복지우선지원사업, 教育福祉優先支援事業) came into effect by government actions from 2003. This project selects educationally and culturally poor places in low-income areas of cities and aims to improve the quality of educational, cultural and welfare services through the cooperation of the government, school and local community.

However, critics have pointed out that no significant statistical differences emerged between participants and non-participants in categories such as students' cognitive and non-cognitive achievements (Lee 2008, p.43) and the effects of the EWPP have been mixed at best. These criticisms that "ABIs continue to have limited impact and any benefits are, at best, patchy (Rees et al 2007, p.265)" are also found in the other ABIs such as EAZs in England and ZEP in France (Dyson et al 2012, NESET 2014, Sonoyama et al 2012).

Given the additional funding, why does inequality persist? Are ABIs incapable of tackling the socio-structural origin of disadvantages? In answering these questions, I will review the ideas of social justice developed by Nancy Fraser (1997, 2003, 2008). As noted by Raffo (2013, p.25), current area based approaches to improve educational equity for those most disadvantaged have predominantly focused on 'closing the attainment gap' through affirmative redistribution of resources. However, by reflecting on the politics of recognition, it has become clear how both historic and current approaches to ABIs have given very little importance to the cultural identities, agency and viewpoints of disadvantaged young people, families and communities (p.34).

My argument is that a more holistic approach that addresses both redistribution and recognition is necessary for effective educational area-based initiatives. In other words, it is necessary to not only provide appropriate and additional material and technical resources (redistribution) but also ensure that educational

provisions in compensatory education are sympathetic to the cultural traditions, histories and values of students and families (recognition).

In this paper, I begin by providing an overview of Nancy Fraser's theory and proceed to present a brief history of the EWPP. Then, I describe in her terms the successes and challenges encountered in an elementary school in Korea that is operating under the EWPP. That evidence suggests that the redistribution and recognition are both essential for narrowing the achievement gap and achieving social justice.

2.Responding to the Ongoing Failure of Compensatory Education and ABIs: Fraser's Two Dimensions of Justice

Since the 1960s, many countries have put in place "positive discrimination" measures in educational policies aimed at narrowing the achievement gap between the rich and the poor. These have included many area-based initiatives—interventions aimed at specific places. Examples of ABIs have included:

- England – Education Action Zone(EAZ),Excellence in Cities(EiC), RSA Area-Based curriculum, Sure Start Children Centres, Full Service Extended Schools(FSES)
- France—Zones d' Education Prioritaires (ZEP)
- US – Harlem Children's Zone
- South Korea – Educational Welfare Priority Project(EWPP)

However, evidence suggests that the impacts of many interventions in ABIs tend to be small-scale (NESET 2014, p.6). This lack of impact is not unique to ABIs and the efficacy of other compensatory programs has also been questioned and challenged throughout the history. Head Start, for instance, has been criticized for floundering since its inception. Despite any good intentions, by creating a discourse of deficiency and attempting amelioration through segregation., all such compensatory social programs, to a greater or lesser extent, are said to be fundamentally flawed (Counsell et el 2013, p.1).

In this respect, Fraser's theory of redistribution and recognition can be a useful critical framework in better understanding the limits of compensatory education. I want to draw on Fraser's (1997) very useful distinction between economic injustices and cultural injustices. Although, as Fraser herself acknowledges, these injustices rarely exist in their 'pure' forms, and there are heuristic advantages in disentangling them (1997, p.12-13).

According to Fraser, economic injustices involves exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation. Cultural injustices, on the other hand, include cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect (1996, p.7). The question for us to consider is whether the programs of compensatory education can alleviate these injustices. In a well-known paper 'Education cannot compensate for society', Basil Bernstein, as one of earlier critiques of compensatory education, argues that it is possible that compensatory education programs actually exacerbate the injustice.

According to Bernstein (1971, p.192):

The concept 'compensatory education' implies that something is lacking in the family, and so in the child. As a result, the children are unable to benefit from schools. It follows then that the school has to 'compensate' for the something which is missing in the family and the children become little deficit systems.

This argument is closely aligned to Fraser's social justice claims. In her words:

...because they leave intact the deep political-economic structures that generate injustice, affirmative redistribution reforms must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is often to mark the beneficiaries as "different" and lesser, hence to underline group divisions (Fraser 1996, p.46).

In this context, what becomes important for Educational ABIs is to recognize and understand the effects of socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition on poor young people. In the next section, I attempt to provide a brief history of EWPP and an analysis of current situation of ABIs in Korean schools, by incorporating Fraser's theory.

3. Brief history of the EWPP

International policy transfer, or policy borrowing is a common phenomenon in education. In the development of the EWPP, the South Korean national government borrowed similar policies from foreign countries, of which two cases significantly influenced the implementation of the EWPP: The Education Action Zones(EAZ) in England and the Zones d' Education Prioritaires (ZEP) in France. Unlike the EAZ, however, the EWPP does not include participation from the business sector and the South Korean government fully funds the project. Instead of inviting business participation, the South Korean government hired educational professionals and social workers (Y.K.Sung et al 2015, p.521-522) .

After running pilot projects in Seoul and Busan in 2003, the Ministry of Education expanded the EWPP in 2005 to include seven additional areas. In 2008, the groups targeted by the EWPP were redefined and various groups of students, such as free school lunch recipient, students from multicultural families, and those who were about to drop out of school, were included. In 2011, with the transfer from the central to the local government, the EWPP further expanded to all the areas. The project name was also changed from 'Educational Welfare Investment Priority Zone Project' to 'Educational Welfare Priority Project'.

The EWPP offers six programs: (1) learning support, (2) provision of cultural experience, (3) psychological and emotional support, (4) social services for students, (5) parents and teacher support, (6) revitalization of preschoolers' education and childcare systems (Lee et al, 2005). According to the KEDI report, as of 2015, the implementation rate was about 22% across the nation (21.2% for the elementary school, 35.2% for the middle school, 5.8% for the high school level). The size of the budget was 1,264 billion won (approximately

JPY ¥ 124 billion) which amounted to 2.1% of the national education welfare budget.

4. Case of the Korean Educational Area-Based Initiatives (EWPP)

In order to analyze the current state of the EWPP in more depth, qualitative methods were used. These included an analysis of local government's official documents and an interview with an 'Educational Welfare Worker(교육복지사, 教育福祉士)' in a local elementary school. The in-depth interview was conducted August 14, 2017 and it lasted for about an hour and a half. The interviewee, Lee (pseudonym), had been working as an 'Educational Welfare Worker' for 6 years. This semi-structured interview was conducted to identify influences on students and the challenges in the EWPP.

(1) Overview of the EWPP in Kangwon-do province.

As aforementioned, the transfer of the decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities for the EWPP from the central to local governments took place in 2011. Since then, the EWPP has been implemented independently from province to province with different names and contents. The Sokcho elementary school is located in Kangwon-do province, so all the EWPP programs have been provided under the guidelines of Kangwon-do Office of Education.

The EWPP in Kangwon-do province was first launched in 2006 in Chuncheon City and expanded to all areas in 2011. In 2014, the project name was changed to 'Happiness Sharing Educational Welfare Project'. At the same time, two different types of schools,—"Core schools" and "Joint schools"—were introduced. If the number of the targeted students is more than 40, the school is categorized as a Core school, with an 'Educational Welfare Worker (social worker)' also placed at every Core school. The specific aims and objectives in the 'Happiness Sharing Educational Welfare Project' are as follows:

- Targeted student interventions: The focus is to enhance the functioning of socio-economically disadvantaged students particularly by providing additional resources. It includes a more integrated multi-agency approach.
- Setting up a place named 'Happiness Sharing Room'('Educational welfare room', 교육복지실, 教育福祉室): This place is designed to provide support and reinforcement programs. Combinations of educational activities within and outside the school are provided.
- Community engagement : This includes attempts to create inclusive community-wide partnerships.

(Kangwon-do Office of Education 2015, p.14)

Table 1 shows the current state of the EWPP in Kangwon-do province.

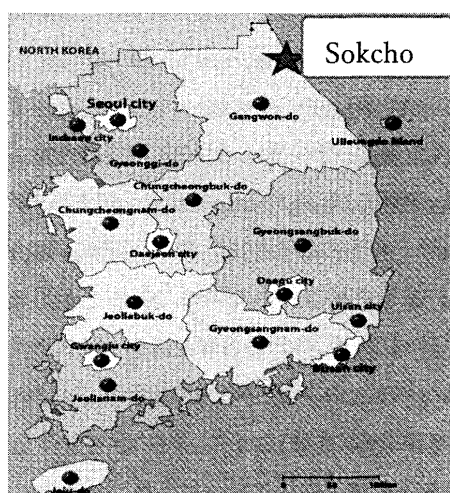


Table 1: EWPP operating schools in Kangwon-do province.

		Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
Total numbers of schools (January 2015)		395	162	116	673(A)
EWPP operating school	'Core' school	49	45	4	98(B) (B/A=14.6%)
	'Joint' school	38	20	10	68
	Total	87	65	14	166(C) (C/A=24.7%)

(Kangwon-do Office of Education 2015, p.12)

If we go back to Fraser's "Justice" framework, we can certainly see that the EWPP in Kangwon-do province has some issues of redistribution and recognition. In the next section, through an in-depth and semi-structured interview with an 'Educational welfare worker', this paper aims to investigate the challenges and successes of the EWPP.

(2) Issues of Redistribution and Recognition:

The Case of Sokcho Elementary School in Kangwon-do province

• A Dimension of Redistribution

Social justice claims that focusing on redistribution emphasizes a more just distribution of resources and goods. In the case of education, redistributing justice is about ensuring that resources are appropriately apportioned to narrow the attainment gap between the most and least privileged in society. The EWPP has provided enhanced funding for schools in disadvantaged urban contexts, so it can be said that these interventions have been successful in achieving redistribution of justice to some extent.

In 2015, for instance, every targeted student was offered up to the maximum amount of 1,500,000 won (JPY ¥150,000) per person at the elementary/middle school level and 2,000,000 won (JPY ¥200,000) at the high school level in Kangwon-do province. (Kangwon-do Office of Education 2015, p.14). The usage of these grants basically depends on an Educational Welfare Worker's decision, but offering cash is not allowed. In addition, an annual budget for each 'Happiness-sharing room' ranges from 10,000,000 won (JPY ¥ 1,000,000) to 15,000,000 won (JPY ¥ 1,500,000). For this additional funding, Lee stated:

Everyone did like the 'Teacher mentoring program' a lot. So, I set up a plan on my own. The students were given a small task to complete together with the teachers. For example, you go to find a fancy restaurant in a specific location or Daehakro to see a performance. Teachers confessed it was a real hard work, but felt

fulfilled to see the student satisfied. ... There has a budget cut in recent years, but this program did not cost much. It is only 700,000 won to rent a bus for a whole day. Including teachers, the number of participants were about 35. But, it costed less than 2,000.000 won in total.

사제 멘토링 애들도 교사들도 많이 좋아하거든요...저는 제가 프로그램을 짰어요...예를들어 대상학생과 선생님은 같이 서울에서 맛집을 찾아서 가야되요.. 대학로에서 같이 공연도 본다거나....선생님들도 굉장히 힘들었다고 하면서도 애들이 좋아하니깐 만족해 하시더라구요. (최근 예산이)줄었어요 많이. 근데 크게 안들어요 하루 버스 대절해도 70 만원정도...근데 프로그램 전체 선생님 포함해서 35 명 정도도 되는 인원인데 전부다 합쳐도 200 만원도 안 돼요.

Sokcho Elementary School

‘Happiness-sharing room’(교육복지실)



Indeed, the EWPP budget had been cut and this is, in part, because of an increase in universal benefits such as free school lunch or child-care. But, in Fraser’s terms, I would now say that, although redistribution is necessary and cannot be ignored, it seems likely that incorporating recognition into policy is more vital to bring about real successes in the EWPP.

• A Dimension of Recognition

Two issues about recognition in the EWPP emerged from the interview with Lee—one of which is related to avoiding fundamental questions, and the other of which is about defining the child and family primarily as a client-consumer.

Firstly, inventing new kinds of institutional responses (educational welfare policy) raises a whole series of questions: about how needs are defined, who defines them and which needs take precedence; about what sorts of interventions are likely to be effective and whether these are best directed at the child, family, or community level (Dyson 2006, p.190). In the course of the interview, Lee summed up the sense of uncertainty felt by herself in the following terms:

In May, I attended a seminar held by Kangwon-do Office of Education. On the last day, all Education Welfare Workers gathered and had a discussion. It turned out we all shared one agony: about our missions.

Because the objectives (of the EWPP) are not clear, it depends on individuals and everyone has different values. It is also ambiguous that under what circumstances the cases can be said successful. All I can say is that their facial expressions got bright after our engagements. The targeted students have not shown any academic improvements, though. How can you judge their progresses? ...

Regarding the parenting classes. Most of the time, the parents in the poor families don't attend. The well-off full-time housewives do. The parents most in need are too busy or listless to participate. These parenting classes were not effective at all.

5 월에 강원도교육청에서 복지사 연수를 했는데요. 마지막 날 다들 같이 회의를 했어요. 다들 같은 고민이 개념이 제대로 박히지 않아서...그게 개념이 안 잡혀서 사람마다 다 생각하는게 다르고. 어떨때 사례관계가 성공했는지 판단 기준도 사실 모호해요. 제가 봤을때는 (대상학생이) 밝아졌어요. 저랑 같이 프로그램하고 나서요. 그렇다고 성적이 오르지도 않고... 좋아진다는 평가기준을 어떻게 판단할 수 있어요?... 학부모 교육에 대해서는 ..저소득층 대상자는 안 와요. 전업 주부 잘 사는 엄마가 와요. 이런 엄마들은 안 와요. 바쁘거나 무기력해요. 전혀 효과가 없더라고요..

The argument that disadvantaged children need a politics of recognition is nothing new. Many scholars in the 1960s and 1970s tried to counter what they saw as negative and deficit representations of the disadvantaged with their lives and culture (Power 2008, p.26). Given this perspective, the Kangwon-do Office of Education has most recently proposed that all the schools should adopt a 'strength-based approach' instead of a 'deficit-based approach' (Kangwon-do Office of Education 2014, p.53-72). Such a view, of course, can be a step forward to incorporate more genuine recognition into a policy.

Secondly, I argue that the effects of the EWPP should not be judged from the 'client-consumer' perspective. As I.M. Young states:

The restriction of public debate has led many writers to claim that welfare capitalistic society is depoliticized. Through its welfare orientation it constructs citizens as client-consumers, discouraging their active participation. I maintain that the distributive paradigm of justice functions ideologically to reinforce this depoliticization. (Young 1990, p.66)

Fraser in her later writings (Fraser 2008) also suggests the need for equity to include issues of representational justice. This recognizes that in pursuing both distributional and relational justice, disadvantaged families and young people often lack a voice in the deliberations and the democratic decision-making about the direction and form of educational policy and practice they may end up experiencing (Raffo 2013, p.37). In this regard, the questionnaires used in the EWPP (**Table 2**) could be viewed as superficial engagements, which are focused on a narrow redistribution of academic educational credentials that appear to have little meaning for many poor young people and their families.

Table 2 A Questionnaire Example of the EWPP

..... 4. Have you ever participated in the learning support programs such as a tutoring service or book club activities? → Yes/No 4-1. How would you rate your overall experience for the learning support programs? → Highly satisfactory ---Satisfactory ---Neutral---Unsatisfactory ---Highly unsatisfactory 4-2 How much have you enjoyed the learning support programs? → Almost totally ----- Quite a bit ----- Moderately ----- Slightly ----- Not at all (An excerpt from Seoul Office of Education, http://sensv.micen.kr/st/)

Given this lack of understanding the diversities and identities of disadvantaged young people and families, Lee also pointed out its limitations of the survey:

Not just the EWPP, there are so many satisfaction surveys such as Afterschool programs, Wee project. The truth is, most of the students are very used to them, so they sometimes don't even read the questions, but mark all of them the same answers. It is written in the Manual, so we follow the rule, but when it comes to this questionnaire stuffs, it means nothing.

EWPP 뿐만 아니라 방과후, 위프로젝트,,다른 모든 프로그램들도 다 만족도 조사를 하잖아요. 사실은요 애들도 항상 하니까요 잘 읽지도 않아요.다 일렬찍기.매뉴얼에서 하라고 하니깐 하는데 이런 설문지 의미가 없어요.

As Fraser recognizes, the ideal of participatory parity is vital in pursuing both distributional and relational justice, but the EWPP case above suggests that the client-consumer perspective and participatory parity are not the same thing.

5. Conclusion

Although educational ABIs in Korea(EWPP) might gain considerably by providing additional funding, my argument is, in line with Fraser's, that educational ABIs cannot be informed solely by the politics of redistribution or politics of recognition, but instead require both to operate simultaneously in order to bring about fundamental shifts in the way young people are both motivated and enabled to engage with education.

But what is the possibility of this happening in the EWPP? In recent years, policy announcements in Kandwon-do province started to suggest new ways in which schools might rethink deficit/disadvantage assumptions and develop educational interventions that might engage with the needs and desires of those most disadvantaged.

An emphasis on communication and subsequent empowerment in the activities of the ‘Happiness sharing room(교육복지실)’ also requires different measures from the traditional compensatory programs heavily focused on cognitive development in favor of co-operative, co-constructors of meaning or fellow-travelers in journeys of lifelong growth and empowerment types (Counsell 2013, p.7). It also requires the abandonment of expert, supervisory, or counseling type relationships. As Habermas put it, “individuals are empowered when knowledge production and claims are legitimated through communication action” (Counsell 2013, p.14). In this regard, enhancing communication in the ‘Happiness sharing room’ can be a meaningful engagement.

In this paper, based on Fraser’s theory, I have attempted to provide an analysis of why traditional approaches to compensatory education have failed and how we should respond to them. Additionally, through an in-depth interview with an ‘Educational welfare worker’, I have provided an analysis to show that, by focusing policy to incorporate more genuine recognition, we may be able to provide a better response to the claims of the socio-economically disadvantaged students. In sum, it is clear that the Korea’s educational ABIs(EWPP) cannot hope to succeed if they only focus on making shallow reallocations or client-consumer assumptions. I feel that, by refocusing on communication and embracing diversities, we can accomplish the institutional change needed by children in poverty in the educational ABIs.

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Area Based Initiatives in Korea: Issues of Redistribution and Recognition

Miyeon Kim

This paper uses Nancy Fraser's concept of social justice as comprising both redistribution and recognition as a frame to interrogate the educational area-based initiatives (ABIs) running since 2003 in Korea (Education Welfare Priority Project (EWPP) 교육복지우선지원사업). The current area-based approaches to improve educational equity for those most disadvantaged have prominently focused on closing the gap through an affirmative redistribution of resources. However, critics have pointed out that the ABIs continue to have limited impact and the effects have been mixed at best. My argument is that a more holistic approach that addresses both redistribution and recognition is necessary for effective educational area-based initiatives.

In this paper, I began by providing an overview of Fraser's theory and proceed to present a brief history of EWPP. Then, I describe in Fraser's terms the success and challenges encountered in an elementary school in Korea that is operating under the EWPP. In order to analyze the current state of the EWPP in more depth, an analysis of local government's official documents (Kangwon-do province) and a semi-structured interview with a 'Educational Welfare Worker' (교육복지사, social worker) were conducted.

The findings reveal that there are two issues about recognition in the EWPP: one of which is related to avoiding fundamental questions, and the other of which is about defining the child and family primarily as a client-consumer. I have provided an analysis to show that, by focusing policy to incorporate more genuine recognition, we may be able to provide a better response to the claims of the socio-economically disadvantaged students. The paper concludes by suggesting that the Korea's educational ABIs (EWPP) cannot hope to succeed if they only focus on making shallow reallocations or client-consumer assumptions.