

Re-defining South Korean Scholarship and Education within the Context of Globalization

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**Simon C. Estok,**

**"Re-defining South Korean Scholarship and Education within the Context of Globalization"**

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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 15.2 (2013)**

Thematic Issue **Asian Culture(s) and Globalization**

**Ed. I-Chun Wang and Li Guo**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss2/>>

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**Abstract:** In his article "Re-defining South Korean Scholarship and Education within the Context of Globalization" Simon C. Estok discusses effects of globalization on the educational and scholarly goals and realities of Korea. Estok argues that although the transformational impacts of globalization in terms of sports, entertainment, politics, and business in Korea are visible, efforts to produce more globally visible Korean scholarship have been ineffective and counter-productive. Estok shows that the imagined dangers to Korean nationhood are rooted in fears of invasion which have strong historical and contemporary justification. Colonized for a third of the twentieth century, Korea in the twenty-first century is a recipient, not a contributor, of global scholarly capital. True transformations of Korean education and scholarship, Estok argues, will only happen once Korea addresses the key issues: that solutions are often superficial, that there are fundamental differences between educational philosophies of Korea and the West, that policy makers are out-of-touch with the schools and universities, and that racism and xenophobia within Korea are hindrances.

## Simon C. ESTOK

### Re-defining South Korean Scholarship and Education within the Context of Globalization

The drive toward globalization has implications for scholarship and education in South Korea. In order to appreciate these implications within the context of recent Korean history — particularly colonization, war, rapid industrialization, and financial crisis — it is necessary to unravel the complex matters of conflicting impulses toward national and global identities which Korea faces. Much of the push for globalization within the Korean educational system is proving counter-productive on several levels: to the articulation of a sufficiently valued localism that is required for globalized and therefore multi-lateral exchanges of theory and scholarship, to the encouragement of scholarship that will have international impact, and to meeting the needs of universities rather than the needs of flavor-of-the-month policy-makers and government officials.

A necessary question we must ask before we begin to address the problems confronting South Korean educational systems in the face of globalization is about the very term "globalization": "'Globalization' is on everybody's lips; a fad word fast turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries. For some, 'globalization' is what we are bound to do if we wish to be happy; for others 'globalization' is the cause of our unhappiness. For everybody, though, 'globalization' is the intractable fate of the world, an irreversible process ... All vogue words tend to share a similar fate: the more experiences they pretend to make transparent, the more they themselves become opaque" (Bauman 1). A misquotation of this comment from globalization scholar Suman Gupta is telling: "All vague [*sic*] words tend to share a similar fate: the more experiences they pretend to make transparent, the more they themselves become opaque" (Bauman qtd. in Gupta 5). Mistaking "vogue" for "vague" allows Gupta to make the right conclusion on the wrong evidence.

The term "globalization" is indeed vague (and in vogue) and it is precisely the slipperiness of the term that allows it such utility, allows it to be mobilized by politicians, and allows it to be snapped up with considerable zeal as a kind of placebo for social ills. The zeal for participating in "globalization" in Korea is rooted in a movement toward democracy: Gwang-Jo Kim explains that "Since the modern school was introduced in Korea a century ago ... the government has been keen to ensure equal opportunity for all — regardless of gender, religion, geographic location or socioeconomic class." As Kim sees it, therefore, "Two distinctive features of Korean education are worth noting: the egalitarian ideal and the zeal for education" (30). This move toward democracy, however, has been thwarted repeatedly. The Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945 was the first of these in the twentieth century. Paradoxically, however, it was precisely this occupation by a hostile colonial invader that was a part of the process of Korea's opening up to the world, an occupation that without a doubt augmented movement on the long journey toward globalization, a journey whose most recent steps have become more hurried — indeed, frenzied. It would, however, be historically inaccurate to claim that Japan initiated the process of opening up Korea or the globalizing of its educational visions or systems. In the years immediately prior to Japan's annexation of Korea, "the government [of Korea] and an increasing number of elites accepted Westernization — broadly defined — as a way of overcoming Confucian 'backwardness,' and implemented reform measures on various fronts — education, the economy, religion, health care, dress, etc." and this was a "campaign aimed at introducing the Western educational system to replace the Confucian system" (Chang 2-3). These reforms all stopped in 1910.

During the Japanese colonial period in Korea a different kind of ending to the centuries-old isolation — and, in a sense, purity — of Korea began: "The Japanese tried to exterminate Korean culture by banning the use of the Korean language in school, teaching only Japanese history, and forcing students to take a daily oath to the Empire of Japan, and to adopt Japanese names" (Andrew, Howe, Kane, Mattison

<<http://globalizationandeducation.ed.uiuc.edu/Students%20Projects/GSEB/2007/South%20Korea2007.pdf>>). It was not until liberation that a less regional and more global set of changes began to appear in the Korean educational system. Liberation was short-lived (or at least liberty was), and the

Korean War (1950-53) preempted any kind of focus the nation could put on educational reform. Even so, as Gwang-Jo Kim explains, education has always been profoundly important in Korea, and both the occupation and war are part of the journey toward globalizing education in Korea: "Korean society has traditionally placed a high value on education ... the zeal for education was reinforced by the recent past, in which Japanese colonialism and the Korean War convinced Koreans to invest more in people than in physical capital. These factors explain such phenomena as extensive parental sacrifice for their children's education and their involvement and contribution to schools" (30).

Following the war, Korea stepped up its policies of expanding compulsory education to such a degree that by the year "2000, about 70 percent of high-school graduates were proceeding to universities" (Chang 5). By the Spring of 2007, the South Korean government was having to implement reforms to deal with the problems of having rushed into things, of having had too rapid an expansion of educational policies. While it is not the purpose of this article to get into policy discussions, it is important to observe that "globalizing education" (a phrase we have yet to define adequately) is profoundly complex. Cathy Andrew, Cindy Howe, John Kane, and Reese Mattison summarize the situation in Korea well:

Current reforms attempt to rectify problems of the past resulting from the rapid expansion of tertiary education and thus catapult Korean universities into the global education market. There is a general trend to "globalize" and "localize" as was addressed in the discussion of the Seventh National Curriculum with an equally long and complicated list of reforms. Recent higher education policy issues focus on the following broad areas: the restructuring of institutions; a new admissions system; the merger and acquisition of institutions; specialization and diversification through the building of networks and cooperatives; globalization and internationalization. Of course, none of these reforms really stand alone. They are intertwined and overlap. (<<http://globalizationandeducation.ed.uiuc.edu/Students%20Projects/GSEB/2007/South%20Korea2007.pdf>>).

The policies are complex and intricately intertwined and the social impacts are far-reaching. One example of these far-reaching impacts is the soaring costs of education in Korea. The burden on parents is immense: Ki Su Kim notes compellingly that the "Parental financial burden ... has already gone well beyond a tolerable level" (17). According to J. Lee, Korean "parents with school-age children spend close to 25% of their income on education" (<<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/WBI/Resources/wbi37164.pdf>>). Ki Su Kim also shows that "that when globalization progresses further, the current educational system will not be viable in terms of ensuring the continuity of public education and of producing a flexible and versatile workforce and a cadre of highly-trained professionals" (Kim 17). Short term answers from governments whose vision only extends as far as their term simply will not bring Korean scholarship onto the global stage. In the simplest of terms, the current situation is untenable, unsustainable in the long-term. The financial costs are just too high. And it is not just financial costs and sacrifices, however, we are talking about here: the social costs are also immense. The 기러기 아빠 (literally "Goose Daddy) phenomenon, where families send their children abroad with one parent while the other parent must migrate (like geese) to see them, splits "wives from husbands and children from fathers" in the name of education: "South Korean parents say that schools are failing to teach not only English but also other skills crucial in an era of globalization, like creative thinking" — a shocking fact when we consider that "South Koreans now make up the largest group of foreign students in the United States" (Onishi <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/08/world/asia/08geese.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/08/world/asia/08geese.html?_r=2&oref=slogin)>). While Jeong-Kyu Lee argues that "The expansion of study abroad by South Korean students clearly enhances the internationalization of Korean education" (<<http://globalization.icaap.org/content/v4.1/lee.html>>), David McNeill maintains that "South Korea's dearth of top universities is a major factor in its annual student diaspora" and that this "massive exodus represents a troubling brain-drain" (<<http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Powers-Ahead-With/44530/>>).

One of the responses in Korea to this outflowing of students has been to try similarly to attract foreign students to Korean schools. But "the goal ... to attract 50,000 foreign students to Korean universities by 2010" seemed unrealistic from the start, for several reasons (Andrew, Howe, Kane, Mattison <<http://globalizationandeducation.ed.uiuc.edu/Students%20Projects/GSEB/2007/South%20Korea2007.pdf>>). It is not so much that this goal was unachievable. Indeed, McNeill notes in 2009 that "the education ministry ... is touting its success in hitting a target of 50,000 foreign students ... earlier than

planned" (<<http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Powers-Ahead-With/44530/>>). The problem is that this goal is simply not a solution, is a superficial and almost gennexive response, and does not address the underlying issues. The most obvious is that universities, colleges, and schools do not have adequate structures in place to meet the complex problems of language acquisition. Another, perhaps more important, issue is that there is a basic structural difference between Western and Korean educational philosophies that needs to be addressed before any kind of level or even remotely level playing field is established. Any foreigner who comes to learn or to teach in South Korea knows that both students and teachers in the country have extensive training in the acquisition of quantitative data. This is a focus that is very much absent in Western schooling, whether European, North American (U.S./Canada), or Australian. On the other hand, the great strength of Western schooling is a focus on subjective and creative engagement with materials. It becomes difficult, therefore, for Western foreigners to perform in a system that requires proficiencies at remembering quantitative data. Similarly, it is difficult for Koreans to deal with analytical matters such as critical writing. Meanwhile, an obsession with English as a cure-all dominates thinking about globalizing education. For South Korea fluency in English means civil rights and freedoms and the social benefits of globalization: "Being able to speak fluent English has become so important in Korea that the government is talking about making public high schools conduct most of their classes in English" (Lee and Lee 15).

If we are to understand South Korean education within the context of globalization, it is not sufficient simply to say that the term itself is slippery and leave it at that: we need some definitive understanding of the term "globalization." While we may have to acknowledge several rather vague and general comments about globalization, rather than having an encompassing and complete definition of it, one thing we can say with relative certainty about globalization is that it is a continuum on which different nations inhabit different spaces and where the costs and benefits are uneven. Moreover, globalization is, in some sense, a threat. As Pitman B. Potter notes, "Globalization is not the same as *internationalization*, which presupposes cooperation and interaction among autonomous nation-states, but rather is a process by which the state itself is challenged" (xv; emphasis in the original). Thus, what Nae-hui Kang calls "globalization in the service of American universalism" (219) is seen by some as a very real threat to the nation, to Korean identity, to Korean selfhood.

Appearing in the *Korea JoongAng Daily* in 2012 is a half-page spread with the header "Multinationals Losing out to More Aggressive Locals" (Kim, Mi-ju 4). No doubt in a serious attempt to quell any suggestion of slighting national pride, the journalist Kim Mi-ju understates the matter with a caesuric colon: "Multinational firms such as P&G, Nestlé and Unilever are global leaders and make the Fortune Global 500 every year. But there's one country where they are increasingly struggling to compete against local companies: Korea" (4). In many ways, South Korea is a remarkable success story: thwarted and beleaguered historically, it thrives today and has a solid and secure place as a globalized and fully industrialized world leader. Indeed, Korea has gone from being "a predominantly agricultural society in the first half of the 20th century" (Lee, Dongjin <<http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/etd/3197>>) to a corporate giant in the second half, where "farmers presently comprise less than 10% of the population" (Kim, Won-Chung 2).

If, in some senses, "globalization can be equated with corporatism, with the marketplace playing a more pronounced role than in the past," then the effect of this within universities is to place an "emphasis upon international competitiveness, [and] economic globalization is viewed as moving postsecondary institutions into a business-like orientation, with its attendant behaviors of efficiency and productivity" (Levin 239). The problem here, however, is in measuring productivity. The answers for Korean universities have been the internationally-recognized yardstick of publishing — not any kind of publishing, but that done within the covers of journals listed in certain indexing services. Some critics argue that this only results in producing a system where intellectuals become similar to factory workers and laborers, "for they are increasingly forced to produce knowledge as a commodity" (Kang 222), a commodity measured within a system — a system that many consider bogus — producing a hierarchy of publications. In part, this hierarchy is established by the status the journal holds with regard to citation indices such as in the profit-based company Thomson Reuters's Arts and Humanities Citation Index, the Social Sciences Citation Index, and the Science Citation Index. Far from being a global standard, this method of evaluation is a sham that effaces the local and trumpets the US-

American: "An obsession with internationalism in the form of international exchange and conformity to the 'global standards' of SCI, A&HCI, and JCR for research activity is making South Korean knowledge production increasingly subordinate to the 'international,' i.e., American model" (Kang 219).

Fears about the erasure of the local and loss of national identity remain tangible in Korea. In many ways, the 1988 Seoul Olympics was a game-changer for Korea, but it was another decade before Korea really began to play ball on the international court. For educational institutions seeking to gain international recognition and acclaim, playing ball has meant a delicate balancing act between preserving ethnic and national traditions (and, indeed, values) on the one hand and potential threats to those traditions and values on the other. Hence there is profound ambivalence in the drive toward globalization. While of course the propaganda machine of the North produces virulent comments about globalization all of the time, a quick glance at one of these comments reveals alarming similarities with sentiments in the South. The North Korean response to the South Korean president Kim Young Sam's 1994 comments about globalization run as follows: "'Globalization' advertised by the Kim Young Sam group is, in every respect, a motto of treachery which is aimed at fully reducing South Korea to a colony of outside forces and a market of international capital, ridding the people of the consciousness of national independence and making them cripples depending on outside forces" (Kim Young Sam qtd. in Kim 1).

The North, it would seem, prefers isolationism; the South, meanwhile, has not in its historical and current ideals strayed very far from such preferences. The argument Samuel S. Kim puts forward is that "deep down, Korea remains mired in the cocoon of exclusive cultural nationalism [which] acts as a powerful and persistent constraint on the *segryehwa* [globalization] drive" (263). Kim is not alone: Gi-Wook Shin and Joon Nak Choi concur and claim that "Korean globalization remains subservient to nationalist goals" (252). This became pronounced indeed with the enormity of changes in South Korean society wrought by the responses to the 1997 Asian financial crisis (known within Korea simply as the "IMF crisis"), which had ripple effects that reached far beyond matters of economy. Within academia, what the tacit promises of "globalization" imply and sometimes seem to demand for bilateral flows of intellectual capital have, many argue, resulted in a radical unbalance. The impact of the 1997 Asian Financial crisis for Korea can hardly be overstated. Scholars have noted the stark paradox of the apparently contradictory trends of nationalization on the one hand and globalization on the other of post-IMF Korea (see, e.g., Shin and Choi), and nowhere is this more evident than in the higher education system in Korea where recognition and validity are determined and granted by foreign bodies. It is difficult to imagine a parallel dynamic in the U.S., with the validity of scholarship being determined by Korean bodies and institutions. The tension is palpable and many professors simply refuse to be a part of this game or simply cannot play ball.

There is no question that in some ways "stuck" in a position of playing "catch-up" Korea runs a risk of falling into a kind of self-erasure with its heavy stress on foreign evaluative models. In a "breathless effort to catch up with the industrialized world" (Wu xi), Korean educational reforms run the risk of being both transfixed and perhaps blinded by the headlights of cultural superpowers. Many scholars (e.g., Carnoy; de Wit and Knight; Marginson and Rhoades; Slaughter and Leslie) have noted that there are substantial problems attending the impulse to globalize education and that these are particularly poignant within the South Korean context. The global cultural "swat" of the United States evidenced in the media, in business, in academia — virtually everywhere — is exported from the West, but imports from South Korea are less reciprocal. Admittedly, this is changing, and the shadow of the U.S. giant is fading. South Korean culture has not been slow to respond to the threat of a one-way flow of cultural commodities on a globalized market: businesses such as Samsung, Hyundai, and LG established themselves as formidable competitors in the global market, bringing with them chunks of Korean cultural commodities. One of the immediate tangible effects of this re-branding of Korean business is a re-valuing on the global stage. It was, for instance, a compelling moment when Willy Bank (played by Al Pacino) opened a box from Samsung in the Hollywood blockbuster *Ocean's 13* and took out a shiny, gold-plated Samsung cell phone. It was a moment that announced Samsung's arrival as a company with brand-value in the U.S. But if globalization has changed the face of corporate Korea in the world, it has also radically re-defined the place of Korean culture in the world. Gone are the days of the Hermit Kingdom: the Korean Wave (한류) is washing over the world.



The Korean Wave began in the late 1990s with the remarkably favorable reception of Korean cultural products in the East Asian region. Primarily involving Korean television drama and popular music, but certainly not limited to these, the Wave has been a source of national pride. A kind of synergy developed and Korean personalities have become well-known in the West, ranging from entertainment personalities to sports figures and politicians: to name a few, we see the 2007 Best Actress Award Winner at the Cannes Film Festival, Do Yeon Jeon (전도연), the internationally acclaimed film director Chan Wook Park (박찬욱), actors such as Byung-hun Lee (이병헌) and Woo-sung Jung (정우성), international Korean sports stars (golfers, figure skaters, baseball players, archers, speed skaters, and so on), the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon (반기문), the new Head of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim (김용), and, more recently, Psy (싸이) and his "Gangnam Style." The point here is that the flow in many sectors has not been one-way. Even the virtual fetishization of US-American landscapes, which is so very much a part of both colonialist propagandizing and of globalization — the imaging of iconic, instantly recognizable places in the U.S. (Times Square, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Grand Canyon, for instance) — does not have reciprocal images of Korea flowing to the U.S. An exception is the restoration of the Cheonggyecheon (청계천; a stream in downtown Seoul) from a cement-covered, virtually dry tributary to a well-foliaged, path-lined stream, a center-piece of the city — a project of Myung-Bak Lee (이명박) the former Mayor of Seoul and then President of South Korea initiated — which has brought not only intense criticism, but also ultimately intense praise and international attention: a Discovery Channel episode, flocks of tourists, and scholarly interest in the historical and cultural sites uncovered by the restoration speak well to this matter.

Yet, if in many ways, the flow has been increasingly less a one-way show, within the academia the same is not true. Indeed, from where I sit writing in Seoul, myself a "goose daddy," it is a lamentable fact that while Korea cites the U.S., the U.S. does not cite Korea: the flow of information remains one-way in much of academia. References to US-American and European literary theorists fill the pages of Korean academic journals while references to Korean literary theorists do not exist in US-American and European literary journals. Using AHCI or SSCI indexed journals as the standard by which to produce globally-relevant scholarship is only as useful to the degree that the journals are themselves relevant. It is a far cry indeed from an adequate yardstick by which to measure globally-relevant scholarship and it is a radically inadequate incentive for producing such scholarship. The fact that many Korean universities have attractive financial incentives for AHCI, SSCI, and SCI authors is effective in the sense that it encourages people to produce, but to produce what? Indeed, if Nae-hui Kang is correct in suggesting that using these journals as a yardstick is a dangerously self-destructive process that potentially turns scholarship in the humanities into a kind of mindless puppet of Euro-American scholarship at the expense of more situated knowledge, ways of knowing, and scholarly approaches, then what is the solution? Certainly, in order for Korea to live up to its ideals of participating in globalization, something is going to have to change in the way that scholarship is encouraged, produced, and rewarded.

One of the things globalization means is to be present and recognized on the global stage. Shame and anonymity continue to plague Korean scholarship. The disgraced cloning scientist Woo-suk Hwang (황우석) does little to benefit the global image of South Korean scholarship or to dismantle what McNeill calls "the higher-education system's historical insularity" in Korea (<<http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Powers-Ahead-With/44530/>>). One of the matters Korean universities is going to have to start funding in a better way is incentives for monographs. Yet, given the radical differences between Korea's publishing industry and academic publishing in the U.S., such funding seems unlikely — at least until there is some proportional similarity in the rigors of academic publishing between Korea and the U.S. (the move against the book and towards Thomson Reuters indexed journals for tenure and promotion is prevalent also in Europe, China, India, etc., but not in the U.S.; see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek). Similar to vanity presses, Korean publishers lack the rigorous peer review process so notoriously a part of U.S. academic publishing. But if one obvious solution for Korean scholars is to publish through U.S. publishing houses, then the imbalance on the playing field is again obvious. It becomes more so if we imagine a US-American at a university in the

US having to gain international recognition by publishing in Korean through a Korean publishing house and this brings us back to language.

The uni-directionality of scholarly capital obviously has a lot to do with what Jonathan Arac has called a "global hegemony of the English language" (20) and the focus on English language education in Korea over the past several decades has been nothing short of astonishing, although it is dubious how effective it has all been in achieving the goals. As one local newspaper reported, "Korean students and office workers invest colossal amounts of time and money learning English," but "their investment doesn't seem to be paying off ... speaking proficiency remains nearly at the bottom" among Korean TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test takers (Kang, Shin-who <[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/04/117\\_42399.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/04/117_42399.html)>). The stress on (and from) learning English in Korea is extraordinarily high, the idea being that English is a global language and that proficiency in it means membership in a world community for a country that "was once considered an educational backwater" (McNeill <<http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Powers-Ahead-With/44530/>>), a country that, for much of its history, has lacked international membership and was known as a Hermit Kingdom. Many Korean universities allow the results from English-language proficiency tests such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TEOIC (Test of English for International Communication) to be used instead of the Sooneung Sheeheum (수능시험: the Korean SAT: Standard Acceptance Test) as a part of the admission requirements. Proficiency tests are also used in many companies as hiring and promotion criteria. To some, this is a troubling trend — one that has potentially dangerous implications. It seems, for instance, a dangerous thing that "a growing number of Koreans propose ... [making] English the nation's second official language" (Shin and Choi 251), since this could potentially radically polarize the country and produce a hierarchy that devalues the domestic. Indeed, to a great degree, this is already happening in universities and schools.

명확히 말해서, 무언가를 읽을 수 없다는 것은 그 글에 포함된 정보를 얻을 수 없다는 것이다: certainly, an inability to read something means an inability to receive the information contained in that writing, as the previous sentence suggests, but the uni-directionality of scholarly capital is surely not simply a matter of monolingualism. Indeed, even within Korea certain statistics make for staggering reading. The Spring 2012 issue of the Korean *Shakespeare Review* has eight articles with a total of 151 works cited of which only 14 are Korean. The flagship journal of literary studies in Korea — *The Journal of English Language and Literature* — does even more poorly when it comes to citing domestic authorities, averaging about six percent. This over-valuing of the foreign and under-valuing of the domestic, in part an effect of a self-effacing social etiquette, is a radical indictment of the powerful impact of Western scholarship. It may sound xenophobic to comment that the bulk of the commentary in Korean journals in the humanities is on foreign texts, but the fact is that academic concerns often betray a clearly US-Americanist or British focus. US-American literature courses, British literature courses, or courses on US-American and British culture are offered at every university in Korea without exception with virtually nothing, incidentally, in the way of Canadian literature and culture courses, except for a scattering of courses devoted to topics such as social conditions, multiculturalism, politics, and social policy in Canada. There is much work to be done in balancing the scales.

Balancing the scales means moving beyond narrowly-conceived notions about what globalization means. At some point, the realities of history need to take center-stage. At some point, the relationship between colonization and language needs to be remembered: "Language has always been the perfect instrument of empire" (de Nebrija <<http://www.antoniodenebrija.org/indice.html>>). Within the Korean context, thus, the colonialist implications of an increasingly global English linguistic hegemony deserve attention. Indeed, the fact that newly emergent economies such as postcolonial Korea still work within sets of narrowly colonialist agendas in which the narratives (new and old) of the U.S. still fill the educational curricula to the almost complete exclusion of other voices from other places surely warrants significant attention as it relates importantly with what A.A. Phillips in 1958 called "The Cultural Cringe." In the simplest of terms, "cultural cringe" is probably the defining barrier to a Korea not US-Americanized and not colonized, but globalized.

While "To master a foreign language is to climb up the social ladder" (Lee and Lee 17), proficiency in a foreign language is no guarantor of global citizenship and is a poor indicator of globalization. Moreover, the methods employed to ensure such mastery is sometimes counter-productive,



sometimes counter-intuitive, and sometimes simply beyond ridiculous. Imagine a situation where, in the name of globalization, a university policy calls for half of the courses to be taught in a foreign language (i.e., a language other than Korean). Imagine further one particular department: Korean Literature. Imagine also that for one of the professors in that department, the only foreign language in which he is proficient enough to teach is Japanese — and keep in mind the unsavory history between the two nations. So, a Korean professor in a Korean university teaching Korean literature to Korean students in Japanese: what does that say?

There is no question that Korea is engaging in globalization and that is far from the cocoon of isolation in which it had for centuries remained. It is indeed a dubious proposition to say that the country "remains mired in the cocoon of exclusive cultural nationalism" (Kim, Samuel 263), and, in fact, the radical surge of Korean superstars on the global stage seems to posit precisely the opposite notion. Given also the enormous bilateral and multilateral flows of cultural and business capital, from movie stars and sports heroes to politicians, car companies, and electronics giants, there is no doubt that Korea is globalizing. There is also no doubt that education is the key: "Due to globalization, the government wants to increase . . . economic competitiveness and recognizes that adult education is an effective strategy by continuing vocational education and training" (Andrew, Howe, Kane, Mattison (Andrew, Howe, Kane, Mattison <<http://globalizationandeducation.ed.uiuc.edu/Students%20Projects/GSEB/2007/South%20Korea2007.pdf>>)). This is clearly the right direction; however, fools rush in where angels fear to tread and Korea needs to tread carefully here.

Ursula Heise pointed out that "over the last decade, 'globalization' has tended to take on increasingly negative connotations in English, where it is now often associated with North American dominance [and] the exploitation of developing countries by transnational corporations" (91). There are good reasons for these increasingly negative connotations, especially when we are talking about globalizing education. McNeill cites Zang-Hee Cho, an expatriate Korean neuroscientist and professor emeritus at the University of California Irvine arguing that the government projects in Korea aimed at globalizing education are simply not working: "The problem is that these projects are led by policy makers who don't know a thing about universities" and Cho goes on to note, as McNeill summarizes, that "The government must begin dismantling a hierarchical faculty system that many believe stifles creativity, [and] then focus on a handful of the country's best colleges and recruit 'top-class professors' from around the world who will stay in the country" (Cho qtd. in McNeill & McNeill <<http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Powers-Ahead-With/44530/>>). But there is not a chance that this will happen while Korea remains committed to notions of a racially defined national identity. In "a 2000 survey ... 93 percent of the respondents agree that 'our nation has a single bloodline'" (Shin and Choi 251). Indeed, the whole discourse of bloodlines in Korea is dangerously racist and downright offensive to any non-Korean visitor. The *wikipedia* entry on the topic is telling: "In 2007, the Korean pure blood theory became an international issue when the U.N. Committee on the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination urged better education on the pure blood theory is needed especially for judicial workers such as police officers, lawyers, prosecutors and judges. The suggestion received mixed reception in South Korea in which some raised a xenophobic concern that foreigners will invade the Korean culture and challenge national sovereignty" ("Korean Ethnic Nationalism" <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean\\_ethnic\\_nationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_ethnic_nationalism)>). Therefore, it would be a mistake to think that "top-class professors" from around the world will stay in a country where they are forever foreigners, are constantly under suspicion of corrupting national integrity, and are always treated differently.

In conclusion, if South Korea is to succeed in its bid to re-define its education and scholarship within the contexts of globalization, many things are going to have to happen which are not yet happening — are not, in fact, even on the table. Korea has globalized in many spheres, but is nowhere close to so doing when it comes to education. Policies currently in place are naïve and often counter-productive. To reward publications in journals listed in certain indices is to offer a superficial solution to deep problems. Failure to provide incentives for monographs keeps Korea stalled. Failure to address fundamental differences between educational philosophies keeps Korea stalled. Failure to take policy

questions to universities by keeping these questions in the hands of politicians keeps Korea stalled. Failure to address deeply-ingrained, widespread racism, and xenophobia keeps Korea stalled. There are solutions, but they will not come quickly or easily. Even so, if past achievement is the best indicator of future performance, there is good reason to have hope.

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