

ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s, demographic and societal changes in South Korea (Korea) influenced by a low birthrate and globalization triggered a discussion of multiculturalism in Korea. This discussion led to the formation of Korea's first multicultural education policy in 2006. In this study, I drew on the theoretical lenses of critical multiculturalism, five philosophical approaches to multicultural education, and neoliberalism to delve into the conceptualization of multicultural education, the construction of "multicultural students," and power relations between multicultural students and mainstream students in the policy. I used Critical Discourse Analysis methodology to critically analyze the ideological assumptions of Korea's multicultural education policy and other intertextually related discourses, and its shifts over a decade.

My intertextual analysis identified two different ideologies for different groups: customized education for multicultural students, which focused on helping multicultural students adapt to the Korean school system; and education for multicultural understanding for all students, which aimed at helping mainstream Korean students accept difference by emphasizing human relations, tolerance, and anti-prejudice. In this framework, multicultural students are still constructed as deficient in terms of Korean language, culture, and academic achievement, whereas mainstream students represent the norm. Over a decade, the institution and legislations have been improved to accommodate new-comer students in the Korean school system. However, the government's orientation still rests on an assimilationist and human relations approach.

This study recommends that policy makers and educators, despite the challenges they face, should address the taken-for-granted social inequalities and should endeavour to develop education that promotes a more democratic and equitable society. Multicultural education needs to move beyond the Korean language-centered learning and experience of foreign cultures, to address the politics of difference and social inequalities, and to empower students and raise their critical awareness.

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**“Multicultural Education Policy of Korea: Critical Discourse
Analysis”**

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

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