

Why has the Critical Thinking Movement not come to Korea?

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This article provides an explanation for why the Critical Thinking (CT) movement has failed to make significant inroads into the Korean education system, notwithstanding the fact that it addresses and seeks to rectify a widely acknowledged weakness of that system, namely, its over-reliance on teacher-centered instructional methodologies involving rote-memorization. The explanation provided in this article goes beyond standard accounts that focus primarily or exclusively on the role of the university entrance exam in the Korean education system. The explanation offered here identifies the core values implicit in CT pedagogy and shows how those values clash with important features of Korean culture.

Key words : critical thinking pedagogy, critical thinking movement, Korean culture, individual autonomy, high / low context communication

Introduction: CT Pedagogy and the Korean Education System

In the preface to the third edition of *Critical Reasoning*, the authors point out that when the book was first published in 1982 it was one of relatively few texts designed to help students improve their ability to evaluate critically what they hear and read in a variety of everyday contexts (Cederblom & Paulsen, 1991). The authors also note that by the time the second edition was published in 1986, courses in informal logic and critical thinking (CT) had become common in

universities throughout North America, with some universities establishing CT graduation requirements, and that since 1986 course offerings and enrolments in this area have continued to increase. The transformation that Cederblom & Paulsen trace with the successive editions of their textbook is a broadly based educational movement - known in the US as the "critical thinking movement" and in the UK as the "thinking skills movement" - to implement CT instruction across the curriculum.

As a result of this movement, CT pedagogy has penetrated virtually every academic field. It has featured prominently not only in areas in which one would naturally expect it, such as in science education (Ahern-Rindell, 1998) and academic writing (Rose & Kiniry, 1997), but also in less obvious areas, such as in social work (Kirst-Ashman, 2002) and nursing (LeMone & Burke, 2003). It has spread to the high school and even elementary school levels (Lipman, 1993) and has since passed beyond L1 contexts into the realm of TESOL as well (Atkinson, 1997). Universities, local education boards, and private institutions have established centers that offer CT instruction and assist educators and administrators in developing CT teaching strategies. Some

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universities have established entire academic programs based on CT pedagogy, others have established programs that take as their foundation the development of CT skills, and still others have embraced CT pedagogy in their conceptual frameworks and mission statements. At this point in time, CT is much more than just another undergraduate course; CT pedagogy has become an instructional methodology or a guiding educational philosophy for many teachers, academic programs, and educational institutions throughout much of the Anglo-American world and beyond.

In Korea, however, the CT movement has yet to make significant inroads. While there are limited course offerings in formal or informal logic at the university level, there has been no serious or sustained effort to spread CT pedagogy *across the curriculum* or throughout the education system in Korea. Nor have many Korean educators or educational institutions embraced CT pedagogy as an instructional methodology or educational philosophy. A 1998 OECD study of the South Korean education system concluded that it continues to employ formal teaching methods that emphasize the “memorisation of fragmentary information” rather than teaching approaches that foster critical and creative thinking skills (OECD, 1998, p. 144). Critics of the Korean education system have been voicing such complaints for decades, and partly as a result of these criticisms there have been countless attempts to reform the system. Yet despite such efforts, the dominant educational philosophy in Korea remains focussed more on the transmission of knowledge than on the nurturing of thinking skills. Indeed, the Ministry of Education officials who requested the OECD to examine and report on the Korean education system described it as “excessively geared toward preparation for college [entrance] examinations” and claimed that the “memorisation of knowledge ... [is] the rule rather than the exception” (OECD, 1998, p. 25). Other critics have concurred that the university entrance exam is “driving the entire educational system,” which has been “reduced to little more than the preparation for and taking of multiple choice exams,” and that this exam-driven education system has “stifled creativity” and “hindered the development of analytical reasoning” (Seth, 2002, p. 169).

There can be no doubt that the university entrance exam has played an unusually important role within the Korean education system and modern Korean society as a whole, and there must be at least some truth to the critics’ complaints that the national obsession with the university entrance exam—an exam consisting solely of multiple-choice questions based mostly on matters of fact—has hindered more than it has promoted critical and creative thinking skills. However, it is

ultimately a mistake to explain the relative absence of CT pedagogy within the Korean education system simply in terms of the nation’s system for admission to university.

One problem with this explanation is that it is only at the primary and secondary levels that education is geared toward preparation for the university entrance exam; at the university level, the purpose of education is obviously something other than to prepare students for admission to enter university. However, even at the university level in Korea, there is little evidence of student-centred teaching methodologies that foster critical thinking skills and encourage students to challenge their teachers or what they teach in any serious way. In order to explain the relative absence of CT pedagogy at the university level in Korea, one must obviously appeal to something other than, or in addition to, the university entrance exam.

A second problem with the foregoing explanation is that it sheds no light at all on why the entrance exam has remained a permanent fixture of the Korean education system despite such widespread dissatisfaction with it. Seth (2002) writes that “Both the public and officials have widely criticized examination preparation as the center of learning... Yet a century of reform efforts has resulted in only an intensification of this phenomenon” (p. 4). Exactly why has it been so difficult for Koreans to free themselves from what they describe as an “examination hell,” a phenomenon that ultimately oppresses the entire populace? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look beyond the university entrance exam to the social forces that support and sustain it.

A third problem with the suggestion that the university entrance exam is responsible for the relative absence of CT pedagogy in Korea is that there is no essential connection between objective-style examinations and teaching methodologies based on rote memorization. Nor is there any reason why an objective-style examination could not be used to promote critical and creative teaching pedagogies. Indeed, some of the most widely used tests of CT—for example, the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal—consist exclusively of multiple-choice questions. Thus, to whatever extent the university entrance exam in Korea does contribute to the relative absence of CT pedagogy, it has less to do with the fact that there is such an exam and more to do with the specific nature of the exam.

What is needed then is a deeper explanation, one that will shed light not only on the relative absence of CT pedagogy in the Korean education system, including at the university level, but also on the Korean fixation with a

particular form of entrance examination, one which may reinforce uncritical teaching methodologies based on rote-memorization. The search for the correct explanation has been a concern of Korean educators for decades, and while most have focussed on the importance of the university entrance exam, other suggestions have been raised. Kim (1985) explains the “lack of critical inquiry in the [Korean] educational process” in terms of several factors, one of which is “a long heritage [in Korea] of a passive, unquestioning role for students” (p. 10). In speaking of “roles,” Kim suggests that the absence of CT pedagogy has something to do with the way in which Korean students are *socialized*. As is shown in more detail below, there is indeed evidence that CT pedagogy is associated with specifically Anglo-American patterns of socialization and that children of other cultures, including many Asian cultures, are socialized in ways that conflict with some of the goals or presuppositions of CT pedagogy. Kim’s suggestion is therefore a profitable one insofar as it leads one to reflect upon features of Korean culture in seeking to understand the relative absence of CT pedagogy in the Korean education system.

In what follows this suggestion is pursued in an attempt to provide a deeper explanation for why the CT movement has so far failed to permeate the Korean education system; the explanation provided below shows how the values implicit in CT pedagogy clash with important features of Korean culture. The remainder of the article is organized as follows. In Section 2, CT and CT pedagogy are characterized. In Section 3, the principal justifications that have been offered in support of CT pedagogy are summarized and the dominant values implicit in CT pedagogy are identified. In Section 4, it is argued that these justifications for CT pedagogy are problematic within the context of Korean culture.¹

Characterizing CT and CT Pedagogy

Dewey (1909) defines CT as the “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). In using the terms “active” and “careful,” Dewey contrasts CT with “passive,” “unreflective” thought. Furthermore, his definition highlights the importance of the grounds and consequences of our beliefs. For Dewey, and for all of those who work in the CT tradition, the concern is not so much on *what* one believes, but rather on the reasons *why* one believes it and the question

of whether or not one *should* believe it.

Brookfield (1988) regards CT as a matter of “reflecting on the assumptions underlying our and others’ ideas and actions, and contemplating alternative ways of thinking and living” (p. x). Moore and Parker (1989) define CT as “the careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment about a claim” (p. 3). They also assert that CT involves several skills or abilities, including the ability to listen and read carefully, to evaluate arguments, to look for and find hidden assumptions, and to trace the consequences of a claim. Cederblom and Paulsen (1991) take CT to be a collection of procedures that enable one to make decisions concerning what to believe, an ability that they contrast with passive reading or listening and mere disagreement. Thomson (1999) describes the following three abilities as the important aspects of CT: the ability to understand and evaluate arguments, the ability to make well-reasoned decisions, and the tendency to be fair-minded. Ennis (1992) defines CT as a process of “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do” (p. 6), and Norris and Ennis (1989) list the following skills as being essential to CT: analyzing arguments, asking and answering questions that clarify and challenge, judging the credibility of sources, making and judging observations, deductions, inductions, and value judgments, defining terms, judging definitions, identifying assumptions, and deciding on action.

The foregoing should suffice to demonstrate that while there are variations in the definitions of CT found in the literature there is broad agreement on the skills or dispositions involved in CT. In particular, CT is widely regarded as involving a set of cognitive skills or dispositions that enable one to evaluate claims and arguments and make rational decisions concerning what to believe or do. The specific skills that the foregoing writers agree are involved in CT include the following:

1. Recognizing reasons and conclusions in linguistic communication.
2. Identifying vague or ambiguous language.
3. Clarifying terms.
4. Identifying hidden assumptions.
5. Tracing consequences.
6. Evaluating claims against evidence.
7. Spotting fallacies.
8. Weighing alternatives.
9. Articulating one’s own views in a fair-minded way.

The list is representative, but is not intended to be exhaustive. For the purposes of this article, it will suffice merely to have a basic idea of the skills that are thought to be

involved in CT; nothing in what follows depends on any specific definition of CT.

One may safely assume, then, that the aim of CT pedagogy is to instill or nurture in students skills or dispositions of the sort mentioned above. In order to identify the values implicit in CT pedagogy, it is instructive to ask what further purposes these skills might serve or why it is thought that they are worth nurturing.

Justifying CT Pedagogy

“The ability to think critically,” Moore and Parker (1989) assert, “is vitally important. In fact our lives depend upon it, since the way we conduct our lives depends on what claims we believe” (p. 3). Their claim is that CT is essential to rational decision-making and that the ability to make rational decisions is necessary for one’s very survival. In a similar but slightly more modest tone, Cederblom and Paulsen (1991) assert that CT pedagogy promotes substantial social values, such as defence against our vulnerability as citizens in a society increasingly ruled by experts; they write that, “Even though we might not be experts, we can mitigate our status as amateurs by honing our reasoning skills” (p. 6).

Lipman also sees a connection between CT pedagogy and self-defence; he writes that, “whenever we make a claim or utter an opinion, we are vulnerable unless we can back it up” (1991, p. 117). When our opinions come under fire, to what do we appeal? In answering this question, says Lipman, we are led to see that claims and opinions must be supported by reasons. Closely connected with the idea of one’s defence against vulnerability is the idea of personal freedom or autonomy, and this is a connection that Lipman makes explicit when he writes that students must be encouraged to become critical thinkers “as a step towards their own autonomy” (Lipman, 1991, p. 118).

Thomson (1999) focuses on the role that CT can play in resolving ethical dilemmas. According to Thomson (1991), CT is important because it enables one to make ethical decisions for oneself, which serves the additional goal of enabling one to take further control of one’s life (p. 1). Brown and Keeley (1994) echo this last claim when they write that CT improves one’s self-confidence by increasing one’s sense of “intellectual independence” (p. 2).

Further support for this connection between CT and autonomy or independence is provided by Ruggiero (1995) who writes that, “We are not individuals automatically; rather we become individuals by our willingness to realize our

potential and our effort to be “self-aware, self-critical, self-enhancing” (p. 39). In particular, Ruggiero believes that CT promotes independence by helping one to avoid blind conformity and self-deception. Ruggiero further claims that CT serves the following two positive functions: a) it helps to clarify or refine ideas and thereby leads to better ideas, and b) it improves one’s ability to persuade others of one’s ideas. “The best idea in the world,” Ruggiero writes (1995), “is of little value until others are persuaded of its worth” (p. 142).

This last point is also emphasized by those, such as Chaffee (1985) and Hammond (1989), who promote CT within the context of improving one’s linguistic skills. Indeed, the primary aim of Chaffee’s text is to develop students’ language skills along with their ability to think, but these are not regarded as distinct aims; rather, it is assumed that by improving the latter skill one automatically improves the former skills. Thus, Chaffee (1985) writes that “since language and thinking are so closely related, how well we do with one is directly related to how well we do with the other” (p. 244).

Finally, CT pedagogy has also been justified on the basis of explicitly political considerations. Lipman (1991) claims that the following sort of argument has been endorsed by a great many thinkers, including John Locke: since democracies put political power into the hands of ordinary citizens, democracy functions best with reasonable citizens; and since CT pedagogy improves one’s ability to reason, CT pedagogy promotes well-functioning democracies. Lipman himself seems to support this line of reasoning, as did John Dewey, one of the leading proponents of the idea of democratizing the classroom for the purpose of fostering effective democracies in the community.

The following is a list of the benefits that have been cited in support of CT pedagogy. According to the authors considered above, CT pedagogy:

1. Provides one with a means of self-defence against manipulation.
2. Promotes one’s individual autonomy.
3. Protects one against self-deception.
4. Helps one to resolve ethical dilemmas for oneself.
5. Enables one to take greater control of one’s life.
6. Enhances one’s self-confidence.
7. Increases one’s intellectual independence.
8. Improves one’s linguistic skills.
9. Increases one’s persuasive power.
10. Promotes well-functioning democracies.

Clearly, the foregoing claims are not independent of each other. Indeed, the first seven claims are, to a large extent,

variations on the same theme—that of individual autonomy. Furthermore, claims 8 and 9, which belong in a different group from the rest, are also related to each other, for the sort of persuasion mentioned in claim 9 is persuasion by means of language, as opposed to emotional manipulation or physical coercion. The idea is that by becoming a critical thinker one can improve one's mastery of the language and thereby use language more persuasively.

While proponents of CT pedagogy have offered a variety of claims on its behalf, many of these claims can be organized around three basic concepts: autonomy, linguistic ability, and democracy. In response to the question, "Why should we teach critical thinking?" proponents of CT pedagogy have provided the following three answers: a) it enhances individual autonomy, b) it improves one's linguistic skills and, hence, one's ability to persuade, and c) it fosters well-functioning democracies. There may indeed be additional reasons for teaching CT, but the foregoing justifications—the first two in particular—should suffice to illustrate the problems that arise in attempting to justify the teaching of CT within the context of Korean culture.

Justifying CT Pedagogy in the Context of Korean Culture

CT Pedagogy and Individual Autonomy

Atkinson (1997) agrees that notion of individual autonomy and the primacy of the individual underlie CT pedagogy at a fundamental level, but he points out that "a vast amount of cross-cultural research shows that various cultural groups assume notions of the individual that are almost diametrically opposed to Western or at least mainstream US assumptions" (p. 80). In support of this point he cites, among other things, a number of studies that demonstrate that the Japanese are socialized in ways that are aimed at promoting group conformity more than individual autonomy. Clancy (1986), for example, shows that the two dominant values with which Japanese infants are socialized are empathy and conformity, and Carson (1992) concludes that Japanese children are trained in school to "value group goals above individual interests."

That the Japanese understand themselves in relation to groups differently than Westerners do is well documented. Reischauer and Jansen (1995), for example, claim that "Certainly no difference is more significant between Japanese and Americans, or Westerners in general, than the greater

Japanese tendency to emphasize the group at the expense of the individual" (p. 128). And Matsumoto (1988) writes that, in Japanese culture, "acknowledgement and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual's proper territory, governs all social interaction" (p. 405). However, it would be a mistake to think that the group-orientation of the Japanese is a feature unique to Japanese culture. There is documented evidence that the Chinese display similar attitudes and patterns of behaviour (Scollon, 1991), as do the Indonesians (Brantley, 2003). What about the Koreans?

Joh (2002) asserts that young Koreans display "a high degree of traditional group identification" and that "their preferred way of decision-making is not by majority based on each individual's opinion, but rather on the traditional unanimous system that is focussed on its betterment as a whole" (p. 397). Joh (2002) also notes that the strong bonding within Korean families has "resulted in feelings of interdependence and harmony" and has formed "traditional values against individualism" (p. 401). Similarly, Baek (2002) claims that obedience to one's parents is a more important characteristic of Korean culture than are individual rights (p. 376). She adds that "Korean society preserves a more traditional, conforming, authoritarian, and status-oriented culture compared with Western society," and she cites cross-cultural studies showing that Korean children are socialized to respect tradition, authorities, and appropriate role-behaviour more than their Western counterparts (Baek, 2002, p. 376). Park (1997) reiterates these views in claiming that Korea's group-oriented culture stands in "sharp contrast with individualist liberalism based on the pursuit of self-interest" (p. 154).

In describing themselves and their own culture in relation to Western culture, Koreans with an understanding of both cultures repeatedly point out that they are less individualistic, that they operate more in terms of groups, and that the most important group of all is the family into which one is born and raised. It is a familiar pattern throughout much of East Asia, one which is surely related to the historical influence of Confucianism, since an individual's subordination to the family is a cardinal precept in Confucian ethics (Thut & Adams, 1964). It would be wrong, of course, to suppose that the Koreans or Japanese are entirely lacking in any concept of self or that they see themselves only in terms of their relations to others. However, it would be just as great a mistake to ignore the significant differences regarding attitudes towards individualism and group behaviour that exist between Koreans and Americans, for example. These

differences, moreover, are clearly relevant to the justification of CT pedagogy.

One of the chief aims of CT pedagogy is to train one how to *think for oneself* and how to avoid blind conformity. Consider, for example, the following passage from a standard CT textbook:

Harmful conformity is what we do instead of thinking in order to belong to groups or to avoid the risk of being different. Such conformity is an act of cowardice, a sacrifice of independence for a lesser good. In time it makes us more concerned about what others think than about what is right and true and sensible. Once we begin to conform, we quickly find ourselves saying and doing not what we believe is best, but what others want or expect us to say and do. That focus dulls our ability to think creatively and critically (Ruggiero, 1995, p. 45).

It would be difficult to find a better example of the clash between CT pedagogy and patterns of socialization indigenous to group-oriented cultures. Like the Japanese, Koreans are socialized to have great concern for what others think, and it is customary in Korean culture to make sacrifices for the sake of group harmony. However, Koreans do not view the sacrificing of one's independence for the sake of group harmony as an act of cowardice. On the contrary; they see the sacrificing of group harmony for the sake of independence as an act of selfishness or arrogance.

In order to nurture and enhance one's intellectual independence and autonomy, CT pedagogy attempts to wean one away from the influence of tradition, hierarchically based authority, especially the authority of teachers, and group-oriented conformity. However, these are the very things that Koreans are socialized to value and respect. As such, the justification of CT pedagogy that appeals to individual autonomy is not nearly as persuasive in a Korean context as it is in an American context, where individual autonomy is regarded as the most important social value. Indeed, insofar as the appeal to individual autonomy clashes with dominant values in Korean culture, one could argue that, from a Korean perspective, this justification of CT pedagogy is highly irrational.

CT Pedagogy and Language Skills

Edward T. Hall (1976) is credited with drawing the distinction between "high context" and "low context" communication in order to mark the significant difference in the degree to which members of different cultural groups rely

on verbal and non-verbal clues in their customary patterns of communication. In high context communication, non-verbal messages can be more important than what is actually said, status and identity are often conveyed non-verbally and require acknowledgement, meaning is largely implicit in the context, directness of expression is avoided, and criticism is generally considered impolite. Low context communication, on the other hand, is more direct and literal, and information is more explicit and verbalized. Hall and others believe that the dominant form of communication in many Western cultures, and in US society in particular, is of the low context variety, whereas high context communication is the norm in many Asian cultures. Interestingly, the distinction between high context and low context patterns of communication seems to overlap considerably with the distinction between group-oriented and individualistic cultures.

Consider, for example, Reischauer and Jansen's description of typical patterns of communication among the Japanese:

To operate their group system successfully, the Japanese have found it advisable to avoid open confrontations. Varying positions are not sharply outlined and their differences analyzed and clarified. Instead, each participant in a discussion feels his way cautiously, unfolding his own views only as he sees how others react to them. Thus, any sharp conflict of views is avoided before it comes out into the open. The Japanese even have a word, *haragei*, "the art of the belly," for this meeting of minds, or at least the viscera, without clear verbal interaction. They have a positive mistrust of verbal skills, thinking that these tend to show superficiality in contrast to inner, less articulate feelings that are communicated by inference or nonverbal means. (1996, p. 136)

The foregoing description of Japanese styles of negotiation is a perfect example of high context communication. Brantley (2003) gives a similar account of communication patterns among the Indonesians, and descriptions of the Chinese show that they too adhere closely to the high-context model (Tan, 1999). What about the Koreans?

Kim (2003) notes that, as a result of the Confucian tradition that discourages verbosity, "Koreans have become accustomed to communication dependent on a given circumstance" and they tend to communicate "through indirect, implicit and non-verbal means" (p. 94). Furthermore, he writes that "Koreans tend to obviate the need to explicitly articulate their viewpoints and persuade others," and that communication in Korea is "geared to promoting bonds

rather than enhancing information exchange and developing persuasive skills” (Kim, 2003, p. 96). Suh (1996), a Korean linguist, writes that:

The frequent use of elliptical expressions in Korean is a hotbed on which semantic implications flourish. The gap created by the use of ellipses is a space out of which a depth of meaning far beyond explicit statements grows. Koreans take immense pleasure in expressions such as *ishim chonshim* (communion with minds), a kind of telepathic communication, a contact of mind with mind unmediated by words (p. 45).

According to Suh, the great use of ellipses among the Koreans poses serious interpretive problems in the case of written speech, where an extra-linguistic context to guarantee the recoverability of meaning is not readily available. In that case, Suh (1996) claims, “ellipsis may end up a loose bundle of unclear sentences which leap over the process of systematic reasoning to non-sequitur conclusions” (p. 46). The descriptions given by Kim and Suh strongly suggest that the Koreans, like the Japanese, tend toward high context communication, and that the communicative characteristics of both cultures differ sharply from those of English-speaking cultures. This fact is clearly relevant to the second justification for CT pedagogy.

Kim (2003) points out that, as a result of their tendency not to explicitly articulate their viewpoints and persuade others, Koreans have found “no pressing need to develop Western-style argumentation, logic, and rhetoric” (p. 96). Suh (1996) echoes this point when he notes that the Korean habit of ellipses in discourse reiterates itself in an ellipses in thinking, resulting in a tendency to put into practice “what the heart feels,” while “bypassing the process of deliberating why and for what reason it should be done” (p. 46). As a result, he writes, “Koreans live by feeling, emotion, and attachment (all of which can be summed up in the word *cheong*) while relatively lacking in the so-called ‘Western’ qualities of reason, logic, and rationality” (Suh, 1996, p. 46).

Suh’s point, presumably, is not that Koreans lack the ability to reason or to think logically, but rather that their typical patterns of communication, which make frequent use of ambiguity and ellipsis, do not manifest the clarity, precision, and logical progression of ideas that are normative ideals in other languages, such as English. However, these norms of clarity, precision, and logical progression are the very qualities that CT pedagogy attempts to nurture. Therefore, if it is true that customary patterns of communication among Koreans do not manifest or even aim towards the standards of CT, then the belief that CT

pedagogy will improve one’s persuasive powers is false from a Korean perspective. Suh (1996) nicely illustrates this point when he notes that, while Koreans are not unaware of the advantage of precision in linguistic communication, the use of precision “gives them a chill as an expression of being too practical and calculating and of a mind of being too geared to maximum profit and efficiency” (p. 43). The Koreans are attracted, he explains, “to the hazy warmth of blanket terms, especially in everyday discourse” (Suh, 1996, p. 43). However, if this is so, then the hapless critical thinker who attempts to persuade such people through the clear articulation of carefully constructed arguments is more likely to achieve rejection than persuasive success.

In general, the idea that CT pedagogy will improve one’s linguistic skills and persuasive powers makes sense only within those cultural contexts in which CT skills function as normative ideals of linguistic communication. In cultural contexts in which this is not the case, such as in Korea and Japan, the idea is simply false. Thus, from a Korean point of view, the second justification for CT pedagogy is just as bad as the first.

Conclusion

The Korean education system is not without its merits. However, one of the widely acknowledged weaknesses of the system is its over-reliance on teacher-centered instructional methodologies involving rote-memorization. Since the CT movement addresses this weakness and aims to replace pedagogies that promote intellectual passivity with approaches that nurture students’ thinking skills, one may reasonably wonder why there have not been greater efforts or success in spreading CT pedagogy across the curriculum or throughout the education system in Korea.

In order to understand why the CT movement has failed to permeate the Korean education system, it will not suffice to point to the role of the university entrance exam or other features of the education system itself, for these things too, as we have seen, are just as much in need of an explanation as is the relative failure of the CT movement in Korea. A deeper, more satisfying explanation is needed, one that examines the values implicit in CT pedagogy in light of the dominant values and practices in Korean society. The explanation offered in this article shows that the values implicit in CT pedagogy clash with important features of Korean culture.

CT pedagogy is commonly justified by recourse to the fact that 1) it enhances one’s intellectual independence and

individual autonomy and 2) it increases one's mastery of the language and persuasive powers. However, what is overlooked by many of those Western educators who hail CT pedagogy as constituting the very heart of education is the fact that these justifications are heavily dependent on culturally specific values and practices that conflict with important features of certain non-Western cultures. Within the context of Korean culture, both of these justifications are problematic. The first justification of CT pedagogy is undermined by the fact that, in nurturing the intellectual autonomy of students, CT pedagogy weans students away from the influence of some of the very things that Koreans are socialized to value, such as tradition, hierarchically based authority, and group-oriented conformity. The second justification for CT pedagogy is belied by the fact that successful communication in Korean contexts is not nearly as dependent on the norms of CT as is communication in English; indeed, some of the norms of CT run contrary to customary patterns of communication among the Koreans.

The central claim of this article is that there are features of Korean culture that presently inhibit the spread of CT pedagogy throughout the nation's education system. It does not follow from this that the CT movement cannot, or will never permeate the Korean education system, for cultures are clearly malleable and dynamic. A question therefore remains as to whether or not greater efforts should be made to embrace the CT movement and change those features of Korean culture that presently inhibit the spread of CT pedagogy throughout the Korean education system. While this, alas, is a question that goes beyond the scope of the present paper, it should be noted that the answer to this question is by no means obvious. It is no coincidence that the CT movement, which promotes pedagogies that seek to nurture students' autonomy and intellectual independence, arose first in what is widely regarded as the most individualistic of all societies, the US. Indeed, it is only to be expected that the dominant values in a society—for example, individual autonomy in the case of the US—should be expressed in that society's principal pedagogical methods or guiding educational philosophies. However, while there is much to be said in support of instructional methodologies that promote CT, there is a legitimate cause for concern about vigorously promoting CT pedagogy in Korea, insofar as the spread of CT pedagogy throughout the Korean education system might weaken or undermine dominant values or norms in Korean culture.

The question of whether or to what extent CT pedagogy should be promoted within the Korean education system

raises complex cultural and ethical issues that go beyond the bounds of purely educational concerns. It is a question that must be answered, not only by educators and educational administrators in Korea, but by all those with an interest or stake in Korean culture. The present paper, while not attempting to answer this question, may be of some assistance to those who are in a position to answer it by helping them to identify some of the cultural costs of promoting CT pedagogy in Korea.

Notes

1. Reference material for the characterization of CT pedagogy, in Section 2, and its justification, in Section 3, was derived from a search of The Philosopher's Index using the descriptors "critical thinking," "critical reasoning," and "critical thinking pedagogy." Material for the description, in Section 4, of Korea's educational values was derived from a search of Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) using the descriptors "moral education in Korea" and "moral development in Korean education." Some of the works cited in the material derived from these searches were also used; search results that were only tangentially related to the central issues of this paper were not used. Seth (2002) was particularly helpful for understanding the Korean education system and Korea's educational values.

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