

**LIFELONG LEARNING AT THE BORDERS:
TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN
KOREA**

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 2006

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea and contributes to an expanded understanding of the notion of lifelong learning as it relates to transnational adult learners. The study revolves around 2 key research questions: What characterizes the learning experiences of these workers and how do their multiple identities—citizenship, class, race/ethnicity, and gender—impact their learning experience? Field research was conducted over a 1 year period and involved direct interviews with 30 participants – 19 migrant workers and 11 learning providers. The researcher gathered participants via snowball sampling and conducted interviews in a semi-structured, open-ended format.

By shedding light on the group's learning experiences, this paper seeks to move beyond previous research that only treats migrant workers' marginalized existence. It spotlights both the importance of the lifelong learning paradigm to migrant workers and the paradigm's waning relevance in its present form. Utilizing critical and feminist theories of adult learning, the study shows that migrant workers in general are disenfranchised by systemic forces in the global context and that this area is ripe for further critical study by adult educators.

The paper concludes that migratory identities negatively impact lifelong learning experiences for migrant workers in Korea. It is clear that the nation-centric notion of citizenship, and the lifelong learning paradigm as currently constructed, constrain the meaningful participation of migrant workers in learning experiences. Recognizing this, the researcher recommends a more transformative view of membership be adopted and that adult educators transform the current understanding of the lifelong learning paradigm into a more inclusive model that covers the increasing numbers of transnational spaces in which learning occurs.

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I wish to express my profound thanks to the migrant workers and their learning providers who participated in this study. Without their willingness and support, I would not have been able to finish this research.

I am also grateful to my committee for their guidance, critical feedback and support throughout this work. My research supervisor, Dr. Thomas Sork created the necessary conditions for me to engage fully in this doctoral program as a meaningful learning process. And my thanks also go to Dr. Jennifer Chan and Dr. Pierre Walter, who encouraged and challenged my thinking and contributed to making my education experience enjoyable.

Among many names that I would like to thank, I would especially like to thank my Study Sisters, an empowering study group of grad students in the department of Educational Studies: Mary Brooks, Betsy Alkenbrack, Janice Murphy, Lisa Moy, Deborah Prieur and Debra Sutherland, all of whom have journeyed with me through this program. Our meetings and shared fellowship gave me the inspiration and energy I needed to continue this not-so-easy journey. Throughout the process of completing this doctoral program, their support has been immense.

Last, but not the least, I would like to thank my parents, my husband Kisoo and my son Kenny for their constant love and support.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Every year, increasing numbers of migrant workers find themselves in complex and difficult work situations in their adopted countries. Their situation is precarious. Leaving their home countries in search of economic opportunity, they are invited by the host country as essential economic inputs. Upon arrival, however, they find themselves less than fully accepted and worse. Facing an array of barriers to their full participation in society, they remain at the border in a vague territory between their home and host countries.

While dramatic global changes have facilitated the flow of capital, information and products, labour is also flowing from one country to another faster than ever. Among migrant workers, the number of people who identify themselves as part of the non-citizen labour force in countries that accept immigrant/migrant labour is rapidly increasing and this phenomenon impacts both sending and receiving societies at a local level. For the past several centuries, migration has been an issue of concern mostly for countries in Europe and North America (Castles, 2000; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Sassen, 1998, 1999; Munck, 2002). However, the trend of importing labour has expanded to other industrialized countries like South Korea, where it also manifests itself in a variety of ways, positive and negative (United Nations, 2003).

According to the Korean Ministry of Labour (2005), the number of these workers in 2005 exceeded 346,000; a number on the increase since 1992 when the country began accepting migrant workers. The goal then was to augment the indigenous labour force in industries suffering from a shortage of workers. Today, migrant workers continue to be employed mainly in small or medium-sized factories and construction sites in jobs that are shunned by most Koreans, who on the whole perceive those workplaces to be dirty, dangerous, and difficult (now referred to notoriously as 3-D Jobs).

This influx of foreign workers in Korea has brought about a number of social challenges. Korea has long been a homogenous society and the workers are often treated poorly because they are regarded as “outsiders.” From the beginning, they have typically been treated as just another basic input on the factory floor. Many experts have pointed to the official government system for importing migrant labour as a root cause. But, despite several policy changes to the official system, workers still face hardships.

My focus in this thesis is on the participation of these non-citizen migrant workers in a variety of learning activities and their efforts to both improve themselves and make an active contribution to the society around them. Participating as full members of Korean society is difficult. Migrant workers are adults who are entitled to the same lifelong learning opportunities as other contemporary workers but, because they have crossed a border, they are not seen as fitting within the existing lifelong learning paradigm. They are excluded.

It is hard to find relevant policy for the education of migrant workers. Also, academics have barely begun to understand their learning experiences in any depth. In other words, migrant workers are regarded merely as people whose hands are needed by the economy but to whom we need provide little protection. No one asks who these people are or what they might want or need to better themselves, despite the fact that they conduct their work on our behalf within the context of unprecedented neoliberal pressure on a global scale. Simply put, there is little or no recognition that they are, like most of us, adult learners who try to plan and organize their learning according to their needs and wants.

This thesis, then, seeks to explore the range, intensity and challenge of the learning experiences undertaken by migrant workers in Korea. The main research questions are: How do the workers’ migratory identities affect their lifelong learning experiences? How do they locate

themselves in the host society as adult lifelong learners? And, how do they prepare for the future after this migratory experience?

Migrant workers in Korea lead challenging lives, both in and out of the workplace. Their learning experiences are complicated due to their migratory status, and are at once local and global phenomena. Injustice often occurs as a consequence of rapid global processes and there is little systematic protection or support for these workers. Not much is known, however, about how they endure these difficult working conditions or why they participate in certain learning activities, which they often provide for themselves due to the lack of provision from authorities and employers. Little is also known about how these workers perceive and interpret these learning experiences which are constructed socially, culturally, and politically in and out of Korean workplaces and which, at the same time, are put in the global migratory context.

An overarching goal of this thesis is to show that the interpretations of those experiences have notable social, cultural and political dimensions that signify meaningful transnational components. By arguing that migrant workers in Korea are transnational adult learners who search for the space to learn even in their marginalized positions, I hope to encourage wider discussion of a transnational lifelong learning paradigm beyond the issues of territorial and national sovereignty. My intention is to adopt a critical approach toward adult learning which specifies the role of adult education in promoting a more just society, where every group of learners' action is not infringed by structural power but supported such that they may act as full-fledged worker-learners within society.

Context of the Study

Globalization and Migrant Workers

Globalization implies unprecedented challenges in two distinct ways: first, it suggests that "many chains of political, economic and social activities are becoming world-wide in

scope” (Held, 1995, p. 21). Second, it suggests that there has been an “intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies” (Ibid.). The intensification of globalization has contributed to the increased flows of capital, information, and production. With these flows, worker mobility has also increased simultaneously.

Not all workers who move along this flow, however, are in the same situation. On the one hand, globalized labour may give new opportunities to some groups of workers. According to Ohmae (1991, 1995), knowledge workers can employ themselves on many levels anywhere in the world. He predicts that this borderless world may signify great advantages to workers in the near future. Multinational corporations hire their core workers from all over the world and this is why we can see many foreign professionals in the cities of so-called advanced countries. On the other hand, the global conditions of labour have brought ever-present challenges in which many contemporary workers remain vulnerable (Munck, 2002) and under “pressure to keep cost[s] down and profit[s] up” (Newlands, 2002, p. 217).

Some of these contemporary workers cross borders into countries with strong or growing economies where, they presume, opportunities exist for higher paid work. These workers, however, may identify themselves as “workers in danger” when they fail to possess the advanced skills and knowledge preferred by capital. Instead of remaining in their home countries to carry on unstable job lives, they decide to migrate to the places where migrant labour is needed. They either go to neighbouring countries where multinational capital operates factories due to cheaper labour costs, or go farther afield to countries where citizen workers shun low-skilled, 3-D work and consequently need to import labourers (Seol, 1996, 1999). In the context of this research, these workers are called “migrant workers.”

According to Portes and Rumbaut (1996), migrant workers comprise those who enter the country both legally and illegally in search of menial and generally low-paying jobs. In other

words, there is a large population of unauthorized migrant workers in addition to those who work legally (Alfred, 2003). Whether legally or illegally, workers are crossing borders more frequently than ever before for the reasons addressed above (Sassen, 1999). According to the International Migration Organization (2005), the number of migrant workers currently traversing the world is 192 million, a number that has doubled in the last thirty-five years. Many of these workers even conduct multiple migrations to find better work and life conditions (Bhachu, 1985). Previous research regarding the causes of migration has revealed some important points regarding the complex “web of networks” which exists behind the decisions to move (Sassen, 1999; Castles & Millers, 1993). In many cases, the decision to move intersects other humans, communities, and even countries (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

Castles and Miller (1993) point out that the movement of migrant workers shows where the centre of global capitalism is and where the peripheries are, highlighting unequal relations between countries. The unequal relations between countries are well illustrated by non-citizen contract migratory labour practices. According to Castles (2000), non-citizen and contract labour is a good example of the effects of globalization due to its high degree of control and the restrictions on the rights of migrant workers.

Research shows that there are multiple, overlapping discrimination criteria for these people. For example, in the study of foreign domestic workers involved in the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) of Canada, Blomely and Pratt (2001) observe the “unequal human geography” (p. 162) between labour importing and exporting countries. Bounded in unfamiliar space, these foreign workers share their experience of inequality with other low-skilled or domestic workers, particularly women. But what makes the experiences of these workers unique is their non-citizen status and that they are “third-world looking” (p. 161). Even though they are not deported and may obtain formal citizenship after an extended period of service, they are likely

to remain as a marginalized social group due to differences such as class, race, ethnicity and gender, which are far from the norms of the host society. Therefore, many contemporary migrant workers face a variety of borders, not only geographical but also borders which dichotomize people into “us” and “others.”

This is not a new phenomenon at all, considering the long history of labour migration, particularly in European countries. However, there is evidence that the difficulties faced by these workers are heightened by the extraordinary nature of the contemporary global context of work in which more and more workers migrate from country to country and the increased likelihood of negative experiences. Many migrant workers, therefore, are at a greater risk of being marginalized due to the ever more globalized context of work. Moreover, some groups of migrant workers are more likely than others to face more borders which are both visible and invisible.

Migrant Workers in Korea

Migration is a heated issue in Asia, where countries are broken into two groups: labour-sending and labour-receiving. The receiving countries are mostly confined to industrial giants like Korea and Japan. They accept migrant labour in their labour-intensive, mostly obsolete, and less attractive industrial sectors. These receiving countries accept migrant workers under the strict control of the state and do not allow migrant workers to have the full range of workers' rights which are available to the citizen workers.

In the case of Korea, migrant workers and the work they do is clearly characterized by their “disposable” nature. Korea experienced industrialization and plunged into global competition in the 1970s, later than other labour receiving countries in North America, Europe, or Japan. Successfully industrialized under the strong leadership of the military regime during 70-80s, Korea gradually started to be recognized as a promising workplace for many Asians.

The 1988 Olympics in Seoul was the moment that Korea was recognized by fellow Asians as an advanced industrial economy (Seol, 1999). As Korea is now evolving into a post-industrial economy, it finds itself pressured between the need to compete with advanced countries as well as newly industrializing ones such as China. In the meantime, manufacturing workplaces and positions shunned by Koreans for their 3-D status were being filled by illegal migrant workers who had aspirations to work in Korea.

This phenomenon was officially acknowledged by the introduction of Korea's first labour import policies in 1992. Korea was able to benchmark the labour import process used in other immigrant-receiving countries. That was useful for Korea because the goal was to minimize the impact of foreign labour on the economy and society. Despite the fact that many Koreans shun those 3-D jobs, there has always been protest against the import of labour. In part to mollify those domestically raised concerns, the government introduced a system that limited the rights of migrant workers and treated them unfairly compared to nationals. Also, migrant workers have never been allowed extended residence.

Migrants provide their labour under either the Employment Permit System (EPS) or the Industrial Trainee Program (ITP), the two pillars of Korea's labour import program. Illustrating these two systems is useful because their characteristics demonstrate the problems inherent in Korea's approach.

Two Systems

The Industrial Trainee Program (ITP) was introduced in 1992. It has been the primary means by which Korea has secured a supply of low-skilled labour for industry. It was used exclusively for the ten year period prior to the establishment of the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004. Now, the two exist in parallel. The ITP is hosted by the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business (KFSB), which is an organization of employers. This organization

invites approximately 20-30,000 foreign workers annually to supply Korea's labour-thirsty industrial sectors (KFSB, 2004).

Through the ITP, foreign labour has been supplied from fifteen Asian countries which have signed formal agreements with Korea.¹ The quota of workers from each country is reviewed and renewed annually. Under the ITP program, migrant workers in Korea are entitled to work for a period of three years in designated workplaces² (KFSB, 2004). The workers under this program are supposed to learn advanced skills that exist in Korea, apply the learned skills at work during their period of stay, and subsequently transfer those skills to their home countries upon repatriation. However, the ITP has been criticized by sustained revelations of inappropriate treatment of workers.

When the EPS was introduced, the intention was to ameliorate the root causes of those concerns and, in large measure, workers rights have improved. The promulgation of the program is an unprecedented experiment to accept foreigners into the Korean workforce as full-fledged workers. Workers under the EPS are entitled to such protections as a minimum wage and industrial accident compensation. To relieve the backlog of undocumented workers who overstayed their visas, the Korean government also granted a year's work amnesty to the workers, but only up to a maximum of four years. Those who had stayed longer were not eligible.

With the introduction of the EPS, the ITP was supposed to be phased out. But this has not happened yet and it remains one of the major sources through which migrant workers enter

¹ The fifteen are, Nepal, Mongolia, Burma, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Iran, Indonesia, China, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Pakistan, Philippines, and Cambodia.

² The period initially consisted of two years' training and one year of work (2+1 system). It was later changed to one year training and two years' work (1+2 system).

Korea. The EPS was expected to be a new milestone for migrant workers but there is still much room for improvement. There are, for instance, several troubling articles in the law which were introduced to protect employers as much as possible. For example, the law still forbids workers from changing workplaces. This has maintained the employers' absolute power to manage migrant workers while limiting the rights of the workers. The whole process of the EPS is governed and orchestrated by the Korean government or government-funded agencies. For example, the country-wide network of 155 Employment Security Centres, where migrant workers under the EPS gain employment are operated by a division of the Ministry of Labour. Table 1 summarizes the key characteristics of the two programs.

Table 1.*Comparison of Industrial Trainee Program and Employment Permit System*

	ITP	EPS
Organizer	KFSB	Government and its agencies
Legal Status of Worker	Trainee	Worker
Labour Rights	Limited	Same as native workers
Period of Work	Max. three years	Three years & renewable
Freedom to Move	Impossible	Limited
Workplace		

In addition to the problems mentioned above, the new system that the EPS represents is troubled further by an increase in the number of law enforcement crackdowns against undocumented migrants. In other words, they are still not being treated as full-fledged workers. Many migrant workers and their advocates in Korean civil society argue that the EPS is not a reasonable solution to the problems that migrant workers face. They insist that only a Labour Permit System (LPS) will solve the problem. Most European countries, such as France, Germany, and Switzerland, have introduced a Labour Permit System. These allow foreign workers to move freely from one workplace to another (<http://www.eps.go.kr>).

More than one year has passed since the EPS was introduced and the voices of migrant workers are becoming louder, insisting that EPS has not changed their marginal experiences at all and that their human and labour rights are under constant threat.

Korean Dreams, Korean Miseries

Since the 1998 Asian economic crisis, the Korean government has been under pressure to make changes that would make its labour market more flexible. These pressures come from two sources, internal and external. Externally, creditor countries, represented by the IMF, advise that future economic growth depends on reducing the rigidity of the system so that companies

can restructure more easily when necessary. Internally, Korea's own economic and political elite has been convinced of the correctness of this path. The result has been an increase in instability for all Korean workers.

Migrant workers, meanwhile, stay in the same, unattractive workplaces but endure a negative trickle down effect as the situation worsens for Koreans. After the crisis, many migrant workers left Korea with a variety of disappointments, such as unpaid salaries or the unpleasant memories of maltreatment from their former Korean employers. The so-called Korean dream temporarily shattered, seemingly, due to the financial meltdown experienced by the country. However, and more importantly, migrant workers have emphasized the negative experiences stemming from unfair treatment in Korean workplaces, and that this tends to originate from their cultural distance from Koreans.

The policies addressed above have not adequately reflected the concerns about the marginalized experiences of the workers and their negative effects. Some academic research, however, has captured the experiences of migrant workers in Korea and the unequal global/local networks embedded in migrant work. These researchers have tried to show the spectrum of the workers' marginalized experiences (see Kang, 1996; Lee, 1994; Lee, 1997; Seol, 1996, 1999). This important body of work shows the variety of discriminative experiences migrant workers in Korea face. It also illustrates the effects of the treatment workers receive which, in many cases, amount to what I refer to as "de-skilling," where previous experience and education are ignored and rendered worthless.

The foremost difference that migrant workers possess which serves as the primary reason for discrimination is their non-citizen status. These workers are often excluded from many protection schemes that are in place for the well-being of workers. Even though migrant workers in Korea comprise a significant part of Korean industry, the idea that migrant workers

are not part of the national workforce is prevalent among Koreans. Instead, they are seen as temporary relief. With 99% of its population Korean, the country can fairly be called homogenous. Even the remainder is a recent phenomenon, caused by the influx of migrant workers and language instructors in the last decade.

Seol (2004) analyzes the basic principles of the EPS policy and finds that “avoiding disruption of industrial restructuring” is one of its key principles. In other words, this principle denotes that “foreign labour should not disrupt the development of Korean economy and industry” (p. 205). What this shows is that Korea does not recognize migrant workers as full-fledged members of the economy. To most Koreans, there is nothing wrong with the current system, in which the nation-state defines the borders. People either belong to the territory or they do not. This may cause outsiders to be treated unfairly but concern for that has not yet reached the radar of many South Koreans.

However, jurisdictional logic does not fully consider the growing contribution of migrant workers to the Korean economy, a contribution which is borne out by statistics. Nor can it justify the reality that many migrant workers work in silence at low wages and under poor working conditions. There are countless stories of migrant workers, through their toil, saving small companies from bankruptcy in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis. Where is the reward for their sacrifice? But it is becoming more difficult to deny the importance of migrant workers to Korean industry, as many small and medium sized enterprises would simply fail without their input. They have been doing that work for well over a decade now, and it is clear that Koreans will not reassume the vacant jobs should all the migrant workers suddenly depart.

Poor working conditions not only mean underpayment or being tasked work that is beneath one's qualification. Poor working conditions also means demeaning treatment: insults, discrimination and even violence, much of which is due to cultural differences. Migrant workers

are regarded as cultural “others” in Korea and are often described as docile people who do not require treatment with the full range of human dignity (Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea, 2001). But, because of their precarious situation in a foreign jurisdiction, migrant workers are often moved to compliance. They are unlikely to express their needs or speak up against unfair treatment so they often suffer in silence.

Resistance and Support from Civil Society

Cultural conflict is often considered the high price that migrant workers need to pay to stay in the country (JCMK, 2001; Seol, 1996, 1999). Conflict between migrant workers and Korean society can arise whenever migrant workers claim their rights. The following example is emblematic. The speaker, Al Mamun Sec, is a worker from Bangladesh who is now involved in the Migrant Workers’ Trade Union (MTU). He worked diligently but in silence for three and a half years before realizing that he needed to do something more:

I majored in business in university and my suggestions on how to increase work efficiency contributed positively to the factory here. I worked with four Koreans. Our team leader was 38 years old and I was as close to him as he is my father, even though I think he is not a good worker. One day, when we were really struggling with our workload, he came over to us foreign workers and started an argument. He asked us why we were working so hard and made some comment about pay. I got really angry and ended up talking back to him. Suddenly, he got insane and tried to kill me with a hammer. I had to quit the factory. That incident let me to realize that I want to live like a human being (Ohmynews, March 8, 2004).

This example shows one aspect of the Korean workplace. When multiple cultures coexist within it, conflict can occur. It is natural for workers to have difficulty functioning as full-fledged workers, making use of their skills and developing new ones.

It did not take long for the frequency of human rights violations to be noticed by Korean civil society. Civic groups in Korea have a long history of protest against military dictatorships that restricted their own human rights. They easily empathized with the marginalized position of migrant workers and quickly came to recognize the seriousness of the problem. That has put the issue on their political agenda. Many Korean activists have participated widely and intensively in various discussions, related research, sit-ins, and demonstrations. Consequently, civil society can take significant credit for the recent changes in the labour import system.

Support for migrant worker causes from Korean civil society has come in a number of ways. First, academic and activist research regarding migrant workers in Korea has contributed to raise the discussion on extending human rights to migrant workers. This has helped elicit positive changes in policies regarding migrant workers. Some researchers have understood that integrating migrant workers into the greater society has made new challenges for the society. While academics discuss the influx of migrant workers and their experiences in a range of academic fields (e.g., sociology, economics, and human rights studies), activists focus on various cases of rights infringement as evidence of the need to improve the system. Overall, research by academics and activists demonstrates increased attention towards the workers and the relationships that Korean people have made with them.

Second, civil action groups have taken a variety of steps to inform Koreans and policymakers about who migrant workers are, what marginalized conditions they face, and how to actively reform the system. Broadcast media has often captured the efforts by civil society groups and aired a variety of programs which reflect the oppression of workers and the pervasive xenophobia of Koreans. Media exposure has brought Korea-wide sympathy and some consensus on the need for improved policies and regulations to accommodate the needs of both Korean industry and migrant workers.

Activists in civil society have understood this issue critically and have contributed to mobilize and support political representation for migrant workers, which eventually elicited the introduction of the EPS. The Joint Committee of Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK)³ and the Migrants' Trade Union (MTU) are examples of influential political organizations which have embraced migrant workers who are determined to confront the inappropriate and oppressive systems and regulations regarding the use of the foreign workforce. JCMK is a cluster of NGOs which supports the human and labour rights of migrant workers in Korea. It has been influential in mobilizing migrant workers, supporting Korean activists, and directing public opinion. The MTU, the first labour union of migrant workers in Korea, existed in a couple of other organizational forms and was finally established on April 24th, 2005. Its primary goal was to obtain full amnesty for undocumented workers. However, the MTU has faced serious barriers because it is not recognized by the Korean government and is still regarded as an illegal organization. These political organizations criticized the ITP as "a system of modern slavery" and have protested against it (Seol & Han, 2004). Their tactics include frequent sit-ins, street demonstrations and help for undocumented workers to evade arrest.

However, not everyone sympathizes with the migrant workers. Some contingents of low-skilled Korean workers oppose the expansion of rights for migrant workers because they are often in competition for jobs. There are also some civil organizations which campaign against

³ The name of this organization was later changed to Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK) by the amendment of the articles of the committee in 2005. This implies the weakening identity of the committee to represent migrant workers and their supporters after the serious debates among the allied organizations due to the different opinions on the government bill of EPS. This caused the withdrawal of some allies from the committee and formed ETU. It was significant that the committee was reduced as a group of supporters who provide social service within the boundary of the law.

migrant workers and push for their deportation (see <http://www.njustice.org>). Major labour unions support migrant workers in principle but, when pressed, still place the interests of Korean workers first. Additionally, accident and crime rates related to foreigners, including migrant workers, are increasing and this puts a strain on the movement to protect and promote their rights.

World Issue, Local Impact

There are two significant reasons why Korea will continue to need a foreign workforce. First, Korea needs to maintain the labour import practice because of its rapidly aging population. According to the Korean National Statistical Office (2005), Korea has the fastest aging society in the OECD. And, according to statistics, Korea has reached what is known as a super-aged society at an unprecedented pace. As such, the workforce will shrink. Since this has become apparent, several academic studies have advocated the introduction of a formal immigration policy (e.g., Korea Development Institute, 2003).

Second, Koreans remain disinterested in 3-D jobs. Therefore, recruitment of national citizen workers in those areas is low and will likely continue to be low. In his study of migrant workers in Korea, Seol (1999) calls this phenomenon a “complementary relationship” between Korean workers and migrants. He also suggests the relationship will continue. These two reasons alone provide a powerful economic rationale for listening to the voices of migrant workers and developing improved policies to create a more hospitable environment for them.

The influx of migrant workers has created a new situation for Korea and it is clear that the country is in the very initial stages of multiculturalism. With Korean workplaces accommodating more and more people from other countries, the role of Korean society to understand the diversity, and the difference these workers bring, becomes increasingly important. Some scholars discuss this in their research and suggest that Korea actively utilize

this chance to deepen the consolidation of democratic society and foster a better sense of pluralism or globalism in which many different groups of people can live in harmony.

Migrant Workers as Adult/Lifelong Learners

There are several reasons why the discussion about migrant workers in Korea deserves more attention. First, they will spend a substantial portion of their adult lives in Korea. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Korea to pay more attention to their issues of health, security and personal development. Second, these workers have made a significant contribution to Korean industries; they should be regarded as a reliable portion of the country's workforce. Rather than regarding them as 'disposable' foreigners, it is more beneficial to regard these workers as an ongoing workforce and to think seriously about long-term policy for their development as workers.

As I described above, migrant workers in Korea have been positioned in a unique work context, in which both global challenges and local conflicts are reflected in their lives. They are a collective social group within Korean society whose disadvantaged position has not been considered enough in Korean policy. If we only look at them as a set of individuals who suffer in Korean society due to their own decision or desire to increase their income, we may not be able to see the ways in which their oppression is systematically, structurally and institutionally exercised. Young (1990) points out the risks of taking an individualist approach, namely that it causes us to end up obscuring oppression. Rather, migrant workers in Korea should be seen as a group of workers who collectively confront the local-global tensions throughout their work in Korea, from the time of entry to the time of their next move, be it home or to another country.

Adopting the same logic, this research regards migrant workers in Korea not as individuals but as adult learners who belong to a social collective that exists within Korean society. That group's learning experiences should be analyzed in relation to their structural

conditions of learning. Regardless of their personal or collective educational goals, they often meet challenges and in many cases are unsupported due to the aforementioned differences with the host culture.

The educational needs of migrant workers are largely ignored by the host society, even though the active learning of the workers may enhance the productivity and competency of the country's entire labour force. While there is previous research which deals with the experiences of migrant workers in the workplace and, more broadly, in society, there has been no single piece of research that analyzes the learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea from various formal and informal learning activities. Several previous studies have shown migrant workers as active political and social agents (see Kang, 1996; Lee, 1997; Seol, 1996, 1999) who may conduct active learning in all facets of their lives in Korea. Even though these studies do not focus on the learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea per se, they generally show the circumstances in which these workers have formed self-help groups, shared their experiences with other workers, learned the Korean language and culture to be productive workers, and at the same time allied themselves with Korean or international NGOs to resist unfair work practices, which are all important scenes of learning.

There are two primary reasons for this dearth of research. First, in the context of the value-laden belief that learning is for the knowledge-producing sector of the labour force, migrant workers are not considered adult learners. Their potential as competent workers is discounted because they are non-knowledge workers, while their utility as low-skilled foreign labourers is highlighted, thus reproducing their victimized and helpless image. The support they do receive is often addressed as beneficence toward a helpless group of people. What is required is a comprehensive analysis of the structure of migratory labour processes in which the workers are socially constructed as low-skilled, becoming helpless in a foreign locale. This is a social

judgment, the effect of which is to prevent migrant workers from being defined as adult learners who need to learn continuously to update appropriate skills and knowledge as workers in this fast-changing world.

Second, the view of migrant workers as not requiring life-long learning opportunities also reflects the view that entitlements to adult learning are only available to the people who belong to the space within the boundaries of a nation state. Migrant workers thus stay outside of the lifelong learning considerations of the country where they reside temporarily. Under this state-centric view, the learning experiences of the workers are marginalized and workers are unable to gain and retain employment or economic betterment, personal fulfillment and social well-being, all of which are described as meaningful outcomes of lifelong learning in the dominant discourses (Delors, 1996; OECD, 1996, 1997; Government of Canada, 2001). Their transnational existence is too ambiguous to be encouraged to foster continuous learning and the dominant discourses of lifelong learning are silent on its relevance for these socially marginalized workers who provide their labour transnationally. Many migrant workers in Korea, as well as other parts of the world, therefore have fewer learning opportunities due to an inappropriate understanding on their transnational status.

In summary, this absence of research on the learning experiences of migrant workers suggests that migrant workers are people who become situated at the bottom of the hierarchical world of work by crossing borders and therefore no further development as contemporary workers is necessary. This view is so commonplace that it should bring adult education scholars to two obvious questions: who are the adult learners who need to be treated as other contemporary workers?; And, are migrant workers adult learners, too? For migrant workers, the research has so far not provided good answers. Very little is known due to a lack of research

about the tangible learning experiences of these workers whose life circumstances are situated at the interstices of the current local and global context.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to better understand the nature of learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea, who are low-skilled, non-citizen, contract-based foreign workers. The academic goal is to make a contribution to expand the notion of lifelong learning that meaningfully includes these transnational adult learners. A major research question in this research is therefore: how do the workers' migratory identities impact lifelong learning experiences? Based on this question, this research addresses the following sub-research questions:

- What characterizes the learning experiences of the workers, and how and why are these learning experiences sustained in this specific context of work?
 - ◆ What types of activities are regarded as learning activities for migrant workers in Korea, including formal, non-formal and informal?
 - ◆ Why do they participate in these activities?
 - ◆ What methods of learning do they choose?
 - ◆ What kind of experiences do they have within these activities?
 - ◆ What understandings do the learning providers have towards the workers?
 - ◆ How are the understandings of the learning providers linked to those of the migrant workers?
- Given that migrant workers in Korea are positioned differently—in terms of citizenship, class, race/ethnicity and gender—how do these migratory identities impact their learning experience?
- What do the experiences and perspectives revealed in this research tell us about the enhancement of lifelong learning practice in Korea or elsewhere in the world where migrant workers toil?

Significance of the Study

The value of this research identifying the migrant workers in Korea as adult, lifelong learners contrasts with the typical approach of research today, which is to view them simply as workers in danger, victims of human rights infringement, or foreigners who add little to the national economy. This research is significant for the following reasons:

First, this research aims to make visible the learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea and to use that evidence to claim a space for active learning for them in this fast-changing world of work. By revealing migrant workers as important actors and participants in adult education and training, I argue that the contemporary migrant worker has been disenfranchised by systemic forces and that this dangerous global “disjuncture” is the key area that contemporary adult educators should be concerned about. Second, for learning providers who wish to undertake responsive approaches to the needs of these migrant workers and the civil society to which they belong, this research can provide a discussion of the frameworks necessary to develop learning activities in ways that can support the workers. Third, this research aims to provide an enhanced understanding of the learning processes of migrant workers who have become increasingly important to Korean society and its economy. Therefore, it will assist policy-makers at a general level to respond to the learning needs that have been uncovered. This is critical for Korea in its journey towards a more democratic, multicultural society. Fourth, an understanding of the migrant workers who live in Korean communities may offer Koreans an opportunity to know better who these people are and provide them both with opportunities to learn how to live together in this global era (Delors, 1996). This is one of the foremost aims of adult education.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter Two, I explore relevant literature to support my theoretical approach to this research. This chapter outlines citizenship theories, the paradigm of lifelong learning, and critical/feminist pedagogy. In Chapter Three, I describe the research methodology used in this research. Chapter Four and Five detail the findings. Specifically, Chapter Four highlights the experiences of migrant workers while Chapter Five provides the views and opinions of learning providers. Chapter Six is the discussion, which focuses on the need for a transformed transnational feminist lifelong learning approach to the education and learning of migrant workers. Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation with a summary, conclusions and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and consider a corpus of relevant literature to help place in an appropriate theoretical context the dilemmas migrant workers face as adult learners who conduct learning transnationally. The arguments I will incorporate are, of necessity, multidisciplinary. They include the notion of differentiated citizenship in the global era, the meaning of lifelong learning, and critical/feminist pedagogy of adult learning.

First, I will discuss the overview of the current paradigm of lifelong learning which presents the heightened value of lifelong learning in this fast changing world. Next, I will move on to explore global citizenship theories and the feminist theory of citizenship to better understand migrant workers' membership in the current society. I will also show how the lifelong learning paradigm links to the labour of migrant workers, despite the fact that the paradigm, as it is currently understood, is not inclusive of those identities. Finally, in order to identify a conceptual lens to analyze the workers' learning experiences, the chapter will review critical and feminist adult learning theories that, while having different focuses, are organically related. While critical theory regarding adult learning broadly defines the migrant workers' conditions of learning, feminist pedagogy focuses on social, cultural, and economic relationships embedded in the settings of learning used by diverse groups of learners.

The Changing Politics of Lifelong Learning in an Era of Challenge

The first part of this section is used to explain the underlying themes upon which the current discourse of lifelong learning is based. The second part introduces a critique of lifelong learning, including its inability to support learning for migrant workers who make multiple moves and provide their labour transnationally. Lifelong learning is still the best way for people to prepare themselves for future changes in their environment. This notion functions as well

established convention, both inside of academia and out. Migrant workers, however, continue to be alienated from this dominant paradigm of learning.

Lifelong Learning in the Global Context

By the 1990s, lifelong learning was an accepted, mainstream concept that became a large-scale policy-and-practice issue (Grace, 2004). There is no shortage of academic research and government studies from a variety of nations supporting the importance of lifelong learning. International institutions like the OECD have also contributed reports as testimony. This great body of work uniformly promotes lifelong learning as the foundation for educational and training policy in this turbulent era (Rubenson, 2002).

In many publications and policy documents, lifelong learning is often addressed as a survival issue. It has become crucial “for persons to continue learning throughout their active working life, and even beyond” (ILO, 2000, p. 3). The formal education process that most people go through in their youth cannot handle the grave challenges people face today. Its importance has heightened due to the unprecedented changes such as globalization and the emergence of the knowledge economy. People are increasingly asked to conduct “purposeful learning” (ILO, 2000, p. 3), be this formal, non-formal or informal, to achieve the capabilities required by the contemporary world. Edwards (2000) addresses the purpose of lifelong learning displayed in many educational policies of various nations:

In recent years there have been significant developments in educational policy around the globe with the purpose of increasing and extending participation in the education and training of adults. In the context of globalisation and economic, social and technological changes, it is argued that individuals and communities can no longer rely on their initial education as sufficient to see them through a life time of economic and social participation. Providing opportunities for people to extend their initial education and training, and have greater opportunities for

updating or to develop new skills--to develop a culture or cultures of lifelong learning—is now a significant policy strategy or goal (p. 1).

According to the OECD (1996), there are three equally important aims for lifelong learning: promoting personal development, economic growth, and social cohesion. Personal development is attained “by focusing on and exploiting the active learning potential of the individual” (p. 87). Today, lifelong learning has a focus on the development of skills—not only occupational skills but also critical “cross-curricular skills” (p. 16)—such as inter-personal life skills which prepare people for the changing work environment and society’s value system.

Various other policy documents advise people to organize their learning coherently to gain relevant competence and enrich their lives (Delors, 1996; European Commission, 2001). Even though the literature focuses on skills development in relation to occupations, social and political abilities are also seen as important for the growth of active citizenship. Rubenson (2004) also points out that promoting active citizenship and employability is highlighted in many policy documents from various nations. These documents repeatedly emphasize “the need for joint involvement of the state, the market, and civil society to make these goals a reality” (Rubenson, 2004, p. 537). Lifelong learning, therefore, is sought to provide a greater diversity of flexible learning opportunities for one’s life.

Economic growth is also highly emphasized as the purpose of lifelong learning. Without doubt, this is clearly adopted in policy documents by leading organizations such as the OECD. Since the labour markets of OECD member countries are more flexible than ever, people are advised to prepare themselves to move in and out of jobs more easily by spending more time learning. The OECD emphasis on this signifies that nation-wide support and advocacy of learning is worthwhile for individuals and economies. The OECD has determined that lifelong learning is a means for unemployment prevention, job creation, and global competitiveness

(Cruikshank, 2004). In his work, Edwards (2000) addresses the urgent need to organize learning opportunities for individuals and the community so as to benefit their economic prosperity, as well as that of the nation state where the individual belongs.

Finally, experts agree that lifelong learning can effectively foster social cohesion, a factor which affects everyone. Instead of helping just the privileged few, lifelong learning programs that are encouraged for all can reduce social polarization and can provide a solid foundation for the democratic societies (OECD, 1996). Policies regarding education and learning are therefore advocated as a way of promoting this purpose. UNESCO (1996) is a long-time supporter of this aspect of lifelong learning. It is concerned about the numerous and vibrant challenges the future holds for everyone, calling it “one of the indispensable assets available to us in the pursuits which regularly bring into the fore the concern for equality, equity and, indeed, human reasonableness” (p. 22). UNESCO acknowledges that education is accused of being the cause of many different forms of exclusion but it also demonstrates that education can “create social links between individuals on the basis of shared references” (p. 53) and help restore cohesion:

Faced with the breakdown of social ties, education has to take on the difficult tasks of turning diversity into a constructive contributory factor of mutual understanding between individuals and groups. Its highest aim will then be to give everyone the means of playing an informed and active part as a citizen, which is something that cannot be fully achieved except within the framework of democratic societies (p. 54).

Bagnall (2000) takes this one step further, suggesting that:

...education of this sort would be directed not only to the transformation of individual understanding and cultural effectiveness and to redressing the cultural imbalances of power, privilege and wealth that underpin injustice, but also to

empowering all persons to engage actively in democratic governance and involvement (p. 29).

He emphasizes the need to facilitate the engagement of citizens who are marginalized or disadvantaged by society.

Problems with the lifelong learning paradigm

Critical scholars have investigated the parameters of lifelong learning and argued that the discussion on lifelong learning has mainly “enhanced market forces in areas of training and skill development” (Mojab, 2004, p. 533). Being used as a powerful learning mechanism for faster development, lifelong learning may easily fall into a neo-liberal mode that puts many groups of people at a disadvantage, which is far from the paradigm’s goal of achieving social cohesion. According to these scholars, there is evidence that very few learning policies also revisit unequal power relationships between elites and working classes.

According to Cruikshank (2004), there is a profound gap between the dominant lifelong learning discourse and the realities of workers in the world.

Today the rhetoric of lifelong learning speaks of global competitiveness while workers talk about survival in the workplace. The rhetoric talks about knowledge jobs while workers talk about call centres and flipping burgers. The rhetoric talks about skill training while workers say employers are not providing training, and lifelong learning has become a way to cull the herd. In this dim light, economic globalization has created unhealthy workplaces, disheartened workers, and weakened communities (p. 535).

According to Cruikshank, lifelong learning is visibly subjugated to the imperative of global capitalistic changes. It is often far from clear how social cohesion through lifelong

learning can be achieved when we see that policies make little impact on unequal educational outcomes.

Also, the dominant paradigm of lifelong learning contains a risk of commodification of education and learning. Bagnall (2000) suggests that lifelong learning may “emerge as a general commodification of persons, whereby individual value, self-esteem and self worth are measured by individual economic potential and contribution” (p. 21). Edwards also asserts that lifelong learning within the subject of economies may obliterate quality of life issues that stay away from economic terrain. These scholars call this trend of lifelong learning vocationalism, credentialism or economic determinism, and that it is counterproductive to the goals of lifelong learning.

A third example is the discourse of learning that emphasizes individualized learning. This stream advises individuals to take responsibility for constructing their own learning pathways and sustaining their own employability. The tenets of this line of thinking provide a rationale for cutting back on income security programmes and diverting funds into retraining programmes (Cruikshank, 2004). In this way, social cohesion is potentially set back instead of enhanced. Bagnall (2000) criticizes the current individual initiative, citing a substantial lack of critical concern and social vision. Nor, according to him, does it have any commitment to social justice or equity. Cruikshank (2002) investigates lifelong learning in Canada and concludes that lifelong learning is playing a critical role in the increasing trend of wealth polarization. Instead of improving the quality of life for all citizens, lifelong learning may deepen social inequality by defining learning as only a responsibility of the individuals in society who are capable of affording it.

Migrant Workers as Transnational Lifelong Learners

The lack of clarity of the dominant paradigm of lifelong learning is highlighted by its inability to help the groups of people who are subjected to transnationalization. In her study of the impact of war and displacement on Kurdish women's learning, Mojab (2004) emphasizes the need to look at the challenges and limitations of the current dominant paradigm of lifelong learning. According to her, Kurdish women use social and collective learning tools to counter the recent Islamophobia, nationalism, patriarchy, and racism in Europe and these have not been well received by politicians and funding agencies.

Similarly, migrant workers also need to be conceptualized as transnational learners. In reality, the majority of migrant workers contribute their labour to advanced countries where lifelong learning is highly encouraged but where they face a greater risk of being labelled as disposable labourers (Macklin, 1992) who do not need continuous learning. The contemporary lifelong learning discourse is not strongly characterized by any of the learning experiences of these people. On the contrary, the dominant paradigm envisages model workers in the 21st century (Brown, Green, & Lauder, 2001) as the workers who are not impacted by territorial boundaries. However, the education and training these migrant workers received previously are not appreciated for many reasons and their need for continuous learning to update skills and knowledge is typically discouraged inside the country where they currently live and work. For example, Filipino workers in Canada experience deskilling and find themselves degraded as non-competent workers, a fact they have collectively protested against (Philippine Women Centre of BC, 2005). Labelling them as workers who are engaged in work where learning opportunities are not necessary seriously accelerates the stagnancy of migrant workers.

This presents a critical need to open up space for dialogue on the right to lifelong learning for all. Despite the existence of holistic attitudes toward learning, many of which

encourage human beings to live together to make a better world (e.g. Delors, 1996), the lifelong learning apparatus for actual facilitation is based on national systems which create multiple boundaries with citizenship, race, culture, and gender that keep migrant workers out. The notion of lifelong learning needs to be attentive to the needs of migrant workers who struggle between multiple borders where conflicting views exist on their entity as humans, adults, and competent workers.

Citizenship in the Global Era

This section discusses the configuration of migrant workers' membership in the global context with the legitimate recognition of difference. The point of departure is set by the theory of global citizenship. In general, it shows that the membership of migrant workers is becoming increasingly blurred in this fast-changing era by paying attention to the transnational people who have situated themselves at spaces which, in the current global context, the simplistic Westphalian nation-state system cannot explain. The discussion then links critical feminist approaches toward differentiated citizenship, which argue on behalf of migrant workers for their group-specific membership, rights, and responsibilities within the host society in which they reside.

Citizenship and Migrant Workers

Migrant workers are a group of people whose tenuous membership to the society in which they reside requires complex conceptualization. The theory of global citizenship represents the most promising transnational membership theory. It uses the activities of migrant workers undertaken between multiple societies to help us position them as full-fledged members of the global society.

Migrant workers are not only defined as people of a marginalized social group in a single society, but as "cross-borderers" who are situated somewhere between the lines. Migrant

workers have particular characteristics which are different from those of other social groups in the society to which they belong. In previous research, migrant workers have often been at the centre of the debates of others because, as Castles and Davidson (2000) point out, the historical origin of the mobility of people was “colonialism and industrialization” (p. 9). They find the evidence that this “colonized other” is the origin and the essence of the ethnic heterogeneity in many European and North American countries. Even migrant workers who became citizens of these countries, are still “irreducible others” and suffer various forms of discrimination (Bannerji, 2000).

Migrant workers who possess citizenship status are similarly situated in a vague area within a sovereign state, along with other marginalized citizen groups. Despite citizenship, they are often easily identifiable as an ‘other.’ Their lives, therefore, may in many ways be as severe as other marginalized social groups. But when migrant workers are non-citizens, the risks multiply because they are not afforded the protection of the nation’s laws and regulations that people of citizenship are entitled. Castles and Davidson also argue against the naïve ideal that everybody can belong equally in a democratic society:

The democratic state needs the participation of all its members: everybody is meant to belong. The reality has always been somewhat different. Most nation-states have had groups on their territory not considered capable of belonging, and therefore either denied citizenship or alternatively forced to go through a process of cultural assimilation in order to belong. Moreover, even those with formal membership have often been denied some of the right vital to citizenship, so that they have not fully belonged. Discrimination based on class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion and other criteria has always meant that some people could not be full citizens (p. vii).

In the case of migrant workers who are not endowed with formal citizenship, they are destined to have the fate of extreme others. The increased migratory movements of workers in

the current world have produced many differing types of migrant work which mainly do not require or bestow citizenship. This type of migrant recruitment varies from Mexican workers in agricultural farms and plants in the United States (Castles, 2000), guest workers in advanced European countries (Castles, 2000; Sassen, 1998, 1999; Soysal, 1994), oil-rich countries' use of low-skilled manual workers for the development of their countries' infrastructure (United Nations, 2003), the trainee worker system in Korea (Kang, 1996; Seol, 1999; United Nations, 2003) and Japan (Komai, 1995; United Nations, 2003), to the conditional domestic labour program in Canada (Blomely & Pratt, 2001; Bakan & Stasiulis 1994, 1997).

A citizen is someone who belongs to one nation-state only. Their rights and obligations are defined and balanced within the political community (Soysal, 1994; Castles & Davidson, 2000). Therefore, citizenship of a single nation-state often means a "territorial sovereignty" (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994, 1997) or "sufficient cultural homogeneity" (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. vii), both of which have substantial power to exclude many people as others. Therefore, survival as a decent human being is difficult for migrant workers who fail to possess citizenship or the host society's cultural attributes.

Global Citizenship and Migrant Workers

Finding that the current citizenship framework has been inadequately derived from the old notion of membership, Castles and Davidson (2000) advocate extending the concept of "open and flexible belonging" (p. viii) to migrant workers. This would replace the compulsion to accept certain cultural norms. They argue that citizenship should be conferred by residence, or other significant links—such as "origin in the territory, family bonds, economic involvement or cultural participation" (p. viii). They argue that this flexible transnational and multicultural citizenship can best incorporate migrant workers into the place where they work and live.

The logic of global capitalism is intensifying human mobility ever more swiftly. This puts migrant workers in a new context, which is also becoming ever more precarious. Notions of global citizenship emphasize differentiated understandings about governance and memberships in this new era. Held (1999) suggests we view globalization not as new, but rather as an enormous change process that is not comparable to previous worldwide changes due to the extensiveness of networks of relations and connections between people, the intensity of flows and levels of activities within these networks, and the impact of these phenomena on bounded communities.

Despite dramatic advances facilitating the rapid flow of capital, information, products, and labour, the citizenship framework is still “a juridical relationship between an individual and a single nation-state” (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997, p. 113). Migrant workers, then, represent a serious gap between the phenomenon of human mobility and this fixed membership of a nation-state. It is within this context that their work situations become more complex and difficult.

For migrant workers, not being a member translates into high susceptibility to human rights abuses. According to Castles (2000), the more mobile migrant workers become, the graver the encroachment on their human rights. Despite the notion that human rights are generally considered more important than civil, social and political rights (Sassen, 1998), and accordingly should be respected regardless of other considerations, the real space allowed for migrant workers in a current capitalist nation-state is narrow. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is advocated by supranational institutions like the United Nations, but this advocacy is often neglected or minimally maintained by nation-states inside their own borders. Moreover, the boundary of human rights is blurred because they are consequentially intertwined with civil, social and political rights in the life-world space.

The unequal power relationship between labour-sending and labour-receiving countries has resulted in push-pull factors that accelerate the movement of workers from less-developed nations to advanced economies. In the global marketplace, the implicit message many migrant workers likely receive is that they will not be protected. Therefore, migration studies now challenge the existing human risks originating from the problems caused by the nation-state model (Castles, 2000) and its uniform conception of citizenship. Growing migration, and the serious human risks involved, have made migration studies move forward to increasingly cross-disciplinary and international discussions of migrant workers (Cohen, 1995) and their rights in both the national and “transnational” spaces they occupy. Unlike national space, transnational space is linked with life circumstances which are situated at the interstices of countries and societies.

In terms of the transnational space, there is a growing number of studies regarding activities undertaken by people who are transnationally situated due to migration. Migrants sustain their daily activities and forge multifaceted social, economic, and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (Basch et al, 1994). Through these multiple activities and relations, transnational social fields are created between national borders. The concept of transnational space that migrants sustain can challenge existing models of immigrant assimilation (Portes, 2001) and “provide a new perspective on contemporary migratory movements” (p.186). Therefore, this calls attention to the activities that migrants undertake to sustain themselves. For example, Evans (2000) points out that many transnational activities are initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors across national borders who fight against marginalization. He calls this “grassroots transnationalism.” However, the meaningfulness of these transnational activities is barely recognized under the current structure of nation-states.

The notion of global citizenship explains the political significance of migration and can recognize the complex relationships and activities that contemporary migrant workers have among many places at the same time. It does this by challenging the uniform notion of citizenship that fails to accommodate the many and diverse groups people around the world who are at risk of falling through the cracks created by various globalizing forces. Global citizenship originates from the increasing numbers of global issues which are responsible for these gaps. This takes many forms. Williams (2002) asks, "How can we try to ameliorate the problems such a system generates in areas like human rights, the environment, development and political freedom?" (p. 43). His question aptly captures the problem that the current world faces. The migration issue is situated at the centre. His suggestion is a form of global citizenship under which every nation-state is a citizen of the international community. Good international citizenship, as a form of global citizenship, emphasizes an ethic that transcends the international law and politics inherent in the existing system of nation-states:

Good international citizenship may thus appeal to advocates of global citizenship because it offers both a method of promoting progress on issues like human rights that are often linked to GC and because it enables the holding of states to account as being themselves citizens of an international community and thus owing certain duties and bearing certain obligations (p. 42).

This can turn into an improved context for human betterment, particularly for migrant workers whose boundary of rights becomes increasingly ambiguous by their border crossing actions. Some scholars propose a similar thread of argument. For example, in an article on current immigration policies, Ottonelli (2002) observes the "denial of legal personality" (p. 231) to undocumented migrant workers in the world. According to her, the coercion of workers is grounded in the very framework of nation-based citizenship. She argues that such exclusion is

implicitly recognized and acceded to by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “where no mention is made of the freedom of movement into a country from another country” (p. 231).

As indicated above, the diverse approaches on global citizenship broadly concern governance and membership, which, when taken together, raise a series of questions about the boundary of rights, activities conducted at borders, anti-oppressive participation of a certain group of people, and justice regarding differences in the power relations among social groups all over the world, both at the nation-state and global levels. The discussion of global citizenship has significance for the conceptualization of migrant workers as constituents in societies, both local and global. They are a group of people who need to live at the interstices between states and, thus, are deprived the typical range of rights entitled to citizens. Some form of citizenship must be extended to them to facilitate their activities and exercise their rights.

Valuing the Difference: Feminist Arguments on Citizenship

Feminists take a variety of approaches towards what is known as differentiated citizenship. This section introduces these and links them to the previous argument of global citizenship as an appropriate system of membership in today’s world. I argue that feminist approaches to citizenship strengthen the argument that migrant workers deserve a form membership that fits both their local and global context of work, and their differences which separate them from the host society, such as class, race, and gender.

The arguments supporting differentiated citizenship are useful to move the discussion about migrant workers beyond the limits of global citizenship, which is unable to completely explain what is needed to facilitate full societal membership for marginalized groups who are labeled different. Overall, by framing diverse social groups of people as active citizens in a civil society, feminist arguments examine the root causes of oppression and argue for group-specific rights as a critical element of a working notion of differentiated citizenship.

Universal vs. differing membership

Citizenship theories comprise an active space for academics to argue the merits of differing conceptions of participation and justice. Feminist arguments on differentiated citizenship start from the clear awareness that a universal citizenship framework does not promote or support the lived experiences of many marginalized groups of people in a society. Some scholars who argue in favour of differing approaches to the citizenship framework point out that a universal citizenship framework does not actively accommodate the voices of diverse groups of citizens, including migrant workers in the world. It is said that if the membership of an individual is decided by the notion of formal citizenship, then he or she is a citizen of a single nation-state who accordingly possesses a range of civil, social and political rights. This is the essence of Marshallian citizenship (Marshall, 1949, quoted in Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). The notion of Marshallian citizenship is a universal conception of the citizenship framework which ensures equal rights are extended to all members. Such rights are balanced by a series of obligations the rights-bearers have toward the community.

While the Marshallian notion of citizenship has been pervasive for several decades, there have also been dissenting voices which argue that it should be reconsidered (Lister, 1997). In particular, political scientists working from a critical perspective have contested it by their finding that, in most nation-states, there are many individuals and social groups whose citizenship does not function equally with other groups. The reason for their inability to exercise full membership and rights, which are enshrined within citizenship, is typically the source of their difference from the dominant groups. This difference, which is often interpreted as a basis for discrimination, includes class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion and a variety of other factors (Young, 1990; Lister, 1997; Turner 2001).

Many critical political theorists cite discrimination and difference as the failure of the current universal citizenship framework. According to Turner (2001), for example, these failures have originated from Marshall. Turner points out two distinct drawbacks of Marshallian citizenship. First, the theory treats citizenship “as a uniform concept and does not attempt to differentiate types of citizenship” (p. 191). Second, Marshall assumed a heterogeneous society where “culture and ethnicity are not important when compared to social class division” (p. 191). Despite having equally endowed citizenship, citizens are perceived and treated differently. This universal notion of citizenship, which does not appreciate their different social, historical, and cultural relations with others, cannot identify their suffering.

Arguments of Differentiated citizenship

Using the politics of difference, feminist scholars track down the origins of oppression and domination. The discussion of differentiated citizenship is based on diverse but shared arguments that propose a system of differentiated forms of citizenship to accommodate the different voices of differently situated social groups within a society. Their arguments emphasize the need for changes in social relations and political institutions along with the changes in understanding.

Lister (1997) suggests a “feminist synthesis of rights and participatory approaches” (p. 28) be incorporated into citizenship. She argues that rights and participation are exercised differently because of the exclusionary power of the universal notion of citizenship. Another set of arguments criticizes the failure of citizenship by pointing to the liberal democratic notion of extending equal rights to all. Lister argues that “liberal formulation of free and equal rights-bearing citizens” (p. 30) is illusory. She also contends that the republican notion of political participation of all is restricted for many groups because some groups are actually denied equal

participation. For example, women's caring work does not have the same value that wage-work has in the exclusionary public sphere because it is often labelled private (Fraser, 1994).

Participation in the public sphere includes the enabling conception of justice. This notion of justice concerns the degree to which a society contains and supports the institutional conditions necessary for the realization of the value of "developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience, and participating in determining one's action and the conditions of one's action" (Young, 1990, p. 37). The concept of participation of social groups and the public sphere where participation is made are closely linked and practiced simultaneously. Habermas (1987) uses the term public sphere to conceptualize the space where citizens discuss and negotiate their political participation over the matters which influence their lives. Participation in the public sphere is an active engagement in the "decision-making of all aspects of institutional organizations, actions, practices and habits insofar as they are involved in these" (Young, 1990, p. 9). Encouraging people or groups of people to participate in decision-making will provide individuals or groups of people with a fair chance to develop capacities to represent their needs in democratic and differentiated ways, an important feature that effective citizenship should accommodate.

However, Habermas's public sphere is contested terrain. Fraser (1997) describes the idea as "a body of private persons assembled to discuss matters of public concern or common interest" (p. 72) and argues this is unlikely. On the contrary, Fraser points out that the public sphere becomes the domain of dominant groups whose ideologies easily label others as private and push them to the periphery. This is what happens to domestic work, which is labelled private and evaluated as less important than wage-labour. It then becomes invisible in the democratic public sphere. In this insidious process, some groups of people are denied entry into the sphere even after formally being acknowledged as participants. The "interests, views and

topics of some are de-legitimated,” (p. 88) and this process is often taken for granted due to the power imbalance between men and women.

As a contested terrain where power relations are played, society is already highly stratified; it has even become more so under the recent global capitalist regime. It has acted as the single, exclusively official space of discourse for all participants who are involved in the society. In this singular space, however, people are stratified, ranked, and evaluated by power as valuable or valueless by the dominant interests of some groups which occupy the public sphere as their own. Young (1990) also points out that “oppression is systemic constraints on groups that are not necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant” (p. 41). There are no visible oppressors in most societies in the world. The inequality we see in our society is not a result of the intentions of someone or some groups of people. Instead, it is a result of unequal structural relations embedded in society, be it at the local or global level.

To replace this, Fraser suggests the tenable concept of inclusive public spheres where multiple publics exist for different interests and issues to be spoken for by their own voices. Fraser (1997) asks: under the conditions of social, cultural, and economic inequality among people, would a single, comprehensive homogeneous space of discourse be preferable to all people in the society to which they belong? She argues that multiple public spheres are needed to prevent any type of domination by some groups’ holding all the power. The need for “subaltern counterpublics” (p. 82) is asserted for making healthy tensions with dominant groups. The idea of multiple public spheres where many representations of individual and collective needs are considered equally legitimate, is validated by initiating a discussion of an open space where each individual and group representation has an equal chance to be represented and negotiated and to compete. A plurality of public arenas of discourse in which various groups can

stay safe and participate actively with their diverse values and rhetoric is a societal model I presume to be just, as well as democratic and dynamic.

Fraser's argument on multiple public spheres is coherently linked to the flourishing arguments on differentiated citizenship, in that both arguments have the same focus on making a just society. Mouffe (1995) suggests that an inclusive notion of citizenship should combine these historical notions of citizenship status and participation in realistic ways. Therefore, differentiated citizenship means various forms of differing citizenship that support the genuinely equal participation of all. Similarly, Lister (1997) provides the notion of "differentiated universalism" (p. 42), which is the way that citizenship can be inclusive of the different politics of different groups.

Young (1989) also criticizes the universal notion of citizenship, questioning why formal citizenship is exercised discriminatorily. She asks, "why are some privileged and some not?" (p. 251). She argues for inclusion in a democratic society and suggests that the politics of different social groups reflects their structural relations within a social, economic, and cultural context, and these are not purely a cultural matter. Therefore, she conceptualizes social justice with the politics of difference:

Group difference is both an inevitable and a desirable aspect of modern social process. Social justice requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression (1990, p. 47).

A series of feminist arguments on the demand for differentiated citizenship have brought a serious challenge to the existing citizenship framework because they challenge the "orthodox view of citizenship" (Kymlica & Norman, 1994, p. 370) which, by definition, is that everybody has equal rights under the law.

Differentiated Citizenship and Migrant Workers

Young (1990) defines a social group as “a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life” (p. 43). She argues:

Group meaning partially constitutes people's identities in terms of cultural forms, social situation and history that group members know as theirs because these meanings have been either forced upon them or forged by them or both. (p. 44)

Following Young, I identify migrant workers as a social group. This is in contrast to a tendency to essentialize them as a group with a fixed identity. There are two reasons to make this distinction. First, migrant workers make social relations as a collective group with other groups of people in the society where they live. In many cases, migrant-receiving countries import workers from various sending countries. Accordingly, migrant workers may use different languages, follow different customs, and have different cultural features such as religion. However, by being socially situated as migrant workers in a society, they are endowed with a socially collective identity which demarcates their social position in the society where they live and work.

Second, living as migrant workers is a social process that forces migrant workers to undergo the differentiating processes which are distinctive from those of any other group of people in the society. As a result of these processes, they are asked to accept multiple group identifications, most of which signify the conditions of unequal social relationships with others. Therefore, migrant workers are neither a homogeneous group of workers, nor an aggregate of millions of suffering foreign individuals.

The membership of migrant workers can be discussed in relation to the established institutional condition for a social group and is linked to the various arguments regarding participation in the public sphere by various social groups, and alternative arguments about the

citizenship of different social groups. It will be valuable for scholars to explore ways to renew or improve civil society which may help to foster improvements in everyone's life that can be sustained in the current fast-paced global world.

Citizenship is not the only basis of discrimination for migrant workers. Bakan and Stasiulis (1994, 1997) research conditional domestic migrant workers in Canada and argue that these workers experience "a spectrum of variable rights and denial of rights" by conditions of "global capitalism, class exploitation, racism and sexism" (1997, p. 114). Arguably, the dominant citizenship discourse is inherently nationalistic and the rights of the workers are inscribed in the laws and regulations of the nation-state (Soysal, 1994). Many studies, however, show this is only one out of many reasons why migrant workers tend to remain outside the main group as 'others' (Blomley & Pratt, 2001; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994, 1997). As indicated in these cases, migrant domestic workers are subject to various types of oppressive practices such as economic exploitation and cultural misunderstanding which result in a broad spectrum of discrimination, while the boundary of their rights is often blurred. Migrant workers may experience exploitation and misunderstanding due to the inequality of their location at the border and their clash with socially, culturally, and politically constructed norms.

Critical Theories in Adult Learning/Feminist Pedagogies

There are two theories within the field of adult education that help me conceptualize the learning experiences of migrant workers in their macro and micro contexts. First, the critical theories of adult learning, mainly contribute to a reiteration of the social meaning of adult education and its implications in the current turbulent world. Second, feminist pedagogy draws attention to micro level factors of difference and discrimination, such as gender, race, and ethnicity, which influence the learning experiences of migrant workers.

Critical Theories Impacted in Adult Learning

Critical pedagogy applied to adult learning emphasizes that learning is a social process in which people enhance their individual and collective autonomy. Critical theories argue that the communicative efforts of human beings can influence the decision-making processes of the system. Adopting this logic, critical scholars in adult education argue that learning by active human beings can be a counterforce to the structural marginalization of human beings, and that everyday settings of learning can be a “countersystem” (Feagin, 2001). Therefore, enhancing this ability or resuming the capacity to do so is the prime task of adult education.

Social learning paradigm. Baptiste (1999) criticizes the dominant trend in adult education that focuses on personal and technical considerations while avoiding the real plight of human beings. There are many adult educators, both scholars and practitioners, who are deeply concerned with neo-liberal globalism and its implications for lifelong learning (Collins, 1995; Rubenson, 2002). These adult educators argue for a responsible change in adult education and lifelong learning agendas by critically analyzing the changes which take place around us, both in the local and global economy. Some scholars in this line of thought discuss the constitution of a healthy civil society, membership in this civil society, and the mission of adult education to achieve these. These people are identified as critical scholars in adult education who utilize critical theory as the foundation of their arguments. They are concerned with issues of groups of learners and conduct research without ignoring important macro contextual factors in learning, such as the market, the nation state and globalization.

Critical educators also approach civil society as an inclusive place for adult learning, in which plural citizenship and membership are supported (Welton, 1999; Johnston, 1999; Baptiste, 1999; Rubenson, 2002). This approach is often referred to as a social learning paradigm. The social learning paradigm originates from a critical theory tradition which questions and

challenges “the given social situations”, instead of “reaffirming and reifying the given social reality” (Young, 1990, p. 5). According to this paradigm, active participation in constituting and defending civil society is a social learning process. If this learning process is challenged by the socially, culturally, or politically constructed power, it creates oppression and necessitates emancipation.

The social learning paradigm suggests that the oppression of human beings is a crisis of authentic learning which exposes certain groups of people to peril. Welton (1995) believes that “relations of force” are often “inconspicuously set in the very structures of communication” (Habermas, 1979, quoted in Welton, 1993, p. 86) and “prevent humans from mutual understanding” (p. 86). How can we redeem human potential to be free? It is a long-term, daunting project that critical theory has undertaken. This question has also formed a critical turn of adult learning theories and frameworks (Welton, 1995; Collins, 1995) because the task of ensuring that people are able to determine their own lives and are able to be active members in a healthy civil society has served as one of the foremost agendas of adult education and training (Walters et al, 1997).

In particular, Welton (1993) links Habermas’s project of communicative action with the means of understanding the nature of social learning processes. The social learning processes, one of the important intersubjective actions in the lifeworld, is often distorted and misshaped under enormous systemic forces, such as the global order (what Welton terms “disorder”). Then, the purpose of critical theory is “to help people to stop being passive victims who collude, at least partly, in their domination by external forces” (Welton, 1995, p. 37). The concepts of “lifeworld” and “system” from Habermas are relevant wherever there exists “the systemic blockages to the achievement of a more fully democratized society” in the lifeworld (Collins, 1995, p. 199). The critical theory of adult learning holds “the commitment to enhance individual

and collective autonomy to achieve their maturity through interactive learning and collective action” (Welton, 1995, p. 36). And adult educators should critically think about what these systemic blockages mean to various groups of learners and what should be done.

When it comes to the systemic blockages in meaningful learning, globalization often serves an important factor for why adult educators should look critically. Walters (1997) argues that globalization has implications for our understanding of progress and democracy, as well as our notions of civil society, the state and the market. Major issues confronting adult education and lifelong learning in this globalized era thus include how adult educators deal with the difficulty of fostering conditions of ideal learning in a social environment in which structural inequalities are more and more entrenched due to the changing context of human lives. The growing recognition of globalization and deepening inequality has brought about the urgent need to focus on the conception of the social purpose of adult education. Adult education is an important tool to support or challenge the currently dominant globalization paradigm. The options to support or challenge it rest with the decisions of adult educators. In this way, the space of adult learning is a site of struggle (Johnston, 1999).

Socio-political Analysis on Adult Learning. Previous research in critical adult education addresses various socio-political analyses of learning related to the social aim of adult education and learning. Adult education is described as “intimately linked to our daily lives, to our work lives, to our legislative and professional possibilities, and obviously to the larger political economic frameworks of our times” (Walters et al, 1997 p. 41). For example, an analysis based on political economy (see Jeria, 2001; Zandy, 2000; Foley, 1999; Chan, 1997; Rubenson, 2002) is one of the approaches used to analyze the macro context of groups of learners in the global economy and its influence on adult learning. Also, Jeria (2001) initiates a critical discourse regarding “geopolitical aspects of the field” (p. 6). Foley (1999) also contends that “adult

education, through its instrumentalist, professionalized and decontextualized practices and discourses, is implicated in processes of capitalist domination and capitalist reorganization” (p.69). He adds that adult educators must recognize that adult education and learning are “complex, and contested social, cultural and historical processes” (p. 69). Chan (1997) looks at female workers on the global assembly line and contends that adult education must address “the material-objective conditions as well as the subjective-affective dimensions” (p. 84).

Feminist Pedagogy and the Politics of Difference

Feminist pedagogy is useful in that it provides a theoretical lens to discuss the politics of difference. Seen through the eyes of feminist pedagogy, migrant workers can be understood as learners who bring various political, social, and cultural aspects into the settings of learning with them according to their difference such as class, race, culture, and gender.

Problems of Universality. Disadvantaged adult learners cannot be grouped under the single banner of a marginalized group of learners. Rather, they are diverse groups of learners who are divided by their differences. Regardless of the critical need to look at the issues of learning of various social groups, the social learning paradigm is often too universal to support an investigation of real educational settings (see Plumb, 1995).

Therefore, a more robust understanding of the context in which learners are situated is needed to understand their real processes of learning. The meaning of difference in specific settings of learning and its relation to a larger social and cultural context are critical to the study of learners, particularly for those who are situated in the marginalized conditions of learning. St. Clair (1999) provides a valid point to understand this when he argues that “the struggle of subjects to understand and to be understood cannot take place on a universal or individual level” (p. 3).

The relevance of feminist pedagogy here is not just that it puts human beings as actors in the world, but understands the difference which influences the practice. To discuss the difference which adult educators frequently deal with in the field of practice, some critical researchers draw their thoughts from feminist ideas, the body of work which is often referred to as feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy is useful to grasp the various socio-political dynamics at work in the contexts of learning.

Feminist researchers typically argue that critical researchers in general often postulate the universal agent of the oppressed as actors in the world, and remain silent in terms of its singularity and universality when the actual fields of practice of education do not conform. For example, Habermas only uses masculine terms to explain his notions of civil society, public sphere and lifeworld when he provides the notions of the critical theory, which is a parent theory of critical pedagogy. For this, he is criticized by feminist theorists by postulating a single democratic public which means to be “democratic to all” (see Benhabib, 1986; Young, 1989; Fraser 1989, 1994). Many feminist theorists have problems with this universal critical framework when they set up research agendas for women and other social groups who are similarly excluded (Luke, 1992). The universality would pose a problem when adult educators need to situate their practice with the groups of learners who are different from each other.

Focusing on Diversity. The value of feminist pedagogy to the issue of migrant workers’ learning is that it expands the discussion with its uniqueness, while openly sharing the traditions of critical theory in adult learning. For example, many feminist researchers argue against the one-dimensionality shown in Freire’s call for liberation (1973) and his undifferentiated reference to the oppressed (*class-based only*) as a unitary rather than as a contradictory and diverse population (see Shor, 2000). The feminist position critiques masculine theoretical frameworks as an add-on approach and argues that it matters to educational practice.

By this rejection, the feminist position continues to address exclusion in educational settings by attentively tracking “whose diversity is being silenced” (Luke, 1992, p. 33). For this reason, feminist positions in research have valid points to be applied even though the subjects of research are not only women.

Feminist researchers understand that focusing on the similarities of learners only “allows members of dominant groups to re-focus on themselves” (Loutzenheiser, 2003, p. 164). If diversity matters in various settings of learning, feminist researchers believe that their lens is able to explain the influences of diversity on the process that learners undergo. After all, not all learners share the same oppressions. Feminist researchers point out the need for oppression to be defined locally at each site of learning in order to discover how differences of gender, race, ethnicity affect a specific group and curriculum. Feminist researchers have therefore tried to discover how differences of class, gender, race, and ethnicity affect a specific group of learners. In this way, they try to embrace diversity and plurality, and look for the ways in which oppression intersects with various differences for the sake of the learners they work with (Weiler, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989).

The focus on critical dialogue by feminist researchers helps educators when they share the definition of oppression in the settings of learning. This shared process helps both educators and learners commit to enhanced educational agendas that work to ameliorate inequality.

Feminist Pedagogical Research. Feminist pedagogy has elaborated the analysis of what systemic oppression means to different groups of learners. Feminist researchers have tried to suggest an appropriate direction and agenda for education to counter oppressions. Since Cross (1981) conceptualized “adults as learners,” efforts have been made to explain their attributes and characteristics. What Cross did not say, however, is that these adults as learners are learners who

bring specific political, social, and cultural contexts with them into the settings of learning (Hansman, 2001; Sissel, 2001; Fenwick, 2003).

Previous research in this tradition has focused on seeking a socially and culturally relevant approach for diverse learners (Amstutz, 1994; Alfred, 2003; Ellsworth, 1989). Among them, Amstutz (1994) argues that traditional adult learning theories—behaviourist, humanist, cognitivist, or liberatory—often exclude the types of learning that “best suit some women, people of color, and people from the working class or those who are unemployed” (p. 20). She contends that adult education can and should provide appropriate, inclusive environments for learners, appreciating learners who “will be more and more racially, culturally, ethnically, socially, economically, and linguistically pluralistic” (p. 30). Tisdell (2000) focuses on the learning interactions in higher education settings and points out that the experiences of female learners are intricately connected with the power relations surrounding the settings of learning. She argues that the risk of researching learning experiences isolated from the social and cultural contexts risks a failure to account for the learners’ experiences with the relevant analysis on the influencing power relations.

The weakness of this feminist lens on adult learning is that it focuses mostly on pedagogical situations, while adult learning embraces the wider range of settings for learning, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning in both intentional and incidental forms (see Livingston, 2001). The need to look into the varying experiences of adult worker-learners is increasing in this fast changing era. Zandy (2000) points out the absence of workers in critical pedagogy discourse when she asks, “What is the relationship between the flourishing of critical theory inside academia and the decline of economic justice outside?” (p. 145).

Theoretical Position of This Research

In this section, I revisit the purpose of the multidisciplinary literature review and explain how I will use these diverse theoretical lenses to better understand the learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea.

The condition of the migrant workers in our sweeping globalized era has worsened and increased their risk of not being regarded as free and active workers. In my opinion, migrant workers are structurally prevented from being active workers and adult learners in three ways. First, unlike citizen workers, they are sometimes openly asked to remain low-skilled and this makes them feel constantly insecure (Brown et al, 2001). In this fast-changing world of work, being a high-skilled worker is an important source of competitiveness. Those skills must be constantly upgraded and the current paradigm of lifelong learning explicitly encourages the continuation of learning throughout life. In this age of the so-called knowledge economy, with its concomitant emphasis on lifelong learning, low-skilled workers are often subject to the cost-driven imperatives that force managers to rationalize work. Considering the pressure imposed on contemporary workers, a low-skilled worker whose skills are regarded as stagnant can become one of the most vulnerable workers in the workplace. Migrant workers in Korea are apparently marginalized in this condition of work and are assumed to have no need to learn further or learn continuously because they will only undertake menial or repetitive tasks throughout their lives.

Second, being non-citizens and having contract labour status has caused them to lose their freedom. This unique status has been a major source of injustice. They do not have the equal opportunities that other workers have and their self-determining power as active human beings, therefore, can be significantly undermined. Worse, searching for the opportunities to participate in claiming their lost rights is discouraged officially.

Third, the social and cultural misrecognition or alienation due to their difference has put in place major obstacles which prohibit migrant workers from functioning as members of a society. This is a less visible and accordingly less researched aspect of human rights infringement. People often believe that the difficulties of migrant workers are, to a certain extent, inevitable due to their non-citizen and contract work status. There is a range of research in which this cultural misunderstanding has been described by the workers as one of the most challenging situations they face in Korea (Lee, 1994; Lee, 1997; Seol, 1996, 1999). In a society like Korea where racial homogeneity is extreme (99% of the population is Korean), differences in appearance or culture are easily exposed. Migrant workers in Korea are often denigrated in public because of their skin colour, language, and their cultural expressions and customs (Chosun Ilbo Daily, 2003). The massive efforts to deport undocumented workers by the Korean government have made the lives of migrant workers more precarious because many legitimate workers also feel constant insecurity because they look the same as the workers who supposedly do not deserve to stay and work in the country (Chosun Ilbo Daily, 2003). Prevalent cultural discrimination against people who look different prevents the workers from mingling with other workers and Koreans in various activities for which participation is voluntary.

In my study, migrant workers in Korea are conceptualized as a group of adult learners who are regarded as different from other groups of people due to their economic, social, cultural and political differences. The learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea are viewed here in three ways. First, they are seen as learners situated in a unique context of structural power relations. In the case of migrant workers, they are asked to remain at the bottom of global and local stratification. Second, this research focuses on learning experiences which seem to transpire across the borders of nation-states. Third, it addresses the relationship between learning and social justice issues that are related to migrant workers' *difference*.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first goal of this chapter is to explain my positioning as a researcher. I then turn to an introduction of the research methodology employed, detailing the recruitment of participants and the data collection process. I also discuss various ethical considerations which I remained attentive to throughout the research. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of the data, including the demographic information of participants and a quick discussion of some of the issues that arose throughout the course of the research.

Locating myself as a researcher

As a point of departure, it is useful to locate my positionality in terms of the complex web of experiences I bring to this research. My interest in migrant workers in Korea is inextricably linked to several things: as a Korean immigrant in Canada; as a Korean living outside of Korea; and, as a former career educator with experience working as a program planner for foreign employees of a company in Korea.

Trying to locate myself as a researcher in this context was important because researchers are never neutral and there is a powerful difference inherently embedded in the study of marginalized people (Wolf, 1996). I located myself as an outsider because I am neither a migrant worker nor a person involved in any of the activities I studied. I was a “stranger” who needed to quickly form rapport and negotiate access to these workers’ stories.

My outsider status was complex. It incorporated multiple positionalities. I see these as the multiple overlapping positions and perspectives which intersect all aspects of this research, from the inception of the idea to the completion of project. Understanding myself as a critical research tool in qualitative research, I was aware that I carried particular positionalities that set me apart from all the participants, but in particular from the migrant workers. As such, I realized I might never be able to fully understand the experiences of the migrant workers—especially the

negative ones such as oppression and cultural misunderstandings. I concur with Ellsworth in that I believe it an essential part of the research process for the researcher and the participants to elaborate on not only what we share but also on what we do not share (Ellsworth, 1989, p.110), aspects such as, *inter alia*, gender and ethnicity. Therefore, I felt that several considerations regarding the researcher-participant relationship should be detailed in writing. (Fine, 1998)

As a Critical Adult Educator

The first task is to situate myself as an advocating educator within the feminist tradition of “value-based advocacy research” (Lather, 1992, p. 92). My own political beliefs have been formed over a significant period of time, supported by four years of experience as a planner in a corporate training program geared to foreign employees located in multicultural settings. During that time, I interacted with foreign workers of diverse backgrounds who took part in training programs despite a variety of social and cultural impediments inherent in working as a foreigner in a Korean company. That experience enabled me to formulate research questions from a critical perspective.

I have also been influenced by my academic training in this doctoral program and that has helped shape the methodology I used to collect relevant data from the research process. Specifically, the methodological approach is drawn from “feminist inquiry” within a qualitative research approach. (Lather, 1992) I value that feminist researchers “have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 44). Although my research participants were not all women, feminist inquiry was the impetus for the design of the study. It helped me focus the aim of the research throughout the process.

Many feminist researchers have advocated for the group of learners they are closely engaged with as teachers, practitioners, or co-learners. Many researchers working from a feminist perspective do not merely research marginalized learners but research “with” the

learners. (Ellsworth, 1989; Luke, 1992; Gore, 1992). Seen as such, it is clear that one contribution of feminist methodology is the “tying together of otherwise disparate people,” and to demand “some new ways of thinking about what to research and how to do it” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 13). My reflexivity was crucial to the process of carrying out this research.

As an Immigrant

I also need to mention my complex citizenship and residency status—a Korean immigrant in Canada—as an influence on my positionality. My nationality, race or ethnicity may have been problematic because these factors are the very socio-political dynamics that lead to the negative and differential treatment received by migrant workers in Korea.

I was born and raised in Korea, and emigrated with my family to Canada when I was twenty-five years old. My perceptions of the workers are likely to have been shaped in some way by the middle class values I hold. Despite my advocacy for them, I may have had difficulty understanding their experiences and feelings. However, I have held Canadian permanent resident status for more than ten years and my experience as an immigrant in Canada—Asian minority and an adult woman—has given me some ability to empathize with and understand the workers who participated in my study; they are all people who have left their home countries as adults.

Fluid Relationship with Participants

The success of this research depended on finding ways to define the varying relationships between myself and the migrant workers. The relationships with the learning providers were also important. But there were several factors which brought me closer to them. For example, some of them and I shared a belief in social justice. I also shared common experiences as learning providers: myself as a corporate trainer and they as trainers or educators either in a government-supported training agency and NGOs.

Even though migrant workers were the focus of this research, the relationship with the Korean participants who have learning provider roles was treated as important as well because I shared part of their experiences of supporting adult learning. At the same time, there were many other aspects of their practice that I was not able to share. For example, my belief in social justice made me feel closer to NGO activists, while their particular arguments also made me feel alienated. Additionally, my experience in the corporate training sector was closer to that of trainers in the governmental training agencies while I had objections to the training approach of the Korean government regarding migrant workers. Explicating my locations and the relationships with my participants, therefore, was a valuable task for revealing a “healthy, if uncomfortable, tension” (Wolf, 1996, p. 217) that I determined to undergo throughout this research.

Site and Participant Selection

The recruitment process involved three steps. First, I selected the broad geographical areas where my research would be mainly conducted. Second, I recruited the worker participants in these areas and started interviewing. Third, with recommendations from worker participants I had recruited or by the facts revealed from the interviews with the worker participants, I contacted learning providers and started interviewing them.

Participant Selection Process

I invited two groups of participants for this research. In the first group were documented or undocumented workers whose period of stay in Korea exceeded one year. The second group included the learning providers who are, either implicitly or explicitly, engaged in facilitating various activities for migrant workers (e.g., work, education, training and cultural activities). These two groups of participants sometimes overlapped because some migrant workers are

identified as learning providers for their fellow workers. Participants who combine these identifications at the same time were interviewed with regard to both sets of experiences.

Participant Criteria—Workers

Participation criteria for this group were straightforward. All worker participants are or were migrant workers in Korea who have held a D-9 visa under the EPS or a D-8 visa under the ITP. All participants were asked to have a minimum of a year's stay and had to be at least 18 years of age. This latter criterion was adopted to ensure all participants were regarded as mature adults.

In terms of ethnicity or nationality, I welcomed diversity in all cases except one: all workers had to be of non-Korean descent. This was an important criterion that I constantly observed throughout and the rationale deserves explanation. Fetterman (1998) recommends a step-wise method to select participants by choosing who and what not to study first and then to proceed by selecting who and what to study. Following the first step of his selection strategy, I excluded foreign workers with Korean ethnicity because I believed that choosing foreign workers with Korean ethnicity entails another complexity which might not be necessary for this research.

This deserves a few more lines before continuing. Korean ethnic workers form a special case because they are often misrecognized as Koreans due to appearance and language fluency, which serves as strong social capital enabling them to secure jobs in Korea. According to Seol (1999), these ethnic Korean migrant workers are mostly Korean-Chinese people who often regard themselves as Koreans. But just as often, they have expressed concern about the way Korean society treats them as foreign workers.

Korean-Chinese workers and their supporters have argued that Korean-Chinese workers have been treated unfairly compared to Koreans in North America and other part of the world.

While migration to North America and other parts of the world mainly began after the establishment of the Republic of Korea and this migration was a middle-class based voluntary movement, migration to China and Russia was based on economic and political hardships and it happened before Korea's establishment. In short, this issue entails the debates regarding the Korean history of migration and unfair treatment of overseas Koreans who are citizens of other countries. I found these to be too complex to consider them in this research.

Participant Criteria—Learning Providers

The other participants were the learning providers. They are the people who plan, facilitate and evaluate various activities for migrant workers. I wanted to understand the perceptions of this group because, even though its makeup is diverse and difficult to categorize, the individuals filling these roles have heretofore not been recognized as learning providers in this context. I realized that listening to them was an important task because migrant workers in Korea are gradually being identified as a new and important social group. As such, trying to understand the experiences of migrant workers through the prism of their learning providers seemed useful.

I set no specific criteria for the selection of learning providers. Participants were first identified and contacted by recommendation of the worker participants. I found additional participants through recommendations of learning providers who had already been recruited. These learning providers varied in their title and work affiliation, and included trainers from government agencies, ethnic community leaders, support activists, and volunteer teachers.

Site Selection

The research sites were industrial areas situated in three cities: Seoul, Incheon and Bucheon. These cities were selected by considering several factors. For one, they are all within

the core, capital area of Korea where more than half of the country's population resides. Seoul is a major metropolitan centre with a population of 10 million and a foreign community numbering approximately 100,000, including migrant workers. Incheon and Bucheon have, respectively, 2.6 million and 0.9 million, and both cities have high populations of migrant workers. Incheon has one of the largest industrial complexes in the nation and is where many migrant workers are employed. Comparatively, Bucheon is smaller, but hosts a dense grouping of small, poor factories producing light industrial goods. Additionally, there is an abundance of construction work in all three of these big cities, something that also serves to attract migrant workers.

Contacting Participants

I first contacted two non-government organizations (NGOs) located in Bucheon and Incheon that support migrant workers' human rights. These NGOs offer labour counselling and a variety of learning activities to migrant workers. With support from the people in these NGOs, I met my first potential participants.

My initial plan was to send letters to potential participants after receiving contact information from the NGOs. However, I moved away from that method after a suggestion by someone in the NGOs that it might be difficult to reach workers due to their lack of Korean or English skills. Instead, because many migrant workers visit the NGO offices every day, I was able to contact many workers with direct visits. I found that the best time was on Sundays when the NGO offices were full of the workers who visited to take part in various activities—education sessions, social activities, labour counselling, free medical check-ups, etc... People in NGOs introduced me to the prospective worker participants on the spot and this was my first chance to meet prospective participants. The first prospective participants who I met in each organization were given an explanation about me and what the research was about. They were

also given an initial contact letter which stated the purpose of the research and my contact information.

After these first encounters, I called within a week to ask if they would participate. After the first five participants were recruited in this way, I used snowball sampling (Palys, 1997) in which these first participants asked their acquaintances who met the criteria of participation. This process continued until I recruited nineteen worker participants.

It is possible that the recruitment method I utilized might not have yielded a sufficiently diverse group of participants. Because I used snowball sampling, and began with people introduced to me at the NGOs, I may have only captured participants who were predisposed to utilizing the services of the NGOs. I may have missed migrant workers who do not normally attend any sessions there. However, when the recruitment was complete, I found that eight of the nineteen had never participated in an NGO sponsored activity or availed themselves of labor counselling or other services. Also, the sample revealed a reasonable mix of other diversities—gender, race/ethnicity, age and experiences. And, since generalization is not the focus of this research, I think the intervention of NGO workers in the recruitment of the first participants was handled without raising concern about the diversity of the participant pool.

The process for contacting learning providers started after I had completed the first round of recruiting worker participants. I had also completed first interviews with some worker participants. By proceeding in that order, I was able to know, in general, who was engaged in the learning activities of the worker participants or migrant workers as significant learning providers and, therefore, I was able to make an effort to contact this group of prospective participants. The learning providers recruited last varied from training practitioners in governmental agencies, to NGO activists, volunteers, and religious and ethnic community leaders.

Data Collection Process

I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather information from both groups of participants. A semi-structured interview is regarded as the principal means of qualitative researchers (Reinharz, 1992; Fontana & Frey, 1998; Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). This interview format is often described as an effective way to approach people's experiences in their own words, rather than in the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

With the worker participants, I focused on their own interpretation of their learning experiences. I wanted to know their reasons for participation and asked them to identify the satisfying and challenging aspects of these learning experiences. I also tried to share ideas on what learning experiences meant to both of us. People learn "not only in classrooms, but also informally at work, by talking to others, by watching television and playing games, and through virtually every other form of human activity" (OECD, 1996, p. 89). I tried to include any occasions and places of learning where the worker participants thought they learned something.

This thick, descriptive stream of data in the worker participants' own voices provided me with a comprehensive picture of learning with full attention to the context in which participants were situated. While previous research on this group of workers mainly used surveys or structured interviews by researchers and/or their assistants (see Kang, 1996; Lee, 1997; Seol, 1999), using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions provided an opportunity to challenge the notion of "researcher-neutrality" which was found in much of the previous literature.

With the learning providers, my questions focused on their role in providing learning activities for migrant workers and their perspectives on that. In addition to eleven Korean participants in this group, five migrant workers who are also learning providers in their respective ethnic community were also asked to move freely back and forth between their experiences as both learners and learning providers. Overall, the data from this group helped me

gain access to the various views of the people who have an influence on the learning of migrant workers.

With these two groups of interviews, I benefited from being able to compare and reconstruct the data. This gave me a comprehensive understanding of the learning process and left me with some valuable insights that could be used to make specific suggestions to help create a more inclusive, non-oppressive learning environment for migrant workers.

Conducting the interviews was a rich experience because it exposed new themes and categories of learning that enhanced my understanding of what constitutes their learning experience. I made a decision early on to research sites with a time gap to add new data and complement what information I had already obtained. As such, interviews were conducted in Korea between November 2004 and January 2005 and again between July 2005 and August 2005, for a total of four months. I conducted twenty initial interviews in the first period in Incheon and Bucheon. In the second period, I conducted four follow-up interviews with previous participants and conducted initial interviews with ten new participants in Seoul and Bucheon. All interviews were conducted in the places requested by the participants, such as their residence or at the NGO offices. When I conducted follow-up interviews with the workers, it was regarded as a “continuing set” of interviews (Matsumoto, 1996; Seidman, 1998) without any different arrangements. In both groups of participants, the initial interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours, while the follow-up interviews varied between fifteen and forty minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

In every interview, I utilized my positionality by addressing myself as an immigrant to Canada and a former adult educator with experience in multicultural settings. The effect of this was different—and significant—for the two groups I studied. For the worker participants, my immigrant status and experience of working and living in Canada enabled them to perceive me

as less of a dispassionate social scientist and more of a close supporter who understands what migration means to a person's life. I was able to share my stories with the worker participants, which gave both of us moments of sympathy and empathy regarding our life experiences.

For the learning providers of Korean citizenship, they were able to perceive me as a researcher from Canada who is situated rather far from the politics of their workplace. As such, they found it safe to talk with me about a variety of things regarding their organizations. They also felt close to me and talked more about their feelings when I shared my experiences as an educator who had similar responsibilities as a learning provider for multiethnic and foreign workers.

Language, Interpretation and Translation

Language was one of the more important methodological issues in this research and I was aware of the complications when multiple languages are used in the research process. I wanted to encourage participants to talk freely about their learning experiences using their own words (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). Interviews can best be facilitated in a participant's first language and the researcher should be able to understand what is being conveyed. Still, my initial assumption was that because the worker participants came from various countries, interpreters would be needed in most situations (Fontana & Frey, 1998). However, I was surprised by the Korean fluency of many worker participants and their insistence on not using an interpreter. Only four of nineteen worker interviews were conducted with interpreters, with the rest taking place in either Korean or English. Since neither Korean nor English was the native language of the remaining fifteen, a range of limitations in word choice or richness of expression was inevitable. That may have impaired clarity to some extent.

The four interviews in which interpretation was used required several methodological considerations. First, rapport between the researcher and interpreters mattered. A qualitative

researcher sets the interpreter as an intermediary between the researcher and the participants, and the researcher thus becomes “subject to ‘triple subjectivity’ (the interactions between research participants, researcher and interpreter), and this needs to be made explicit” (Temple & Edwards, 2002, p. 11). Despite being aware of the “rigorous reflexivity” (p. 11) of using interpreters in qualitative research, there were no opportunities to work with the interpreters prior to the interviews due to their busy work schedules. This could be perceived as a methodological challenge to this research. Second, it is important to minimize arbitrary interpretation. To avoid this, I emphasized the matter with the interpreters, asking them to take care to interpret as closely as possible. Third, because the interpreters were chosen at the request of the participants and introduced to me as close friends, I was concerned about their intimacy.

There were some other problems that could have affected the data obtained in the interpreted interviews, such as age gaps and gender differences. I tried to be attentive to those. Additionally, I had some concerns about the English translation of data. Despite my determination to translate as carefully as possible, several concerns could arise related to the authenticity of data which may have been distorted through the complicated process of translation (Fontana & Frey, 1998). I tried to pay close attention to this issue in order to reduce its potential for occurring.

Rapport

The choice to use qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews has merit because it attentively looks at “the interaction of social forces in the construction of our lives” (Lather, 1992, p. 91). However, it can be problematic by not thoroughly incorporating the complex relationships between the researcher and the participants. In all the interviews—in particular with the workers—I tried to establish rapport. I interviewed people on a separate day from the initial introduction because I considered this first encounter as a preliminary meeting to get to

know one another. In the first encounter, I allowed a certain amount of time to introduce myself and share my research goals with the prospective participants and to answer any questions they might have had about me as a researcher (Thompson, 1995). Then, after an interval of at least one week, I called to confirm their participation and schedule the interview. Some declined to participate at that point.

I was aware that establishing rapport before the interviews would set up a relaxed, collaborative interview environment that would minimize the power difference inherent between interviewer and interviewees (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Fontana & Frey, 1998). The preliminary encounter and the basic rapport I developed with the interviewees helped me to establish mutual respect and trust as preconditions and made succeeding interviews flow smoothly. This contributed to my success in obtaining comprehensive data.

After the interviews, I maintained contact with the participants which paid off in terms of enhanced understanding. With the worker participants, I took the opportunity to attend several activities put on for them, such as their Sunday worship sessions and events designed to bring their ethnic communities closer. With the learning providers, I participated in their workshops, seminars and festivities. Participating in these occasions after the interviews helped me to maintain relationships with the participants and gave me insights which were useful later when I analyzed the interviews.

Demographics

There were thirty participants in total, of which nineteen were migrant workers and eleven were learning providers of Korean citizenship. Five of the nineteen migrant workers formed the subgroup of learning providers who had also been migrant workers in Korea. Pseudonyms and real names were used for the participants according to their wishes.

The worker participants have a variety of differences in terms of race and ethnicity, age, period of stay and so on (see Tables 2 & 3). On average, however, these participants were seasoned workers who led similar lifestyles as migrants in Korea. The average length of stay in Korea was 4.6 years (55 months). Most worked 9 - 12 hours a day, six days per week and often did overtime or worked nightshifts in factories.⁴ Most carried out their responsibility to the Korean economy while receiving a lower wage than citizen workers. Four of the workers had overstayed their visa. The average age of the worker participants was 29, with 9 in their 30's and the remaining 10 in their 20's. The five indigenous learning providers were all in their 30's.

Only four of the nineteen workers were women. The gender imbalance can be interpreted in a couple of ways. First, men outnumber women among migrant workers in Korea, likely due to the strenuous nature of the work they are required to do.⁵ Second, female workers are forced to juggle life responsibilities and this may have contributed to the imbalance in the participant selection. For example, three women declined to participate. They expressed their reluctance when they were first asked, begging off because of their busy work schedule, incidents in the family, and children to take care of. One female activist at an NGO in the learning provider group helped me to partly understand the very busy lives of female migrant workers. According to her, while women workers participate less often in the activities of her

⁴ Four workers reported they no longer work in manufacturing industries due a determination to become more involved in other activities, such as ethnic community management and missionary work.

⁵ Korea has male-dominated migrant demographics. The positions may open to men migrant workers wider than women workers because the available positions in Korean workplaces for migrant workers would mainly require physical strength, which often explains employers' preference men over women. However, women migrant workers are often preferred by employers in assembly factories due to their cheaper wage rates.

NGO on Sundays, they are major clients for labor counselling and visit the NGO office frequently during weekdays. She also related stories of female workers who were oppressed in many ways that men cannot or do not experience, such as the need to attend to family affairs, child rearing, sexual harassment or family violence.

Table 4 details the Korean learning providers. They had a variety of roles, such as official training provider, NGO activist, NGO administrator, volunteering facilitator of educational programs, and Christian minister.

All interviewees saw their participation in this research as a way to help migrant workers achieve more meaningful learning experiences, although there were notable differences between the groups and even in the same group. For instance, some worker participants viewed their participation as an extension of help to newly arrived fellow workers because they believed that sharing their experiences and recommendations would help newcomers have greater access to helpful activities. Similarly, the Korean learning providers viewed their participation as a chance to express their hopes for possible improvements in their field of practice.

The NGO activists who have promoted the human rights of migrant workers showed a varying range of interest in this research. Some showed a welcoming attitude toward a scholar's interest regarding migrant workers and their learning experiences.⁶ Others displayed mild skepticism toward academics because they believe that scholars have made comparatively weak

6 One NGO activist said, "It seems like you study the things we value highly in our organization and that's the reason I want to give you my help as much as I can. I think your finding will help all of us in here and will give us a good opportunity to learn and think deeply on our daily practice."

real world contributions to enhancing migrant workers' human rights as compared to activists who they believe are more action-oriented.⁷

7 When I asked one senior activist to get permission to do interviews around this organization, she said, "Okay, I hope you won't just "gather the data here and run away" because I have seen these irresponsible academics so many times and that is why I don't trust them."

Table 2.*Demographic characteristics of worker participants (n=14)*

Name	Sex	Country of Origin	Age	Work Experience	Education	Work Status	Industry/ company type
Nguyen	M	Vietnam	24	4y 5m	High School	Documented	Plastic products
Goggang	M	China	27	4y 6m	High School	Documented	Car components
Aesan	M	Pakistan	28	3y	University withdrawal	Undocumented	glasswork
Sonoara	F	Bangladesh	27	2y 5m	MA degree	Documented	Plastic products
Arafat	M	Bangladesh	26	3y 4m	High School	Documented	Plastic products
Geshab	M	Nepal	22	1y 6m	University withdrawal	Documented	Car components
Raju	M	Nepal	22	1y	University withdrawal	Documented	Electrics
Wing	M	Burma	23	1y	High School	Documented	Welding
Eddie	M	Iran	30	4y 2m	University	Documented	Plastic products
Shakron	M	Indonesia	30	6Y	High School	Undocumented	Electronics
Tuhan	M	Vietnam	32	9y 9m	High School	Undocumented	Textiles
Maria	F	Burma	26	7y 8m	University	Undocumented	Textiles
Tantan	F	Burma	24	1y 5m	University	Refugee status	Assembly
Seoran	F	China	34	1y 10m	Elementary	Documented	Textiles

Table 3.*Table 3. Demographic characteristics of learning providers—Migrants (n=5)*

Name	Sex	Country of Origin	Age	Work Experience	Education	Current Employment
Hyang	M	China	34	10y	University	Volunteer facilitator
Winfermau	M	Burma	39	5y 4m	University	Ethnic Community leader
Tura	M	Burma	34	9Y	College	Ethnic Community leader
Gurung	M	Nepal	39	4y 11m	University	Ethnic missionary
Wingnaioo	M	Burma	35	10Y	University	Ethnic Community leader

Table 4.*Demographic characteristics of learning providers—Koreans**(n=11)*

Name	Sex	Affiliation	Years of work(approx.)	Title
Choi	F	Human Rights	6y	Director
Lee, S.	M	Human Rights	5y	Full-time staff
Park, J. H.	F	Human Rights	4y	Full-time staff
Kim	F	Human Rights	3y	Volunteer
Oh	F	Human Rights	7m	Part-time staff
Reverend Lee	M	Religious	10y	Minister
Para	F	Religious	16y	Nun/Director
Park, J. Y.	M	Religious	3y	Administrator
Lee, Y.	F	Labour	6y	Unionist
Chung, H	F	Labour	6y5m	Unionist
Yoo	M	Governmental	3.5y	Full-time staff

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a comprehensive task of transforming data into research results (LeCompte, 2000). The process of analysis actually “begins with the first step into the field” (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p. 147). Likewise, my data analysis started with the data collection process. I went ahead with transcribing existing interview data as I conducted other interviews. This process was useful because it enabled me to fine-tune my questions and add new ones in subsequent interviews. Because I was responsible for the entire process of data collection, from the interviewing to the transcribing and translating, I was able to read and re-read the data multiple times.

Once I heard, transcribed, translated and then read the transcripts, I analyzed the participants’ stories in relation to my two key research questions. The first question focused on the characterization of participants’ learning experiences, including their learning needs, processes and goals of learning. The second question focused on the differences that the workers have from other workers in Korea and how these influence their learning experiences.

After thoroughly reviewing the data in relation to these two questions, I developed four primary codes and many sub-codes. They are: characterization of learning experience; stories of experience; understanding of key players; and, influencing identity-forming concepts which impact the learning experiences of the workers. Some codes applied to more than one group. For example, one sub-code ‘Korean labour laws & regulations’ as a subject of learning under the first group “characterization of learning experiences” was also relevant to “stories of learning experiences,” or “influencing identity-forming concepts which impact the learning experiences of the workers.” This process can be referred to as a recursive analysis, repeating interpretations by rigorous reading and re-reading of data. This recursive analysis was needed until I identified

items and their larger patterns, which revealed the learning experiences of the participants (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Throughout the analysis, I noted the complexities and nuances of the qualitative research process (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; LeCompte, 2000). We know that credibility of qualitative research can only be clear when I am aware of my location and my “tacit and formative theories” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 146), which are the sources of my selectivity. My positionality as a supporter of migrant workers in Korea continuously intersected the analysis and critically influenced my selectivity throughout the analytical process. As a measure to maintain credibility, I extended my engagement through the interview process and, in many cases, conducted multiple interviews with the same person. I also shared my analysis with my research supervisory committee members and some of my doctoral cohorts to gain their input on the analysis. Finally, I kept a research journal recording my decisions to make the process of decision clear by explaining the codes with evidence of phrases from the participants.

There were technical considerations in the data analysis. I used Microsoft Word to record my data and NUDIST, a qualitative analysis program, to facilitate my analysis. Using NUDIST was helpful to identify patterns because it enabled me to sift through the data more efficiently.

With the theoretical framework in place and the research methodology explicated, I will now turn, in the following two chapters, to the voices of participants themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR: STORIES OF MIGRANT WORKERS

This chapter explores the learning experiences of the migrant workers in Korea who were interviewed for this research. By writing about their experiences, I aim to reveal two points: in the first section, I address the range of learning opportunities available to migrant workers and the capabilities the workers desire to gain. In the second section, the impacts of “difference,” such as citizenship, race and gender, which formed multiple social locations on their learning experiences, are described to demonstrate their sites of learning as the space of multiple oppression and challenges against it.

Learning Experiences and Desired Capabilities

The learning experiences of the migrant workers I interviewed were situated within the local and global context of their marginal work in the declining industries of Korea. However, their various learning experiences, experiences that were life-sustaining, provided them with certain desired capabilities: occupational, social and political. To obtain these interviewees often exerted considerable effort to go beyond the limited scope of their work. In this section, I address their voices in the space of learning in relation to these three capabilities that they pursued. The division of these three capabilities is not arbitrary but participants sought each of them every time they participated in an activity.

Regarding the three, several things can be said in general. As to occupational capabilities, participants mentioned language proficiency, current job-related skills, and various skills required to meet future goals. I will discuss these first, followed by an outline of various activities needed to gain social capabilities, such as cultural capital in Korean society, multicultural understanding, and local/global networking. Finally, I will detail the activities needed to obtain political capabilities, such as the understanding and claiming of worker and human rights and the raising of awareness of political situations in the worker’s home country.

Learning To Gain Occupational Capabilities

Occupational capabilities can be defined as capabilities that enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes which are directly or indirectly related to performing current or future work. Interviewees placed a premium on achieving Korean language proficiency and acquiring the technical job skills needed to afford them survival in the Korean workplace. They also expressed their disappointment when faced with the reality that they are bound to low-skilled jobs in Korean workplaces and limited in their opportunities to gain viable skills to be more competent workers in the future, be it in Korea, at home or other places in the world.

Language Proficiency

Although Korean language ability was mentioned by interviewees as an important occupational skill, opinions on the required level of proficiency at workplaces and the reasons for achieving it varied. Many questioned the strong correlations between language proficiency and their work performance. They stated that migrant workers do not feel a strong need to speak Korean well because, in the main, they work in manufacturing and construction sites where strenuous manual work is the norm and elaborated communication may not be considered a critical occupational ability.

Despite this, they still averred that learning Korean is critical, in a broader sense, to maintain or enhance their work and life status. Their commitment to obtaining proficiency is in part shown by the fact that ten of the interviewees were able to communicate in Korean even though they initially asked to be interviewed in their native languages with interpreters. During the interviews, while speaking of their own focused plans to improve their fluency, they expressed their disappointment about the seeming lack of concern from the Korean government for their personal development in terms of being able to communicate in the workplace.

Recently, the Korean government has highlighted language proficiency as an important occupational capability for migrant workers. The government announced that all prospective workers are supposed to have a certain degree of Korean proficiency before they will be given a visa to come to Korea. The interviewees, who were all already working in the country, stated that language acquisition was hardly given any attention either before or after they started work in Korea. Preparation for departure to Korea was unorganized by their governments or agencies and migrant workers received but three days' initial orientation from the responsible Korean government agencies. That orientation included only three hours worth of language training. Hyang spoke of the insufficiency of this language education and the difficulties it caused him as he tried to adapt to his first Korean workplace:

I got Korean lessons before we left China, but it was only two days worth! (with a laugh). After we arrived, we had a three-day informational session at some government bureau. But the Korean language lesson was only three hours long. Neither was enough to help me face my new work situation. At that time, my co-workers called me names a lot and shouted at me when I was slow to pick up what they wanted me to do. But, I somehow understand now that we should let that first difficult period pass, otherwise we cannot survive. (Hyang)

Even after being set in their workplace, none of the interviewees reported receiving any organized help from either their employers or peer Korean workers to learn Korean. Raju, Geshab and Tura reasoned that this was due to the nature of the system and employers:

Some companies have a lot of repetitive work so there is no need to speak while working. Of course some work may be difficult and people must know more Korean to be able to work better. But in my case, in my workplace, there is no need to speak good Korean. (Raju)

If the work is very hard and complex, there is language problem for them in the beginning. But later, the need to communicate disappears. I am very good at what I

do so now I don't need to speak with my coworkers. We have done the same thing over and over for a long time now. (Geshab)

The company didn't teach us Korean at all. The company might think it's better not to teach us, if possible, because we are just foreign industrial trainees. (Tura)

Many interviewees did recall some occasions they were taught Korean by coworkers and employers. That enabled them to understand key workplace expectations. But, it was clear from their statements that the functional degree of fluency regarded as important at work included only listening and speaking to understand the instructions and orders with accuracy and to communicate with other workers on tasks. Arafat stated:

When we arrived, we foreign workers were asked to get together. Then, our Korean co-workers taught us the terms used in the factory. The most memorable words were "Ppali, ppali" (hurry, hurry), and stuff like that. (Arafat)

Many interviewees spoke of similar experiences in which they received training from Korean peer workers or employers in less-than-organized settings. This is one example of how the learning proceeded on a one-way basis due to the limited expectations of workplaces on the migrant workers. Their motivation to learn Korean was left almost completely unaddressed as they went through the motions of learning only the expressions their workplaces deemed essential. In many cases, the new workers' motivation to learn Korean and be better workers gradually lessened as they got the knack of the first series of tasks and immediately became buried under the repetitive strain of the work. Maria talked about this problem:

Most workers don't have the opportunity to learn Korean because they are placed in the workplace right after they arrive. Some people can get it from church or some get it from NGO programs, but most do not have any association or simply don't know where to get help in learning. So, they end up communicating in body

language for years, some for five or even seven years! Without language, they cannot express their hardship without sounding dumb. (Maria)

Independent or Supported Lessons. Lacking opportunities to learn Korean, many interviewees started to discover personal reasons to make an effort on their own, and proceeded from their new found motivations. They stated that they went through either totally independent study or received some support from people they were close to in the workplace. The most frequently mentioned learning method was self-study while consciously and intentionally interacting with Koreans at work. The popularity of self-study arose mainly from the reality of their extended and unstable work schedules, which often saw them work large amounts of overtime and on the weekends. Self-study was, then, the best option, with many trying to continue their efforts at night or even during short breaks at work. Many interviewees started their self study with the books of conversational Korean they brought from home.

In the course of attempting to obtain help from Koreans for their self-study, many interviewees recalled having to make significant effort even to elicit a response. Eddie, an Iranian worker, recalled how hard he had to work to show his employer that he really wanted to learn Korean from him:

I promised the boss. I told him if I learn the tool names first, as quickly as possible, that I will work well. I picked up all the tool names within two, three days. My boss was so impressed and started to teach me Korean language. My boss taught it to me bit by bit, often using English, such as "Heart is 'maeum' in Korean. I picked up what he taught me quickly and I asked him for more. (Eddie)

Eddie's example shows that some employers or Korean peer workers understood something about other languages or culture, even at a minimum, and were able to impact positively the interviewee by forming a relationship of teaching-learning Korean in the workplace.

Four interviewees reported they were helped in this way. Eddie's employer was a person who experienced life as a migrant work himself in Saudi Arabia when he was young. Eddie mentioned he understood some English words and Arab culture as well due to his work in the Middle East and that helped Eddie learn Korean from him without much difficulty. Shakron had a similar experience getting help from Korean peer workers who had experience working in his home country of Indonesia. He stated how he was lucky to meet them in the workplace:

The security guard of our factory knew a bit of Indonesian because he had several years of work experiences in the company's Indonesian subsidiary there. It was good I happened to get to know him in my first days of life in Korea. I visited him everyday in his office after work to learn Korean. And there were several people like him with the same experience in the company. They helped me a lot to learn Korean. (Shakron)

Raju and Geshab, both from Nepal, recalled they were able to form instant friendships when they learned Korean from young Korean peer workers using English as a medium language. However, the instantaneousness of the relationships was due to the fact that these young Korean workers were not satisfied with their workplace and would quit soon after just a couple of month's work.

Learning Korean to work better was also an investment. Some interviewees spoke of their efforts to learn in order to be able to grasp opportunities for upward mobility. Obtaining a strong command of the language was seen as crucial to that endeavour, and this was particularly the case if the goal was to obtain more complex work where strong communication skills are prized over the merely manual ones. Eddie recalled the days when he was transferred to more complicated tasks due to his focused efforts for months to enhance his Korean proficiency:

Do you know why Koreans are reluctant to use foreign workers in construction sites? The reason is because a person working upstairs says to the person

downstairs "Hey, bring up one ton of plaster which is not too watery or too thick." You should be able to understand complicated orders first. If he said it is too watery, then you need to know what "too watery" means exactly. So the ratio of density is critical. After three months of working, I got a raise and then my employer told me "Eddie, you too bring a friend. And come upstairs." (Eddie)

This example shows that some migrant workers learn Korean as a communication tool with a proactive, positive purpose (i.e. to be able to handle more complicated work in their work contexts).

On the other hand, some interviewees stated that they needed a higher level of Korean ability to protect themselves from the verbal abuse of Korean peer workers and from sweatshop labour. This resonates with Tuhan's experience. Tuhan is now fluent in Korean and he indicated that he made a focused effort to learn in order to obtain better treatment as a worker and human. After he ran away in 1995 from his first "exploiting workplace which made him work twelve hours each day without overtime pay," he came to believe that enhancing his Korean proficiency was the only way he could have a chance to show his capability as a worker.

Self-study was the only option for him because he was subject to frequent overtime and night work, often on a seven day a week schedule. Despite his undocumented status, his Korean proficiency so far has guaranteed him stable jobs and better treatment than even some documented workers. Even though he has changed workplaces several times and the skills needed at each workplace were different, he was treated as a skilled worker in each case, trusted and protected by his employers during government crackdown periods. Therefore, his fluent Korean enabled him to break the bonds of "limited labourers."

Shakron, Eddie and Maria echoed this point as they sympathized with their friends who were likely to have been verbally abused by Koreans at work due to their imperfect Korean

communication ability. According to Shakron, being the target of disrespectful remarks by Korean peer workers is destructive:

Since I could make myself understood in Korean, I have less verbal abuse than other friends. Other friends often have verbal abuse. The reason I learned Korean that hard was...well, I just wanted to feel comfortable at work. Speaking good Korean has lots of merit, particularly at work in that aspect. (Shakron)

Even if bosses like foreign workers because they are strong, if they do not understand the language then they think it is hard... Once said, twice said, then it's going to be an F-word when it has to be said a third time. (Eddie)

Maria, too, indicated that an active reason to learn Korean was to challenge the insults:

People often say, "Oh I don't think I learn because I hate Koreans" I often persuade them into learning Korean, telling them "If you hate Koreans, you should learn Korean language all the more to tell them your feelings logically." Then they sometimes decided to learn Korean. (Maria)

The Value of English as a Medium Language. Some interviewees spoke of the efficacy of utilizing small learning circles involving older and recently arrived migrant workers at the same workplace to meet their communication expectations. Learning was facilitated either in their native language, when they happened to be from the same country, or in English as a medium language. They used breaks or evening meal times for their sessions. Eddie spoke of his experiences as a Korean instructor to other workers. As a seasoned worker, he explained his motivation to help others—typically at the cost of his own already short time—by recalling how he empathized with the difficulties faced by other workers with less Korean proficiency:

I teach Korean to Pakistanis in our workplaces. We get together during lunch time and at night, learning one thing a day. We communicate in English, which Pakistanis know well. I taught them what to say in the office and let them try

themselves. They are Muslim, so they trust me and I can teach them well. Filipinos, on the other hand, they do not ask me questions. If they do not ask, then I cannot teach. The supervisor for the night shift knows English but if that was not the case, then the Filipinos have to learn quickly, like me. (Eddie)

Eddie's remark shows that the value and importance of Korean proficiency rises or lowers depending on whether English is at least partly understood by the management or not. Speaking Korean was more likely to be crucial to the workers from the non-English speaking world. Unlike Eddie's workplace, Raju and Geshab, whose English was fluent enough to communicate, suffered from a lack of Korean proficiency because nobody understood English in their small workplaces.⁸

Length of Stay in Korea Matters. The amount of the effort spent on Korean language acquisition also varied due to interviewees knowledge that the worker immigration system only affords individuals a relatively short period of stay—three years—in the country. This discouraged some interviewees from investing in learning Korean. Instead, they often thought about what country they would go to next. Raju stated how the Korean system influenced him against actively seeking opportunities beyond self-study to learn Korean:

We are very interested in learning languages. But the problem is that we are only staying here for three years. Every foreigner wants to speak Korean but what if we go to Nepal next? Once we go there, we have no reason to know Korean. We like Korea and wish the government would give us a better opportunity. (Raju)

Raju's comment illustrates the transitory and mobile nature of migrant workers. After the allowed time is completed and there is no prospect to continue working there, workers plan to

⁸ English, however, was in many cases addressed by interviewees in relation to its power and efficacy in migrant work not only in Korea but also other places in the world.

move to another country or come back home to prepare for another move. This transitory and mobile nature is a distinctive characteristic of transnational migrant workers and their transnational space.

Organized Programs outside Workplace—NGOs. Outside of the workplace, there are some focused programs teaching Korean in a more organized manner. Many NGOs which promote migrant workers' human rights also facilitate these programs as their main educational activity. They are joined by other NGOs. Even though program quality varies in terms of curriculum comprehensiveness or number of teachers, the goal is always to enhance the capability of workers by giving them tools to protect themselves from possible threats from miscommunication in the workplace. It is interesting that Korean civil society undertakes training for enhancing occupational capabilities while government and industry hardly notice its importance.

Interviewees who experienced these programs spoke of them positively in terms of their impact on both fluency and expanded social relationships. Goggang, Arafat, Nguyen, Shakron, Maria, Tantan and Seoran all took part in these NGO-sponsored programs and described them also as a moment of nurturing that aided their preparation for daily life both in and out of the workplace. Tantan, a female worker, talked about the benefit of learning Korean in the organized program:

The reason why I feel good is because I have confidence in my speaking now. So in addition to communication with other workers, I can enjoy even the little things like grocery shopping much more than I did. But the best thing is that I can express how I feel in the workplace. (Tantan)

However, interviewees also spoke of the barriers which made participation in these programs difficult, and the key one was a lack of time. Many workers do not have adequate time to participate on Sundays due to the workload imposed on them:

I was only able to start learning again here (at an NGO) after I started work at a new workplace. I had been able to study continuously for six months but the overtime at my former workplace made it impossible to continue. It's good to be here but I feel like I'm starting at the beginning again. (Tantan)

The upshot is that the opportunities for migrant workers to participate in organized learning programs are erratic. To alleviate that, Maria suggested the government provide more support:

It would be nice to be able to learn Korean for six months while working when we first arrive because I think people hold their curiosity and motivation to learn only in their first stage. If not, and a year passes, they may think that they don't really need to learn. I've seen this happen many times, where people start off with enthusiasm but because of all the weekend work just give up. (Maria)

Interviewees also talked about their hopes for improvements in the NGO's language programs:

This centre has been recruiting volunteer teachers through its website. And I know there are many warm-hearted applicants who volunteer their time and energy for us. However, the numbers are still too small for this centre to be able to operate various specific skills classes with various levels of ability. (Hyang)

Organized Programs outside Workplace—Ethnic Communities. Some interviewees also talked about the organized support they received from their existing ethnic communities. Wing, a worker from Burma, learned Korean from other Burmese on Sundays for several months upon arrival in Korea. Wingnaiwoo, also from Burma, pointed out the importance of

learning Korean as a basic step to obtain other learning opportunities, whether proficient Korean communication is needed at the current workplace or not. He explained why his countrymen were helping each other:

We always advise our newcomers to learn Korean as hard as they can. You know, once you understand Korean well, you can take the next step, such as learning computer skills and so on, which are provided at this NGO. (Wingnaiwoo)

His remark shows that learning Korean was recognized as a door to other opportunities. In ethnic communities, these learning needs were discussed and dealt with collectively.

Technical Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes

Some interviewees talked about their experiences acquiring knowledge, learning technical skills, and developing the right attitudes needed in the workplace. They shared stories of the struggle to grasp current skills and showed their disappointment and frustration in their efforts to reshape the context of training through their active intervention and resistance.

No skills required, No training needed. All worker interviewees reported limited official workplace training opportunities. Aside from the initial three-day residential orientation, all training related to skill acquisition was received on-the-job (OJT) from peer workers or managers. The analysis of the reasons for this dearth of opportunity differed according to each interviewee and depended on the initial primary reason for coming to Korea or their experiences after arriving.

All interviewees except one were people with secondary education completion and stated that they had a hard time in seeking proper jobs in their own countries. Nyguen provided a typical example:

Our economy is a bit less developed than Korea so there are many people who want to come. It is hard to save money at home. It may sound strange but it is harder for educated people to find jobs in Vietnam so they often consider working abroad to get a higher income. (Nyguen)

While money was the main purpose for coming to Korea, they all also reported their expectation to obtain sustainable skills and knowledge while they work in this more advanced country. Tura's expectation turned to disappointment quickly after starting his first job:

Skills training was completely absent. None, I dare say. Most factories only care if foreign workers are physically fit or not, can work well or not, understand some Korean or not. So it isn't surprising that factories and employment agencies don't provide any education. This isn't just my perspective but also that of many friends who came as industrial trainees like me. The only way Korean co-workers look at us is as cheap labour because it is hard to get Korean workers when the work is physically demanding. (Tura)

While most of the interviewees expressed disappointment with the low skilled jobs, they saw their work as an important contribution to the Korean economy.

We migrant workers should not be neglected. No single country can exist without manufacturing. Why are we ignored while we do the country's important work? (Hyang)

Interviewees said that this apathy towards them critically influenced their pursuit of learning opportunities to fulfill long-term plans of skill upgrading.

Aimless Initial Orientations. The initial orientation has the potential to provide a positive impact on the entire future stay of each migrant worker. However, many interviewees saw their experience as suboptimal, with some even referring to it as merely an advertisement for the country. They recalled learning such subjects as that brief lesson on the Korean language, security education, general information on Korea, basic work ethic, some do's and don'ts in the

workplace, and a brief explanation of labour laws. The first complaint was the lack of time, which meant that essential subjects were dealt with only in the abstract. Each subject was allotted two to three hours. Raju's comment about the time insufficiency was representative:

These subjects requires five days at least but they only kept us for three days. It can be longer, providing they teach us what we need for our jobs. That would be better.
(Raju)

The second criticism concerned the one-sidedness of the content or the delivery. Hyang, a Chinese worker, recalled the culture shock he got from his orientation in 1994:

How can we adapt ourselves in such a short time? I didn't feel any consideration for the workers who come from different countries. I never thought the education I got was appropriate, because Korea and China have so many differences in terms of social structure and culture and many other aspects. The stress was so tense in the first three days due to the difference I perceived between China and Korea. It was so one-way. (Hyang)

Goggang, who experienced this orientation in 2000, echoed the same point of "non-mutuality."

I heard a lot about the goodness and superiority of Korea. There was a big gap between the advertisement we heard and the reality I experienced later. (Goggang)

One positive aspect is an apparent improvement with regards to feelings of oppression. While some seasoned workers who received this orientation approximately ten years ago, like Hyang, presented rather oppressed feelings, interviewees such as Goggang, Raju and Geshab, who received it around 2000 -2001, stated that the atmosphere was non-oppressive. However, the complaint about the lack of comprehensiveness and mutuality went unresolved. For example, Goggang indicated that he only listened to information about Korea for the entire three days,

while never hearing anything about the new workers' concerns about entering a new workplace. Similarly, Raju and Geshab stated that the content was not related to their work at all even though work was the specific reason they had come to the country.

On-the-Job Training. All interviewees reported that their current workplace skills were achieved by OJT, which was mainly provided by employers or peer workers. After the initial OJT, the possibility for successive OJT was mainly determined by the circumstances of each workplace and its people. Some interviewees had opportunities to move on to more complicated tasks by gaining additional training. Their cases often entailed active instructions or transmission of skills out of necessity in severely short-handed and small workplaces.

Others benefited from productive experiences with employers and peer workers who possessed open attitudes. Still others, however, indicated that people in their workplace intentionally imparted no more than the minimum level of training required so as to leave them at an elementary skill level and therefore only capable of handling certain tasks. Tura made the following illustrative point about how his learning expectations turned into a frustrating experience:

If you work in a newspaper company then the most important thing is editing and writing an article. If you learn anything, you learn how to cut papers, edit, do pictures and how to write an article. But for us, we only move and cut papers, so our bodies get hurt, maybe a finger gets cut off. You might think it a skill to be able to move and cut paper, but it's not really a skill. (Tura)

In smaller workplaces, and especially ones where the work was manual and repetitive, upgrading hardly occurred at all—including for the Korean workers. When asked if there were opportunities to upgrade his skills in his workplace, Nguyen answered:

Well, there has been almost no change when it comes to my tasks at workplace. At our factory, we use moulds to make slippers. The moulds are used again and again for a long time. I learned what I needed to know in two months but I have used the same four moulds for four years so far. Remember, we cannot change the workplace, we are industrial trainees. (Nguyen)

Nyguen's example is emblematic of others because of the systemic constraints imposed upon his development. By law, industrial trainees are not allowed to change their workplace. So, those workers who abide by the law are in danger having few chances to obtain skills. Tuhan recalled his frustrating "training" period:

There is no such thing as good training. Instead, they gave us a tremendous amount of work which needed no skills. You know, a textile mill has many electric machines. But we were not allowed to touch anything. We were told to just clean the floor and machine...for the first 6 months. (Tuhan)

He continued to say that the training period was in name-only:

Now I am really good at what I am doing. But at that time, people who taught me kindly were scarce. So most of the time I had to see, think and do by myself. We are foreigners and cannot be expected to do things as well as Koreans do unless we learn it well. I finally ran away from it and became an illegal worker. (Tuhan)

But becoming an illegal worker can have its negative effect on skills acquisition besides the obvious dangers of flouting the law. Maria, an undocumented worker, talked about her inability to learn new skills this way:

Doing a good job as a foreigner takes at least a year or two. But we foreigners do not have work stability because we often face incidents which force us to quit and change workplaces. So, learning new skills which are often the manual, repetitive ones seems like an endless experience for us. We feel like we are "eternal novices." (Maria)

OJT providers were not entirely Korean. Some interviewees obtained OJT from fellow migrant workers who were “old-timers” in the same workplaces. In these cases—particularly when the two people were from the same country—the worker felt more comfortable than when they were taught entirely by Korean people. Eddie talked about his determination to be a good trainer to the newcomers in his workplace:

After a fellow Iranian came, I moved to upstairs [to more complicated work]. But whenever I had time, I went downstairs frequently to help him and went back upstairs right away. (Eddie)

Eddie taught new migrant workers and led them to break through the low-skilled, marginalized situation to a certain extent. Arafat was one of the people helped enormously by another migrant worker, in his case a seasoned worker from Bangladesh. Tantan, stated that her ethnic community helped her in an organized way, from getting jobs in the companies where her fellow countrymen worked, to helping newcomers adjust to the tasks.

Learning Skills While Looking Forward

Outside of the workplace, interviewees thought about their future and tried to develop themselves as full-fledged workers to move beyond the current context of work, to the next stage of life after being a migrant worker in Korea. The first step was usually an exchange of learning about the various skills and knowledge that seemed useful for gaining sustainable jobs in the future, be it at home, in Korea or anywhere in the world. They also participated in various programs offered by NGOs where, unlike the workplace, their potential to be competent workers was acknowledged and encouraged. Some workers favored the company of their own ethnic communities, which facilitated some learning circles to aid personal development.

Learning Transnational Capabilities. Interviewees often talked about their status as ‘transmigrants’ searching for jobs wherever in the world they are available. Interviewees spoke of their desire learn to be better workers in order to aid their search. However, their learning needs were often challenged by a series of dead-end jobs that sometimes stretched for years. Tura expressed his feelings about this in the following way:

We should have an opportunity to achieve whatever we want to do in our life wherever we are. I don't know about other countries but in Korea, for migrant workers, there is almost no opportunity except for working in one single factory.
(Tura)

Far from his ideal of being a world citizen, Tura spoke of his experiences of being boxed in as a cheap labourer who even lacked the full freedom to change workplaces.

There were several specific skills that interviewees sought while in Korea. One of those was English, which was seen by them as an important transnational capability. Out of nineteen worker interviewees, six were interviewed in fluent or communicable English, which was not their native language. All six interviewees had completed post-secondary education, where they had learned English. All of them saw English as a sustainable, transferable skill, useful throughout one's life. Shakron and Nyguen, who despite speaking Korean fluently, were planning on returning home soon due to pending visa expiration, prioritized learning English as the very first thing to learn upon arrival at home. Nguyen talked about his desire and his difficulty to study English in Korea:

I wanted to learn English here, but I was not able to do so due to a lack of free time and money. And since I am in Korea to work, learning Korean got priority. For my future, however, that would be great because we can make ourselves understood in English almost wherever in the world. English is a must. (Nguyen)

Computer skills were also identified by all interviewees as crucial skills. Gaining occupational utility was a key motivator, along with other social, or networking reasons. Computer ability is widely associated as the literacy of the current era. Explaining how they have been influenced by the recent trend, all of the interviewees drew a linkage between acquiring computer literacy and their future careers. Only Shakron and Tuhan said there were computerized tasks in their workplaces. However, Tuhan reported that, during three years of work, he had no opportunities to handle those tasks. Shakron indicated that he had operated the computerized machinery, but only with limited authority. Even those brief experiences, however, sparked his interest in computers and to further learning with the help of his Korean friends:

Our aim to be here is not only making money. We think we should learn some skills for our careers. Computer is one on those. We may be able to learn computer at home after we return but it might be too late. It's good that we can learn it here if we have a will to do so. (Shakron)

A few interviewees stated that they had some opportunities to learn some computer skills before they came to Korea but they reported that they were amazed by Korea's easy and non-expensive access to computers and the Internet. This may have served as a reason why all interviewees ranked computer skills as the top priority to learn while working in Korea:

Some of us learned Korean and ended up adapting ourselves here. Now we do our best to catch up to the world and be competent. One of the ways to do that is study about computers whenever we have time. We don't have time or money but we want to keep up with the flow and we do that because we have dreams and we are young. (Tura)

Despite the barriers of time and money, all interviewees sought various ways to develop better computer skills. When they had peer migrant workers who were knowledgeable in computers, peer learning was facilitated easily, using evenings after work, gathering at the place

of a worker who owned a computer. Raju stated that he learned computer skills in his dorm room with other workers who worked near his place because his workplace provided computer and Internet access.

Other interviewees enrolled in computer skill programs offered by some human rights NGOs. Some interviewees appreciated the NGO computer programs because they are free but others pointed out the language barrier to learning, as all are taught in Korean. According to interviewees who participated in these programs, the programs were driven by the aspiration of workers who wanted to know about a new technology that is one of the must-knows as workers in the 21st century. NGO workers are also a key input, many of whom give of their time freely even outside of official NGO office hours. Interviewees stated they enjoyed learning computer skills in these NGOs, sometimes more than learning Korean, because participating in computer learning programs would have many uses in now and later on in their lives.

Some interviewee's thirst for computer knowledge was quenched by support from their ethnic communities. Wingnaiwoo's community has facilitated a small Sunday learning circle among members with cooperation of an NGO:

We have 27 leading members who have executive positions and six or seven people among them who take turns to come up to this NGO. They all stay on Sunday and offer some lessons on computer skills to our country people. Aside from that, we also have some personal study circles among people who learn something privately from someone who knows the skills. (Wingnaiwoo)

Interviewees enjoyed their basic encounters with computer knowledge, and how that often gave them access to information in other areas. Goggang learned basic Internet skills from an NGO. He and his friends were able to make a Chinese interface available in the lab of the NGO. Arafat and Shakron responded that knowing how to use computers made them more knowledgeable than before because they could find almost any educational resource on a variety

of areas on the web. Shakron referred to the Internet as his virtual teacher. Two interviewees bought computers for their daily practice of computer skills or to find resources which may be relevant to their future jobs. The rest either made use of facilities at NGOs or went to Internet cafés near their workplaces and residences where they could use computers for a reasonable fee⁹ to learn to use the Internet with friends.

Overall, interviewees understood that acquiring computer skills and English proficiency can create better opportunities for them to access to stable and viable jobs in the future and have actively sought out opportunities around them.

Specific Vocational Skills. Some interviewees shared their specific plan for the future with the capabilities they gained from Korea. Arafat told of his encounter with knowledge on the internet by attending an NGO's basic computer class and how it opened his eyes to the possible careers that he could pursue with this skill when he goes back home. He decided to learn Photoshop because he thought this skill would be profitable since there are few digital photo studios in Bangladesh. Without finding any program to take, he asked a close NGO worker who taught his computer class a year ago to teach him this advanced software program individually for several months. By having short tutorials for half an hour after five o'clock several days a week, it was possible with an enormous effort to spare time to sleep before his is nightshift. After he gained enough knowledge on handling the software from her, he studied independently with the materials she recommended. He expressed how serious his intention is to find a niche at home:

9 The fee for using computers in a Korean internet cafe is approximately CDN 1 dollar/ hour.

When we finish working here and return to our country, we should do something to make money. I searched the job market at home and found there are not many computerized photo studios. Once I thought to take classes in some institutes, but I simply couldn't because we don't have much free time to schedule learning during weekdays. Also it is very hard to find opportunities what we want to learn. Even though I understand Korean quite well, I couldn't find an institute open on Sunday. I finally asked her to teach me and she kindly helped me with her expertise.
(Arafat)

His positive experience led others to request the same treatment, which the NGO saw as a collective request. The NGO opened a regular Photoshop class with a volunteer teacher.

This example shows that some workers were motivated by the skills they learned in Korean and actively formed a tangible link between them and business or employability when they are no longer migrant workers in Korea. Maria, a woman from Burma, mentioned that she gained some knowledge and experiences regarding early childhood education and spoke of her hope to be a kindergarten teacher when she goes back:

I want to work in a Kindergarten when I go home. But I work and don't have enough money, not to mention my undocumented status, to take some kind of early childhood education class that takes two years. I finally was able to get a part-time assistant job in a kindergarten where I work four hours in the morning to take care of children using my English. I am doing this assistant job with all my heart, learning how to be a kindergarten teacher. (Maria)

Some interviewees who speak fluent Korean expressed their hopes to utilize that skill for future employability at home:

I'd like to learn Korean more and make it my expertise in the future when I go home. I want to do something which is related to Korea since I worked here and learned the language. I hope I can get a job in a trading business between Korea and Vietnam. This area of business is now expanding. (Ngyuen)

Stories of obtaining skills for the future shared some commonalities. First, these stories were based on individual and sporadic efforts of high achievers who were down-to-earth and made extraordinary efforts to plan their futures in various ways. Second, languages were the precondition to proceed with the learning needs for skills for the future.

To meet the learning needs of the newer workers, some seasoned workers tried to provide learning activities in their own ethnic communities. Some interviewees shared their stories of learning the skills what they wanted to learn with other members of their ethnic communities in twos and threes.

Some friends of ours often tell me computer classes offered by NGOs are incomprehensible because they all are offered in Korean. Understanding the content only in Korean may be too difficult for foreigners who have been here only for a year or so. Since there are many people who want to learn computer skills in Burmese, we opened a small computer study circle last year. One Korean teaches us and some of us interpret the lesson. (Wingnaiwoo)

Wingnaiwoo wants to organize other vocational learning opportunities for his community:

We have been thinking about facilitating small learning circles for each skills area, like electric work, mechanic work and so on. We have some people who have had expertise in these areas but we have difficulty to bring people together due to time conflicts. Even though there are a few opportunities to do so they are offered in Korean and that made many people feel disappointed. Many of us really feel the need to learn advanced skills. Because we mainly have academic backgrounds and are lacking mechanical or technological skills, we do need to learn it to sustain our lives when we live here or go back home. (Wingnaiwoo)

Other ethnic community leaders tried to facilitate similar activities but lacked the resources to organize. To start concrete programs for vocational skills, these leaders connected with their Korean friends and NGOs to discuss the possibility of developing programs together.

Tura, for example, has been involved in developing a returning project with the Joint Committee for Migrant workers in Korea (JCMK). He believes that the initiation of this program is “making a step forward” for the history of migrant workers in the country:

People try to start something with the money and the knowledge that they got from Korea when they go back home. But most people fail. The reason is that the knowledge they gained here is not appropriate for the situation at home. Since they are away from home for extended periods, they cannot learn the field necessary for the county they hope to return to. Learning should happen by linking two societies. If we cooperate, Korean NGOs can connect with NGOs at home to help people to learn the necessary skills and use them when they go back. (Tura)

Tura’s remark shows that efforts to develop returning programs have started to emerge. Tangible programs, however, are still not available. Maria expressed her expectation that Koreans, too, would be interested in programs that prepare migrant workers to return:

I heard that Bucheon College would start programs for foreigners but I haven’t heard anything since and that was a couple of years ago. If Korea created a certificate program, that would be best! Korea is a highly advanced country and there are abundant skills in Korea that we want to learn. We would happily accept low salary but it would be very nice if Koreans teach us viable skills that we can take away with us. (Maria)

Learning to Gain Social Capabilities

Social capabilities can be defined as capabilities that enhance knowledge, skills, and experiences, which in turn enhance understanding of the society to which they belong, increase the understanding of others who are different from oneself, and enable the establishment and maintenance of relationships with people through various ways of networking. Interviewees were engaged in various learning activities and maintained a complex web of social relations in Korea and with their countries of origin. Their stories revealed that they experienced multiple

identity formations while participating in activities due to their unique and multiple social locations in Korea which they never experienced before.

Interviewees reported that participation in some activities helped them to maintain or enhance their social capacities. They tried to be as flexible as possible in order to accommodate themselves to the new social settings. One interesting point was that the interviewees did not view gaining social capabilities as incidental outcomes. Rather, they actively planned what they wanted to learn from these engagements. The learning experiences that were revealed are categorized into four areas: learning Korean culture, exchanging cultures, and networking with others either locally or globally.

Learning About Korea and Koreans

Interviewees reported that they enjoyed getting to know Korea and its language and culture. For some, the reason to learn Korean went beyond better communication at work. It also facilitated a fuller life by enabling themselves to engage the place they selected to spend years of their lives. Many interviewees gave this rationale for learning Korean. For example, Shakron's advanced level of Korean proficiency often enabled him to form good relationships with Koreans, such as peer workers and supporters. Aesan, who addressed himself as "almost Korean," recently started an advanced Korean program in an NGO. He stated he wanted to write beautifully and expressed his view on this specific learning need:

I can speak pretty good Korean and so I have a good life here with many Korean friends. I think that if people study the language hard and get a good command of it, they can be regarded as Korean. That's what I feel and I know I need more fluency than I have now. (Aesan)

Korean proficiency often made learning interactions mutual. Hyang, a Chinese migrant worker, has provided Chinese language class once a week to staff and volunteers at an NGO for

years on a volunteer basis. He stated that he studied Korean hard to build good relationships with Koreans. While he learned computer skills in this NGO, he formed solid relationships with Koreans such as NGO activists and volunteer teachers who dedicated their time to migrant workers, he suggested teaching them Chinese, one of the most popular second languages in Korea:

I wanted to pay back this favour. You know, we migrant workers learn Korean and computer from these teachers. I was so grateful to them for spending their precious time on us so unselfishly. It made me realize that I could help them as well instead of just using our time to make money. It's mutual volunteer work. (Hyang)

Other interviewees explained that their Korean proficiency helped them to facilitate better relationships with Koreans in and out of their workplaces. Nyguen, who was about to return to Vietnam in a couple of months, said he made many friends in his four years of work. Hyang's experience was similar:

In my workplace, there is just me and my employer. Can you imagine how boring my life has been? I wanted to meet people instead of just hanging around on Sunday. I could have worked and earned money. Instead, I earned many relationships at the NGO that were much more precious than the money I made. (Hyang)

The Christian interviewees spoke of their good relationships with Korean Christians. Raju found meaningful relationships from his religious activities and he explained that these relationships were something that he did not have with Koreans at work:

I met many Korean people at church. At the company, I don't really meet anyone. We are only co-workers and there are few if any relationships. But in these Christian activities, we can find many kind people. (Raju)

Geshab, who belonged to the same religious community with Raju, went a step further:

Some companies care, but many companies do not care if somebody gets sick. The company just tells you to go home. It's bad, and makes us feel sad. But the people in our religious community care. (Geshab)

Many interviewees also expressed an interest in getting to know more about Korea's culture. They often pursued this by visiting places alone, with employers and peer workers, or with Korean NGO workers and volunteers. Because of their lack of time, the interviewees singled out these outings as an important way to learn about the country. Learning about Korea was also achieved by watching Korean TV after work. Many interviewees stated how much they liked Korean TV dramas and popular music. Interviewees were enthusiastic when they spoke of Korean TV dramas they regularly watched in evenings. In some cases, like Arafat's, the desire to understand Korean TV dramas served as a reason for enrolling in Korean class. Gogang mentioned the names of his favourite Korean singers.

These stories of gaining cultural knowledge from media were connected with the "Korea Wave" of cultural exports to neighboring countries. Some interviewees, particularly from China and Vietnam, were already quite familiar with Korean cultural exports before ever actually setting foot inside the country.

Exchanging Cultures

Korea has almost 400,000 migrant workers from 97 countries in the world. Therefore, this multicultural circumstance in and out of their workplaces was also seen as something new to migrant workers as well. For interviewees, engaging in activities designed to enhance understanding about Korean culture often expanded to participating in activities for exchanging culture with other migrant workers. The example of Hyang teaching Chinese to Koreans at an

NGO can be explained as an activity to exchange culture through language learning. Some interviewees participated in cultural events to let Koreans know about their own cultures. These events were mainly organized by NGOs, municipal governments, universities and colleges and served as good opportunities for interviewees to make their presence in Korea felt by many Koreans who are interested in other cultures. For example, Nguyen was often able to inform Koreans about his Vietnamese culture. His participation in cultural events influenced Koreans who are interested in Vietnamese culture. He spoke of his experience participating in a big municipal multicultural festival:

I would like to tell you about the one we did at Bucheon city. It was awesome! So many Korean people visited the event and they came to our booth and bought our delicious dumplings! We sold many dishes. By the way, more and more Vietnamese restaurants are opening these days. (Nguyen)

His engagement in cultural activities soon went beyond the “cultural fair”. He began to give his support to the marginalized groups of Korean society. For example, he spent time visiting an orphanage and sharing Vietnamese food with the children there.

Interviewees also stated that they developed curiosity about the cultures of other migrant workers by participating in various organized activities together. Sonoara, who regularly attends the Sunday Korean class at a nearby NGO, spoke of the meaning of her class for her:

People from other places come here to meet their friends. I can see so many people from different countries. That makes me happy because meeting people is my favourite thing. I love to see many different people from many countries. That's a very new experience that I can get here in Korea. The different cultures of the different people I encounter here makes me feel good. (Sonoara)

As shown in Sonoara's example, interviewees who participated in NGO programs had chances to get to know the cultures of other workers by engaging with their volunteer teachers and migrant worker classmates. Nguyen recalled:

I do like Korean class and I mean it. There are so many fellow foreign workers who come from other countries and we exchange our thoughts on our cultural differences. It's huge fun and it's easy to make friends. We are all foreign workers who left our homes so we quickly understand each other. (Nguyen)

When the workers were from different countries but had some commonalities between them, that facilitated close relationships and enabled some learning exchanges to happen. Arafat, a Bangladeshi, mentioned a close relationship that grew between the Pakistani and Bangladesh worshippers who all share Islam. He and his friends came to learn the Pakistani language from frequent socials with them after worship.

Interviewees stated how they tried to be involved not in Korean-dominated communities but in "multicultural communities with all different others," where their cultures take up some space along with those of other migrant workers. Interviewees stated how new this multicultural setting was to them. Through various activities, they learned about Korean culture, let people know about their own, and learned other workers' cultures. Their stories could be understood as the stories of a shared sense of belonging that bound people who are often assumed to be one large amorphous mass of marginalized foreigners in the Korean society.

Social Networking within Korea

For interviewees, gathering with other people from their own country, regardless of group size, was a great asset in terms of exchanging friendship and mutual support in the face of the difficulties of living abroad. Tura, Wingnaiwoo, Shakron, Winfermau, Tantan and Wing each talked about their experiences. Wingnaiwoo stated:

This NGO offers a free medical check-up twice a month. We make use of this as a day when all Burma people in this city can get together. So we made an effort to secure a small, but separate meeting place of our own inside this NGO's office. (Wingnaiwoo)

Some ethnic communities are more established than others. They sometimes have their own community newspapers which provide an important networking function that brings the group together. Tura stated that his community publishes two different newspapers to enable people to follow up on the situation in their home country as well as to gain information on life in Korea:

Our newspapers contain politics, society, labour, and information on Burma activists all over the world, as well as information and news entirely for the migrant workers in Korea. We advertise our Burma community in these papers then newcomers can reach us and get help from us. (Tura)

Learning activities through library and reading circles were also pursued by the Burma community. People from that country established their own library in the corner of an NGO's office years ago and facilitated reading about the home country or on various subjects written in their mother tongue. The reason for this collective learning through reading was to keep their minds sharp. Wingnaiwoo explained the thirst for various kinds of knowledge of Burma citizens living in Korea:

The educational background of our Burma workers varies from junior high school graduates to post secondary graduates. Regardless of the levels of our education, everyone needs to study continuously. General knowledge is being updated daily so we get behind unless we make the effort. (Wingnaiwoo)

Interviewees stated that forging strong bonds within their ethnic communities fit their needs, particularly when they need the help and support of someone from their own country. Ethnic communities were often formed based on the city in which they work and live. The same ethnic communities in different cities often cooperated together over big-scale plans or projects.

Charity work revolving around the Tsunami disaster is a good example of a case that went far beyond the interests of just the Indonesian ethnic communities in showing their desire to help people across ethnic and national lines. Interviewees from the Burma community convened a meeting to find ways in which they could help Indonesians. Additionally, interviewees in the ethnic communities stated that they actively appealed for support from Koreans, too. The Indonesian community held a street collection for Tsunami aid. Also, a charity bazaar for refugee children in Burma was held by the Burma community in Bucheon. Koreans got involved, as did other ethnic communities, making for a solid example of solidarity for this type of transnational issue among migrant workers and socially conscious Koreans who happened to be involved in the communities.

Interviewees who were engaged in specific ethnic religious communities were Raju, Geshab, Gurung and Maria and they were all Christians. Christian interviewees talked about their feelings of inclusion and shared humanity when they got together with others in their religious communities for social time, such as having dinner or playing sports together. Maria spoke of how she regarded this social atmosphere as essential to her life:

I meet with other Chin people in our Chin-Christian religious community. We share our stories about what happened to each of us in the week past. We often throw around jokes and I sometimes feel this is the only time of spiritual healing I can have in my life in Korea. (Maria)

Global Social Networking

Interviewees talked about their desire to be informed about news in their home country and in other parts of the world. They also stated they frequently contacted their family members or acquaintances at home and friends who work in other countries as migrant workers like themselves. Web-surfing was the most important means for this activity. Sonoara articulated her reason for surfing the web sites of her home country as deep longing for the family in Bangladesh:

In Korea, foreigners always think about their families at home. We come here for work, but we live in the land of our family at the same time. Whenever holidays and festivals at home come around, we feel them and miss them so much. (Sonoara)

Knowledge and information on home and other parts of the world were gained not only through the web, but also from other traditional media such as newspapers, as discussed above. Winfermau, who publishes a community newspaper, talked about the importance of home news for people from Burma living in Korea:

In Burma, we cannot get information and news. In other countries, we can. We enjoy the information we can get here through the Internet. We take all the home news we got from the web and publish it with the migrant news of Burmese workers in Korea. We also use the internet to send our papers to our friends who work in other parts of the world. So they can print and distribute it. I have friends in Tokyo and Nagoya who do the same thing, as well as in other countries like Bengal, Norway, Finland, and America. Because we cover local news about our local workers, Burmese migrants around the world know what is happening in our community here in Korea. (Winfermau)

Likewise, interviewees stated that they share and exchange information with other migrant workers around the world. Virtual networking through the Internet was facilitated by

linking them without much difficulty to other workers either of the same ethnicity or different. Many interviewees spoke about the “wired global community of migrant workers” which was only possible through the Internet. Many interviewees mentioned that they learned to do instant messaging and occasionally did this with their friends who worked in other countries. They often could not link with families back home, however, where computer literacy or unavailability were hindrances.

Information exchange by email and chatting was also critical to the interviewees when they considered another migration. This was regarded as a key process by which migrant workers in Korea could build virtual social relationships with people in other parts of world and in effect link their country of origin, their country of settlement and some unknown places for the next migration.

Learning to Gain Political Capabilities

Political capabilities can be defined as capabilities which help people understand their own rights, actively find ways to claim them, and which help them encourage others to participate in activities that make the world a better place. Interviewees reported many activities which deepened their understanding of their rights as migrant workers in Korea. They sometimes learned to resist their subordination which happened due to their marginalized status. They also participated in various activities to let Koreans understand the meaning of living together. Through these activities, the interviewees were able to gain knowledge about how to push aside barriers placed before them in a collective way by using their own political awareness about their social situation as migrant workers, not as individuals who move in the pursuit of money.

While many interviewees spoke of their learning experiences which centered around workers' rights which should be transnationally understood, discussed, and protected, some Burmaese workers spoke of their collective participation in movements to overthrow the dictatorship in their own country, which showed a unique political learning related to migrant workers' national awareness.

Seeking Information about Rights

Interviewees stated they often sought information on workers' rights by participating in informational sessions offered by NGOs or their ethnic communities. Many interviewees stated they had received individual labour counselling from NGO activists. Many interviewees with a fluency in Korean were often asked by their friends to contact NGOs to find solutions for problems on their behalf. In this way, knowledge about laws and regulations or strategies to cope with problems was transmitted from NGO workers to the workers.

In terms of collective sessions, each NGO provided information in its own way. In general, though, NGOs facilitated their information sessions in large-scale settings where the language spoken was Korean. These meetings were information-driven and attendees were from a variety of ethnic communities. The sessions offered by individual communities, however, tended to be smaller, more political, and focused on workers' rights. There was always practical discussion about how methods to cope with cases of unfair treatment.

The meaning of participation in these sessions can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, this can be technically interpreted as an act of gaining information to obtain as many benefits as possible during the migrant workers' stay in the country. It also shows "rule learning," to function as workers and to understand how to act along with and resist against the rules. Wing talked about his experience as a participant in a newcomer orientation session offered by a political group within his ethnic community three months after he arrived in Korea. Taught by more experienced hands, he learned Korean language, laws and regulations, as well as coping strategies in a small learning circle in their small community office, which was a small rented apartment.

According to Wing, the purpose of learning Korean in this small learning circle in his ethnic community was to gain command of power represented by language. As a first priority, he studied texts which mainly addressed migrant workers' rights:

This program in particular delivers the benefits and pitfalls hidden inside Korean labour laws and regulations. A total of twelve hour's worth of education is provided over four weeks. Well, I didn't study hard, but I can say that the orientation by senior countrymen was very useful to know something which is hard to know about life in Korea elsewhere. (Wing)

Tura, a senior in the community, and one of the organizers of this program, reflected on his own difficulty over this last ten years working in Korea and talked about how important this type of training program can be for newcomers:

I had a lot of troubles at work. I was oppressed a lot, but most of migrant workers often think in early stage, 'I'm here for a 'short' period of time.' and 'whether I own a company or I'm a lawyer back in my country, I'll do whatever I'm told to do in here, no matter what, to make money.' Thinking like that, they just tolerate everything. They say nothing even though they are treated like slaves or even animals. Often, migrant workers adhere to this one thought. But they do not know how short that will be. It can be 1 year, 2 years, 3, 4, 5...10 years, but it's useless because they stick to only this idea. At last, they lose their physical health, mental health, and at the same time don't make much money. They just get by. Is this the result they want? (Tura)

Shakron, the leader of a newly forged Indonesia community, emphasized that his community's priority was to get together and learn migrant workers' rights collectively:

The Indonesian community will give our people a lot of help regarding life in Korea, legal work, wage problems, medical treatment, industrial disaster insurance coverage, you name it. Any fellow Indonesian can be helped by us and that will help them work and live here happier. (Shakron)

The phrase, "Know your rights," meant a range of things for the interviewees. For some, it meant actions that enhance their technical knowledge of laws and regulations which are laid out in informational leaflets published by governmental agencies. However, some actions taken by interviewees demonstrated their resistance against any oppressive power placed ahead of their existence as a migrant worker. Particularly, Tura believed that to "know your rights" is the first step to functioning as full-fledged migrant workers in the world and that this should come before other purposes in offering the sessions.

Organizing Small Political Circles in Factories

Tura, who stopped working in factories and started his activist's life officially a few years ago, shared his stories of organizing political circles in the companies he worked for in the last ten years. While employers would like to find "people who work without complaints," Tura introduced himself as "a person who has too little patience to work silently." He stated:

I always had such an idea from the beginning, a thought that 'this is not right'. I always organized a group in each company I worked. From the employer's perspective, they might have thought of me as a trouble maker. But I think we shouldn't just sit around, we have to speak out. Since I did things this way, people in the companies where I worked may have found my arguments made sense. They agreed saying 'That's right' and 'Let's talk to the employer.' When we went to the employer and told him. In some cases, we were allowed to speak and to a certain extent they made changes for us. But in others, we simply got kicked out. I have been kicked out many times. Even if I left the company, other people took my position and kept trying to find their own way. (Tura)

In particular, he emphasized the importance of communicating with employers directly so as not to be exploited:

If you get hired through a friend here, then you don't get to meet and talk with the employer of the company. The employer just says to one of his employees 'Bring a friend,' then the employee takes you to him, you say 'hi' but that's it because there is no real conversation about the company or your job description with the employer. You just work there. This is the beginning of all painful mistreatments later on. (Tura)

While leading small political circles to discuss their trespassed rights within factories, he decided to be a de facto political activist leading migrant workers' political struggles against the Korean immigration system which he believed to be unjust:

I thought I might be better off joining a political organization rather than working here and there and doing political things sporadically. So, I quit my job and started to get together with friends who do political activities. (Tura)

Claim Your Rights—multicultural Education

Three interviewees – Hyang, Nguyen, and Tura – shared their stories about participating in multicultural (and human rights) education as lecturers or facilitators, and described how they tried to let the Korean public know about them without distortion and misunderstandings. These activities gave interviewees the opportunities to experience the position of learning providers for the general Korean public rather than remaining as their taken-for-granted learner-student, recipient status. Nguyen and Hyang stated how much participating in multicultural education meant to them:

I've had several chances to talk about Vietnam and its culture in several community centres. I found it fun. This coming Friday, too, there's a cultural event called "Vietnamese Day." It is a small event which is organized by some faculty members of Seoul National University and their Vietnamese students who study there. They asked me to come if I have time. It is an event related to Vietnamese culture. They cook Vietnamese dishes, display some poster on our culture, sell some books on Vietnam. (Nguyen)

It was fun to spend time with Korean children and be able to share my Chinese culture with them. It was a pity that I was not able to get involved from the beginning of planning this education since I am busy with work, but if there were more opportunities like this, I am sure that I want to be part of planning, too. (Hyang)

Tura shared his experience as a planner, facilitating a “cultural understanding of Burma” for Korean elementary school children with other Burma workers:

We continue to educate Korean people, school by school, about the countries where migrant workers are from, regarding their cultures, how they live, their languages, food, religion, and so on. When we go to a school, we cook our food and dress kids in traditional clothes, and teach them songs. We also talk about why people from our country come to Korea, and the differences and similarities between them and Koreans. Through this, children find things that help them relate to us. (Tura)

These remarks demonstrate two things. First, they went to great lengths to inform Koreans about their culture. We can see this as an effort to retrieve their culture from marginalized status in Korea. Second, it showed migrant workers themselves taking an active part in making an inclusive society. As mentioned by Tura when he chose the words “our society,” he meant a society in which Koreans and migrant workers live together without oppression.

Learning to deal with Media

Tura and Hyang shared their experience learning how to produce videos to establish migrant workers’ own route to approach the media. Tura recently joined a group of migrant workers which regularly makes TV programs to portray the lives of migrant workers in Korea. This program airs through a cable TV channel, Citizen TV, every two weeks. It marks an unprecedented attempt to broadcast migrant workers’ lives by migrant workers themselves. Tura, on his reason to participate:

Korean media portrays migrant workers only with regards to Korea’s own needs and this portrays us in the wrong light. I find this unjust. (Tura)

Hyang found his own way to let Koreans see an unbiased account of Chinese workers’ lives in Korea by attending a media production course from a community centre. However, to complete the course, he took a great risk. There were initially five workers who enrolled but

only he was left at the end. For the undocumented workers, they dropped out in fear of a severe government crackdown. For documented workers, there were misunderstandings between them and the employer about their learning. Hyang, who was an undocumented worker, talked about taking the risk to complete the course:

Everyone but me gave up. Maybe I have some kind of unyielding experience (says with a laugh). But this was a rare opportunity to learn how to make film that will teach others about us without misunderstandings. (Hyang)

He recently completed his first work when he participated in a summer camp for migrant workers offered by an NGO and posted a video of that on the NGO's website. His ultimate dream is to make a documentary on the lives of migrant workers in Korea but his undocumented status is a great barrier, as he recognizes:

It's been more than twelve years since migrant workers have lived in Korea. I want to make a video of our lives to show that we have become a part of Korean society. Since I am Chinese, I would especially like to take a video of Chinese people's lives to let Korean people know about that. What I would like to show to Korean people is that we do business here; we earn money by hard work. So, why we are not a part of your society? Particularly, the Korean government does not want to acknowledge it. But the reason why I haven't started yet is the current political crackdown on people like me. Everybody knows many people are being caught around Garibong-dong (a Chinese ethnic ghetto). The streets there look very, very deserted now. (Hyang)

Participating in Social Action

Interviewees often commented that forming memberships was essential to the maintenance of their personal dignity as workers in Korea, not as pathetic foreign workers, but as workers who can exercise their rights and claim justice. Tura referenced this as a reason to

participate in sit-ins last year with many migrant workers and Koreans who opposed legislation of the EPS, which they perceived as deceptive:

When you're in a situation where you cannot achieve your dream, your plans, are you going to just sit around and do nothing? The answer is "No," So we just do it even though it's tough and what we can do is little. (Tura)

This feeling often invited migrant workers' activity in various social actions such as sit-ins, street demonstrations, and hunger strikes. Tura and Wingnaiwoo participated in street demonstrations and hunger strikes to resist the EPS legislation because they believed that the system has too many loopholes which would make no progress in migrant workers' betterment from their significantly marginalized situations. The most problematic provision mentioned by them was the one regarding no right to change workplace, which they see as oppressive.

Raising National Awareness

Some interviewees from Burma talked about their close political linkages with people in Burma and their dynamic activism toward achieving freedom from the ruthless dictatorship there. Four Burmaese interviewees were involved in democratization movements against the military regime. These interviewees stated that a significant part of their various learning activities in Korea was related to the aim of enhancing their political capabilities which would eventually help Burma's democratization. For gaining knowledge of current affairs at home, they operated small political learning circles and facilitated reading through their own small library. For the library, they regularly purchased new books to update knowledge. Significant parts of their collections are political books which are banned in Burma by the military regime. Tura talked about the meaning of being politically active outside the home country:

We are making an effort to enhance the quality of our lives in Korea. But we are also continuously thinking about the ways to foster democracy in our own country. This awareness links us to other migrant workers in other countries. We work to rid ourselves of the oppression we had in Korea and our experience of oppression gives us a deeper understanding of what migrant workers face elsewhere. (Tura)

Interviewees from Burma spoke of their plans to find their ways to enhance their political capabilities in order to be influential in their home country even though they were living as migrant workers. However, they were well aware of their precarious transmigrant status since three out of four interviewees had overstayed their visa. They submitted refugee applications to the Korean government. Tantan, who already achieved refugee status with her spouse, spoke out about her situation:

I want to find things I can do for Burmese who are in Korea as well as to make Burma into a democracy. But our lives here are precarious. My husband has been fired since he frequently took time off work to attend political meetings and demonstrations as a part of his activist's life. We live in a small room and cannot afford anything better. Even though we are accepted here as refugees officially, our lives are the same as that of thousands of other workers who are undocumented. In other words, there is no support for refugees. (Tantan)

Politics of Difference in Migrants' Learning Experiences

This section deals with the impact of being othered that the worker interviewees experienced in their learning, and is arrived at from the perspective of a feminist adult educator. The demographics of the worker interviewees shows that they arrive from Asian or Middle-east countries through ITP or EPS, often stay in Korea longer than they were permitted, and work in manufacturing and construction sectors. These workers are unique from other groups of workers in Korea in terms of their being low-skilled or contingent labourers in the Korean society, foreigners, and cultural aliens to the society. In this research, these characteristics of migrant

workers in Korea are referred to as their multiple social locations, constructed through their participation in work and various other social practices.

I tracked down the ways these locations became the sources of tension in their learning experiences. Also, I discovered gender as an influencing factor that brought different learning experiences to female migrant workers. Though strongly impacted by their “differences,” they negotiated and sustained their lives to make sense of their learning experiences, to make a fuller life, and to work toward becoming full-fledged adult learners rather than poor foreigners with dead-end jobs.

In this section, I divide my analysis into two parts: first, I address foreignness, non-possession of citizenship, and low-skills as the most visible social locations which marginalize and often de-legitimize their learning experiences. Second, I deal with cultural, race, and gender to see how their more subtle categories impact learning.

Class and Transnationality

The impact of being low-skilled and non-citizen on an individual’s learning is contested. Significant amounts of the learning experiences of interviewees were located at the centre of interactions of these two contested social locations. Perspectives, perceptions and experiences of the interviewees were addressed regarding how these social locations cut into their learning experiences and how they tried to reshape the contexts with their enhanced understanding through significant amounts of learning.

According to interviewees, the main problem these workers faced was that they are regarded as cheap manual laborers from the beginning until the end of their stay in Korea. They interpreted the meaning of their jobs in the Korean society as 3-D or “Korean-shunned” jobs. They talked about their perceptions of their jobs and what that meant to their lives. Tura

expressed how he felt at his first moment of realization regarding his status as an ITP worker in Korea when he was placed in a medium sized factory for the first time:

When we came to the factory, the people working there rejoiced. That's because they can now make us do all their work and reposition themselves with easy jobs. They taught us as fast as possible how to do the most dangerous jobs. (Tura)

Raju also defined his work as 3-D:

The work we do in the company is the work they (Korean workers) don't like to do. They like easy, light, simple and clean work. Do you know what that means, 3-D? Difficult, dangerous and dirty. We have to do this work. It might be dangerous, difficult, and dirty but we have to do it. (Raju)

Likewise, interviewees explained the actual dynamics of their lives as migrant workers within the workplace by accepting dead-end and repetitive jobs:

Frankly speaking, I think most Korean people are highly educated so they shun manufacturing. I think that is the reason why many people are unemployed. People often say 'There are no jobs,' but it is not true. There are jobs but most of them are regarded, by Koreans, to be 3-D. Koreans prefer trade or sales but I don't think these sectors can hire all the candidates. On the contrary, there's simply no job at home for educated. That is why we are here. Life here is hard. But life in Indonesia is as hard as here. It's even worse, because Indonesia has very a small labour market which doesn't give us many chances to get hired. (Shakron)

In this remark, Shakron illustrated the global flow of labour between sending countries and receiving countries. He resigned himself to the realities of a world where the shortage of manual laborers in the receiving countries and the shortage of positions in the sending countries coexisted and concluded that accepting hard work in Korea was inevitable. Tura stated that accepting the Korean-shunned work relegated them to the status of "less-than workers":

It's not only my perspective but also that of many friends who come here as industrial trainees. The way Korean co-workers look at us, they think they can easily get cheap labour from us. They're happy because it's hard to get Korean labourers to do physically demanding work. Especially if there is a lot of work to do and they are shorthanded. (Tura)

Interviewees expressed divergent opinions on either whether they should just accept their treatment or actively resist it. Shakron accepted the situation because he knows there are people in Indonesia with more education than he who cannot get as much money as he does in Korea:

The work (injection moulding, plating) is hard but it's OK. In Indonesia, we are hardly paid fairly even though we work hard. We cannot earn as much as we earn here. In Korea, I believe there is potential to make good money as long as we accept. (Shakron)

Nyguen echoed this point about intellectuals in her own country of Vietnam:

A person with even just a bit of education will have a hard time to find a job in Vietnam. Then they consider working abroad because they can get a higher income. (Nguyen)

On the other side of the argument, Tura stated that discrimination is hidden in the structure of importing migrant workers, and that depriving them of their previous education and career experience is a dangerous attitude that keeps migrant workers much lower than Korean workers:

Why are our education and experiences not considered? Koreans who work with us are mostly from very rural areas and have lower education than us. In many cases, they are not good at their work. Since we live at the bottom in that class, we are seen as lower than Korean workers. However, they teach us skills we can learn faster than anybody else. Also, we are capable of developing something with our ideas that will favour the companies. We really want to have some chances to learn

skills as engineers. In the current system, however, no such opportunities exist.
(Tura)

The answer to his question is two fold. First, there is a systematic creation of a low-skill migrant labor force in Korea and in it, workers are equalized as uneducated laborers. Interviewees stated that they were treated as uneducated regardless of their education level. Previous education and experiences were stripped away or not recognized, treatment towards which the interviewees showed uncomfortable and unresolved feelings. According to them, taking marginalized work brought upon a painful deskilling process. They indicated that the label of low-skilled was a powerful category under which Koreans can keep them down. Tura argued directly against the labelling by suggesting that many peer Korean workers had less education than migrant workers. Hyang made the same case indirectly by referring to the inability of the Korean peer workers to migrate. Although not all migrant workers are relatively highly educated, many of the interviewees spoke of the systemic discounting of their education and previous career experiences due to their countries' lower rank than Korea in this swirling, globalizing economy.

Second, the denial of their intellectual capital brought a powerful assumption that they did not have to be learners of fast-changing skills or acquirers of knowledge which is often announced as a must to all contemporary workers in the world. While their intellectual capital was regarded as meaningless in living at the bottom of the economic ladder in a foreign nation-state, the practical impact on their lives is that they received scant training. In the so-called knowledge society, migrant workers are largely left unattended within the structure of labour. Official orientations were recognized for what they are: the first and last training:

The never taught us what our work will be. Before we join the company, they should inform us what our work is like. Orientation was not related to our work at all. In my case, no explanation regarding my electric work was given. (Raju)

Their remarks can be seen as expressions of a naïve expectation that many migrant workers have in the early stages of arriving in Korea and starting their first jobs in the country. The need for an organized learning opportunity when starting a new job in a new place is natural for everyone. Without having any organized learning opportunities on skill acquisition, interviewees started to feel their existence in Korea as the politicized location of a cheap manual labourer. Interviewees addressed their inner conflict of being treated as low-skilled workers who only do strenuous, repetitive or brainless tasks. Maria talked about the difficulty she felt during her on-the job training:

Whenever I made a mistake and made inferior goods, I asked Korean peer workers but they were not friendly and didn't let me know what I did wrong. Even though they had patience sometimes to let me know about the cause, it was too short to understand and because of that I made many mistakes and produced inferior products. It caused me great stress because I ended up causing a loss for my employers. (Maria)

While they also addressed part of their efforts for upward mobility by demonstrating their abilities, these efforts were not supported by their workplaces. Some interviewees resisted institutional practices labelling migrant workers as low-skilled. Tura suggested that he was not satisfied with leaving his own security and stability as workers to chance or Korean mercy. Many workers stated that they left their workplaces when they felt they had reached their limit of patience with being treated and paid as low-skilled.

When they got adjusted in the Korean workplace or experienced several different workplaces, they started to feel that being low-skilled is not only their destiny but something

that can be shared with Korean low-skilled workers who were not able to be competent workers in this fast-changing world. Hyang stated how he gradually opened his mind to Korean workers and employers:

A few years passed, and we found ourselves gradually understanding our employers and Korean peer workers. I even worked for my previous employer for six months free because the company failed due to Korean financial crisis. Why? Well, I think I am lucky because I have many good Korean friends. That employer was in a critical financial situation and struggled as much as he could. I kept encouraging him to do our best together. Sometimes he contemplated suicide. He had two children to feed and a huge debt from machine purchases for the factory. Since then, I often tell my Chinese friends who are newcomers when they complain about the low pay or being paid late, "We are all human, we all have a family to feed. He may not be the person who steals our salary. Let's wait until they can afford to pay us. This is what I learned about the reality of small workplaces in here. (Hyang)

Many interviewees believed that the system of acceptance of low-skilled workers has wielded power over them, leaving them as "eternal novices" who are not to be accorded dignity as workers. As revealed from the workers' remarks, low skill is a top-down method or hegemonized category under which Korea accepts and delimits migrant workers as uneducated. This unreasonable and discriminating system made Korean people prone to treat the workers as compliant cheap labourers who should always agree to stay in the same position working on the same tasks as long as they are ordered to do so. These are the systemic constraints that Korea uses to keep these workers in very limited low-skilled areas. This leaves the workers with a deep sense of frustration.

Without having an appropriate adjustment training or skill specific training, interviewees described how their initial expectation of obtaining meaningful migratory work experience in Korea went to pieces gradually. Shown in their remarks, interviewees often maintained their

lives at the workplace while some spoke about experiencing some limited upward mobility. The hopes of the workers interviewed about obtaining new skills were gradually transferred from learning within workplaces to learning outside workplaces. Interviewees stated that they tried to reconcile this reality of work with their hope to be competent workers by seeking learning experiences for themselves, whether individually or collectively.

Foreignness as Legal De-legitimization of Rights

Interviewees talked about how their foreignness became a significant way of creating systemic barriers to meaningful learning experiences in and out of workplaces. According to the interviewees, foreignness acted as a constraint on their ability to live their lives independently.

First, being foreign meant being under the control of the workplace. Many systemic constraints existed due to their foreignness and these were discussed by interviewees. One example was receiving lower wages than citizen workers. Interviewees stated that they were not regarded as competent workers whose skills, knowledge and rights are valued in the same way as citizen workers but they had no other choice besides enduring the unfair treatment. The most problematic restraint was the lack of freedom to change their workplace. When Raju explained his experiences regarding the oppressive situation at his company, he identified the system prohibiting migrant workers from switching jobs as the cause of his oppressed situation:

However bad they treat us, we cannot change the workplace. Once we come, we work for the same company. But Korean people, they have no obligations. If they don't like it, they can change tomorrow. But we must exist. (Raju)

Raju is correct in that ITP workers have almost no freedom to change workplaces during their three years' stay. EPS workers are believed to have more flexibility in changing workplaces than ITP workers but they can move their workplaces only up to three times and

only when there are clearly appropriate reasons acceptable to the Employment Security Centre, the governmental agency. Also, their employers must sign the form as a token of official agreement. This lack of freedom and the limited experiences of segmented tasks in workplaces without choice impacted negatively on interviewees and their active learning of skills while in Korea. These restraints were due to their foreignness. Employers and Korean peer workers view migrant workers as people to be continuously controlled and regulated rather than viewing them as independent workers.

Interviewees pointed to foreignness as the cause of systemic indifference to their other rights as workers. This issue was raised by many interviewees when they talked about the suffering they encountered due to late pay, unfair treatment, or a lack of benefits and welfare provided by the workplace that are extended to Korean workers. Many interviewees experienced painful processes of quitting or running away from their workplaces due to these situations:

Our old manager was a good person who was kind to us and we were able to communicate with him, but the new factory manager was mean. He enforced a wage-freeze policy on the foreign workers. I got less than I earned two years before. How could such a painful thing happen to me and other fellow foreigners, who work really hard until midnight every day? I ended up leaving that workplace with some friends of mine. (Shakron)

In other words, the workers' situation at their companies is precarious and subject to the potential capriciousness of management. Fair treatment is only possible with good employers. Interviewees pointed out that this often put them at a crossroads between enduring and running away.

Third, foreignness typically meant fewer resources to exist meaningfully even outside workplaces. This often became the reason for the lack of essential provisions to sustain their lives, such as the maintenance of social relationships and personal development through

learning. Setting aside various inconveniences or difficulties that foreigners would have in a country which is not their own, interviewees stated that there were almost no feelings of security due to the psychological threats of government crackdown, whether they were of documented or undocumented status. Since these crackdowns take place on a nation-wide basis and at any time to any people who look like migrant workers, interviewees stated that they can be asked to identify themselves to immigration officers at any time.

In the case of undocumented interviewees, government crackdowns were always a threat to their continued life in Korea. Life is precarious, lacking human rights, basic services like health care, industrial disaster compensation, and reduced social relationships. The fear of being caught or deported often led them to drop out from activities planned by their community or NGOs. On the other hand, they shared various stories about taking risks to sustain their activities, such as social times with other people, helping newcomers, and participating in learning activities. Tuhan and Hyang continuously help Vietnamese and Chinese newcomers who are deprived due to their undocumented status. Hyang spoke of his frustration when he worked for the fellow Chinese workers due to his own undocumented status:

I do it because I have been here the longest and there are people who want to get together. However, it is not possible to do so these days due to a severe government crackdown. I have had a lot of plans to build our community but I am also thinking, what can I do with all this insecurity? Many people come to me to ask help. I have to deal with these invisibly and it is difficult because I stand in front. I am less confident everyday about my ability to build our group. (Hyang)

Many interviewees expressed contempt for the motives behind the crackdowns on illegal workers:

Well, anybody can make fake identification to stay in Korea if they can afford it. What's all this about? The meaningless crackdown to deport all the workers who have overstayed their visa has brought another illegal practice! The important thing is not kicking us out from Korea but making the system favourable to the people who are willing to work and learn. (Hyang)

Instead of meaningless discrimination against foreigners, he argued in favour of transnational rights to work and learn. Foreignness embedded in the status of migrant workers divides the workers in the Korean industry into citizen and non-citizen and documented and undocumented and these divisions signify who is entitled to be treated as full-fledged workers and who is not. These divisions then justify the denial of essential rights to significant numbers of migrant workers, and it is all based on the arbitrary Korean legal-illegal dichotomy.

Admittedly, this dichotomy becomes blurred by the forgery of identification or special government pardons and amnesties that extend the stay of workers. But there is no denying that foreignness is still a strong social category which is interpreted as a lack of legality that seriously hampers many migrant workers from grappling with the handful of alternative opportunities offered by Korean civil society. Arguing in favour of migrants' equality of opportunity, Hyang emphasized that more opportunities to learn should be given to the workers regardless of foreignness or their legal status in the country, that the payoff will be great:

I majored in mechanical engineering and I know I am a good worker. My employer has told me that he has never seen anyone who can handle the machines as fast as me. Korea can benefit hugely from utilizing us freely as long as we live in Korea. But to do so, they should teach us. Foreigners can be better workers when we benefit from education opportunities. (Hyang)

There are systemic barriers preventing migrant workers from learning capabilities valuable for their personal and career development. Ethnic communities often do much to fill the learning gap by providing services to their members. However, many ethnic community

leaders have been here for a long time and, by definition, have overstayed their visas, leaving their situation precarious. So, the gap remains.

Cultural Analysis: Race, Culture, and Gender

Impacts of race, culture and gender on the lives of migrant workers were identified as being as strong as the low-skilled and foreign labels addressed above. Unofficial labelling such as race, culture and gender were often found to be psychological barriers that kept the interviewees from actively participating in various activities in which voluntary will is required as a precondition.

First, the split cultural understandings of Koreans between the so-called first world and third world with a certain amount of racial and/or cultural discrimination were negative influences. While more legal rights have been granted to migrant workers and fair treatment has been emphasized recently, interviewees talked about inner pains because they had been denied social membership by being culturally alien to the Korean society. In this line of thought, foreignness was revealed as a cultural issue, related to race and culture. Some interviewees addressed how these discriminations impacted their lives and how they tried to reconcile or resist these subtle forms of oppression. Others referred to their participation in various activities, showing their proactive effort to make explicit links between their cultural rights and human rights.

Second, female workers were treated separately here to show how gender difference impacted the experiences of female migrant workers. Female workers spoke of being influenced by male-dominant cultures in both their home countries and in Korea and stated how they dealt with these difficulties in their daily lives as female migrant workers in Korea.

Race and culture. Some interviewees felt frustrated by Korean attitudes towards them. They mainly interpreted these attitudes as racist. Encountering racism was something they did

not expect when they migrated to Korea as it is an Asian country which is situated closely to their own, either geographically or, they thought mistakenly, psychologically. The interviews show that the migrant workers felt some affinity towards Korean culture, perhaps because of the commonality of being Asian.

In spite of that affinity, though, interviewees talked about how they felt ignored or seen as somehow beneath Koreans for reasons related to their skin colour, cultures and their countries of origin. First, several interviewees spoke of a racial hierarchy among foreigners that, they thought, was widespread in Korean society. According to them, foreignness does not mean the same things for other foreign workers who appear Caucasian or who obviously come from a first world country.

In Korea, many foreigners are hired by thousands of English language training institutes as well as in other professional jobs. However, Sonoara stated that she felt a racial skill divide when she sought an English teaching job. She stopped working at a factory due to the painful experience of a miscarriage and sought jobs in Korea to stay with her husband who also worked in a factory. Since she taught English in Bangladesh and had a master's degree from a university there, she sought out the possibility of getting English teaching jobs. However, the answer she heard from the institutes was painful, and she said the following about her disappointment:

You know, getting a teaching job for a Bangladesh woman is not easy at all. I tried to get it for a year, but I was not accepted. Koreans love white foreigners—Americans and Canadians—as their teachers but not people like me. (Sonoara)

When she visited the employment help agency at an NGO, she was advised to apply for live-in caregiver jobs. She heard discouraging opinions from the agent that she even had less employability to get that job due to her low proficiency of Korean and her Islamic culture.

Sonoara, as a dark-skinned intellectual, expressed that having dark skin meant he or she is a nobody who is only entitled to do manual work in Korea.

For many years now, there has been a widespread racial assumption in Korea that dark-skinned and Asian foreigners are supposed to be migrant workers while Caucasians are almost always recognized as professionals, English teachers or visitors from affluent countries. This is despite the well-known fact that there are thousands of unqualified workers from the US or Canada in Korea who illegally teach English at the ubiquitous language institutes. The double standard is obvious.

And, since most migrant workers in Korea have darker skin than Koreans or have Asian or Middle-eastern looks, these appearances have come to mean that the person is a migrant worker. Chinese or Mongolian workers, who look similar to Koreans, are sometimes safe from racial discrimination until they are perceived as foreigners by their language or attitude. Sonoara's remark showed that a Bangladesh woman who speaks immaculate English and hold master's degree in English was only regarded as a person who is to be located under the unqualified Caucasians. Those unqualified Caucasian teachers are never thought of as low-skilled or illegal workers who should be deported but a Bangladesh women is immediately suspected and will never be considered as a candidate to teach Koreans irrespective of whether she is qualified or not, legal or illegal.

This foreignness is not only a racial matter or hierarchy of the nation-states but also a deeply cultural matter. Eddie referred to his short acquaintance with a foreigner who worked in Korea as an English teacher. He was surprised by the fact that Korean as a language of power was mainly felt by him but not by the English-speaking foreign worker. Eddie stated:

I got to know one English teacher and we became friends each other. She taught English in Korea for one and half years and got paid well, but she only knew how

to say thank you or hello in Korean. That was it! She has no need to learn what I need to learn. (Eddie)

While English is not often used in small to medium manufacturing workplaces, speaking English sometimes was represented as a differentiated power which even exists among migrant workers by revealing a bit of Caucasian or Western cultural background that some workers carry. Mere English language proficiency as a second language does not stand alone to qualify the power. Relevant cultural background, and, if possible, skin colour should be added to prove that the workers are cultivated foreign workers.

English is, therefore, not merely a technical issue of competence but a cultural issue with its link to racial and cultural discrimination. Sonoara and Eddie's examples showed that foreignness is hierarchical and discriminatory divided on a selective basis, with its links to inner differences such as race, ethnicity, nationality or cultural background among all foreign workers in Korea and even among migrant workers. Geshab, who is Nepalese, stated that Korean society enforced high-handed attitudes towards people who look different from them:

We work hard but they say we don't! They often say, "go back to your poor country if you don't want to work hard!" And always with very bad words. The coworkers, they don't think foreigners like me are human beings. They think we're brainless. (Geshab)

Raju, who is also Nepalese, added boldly that only the people who understand other cultures understand they are humans:

Only some people who know about other worlds, who know about other cultures, they love us. Even in my company, there are some people who love me. But some people don't care about the world, don't care about us. They treat me very bad, I found. If they see you are a foreign worker, Korean people never treat you as a human being. (Raju)

This lack of understanding of the peer workers about their cultural background was incomprehensible to Raju because he thought his culture and Korean culture have something in common, as both are situated within Asian culture. Even though he could speak of actual similarities in some parts of the culture in these two countries, such as traditional customs, his understanding was not reciprocated by the actions of his peer workers. In this way, culture also becomes a contested term to include race, skin colour and even the level of prosperity of their home economies.

Interviewees who experienced feelings of alienation shared their stories of the efforts they made to find coping strategies. They wanted to challenge these undesirable situations or take some measures to correct them. Raju and Geshab talked about their effort to find some Korean people who understand and embrace them as friends within the bounds of Christianity:

I think there are some very educated Koreans who understand foreigners, like you. We often find them from Christianity. If someone is a good Christian, he also treats us as human being. (Raju)

Religion, Christianity, that is what I found. Korean Christians told us about the Jesus Foreign Mission Church and asked us to join. When I go there I feel a sense of sympathy and I can relax. (Geshab)

Some interviewees took the cultural misunderstanding as a political issue. They tried to bring attention to it because they felt that the discrimination against migrant workers is not just a matter of racist attitudes or intentional contempt about other, less powerful cultures, but rather a reflection of cultural ignorance. Hyang and Tura shared their views on the distorted images of migrant workers and attributed the causes of misunderstanding to the Korean media by arguing how the Korean media has perpetually portrayed and promoted images of migrant workers as helpless, dark-skinned people from underdeveloped parts of the world. Coincidentally, these two

interviewees adopted the same activities—first, to participate in multicultural events and education programs as a planner and lecturer and second, to learn media production skills to redress distorted understandings on their cultures.

Among the cultural events they mentioned, the most important one was “We too love Bucheon,” a municipal, multicultural festival in Bucheon City. It was named by Nyguen, Eddie, Wingnaiwoo, Arafat, Tura, and Hyang who lived in the area. They actively planned or participated in the events and reported them to be valuable opportunities to let Koreans know about their own cultures. The centre of planning for these events of multicultural awareness was NGOs. These community-based NGOs have become the space for negotiation of workers’ cultural values. Individual migrant workers and whole ethnic communities in Bucheon participated actively in this large event. As a member of the one of the participating ethnic communities, Tura had this to say afterwards:

As you know, discrimination in the workplace occurs because we neither understand nor accept each other’s cultures. The ‘We too love Bucheon’ is the beginning of understanding. We can’t solve everything at once. What we do is called multicultural awareness education. We continue to educate people about the countries where migrant workers are from, about their cultures, how they live, their languages, food, and what their life is like, wedding ceremony, religions, things like that. (Tura)

He believed these multicultural education opportunities would give people a chance to share their thoughts with Koreans and that these would enhance the notion of living together and partly contribute to the establishment of social membership for migrant workers in the communities to which they currently belong:

After meeting a few times, the children say ‘Hi’ in Burmese when they meet people from Burma, and then they feel much better. These children will lead Korean

society when they grow up and since they understand multi-cultural issues even when they are young, I think, that kind of discriminatory mind will disappear. And the same thing goes for the older children. Then people can begin to think that 'these people are also human beings and we should treat them as such and should not discriminate'. I find it meaningful to continue. (Tura)

The gender dimension. Female migrant workers' experiences illustrated the gendered context of migrant work. Their experiences were closely located in either home or Korean societies. Female migrant workers are situated in the extension of the discrimination against all women in the world who live under the male-dominated societies. In this research, listening to the voices of women was more difficult than finding men's voices because recruitment of female participants was not easy: some female workers who were asked to participate declined to be interviewed and provided reasons of non-participation such as lack of free time. Four women were finally recruited and interviewed. They described visible and invisible barriers in their daily lives which impacted on their full participation in various learning activities provided by various organizations.

First, the female workers interviewed spoke of the structural discriminations which existed from their entry in Korea as migrant workers. Seoran, a Chinese woman, talked about why she started to learn Korean in an NGO after more than a year passed since arriving in Korea. She explained that she felt frustrated by the economically disadvantaged situation that women are face compared to men:

We pay more to brokers to come to Korea than men. So we would like to stick to the workplace and not do anything not related to workplaces. We are more cautious because we worry we'll be fired. (Seoran)

Tantan echoed Seoran's point:

Women worry more than men about losing jobs because we had more difficulties than men when we entered Korea. We pay more to the brokers. For example, let's say men need to pay five thousand, we pay eight thousand. There is no doubt that women worry more than men about losing their job. (Tantan)

As shown, the brokerage fee that workers have to pay to the agencies in their countries has been discussed as the one of the most wrongful unofficial practices existing regarding the entry process for migrant workers. Seoran and Tantan spoke of the exorbitant fee that she had to pay to come to Korea, which made them be more cautious to not to make any trouble while they work. This shows that gendered labour practices hidden in the system controls female workers' entering public space where information, relationship, and learning opportunities exist. In other words, women experience isolation and are openly asked not to share anything with others but to keep their suffering to themselves.

Another systematic discrimination on female workers was wage difference:

We do exactly same tasks for the same amount of time but get 150,000 won less than men in the end. The starting difference was 100,000 won less but it seems like the gap is widening. Once I asked the employer about the wage gap. He said, "In Korea women's salary cannot be the same as men's. I can't give you the same salary even if I wanted to." I heard Korea is a democratic country but I now feel it is a male-chauvinistic democracy! (Maria)

Maria showed that discrimination towards female migrant workers was related to Korea's long running male domination of every aspect of society. This explicit or implicit oppressive system of power and the Korean culture of male domination negatively affected female workers' learning needs and self confidence as competent workers. Seoran provided an interesting story about her decision to participate in a Korean class. Her story shows the implicit oppressive power over female workers:

I prefer day work to the nightshift. But for a year or so, I have done nightshift work. Who likes to work at night and spend days only sleeping? But I was afraid to tell my preference to my Korean manager and my reluctance ended up dragging on until now. I finally decided to learn Korean by active and efficient method, attending a class, to express my requests logically to the manager. (Seoran)

For Seoran, Tantan, and Maria, the main sources of oppression came from the system which brought them to Korea in the first place and customary practices at work, which are male-dominated. Sonoara set her oppression in the context of her religion. In addition to problems that other women face, she also described her own Islamic culture as a barrier to her active participation in learning activities:

(referring to NGO activities) I can see so many people from different countries. That makes me happy because, meeting people is my favourite thing to do. I love to

see many different people from many countries. That's a new experience that I can get here in Korea. But I can't meet people very easily. I came from a very conservative family. I am a Muslim, so I have been asked to stay at home. I try to make some friends, but...(Sonoara)

These stories from Seoran and Sonoara converge on the reality that female workers are sometimes discouraged from finding meaningful activities by some men around them, either Korean employers or fellow countrymen, or even people very close to them.

Finally, family work was another barrier keeping women from participating in various learning activities. Sonoara spoke of her double-bind between work and family when her participation in class was hampered by her maternity and family work as a married woman:

I started Korean language class a long time ago. But I simply was not able to continue. Sometimes I had three-to four months' gap due to my pregnancy and family responsibilities and then tried again. (Sonoara)

Sonoara's description of her difficulties to participate in learning opportunities challenged the widely accepted idea that learning activities are based on free access and widely open to 'all' migrant workers as long as they have the 'will power' to devote their free time to learn something valuable.

Despite their difficulties, Sonoara, Tantan and Seoran expressed satisfaction from their participation in Korean class. They were able to gain essential knowledge and create real social relationships with other people. Sonoara described how her curiosity regarding other cultures was fulfilled by her participation in the class. To no surprise, female migrant workers faced the same systemic barriers, such as sweatshop work practices which ask the workers to work even on Sundays while most voluntary activities are offered on Sundays.

Challenges to women's learning also showed up in one of the important spaces of learning for migrants—the ethnic and religious communities. Tantan mentioned the male-

centred activities within her ethnic community. Although the Burma community has been recognized as one of the strongest and most well-established, Tantan stated that the community lacked organizational commitments to female workers who suffered as much as or more than male workers. Since information is shared mainly among men community members, women felt a serious lack of power to handle their own problems by themselves and ended up depending on men who are close to them, such as their spouse or boyfriends. Tantan indicated that this causes suffering for women who do not have men to help her like spouses or boy friends. She explained:

When we women arrive in Korea, the biggest questions are: "where to work?" "Where to live?" Women who have spouses or boyfriends here are lucky because they can get help from them. I am one of them. My spouse sought good employment for me on my behalf. Good employment, where the pay is stable and the work environment is secure from all potential risks that women might face in a foreign country. Even though I have benefited from having my husband's help, as well as his friends who are influential in the community, I am aware of other women's suffering who don't have men's help and must face all these difficulties alone.
(Tantan)

What she pointed out was that important information was mainly shared by leading community members who were always male workers. Female workers were easily situated in the awkward positions within the community when they did not know close influential male members. This brought difficulties for female workers when it came to handling problems without resources. Many female workers, in this way, faced difficulty benefiting from the community's help, which is committed to providing help for all people from Burma in Korea, without condition. Asked what role she wants to play in the community, she replied:

Lots of female workers suffer domestic violence but we women do not have a viable channel to appeal to, because our community, the place we are supposed to seek

for resolution together, is male-centered and does not know anything about why women suffer. I'd like to work for Burma female workers who suffer more and live different lives in Korea. (Tantan)

Maria, a devout Christian, had the same feeling when she tried to accept the male-centred religious culture which was prevalent in her Christian community, a mixed group of Korean and Burmese (particularly Chin, a Burmese racial minority) Christians. She explained that she wanted to challenge the atmosphere of the community while, at the same time, she talked herself into staying within the boundary. She stated:

In our Christian community, I sometimes think it's women's destiny to support men, like the Bible said. But sometimes, I also think we women should get the same chances that men get. But in most cases, I act modestly because I believe women in the community should be able to serve other people by being humble by themselves. I haven't seen many occasions here when women's voices are heard in the community. In my country, though it is less developed than Korea, we Chin women have same voice as Chin men and talk freely without any hesitation during worship. Here in Korea, I have seen that women mainly keep their voices in themselves and only do routine chores. (Maria)

The stories of female migrant workers in Korea illuminated the gendered context of experiences many women are familiar with. Power to control women was located either at home or in Korean society, which operates in ways that hamper the meaningful learning of female migrant workers. Female interviewees made efforts to gain knowledge and skills which are seen as essential to establish themselves as legitimate, equal and fully contributing participants in the places they belong.

Summary

This chapter illuminated the learning experiences that migrant workers have gone through to sustain their lives occupationally, socially and politically. It also described how the

workers are situated among the multiple social locations of migrant workers under which those experiences were constructed. Interviewees spoke amply about their the learning needs they discovered, the motivation to learn something, the process to participate in some activities they chose and the positive or painful experiences that were the outcomes of participation. These experiences showed their awareness of their border status and, at the same time, their focused aim to gain capabilities as transmigrants to push ahead and challenge the borders that are present in their lives. The learning experiences of interviewees captured their efforts to maintain their integrity as workers and members in the society through meaningful learning. In addition, they referred to influencing factors, such as their multiple social locations (e.g., various notions of skills, membership gender and race) which impact their experiences, as being challenging.

From the testimony of the interviewees, we can see that, overall, the various learning experiences of migrant workers in Korea were inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism and cultural hegemony. This implies the importance of workers/adult learners as human agents who have the capacity for learning even under adverse systemic pressures. Rather than being passive, they chose to exist as highly motivated learners who sought ways to be competent workers and community members both within Korea and their home societies, as well as within the context of the global society, which includes both.

CHAPTER FIVE: STORIES OF THE LEARNING PROVIDERS

This chapter focuses on the voices of eleven learning providers. While most studies on migrant workers describe the activities and diverse places with which migrant workers are involved, they have not emphasized the educational functions embedded in these activities, nor have they appropriately noticed the recent burgeoning of learning-focused activities around migrant workers. I define these interviewees who possess influential positions in the learning process of migrant workers as learning providers and interpret their activities as a range of contributions creating meaningful learning experiences for migrant workers in Korea.

The learning providers I interviewed are the people who plan, facilitate and evaluate various activities in which migrant workers participate. In some cases, interviewees were also engaged in organizing activities which aim to help the Korean public better understand migrant workers. In terms of ethnicity, five were migrant workers acting as leaders in their ethnic communities. The remaining six were Koreans. The official titles of the interviewees were diverse. One was a trainer in an official agency. The others were, variously, full or part-time NGO workers, volunteers, labour activists, religious leaders, administrators of religious organizations and leader or representative of ethnic communities. Only one person who works for the governmental training agency was indicated as a professional educator exclusively in charge of educational tasks. The others had a number of roles dealing with various components of education and learning of migrant workers. For example, full-time NGO workers have provided several education programs as well as informal learning activities; ministers or missionaries in religious organizations have supported the spiritual aspect of learning; the leaders of ethnic communities have focused on self-help efforts. Except for mandatory initial employment training, workers' participation in all other activities provided by the interviewees was done on a volunteer basis.

In this chapter, I address how these learning providers connect locally, regionally, nationally and globally with migrant workers and other providers to create an unobstructed environment where migrant workers can learn. Then, I address the understandings of the learning providers under which their current practice is conducted. The functions and understandings of learning providers in the official agency will be discussed first, followed by those of the learning providers in the civil arena, grouped into migrant-supporting NGOs, a labour union, and religious organizations. Lastly, the functions and understanding of the leaders of ethnic communities will be presented. While they sometimes revealed common views, interviewees often showed different perspectives based on their personal beliefs or the organizational points of view with which they are affiliated.

First Arena of Learning: Voice of an Official Trainer

Three organizations are involved in the support of the initial entry and employment training for migrant workers. They are the Korea International Labour Foundation (KOILAF), the Human Resource Development Service of Korea (HRD Korea) and the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business (KFSB). KOILAF is in charge of the initial employment training for the workers from two countries (Vietnam and Mongolia) out of the six that are under contract with Korea through the EPS. HRD Korea offers its services to workers from the remaining four countries. Industrial trainees of ITP come from sixteen countries¹⁰ and have similar services from KFSB.

The only interviewee was Yoo, who had worked for one of these organizations for a year and a half and, prior to that, spent two years providing service to migrant workers in an NGO.

¹⁰ Nepal, Mongolia, Burma, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Iran, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Pakistan, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the Philippines

He was in charge of planning, facilitating, and evaluating the twenty-hour initial employment training program for workers who come through EPS. His organization will not be identified at his request.

Preliminary Education and Orientation

Initial employment training is regarded as part of the process of a workers' entry support. It occupies only a small part of the whole process of receiving and delivering workers to their employers. As part of the entry process, this training is akin to a rite of passage, rather than a systematic training. According to the websites of these organizations the goal is to provide workers with education to help them adjust more quickly as they arrive and to obtain higher productivity for Korean businesses. Yoo, however, expressed his skepticism about the limited time allocation, suggesting it is too short to achieve these big aims:

Twenty hours, it's nothing. I wonder if twenty hours is the enough for me to actually elicit some kind of meaningful change. That's the point, isn't it? I don't know if I achieve anything but deliver what I have to deliver, regardless of how much they understand. (Yoo)

According to him, this training in Korea is not supposed to be the first training for migrant workers coming to Korea. The memorandum of understanding signed between Korea and the sending countries to govern the EPS, stipulates that workers are to have period of training before they are sent to Korea. Yoo expressed his doubts about whether this was happening:

The workers are supposed to have 70-80 hours of education before they enter. We also don't know about the contents and quality of that education because this is an uncontrollable part from our position. (Yoo)

The lack of preliminary education raises the pressure on the initial employment training. In the twenty hours that Yoo has, he should impart all the essential information and knowledge regarding Korean culture, labour and immigration laws, basic skills, security, complaint resolution and Korean language to the workers.

Yoo also talked about other limitations planners face. One problem was a lack of financial resources. Since the expense of this initial training is supposed to be covered by employers, planners are under pressure to not increase their fees. The Korean government reimburses a significant portion of the employer's expenses but has no plans to increase funding. He also talked about his limited autonomy to plan. This was based on the fact that the Government's set of regulations should be abided by and, at the same time, planners are not given the relevant resources or networks helpful to design the curriculum. While all three organizations offer a similar format of initial employment training, they do not coordinate and there are no existing relationships. Accordingly there is no sharing or benchmarking of curriculum:

We have to make our curriculum within the boundaries set by the Ministry of Labour. The subjects are set by the government in advance and we follow. I know that other agencies conduct their training in the same way but we have no existing route to share curriculum. (Yoo)

He also mentioned how difficult it is to obtain access to reference materials, such as text books, from other organizations. This lack of networking among the staff of these organizations shows one aspect of how low the initial employment training for migrant workers is valued.

Suggestions for enhanced training

Even though he pointed to a variety of constraints, he was positive that this official training can be better facilitated with several improvements. First, in the current curriculum, the

one-sided and abstract approach to introduce the Korean culture is problematic. He suggested it be replaced with content relevant to the real lives of foreign workers. He stated that he felt powerless because he could not move beyond the government's intention to treat Korea as a superior country in the training:

We had difficulties when we designed the curriculum. Especially the culture part. We invited content experts but they also didn't know about the way to inform the workers regarding their lives in Korea. We gave up and ended up pushing all advertisements through. For example, we play the video of the 2002 World Cup soccer game when the Korean national team made it to the semi-final of the World Cup. (Yoo)

He added that improvement is beyond the planners' authority:

Basically, we are ordered to train the workers on behalf of the Korean government and it is hard to ignore that. We include what the government wants us to include. This subject, "Understanding of Korean culture," is the most meaningless part of this entry training. It is supposed to be taught with rich micro detail about the reality of life in Korea but the training only contains the macro part of culture in Korea, such as economic growth, national per capital income, national flower. That's what the government wants. (Yoo)

He argued that content experts should be at the planning table to help in the process and suggested that a greater effort be made to fill content with meaningful information:

How about teaching labour culture, particularly the work culture in Korean small enterprises? That's their workplace. The law only talks about duty, obligations and rights, but our real work life is not perfectly straightforward like that, especially not in those poor workplaces. We should teach the workers to understand the Korean style of the labour-management relations. But we found it hard because we were not experts in that content and there are no programs for us to benchmark. (Yoo)

Yoo also strongly argued that migrant workers need more chances to get training opportunities later in their stays in Korea, that they should be given a follow-up opportunity to the initial training program. According to him, workers would gradually form learning needs for successive training program after some time in the country and they come to know more about, as he put it, "what's going on here.":

The knowledge they need later is different from what they gain in this initial training. They will feel the gap between reality and the things they heard from this initial training. After all, workers cannot understand everything we teach them here when they first arrive. Everything is completely foreign to them. I would rather give them one more official training opportunity after a certain period of time than increase the amount of hours in this initial training. If we give them 'one' in the initial training, we can give them 'ten' in this succeeding training. (Yoo)

He emphasized that the improvements depend on the will of the Korean government:

The government can offer these trainings and systemize them as essential training for migrant workers only when it has the will to do so. We can only act accordingly to make good programs for the workers if the government supports it. (Yoo)

Nongovernmental Support and Advocacy

While official training is scant, there are diverse and sophisticated approaches emanating from Korean civil society that facilitate learning for migrant workers. It was hard to find clear-cut categories for these supporters. However, I divided the interviewees into three groups along with their backgrounds and inclinations toward either service or advocacy on behalf of migrant workers. This section covers the first group, interviewees from NGOs for migrant workers' human rights, and the following sections cover labour activists and religious supporters, respectively. While religious providers are inclined to support migrant workers, labour activists are clearly advocacy-oriented. They regard migrant workers as comrades in a greater cause of

labour activism. NGO workers combine both service and advocacy orientation. It is not surprising, however, that there is both cooperation and tension amongst the groups.

Interviewees in this section include five NGO workers and volunteers from two human rights NGOs in Incheon and Bucheon. They actively organize many activities which help migrant workers to enhance their aimed capabilities through participation. Overall, they have tried to foster consistent social relations between themselves and the migrant workers, despite the fact that activities are not always offered with the same direction and agenda.

Understanding Learning Needs through Supporter Actions

Choi, Park, J. H. and Lee, S. are all full time workers in human rights NGOs, where labour rights counselling, medical care, and the provision of education and social activities are considered to be the three major pillars of support for migrant workers. Park, J. H. and Lee, S. view all three areas of support as necessary for migrant workers because they are outside the systematic structure of protection by dint of foreignness or, in some cases, lack of legal status in the country. They chose to work full-time on behalf of migrant workers because they believed everybody should live in humane conditions, with migrant workers in Korea being no exception. Lee, S. stated that migrant workers are situated at the bottom of the Korean society and believed they need supporters like him:

Other socially marginalized groups in Korea are battling hard, too, but they at least have other people to count on, for example some means to let others know about their struggles, like the media. But migrant workers have nothing. (Lee, S.)

Interviewees talked about these three areas of support in detail. First, their direct contacts with migrant workers through labour counselling have given them an advantageous position from which to understand the workers and their various needs better than any other people.

Their services are free, and include a range of simple support functions, such as filling out complicated forms (e.g. a labour contract or visa renewal), explaining laws and regulations. There are also more challenging roles, such as negotiating with employers or petitioning the authorities on behalf of the workers who struggle with overdue wages, human rights infringement or industrial disaster and violence, as well as other difficulties which fall through the cracks left by laws and regulations. Two examples of the counselling they've provided and the importance of their efforts:

We inform migrant workers about Korean labour laws. From the workers' perspective, they are at a disadvantage just because they don't know these simple things. It could be a language matter or it could be a matter of indifference. In any event, these small things end up dividing the documented and the undocumented, the legal and the illegal. (Park, J. H.)

If someone gets into an accident when he rides his motorcycle and it is 100% his fault but he himself is seriously injured, what should be done? This is a case we got last August. He was an Uzbekistan man and the hospital charge went over 17, 18 million won. He didn't have any money but immediate surgery was a must. What should be done in those instances? He turned to us and we were able to convince the doctors to just go ahead with the surgery, that we would guarantee payment. Afterwards, we ended up dealing with the bill by raising some money for him. (Lee, S.)

It is an open question what would have happened to the man if the NGO had not helped him. There are countless cases like this where full-time NGO workers help migrant workers navigate their way through difficult situations. Some are of the crisis variety, but many are also situations from daily life. To Lee, S. this counselling is basic and the most essential way to understand the workers:

Every activist in our NGO counsels workers in addition to our specialized duties. Counselling is essential. It also makes me truly understand what is happening in their lives. If I neglect it, I wouldn't be able to publish our newsletters with such vivid descriptions of their lives. (Lee, S.)

In addition to counselling, the NGO workers distribute information on the rights of migrant workers to both employers and workers. They spent considerable time at this, distributing information brochures and leaflets or developing the organized content of informational sessions from their accumulated experiences.

In their work, they often utilize interpretation that is voluntarily offered by seasoned migrant workers. Park, J. H. spoke of the help she gets from the ethnic communities when the workers she is helping cannot communicate in Korean. Oh, a part-time worker at an NGO and the spouse of a Bangladesh worker who has since become a naturalized Korean, does this type of volunteer work three times a week. Her foremost determination when she started this work was to help resolve the many difficult situations Bangladeshi workers face, situations she often witnessed through her spouse's own experience.

Seeking solutions for distressed workers enabled the NGO workers to have keen insights into the unfairness inscribed in the laws. Park, J. H. took on Korean employers' inappropriate understanding of migrant workers as one of the challenges for migrant workers:

Most of the employers regard migrant workers as labourers out of whom they can squeeze out as much as they can while denying them their workers' rights. (Park, J. H.)

These insights pushed them to challenge the unfairness they discovered with various critiques and actions. The daily tasks of dealing with labour-related problems often caused them to cross the border of laws and regulations. Since their clients are both documented and

undocumented workers and no discrimination is made between these two when they work,¹¹ dealing with the authorities is often challenging, problem that Park, J. H. spoke about:

There are some conflicts because we are an organization that helps migrant workers. In many instances, the law does not help, but government officers are people who do everything according to what the law says. (Park, J. H.)

In 2004, many NGOs temporarily closed their offices for days and took to the streets to demonstrate with the workers in an attempt to achieve full labour rights for them. The reason they participated in the demonstration was that they believed a revision of the laws was the most proactive way to prevent disasters from occurring. After a fierce struggle and half-way success, marked by the government's initiation of the EPS, they returned to their routines, helping workers as usual. However, this social action made them rethink their role as advocates of migrant workers. Lee, S. spoke about the changes in him after participating in the supporters' action:

Clearly, the context of our work has been changed, and we feel we should be changed accordingly. We felt this keenly when we participated in the demonstration. We recognize that no further improvement or changes in system

¹¹ Park, J. H. and Lee, S. were curious and even felt offended when I asked them to help recruiting participants 'documented workers-only.' Both said to me, "You may not know what is going on here – there's no difference between the documented and undocumented." After regularly visiting these research sites for a month, I changed the participant criteria to include undocumented workers because I realized that undocumented means nothing more than 'overstay' and many undocumented workers whose stay did not exceed three years were pardoned last year while just as many workers were not eligible due to even 'staying in Korea a day more' than pardoned workers. I see this status issue as a political matter in the participant selection which I dealt with in detail in chapter three.

would come again soon. So we should find ways to move forward accordingly. However, our reality is still bound to the basic labour counselling on helping to deal with labour rights infringements, such as wage delay, industrial disasters, violence and so on. Even though it may be true, we believe that we have to set up a new direction to achieve a better system, policies, and social understandings. (Lee, S.)

Organizing medical care support for migrant workers is also an important task for the NGO workers. Interviewees in both NGOs have regularly scheduled free medical check-ups for migrant workers. To do so, the voluntary support of regional medical experts and medical student organizations is critical. This may change somewhat, as the Ministry of Health and Welfare has announced recently that even undocumented migrant workers will have their hospital charges and operations supported up to \$6000 (Dong-A Daily, May 18th, 2005). But even if the law is changed, free medical check-ups in the civil arena will almost certainly be continued because approximately 300,000 undocumented workers are still vulnerable due to their status and may not feel comfortable enough to avail themselves of the services.

The interviewees also took responsibility for organizing learning related programs. They identified Korean language as one of the most important learning needs because language proficiency reduces miscommunication and helps the workers to lead independent lives. Interviewees described how the learning needs of migrant workers are met in their Korean language and computer programs, how they grappled with the newly discovered needs of the workers which emerged in the process of facilitating these programs and how they reflected these in planning better programs for the workers. They also mentioned other activities they facilitate for or participate in with migrant workers.

Programs Offering Educational Support

NGO workers and volunteers who were interviewed and who have taught classes, talked about the various dimensions that exist in the offering of educational programs. Although planning educational programs is an important task for the full-time workers, many human rights NGOs recruited volunteers to do the bulk of the work. Volunteers who are in charge of classes are in continuous communication with NGO workers to discuss program direction and administration. Park, J. H. explained how this volunteer-centered structure has been organized and conducted systematically in her organization, as well as the difficulty to find dedicated people:

Volunteer teachers take turns once a year to take the lead role. There are many people who want to be a volunteer teacher but they are not supposed to teach immediately. Instead, they are asked to participate in classes as an auditor or teaching assistant for a month or two because many years of experience operating this program has shown there are people whose enthusiasm for volunteering easily wears out. Therefore, screening and training are needed. Even some people who passed that process still haven't got a chance to teach class. (Park, J. H.)

In this remark, she stressed the importance of the commitment of volunteers. This directly influences the learners.

Volunteers in her organization are mostly long-time volunteers, many of whom are thirty years old and over and have full-time jobs. Generally, volunteers tend to be young college students who may quickly lose enthusiasm. But Park, J. H. explained how the matured and dedicated volunteers in her organization made a difference facilitating programs:

Since many dedicated people have offered long-time volunteering, they have had a sort of accumulated expertise facilitating activities. Also, they may have felt a sense of responsibility. So most of them almost never fail to come and teach. So

this is not something like leisure, but has truly become a part of their lives, I guess.
(Park, J. H.)

Along with Korean language learning, computer learning programs are also some of the more popular educational offerings made by the NGOs. Over time, workers began to express their desire to learn how to use computers and this influenced the NGOs' educational planning. Lee, S. indicated that every time his group survey's the migrant workers who drop in to their office, they always place computer education at the top of their list of things they want to learn. For many people, making a document in Microsoft word is a skill that is taken for granted. Not so for the migrant workers.

To initiate the programs to teach this information, securing sufficient funding is often a critical matter. This was true for both NGOs, although respective financial circumstances were not the same. While Park, J. H.'s organization has had an on-going computer learning program which begins every two months, Lee, S.'s organization has only recently set up the facilities and volunteer teaching force. Park, J. H.'s organization was able to get funding from the municipal government for the equipment purchases. Lee, S.'s, on the other hand, went through a long application process to obtain a grant from social public funding.

The program in Park, J. H.'s organization previously entailed only an introductory course to teach some practical functions such as web surfing, e-mailing, exchanging photos, etc... Now it has been diversified. Park, J. H. understood that learning to use the Internet is regarded as critical because the Internet acts as a door to move forward to more knowledge and is a medium to network with others. Therefore, the curriculum started from very basic operations and proceeded gradually to invite the learners to the world of the web. After workers gain this basic knowledge on computers, they often show up in the computer lab and pursue

their own self-study further. Park, J. H. related that her organization will expand the computer learning program as much as possible.

The challenges that interviewees stated in planning and facilitating educational programs can be summarized into two points. First, the turnout of the classes does not necessarily reflect the learners' aspirations. In other words, high interest may not be directly related to the success of class. There were contextual factors which acted as difficult barriers for many workers to participate in class. Park, J. H.'s comments about these speak volumes about the migrant workers' struggle to learn:

Even though they are very enthusiastic about learning the computer, many people ended up withdrawing in the middle of the course. Unlike Korean language, which they can practice anywhere, the computer is more challenging to practice outside class because many don't have one. Even if they do, they may not be able to use the Internet at their dorms or houses. These workers have no other options but to wait for the class on Sunday. Second, if they have to skip a class due to overtime work on Sunday, then the next class might be difficult for them to follow and their interest diminishes. Teachers just don't have time to offer individual tutoring to catch people up, even though sometimes they do. The other problem is the government crackdowns. People just can't come to class when their lives are at risk. If one's life is at risk, nobody says, "Oh, I've got to go to class today." Before the severe crackdowns started, there used to be many steady learners in our class. However, afterwards, the number of attendees went down dramatically and there was a period that nobody showed up for several consecutive weeks. We ended up cancelling the computer class for three months. (Park, J. H.)

Migrant workers in Korea clearly want this type of opportunity but they lack time and money. In terms of time, many employers think of migrant workers as being available for service at all times because they think the workers are here only to make money. In this sense, learning needs are often ignored or even oppressed by their employers. The government crackdowns also provide a significant challenge to workers' to learn. Before the severe

crackdowns started in 2004, according to Park, J. H., the computer class was offered twice on Sunday due to high demand—once in the morning and once in the evening with the same curriculum. This gave workers some flexibility. Now, due to the sudden low turnout, it is no longer held twice a day. Many undocumented workers in class went underground and this negatively affected the remaining learners. Severe crackdowns therefore negatively influenced the learning needs of both documented and undocumented workers and ended up terminating some learning opportunities.

This reduction in opportunity has sometimes been made up for by extra efforts on the part of activists. Park, J. H. and Lee, S. stated they both devoted some of their personal, after hours time to help migrant workers reach their goals. Park, J. H. indicated that she could not say “no” when she realized how dedicated the workers were to learning skills that would be important for them when it came time to return to their home country. However much she wanted to help facilitate a soft landing for them, though, she also talked about how difficult it was for her personally to do it all.

Another challenge mentioned by the interviewees was the lack of available resources for planning and facilitating specialized classes. For example, due to a lack of volunteers in some advanced skills courses she is planning, Park, J. H. had great difficulty putting the course together:

Even though there are workers are asking for specific programs, there are no volunteers willing to teach it. We have a lot of Korean language teachers but computer experts is another story. (Park, J. H.)

Depending entirely on a volunteer teaching force may become even more problematic in the long term as NGOs expand their efforts into other types of courses.

Expanding the Notion of Learning

According to the interviewees, learning-related activities often went beyond the boundary of the established educational programs. The activities mentioned by the interviewees are grouped into three categories according to the shared goals and the characteristics of the activities: organizing informal learning circles, planning and facilitating multicultural events and education, and developing returning programs. As shown in these categories, not all of these activities aim at migrant workers as primary recipients or are necessarily education-oriented. Rather, these activities expand the domain of activities that migrant workers can participate in, where both migrant workers and Koreans have increased opportunities to understand each other.

Informal Learning Circles. Informal learning circles were often mentioned by interviewees as activities where learning providers organize and encourage participation from migrant workers. Four interviewees talked about various informal learning circles they voluntarily organized or participated in—language learning (Spanish, Pakistani, English, Bangladesh and Chinese), physical or mental activities (Latin dance and meditation), and library-related activities.

The reasons for facilitating these informal learning circles are diverse and can be grouped into three types. First, some learning circles are organized by learning providers and shared by themselves as a form of learning exchange among them for their professional development. In general, someone who has particular expertise facilitates a learning circle and he or she often participates in other learning circles which other people facilitate. Spanish and English learning circles were the examples in this category. These learning circles were started by volunteer teachers to understand different cultures. Therefore, these informal learning circles, in some sense, meet NGO workers' need to understand the multicultural context of their own work.

However, some learning circles they participated in were originally intended to benefit specific groups of people other than the learning providers themselves. In cases of the Bangladesh and Pakistani language learning circles, these circles were started by volunteer workers in NGOs, who are Korean spouses of migrant workers, to benefit other Korean spouses of the workers. Oh, a part-time worker of an NGO and a volunteer facilitator of Bangladesh language learning, started this learning circle because she understands how important communication is in intercultural families like her own:

There are many spouses who want to learn this language because they often have a hard time communicating with their spouses. Currently, only several Korean spouses can speak the languages of their foreign spouses and the rest of the people cannot despite being married for years. There is obviously strong motivation to learn. (Oh)

Lee, S. and his colleagues also participate because this NGO is located in the area where many Bangladesh and Pakistani workers work. It is beneficial for them to have an understanding of those languages so they can provide better services to the workers they help.

A second reason to facilitate the learning circles was to invite migrant workers to act as instructors. Latin dance learning was such a case. Park, J. H. and other colleagues invited Peruvian workers to facilitate. In another, Chinese learning was even initiated by a Chinese migrant worker who felt the urge to pay something back to the learning providers who had helped him. China and Korea have recently increased their economic interaction and this has spurred interest in learning Chinese. Park, J. H. and Kim accepted the worker's offer happily and have participated in learning Chinese every Sunday. In other words, learning happens not only on the workers' side but also for the Koreans who interact with them closely, such as NGO workers, volunteers, and migrant workers' Korean spouses and children.

Third, some learning circles are motivated by NGO workers with intentional aims to support migrant workers' continuous learning. The library projects that both NGOs undertook on behalf of the workers are prime examples. Reading is regarded as a good way to facilitate the gaining of specific and generalized knowledge. Funding was provided by major fundraising organizations such as Community Chest of Korea and Beautiful Foundation, or through collection campaigns that NGO workers arranged on donation websites in Korea.

These libraries stand as a major achievement in that their importance to the learning of migrant workers was recognized and supported by the general Korean public. In the process of gaining the achievement, the interviewees spent more time to plan and facilitate knowledge-pursuing activities more than ever before and, in so doing successfully expanded their role from rescuers of troubled workers to learning facilitators. Lee, S., who drafted the written submission to the Community Chest of Korea in support of the library project, where it competed with other worthy projects, described the urgent need to create the library:

I want people to come out from their small rooms and actively engage with others and talk about their own special interests. I want to support workers to read and form reading circles with people who might share those interests. This is something our library can thrive on. People request certain books for their knowledge growth and we meet those needs. It is a mutual interaction because the reason we do this is our own dream to see people reach their goals and grow with others. (Lee, S.)

The interaction has been mutually beneficial. Interviewees indicated that, overall, their understanding of migrant workers and, in particular, their learning needs, increased as a result of the informal learning circles. For migrant workers, these circles meet learning needs in an unofficial way. Also, these learning occasions have given learning providers chances to redefine their relationships with migrant workers. Interviewees located themselves in the position of

adult learners, a switch from of their usual instructor/supporter role. At the same time, migrant workers have been able to experience horizontal relationships around the learning by taking roles of instructor, organizer, or resource persons in addition to learners.

Multicultural Events and Education for the Communities. Organizing multicultural events and educational programs for their communities is another way in which the interviewees actively negotiate with the cultures of migrant workers. The aim of many activities in this category focused on enhancing multicultural understanding by providing spaces for mutual growth between migrant workers and the Koreans in their communities. An example is a multicultural festival that showcases the cultures of the migrant workers for Koreans. Many interviewees agreed that contacts between migrant workers and Koreans have been scarce and this hampers mutual understanding:

It is difficult to have meaningful encounters between Koreans and migrant workers. There just isn't much contact between the two groups. Even though people see migrant workers everywhere, an encounter itself is very rare. (Lee, S.)

Manufacturing these encounters is the very purpose of the multicultural activities. They are organized in varying scale. In Bucheon, migrant workers put on an annual multicultural festival. It is a large-scale municipal event and the workers are the key organizers. The name for the event, "We too love Bucheon," conveys to Bucheon's Korean residents that the migrant workers also live and work there.

According to Park, J. H., nearly 3000 people participate in this festival and enjoy the opportunity to see migrant workers as valuable members who enrich the community by creating a multicultural atmosphere. She thought this would help migrant workers by heightening their sense of self-respect:

It means "We" would like to show "us"—our culture, our food, who we are. Migrant workers are proud of showing something to Korean people. It is a statement, something to the extent that "We are by no means slaves who work in 3-D jobs. We are migrant workers but that is not all." (Park, J. H.)

There are other activities on a smaller scale that are also focused on the meaning of living together. According to the interviewees, there are occasional activities, such as ad hoc concerts where many migrant workers present their own music and dance. Sometime they take short trips. Park, J. H. said she could feel their enthusiasm when they take trips together:

When we have money left in our budget, or have some extra donations, we go to trips together.. One day, we were supposed to meet at 10 am but some people were late. They were so upset, they came to meet us by taxi. (Park, J. H.)

Sometimes, people other than NGO workers take charge in holding multicultural events. An intercultural family community named "Hanulmaum" (literally translated as "mind of sky"), has organized various multicultural activities. According to Oh, one of the leading members of this community, there was demand among the intercultural families to start their own community. Spouses of foreign workers from Bangladesh and Pakistan shared their ideas to develop their casual gathering into a full-fledged community. Since being established, members have regularly organized seminars, lectures, and potlucks. For example, Oh talked about a recent meeting when they invited a professor of Islamic studies for the lecture and discussion to help them understand their spouses' cultures. According to her, there were so many things for them to accomplish within their families that others take for granted, like establishing genuine communication at home.

Oh went a step further and asked for the Koreans' enhanced understanding about their spouses, to see them as not just migrant workers who are supposed to return to their homes in several years but naturalized Korean citizens who settled in Korea permanently with their

families. She talked about the difficulty she has when people see her as being different from her husband and their mixed raced children:

Whenever my husband (a Bangladeshi) went for a job interview, people took a cold glance at him and asked, "From what country, did you say?" And the rest of the story is not very pleasant, as you can imagine. How do I put it? The reality here for about two years was a challenge. My husband hasn't gotten a stable job and his life here in Korea is just exactly the same as that of other migrant workers. Some Koreans go the other way with sympathy, saying "Oh, I feel pity for you to have such a hard life here. You deserve better," they'll tell me. (Oh)

The second form of activity they organize is multicultural education programs targeting the Korean public. Interviewees mentioned these programs as a specific educational function that NGOs are requested to conduct for the communities. NGO workers are mainly in charge of planning this education and invite migrant workers as facilitators. Park, J. H. stated there have been many requests for multicultural education programs from schools, community centres and organizations to enhance their understanding of migrant workers. These requests have made her and her colleagues busy to come up with feasible plans:

A few weeks ago, we offered a program to elementary school students. I asked, "Raise your hand if you know anything about Vietnam" but very few hands were raised. We gave a short lecture on its history, culture, language and in the last hour we made Vietnamese dishes together. Six Vietnamese friends introduced themselves in Korean and taught the students Vietnamese songs and how to say hello. The workers must have felt very proud to be able to teach their culture to Korean students. (Park, J. H.)

She believed that this multicultural education not only enhances the recipients' multicultural awareness, but also empowers migrant workers who take on the role of educator. She was also surprised by the enthusiasm of the program recipients. "Hanulmaum" members are

also in the middle of planning multicultural education to support their children who have challenging school lives due to their different appearance. Discovering that communities need to understand migrant workers as their neighbours has given NGOs increased educational responsibilities on a regular basis. For example, Park, J. H.'s organization received great evaluations and was subsequently asked to facilitate this program four times a year for this community centre.

Returning Programs. Interviewees stated that they are engaged in various efforts to offer educational support to migrant workers who return to their countries after working abroad. Interviewees engage in job counselling and often try to link the workers to opportunities for hands-on skills learning programs which may help them start a business or get a job at home. Choi and Park, J. H. introduced a pilot project through which they tried to offer a tangible technical skills education for returning workers. It was a joint project involving the NGO, a local district office, and a vocational institute in the city. It is noteworthy that the municipal government participated to provide this learning opportunity for migrant workers, despite its small scale.

Unfortunately, the outcome was less than satisfying due to workers' time constraints:

It's been almost two months since we started but there is almost no one left in the program. I heard from one Burmese female worker that her boss wouldn't let her out of doing overtime. When she asked for understanding so she could attend this class, her employer refused. Her problem was quite common. (Park, J. H.)

The failure of the pilot returning program, once again, shows that workers' non-participation was not due to their lack of interest. It was rather a structural problem in Korean workplaces, which regarded these workers as labour on standby. Choi emphasized that what is needed is the will of the government to make these programs work:

Ultimately, these programs are only possible when the government enforces it at the policy level. For example, let employers who hire migrant workers allow their migrant employee to have a couple of hours for them to be involved in the training programs to prepare their returning. (Choi)

Interviewees' feelings about Migrant Workers

The perception of the interviewees regarding migrant workers influenced the decisions about what was done in practice. Interviewees emphasized that their understanding of migrant workers is not static. Instead, it changes through interaction. They emphasized how significantly the change in perception influenced their practice. In general, they understood migrant workers in three ways. First, as high-achievers who participate in the activities they organize with focused aims and enthusiasm, achieving meaningful outcomes. Second, they are seen as influencing neighbours, people who change other people's way of thinking and acting in ways that help people to co-exist peacefully. Third, they are viewed as people who will start their journey again soon. In other words, they are people who will eventually leave Korea to go home or to another country. Therefore, they need time and resources to prepare for leaving.

As high achievers. Interviewees stated that they discovered migrant workers to be people who make tireless efforts to fulfill themselves through continuous learning despite challenging circumstances. Park, J. H. and Kim, who encountered migrant workers in classes or learning settings, reported a significant shift in their personal views regarding the workers. They no longer saw them as just marginalized foreigners, instead recognizing them as autonomous adult learners:

There is a group of Burmese performers called the Eureka Band. The performance isn't great but what touched people, was their enthusiasm to seek self-development by practicing their performance every night after work, even though their main reason for being here is to make money. This is learning. These people work very

hard in terribly poor conditions. Even though they have difficult lives, they practice hard at night, and hold small concerts on Sundays wherever they are wanted.
(Park, J. H.)

Their understandings reflected recognition of the fact that migrant workers are people who were forced from their place of origin, instead of people who are just chasing after better chances to make money. This understanding led the interviewees to identify migrant workers as people whose knowledge and skills have to be supported in the same way that the NGOs provide support for workers who are injured or have unpaid wages. The interviewees expressed satisfaction when they witnessed the visible achievement of facilitating meaningful learning occasions for the workers:

There was a guy from Thailand who didn't even know how to grab a mouse. He started to learn how to use computer in our class. After several months, he showed up, thanking us for teaching to him. He told us that he learned more by himself and even was now able to assemble a computer! We were so surprised and felt a bit proud of ourselves. This kind of program can mean a lot to someone who really needs to learn. (Park, J. H.)

Kim expressed her surprise about the workers' enthusiasm that she witnessed in her advanced Korean language class:

While they prepare for the language proficiency exam, people are hopeful about their future. That is, they can do something, not just working and making money, but they can achieve something and plan for their futures. People come to classes even if they are tired from night shifts. One person even came all the way from Daejeon every Sunday. What makes them to have such strong will? I don't think they come here just to learn Korean. Having a sense of purpose itself, how much it can make our life fuller—that might be the reason. (Kim)

In other words, workers in her class did not just learn Korean but utilized it as an opportunity to engage themselves in meaningful learning. Her trial language program, which was geared towards preparing workers for the government-sponsored Korean Language Proficiency Test, was a success:

The prep class started last year for the first time. Back then, there were some arguments among the teachers about whether to teach to help them function properly in daily life or to put more value on providing a stepping stone to other opportunities. But we gave it a try and, watching my students pass the exam was quite emotional for me. (Kim)

She talked further about her opinion regarding the migrant workers' motivations to study further:

People's feedback was very positive and they wanted to learn other things, like computers. It shows that they want to do something more. They have a hope and a sense of purpose about their future. You know, having a sense of purpose to learn what we want to learn can make our life fuller. If we're teaching them Korean just to help them to get by here, they have nothing else to gain. Advanced classes like this can link people to other possibilities to learn some skills that can be important later. (Kim)

Kim's story is an example that these higher learning needs of migrant workers are discussed and supported in the civil arena, even in Korean language programs which are often regarded simply as language acquisition for survival and planned as such. Her story epitomizes the process in which volunteers discovered who their learners are through active interactions both inside and outside of class. It also shows how they attempted to reflect their changed perceptions in practice.

However, Park, J. H. also recognized that not all migrant workers could freely participate in these learning opportunities. As a female NGO worker, she noticed the preponderance of males in her program:

Female workers led more exhausting lives in Korea due to work and household duties. Child rearing drains their time. Therefore it is actually impossible for many of them to come to the Korean or computer classes or any of the events. What is clear is I can meet many female workers in weekdays who talk about their problems but I cannot see them on Sunday. (Park, J. H.)

These stories show that the interviewees achieved an understanding about migrant workers that enabled them to be viewed as high achievers. Interviewees stated that this feeling of respect has been concretized in close contact during activities, particularly the learning-related ones. They also stated that they tried to reflect their enhanced understanding in many aspects of the learning activities they plan and facilitate. While the general picture of NGOs has still been based on basic human rights protection rather than offering educational opportunities to the workers, playing the extra role of educator let interviewees feel that there is more work to do. However, at the same time, they also spoke of their lack of experience in performing this role and they expressed a desire for more training for themselves to be able to offer more diversified learning opportunities with better competency.

Influencing Neighbours. The NGO interviewees said they regard migrant workers as people who are different but who exist equally in the same society. Kim talked about her interaction with the workers in class and how her attitude towards different ideas was changed when she gained a better understanding about the workers:

Because of the culture difference, there are things that I just cannot understand at all. For example, treatment of women in Islamic culture, I cannot understand that. I want to argue, but I settle for just saying, 'Really? This is the way we do it in

Korea. 'I think their cultures should co-exist along with ours. Even though I cannot understand theirs, I shouldn't hate or boycott it. In the past, I used to argue with my friends. I was aggressive like 'How can you think like that?' to the extent of quarrel. But I've changed since I joined this NGO. (Kim)

Her increased understanding about migrant workers and their cultures allowed her to create a class atmosphere open to different ideas by adopting a free-but-focused discussion format, an adult-learning technique.

Park, J. H. and Kim both explained that their expanded understanding about different cultures came gradually by spending a significant amount of time with the workers in classes, social gatherings, and during casual talks in the office. Kim explained that her motivation as a volunteer went from abstract sympathy to concrete dedication to the people who learn together through engagement with migrant workers:

Initially, I was satisfied with simply volunteering. I think my attitude was arrogant in that I viewed myself as a giving person. I had a little bit of that attitude, without realizing it. But now I often think, I'm receiving more help than I'm giving here. I realized that my attitude was changed by my interactions with them. (Kim)

As addressed above, migrant workers she knew did not remain as her learners but took on roles of teacher and friend at the same time. These multiple relationships made her aware of how much her life had been enriched. This is a change from a one-way relationship to a mutual one, or from hierarchical to horizontal.

Park, J. H. gave an example that happened in the annual Korean speech contest for migrant workers. This seemingly simple competition typically reflects several pedagogic dichotomies: teacher/learner, provider/recipient, or evaluator/evaluated. The activity, however, has seen some significant changes over the time by introducing mutuality. While it used to be merely an opportunity for migrant workers to tell their successful or tearful stories of how they

adapted themselves to live in Korea, it has now incorporated some two-way interactions through which migrant workers and their supporters perform together:

This year, we are not supposed to just watch what the workers perform. This time we are supposed to do something from their culture and entertain them. That is the way, we believe, to show them we are as same as them. So last year, a few people sang a couple of songs and this year, the staff and volunteers have learned a Latin dance from Peruvian workers that we will perform. (Park, J. H.)

Interviewees also tried to open a way for everyday Korean people to join in this knowledge construction process. For example, according to Lee, S., forming 'reading clubs' among migrant workers and other people, they also do this by spreading information about what's going on through their regular newsletter and websites, as well as facilitating multicultural education in schools and community centers. In this way, interviewees were able to change how the Korean public perceives migrant workers. Choi talked about the need for new thinking in this respect:

I would like to argue that NGOs should have a new paradigm. In the past we simply helped migrant workers and they were only our 'marginalized clients.' Now our subjects for facilitating projects are not only migrant workers but also any people in Korean society. Therefore, if we helped migrant workers on a person-to-person basis before, now we are to focus on the projects in which we enhance our society's social safety net, which includes multicultural diversity and toleration for that diversity. (Choi)

Not all interviewees talked about the changes in their perception of migrant workers in only positive terms. Lee, S. said he sometimes felt conflicted due to the differing worldviews of migrant workers. He acknowledged that he often struggled when he tried to form relationships with migrant workers. He wanted to look at migrant workers as members of a marginalized group in the global context who should fight against neoliberalism, which he believes to be the

primary cause of their adverse circumstances. But when he did that, the workers often showed what he called a “petit-bourgeois mentality”:

I found when I talk with the workers situating myself as a Marxist, I face tremendous difficulties to continue the conversations. Because they believe their status and roles to be petit bourgeoisie and want to play a role as such. Therefore, defining them as proletariat and doing our work accordingly is far from their expectations. Actually, a huge gap exists between what they do here and what they want to do when get back to home. (Lee, S.)

In other words, there were gaps between the views of the supporters and the supported. Sometimes migrant workers resisted being seen as oppressed and this caused some cracks to form in the relationships between interviewees and the workers. Lee, S. shared his story of a painful experience of collapse of the two established ethnic communities which closely cooperated with his organization. The problem stemmed from differing views on the direction of the sit-in strikes against the legislation of the EPS:

We worked closely with the Bangladesh and Indonesian communities last year, but they were broken into pieces when the government crackdowns were most severe in November in 2003. In case of the Bangladesh community, half the leaders went back home. They were people who acted as the core with us for a long time. When they returned, the other half asked us to hide them from the authorities. But we asked them to fight together against crackdowns. They urged us to let them use the NGO as a place to hide. We told them that it wasn't a matter that hiding could solve so let's go and participate in a sit-in strike. We had a serious disagreement over differing views and our relationship ended. (Lee, S.)

In a way, this helped him to conduct a self-examination to check his and his organization's intentions to work together with the workers through such differences. In other words, painful experiences caused from misunderstandings were the stepping stones for them to approach migrant workers with more mature ways to pursue equal relationships with the

workers. Lee, S. talked about his new project to help Indonesian people forge a new community, and explained the reason of the support:

If they have their own ethnic communities, their relationship with this centre can be equal. There are also many things that communities can take care of themselves, such as buying books, doing needs analysis, interpretation and translations, things where they can play a main role. As they gradually take up these roles, their voice is getting more audible and they end up voicing their opinions and demands to us and our agenda. I think this is a tremendously meaningful, both for their experience here and as they return home and become leaders there also. (Lee, S.)

He wanted his relationship with migrant workers to be based on trust and equality but forging an equal relationship can be difficult due to the power imbalance. Other interviewees talked about this difficulty, too. Park, J. H. also talked about power imbalance between her organization and migrant workers:

An ethnic community is a full-fledged organization and we are supposed to have an equal relationship with it. But we sometimes find ourselves in awkward situations. When we did a charity bazaar for Burma refugee children, I had arguments with one of the leaders in the Burma community. It is a cooperative project where both parties equally have a central role but, when we do this kind of thing together, we often end up meddling. In this case, I felt like I was doing too much of the directing because things weren't getting done. This was a difficult situation because we're supposed to be supportive. Instead we end up bossing people around. That is not our goal and sometimes brings tensions. (Park, J. H.)

As shown in the stories, the type of relationship formed is often related to the activist identity or belief system under which the interviewees devoted their efforts for migrant workers. Lee, S. and Choi were both engaged in student and labour movements in the past and these previous experiences are constantly brought back to them when they work with migrant workers. In many cases, the full-time workers' political stances define the characteristics of the activities

of the organization. For Sang-jae, he was able to maintain his beliefs consistently since his student activist days but also found that these beliefs were gradually adapted by his experiences with migrant workers.

People on a Journey. In addition to their efforts to involve migrant workers in the wider Korean community, interviewees also understood that migrant workers are people who have places to which they will return. Therefore, they expressed their concerns about the workers' safe return and showed their transnational solidarity with them even after they leave Korea. This was most obvious in the efforts to create helpful returning programs. They were enthusiastic about this because they believed that these programs expand the scope of their work, turning their projects into future-oriented international initiatives. They know that the migrant workers often come to Korea because of the difficult or desperate situations in the home country but also that the migrants also have a will to return someday and make a contribution if they are empowered to do so. Knowing this provided extra motivation for the interviewees.

According to them, the essence of planning returning programs is to help the workers secure more promising futures in their countries. Pushing the returning program to offer viable skills was thus made into a priority. To facilitate this learning, Choi first conducted research on the specific countries by networking with people there to find out what was needed. Her organization surveyed workers in seven cities. Most of the respondents said that the skills they use daily in their manufacturing workplace would not help them as they returned home because their home country's manufacturing base is not as developed as Korea's industrial sector.

Interviewees also talked about the psychological alienation that workers can feel when they return, especially if they've spent a significant amount of time out of the country:

Even though people come home with money, the isolation they feel seems to be the great problem. The long time away from their familiar place influences workers

badly. The relationship with their family can often be a problem. Their own lives are totally unattended and the workers end up being reduced to a money-making machine. They often end up accepting this as fate—work and send money and work again—and they cannot find any answer for their own development as humans. (Choi)

But she also pointed to other cases that show some migrant workers making a positive impact on political matters at home, and that this showed that they need time to prepare “here” for their lives “there”:

In the Philippines, returned workers forged their own party. Labour export was a major national export project there in the 1950s. Many people went abroad as labourers and two thirds returned and faced great difficulty at home. Even though they increased the foreign exchange reserves of the country, they found no space for themselves when they returned after 10 or 15 years. So many returnees forged their own party to argue for retraining or social welfare. (Choi)

Forming links with the people in the countries of the workers has been valuable for the NGOs to set up their returning programs. Various projects are underway in both NGOs to update the workers with knowledge that will be helpful at home. The migrant workers’ libraries links are a good example. They connect the workers with home by providing books and magazines from home. Interviewees relied on the various connections they had set up with organizations and people in the different countries to supply the books.

Many returning programs are still on the drawing board. In general, returning programs take the form of projects undertaken cooperatively with the ethnic communities in the regions. This guarantees specific research on tailored programs and collective participation. Choi stated that returning programs should go beyond offering opportunities to learn vocational skills for the purpose of making money:

Some people think returning program means offering profit-making skills learning to the workers so they can earn money with the skills learned when they return home. We should be wary of this. We should be trying to combine that with the opportunity for them to think about the respect for human rights, equality and democracy that exists in Korea. I believe those invisible values are stronger here in Korea. Internalizing them top of offering tangible skills is best. (Choi)

Lee, S. echoed this point when he talked about the barriers migrant workers and their learning providers confront together in the process of constructing meaningful programs. One barrier is the lack of resources from the providers' side. Another is a lack of accumulated experience with this type of project.

Another barrier is the complicated task of persuading the Korean public to understand, first, why workers should be offered such training to returning workers, many of whom are undocumented and, second, how these programs ultimately benefit Korean society. Choi talked about these problems:

Helping undocumented workers is a very divisive issue, even within civic action groups. My personal opinion is that pardoning all undocumented workers is a shallow argument which most people will not understand because I don't think the Korean economy can sustain all these 600,000 migrants. Also, the enterprises that hire migrant workers are mostly declining industries which hardly generate profit. (Choi)

But she does support the purpose of the returning programs:

Korea spends an enormous amount of money and resources to find and deport undocumented workers. But I think one reason workers overstay their visa is the lack of opportunity at home. Imagine if they were offered a series of opportunities to learn the skills and knowledge which fits their needs at home. If they think those skills are viable, maybe they'll return without such an expensive effort. (Choi)

However, she also related several examples of the difficulty her organization has faced in trying to get the programs set up and recommended that government get involved to set a policy direction that colleges and universities could follow. She asked for understanding of the needs of migrant workers to prepare to return to their home. She even suggested that Korea think about facilitating settlement programs for a certain number of migrant workers who wish to stay in Korea as long-time residents with relevant legal status.

Despite their germinal stage, the meaning of these returning programs is significant because they feature migrant workers as people who have full potential which can be nurtured and utilized, if not here, then later in other contexts. Also, these returning programs gave momentum for the learning providers in the Korean NGOs to open their eyes towards international civil projects that they can do with migrant workers. This is a qualitatively meaningful development that has taken place in Korean civil society. While civil society has so far mainly concerned itself with ensuring basic human rights protection for workers, these returning programs proactively consider the potential of migrant workers and actively support them by creating learning opportunities together.

Interviews with Labour Activists

Lee, Y. and Chung, H. do not currently work for migrant workers officially. However, they previously worked in the migrants' human rights movement but separated from it due to their labour-oriented perspective. Lee, Y. is a director of policy research at the Korean Federation of Transportation Public and Social Service Worker's Union, often called the Public Union. She started her activist career when she was in college and was the first representative of the migrant workers' branch of the Equality Trade Union (ETU), which was the forerunner to the MTU. Chung, H. is a Korean-American who started her activist career in America to protect the rights of Asian female workers. She is a Korean liaison agent for the International Union of

Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), and has worked to help link international and Korean labour activists. Both were deeply engaged in forming the Migrant Workers Trade Union (MTU), the first-ever union of foreigner workers in Korea. It did not receive authorization from the Korean government and, consequently, measures were taken to suppress it.

They are people who have experience in organizing a variety of activities to support the learning needs of migrant workers. As labour activists who closely encounter migrant workers, they talked a lot about the changes which occurred to them after interacting with the workers.

The Birth of the Migrant Workers' Trade Union (MTU)

The interviewees' identity as labour activists often came into conflict with others when they worked at the JCMK. Two critical incidents eventually caused them to withdraw from the JCMK. First was the formation of a small discussion group between some activists, including them, and migrant workers. This group was called the International Migrant Workers' Organization in Korea (IMOK). Chung, H. talked about her expectations from the discussions at IMOK:

I proposed a retreat for migrant workers and activists. In the retreat, we found out what the difficulties of migrant workers are and what they want to ask of Korean people. It was a lively discussion with migrant workers as equals who are also working to improve society. The goal was to learn by participating together. We also wanted to enhance communication between the workers and Korean supporters at JCMK. (Chung, H.)

This innovative trial to facilitate more equal communication between the workers and supporters was not very well understood by other executive members in JCMK.

Second, Lee, Y. and Chung, H. were opposed to the official JCMK position that accepted the government's planned introduction of the EPS, calling it a suboptimal solution. Their reasoning was that the EPS bill did not acknowledge the rights of migrant workers as full-fledged workers. So the two women, instead, forged a new organization with others where the identity of migrant workers could be spotlighted. This organization was named the Strike Headquarters of Migrant Worker's Full Labour Rights (SMFL). They announced they would break off relations with other support camps that were based on what they called "mere humanitarianism." The founding of this organization later led to the establishment of a migrant workers' branch of Equality Trade Union, which is a part of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and this in turn led to the successful establishment of the first independent union of migrant workers, the MTU, in 2005.

Learning to be equal: Labour education

The first goal they meant to achieve through the action in IMOK, SMFL, and ETU was to inform the Korean public of the hidden oppression in the EPS. The second goal was to enable workers to participate as equal members. The removal of the hierarchical structure that existed between migrant workers and their Korean supporters was what they and their colleagues wanted to accomplish in the JCMK:

I took the problem of the hierarchical structure between the workers and the supporters very seriously. Whenever I visited the counselling centres in various cities, which are subordinate to the JCMK, it was clear that migrant workers could never be equal with their supporters. For example, they always talked to them in Korean using honorific terms regardless of their age. There was clearly a vertical structure between them. On top of that, most of counselling centres were based under religious organizations, which added a hierarchical structure between religious leaders and laity. (Lee, Y.)

When I worked at the JCMK, I often felt embarrassed because I witnessed many times that equal membership was not given to migrant workers. This experience helped convince us of the need to withdraw from the JCMK and make our own labour-related organization. (Chung, H.)

The interviewees spoke of the direction of their education with migrant workers and Korean activists within the IMOK, SMFL, and ETU. Lee, Y. talked specifically of the IMOK's educational agenda:

At that time, we couldn't imagine being able to forge a labour union because the idea itself was received by the Korean public as too radical. What I expected as a direction of IMOK was to create an education centre where migrant workers and Korean labour activists learn together and grow together to be seasoned activists through discussion and debate. (Lee, Y.)

Therefore, labour education was initially set up by IMOK and continued that way until the establishment of the MTU. Lee, Y. outlined what was accomplished in this period in terms of labour education:

Facilitating labour education was the one of the biggest reasons to forge the IMOK and the SMFL. What we did most was open regional open discussion sessions, dealing with the ABCs of labour education, such as "Who are workers?", "Who are the bourgeoisie?" The basics that we need to forge labour union. This education let workers look at society from a more structured point of view. (Lee, Y.)

These sessions were facilitated in Korean and English, with the interviewees indicating that they were meaningful learning experiences for everyone who participated, even though these activities were often criticized by other established migrant supporting organizations.

National/International Solidarity of Workers

After the start of the MTU, an influential Nepalese worker was elected president and the interviewees gradually moved back to their original activities. For Lee, Y., that meant working in the Korean labour movement. For Chung, H., that meant facilitating international solidarity in labour movement. However, they have continued to support the MTU from the outside, not individually, but collectively within their current organizations. Right after the initiation of MTU, the president was arrested in a targeted crackdown and detained in the foreigner detention centre for three months. Lee, Y., Chung, H. and their colleagues regularly visited the president at the detention centre and worked on organizing protest rallies:

We have worked to free the president in a variety of ways. We submitted a petition to the National Human rights Commission and the president himself has continued the lonely fight inside the detention centre. I visited him last week. (Lee, Y.)

Chung, H. has also tried to let international labour organizations know about the difficulties of migrant workers in Korea. Her organization officially sent protest letters, as did other international labour organizations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Public Services International. These organizations plan to bring this case before the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Overall, Lee, Y. and Chung, H. emphasized the identity of the workers as workers. Lee, Y. stated that she therefore focused her agenda on spreading the notion that foreignness cannot be a barrier to discuss the full rights of migrant workers. She criticized the JCMK's current direction which she feels only serves to spotlight the workers foreignness instead of their identity and rights as workers:

When we were in JCMK, we intentionally used the term migrant workers instead of foreign workers and it was a difficult fight to let people understand migrant workers as workers, not as foreigners. Recently, JCMK changed their name to the Joint Committee for Foreign Migrant Workers in Korea. I think this is a serious regression because the term 'foreigner is based on nation-state which discriminatively separate migrant workers as people from somewhere else. (Lee, Y.)

However, their argument that migrant workers should have full-rights has run into systemic opposition. The Korean government does not acknowledge the act of organizing a labour union by people who do not have the right to stay in Korea permanently. Also, the position of these labour activists has been confronted by the sentiments of the general Korean public which is formed according to the nation-based citizenship and the discussion of the rights within the boundary.

Learning Providers in Religious Organizations

Four of the people interviewed are affiliated with religious organizations but not all have an official title. One interviewee was an administrator of a Buddhist temple. He is in charge of the social work division. The others include a reverend, a missionary from a protestant church and a nun in a catholic church. Similar to the NGO interviewees, they stated that their frequent and continuous contacts with migrant workers helped them understand migrant workers as people who need their support in various ways. Therefore, interviewees stated that their support does not remain in relief activities but aims to be supportive of actions which last even after the workers return to their home countries.

However, this group of learning providers is distinctive in that the support they provide for migrant workers is firmly based on their religious beliefs, while the interviewees in NGOs approach the issue from a more general standpoint on human rights. One noteworthy difference among the religious learning providers interviewed was the influence of missionary work on

their daily activities. The Buddhist and Catholic interviewees did not view migrant workers as subjects to evangelize, whereas the interviewees from the protestant church often revealed that the activities they undertake with migrant workers are often based on missionary aims.

Protestant Church: Learning Jesus' Mission Together

Foreign Mission. The Protestant church in Korea has had the widest network and the longest history in offering support to migrant workers. Two people agreed to give interviews: one is Reverend Lee who leads the Burmese church in Bucheon, which he has led for the last ten years. In his church, fifty believers from Burma get together with their Korean supporters to share various activities on Sunday. The other interviewee, Gurung, is a Nepalese evangelist who leads the small Filipino and Nepalese religious groups with support from large Korean churches. He has migrant work experience in Korea and became a missionary later by graduating from a Korean theological university. These interviewees are religious persons who work for migrant workers directly under their religious titles and therefore are different from other people who work in many faith-based NGOs, such as counselling centres founded by churches.

The most important activity that Reverend Lee does on Sunday is to facilitate worship. With the help of a native Burmaese speaker who is fluent in Korean, the worship is conducted bilingually. Afterwards, he facilitates and participates in various social activities such as potluck dinners or soccer games. On weekdays, he visits every workplace of the church members to see if there is any problem that the members face there. If so, he actively mediates the conflicts or disputes between the employers and the workers. He also coordinates the medical check-up and clinical examinations for the workers by referring them to medical institutions which offer free medical services to migrant workers.

Overall, his activities are not much different from those of the NGOs. The uniqueness of his work, however, resides in the scope of the targeted people and the reasons for offering

support. In other words, his activities are mainly conducted for members of his church or members-to-be with a strongly religious tinge. Operating a foreigners' mission for ten years, he has witnessed many meaningful changes that have happened for workers with a continuous fellowship with Christ:

I found my efforts meaningful when people voluntarily visit our church and make significant changes in their lives by finding the real purpose and the meaning of life from fellowship with the church. I dealt with so many difficult cases of life, funerals, major surgeries, you name it. (Reverend Lee)

His role goes beyond the Korean territory because the members of his church have their own families in Burma and some have returned home and continued networking with him for years internationally. On behalf of the workers who do not have much freedom to visit their families at home, he moves back and forth between Korea and Burma once or twice a year to keep them posted on what is happening in both places. He found his international efforts worthwhile, particularly when he experienced the families' relief and happiness by his continuous liaison:

One day when I visited Burma, there were two workers who had surgeries with our church's help. I met a father of one of the two workers there and he grasped my hand firmly with tears and told me that I was the real father to his son. Whenever I visit Burma, the families of the workers show their happiness and treat me with great hospitality. I feel happy, too. (Reverend Lee)

He also proceeds with projects in both countries. He currently works on a project that enables returning workers to have the means of earning money at home. Being able to collect some amount of funding from Korean believers who are interested in international missionary work, he has been involved in building a small town of the returning workers where they can make independent lives by doing business, such as growing profitable medicinal herbs,

collectively. For this project, he often visits Burma and utilizes the network of Korean missionaries there:

A lot of changes are in the middle of happening there. For example, they founded orphanages, dormitories, schools and farms in which many positive changes are happening. We started our project from small relief activities such as sending relief packages in 2000 and now we have been in the middle of building our own town of the returnees where they live and work collectively. (Reverend Lee)

He is also involved in a Korean project to expand his church as a vision centre for believers from Burma. He spoke of what that means:

We will build a vision centre in Korea in which people can plan for their future and link their lives between Burma and Korea. The Korean society will be changed very soon by these foreigners and it will be towards a situation in which we all live together. Our vision centre offers migrant workers various skills and the chance to gain knowledge. It will also be a place for them to enjoy their weekend life because we will provide shops, a café, and a library. (Reverend Lee)

He also explained how this project will network with the returnee workers in Burma:

This vision centre will work with the town of the returnees in Burma and facilitate education projects that for the second generation who can come to Korea to study. Then we educate them here in Korea to be leaders in Burma when they complete education and return. (Reverend Lee)

The vision centre is, of course, a community centre. And, building a town of returnees in Burma shares a common agenda with the various returning programs pushed by the NGOs. By defining these projects as Christian, however, they can be regarded as closed activities which are confined only to members.

In addition to these closed activities, though, he also talked about some programs that he and some migrant workers are putting together on a more inclusive basis. He links with other churches in the city which work with migrant believers from other countries and this activity allows him to branch out and provide services beyond his church. For example, his effort to forge a network among migrant believers and Korean pastors in the same city has seen the achievement of strengthening the social ties of migrant Christians. He realized that the best education for migrant workers he can offer includes opportunities of experiencing Christian leadership and stated that sharing educational moments together is a mission of all Christians.

He also argued that Korea's education benefited in the past by the introduction of Christianity from the Western world and now is the time for Korean Christianity to enrich the people in other countries with Christian education:

Korea's education was greatly supported by the foreign missionaries in the early century. They founded schools and hospitals and made efforts in education and cared for the lives of the Korean public at the same time. Their effort brought great changes in Korea, particularly in moral enhancement. That's the essence of the Christian education. In Eastern Asia area, there are 76 countries where God's words have not reached yet. We will do our best to reach them. (Reverend Lee)

He also expressed his opinions about Korean society in general and argued that Koreans and migrant workers need to learn to live together:

Koreans have been homogenous for so long. We didn't have a chance to learn to live together with other people and that's why migrant workers have so much difficulty here. But to live in the global age, Koreans should open their minds to other people. The government also should support this aspect by offering education. We Koreans ourselves have memories of going abroad in the 60s and 70s to Germany and the Middle East to earn money and that rigorous efforts of migrant workers contributed to build the firm basis of our currently strong economy. (Reverend Lee)

Religious Groups of Migrant Workers. Migrant workers often gather in groups to worship in their native languages. Gurung, the former Nepalese migrant worker, has been working to link the workers and Korean churches for years. The number of people in each religious group ranges from forty to fifty and people worship together in English and Nepalese. Like Reverend Lee, Gurung also expressed the meaning of gathering as a part of his effort to spread Christian leadership. As a former migrant worker himself, his diagnosis of the suffering of migrant workers may sound more persuasive to members of the groups than other Korean missionaries:

When I came to Korea, I faced so many problems. So do many migrant workers. It's because they didn't have Christianity. Who am I? What should I do? And, they couldn't understand the answers. I think, without a leader, it was difficult to find a way. (Gurung)

He emphasized the importance of religious training to enhance the morality and ethical attitudes of sharing lives with other people, who are not just strangers to each other but brothers and sisters within Christianity:

I searched for the moral character of people. And then how can I change the moral character or ethics of people in my vicinity? Christianity is the best way to teach it and I try to copy Jesus to educate them. (Gurung)

As a person who is also supposed to return to Nepal in a year, he revealed his plan for returning with the members of the groups and starting meaningful projects at home, such as establishing a school for the poor. He emphasized that Christian education helps people to possess the needed leadership to make their home society a better place.

Buddhist Support

In general, supporting migrant workers under the auspices of Buddhism is less prevalent than protestant or catholic churches, which established the labour counselling agencies that comprised the first generation of civil society support for migrant workers. While Catholics and Protestants were central to the creation of the JCMK, Buddhist-based organizations did not participate. However, some major temples have set up counselling centres for migrant workers, providing help irrespective of religion.

Some temples also have supported Buddhist workers and their ethnic communities or gatherings in the same regions in various ways. For example, Park, J. Y., an administrative staff member of a temple in Bucheon, has been supporting the Burma ethnic community in Bucheon as part of the temple's social work projects because the temple has cooperated with the Burma community to organize Burmaese Buddhist events. In particular, he detailed the support his organization gives to Burma's traditional holiday events that enable many Burma workers to get together several times a year. His temple also regularly supports the shelter of migrant workers in Bucheon financially. Burma workers frequently have meetings in this temple comfortably due to this long-time relationship between their ethnic community and the temple.

His understanding of the workers influenced him to extend his help to the workers personally. He has taught computer skills twice a week voluntarily and has given administrative support to the Burma community to create project proposals that the community, with the cooperation of Korean NGOs, can submit for various municipal social welfare funds. Even though his temple financially supports migrant workers, this support is confined to basic necessities such as food and shelter or to Buddhist event preparations. Knowing this, he proposed to support computer learning for the community by working with a local NGO and the

joint project recently got funded by the municipal office. He expressed happiness regarding the success of the project.

But he also revealed his concerns about what he referred to as “pseudo” NGOs which have sprouted up in the city, with big announcements that say “they will help migrant workers to learn.” He argued that people should be aware of these NGOs, which aim to start educational projects for migrant workers with social welfare funds available from the city office or elsewhere. He stated that tangible support can only be given by organizations or people that really understand the learning needs of migrant workers due to their long-time relationships. He stated that he wanted to give meaningful educational support to the workers who are preparing to return home. He was therefore bitterly critical of numerous organizations which attempt to offer educational opportunities to migrant workers without having specific aims conducive to workers. Park, J. Y. emphasized that offering educational opportunities for migrant workers should not have other purposes than support for human development:

I have a different position from them because I don't get any because I am doing some work for them since I am working in the existing religious organization. But they aim for money, funds offered by municipal organizations. Many people want to do projects for foreign workers, lately. But they are not genuine. They don't even know why education is needed for migrant workers. They make their proposals just to win the fund first and achieve fame as influential social workers. (Park, J. Y.)

He also criticized the Korean government which does not facilitate anything for migrant workers:

Some of them have lived in this country for 10 years or so, working hard for Korea. The Korean government does for nothing for them. They cannot be welfare recipients because they are not Korean citizens. These workers help the Korean economy out by taking work that we don't want to do, we have to do something for them. (Park, J. Y.)

He argued that tangible support for the workers in both material and educational ways are indispensable to live together.

Support from the Catholic Church

The Catholic church shares the religious root of Christianity with the Protestant church but its approach toward migrant workers is known to be less related to proselytizing. Sister Para is a nun who runs a small counselling centre for migrant workers with two other nuns. She stated that it was the central archdiocese of the Catholic Church in Korea which first became aware of the difficulties that migrant workers experienced and opened counselling centres in Seoul and Incheon in the early 1990s. She had supported migrant workers before and therefore was given charge over these two centres. In the similar period, an association of the heads of convents resolved that they would support foreign workers in Korea who, they recognized, live in a marginalized situation:

In 1993, in a meeting of the heads of the convents, the foreign workers issue was brought to the table. As you know, we nuns have participated in the protest rally in front of Japanese embassy to ask them to apologize for their savageries of comfort women. We started to look inside our society to see if we could possibly remain unconcerned about any suffering of human rights here. Since the Seoul Olympics, foreign workers have gradually entered our society and suffered. They caught our attention. (Sister Para)

What she aimed to achieve from the projects with the convent association included counselling, shelters, and support for female migrant workers such as delivery help and daycare. After having experiences in these joint projects, she started a small counselling centre in Bucheon. This centre is supported financially by individual supporters and some regular

donations from Catholic churches in the Incheon diocese. She described the aim of her work with migrant workers for the last ten years as inclusion of all people regardless of religion:

We are not like protestant churches because we respect the workers' own religions and never ask them to convert. I heard some people in the protestant church offer their support with conditions of conversion. Unlike them, we think each person has their own religion and if they follow the true values of what their religions preach, they will be happy and god's work will be done. (Sister Para)

Not offering any religion-related activities, she defined her activities as ones very similar and closely related to the ones that NGOs offer to migrant workers, such as counselling, Korean language class, and various cultural activities that Koreans and migrant workers can participate in together. However, she emphasized that all activities are based on the word of God, who orders people to establish justice in the world:

Each group pursues its own interest and we religious people are supposed to harmonize these different interests. I think we can do the job better than any other to make that harmony because we don't put values on worldly things. We only pursue our Christian values of justice and human rights and if our pursuit is against the current law, we want to change it. (Sister Para)

After sixteen years of experience working with migrant workers, she came to have a clear opinion on their situation and role in Korean society:

I think migrant workers and Koreans are all humans who are supposed to exercise the same rights in this society. Migrant workers are also people who contribute to our industry. Of course Korean workers in these days suffer much. But I found out is that there is discrimination in the workplace between Koreans and foreigners because foreigners undertake the tasks that Koreans shun. (Sister Para)

She suggested an educational approach as a way to reduce the suffering of the workers. Offering education to employers for their enlightenment would be efficient, according to her, because employers in many cases do not understand migrant workers well and this lack of understanding often causes discriminatory actions. She also expressed conditional support for the EPS as a stepping stone to a better system:

I think introduction of EPS is good for now. Many people had arguments for or against it but I think no system is perfect at the beginning. But something is better than nothing. At least we have a system. We can find our weak spots and improve.
(Sister Para)

Religious Points-of-view: Similarity and Difference

According to the interviewees from religious organizations, support for migrant workers is an extension of their charitable work, which is one of the responsibilities of their religion to society. Interviewees regarded migrant workers as the one of the marginalized groups in Korea who need their support, sometimes even more than other marginalized groups of people due to their lack of language and social network. In terms of offering help to migrant workers, the support started from relief activities in the beginning but has expanded to include a variety of elements that let them exercise active citizenship, such as education, social activities and experiencing fellowship with others. On this point, they conduct functions similar to the interviewees from NGOs. Some interviewees stated that they network closely with the NGOs to cooperate in some projects or preparing some events. Reverend Lee stated:

We often link with NGOs supporting migrant workers in this region because there are many parts I cannot handle, like human-rights or legal matters. I am no specialist in those parts so I often visit and get their help. (Reverend Lee)

In some points, however, there was divergence with what the NGOs do. First, Reverend Lee saw the difference as ethical/moral integrity development assistant versus rights-claimers.

He stated:

Of course NGOs do valuable work by supporting migrant workers to claim their deprived rights. I am sure that is important, particularly in Korea at this moment because many of their rights are ignored. What I think is somewhat missed in those activities is the link between these claim-based activities and the enhanced morality for them to use when they return home. Of course, to build a human character, reclaiming the rights of the oppressed is the basic project. But it is also important to give a sense that there is a purpose to life. The purpose to education is to teach these values and I think NGOs have been deficient in this aspect.

(Reverend Lee)

Speaking from a Buddhist point of view, Park, J. Y. criticized some NGO's attitude for offering education programs without realizing that education is inevitably about human interaction:

Facilitating education is the same. Many organizations facilitate sessions regarding labour laws or regulations for the benefit of the workers. What is the eventual aim of all these? Eventually, it is education for humans. But while they facilitate educational programs, some of them ignore the truth that these workers are as equally human as they are. (Park. J.Y.)

He was referring to the superiority of moral support over any provision of practical skills.

Reverend Lee also valued the enhancement of morality in offering education:

People cannot make fundamental changes only by material. Without mental or moral change, material change cannot make people happy. NGOs somewhat overemphasize right-claiming and don't talk enough about moral change.

(Reverend Lee)

Learning Providers in Ethnic Communities

Ethnic communities are regarded as safe arenas where migrant workers can exchange support and develop collective aims for achieving their goals in Korea, as well as in their homes countries. In this research, ethnic communities refer only to the representative communities of migrant workers from the same countries. By representative, I mean an organization which surpasses any limitations such as religion, interest, or territorial relationship. These ethnic communities are often established based on the area where they live and work. For example, Indonesian communities exist in Seoul and Incheon and some other cities where Indonesian workers have congregated. However, not all migrant workers have developed a supportive ethnic communities because forging a representative ethnic community takes significant effort and sacrifice from the workers as well as support from Korean civil society.

Ethnic community leaders shared stories about how their communities were forged and how they have tried to learn and grow together with workers of the same ethnicity and all migrant workers in general. The common factors of the established ethnic communities of the interviewees in this research, synthesized from their remarks, included determination of people, good leadership and support from Korean civil society, which are represented as regional human rights NGOs. Interviewees from the Burma community in Bucheon and Indonesian community in Incheon stated that what they do and think is for the betterment and growth of their members and migrant workers in Korea in general.

Establishment of Two Ethnic Communities

Interviewees stated that their ethnic communities were established by their desire to have their own self-help organizations. However, they all agreed that support from Korean human rights activists in the regionally based NGOs was critical. The Burma community in Bucheon was established with the help of a regional NGO. Interviewees in the community boasted a long

history and stable organizational structure. In contrast, Shakron, the representative of a newly established Indonesian community in Incheon, said that his organization has only a month's history and sixteen initiators. Shakron also reported that people from an NGO in the city helped them organize the community's first convention. They attended as invited observers, and celebrated its birth together. Membership and services are open to anyone who belongs to the same ethnicity/nationality.

Active Learning within the Communities

Interviewees introduced many activities in which their ethnic communities become involved, either on a regular or ad hoc basis. The primary goal is to ensure that members are happy and safe. The Burma community has ten years of history and 300 members who pay a membership fee regularly. Wingnaiwoo talked about the purpose of their gatherings:

We have had small gathering since 1994 which had no formal name. We have just wanted to lead a happy life even though we are passing through a difficult period in our lives. We thought that people cannot find happiness when they work mindlessly alone. (Wingnaiwoo)

As a self-help effort, providing education about Korean work regulations is widely shared as the most needed educational component for the members. Shakron spoke of this educational reason why he and other Indonesian workers started their own community:

First, there are many Indonesian workers in Korea. Second, we Indonesian workers often don't know very well about the complex laws and regulations which are essential for working here without problems. That's why we need a community. Our community will give our people help regarding life in Korea, legal work, wage problems, medical treatments or industrial disaster insurance coverage, you name it. Any fellow Indonesian can be helped by us and that will make life here happier. (Shakron)

As hinted by Shakron, well-built ethnic communities represent collective power in which migrant workers are able to help each other and keep themselves from being helplessly marginalized. For example, the Burma community has facilitated orientation programs for the newcomers regarding life in Korea. Tura, as one of the providers of this program stated that they even try to train the lecturers in advance:

To facilitate this program, we train some of our members to be lecturers. This training period is about three months. After three months' training, newly appointed lecturers are dispatched to wherever they are needed. (Tura)

Second, the Burma community has facilitated many activities, including vocational training, computer and language learning, publications, religious activities, and occasional physical activities like soccer games. In terms of the regular activities such as language learning or computer skills learning, the leading members take turns to be responsible for planning and facilitating, while specified functions like the publication of newsletters or community papers are charged to an individual who has professional experiences.

Third, ethnic communities also facilitate their own cultural activities, such as national holiday festivals and library operation for free reading. These activities often become chances for the workers to get together despite their busy schedules.

Fourth, ethnic communities often network with their counterparts in other cities and sometimes several NGOs at home to sustain connections with home countries. The Tsunami relief drive showed the strong networks in the Indonesian community, with various groups around the country getting in contact with each other to raise funds and remit together. In the case of the Burma community, interviewees stated that they have social and political connections to Burma:

You know, there are a lot of child refugees on the border of Burma. Among us in Korea, there is a group which supports these children and this group works very actively. So, in some sense, all the Burma people, with the community at the centre, are doing specialized work related to our country. (Tura)

One of the distinctive activities the community is involved with is the political movement for Burma's democracy. Winfermau stated:

Most Burma people in Korea don't like the military government at home. They don't speak out but I know what is in their minds. Not all Burma workers are political activists but all persons are supportive of our association. And don't forget that the central, founding ideas for our association are based on nationalism and democracy. (Winfermau)

Fifth, established ethnic communities are often the centre of the preparatory effort to return to the home countries. Leaders who were interviewed were the ones who have strived hard to plan out educational sessions for members who are supposed to return. They also forge networks with Korean supporters who can help them move the plans forward. In the case of the Burma community, Tura has been engaged in a joint project of the returning program with Asian Cultural Solidarity, a regional NGO in Bucheon, and the JCMK.

World Citizens

Interviewees emphasized that migrant workers are not merely labourers who only do work which is shunned by Koreans. They are also people who have many other roles, both within the Korean society as well as individually, and therefore have diversified learning needs that should be fulfilled. However, their learning needs are negatively impacted by their lack of citizenship and their status as either legal or illegal workers. Inside the communities, the people who have overstayed their visas are often the ones who have accumulated the most knowledge

and experience which is invaluable to newcomers. However, they have to take big risks if they want to stay and impart this to others. This is one reason why learning experiences are not well accumulated within the ethnic communities; leaders or leaders-to-be are in many cases not able to reveal themselves in public due to their undocumented status.

Second, interviewees emphasized that they exist transnationally between the two worlds and consequently struggle to maintain or enhance their social membership at home. Interviewees pointed out that while migrant workers try to get social membership in their current space of living with the help of Korean civil society, they also need the equivalent one at home. Therefore, the returning programs as discussed in Korean civil society groups are the ones in which ethnic community leaders are most interested. A difficult situation in the home country can sometimes act as a cohesive power among the workers, situating home in the centre of their minds, despite being thousands of miles removed.

Third, ethnic communities are sometimes situated within complicated power relationships, such as the asymmetrical power structure between themselves and the Korean NGOs. The interests on both sides cannot be exactly identical. Interviewees explained how much material and emotional support they have had from the Korean NGOs. For example, the Indonesian community has been offered their own meeting room from an NGO it collaborates with. The Burma community also could not have managed as well as it is currently if there had not been close and dedicated help from an NGO they have collaborated with for the last ten years.

However, tension often exists between the ethnic communities and their supporters because they do not have exactly the same political stance towards this cooperation. Tura explained that this is a healthy tension as long as they aim for the same general direction, to

make the world better place. What Tura was concerned about was that there are many NGOs sprouting up everywhere which make various propositions for collaboration:

In term of relationships we make with other organizations, our stance is that we try our best to maintain existing relationships as much as we can. What we can do is take the utmost care to find out the genuine intentions of the people who want to be with us to initiate a certain project. We deal with these people with utmost caution. In terms of our existing relationship we appreciate it and try to maintain it as much as possible. (Tura)

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to listen to the various voices of the learning providers who are engaged in the planning and facilitation of activities related to the development of knowledge, skills, and attitude or social relations of migrant workers. Educational or learning facilitating functions of these interviewees were revealed to be significant even though the beliefs or internal motives for providing the support were different according to their personal and organizational points of view. From an organizational point of view, the organizations of the interviewees provide a range of support that spans between service and advocacy.

Overall, interviewees undertook their roles earnestly and conscientiously. However, the efforts of Korean civil society to intervene on behalf of migrant workers have limits. The organizations' educational activities represent just one part of their overall goal, which is either service-oriented, advocacy-oriented, or both. Also, learning providers in these groups often feel inadequate, both in the sense of personal training as well as resources, to actively organize the learning activities. Migrant workers' meaningful and efficient learning could be better accomplished by increasing the visibility of the educational activities of these providers and reflecting on their insights as adult educators or adult learning facilitators on planning and facilitating programs for migrant workers.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of the research was to understand how the multiple identities of migrant workers in Korea impact their learning experiences. The findings demonstrated the lived experiences of learning in which their various needs, actions, and outcomes are situated across multiple times and spaces. Particularly in Chapter Four, I argued that the workers' learning experiences are sustained to enhance particular capabilities—occupational, social, and political—first as contemporary workers who maintain their competence as required by their changing circumstances and second as people belonging to multiple communities. However, the results also show that the differences in those identities, in terms of citizenship, class, race/ethnicity and even gender, were situated in the midst of their learning experiences and often have a negative impact on those experiences. In Chapter Five, I addressed the diverse voices of learning providers who are located in a variety of arenas: official/state agencies, Korean civil society, and the various ethnic communities of migrant workers themselves. By listening to these voices, we can understand who supports migrant workers and how their advocacy is formed.

In this chapter, I discuss three points based on the findings in relation to the theoretical frames discussed earlier: transnationalism and citizenship, the notion of lifelong learning, and critical/feminist pedagogies. First, I examine and confirm the existence of grass-roots transnationalism (Portes, 1999) situated in the realm of lifelong learning. Second, I analyze migrant's identities that impact learning. Third, I envision a new approach to lifelong learning which can accommodate the lived experiences of this group of workers. Fourth, from a critical/feminist pedagogical point of view, I examine interactions between learning providers and learners and outline what democratic adult education practices in this new field could be like.

Grassroots Transnationalism and Agency in Learning

The existence of grassroots transnationalism and agency in their learning experiences is one of the significant identities of migrant workers. The workers interviewed have participated in various activities focused on learning in which their transnational lives are sustained. The two arguments below highlight the existence of transnationalism and agency in their learning experiences. First, the capabilities sought by the workers were focused on meaningful lifelong transnational survival as competent workers and responsible community members. Second, learning brings power for migrant workers to combat various kinds of injustice encountered locally or globally.

Capabilities for Sustaining Transnational Lives

The findings show that the lives of migrant workers are situated in transnational spaces and the workers engage in learning in such a way that their lives are sustained. The workers interviewed for this research linked themselves to their home communities in a variety of learning activities. Regardless of how much they earn, all except one reported that they remit much of their income to the home country to sustain their families. Many tried to learn employable (or self-employable) skills needed by participating in individual or collective learning activities. Some tried to find niche markets at home while some hoped they would be able to engage in international trade between Korea and their home countries in the future. These experiences showed that they are making an effort to sustain occupational livelihoods ranging widely from the present to the future through constant learning.

To enhance these capabilities, the workers participated in activities that deepened their understanding of disparate societies and cultures. They updated their knowledge at home to reaffirm the worth of their cultures, learned about Korean culture, educated Koreans about their

own cultures by becoming involved in planning and facilitating multicultural education projects, and actively linked themselves to a number of other cultures.

Through this process, multicultural understanding was enhanced among a broad range of people. Politically, some workers reported that they participate actively in their home country's politics. Others spread information to a broad range of people including others from their own country, sympathetic Koreans, as well as to people in international NGOs. Many of them participated in social action designed to improve their marginalized status in Korea. In all instances, the enhanced political capabilities of the workers covered multiple places in the world and multiple actors such as ethnic communities, Korean NGOs, and international NGOs. Therefore, the workers were able to maintain a complex web of political relations in multiple societies.

Transnationality is a crucial part of their identity that covers different times and places. It connects them with more people in different parts of the world and broadens their focus of learning. At the same time, it is a sense of agency in learning that enables them to engage in learning activities. As a result, workers experienced many of the learning opportunities embedded in Korean society and, at the same time, were able to remain engaged with the communities in their original countries and other places in the world. Their learning activities can be deemed transnational, since learning requires significant time and the commitment of the workers and in many instances takes place across borders.

The sense of agency in continuous learning sustains or encourages their transnational identity despite hardships. For example, returning programs are purposeful educational activities that aim to help migrant workers re-conceptualize their transnational identity and deal with the hegemonic context that simultaneously surrounds them. They make the case that global non-elites are transnational citizens with learning priorities. Transnational lives are not just for

professionals. Migrant workers cannot just be seen in terms of descriptive macro-level migrant flows within the global and local labour markets. They must be seen as active social beings who claim transnational space as do global elites. For that to happen, learning must become a crucial activity which happens in the complex lifeworld of migrant workers, not only to respond to these hegemonic contexts which impact their transnational lives, but also to reshape these very contexts (Welton, 1995) through their resistance. I consider this phenomenon to be an important characteristic of grassroots transnationalism which I will explain in the second argument below.

Learning as Social Justice

My second argument focuses on the significance of learning in the lives of these marginalized workers, which combats various kinds of social exclusion due to their migrant identities. Migrant workers are marginalized in local spaces of living when their identity is interpreted as not just different from other workers, but significantly inferior in that they are migrant, low-skilled workers and racial minorities. The workers showed, however, that they do not remain in the expected marginal roles but actively engage in various activities which enable them to acquire targeted capabilities to make themselves full-fledged members in the multiple roles they pursue.

Worker interviewees showed that they changed the beliefs that have guided their lives by examining their taken-for-granted assumptions about their lifeworld in which their roles are fixed. For example, different racial features often serve as justification for their relative lack of rights as compared with other workers, as well as the fact they are asked to do whatever tasks others may avoid. The role that learning played in facing up to this type of discrimination was significant in that it led the workers to examine the assumptions of discrimination and prepare to combat it.

In particular, participation in collective learning activities showed a significant learning outcome to combat exclusion. The workers started to engage with other workers whose situations were similar to theirs, were able to find support from Korean civil society and other parts of the world, and started to understand how to deal with exclusion individually and collectively. As the findings show, social marginalization impacts the learning process as well. They were often denied full meaningful participation or forced to discontinue learning due to their migrant identities. However, continuous learning, against all odds, certainly reduced their isolation and marginalization in that the workers not only strengthened their capabilities but also benefited other migrant workers as well by sharing the learning outcomes collectively.

The power of migrant workers' collective learning to fight exclusion is significant in the political learning activities. Workers became involved in social action demanding their human and labour rights, which is similar to other marginalized groups in Korean society. There are also examples showing that meaningful learning occurred to benefit people other than themselves who are living under injustice. Cohen (1995) reasons that, "Awareness of the precarious situation may also propel members of (transnational) diasporas to advance legal and civic causes and to be active in human rights and social justice issues" (p. 13). Through continuous learning, the workers aim to eliminate unfair treatment of themselves and others.

Burmese workers provided a case in point. They participated in activities to align themselves with other people in Korea and other parts of the world who are aligned against the anti-democratic practices taking place in Burma. Through the process, workers from Burma were able to be recognized as a political entity that strives to contribute to social justice at home and obtain political rights that should not be excluded in the current space of living.

Learning how to combat social exclusion increasingly becomes a powerful lifelong agenda in the lives of migrant workers. The findings show how they are marginalized and

excluded, and then how they work against these violations of human rights with their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Their experiences show that learning can be a counterforce to the structural marginalization of human beings (Habermas, 1998; Welton, 1993; Collins, 1995). The social justice perspective allows us to look at the relations of power and discrimination and see the need to extend human rights to these people who are now only identified as migrant labour.

The learning of migrant workers in Korea, therefore, should be interpreted as a collective effort for “globalization from below.” Evans (2000) says “Globalization from below allows ordinary citizens, especially those from poor countries, to build lives that would not be possible in a more traditional world of bounded nation-states” (p. 230). The role of learning in this process was prominent in the voices of the workers who were interviewed and becomes a significant part of grassroots transnationalism (Portes, 1999).

Feminist Analysis of Lifelong Learning for People at Borders

In this section, I analyze the challenges that existed in the learning experiences of migrant workers and point out a critical absence that the current citizenship framework and lifelong learning theories have neglected. Opposing any ad-hoc approach to the lived experience of migrant workers, I argue that their learning can only be justly accommodated when they are entitled to proper status within a transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning which I will explain in the next section.

Problematizing the Learning Experiences: Agency and System Discord

First, I problematize the absence of a theoretical framework which is inclusive of the learning experiences of migrant workers. The current and dominant lifelong learning paradigm has ignored migrant workers as invisible, or has approached them as one of the various marginalized groups of learners, as identical to the experiences of other marginalized groups—the poor, the elderly, or the disabled—who clearly belong within nation-states. The fluid and

complex existence of migrant workers requires us to reconsider what lifelong learning means for this transnational group of people. Therefore, I focus on an analysis of the challenges I found to exist in their learning experiences and accordingly argue for urgent transformation.

Chapter Four illustrated the discord between active learning agents and the absence of relevant spaces allowed for them. The efforts of migrant workers to plan and continue their learning were often hampered by challenges from several sources. The first source is their transnationality because of the ambiguity regarding what kinds of learning they are permitted to pursue. The findings show that migrant workers do not necessarily have the same lifelong learning priorities as other people who belong to the state and corporate world and even move beyond a skills deficit perspective on what needs to be learned to be competent transnational workers. However, not much safe and legitimate space is allowed for them. By willingly crossing the borders and undertaking the jobs shunned by others, they are destined to suffer from the technological determinism of Korean workplaces, which is indifferent to their employability. The lack of citizenship and low skills combine to form a deep-low status which is more serious than they initially imagine.

But this notion that the process of deep marginalization is “totally voluntary” is problematic. Held (1999) argues against this, pointing out that the current globalized society creates various kinds of chasms in which people can fall. The increasing numbers of migrant workers in the world and their negative experiences demonstrate clearly that they are situated in a global chasm where they suffer due to a lack of clarity regarding their rights.

A second source is the many invisible barriers to migrant workers’ meaningful learning. Cultural identities (race, skin colour) and gender differences are just two examples. The social construction of migrants’ cultural identities takes more discrete paths than the construction of official identities such as non-citizenship. It is vividly described by the workers as a challenge to

their pursuit of active learning. For example, race was a serious factor causing human rights violations against the workers. It acts as a mode of classification between those who are 'decent foreigners' and those who are 'migrant workers.'

The experiences of the workers show that foreign workers are not all marginalized in the same socio-cultural ways. For example, Korean-Chinese or Chinese workers may be less discriminated against initially because of their similar physical features. The situation changes when conversation is initiated and language reveals their identity. At the same time, naturalized citizens from Islamic countries are likely to be marginalized even though they are Korean citizens and are quite familiar with Korean culture. Thus, the matter of who is a full citizen is decided by both official criteria and cultural or racial categories, which is reminiscent of Young's (1990) argument that dark skinned intellectuals cannot be respected until they reveal their status, while a white working class person is respected until he or she reveals his or her status.

Sometimes the cultural difference of migrant workers becomes a target of change. According to Young (1999), cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. Dominant groups have exclusive or primary access to the means of interpretation and communication in a society. Without it, migrants' expression of their experiences, values, goals, and achievements become voiceless. Seen in the findings, their cultural difference is neither addressed nor applied in official training programs or their workplaces. The discomfort of the workers showed that those official spaces of learning hardly consider migrant workers as people who come to Korea with respectable cultures.

In addition to that, gender is shown as another category laden with substantial power to decide the level of privilege that migrant workers are afforded. Female migrant workers, as

interviewees reported, are often not invited to learning opportunities, and may even be discouraged from taking the initiative in learning. The gendered structure in which learning opportunities are organized and distributed was significant, not only in Korean society but also, surprisingly, in their ethnic communities where they expect to belong comfortably.

Overall, migrant workers are barely regarded as legitimate learners. At best, they are seen as contingent learners, as opposed to the broadly shared concept of lifelong learners. Their learning experiences are hardly recognized in the public space and this is why their active efforts for continuous learning are often regarded merely as surprising, admirable, or the extraordinary acts of a few. However, the migrant workers I interviewed engaged in lifelong and life-wide learning—as lifelong links their past, present and future, life-wide locates their experiences in multiple spaces.

The Challenge of the Lifelong Learning Paradigm

While migrant workers require proper spaces where they can reveal their learning needs, plan ahead, and participate actively without threat, the conceptual foundation to accommodate their experiences is absent. In this research, neo-liberalism and nationalism were found to form two significant challenges to the learning experiences of migrant workers. Generally, the current rhetoric of lifelong learning almost makes it sound fashionable. There has been a bandwagon effect, where adult education is now often discussed as the best provision for adults living through turbulent times, emphasizing the continuous learning of adults even after formal education ends. However, under the neo-liberal interests practiced in the nation-centric system, migrant workers are not only disenfranchised but also delegitimized. My point is to highlight the absence of an inclusive lifelong learning agenda, which suggests how deeply the current paradigm of lifelong learning is either neo-liberal or nation-centric, or both.

Neo-liberalism represents a knowledge-power regime and ignores the potential of migrant workers, regarding them instead as a non-competent workforce in the world. We understand that the knowledge and skills most valued in neo-liberal economies are to be earned by learning for the new global economy (Grace, 2004). Lifelong learning is often believed to be a systematic provision to enable all people to gain the required knowledge and skills throughout lives (OECD, 1996). Since it signifies that the opportunities will only be given to the people who have a thirst for knowledge (Department of Education and Employment in England, 1998), competition is thus embedded within the realm of lifelong learning while learning provision for less competent groups of people are set minimally. In other words, there are many concerns that the current policies of lifelong learning in many advanced countries may exclude those who could truly benefit from them, that only a small number of citizens are defined as lifelong learners and, as such, benefit from the system.

This tendency seriously accelerates the stagnation of migrant workers by labelling them as workers who are engaged in work where learning opportunities are not necessary. The workers interviewed for this research highlighted this high risk of being labeled as labourers who are only welcomed for their hands while other parts of their entity are often denied. They were often treated as “eternal novices” (Seol & Han, 2004, p. 48) whose skills are never meant to be upgraded. However, their educational achievements were, in many cases, higher than their peer Korean workers. In this way, migrant workers skills often remain stagnant despite their will to improve. While model workers do not face boundaries because globalization has weakened territorial boundaries for them (Brown et al, 2001), migrant workers were affected negatively by border-crossing.

Additionally, while lifelong learning is understood as a helpful concept and a systemic provision that helps all Korean workers who aspire to be more competent, migrant workers are

asked to sacrifice themselves as Korea and its people struggle to maintain their competency in a neo-liberal economy. Situated at neither the periphery nor the centre of global capitalistic changes, Korea's neo-liberal direction has had a negative impact on the provision of social welfare for citizen workers. Migrant workers' stagnancy is the least concern in Korea's lifelong learning agenda, which is no surprise.

I agree with Soysal (1994) and criticize the notion of rights and responsibilities which are inscribed in the nation-based citizenship because of its detrimental effects on the learning experiences of migrant workers. The national model of citizenship makes it hard for people to accept that unobstructed learning and development are universal rights for everyone in the world, including non-citizens living within the same territory. Nation-states promote lifelong learning which benefits citizens who clearly belong to one place, a nation state, and this tendency is perpetuated by countries where lifelong learning has been a significant part of national policy.

As Brown (2001) reminds us, neo-liberal globalization has done away with national borders and their sovereignty. Even though holistic attitudes toward learning are publicly announced by some transnational institutions such as UNESCO (see Delors, 1996), the lifelong learning apparatus of nation-states is less affected by those promoting an agenda of social inclusion through lifelong learning. For example, research by Mojab (2004) reveals the displacement of Kurdish women and their learning, which is neither supported nor encouraged by a nationalistic apparatus of lifelong learning provision where receiving countries determine the rules for participation. Similarly, migrant workers often have great difficulties in engaging in learning without any systematic support. Exclusion by the nation-centric model is, of course, by no means simple. Delegitimization is found to be a complicated and insidious practice. For example, refugees from Burma among interviewees suffer in the same way as migrant workers

despite their access to legal status. The problem for them is they supposedly look the same as migrant workers who most people assume will leave the country sooner or later.

The social inclusion argument elucidated in the dominant lifelong learning paradigm has the potential to be a significant feature to change these painful experiences of migrant workers. It connotes that all people in a society should live without threat and that they are entitled to be helped in their struggle to overcome the barriers they face by engaging in meaningful learning. The only ways found that organized programs for migrant workers can be facilitated, however, were some ad-hoc training or educational programs offered by some migrant-supporting NGOs or self-organized projects organized by a couple of ethnic communities. The significant lack of public space of learning for migrant workers delegitimizes these active social participants as merely extra-recipients of Korea's welfare who cannot survive without the charity of the Korean people. By excluding migrant workers (and other transnational groups of people) from the list of the group of lifelong learners, many of them tend to easily discontinue any consistent efforts towards learning, viewing it instead as a luxury.

A Feminist Transnational Lifelong Learning Approach

Migrant workers' learning experiences have become a significant part of their transnational experience. Learning is inextricably linked to the changing nature of global capitalism, either to catch up with or resist it. In the findings, migrant workers did not see being marginalized labourers as their primary identity, instead proudly displaying lifelong learning priorities which are not necessarily similar to those of other groups of workers. They made alternative efforts to create spaces for lifelong learning of their own that go beyond neo-liberal or national intentions. Unfortunately, these are new, small-scale, and not organized enough to benefit the majority of migrant workers.

To accommodate these emerging counteractions, which are not included under the rubric of lifelong learning, I suggest below an alternative approach toward the provision of learning for migrant workers which emphasizes two axes: a difference-sensitive and a human rights-based approach.

A Differentiated Approach to Learners

Transnational feminist lifelong learning approach emphasizes the importance of differences possessed by various groups of learners. It is effective because it is an inclusive and differentiated approach to learning for transnational groups. Differences considered in this research are migrant status, gender, race, class and other significant social locations. I particularly focus on how these social locations intersect.

Migrant workers' complex existence and learning experiences require us to reconsider the dominant lifelong learning paradigm which has been enacted within the citizenship framework. The uniqueness of their status in the world needs to be reconsidered through an introduction of alternative forms of membership. A global citizenship framework with feminist arguments on differentiated citizenship can theoretically relocate migrant workers from the dangerous chasm of globalism to a safe arena of transnationalism while guaranteeing their different identities.

The findings showed that migrant workers' experiences are worsened under the universal notion of nation-based citizenship. Their location between states means that the learning requirements of migrant workers can only be accommodated with the creation of some form of supranational citizenship. The development of migrant workers' learning agency can only be accommodated within such a notion. As noted, one of the aims of the lifelong learning agenda is to create active citizens (European Commission, 2001). The notion of global citizenship is useful for a construction of new membership for not only migrant workers but also

other transnational groups of learners who are situated at the intersection of global phenomena and restricted citizenship. It would treat them as citizens of global society. As seen in the findings, migrant workers enact a certain form of unauthorized citizenship of their own, which geographically covers two or more different countries. Some workers referred to the membership they have as world citizens. Some learning providers also showed their comprehensive understanding regarding learning opportunities beyond the nationalistic paradigm, which came from their daily practice of training and creating educational activities for and with migrant workers. These learning providers embrace the workers as a certain kind of special citizens. Based on the findings, a new concept of citizenship is needed to actively include them.

I argue that global citizenship can provide the theoretical foundation to discuss the lifelong learner status of migrant workers by going beyond the national model of citizenship. Having said that it is a feminist approach, this particular global citizenship regarding migrant workers disapproves of the ad-hoc approach for people who do not have “a juridical relationship between an individual and a single nation–state” (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997, p. 113). By emphasizing an ethic that transcends nation-states, such as international law and politics, global citizenship can set the first step forward toward the betterment of migrant workers in the world whose rights become ambiguous by crossing borders. Also, feminist arguments on differentiated citizenship should be adopted to be sensitive to the learner’s different social locations. Arguments on differentiated citizenship emphasize how to value differences. Migrant workers featured within a global citizenship framework in this research do not mean that all migrant workers are entitled to have a certain fixed form of universal citizenship. Instead, differentiated citizenship argues that challenges are experienced differently depending on race, gender and other differences. Only by enhancing sensitivity to difference can we reduce the risk of reifying

a group of people as a universal entity. According to Young (1990), universal citizenship has the power to exclude some people from citizenship on the grounds that they could not adopt the general point of view. Similarly, treating someone as a foreigner is a conscious exclusion from citizenship based not only on nation-centric citizenship, but also on Korea's discourse of power in terms of class, race, and gender.

The term migrant worker itself may serve to reinforce their non-citizen status in society. However, the findings show that some migrant workers suffer from intersections of discrimination due to their race, culture, or gender. For example, female migrants indicated that particular challenges existed in their learning experiences because they are women. Imposing homogeneity of a social group that suppresses group differences denies the varied social existence of migrant workers in Korea and makes it hard to find ways to serve them efficiently with educational expertise.

A Human Rights Approach

An expanded notion of citizenship has been suggested in many areas of research, particularly migration, citizenship, and feminist research. In general, the research acknowledges that most immigrant accepting countries now adopt more legal rights policies and, in some cases, more tolerant ethnic policies. Similarly, migrant workers in Korea have been granted more rights than ever due to the recent introduction of the EPS. There is evidence that migrant workers are now officially entitled to more rights that would enable them to lead sustainable lives in Korea, including the benefit of the government-run medical insurance system. The move is in line with international requirements for protecting the human rights of migrant workers (Asian Migrant News, April 2005).

However, migrant workers in Korea report that nothing has changed for the better. Shakill, the acting president of the Migrant Trade Union in Korea (MTU), recently announced

that the policy changes have not improved the lives of migrant workers at all. Research in migration and citizenship studies has dealt with the reasons for this (Blomely & Pratt, 2001; Basok, 2004; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994). Among them, Basok (2004) argues against the notion of effectiveness of legally endowed rights of Mexican seasonal migrant workers who live on the social margins of the local communities in Canada. Blomely and Pratt (2001) also notice the invisible borders that domestic migrant workers cross during their conditional work periods.

My research is consistent with the findings of these previous studies and shows that exercise of endowed rights entails high levels of continuous learning, which itself requires a degree of freedom to pursue. This freedom is not officially granted to migrant workers. Workers from Burma, Nepal and Indonesia who were interviewed, however, reported that learning helped them establish social ties collectively with their own ethnic communities, the supporting NGOs in Korea, their homes, and other parts of the world to achieve collective solidarity which was critical for them to exercise their given rights.

The transnational feminist lifelong learning approach helps us to define what essential rights—civil, social and political—are needed for people in transnational spaces. Migrant workers' active learning experiences let us know that the condition of unobstructed lifelong learning is one of the critical components in human rights because it serves as the foundation for understanding and exercising rights and responsibilities. The lifelong learning of migrant workers, therefore, should be understood as a local/global practice done by hundreds, thousands, millions of these transnational human agents, and, at the same time, as a basic premise that their transnational mode of life can be sustained. If so, it will globally settle migrant workers' learning as authentic and legitimate experiences of exercising human rights while it locally encourages migrant workers to safely navigate learning opportunities and find the best ones to fit their own learning needs, or create the opportunities for themselves.

In the past, migrant workers' learning was mainly looked down upon as a harsh and passive process of adaptation or assimilation to the current realities of the place of settlement. Nothing higher has been imagined. Learning only to assimilate means workers may not be viewed as competent or full-fledged members until they complete the harsh process of assimilation to think and act like citizens. This has constituted an inferiority discourse on migrant workers in that their learning is regarded as non-lifelong, non-mutual. However, the learning experiences found in this research are clearly consistent with the opposite view.

Interviews with migrant workers in Korea show that their continuous learning and its outcomes are a collective positive experience of an unfairly marginalized group of people, which impacts not only themselves but also Koreans and people in other parts of the world. The continuous learning of migrant workers is needed not only for the sustainability of migrant workers' capability enhancement and social inclusion, but also for Koreans' capabilities to understand and live with others, which is specified as one of the critical lifelong learning abilities by UNESCO (1996).

In fact, the importance of continuous learning has now been emphasized more than ever before (OECD, 1996) and the barriers to learning are even felt more seriously by migrant workers. For example, efforts towards meaningful mutual learning have sometimes been banned due to the lack of understanding regarding the meaning of learning for migrant workers. Support for learning sometimes is regarded not as an aid to exercise basic rights to live as independent capable beings in this rapidly changing world, but as the charity of warm-hearted individuals. Alternatively, it takes a tiny, single part within the huge scale of the human rights movement.

Though there are many NGOs which are core institutional centres of migrant workers' meaningful learning, learning providers in these organizations, in most cases, lack either material or human resources. Sometimes, their daily practices are often understood only as an

action for larger political purposes and its educational component is often unrecognized. Some established ethnic communities were able to set up their own agenda of individual and collective learning but not all migrant workers have benefited from their own organizations. Overall, supporting learning is not regarded as crucial element in protecting the human rights of these marginalized people. This is the main area which needs major transformation from the perspective of adult education.

For migrant workers, learning is pursued to find the social membership which these people can safely assume even at borders. These experiences have formed an authentic part of adult education in this global era. On the one hand, there is burgeoning research regarding adult learners at borders. Mojab (2004) argues that we need to think of the transnational features of the lifelong learning communities in which these people at the border are embedded. Agreeing with her, I view the interactions of migrant workers and their supporters as authentic lifelong learning interactions that happen in the current adult education arena.

This research only dealt with some migrant workers in Korea, but there are many other groups of people who are situated at the borders: foreign spouses, refugees, naturalized citizens, foreign sojourners and others. There is also research concerning refugees and immigrants (Alfred, 2003; Jeria, 2001) which provides evidence that adult education actively includes these learners as adult learners who bring meaningful focus on difference into practice. And, many practitioners are increasingly experimenting with learning interactions. These efforts in research and practice are receiving more and more attention within adult education. The lifelong learning paradigm is increasingly being challenged to include these difficult but active, lived experiences of transnational groups of learners who exist on all borders, globally and locally.

Learning Providers – Issues Raised from the Field

This section aims to discuss the roles of learning providers for continuous and non-oppressed learning of migrant workers. The importance of local space for practice is emphasized because the very learning interactions that are important happen on this micro level, offering strong evidence to support arguments for a transnational framework for lifelong learning. The role of learning providers was prominent, particularly in setting up democratic provider-learner relationships and an agenda in which migrant learners' identities are fully understood and reflected in the contents of the programs.

Searching for Empowering Relationships

In this research, the voices of the learning providers illustrated how learning interaction is actually carried out within and across the field of practice. In Chapter Five, I described the understandings of a varying range of learning providers who were engaged directly or indirectly in education, training and other learning-related activities for and with migrant workers. An official trainer from an agency of the Korean government indicated that he can do only what he is ordered by the government while expressing the hope that the official training be expanded to help workers to settle more comfortably in Korea and, when appropriate, help better prepare them for their eventual return home. This is the proper role of official government trainers but, as he explained, the government is not focused on that now.

In contrast, Korean civil society groups are looking carefully at the collective learning experiences of migrant workers and are becoming increasingly involved in furthering their lot. In particular, Koreans in civil action groups and migrant workers in ethnic communities showed a unique form of relationship which was helpful to organize meaningful learning projects together. Overall, the relationships between migrant workers and learning providers in civil

society were based on certain shared thoughts regarding alternative membership, which see migrant workers not simply as economic entities but in more multi-dimensional terms.

In many cases, the reasons why learning providers in Korean civil society support migrant workers were diverse. Despite this, they all revealed their efforts to understand migrant workers as a part of their communities. The method of engagement varied but they nonetheless conceived of themselves as supporting people who are engaged in activities “to help people to stop being passive victims by external forces” (Welton, 1995, p. 37) and strive for the change of system’s intrusion into the “lifeworld” because “the systemic blockages to the achievement of a more fully democratized society” (Collins, 1995, p. 199) is simply wrong from their point of view. Some of the providers went further to participate in various resistance actions to demonstrate their solidarity. The space they have formed with migrant workers was an inclusive one in which plural citizenship was supported (Welton, 1999; Johnston, 1999; Baptiste, 1999; Rubenson, 2002).

It was also found that many learning providers in civil society did not want to remain in these relationships of unequal supporter-supported, preferring instead to go beyond and find the conceptual foundation by which their interactions are more equal. These intersubjective actions in the lifeworld may often, however, be disoriented, due to the global and local forces which threaten the relationship. Drawing on critical feminist pedagogy, I argue that the ways to achieve a more equal membership between learners and providers were highly remarkable. The activities discovered through meetings with learning providers in the civil arena showed what their advocacy on behalf of migrant workers means to them.

They experimented with alternative membership in such a way that both learners and providers could interact based on the notion of social justice and supported the workers such that meaningful learning could happen until the workers return home. Even after, the solidarity

they had between them, which was based on making the world a better place, continued through the networks they had created. From the perspective of the providers, this advocacy is an effort to find working relationships between these disparate learners and themselves, trying to participate in their lifeworld and invite them into the mutually constructed space. The learning providers often challenged the existing system and asked for national/international cooperation.

Similarly, learning providers and workers in this research tried to network the disparate social movements for the rights of migrant workers—health care, labour rights, and learning. As Chan-Tiberghien (2005) observes, this is a form of global citizen education to maintain global citizenship through which continuous learning mutually impacts and makes both parties grow together. Since these new fields of practice have not had attention or been named appropriately within adult education theory and practice, a need arises to do so, and recognize it as a global form of adult education practice that justly accommodates these existing lived adult learning experiences.

Few of the learning providers, however, have specified it as mutual learning interactions. Even though learning providers in the civil arena showed an expanded understanding of the importance of learning in the lives of migrant workers, they might have difficulty supporting learning as a crucial element in protecting the human rights of the workers or in creating a membership that all can share. Adult education needs to develop this solidarity and implement an advocacy role for the learning providers who located across the span of Korean civil society. Critical/feminist theory may enrich or transform these learning interactions.

As other researchers in adult education do (e.g., Alfred, 2003), I identify the role of adult education situated in collective experiences against transnational marginalization. Baptiste (1999) suggests that adult education should aim to change toward a practice with both global and local considerations. Critical adult education “develops more inclusive strategies that

supersede these practices of marginalization and cultural imperialism” (Kell et al, 2004, p. xxi). The learning providers who were interviewed were increasingly asked to be involved in enhancing the capabilities of the workers. They prioritized the critical thoughts about what the systemic blockages to learning means to this group of transnational learners and what should be done accordingly in the field of practice.

By describing their relationship with migrant workers as “colleagues fighting for the better world,” some learning providers in the civil arena and the workers seem fairly equal. However, some learning providers who have the notion of solidarity with workers acknowledged that they ultimately carried the unequal agency/power relationships because migrant workers are apparently situated at the very bottom of the Korean society. In particular, learning providers in the ethnic communities who have been migrant workers themselves, found the relationship as one which needs more improvement to achieve an equal footing. When it comes to systemic blockages, many learning providers in the civil arena indicated that globalization forms the top level, while unfair systematic measures then serve as the reasons of injustice which are the ones that require the most remedial attention.

From these comments, we can recognize that learning providers in civil society have used their continuous interactions with migrant workers well and gradually come to understand them. They have started to get a sense of what learning to live together means. Critical/feminist pedagogies will help these providers to recognize the power and oppression inherent in current practices of offering and receiving learning opportunities and to encourage personal and societal transformation through expanding consciousness, capacity for voice, and self-esteem. In other words, critical/feminist pedagogy’s theoretical framework is useful to facilitate programs for migrant workers because it helps to understand how significantly education can either reinforce the injustice or change situations.

Therefore, the learning providers can finally invite the workers as equal actors in the world and participate in social discussions and actions for and with them. The learning providers need to clearly know who these transnational learners are and under what purposes they are creating certain programs for them. To do so, learning providers should focus on power and oppression in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning projects for and with migrant workers. In this way, the lifelong learning paradigm will not be stagnant but interactive. It provides us with the best argument as to why a transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning is seriously needed to facilitate anti-oppressive learning for this marginalized group of people, particularly now in the context of the so-called global economy where increasing numbers of migrant workers suffer from a lack of continuous learning by existing at borders of multiple boundaries.

Utilizing a Critical/Feminist Lens in the World of Practice.

The transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning can be best realized with ideas on adult learning through the recognition of difference. As Edwards (1991) argues, “before we become blinded by meeting individual learner needs and subordinating ourselves to relations of power which truncate possibilities within unarticulated boundaries of class, sex and race division” (p. 85), adult educators need to make better efforts to understand their learners. Similarly, adult educators who work with transnational learners are asked to understand the complex web of political relationships, contested values, and competing ideologies in their world of practice. In what ways can learning providers interact with migrant workers responsibly, responding appropriately to these diverse learners? To answer that question, this research tried to examine how difference—class, race, and gender—impacts learning experiences.

As critical feminist educators and scholars notice, learning providers need to be attentive to adult learners who bring with them into educational settings specific political, social, and cultural contexts (Hansman, 2001; Sissel, 2001; Fenwhick, 2003). It is important to understand that not all migrant workers under that condition of work suffer the same marginalization. Some interviewees reported that they suffered more than others because they possessed more differences and, accordingly, suffer at the intersection of discrimination. Learning providers should be careful not to reify migrant workers as just oppressed learners. In providing a particular form of generic programs for migrant workers, their identity as learners is at risk of being reproduced or reinforced as marginal learners. The transnational feminist approach emphasizes all differences that the learners bring into the learning contexts. By failing to do so, educators may continue to perpetuate relations of dominance in their field of practice or simply be less helpful to their learners by not understanding them well.

Narayan (1988) argues that self examination is a pre-requisite for adult educators who have sincere intentions of working across differences. Van der way (2003) also points out that we may choose to ignore difference intentionally or work towards forming risky bonds of understanding while realizing the fragility of relationships that are being constructed across differences. Some adult education researchers notice that adult educators may feel inclined to select a set of experiences of a particular group or groups of learners as normal and appropriate, or recommendable. However, the learning experience of migrant workers cannot be generalized under the category of contemporary workers, and there is no such thing as universal or general migrant workers who are separated from specific politics, culture, economic and social structures with which each worker or group of migrant workers lives.

Rather, we should understand that migrant workers are uniquely positioned adult learners whose difference is no small matter for the educators working with them. For example,

the findings show that not all caring thoughts and actions for migrants are automatically given the status of culturally appropriate practice. Workers reported some stories of participation in multicultural events for migrant workers which actually yielded the opposite results. Ethnic community leaders, particularly, did not think all multicultural festivals were anti-oppressive or enjoyable. Young's (1997) concept of asymmetrical reciprocity supports Narayan's (1988) view that insiders have knowledge of lived oppression that is unlikely for an outsider to fully grasp. In this research, the depth of mutual understanding on disparate cultures was pointed out as a primary consideration by the ethnic community leaders. Therefore, using an insider's point of view in planning is one possible way to understand the learners and facilitate good adult education programs.

Summary

In this chapter, I tried to reveal why migrant workers are a transnational agency with unique learning priorities and how these collective learning experiences can be regarded as grassroots transnationalism. Migrant workers who are labeled as outsiders in these global flows did not see themselves as helpless labourers. Nor did they adopt that notion as their primary identity. Instead, they pursued lifelong learning activities which meaningfully helped them sustain their transnational lives. Adopting a social justice perspective was useful because it afforded me an opportunity to look at the relations of power and discrimination regarding the differences that migrant workers bring into the educational setting. This is important because differences impact their learning process and outcomes, often negatively.

I also generalized the specific arguments I made in the first section and showed how current scholarship in citizenship and lifelong learning lacks a more critical perspective that is not nation-centric. As a remedy to this deficiency, I suggest a transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning which starts as a critique to the predominant nation-centered, neoliberal,

technical approach to lifelong learning, and aims to expand to a comprehensive paradigm that includes transnational learners as its core. To be a comprehensive approach that includes many groups of transnational learners, the new approach needs to be understood as an expansion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because it recognizes the modes of lifelong learning conducted across borders as an essential right.

Finally, I discussed the need for change in the field of adult education practice. That change requires learning providers to look again at the needs of transnational learners. I used evidence from Korean civil society to point to the need to develop empowering relationships with these transnational learners. Critical/feminist pedagogy was addressed as a useful theoretical tool to help learners and learning providers move beyond the traditional supporter-supported dichotomy toward a more equal relationship within the educational settings. Recognition of difference was introduced as a critical issue that educators should consider carefully throughout the learning process of transnational learners.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Labour migration is an acute issue which has brought the political interests of countries into conflict. Social scientists have mainly approached the issue from a macroeconomic perspective, in which migrant workers are typically depicted not as social agents but as a part of the flow of commodified labour. As a Korean woman who is also an immigrant to Canada, I have become interested in the lives of immigrants all over the world and I have drawn on that interest for my research into adult education issues. When I heard and saw how seriously migrant workers' human rights were being infringed in my home country, South Korea, I became very interested in them. South Korea had not accepted migrant labour until 1991, so the social phenomena swirling around the issue were new to the country.

Recently, much work has been done in the research world to identify these people and produce information about them. However, the literature mainly views migrant workers as a marginalized social group and does not adequately address the complex context of their learning. Within the field of Korean adult education itself, only a few studies have viewed migrant workers as human resources (Kee, 1997). The work that has been done rarely informs us about how to understand these workers as adult learners who are social agents with the desire to learn.

Summary of Research

My primary research questions were what characterizes migrant workers' learning experiences in Korea and how do migrants' identities impact on that learning experience. To answer these questions, I used a qualitative interview process, working with two groups of participants—migrant workers and learning providers. The first and primary group was migrant workers, who are working or had worked under the Industrial Trainee Program (ITP) or Employment Permit System (EPS). Learning providers were those who offered any types of training or education to migrant workers. Among thirty participants, nineteen were migrant

workers, five of whom are also learning providers in their respective ethnic communities and the rest were Korean learning providers involved in official training, Korean civil society organizations, labour unions, and religious NGOs.

Semi-structured interviews were the main method used to collect data. For interviews with migrant workers, interpreters were engaged according to the proficiency in Korean or English which the participant themselves decided. Interviews took place over a period of one year—between November 2004 and July 2005. The data were analyzed recursively as they were collected, transcribed, coded and re-coded.

Conclusions

In short, my conclusion is that differentiated citizenship identities (according to their gender, race, and other locations) significantly impact lifelong learning experiences of migrant workers. The findings describe the various learning experiences of migrant workers and their interactions with learning providers in which migrant workers gain capabilities to function technically, socially, culturally and politically to make themselves more capable and mature as workers in this fast-changing global world. The interviewed workers reported they were challenged when they tried to make meaning from these learning experiences due to their migrant identities as low-skilled foreign workers who are different in many ways from other workers in Korean society in terms of class, race, gender or the intersections of these differences. Even though migrant workers were engaged in various interactive practices of learning, these learning experiences were situated in the chasm of neo-liberal globalism, a situation which does not afford them complete membership and which does not promote meaningful learning for them.

Based on the findings, I conclude that these global non-elites are transnational citizens with their own unique learning priorities. I highlight the concepts of grassroots transnationalism

and global citizenship as useful in that they broadly situate these workers in the research's macro (global) framework. I also found critical/feminist arguments related to citizenship and pedagogy useful in that they situate the workers in this research's micro (local) framework. With these conceptual lenses, I approached the learning experiences of migrant workers and problematized both the taken-for-granted marginalization of the workers and their absence from the current lifelong learning paradigm. In this process, it was clear that nation-centric citizenship and the lifelong learning paradigm as currently constituted act to constrain participation of migrant workers in meaningful learning experiences. A more transformative view of membership is required, along with various supporting mechanisms to justly accommodate these learning activities. This view is what I refer to as the transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning.

In this approach, migrant workers' learning experiences can be located, not as an ad-hoc phenomenon, but as a legitimate experience that is supported on a systematic basis by the local jurisdiction. The critical components of a transnational feminist approach are summarized in two points: first, recognition of difference—this approach should understand the difference of individuals or groups of transnational learners, which is created at borders—not only geographical borders but also other abstract and invisible borders such as the intersections of migrant status, gender, race, class and other locations. This helps to prevent essentializing migrant workers as a homogenous group of non-elite border crossers. On the contrary, it helps to define difference fluidly and relationally, as well as contribute to the field of adult education where difference should be used to enrich diverse transnational learners.

The second critical component is the adoption of a human rights-based approach that includes cultural and political rights. This approach emphasizes the learning needs of transnational learners as a crucial part of human rights and thus entails the empowerment of

migrant workers in various educational settings. The collective learning experiences of the workers represented in this research may change our previous knowledge of the world. In terms of migrants' social well-being, much has been realized in many parts of the world where migrant workers exist. Many host societies have gradually acknowledged their efforts to belong and rewarded them by extending human rights and health care services. However, support for learning is still regarded as extravagant, despite the fact that learning is an essential condition for human existence, particularly in this era of change and is a necessary condition for exercising cultural and political rights.

I believe the importance of this approach is validated by this research, which shows the tremendous efforts that the migrant workers in Korea made to carve out their own space for learning inside of the transnational space in which they exist. The issues of lifelong learning for migrant workers include not only learning for immediate survival or adjustment, but also learning which forms a critical part of grassroots transnationalism. The increasing numbers of transnational people should also make us feel that these issues of lifelong learning cannot be ignored.

To avoid becoming an anachronism, the lifelong learning agenda should move forward from conventional approaches to a broader approach that covers the increasing numbers of transnational spaces in which learning occurs. I argue that participatory democratic processes and support of transnational lifelong learning are not two different processes in this swirling global society, they are intertwined.

The transnational feminist approach is a practice that starts from borders where at least two different cultures, systems, or societies meet. The approach aims at people who learn at the borders and tries to free transnational learners from the constraints of nation-centric systems. Therefore, it is critical to establish supranational institutions where issues can be raised, shared,

discussed and ultimately resolved. A common understanding on what particular local/global concerns these transnational learners face in their pursuit of learning and ways to support these people to act responsibly must be established within these institutions.

In this large transnational mechanism, sending and receiving countries should cooperate to enable migrants to obtain an appropriate education or training to initially adjust themselves in the host countries and workplaces. For example, effective language education and cultural awareness programs are needed before the workers leave their home countries. Sending countries may not be able to fully support their sending workers due to scarce resources. However, they do need to be responsible, to a certain extent, for the welfare of their citizens, especially considering that the workers remain attached to the home country culturally and economically, as shown in this research. Receiving countries should also take care of returning workers and to ensure an effective repatriation. These tasks require extensive networks of information as well as human and financial resources between the sending and receiving countries and their societies.

In this transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning, the role of adult education is critical. The importance of the local space of practice was emphasized throughout this research because the learning interactions emerge in this micro level, offering compelling evidence to support arguments in favor of the need to create a transnational framework that supports lifelong learning. The role of critical/feminist pedagogy should be prominent, particularly in setting up a democratic relationship between the learner and the provider, and creating an agenda in which migrant learners' identities are fully understood and reflected in the contents of the programs.

Lastly, I want to explain the implications of this transnational feminist approach for Korean society specifically. Migrant workers are an emerging social group in Korea. What needs to change in Korean society to better accommodate this group? Would Korean society, or

any society that invites transnational actors into their midst, benefit from an expanded and more sophisticated notion of lifelong learning? The answer is a tentative yes. More than 400,000 migrant workers and foreign-born residents were created by, for example, the Korean societal needs of labour, the rapid increase of interracial marriage, and record-low birth rate and a rapidly aging population.

Therefore, the Korean government should take the lead in exploring new ways to prepare to meet the demands of a multicultural society. The fundamental step is to endow fair rights for migrant workers who are the biggest group of cross-borderers in Korea, which include rights to engage in meaningful learning experiences throughout their lifespan over multiple spaces. Creating a transnational space for lifelong learning is possible and should be discussed in Korean society as well as other countries which experience similar phenomena.

Recommendations

For Future Research

On the theoretical level, this research contributes to adult education by offering rich descriptions of migrant workers' marginal but active experiences of learning. It also provides some perspectives and insight into how they conceive themselves as agents in learning and experience lifelong and life-wide learning in multiple spaces of their transnational lives. However, this area is still one of the most neglected fields of adult education. To impact this field substantially, more studies on migrant workers and their learning are needed.

There are several kinds of adult education research which can benefit Korea specifically. First, there are other factors that affect the learning experiences of migrant workers such as religious and spiritual communities, ethnicity, and status as a documented/undocumented migrant. These are the important factors that impact workers' experiences that deserve researchers' attention.

Second, an analysis of migrant workers' needs and experiences during initial employment training could contribute to the improvement of those government-sponsored training programs.

Third, studies on the possible or appropriate direction for helpful learning programs for returning workers seems needed in Korea. More effective returning programs will also encourage migrant workers to voluntarily return to their country of origin with the increased expectation of a "soft-landing."

Fourth, learning activities provided by NGOs also deserve the attention of adult education scholars. As shown in this research, these programs can benefit not only migrant workers but also the Korean public in terms of enhancing multicultural understanding. They can and should be approached systematically by central or provincial governments as community-driven lifelong learning programs.

Fifth, the companies that employ migrant workers, and the managers that work there, form an important group of people who have been left out of the educational process. Yet, they are the ones who interact with migrant workers daily. As such, they are in a position to have a significant impact on the lives of migrant workers, perhaps more so than any others. There should be educational opportunities for this group as well. The education should revolve around enhancing their understanding of human rights and multiculturalism and it would be useful if scholars focused some of their attention on this area.

Sixth, future research on the role of teaching and pedagogy on their learning experiences would be useful since some forms of teaching might have helped migrant workers more than others.

Finally, there are areas of research regarding migrant workers or other types of transnational people that can be applied, not only to Korea, but also to a wider global setting.

There are many immigrant and migrant workers in the world but there is a dearth of studies analyzing the issues of culture, class, profession, and gender which they bring to their new countries of residence. Among these suggested analytical frames, I strongly recommend a focus on the learning experiences of female migrant workers, a subject that was only treated minimally here. Studies more focused on gender would be able to analyze female workers' experiences in several ways: first, they could include the experiences of more women and could compare the experiences of learning between male and female workers. During my research it was clear that female migrant workers who are married face more arduous responsibilities as they balance their public and private lives. Also, both single and married female workers (particularly from Islamic cultures) were not seen as emotionally free to actively participate in learning activities due to norms from the home culture. These are areas deserving of further study. We should remind ourselves that the lives of female migrant workers are diverse and they do not necessarily provide their migrant work in visible workplaces such as factories. On the contrary, many work invisibly.

It should also be pointed out that female migrant workers are not the only people who work and learn transnationally. There are migrant female spouses in Korea who are married to Korean men. And there are refugees, naturalized citizens in Korean society, not to mention the families of the migrant workers themselves, who also face injustice and need space within adult education research and practice. This research was only able to partially deal with refugees who combine migrant identity with official resident status in Korea, but these groups of people are entitled to be dealt with in future research intensively, as are the families of migrant workers. The United Nation Commission on Social Development, UNICEF and UNESCO have long been interested in the education of migrant workers' children. This subject, as well as the

education for migrant workers as parents who have great concern and interest in their children's education, makes for an interesting subject for adult education researchers.

For Policymakers

There is much evidence that Korean society has been impacted by the multiculturalism that increased numbers of foreigners, including migrant workers, has brought. For example, street signs are now marked with at least three languages and there are now two non-citizen government officials who have been appointed for the first time in Korea's history (Joongang Ilbo Daily, 2004). However, Korea still remains a country where foreigners face difficulties in their daily lives, particularly for migrant workers. There are discussions regarding how to better accommodate foreigners who spend time in Korea for an extended period of time and many people see these as some of the most urgent social goals in Korean society. Those should continue and hopefully progress to a positive conclusion.

Unfortunately, those discussions are not extended to include migrant workers. Policy makers should start with an expanded notion of citizenship and systematic provisions to put it into action. The foremost requirement to develop policies regarding migrant workers in Korean society, or any society where the role of migrant workers is increasing, is an enriched understanding of the current turbulent global society where more and more people are situated at borders. Several recommendations follow:

First, expand the approach of lifelong learning toward migrant workers, regardless of status. If workers enter a jurisdiction and toil on behalf of the people and economy in that jurisdiction—and particularly if they pay taxes—they should be accorded full access to state programs that promote lifelong learning. Moreover, policies in all nation-states need to become more specific as a system for supporting the active citizenship of migrant workers. For example, along with Korea, Japan is another country where permanent residence status for migrants is not

extended. Instead migrant workers are issued temporary work visas. These countries need to be more active in finding ways to respect the human rights and dignity of those workers, and observe relevant international conventions. Specifically, many countries which receive temporary labour from other countries, such as Korea and Japan, have not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. They should do so. And, policymakers are encouraged to develop ways to support transnational workers and ensure that the provision of lifelong learning opportunities is significant.

Second, support migrant workers' training and education for the purpose of developing human resources and let those workers who have proven the value of their skills, knowledge and commitment to the host country and economy have some flexibility in renewing their contracts or extending their duration of stay. Policies to endow qualified status such as long-term resident status to qualified migrant workers would be something to consider in the long-term.

Third, include the various learning providers from civil society at the policymaking table. They are the ones who know the migrant workers the best and are therefore better situated to assess workers' learning needs, and to plan, facilitate and evaluate the programs. I strongly believe that now is the time to invite NGO activists from the Korean civil society to the policy table to consider the direction and the content of education and training activities for migrant workers. The capabilities of this group have grown through the numerous and substantive interactions with migrant workers as they have supported them with services and advocated on their behalf.

Fourth, conceive new ways to meet the professional development needs of all learning providers who serve migrant workers, many of whom have undertaken adult educator's roles and tasks without appropriate recognition or support from the state. It is preferable that

professional development opportunities are advanced to all types of learning providers, including NGO activists. Realistically, however, consideration may start with the learning providers in official agencies who are in charge of initial employment training and then expanded.

Fifth, find ways that Korean citizens and migrant workers can mutually benefit from each other to learn to live together. This has been whole-heartedly endorsed by UNESCO (1996) and has been partially fulfilled in the Korean civil arena, as shown in this research.

Sixth, networking with sending countries, not only to satisfy labour supply and demand concerns but also for cooperation in development of human resources, is necessary. For example, the provision of cultural adjustment training and information sessions on Korean labour law is of critical importance and should begin before migration starts.

These recommendations represent new ways to combine the approaches of transnationalism, democratic governance in the global era, and the social justice perspective of lifelong learning.

For Learning Providers

Because there is a broad range of ways in which learning experiences can transpire (formal, non-formal, and informal), and because the background and purposes of learning providers are so disparate, it is hard to offer suggestions to all of them at once. However, I have two recommendations. One falls under the general rubric of enacting the transnational feminist approach in lifelong learning in the field of practice. Regarding the transnational feminist approach to lifelong learning, it should be understood in practice as an initial step toward empowering the adult educator-learner relationship. Also, the approach can acknowledge the differences among, between, and within transnational and non-transnational learners—and reflect them actively in practice.

There are several, practical recommendations that can be made for the different categories of learning providers discussed in Chapter Five. First, for official trainers, multicultural understanding is crucial to enhance the quality of initial training or employment preparation programs. Also, to facilitate the transmission of the essential information efficiently, an approach to overcome language and cultural barriers is critical.

Second, Korean learning providers in civil society, such as NGO activists, volunteers, labour unionists and religious leaders, must guard against creating an unequal relationship between supporters. Offering learning opportunities and participating in them together with migrant workers should not be viewed as an act of charity but a participatory action that works toward the reinstatement of rights that have been oppressed.

Third, for ethnic community leaders, there is a need to facilitate comprehensive educational sessions regarding the rights and responsibilities of the foreign workforce in Korea as regularly as possible for the benefit of their membership. This is a fundamental first step to create a strong educator-learner relationship inside the respective ethnic communities and to grow the independency needed to organize and lead various learning opportunities for migrant workers themselves.

Fourth, active networking among not only organizations in Korea but also with NGOs in the sending countries and other parts of the world will help organize their learning activities to fit current Korean lives, strengthen their ties with home, and broaden solidarity for global democracy through grassroots transnationalism. There are active global networking efforts in several regional and global networks to support migrant workers issues. This research was able to document the global networking between Korean migrant-supporting NGOs, migrant workers, and their home countries themselves, as part of the transnational learning experience.

Facilitating this global networking should be situated prominently on the future agenda of learning providers.

Closing Comments

This research has been personally meaningful to me. As a permanent resident in Canada who left Korea twelve years ago, I am no longer a complete Korean citizen. I have held a special identification as a repatriated Korean, signified by a different social security number from that of regular Korean citizens. When I revealed my identification to some of my migrant friends who were participants in this research, the typical response was an outpouring of empathy. Feelings of solidarity crossed my mind briefly before having to focus on the task at hand, and the requirement for dispassionate observation. I plan to return to Korea to conduct other, similar projects with migrant workers but I by no means will terminate my relationship to Canadian society or the Korean community in Vancouver. To me, solidarity with transnational adult learners in the world has just begun.

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