

## **Inquiry on Narrative's Application to Subject Matter Education: Focused on the 2015 Revised National Curriculum**

Hyeon-suk Kang<sup>1</sup> and Ji-eun Lee<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*Department of Education, Kyungpook National University 80 Daehak-ro,  
Buk-gu, Daegu, Korea*

<sup>1</sup>*hskang84@knu.ac.kr, <sup>2</sup>jieunlee@knu.ac.kr*

### **Abstract**

*In the thesis, researchers explored the importance of narrative in education, and how to apply narrative into subject matter education. Narrative is meaning making in one's life and it depends on inter-subjectivity and interpretation. Knowledge cannot be alive only with the facts as a fragment. Regarding the trends of the 21st century, making a new meaning and connecting the knowledge to real-situation is one of the tasks we have to solve. With narrative's importance and values, we can solve those problems. Therefore, this study especially explored the ways to apply narrative into the subject matter education in schooling. As the 2015 revised national curriculum also highlights six key competencies, the researchers found the common points between them. As a schema and for interpretation, communication, and elaboration of our knowing and thoughts, narrative can be applied to students' whole lives. With narrative curriculum planning template, subject matter education can be applied to a stream of narrative stages. In this way, subject matter education with narrative can develop.*

**Keywords:** *Narrative, Subject matter education, the 2015 revised national curriculum, Narrative's application to subject matter education*

### **1. Introduction**

Education changes endlessly under the society's values, people's demands, and pursuit of ideal education. When looking back on the flow of education in Korea, the typical aspects of education were to cram the knowledge to students. In Bruner's words, school only inflicted 'middle language [1]', instruction focusing on the consequences of disciplinary areas rather than the processes and inquiry itself of them. In consequence, students forgot the learned contents very easily and contents were not relevant to students' lives, so that subjects had no meaning to their lives. This phenomenon was not the sole problem of Korea. In USA, same problem happened before the 1960s. Bruner, prominent for changing the curriculum in education, therefore suggested 'the structure of knowledge [1]', which underscored the processes of disciplines and roles of researchers in disciplinary areas. It was a fresh look at education in the USA at that moment. However, as time went by, only the elite students with wealthy backgrounds could benefit from it in contrast with his thoughts. Too much emphasis on knowledge itself alienated many students from the society and their lives. Students only knew the knowledge, not the state of affairs, which is also important to their lives. Facing

---

#### **Article history:**

Received (September 11, 2016), Review Result (November 22, 2016), Accepted (December 22, 2016)

these problems, Bruner regretted what he insisted on in the past [2]. He, then, changed his thought to a new phase of education, which has been marginalized in Bruner's educational thoughts before.

That is the narrative, which this thesis is concentrating on. Applying narrative to education values cultures, thoughts, and lives of people in a world. Students are neither the passive learners nor independent ones from society. What is important is not how much knowledge students have, rather how students learn and make meanings in learning processes [3]. Bruner's emphasis on narrative showed homogeneous implications on Korean education. Even though there were many educational changes and reforms for the past a few years, nothing great and rejuvenating happened actually. Those of them were just typical in themselves in consequence. Still, our society prioritizes the quantity of knowledge of students, rather than relatedness between knowledge and lives. Knowledge in itself has no power and is volatile. The value and genuine outcomes can come out with relevant usage and connection of knowledge. That is directly coupled with one's life. Narrative can be the mechanism of the connection.

As time has gone on, many Korean educational reforms in the upcoming years have had a hope to resolve our educational problems. The 2015 revised national curriculum policy shows those aspects of a solution. According to the Ministry of Education in Korea [4], new curriculum focuses on: reading education in Korean subject, problem solving based on real-life situation in mathematics subject, communication skills in English subject, and so forth. Furthermore, there are six core competencies in the 2015 revised curriculum: self-management competency, knowledge-information processing skills, creative thinking skills, aesthetic-emotional competency, communication skills, and civic competency. Besides of them, there were many new plans to change the pre-existing curriculum.

Those changes point out the similar traits with narrative. Therefore, appreciating values and perspectives of narrative would be helpful to understand educational trends in Korea and suggest valuable implications on our education. This research will deal with the definition and traits of narrative, the 2015 revised national curriculum, and application of narrative into subject matter education.

## **2. Narrative and the 2015 revised national curriculum**

### **2.1. Narrative**

People generally define narrative as a story. American psychologist Jerome Bruner views narrative as an instrument of meaning making in our minds, and it entails reading, making, analyzing, understanding, sensing, and discussing. He insists narrative, story making, is necessary to schooling as it helps learners create their own world by understanding and reorganizing the contents in subject matter education [3]. Similarly, Polkinghorne [5] also defines narrative as a schema for providing the means to make meaning on experience and one's behavior in life. Furthermore, the narrative gives forms of understanding one's intention and integrating those episodes into a unit. Especially, meaning is crucial part in narrative. In a nutshell, the narrative is not a mere story, rather accumulated stories in one's life and it shapes one's self, minds, and behavior.

According to Olson [6], Bruner's insistence of narrative has four remarkable traits. First, mental structures are organized by reorganization of prior experience and by the acquisition of explicit cultural meanings, rules, and norms; Second, organized mental structure is constructed by interaction with others as well as by knowledge per se; Third, Intentional

states and actions are actually the byproduct of narratives of agents, actions, problems, and outcomes; And fourth, narrative provides the hypotheses for comparison and judgement. In summary, narrative is a human's fundamental mechanism for shaping minds within the culture. Narrative and culture are indivisible, and narrative let one become an agent.

Park [7] also suggests four characteristics of narrative. First, narrative can provide a mechanism for efficient memorization as it connects between meanings; Second, narrative let one experience other's lives indirectly, reflect oneself, and construct self; Third, narrative is a way of meaning making; And fourth, it facilitates learning in meaningful contexts.

## **2.2. The 2015 revised national curriculum**

In contrast with the 2009 revised national curriculum, the 2015 revised national curriculum [8] highlights six key competencies: self-management competency, knowledge-information processing skills, creative thinking skills, aesthetic-emotional competency, communication skills, and civic competency. The characteristics of them are like below:

A. Self-management competency to lead one's life with self-identity and confidence based on basic abilities and qualifications necessary for life and career.

B. Knowledge-information processing skills to process and utilize knowledge and information from diverse fields to solve problems in reasonable ways.

C. Creative thinking skills to discover something novel by integrating knowledge, skills, and experiences from diverse professional fields on the basis of broad foundational knowledge.

D. Aesthetic-emotional competency to find and appreciate the meanings and values of life, based on an empathetic understanding of others and cultural sensitivities.

E. Communication skills to respectfully listen to opinions of others and effectively express one's thoughts and feelings in diverse situations.

F. Civic competency to actively participate in improving the community with values and attitudes required to be a member of local, national, and global communities.

In accordance with these competencies, instruction and learning will change as well [9]. First, a student-centered class will be much more activated as deep understanding needs students to explore subjects and make the meaning on their own. Second, an instruction will mainly focus on key competencies and deep understanding. A teacher should make key questions, which are at the heart of each subject, and students should experience learning by doing and by problem-solving. Third, an instruction will focus on each student's development stage. A teacher should run their class based on students' needs and characters. Fourth, an instruction should provide students integrated learning experience. As creative and interdisciplinary thoughts are underscored, a teacher should organize a class by the integration of knowledge and skill, connection between one discipline and another discipline, and connection among units. Fifth, students' active participation and experience activities will be much more strengthened for developing key competencies. Sixth, an instruction will provide a chance to apply knowledge to real-life situation for reaching deep understanding. Seventh, students will develop meta-cognitive and self-directed skills as the 2015 revised national curriculum mainly views a learner as an agent.

### 3. Applying narrative to subject matter education

Narrative and the 2015 revised national curriculum share common traits overall. In the light of narrative, human is homo-narrans. With narrative, one can make his own life story and narrative naturally connects with self-management competency. Though provided with same learning environment, each student organizes his own learning experience. In the process, one can make self-identity and characters. As Bruner pointed out in the 1960s, memorization of separated knowledge is only meaningful to test and it does not provide any benefits to organize one's educated mind. However, narrative, by connecting knowledge to other knowledge, students can process his mechanism for handling information. Having the storied mind can develop knowledge-information processing skills. As the narrative is connected with the culture and one's life, one's academic narrative is also connected with school culture and school life. By learning, students will organize stories and it is linked to aesthetic-emotional competency. Students share their minds, thoughts, and opinions with their classmates. In that process, communication skills can be improved a lot. Moreover, for civic competency, the narrative will play a significant role. If students learn the importance of communities, nations, and global village as a form of knowledge, that learning cannot provide anything more than knowledge itself. Students cannot make any sympathy and agency. However, with narrative, students can understand the importance in the form of stories. In every aspect, narrative and the 2015 revised curriculum are connected directly with each other.

For narrative's application to the subject matter, Lauritzen and Jaeger [10] have made a narrative curriculum planning template of the figure 1 below. The template reflects essential characteristics of the narrative and it can be applied to all subjects. An instruction can be organized with the template and the first stage is to organize the context. Context is the overall situation students will learn. The context should be linked to the student's real-life situation and it also should be focused on a goal of unit in a textbook. With this, there would be a number of inquiry questions for students to solve the problem and to learn. Among possible inquires, an instructor should choose more essential and meaningful inquiries among them. With final inquiry questions, students will do and reflect upon the activity and survey. In the process, students should find the solution, communicate with peers or teachers, attain the goal, and elaborate the pre-existing knowledge and thoughts. In the culmination stage, students' learning should ultimately provide a chance to share their learning outcomes with peers in the expanded perspective. After these stages, a teacher can finally evaluate the process and outcome of students' learning. The criteria for evaluation are whether students approach to the fundamental understanding we want.

**Basic Goal** : problem solving, critical and creative thinking, use of technology, communication, quantification, self-directed learning, cooperation  
**Application**: reflecting the public problem, interpreting human experience, understanding diversity, having a healthy habit, relating with science and mathematics, understanding human nature

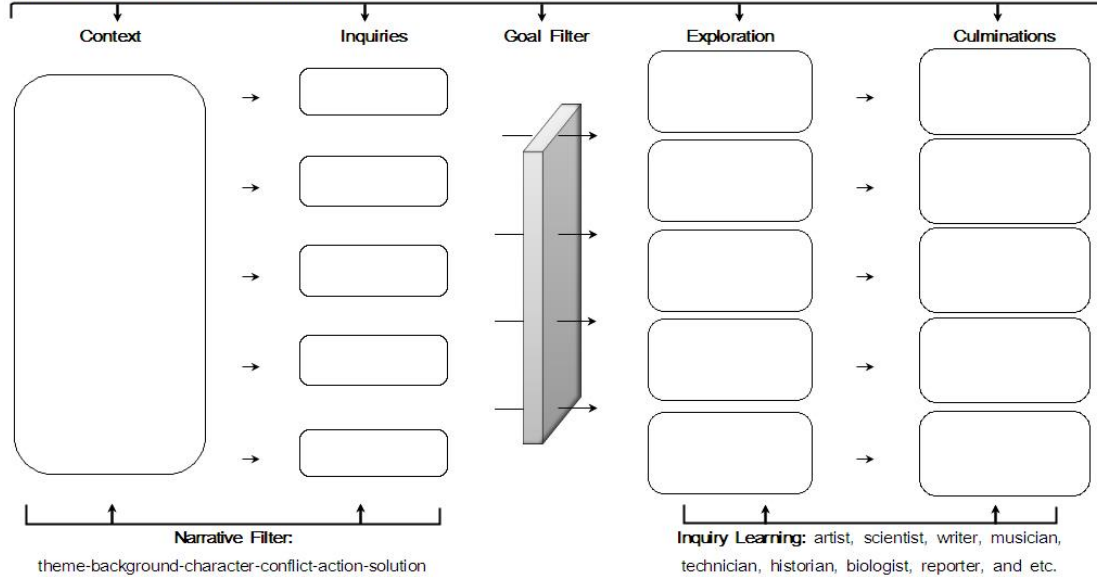


Figure 1. Narrative curriculum planning template

#### 4. Conclusion

In contrary to the past, the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs creative mind, convergence, a state beyond the information given, and communication. Until now, Schooling has only highlighted the transmission of knowledge to students. However, with the new 2015 revised national curriculum and social change, we have to respond to the new demands. Furthermore, those abilities are actually much more linked to one's life. In these conditions, narrative can be an efficient way to resolve.

According to Bruner and Polkinghorne, narrative is an act of meaning making and accumulated life stories in one's life. In schooling, student's narrative is directly connected to his life and each student's narrative is different with others. They can organize this narrative by learning in a class. Narrative is indivisible with culture and becomes schema for interpretation, contrast, elaboration, and so forth. The 2015 revised national curriculum highlighted six competencies, which underscore communication and student-centered abilities. In that aspect, narrative and the 2015 revised national curriculum share many common points each other. With narrative's traits, it is possible to develop key competencies and advance into our lives. For applying narrative to subject matter education, Lauritzen and Jaeger's narrative curriculum planning template can be utilized and it focuses on the learner's authority, communication, sharing, and meaning making.

With this application and traits, narrative can be an efficient and essential tool for our education and our lives.

## Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Ministry of Education and the National Research Foundation of Korea in 2015 (NRF-2015S1A5A2A03048364)

## References

- [1] J.S. Bruner, Editor, "The process of education," Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
- [2] J.S. Bruner, Editor, "The relevance of education," Norton, New York
- [3] J.S. Bruner, Editor, "The culture of education," Harvard University Press, Massachusetts
- [4] The Ministry of Education Korea, Confirmation and Notification of the 2015 Revised National Curriculum's General Guidelines and Subject Guidelines, Retrieved from: <http://www.moe.go.kr/web/100012/ko/board/view.do?bbsId=316&boardSeq=62381>, (2016)
- [5] D.E. Polkinghorne, Editor, "Narrative knowing and the human sciences," SUNY press, Albany
- [6] D.R. Olson, Editor, "Jerome bruner: the cognitive revolution in educational theory," Bloomsbury, London, (2007)
- [7] M. Park, "Narrative and curriculum studies in Kim," Y. C. (Ed.) Afer Tyler: Curriculum Theorizing 1970-2000, Muneumsa, Seoul, (2006)
- [8] The Ministry of Education Korea, "National Guidelines for the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum," Proclamation of the Ministry of Education #2015-74, (2015)
- [9] I. Park, Editor, "Change of learning and instruction, and evaluation in the revised curriculum," Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Curriculum Experts Forum, Daegu, Korea, November 10, (2016)
- [10] C. Lauritzen, M. Jaeger, Editor, "Integrating learning through story: the narrative curriculum," Cengage Learning, Inc, Belmont
- [11] H. Kang, Editor, "New research methods of humanities and social sciences: narrative inquiry," Hankookmunhwasa, Seoul, (2016)
- [12] H. Kang and J. Lee, "Narrative epistemology's value and importance as a basis of academic convergence," Convergence Research Letter, vol.2, no.2, (2016)