Teaching Regional Geography in a Region: Taegu

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It is said that we can hardly distinguish one region from the other. Rural and urban landscapes are homogeneous, not much different from place to place. Greater differences are between an urban center and a rural periphery. We have experienced homogeneous culture on different geographical features. This is mainly due to the spatial organization of modernization. The modernization, industrialization, and urbanization in the recent history of Korea have evened out the regional differences over the national territory.

Contrary to the trends, there is a strong motivation among Koreans to identify themselves in their home towns. They gather under the name of their home countries in many cultural occasions and took names of restaurants, hotels, and even businesses named after their home places.

The motif of regionalism is getting stronger with more national development. The demands for regional geography become high waves tide of municipal autonomy near future. Research puts emphasis on the matter of how regional characteristics have disappeared and how it possible to revive a sense of regional identity.

However, we, geographers are forced to explain and describe something about their own regions in terms of political shifts and a changing educational climate. We suggest that geographers explain a region as a personality. A national model of development cannot be applicable to regional level in the same manner, because regional individualities have rooted in native places for thousands years. We may attempt to explain regional identity as cultural adaptation and its regional institutions in the process of modernization.

I. Why Teach Regional Geography of Taegu

In a colloquium in university of Washington, professor R. Morrill raised a question why Korean geographers were necessary to re-
regionalize and teaching regional geography in such a small and homogeneous country in Korean peninsular.

Region has been conceptualized in various ways, a subdivision of a nation, a fragmented land of nation, and administrative district. The concept of region has been employed most extensively in the field of geography. Geographers are favored to use region as nodalized concept in a view of flow of goods or people. Planners love to use homogeneous or programmed region in a given criteria for their planning purposes.¹

A region, Taegu has been developed as a regional center for centuries at south eastern part of Korea. It has evolved from a small agricultural village to 2.3 million city. The transformation has occurred in accordance with structural change of the region for the period. Taegu has posted a regional center being dominated by the national center for centuries. While Taegu practiced an extractive power to surrounding area, Kyungpook. Its hierarchical status in a national system is similar to Korea in an international spatial system. Korea has been positioned in relation with China in preindustrial society and with Japan and United States in the process of modernization.

It is often referred that regional geography represents for one of core fields in geography and integration of Geography. However, teaching regional geography in any level of school education in Korea has been practically ignored. Despite fair long history of geography education, no printed materials ever been accommodated for teaching regional geography of their home places. It implies that teaching regional geography involves in teaching national geography as whole. It is not so difficult to inquire why teaching regional geography has been ignored if we understand that region or local of Korea is not a functional area as a subdivision of nation, but subordinating area to center of the nation. National power, Seoul in spatial term, has been accumulated dominating over peripheral region of the nation.

In other words, importance of nation always lies at the center, consequently the authority who is responsible for education puts emphases on nation as whole shunning regional geography at regional level. The educational tradition of the core region concept has been derived from the education policy of Japanese colonial govern-

ment. It forced students to learn Japanese islands importance and disregarded Korea as a barbarian country. They did not allow to teach regional geography of region where Korean were rooted.\(^2\)

Regional geography gives us an holistic and personality view of a region. Regional geography is rudimentary cognition to get in geographical work and closing intergration of geography. It furnishes us fundamental framework for regional characteristics. Thus geographers are responsible for teaching regional geography of the region in order to command his home town.

II. Perspectives of Regional Geography

Perspectives on regional geography has been changed from descriptive to structural approaches. Hartshorne refers that regional geography has focused on correlation and functional associations, and ignored the descriptive and unanalytical geography. He maintains that geography is essentially a spatial discipline.\(^3\) On the other hand, Sauer presented a vigorous defense of the historical approach in geography and argued for a strong temporal component in the discipline.\(^4\) In spite of Sauer’s strong defense, the paradigm of ‘the nature of geography’ was widely accepted as the definitive work on the philosophy and methodology of geography and exerted an enormous influence on the field for several decades.

In any way geographers decide a choice between well supported factual studies of little explanatory value or poorly supported factual studies of theoretical ones.

The descriptive character of much of the regional geography produced within the Hartshornian framework provided a stimulus for reexamination of some fundamental assumptions. Schaefer’s paper, ‘Exceptionalism in Geography: A Methodological Examination’ is generally recognized as an early statement of the ‘new’ geography.\(^5\) Although Schaefer was critical of a number of the generally

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accepted Harshornian ideas of geography. Schaefer was in fundamental agreement with Harshorne on the scientific character of the discipline. The disagreement on whether geographers would discover few or many laws a futile kind of argument which had little impact on the practice of geography.

If much regional geography was validly criticized for being overly descriptive, the same criticism is also applicable to new quantitative geography. The more accurate producers employed did not alter the fact that geographers were mainly concerned with functional relationships which offer little insight into causal connections. The failure of the law-seeking approach—or more accurately the empirical statistical method—to clarify causal relation fostered the reemergence of theoretical geography. The problems the new geographers had in matching their theories with reality were, however, as difficult and grave as those the environmentalists had faced a generation before.

In shifting to a completely spatial viewpoint the new geographers abandoned the idea of geographical significance in its tractional meaning and, at the same time, eliminated the need for regional geography as the central core of discipline.

III. Region as a Process of Mode of Production

It was suggested that much regional geography was overly concerned with functional relationships and boundary drawing and that studies based on a strict interpretation of Hartshorne lacked historical depth. To accept a new paradigm of regional geography would have to avoid a number of pitfalls. It would have to discourage factual empirical studies emphasizing associations of phenomena rather than causal relationships and, it would have to prevent the development of abstract theoretical notions without empirical validity. The new paradigm for regional geography would have to allow for the free incorporation of time in all its work.

The advocates of regional geography, in attempting to build a case for their work, were keen on comparing geography and history. Guelke pointed out that historians were conspicuously more successful than geographers, with some notable exceptions, in winning scholarly respect for their work. The success of history is primary

attributable to the methods of analysis used by historians.

Historian is not concerned as the scientist but is with a search for the causes or laws of events. Historian's work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent. Historian is not concerned as the scientist is with a search for the causes or laws of events. When he knows what happened, he already knows why it happened.

The adoption of new regional geography is no longer necessary to seek for causal explanations in general theory or content themselves with statistical description. This approach would appear to be well suited to analyzing the complex relationship that exist between man and the physical environment. So that regional geography in historical approaches reconstituted along these lines could provide a needed central focus for geography and would reinvigorate this basic traditional component of the discipline.

The main ideas has been introduced in three ways. The first view refers to the regional as the spatial organization of the social processes associated with mode of production: the regionalization of the social division of labor; the regionalization of the process of capital accumulation, organized as a net of interwoven partial accumulation process that have defined territorial bases; the regionalization of the reproduction of the labor force, whose logic relates the region of labour markets to the spatial organization of population; and the regionalization of the political and ideological processes of domination used to maintain the social relations of production.7

It defines the region as the concrete articulation of relations of production in a given place and time. This political economic approach to the region is explicitly grounded in Marxist theory. The position adopted is that the region is best dealt with within the general framework in which the social relations of production are seen as the underlying structures. Regional geographers argue that they are constructed over space and that regions are unique.8

The focus is on how the processes of capital circulation operate in distinct places, that is in places that have specific social characteristics. Perspective on capital circulation must be innovative idea challenging tradition way of regional geography. This perspective is apt to ignore geographical phenomena of man's role changing face of the earth and vice versa. Regional geography puts its discipline man and physical and cultural environment.

IV. The Region as an Identification

This point of view is that culture is the prime object of regional studies. This concept of region seems to have emerged from a number of different perspectives. The assumption of cultural diversity stems from a humanist perspective on society. The other is collective meaning of the region. The influence of structuralist theories is from common sets of information, of practices and knowledge that bind together individual understandings of the material environment that regional consciousness and identity emerge. The spatial setting of interaction, such as the urban nodes, would also be considered as important.\(^9\)

Contemporary regional geographers have replaced the traditional idea of a collecte mentality or culture as regional heritage and adaptation by the concept of culture as an instance of social relations. Today's cultural analysis of regions does not concern the material environment as such but ways of thinking about it. Priority is given to the human purposes which give sense to places and regions.\(^10\)

This group of geographers refer to the region as a medium for social interaction, postulating that this medium plays a basic role in the production and reproduction of social relations. A group of geographers propose to look at the region as a physical setting for social interaction. Giddens recognized that central proposition is that social relations are structured in time and place.\(^11\)

The new regional approach is not only an argument about the scientific understanding of space and time. Within the defense of a

regional geography concerned with structures in constant evolution is also a normative argument of discipline opening to social involvement: regional geography does not amount to a mere tool for knowing about the world, it is an instrument for action.\textsuperscript{12}

Ryu has studied the Honam plain, Korea in a view of institutionalization and cultural adaptation. His points are that changes in institutions triggered the transformation of systematic interrelationships in the regional human ecosystem and thus adaptive strategies on the Honam Plain. He puts that ecological system consists of population, agriculture, market and institution. Any changes are in systematic interrelationships among these components. The change in a specific component may instigate readjustments through cultural adapting of systematic interrelationships between this element and the others, and, then of systematic interrelationships among all four components.\textsuperscript{13}

Cultural adaptation is defined as the continuous modification of behavioral patterns in response to changing environment. In short cultural adaptation is the process of selectively fitting behavior to a specific environment.

However, it may expalin the status quo of the region, but it does not explain structural disparities between center and periphery. Cultural adapting perspective describe passive human behavior in a given environment, but does not reveal structural spatial organization of political economy which emulated regional geography of the area.

V. Municipal Autonomy and Regional Geography

President Rho announced to carry on local assembly election March 26, 1991, Korean will experience local autonomy politics, which is so called the flower of democracy and to operate the grass-root democracy in any way in Korea. Monitoring the local autonomy, we could expect local government gets its bargaining poweres from the central government, manipulates and decides local policy by the


hands of residents in the political region. Its implication on education, particularly geographical education, is to work geography significantly. Centralized education is forced to shift to local autonomy of education and teaching geography at any level of school implies to share with teaching regional geography of the region.

Taegu is divided into eight electoral districts of national representatives and 28 electoral districts for local assembly representatives. They are delegates for their own districts and are charge of struggling for the development of the region. However, they are very little concern of geographical facts of Taegu. It does not mean that representatives are supposed to know geographical facts of Taegu. However, it does not make sense to talk over the regional development issues without comprehending regional geography of Taegu. It raises questions how the representatives work out without grasping comprehensive regional information. They are interested in much about national problems and issues, Seoul rather than regional issues where they are living. It is because so far regional elites have played for a subordinate role of central elites.

For example, city mayor of Taegu who is responsible for management of Taegu city, has been appointed by the president of Korea according to his loyalty to the president. Consequently the mayor looks up the surveillances and directions of central government rather than hearing publics of the region and local assembly, that is much looked up with centralization of power, Seoul.

Bureaucrats as well have thought how the region could be dependent on nation rather than how to get distributional power of the region. So that they always respect center of the nation where central elites live and pass over local culture and regional matter.

VI. Education of Regional Geography in Taegu

Twenty quizzes of Taegu regional geography were given to one hundred examinees. Those quizzes were mostly picked up from the text book of the fourth grade of elementary school, Taegu Municipal City. The first quiz is related to maps of Taegu. The second to physical environment of Taegu. The third to historical background of Taegu, The fourth quiz is mainly concerned to population and industry. The fifth is to institutions regarding to political economy.

Paired quizzes of national geography and Taegu regional geography were give to 100 interviewees. These questions were given each to primary school, middle school and high school students, college
TABLE 1
QUIZ ABOUT TAEGU REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Number of Quiz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map (2)</td>
<td>direction and distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment (4)</td>
<td>river, mountain, climate, and pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Backgroup (3)</td>
<td>situation of Taegu in 15 century, colonial, and Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and Population (8)</td>
<td>population, manufacture, textile, service, transportation, communication, landuse, and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution (3)</td>
<td>major, university, Kyungsang Pook Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ): number of quiz

TABLE 2
COMPREHENSION OF REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF TAEGU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Physical Environ.</th>
<th>Historical Back</th>
<th>Industry Pop.</th>
<th>Inst.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
<td>3 (7)</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>13 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
<td>0 (7)</td>
<td>8 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0 (8)</td>
<td>2 (9)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
<td>2 (9)</td>
<td>0 (8)</td>
<td>7 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td>3 (7)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>14 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>0 (3)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4(25)</td>
<td>11(36)</td>
<td>15(29)</td>
<td>13(36)</td>
<td>7(25)</td>
<td>50(147)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show me similar pattern through primary school students to adults. Interviewees respond very low level of intelligence of regional geography in comparison with national geography. Regional level shows less than half of the nation. They knew very little about Taegu. It proved that regional geography of Taegu has not been properly educated in Taegu and as it reflects centralized educational system. Most interviewees show very high inquisitiveness in national contemporary issues, however, they are very little knowledge of regional geography of Taegu.

It is no wonder if you look into the contents of textbooks of each level of school, social studies subject in primary school include geography. One chapter is assigned to regional geography, namely ‘features of our home town’, in a syllabus of social study in the spring semester of third grade. Social study of the third grade in general is geography, in which only 13.1% of the contents are students, and citizens.
assigned to regional geography of home town, that is 16 pages out
122. The chapter covers Taegu regional geography. However, class
allocation for the regional geography is less than 3 hours per week.
Though the chapter is allocated to Taegu regional geography, but
not a name of 'Taegu regional geography'. It means the development
of the chapter to the students is totally depended on the teacher's
will rather than the subject the teacher is supposed to teach.

Recently Taegu regional geography is shown up in the spring
semester of the fourth grade in the title of 'Taegu Municipal City'.
It assigns 40 pages out of 152, 26.2 percent in the social study
curricula. Inserting the regional geography chapter to the social
study syllabus in the fourth grade becomes a great advanced step in
teaching regional geography of Taegu. Still this it is far behind
level in comparison to Japan, U.K., Canada, and United States.

Geography of college education in Korea is not much different
from the curricula of the American universities, but one important
course omitted in the department of geography, Korea is regional
geography of home town.14 Departments of geography in United
States have developed their own textbooks of regional geography of
her home town. But no department of geography of Korea have ever
developed the textbook of home town geography.

Little share with regional geography is mainly due to the centraliz-
ed education system of Korea. Policy and decision of social study
have been done in the central government and regional level of edu-
cational bureau depends upon the central government. Thus without
political autonomy, regional autonomy in education can hardly be
achieved.

In curriculum of middle school, geography was taught in the first
grade and the syllabus shares with small amount of Taegu regional
geography. Moreover, high school regional geography of Taegu is
bleak. High school education in Korea is not heuristic, but like an
institution preparing for college examination. The exam also in-
cludes geography, so that the high school is supposed to teach
geography in the syllabus. The geography does not include at all
regional geography of the region where students are living. College
exam is a national homogeneous so that various subject included in
regional geography of regional level should be out of the range of

14Kyong-Hee Yeh, 1990, "A study on the improvement of geography curriculum
teachers college in Korea," Journal of Educational Science, The Institute for Educational
Affairs, Chongju University, Chongju, Korea, Vol. 4, pp.159-216.
The college exam was carried by the central government, so that the examination has been given to the students the same questions to all candidates. It does not care where they were brought up in rural or in port. In reverse, high school teacher have taught students the same geography being taught in metropolitan city to students in countryside high school. Despite geography is ought to work on the likeness and differences on the surface of the earth, high school teacher is not allowed to teach regional geography of his home town and cumulatively he disregards regional geography of home town.

First of all there is no systematic education of regional geography in a regional level. So far students in every level of school were taught national geography and did not allow to teach them regional geography. Primary school curriculum does not include home town geography as a portion as national geography.

Recently the textbook of social study of primary school titled ‘Taegu municipal city’. Taegu city as region is not a regional boundary but is an administrative demarcation. The administrative border is not the like of national territory. Which is more flexible than nation. Taegu municipal city was renamed from Taegu city in 1981 by the regulation of the central government on the basis of administrative boundary. Thus Taegu administrative boundary did not coincide the Taegu region in geographical concept. Despite the distortion, textbook of regional geography in primary school deals with exclusively Taegu administrative district ignoring geographical concept of region, which causes student to uphold concept of administrative district rather than they take up a real region in interactions with its surrounding area.

Moreover, it is still controversial issues, because residents doubt whether promotion to ‘municipal city’ contributes to living conveniences of city. The promotion of city was determined for political purpose by the central government regardless residents’ will. This is the reason why region in Korea can not stand alone and regional geography of regional level. It is desirable to teach them a region, geographically conceptualized region. The region could be demarcated by Taegu and its hinterland Kyungpook or Kumho river basin.

The concept of region in Korea was very significant in the preindustrial society. Cultural adaptation Chosun period was so strong that create cultural patterns of each region. However in the modernization process the regional personalities were not characte-
rized as much as it was, because industrialization has diffused over nation wide and even out regionalities in a homogeneous pattern. Region has shifted something like human being. Man in traditional society has strong personality because he adapts culturally in a given environment and restricted to interact with limited size of space, but the modernized man is educated in universalized education system and interacted with the broad space in accordance with development of transportation and communication, which results in homogeneous modern man with same value system. Thus modernism is universalism, and modern man is universal man rather than delimited cultural man.

The modernization of Korea has been initiated forcefully by the Japanese colonial government. The core Japan forced peripheral Korea to change to modernized industrial system, so that traditional administrative seats became regional centers as colonial bases. The urbanization, industrialization and modernization process eliminated regional characteristics. Now we can only distinguish urban center by the size of population.

So that central government did little pay attention to the regional culture and people's adaptation in the process of modernization, which resulted in one region, one value and one culture in Korea. Ministry of Education did not must weight on teaching the region, because the regional development does not depend upon the regional institution and its cultural adaptation, but central diffusion to its periphery. It reflects that higher education and better education are concentrated on the core region of Korea and this phenomena have been accumulatively manipulated since modernization of Korea. Consequently, the textbooks and other educational publications are published in Seoul and distributed to regional level. Moreover, decisions on the educational policy in the national level are made in Seoul and ordered to regional level, and then education in the region just follows to the order of central government and the local government cannot hold their own educational policy to fit the their cultural and physical environment.

Moreover economic development of Korea has been based on the export oriented and manufacturing industry, which are linked with western culture and aloft from the Korean culture rooted in rural agriculture area. Consequently educational policy in line with exporting industry ignored regional characteristics based on agriculture. The educational system also imported from the western countries, Japan and America followed by industrialization, have swept
away in a same value system all over the territory of Korea. Therefore the main regional level education was entirely neglected.

Teaching regional geography in English speaking countries also impacts on teaching geography of Korea, because United States as a mentor of Korea has influenced strong power in the process of modernization. Geography is not exceptional. The geographical education being influenced by American geography was stagnated in proportion to geography of United States. Gardner pointed out: “In 1960–61, only 14 percent of American’s 7–12 grades were enrolled in geography courses. This was a lower percentage than had been standard for years. By the mid of 1970’s, however, the figure had dropped to 9 percent. This development means that children not only lose instruction in basic place name geography, but also are denied the potential for creative approaches to spatial skills, and understanding of the earth, its resources, and the broad patterns of cultural distinction across regions.

Drawing on 1982 data, we find that of the some five thousand teachers who teach geography when they were in college; 30 percent had minored in geography; 10 percent had majored in geography, and the remainder had taken only one or two courses. Thus, only is a smaller percentage of the precollegiate population being exposed to this subject, but those who teach it today are less familiar with the subject than one might hope.15

He continued to reason significance of teaching geography as the deepening of students' grasp of the world’s complexity and the broadening of vision that geographic studies encourage — I welcome the energetic efforts of geographers to strengthen this educational resource in American classrooms. Activities to improve the teaching of geography in the schools have a stepwise, a national, and international. One of the special strength of geography is its capacity not only to educate a student about the location of foreign place, but also to teach about the physical and cultural environment of such places. As a nation, we stand in need of lessons on the geography of the Pacific Rim, for we are entering into what has been called the Pacific Century.

The stagnation of American geography, in my experiences, is mainly due to stagnation of regional geography. Department of geography, University of Washington has offered economic geogra-

phy to business school for a required course to undergraduate for decades but the policy of business school graded down the required course to elective one because modern economic geography provided by the department of geography mostly overlapped with courses offered by the home department. Business school demands economic geography in a context of regional geography. Department of political sciences and department of international economics has expanded areal studies, but home department of areal study, department of geography reduced it and put aside marginal courses.

VII. What and How to Teach Regional Geography of the Region

Teaching regional geography demands uprising in a wave of political autonomy and in an effort of regional identification which has been ignored in the process of modernization. Recently we, geographers revealed that national growth does not coincide with regional development and moreover the aggregate growth has brought up the growth of the center.

Teaching regional geography in a region provides students a holistic view of the region, looks into center and periphery relationship as well as functional interactions with other regions in order to improve their regional status, and esteems his region being proud of his culture. Pluralism of regional identification contributes to strengthens nation as whole.

Hypotheses teaching regional geography are:

1) Teaching regional geography as used to be, involves facts of the region which provides to students abundant and accurate informations of their region. Without comprehending facts of the region, analysis and theory formulation of the region would be less meaningful. Thus human and environmental facts should be involved in the syllabus of textbook of the regional geography.

2) To teach a river basin as regional unit. Region in Korea could be categorized in criteria of Western point of view such as homogeneous and nodal region. The river basin of Korea has been historically and ecologically an identified region. In the hydroculture in the Korean society, to understand river basin means historical background of the region and ecological region. In case of Taegu, Kumho river basin and Nakdong river basin as the ecological and historical background of the Taegu.

3) To teach student to conceptualize region as center-periphery paradigm. Central government, Seoul, Korea has so dominant that
region as lower hierarchy has been deteriorated. Teaching the power relation between center and periphery provides them how to ameliorate the dominant and subordinate relationship. Taegu has been developed under the domination of national center of Seoul and regional center Taegu to its surrounding region, Kyung Pook. Regional development scheme should be understood by power relation with center and periphery.

4) To conceptualize region as interaction with core and hinterland, so that region cannot be isolated and always interacts with surrounding area in a compliment relationship. Despite outstanding necessity of center peripheral model of the region in a national system. It is not desirable perspective to keep on observation of regional identification as conflict and dependent relation with center and periphery. On the other hand development of Taegu should be understood by interrelationship with national center, Seoul, but also its interaction with hinterland in terms of flows of goods and people.

5) To conceptualize region as human being cultural adaptation to his environment. In the process of modernization and universalism, resident of the region adapts and adopts differently to the given environment.