1. Introduction

Peace on the Korean peninsula has been fragile over nearly seven decades since Korea was divided by communist North and capitalist South in 1948. With North Korea nuclear-armed and tensions between China and the United States showing no signs of abating in the region, maintaining peace and building up a comprehensive peace system is all the more crucial for the Korean government. In the midst of changing internal and external environment surrounding the Korean peninsula, unification seems to be an elusive phenomenon. This is particularly true of the young aged 19 to 29. They embrace the need for unification only half-heartedly. Their support for reunification is about 50 and its extent of support has decreased over the years (100 equals full support, 0 totally opposed, 2007-2014, Annual Unification Attitude Survey, Institute for Peace and Unification Studies Seoul National University). In addition to this, Korea found itself to be a multicultural society against its will. The number of foreigners living and working in Korea exceeded 1 million mark in 2007 and continues to rise. With birth rate rapidly falling, more foreigners are likely to come to Korea and work. As of end of 2014, there are one million 559,470 families of mixed nationalities out of 17.73 million families, 8.7% of total Korean families. By 2020, one out of nine children is likely to come from a multicultural family. These two phenomena – unification and integration – seem to contradict each other prima facie and there have been little efforts to link these two apparently contradictory trends.

This paper argues that we need a paradigm shift from unification to peace education; it will first examine the present status of unification and multicultural
educations and contextualize why we need to replace government-centered unification and multicultural educations to peace education with multiple actors. This is especially important in view of evolving multicultural society.

2. Present status of peace and multicultural educations in Korea

Unification education has been offered to pupils and students from the elementary to the university. Started as an anti-communism education in the 1950s, it has gradually changed into unification based on national reconciliation and mutual understanding. Yet, despite this change in curriculum, it has been a top down and government-centered approach. Government has virtually monopolized the unification education and schools have given a course on it either on an extracurricular activity or in a credit course (university).

Unlike the unification education, learning about multiculturalism came late in the early 2000s. The government in 2006 starting giving aid and counseling services to the interracial families and help immigrant wives adapt themselves to Korean culture and living. As pupils in primary and middle schools see more friends from families of mixed nationalities, multicultural education was recognized as a necessary one. For multiculturalism, civil society has played a more active role compared with that of unification. Religious as well as women’s organizations have organized various activities for the foreigners who were naturalized to Korea through marriage.

3. A missing link: a need for linking the unification and multiculturalism with education for peace

Korea faces two apparently contradictory difficulties. To prepare for eventual peaceful unification, the young continue to be educated about it. It is aimed at focusing on nationalism; a single nation divided by the foreign powers; benefits from unification would far outweigh the costs. On the other hand, multicultural education has to emphasize cultural diversity in the age of globalization.

Despite these seeming contradictions, the two has in common. Unification and internal integration are mutually interchangeable in the sense that Koreans need to get used to cultural diversity, not only with foreigners but with brothers and sisters from North Korea. As of end of 2014, about 27,000 North Korean defectors settled down in the South. We have seen the rapid increase of North Koreans in search of freedom since the mid-1990s when big flood struck the North. Until 1998, only 947 defectors lived in the South. But since then we have seen over thousands of North Koreans come to the South annually, looking for freedom. Defectors confront cultural shocks in the South, as seven-decade long division set two Koreas apart in many ways. To help the young revive their interests in unification and adapt themselves to fast evolving multicultural society, we need to consider linking the unification and multiculturalism. Education for peace is ideal and suitable for doing it.

Peace is to be approached at three levels, personal, societal and inter-state and Korea has negative peace to a limited extent, i.e. lack of war without, yet so many conflicts within. Positive peace, lack of structural violence that limits one’s development, is very far away to achieve both within and without.

4. Conclusion

As UNESCO Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy in 1994 makes clear, peace is an overarching concept. It is through the peace education that Korea can prepare itself for two daunting tasks of
References