

How and What Kind of Economic Citizenship Can We Develop through Economic Education in Korean Precollege School?

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For the last 70 years the economic education in Korean precollege schools has gone through several stages. In the early stages of the process, economic education was conducted to make students understand separate economic knowledge, economic problems of the Korean economy and their solutions. After the mid-1970s, economic education laid stress on understanding the basic economic concepts and principles, and methods of economic research, namely the structure of economics. Now it is being done mainly by compromising these two directions at each school level. In this study I conceptualize the actual activities of Korean precollege economic education as three main types; First, economic socialization (passive and active socialization), second, economics education, and last, participatory economic education. Then I suggest an actual plan or method of implementing economic education at every school level.

1. A gap between the Objectives and the Curriculum in Precollege Economic Education

It has been more than 70 years since the beginning of economic education in Korean school at the precollege level, and the academic research on it has been carried out for over 50 years. During this period, precollege economic education has undergone seven regular revisions and four occasional revisions, up to the last 2015 Revised National Curriculum.

In the meantime, the economic curriculum for Korean precollege school has gone through several stages. In the early stages of the process, economic education was conducted to make students understand separate economic knowledge and problems of Korean economy. After the mid-1970s, economic education laid stress on understanding the basic economic concepts, principles, and the method of economic research, namely the 'structure of economics.' And now it is being done by compromising these two directions at every school level.

The purpose of social studies education, where precollege economic education is mainly carried out, is to cultivate citizenship. But relatively, the appropriateness of today's secondary economic education, which is centered on basic concepts and principles of economics, depends on how effectively the present economic education can achieve 'citizenship cultivation,' the educational goal of social studies education.

The concept of citizenship as an educational goal is the oldest, traditional and comprehensive goal of social studies education, which is not defined in a single meaning. But its common meaning is

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summarized as follows: “Citizenship is a qualification of a citizen or a person who can contribute not only to have a blissful life as one person but also can contribute to national development as a resident.” Based on the above concept of citizenship, economic education emphasizing the structure of economics has its usefulness in systematically understanding economic phenomena, but also there are many limitations in solving specific economic problems and analyzing and applying social values related to them.

Considering the problem as above, this study aims at first to conceptualize the actual activities of school economic education as economic socialization (passive and active socialization), and then to suggest that participatory economic education and citizen’s economic action plan should be newly introduced into economic education.

2. The Structure of Economics and Economic Education

2.1 Economic education centering on concepts and principles of economics

After Jerome Bruner introduced the concept of ‘structure of knowledge,’ it have had a strong influence on the educational thoughts in the United States since the 1960s, and gave shape to the discipline-centered curriculum and New Social Studies Movement. One feature of the economics-centered economic education is brought about by this perspective and is somewhat directly reflected on the revision of economic curriculum in Korean secondary schools. From the 1970s, Korean National Curriculum for economic education in secondary school began to emphasize the concept of inquiry. In result, the structure and method of economics was introduced comprehensively as the main content of economic education, and this tendency has accelerated since 1980.

This kind of economic education centered on economics has created an opportunity for the contents of school economic education to be systematized by theoretical concepts and principles of economics. But during organizing its contents, it weakened the consideration of students’ cognitive development. In addition, it has become a starting point where the equation of “economic education = economics education” was ‘fixed’ uncritically. Moreover, economic education centering on economics is problematic because of the low level of readiness of economic teachers in secondary school and the divergence in the actual experience of students in economic life. In result, economic education centered on economics has resulted in being neither welcomed by teachers nor by students (Kim Kyung Mo, 1995, 1997).

2.2 Usefulness and limitations of structure-centered economic education

Structure-centered economic education aims to teach students the basic economic concepts and research methods of economics or to cultivate their ability to understand and apply research methods or research procedures of economics. In short, economic education centered on economics is aimed at cultivating ‘small economists.’ Small economists are not only well acquainted with the basic economic concepts necessary to understand economic phenomena, but also can apply economists’ methods of research in suggesting solutions to those relevant problems. To this end, the contents of economic class

should consist of basic economic concepts, economic principles, and the inquiry process of economics. In teaching and learning activities, students are first exposed to economic issues which economists have been interested in. After that students are supposed to be experiencing two kinds of inquiry; One is so-called Consumptive Social Inquiry with which students can learn the basic economic concepts and principles, the other is namely Productive Social Inquiry with which students can learn how to make a hypothesis and prove it in applying research methods of economics like a real economist(Kim Kyung Mo, 1995).

However, this kind of inquiry is neither possible nor desirable in secondary school economic education classes. This is because the average economic background of social studies teachers does not make it possible for them to fully understand the contents of a principle of economics or an introductory economics course. For these economic teachers, economic education centered on economics is very disconcerting and it will only result in teaching 'more economic concepts' and more frequently in teaching many 'misconceptions of economics or analysis framework.' It may be true that economic education centered on economics is highly attractive to a few students with a high interest in economics, and there is a considerable gap between this kind of economic lessons and the goal of the subject of social studies as a whole, that is, cultivating basic democratic civic literacy.

In this respect, the existing economic education centered on economics can not only deal with what it originally intends, but it also makes a considerable degree of gap between the goal and the means in terms of the ultimate goal of economic education of fostering economic citizenship (Choi et al., 1994). Although economic education centered on economics shows a tendency to be somewhat weakened on average after the sixth Korean curriculum revision, it is difficult to deny that it is still a leading form of economic instruction in Korean secondary school.

3. Economic Socialization and Economic Education

Most public education is supposed to enable students in each society to learn knowledge, values, attitudes, and functions necessary to become members of the society through school subjects. The socialization function that school performs can be distinguished in two ways. One is so-called Passive Socialization through which students learn how the present society works and what are necessary skills and values for the future job or profession. The other is so-called Active Socialization through which subject lessons in school can foster students' ability to change or improve the existing society with the critical understanding of the present society (Engle and Ochoa, 1998, pp. 28-48).

3.1 Passive economic socialization and economic education

What is the content of passive economic socialization when applied to economic lessons in secondary school? First, in the realm of knowledge, knowledge about economic systems and laws, as well as principles of basic economic life, belongs to this domain. Exploring the changes in our economic life by the historical era, understanding of the current economic system, such as the monetary system, financial system and social institutions related to it, belongs to the main contents of

economic lessons of passive economic socialization.

In the skill area, we can think about learning how to make use of financial institutions, how to write economic documents, etc. In the area of value and attitude, education about frugality, saving, the meaning of labor, duty as a taxpayer, etc. can be illustrated. When we classify the contents of passive economic socialization like this, it is true that these contents are more frequently taught in elementary school. At the secondary school level, they have been presented to students in vocational school rather than humanities school. In the case of the value and attitude domain, it is emphasized only at the elementary school level. Though it is rarely mentioned at the middle school and higher level, we cannot hide the fact that the way of presenting the contents takes the form of just accepting desirable economic values in Korea.

In short, the contents presented in an economic class for passive economic socialization include knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes which are just necessary for students to lead an economic life in Korean society as a citizen with passive economic socialization. Therefore, it does not take the situation of students as active learners into account. In this case, it is expected that economic lessons will be dominated by one-sided communication and explanation by teachers and just reception by students.

Nevertheless, advantages of passive economic socialization as a content area of secondary school economic education can be explained in two points. One is that it can enhance understanding of economic laws and related social rules that have not attracted attention as the contents of school economic education, the other is that it throws light on the so-called affective domain of values and attitudes, which has been neglected but can be reexamined now in economic lessons (Kim Jung-ho, 1993). Considering usefulness of the content of passive economic socialization, understanding economic institutions, relevant laws, and changes in economic life is necessary for students at the middle school level where their career path is not specifically determined, and even for high school students in the humanities course where they are struggling to enter the university.

3.2 Active economic socialization and economic education

Passive economic socialization is useful in two points. One is that it introduced actively values and attitudes which are not covered in economics-centered economic education. The other is that the point of economic education stresses the economic knowledge necessary for leading a real economic life. However, those knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes are mere “things to be conveyed” and do not include an independent and active role of students themselves in the process of economic education. Such a method is likely to force students to unilaterally accept the facts and certain values.

But we are facing the rapid change of information and diversification in the current social environment. In result, economic facts, knowledge, and values that should be firmly transmitted are reducing. In spite of these changes, if this unilateral emphasis on the contents of passive economic socialization is not changing, it will be difficult for school economic education to play a meaningful role in fostering an ‘informal decision-maker’ (Woolever and Scott, 1988), which is emphasized recently as an important element of citizenship. We can find active economic socialization as a complement to

passive economic socialization.

Economic education for active economic socialization can offer an opportunity to the class in general to apply the decision-making process to the real economic problems in Korea. In this regard, several useful teaching models have been introduced since the 1990s. Those can be classified depending on the nature of economic problems that have arisen. For example, Controversial teaching model (Cho, 1992; Cha, 1993), Higher order thinking model (Cha, 1993; Kim Kyung Mo, 1996), Rational profit-seeking model (Cho, 1991, 1992, 1997), etc. are representative of those learning models.

Some are afraid that economic classes intended for active economic socialization may only exaggerate the dark side of Korean economy to middle school students who are quite sensitive, and it is very difficult to execute such a class because there is a possibility of criticizing the existing Korean social system in extreme ways. However, active economic socialization has a very great significance in overcoming the 'just world' image of Korean economy, making students actively engage themselves in preventing the chaos and 'cognitive dual structure' which is caused by a distinction between the reality of Korean society and the contents which students are supposed to learn in class.

In short, active economic socialization as secondary school economic education gives an opportunity to shift the focus of learning from the structure of abstract economics to economic life and real economic problem-solving. Also, it can shift the center of learning activity from teacher to student, whether it is passive or active.

Economic education for passive and active socialization has a great rationale in extending the scope of school economic education and improving the relevance of economic education in terms of economic citizenship. School economic education would make great progress if it could organize the contents of economics and economic socialization in a well-balanced manner, and if teaching and learning activities could be done in the way that enables active economic socialization. However, in the process of applying it to a class of public education, it is also a solemn fact that economic classes for active economic socialization face many challenges and obstacles.

Though economic education for active socialization must be carried out in many situations, furthermore there is a need for appropriate opportunities for participatory experience to be offered through the class. What is worthy of note in this regard is Citizen Action Strategic Plan. I will make some explanations in the next chapter.

4. Participatory Economic Education: Application of Citizen Action Strategy to Economic Class

4.1 What is the rationale of Citizen Action Strategy?

Fred M. Newmann was the first one who suggested a model of citizen action strategy in social studies education. Newmann had a pluralistic view of society as a premise of this model. In other words, he defined the existing society as a pluralistic one and saw that there were always conflicts in

this society because of the diversity of each individual position. In this social context, social studies education should make sure that students have a chance of actively bringing social critical elements to class and try to solve them.

Citizen action strategy is the model that embodies and specifies these elements as a teaching and learning method of social studies. Citizen action capability which is the most important content of this model means 'environment competence.' In order to enhance the ability to respond to the environment as more efficient interaction with social environment, it is necessary to acquire basic social science knowledge and skills. The skill here means proficiency in the value inquiry process, a decision-making process for the resolution of a value conflict.

In general, the process of value inquiry consists of four steps: (1) identifying public controversial issues with value conflicts, (2) identifying specific controversial factors in public issues, (3) choosing one's own position and reconsider or strengthen it through discussion and persuasion, and (4) confirming whether the final choice of self-position is correct or not in accordance with social reference values, and clarifying social basic values which have been the standard of conflict resolution.

The significance of Newmann's model of citizen action strategy is that if students decide their own position on the basis of social reference values for important social issues, social studies teachers must give an opportunity and momentum to students so that they can put their decision into action in a real situation. Through this, students can feel a sense of personal responsibility and trust in their decision-making and raise the level of efficiency as a citizen.

4.2 Attaining proficiency of problem-solving skill as the minimum capability for citizen economic action strategy

In order to produce the intended educational outcome for the citizen action strategy, students need to master the problem-solving process. In this sense, a teacher who wants to apply the citizen action strategy model in an economic class needs to understand the whole teaching procedure for problem-solving, and activities and characteristics of a teacher and a student at the concrete stage. It can be summed up as follows.

In a social studies class which focuses on social problems, students learn social science concepts related to social problems that they face now (social inquiry), going into the problem-solving process after clarifying their values (value inquiry). The problem-solving process can be divided into three steps: to present alternatives, to predict the outcome of each alternative, and to prioritize alternatives by comparing their respective results. The results of the alternatives listed in this process should be specific and the knowledge applied here must be what students have learned in the social inquiry process. To do this, a teacher needs to show students the reasoning process in which they can support the listed alternatives, or to present the data. In addition, there is a two-by-two matrix and decision tree (Remy and Raus, 1978, p. 57) that can be used in the class.

Especially, in the process of comparing the results of the alternatives and determining the priorities, it is very important to know to what degree each of the alternatives meets their personal and social

values. Thus, at the end of the problem-solving process, a teacher should give an opportunity to students of reconsidering their own value system and its origin, and whether there is a contradiction in their value system to clarify the result of their chosen value.

In addition, most of the problem-solving process is done collectively. A mastery of collective decision-making process plays a crucial role in enhancing citizens' competence in a democratic and pluralistic society (Banks, 1991, pp. 449–467). And a mastery of group decision-making is the necessary process as a precondition for practicing the citizen action strategy model.

4.3 Applying the method of citizen economic action strategy

After a specific decision-making process, students need to be given, individually or collectively, an opportunity of participating in an actual plan or program that can help them to practice their own decisions. Direct participation allows students to feel a greater sense of efficiency as a citizen. Although social studies teachers cannot give students an opportunity of practicing every decision made by themselves, school should be able to give students an opportunity of practicing their decisions in cooperation with social groups. Traditionally, social studies education failed to give enough opportunities as above, so it is true that it raised civic apathy rather than efficiency and practical ability as a citizen.

Citizen action strategy and engagement plans can be made in various forms. In other words, volunteering for economy-related community activities, community surveys, internship at public organizations, and contributions to NGO activities are all examples. The most important consideration in forming these strategies and participation plans is the age and grade of students. For example, community surveys and internship at public organizations are appropriate to high school students, but they are not practically usable for elementary and middle school students.

Therefore, students at the elementary and junior high school levels are encouraged to engage themselves in specific activities appropriate to their level in the primary social group (family, school, class) or in the secondary social group (club or religious group), so as to raise civic efficiency individually under a very emotionally stable atmosphere. However, in the case of Korea where most schools are public, a cautious approach is needed to apply these citizen action plans to class. Therefore, it can be safe that it starts with researching and analyzing social problems and goes further to choose to participate in setting school policies and rules. Involving students in the operation of school co-ops where they establish the rule of co-ops, their participation in operations and publishing operational results can be considered as a citizen action strategy for economic education. Furthermore, students can investigate economic problems in cooperation with economic organizations in the local community and seek solutions for them. The local government and council can be good organizations for cooperation.

The above-mentioned citizen action strategy is expected to be a stepping stone for school economic education, which is more active and participation-oriented through an improvement in students' interest in economic issues of the community where they live.

5. Economic Education for Developing Economic Citizenship

For the past 70 years, the Korean school curriculum for economic education has changed from the subject-centered economic curriculum, which focuses on fragmentary economic knowledge, via the economics-centered economic curriculum, to the economic curriculum for problem-solving, which emphasizes rational solution of economic problems. In spite of this shift in the curriculum, the actual practice in economic education in secondary school has only changed from economic education focused on fragmentary economic knowledge to economic education focused on theoretical economic concepts, and so it is true that they cannot escape much from the basic characteristic of economics-centered education. We can just find an exception in the integrated social studies in elementary and high school, but the basic economic concepts are still emphasized at these levels of school.

If the contents of the curriculum can be divided into academic knowledge and life experience, the economic curriculum can be divided into a life-oriented one and an economics-oriented one. And if we add the feature of social studies here, the contents of the economic education curriculum can be divided into the structure of economics, passive and active economic socialization, and economic participation and practice.

Among these contents, the structure of economics is the basis of the economics-oriented economic education curriculum, and it is essential to understand and apply the basic concepts and research methods of economics. There still lies a problem of “what are the basic concepts of economics and how to allocate them to each school level” (Kim Kyung Mo, 1997). Nevertheless, economic education focusing on the basic concepts of economics has been the main type of economic education in Korean precollege school.

On the other hand, the curriculum for passive economic socialization is composed of the basic elements necessary to understand and lead a real economic life, such as the economic system and laws, and the principles of basic economic life. Compared with this, the curriculum for active economic socialization, which is a contrast to passive economic socialization, consists of two kinds of ability. One is the ability to understand economic policies of a nation in a critical way, the other is the ability to solve public issues related to economy. In recent years, controversial teaching methods or higher-order thinking skills have enabled effective learning of the contents of active socialization in terms of teaching and learning. And the ‘reasonable profit-seeking model’ is meaningful as a content criterion for solving such controversial economic problems.

However, the goal of school economic education is to cultivate desirable citizenship in the economic realm, and such economic citizenship can be achieved not only by acquisition of economic concepts, but by understanding of a real economic life and the ability to solve critical problems. They have no more than a partial meaning or an instrumental meaning for promoting economic citizenship. What is needed now is another opportunity for an economic lesson where knowledge for understanding and leading a real economic life, knowledge of economics and skill in economic decision-making can be applied.

For this purpose, this study tries to examine the implications, premises, and methods of Newmann's citizen action strategy. In result, Citizen Action Strategy needs to consider the age and school grade of a student in setting the occasion and method of practice. Specifically, elementary school students are provided with specific practical activities focusing on the primary social group, and secondary school students are provided with research activities, volunteer activities, and internship activities in social institutions. If we put these implications in the economic sector, the contents and methods which can be practiced at each school level are as follows.

At the elementary level, it is necessary to devise a citizen action strategy for specific economic activities. In order to do this, it is necessary to carry out activities by students, such as savings (in cooperation with local financial institutions and schools, establishment of accounts, notice of accomplishment and awarding prizes), consumption-saving through student self-help activities (announcement of consumer conservation cases and a goods saving plan in class), resources recycling, and planning and activating a campaign for using domestic products.

At the secondary school level, we can think about researches on regional economic issues, an investigation and analysis of regional economic issues, participation of local economic organizations, in-school flea market, self-management of school cafeteria, comparative analysis and discussion of economic pledges during an election campaign, making and execution of a budget for self-management activities, settlement of balance, audit, and so on. Among them, I would like to recommend an in-school shop (school co-op) activity which is emerging as one of the social economic activities, where students can make the related rules and involve themselves in management of school co-op.

Economic education at the precollege level should be able to actualize the general goal of cultivating citizenship in the economic domain. However, economics-oriented education and socialization-oriented economic education were partial and instrumental in achieving this goal of economic citizenship. Considering the problem like this, it is necessary for economic citizen action strategy with concrete action to be put into practice as a very important content for school economic education to cultivate economic citizenship.

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