Inquiry on Ways to Integrate Narrative Into Backward Design

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ABSTRACT

Globally, education trends have changed from rote learning and a test-centered class, to communicative and active learning. Korea is one of the countries promoting new trends in education. Particularly, Bruner's narrative theory and Wiggins & McTighe's backward design are receiving attention due to their congruence with new educational trends. The impact of education will be optimized by integrating narrative with backward design. However, until recently, few studies have examined the methods of integration. Thus, there is a need to conduct research on how to integrate these emerging two theories. This study explores the methods of integrating narrative theory and backward design for schooling. To address the research question, based on the literature review, this study conducted exploratory research and proposed ways to integrate the two. A narrative is, according to Bruner, a mode of human thoughts, structure for organizing knowledge, and an instrument for instruction. As a narrative comprises a series of accumulated acts, or meaningful events in human minds, three stages of backward design can apply narrative-based aspects. In stage 1, "enduring understanding" and "essential questions" are not merely intended for a specific test or a class; instead, as they are permanent and meaningful in our lives, a narrative can apply to them. In stage 2, as performance tasks have a narrative form, they can maximize learning effects. In stage 3, by providing reflection and construction of one's narrative in a class, the learning plan will be much more meaningful to students' school lives. In brief, the integration of narrative and backward design will be appropriate for the new Korean curriculum's six key competencies. Students' active and communicative competencies can develop through this integration. Furthermore, the integration would be applicable worldwide, and schooling would become much more meaningful.

Keywords: Integration of narrative and backward design, narrative, backward design, Bruner, Wiggins & McTighe.

1. INTRODUCTION

Issues related to education begin with the content and methods of teaching. These issues continue to be contentious in the education community. In the past, as Tyler's theory (1949) has influenced school curriculums around the world, the order of consideration in education decisions has shifted from goals to content, instruction, and evaluation. Particularly, this has formed the basis for constructing the school curriculum in Korea (Ministry of education, 2009). All schools are expected to follow the rationale of Tyler, and every instruction's lesson plan has a format comprising the goal, contents, instruction, and evaluation, in this order. This format looks perfect for each instruction; however, the real landscape of the school curriculum belies the appearance. Several reports (Kang, 2016; Kang & Yi, 2016) have criticized the education system because of the following characteristics: rote-learning, university entrance-based instruction, un-connectedness between goal and evaluation, activity without a clear goal, and so on. To change the pre-existing, old-fashioned education system, the government is making an effort to change the curriculum completely, by introducing the new 2015 revised curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The most remarkable innovation is the transition from quantity of knowledge to quality of knowledge. The innovation also focuses on affective and psychomotor areas. Schools should explore ways to internalize students' learning experiences in their minds. In this regard, the Korean Ministry of Education (2017) introduced the concepts of competency, free learning semester, and deep understanding in instruction. To implement effectively these new policies, the application of a new and relevant theory or pedagogy will be essential. In particular, the new curriculum covers backward design, and many scholars and education experts (Yi, 2016; Park, 2016; Song, 2016; Taher et. al., 2016) are searching for ways to apply backward design in the classroom. Besides backward design, the new curriculum's purpose and directions are in line with the narrative suggested by Bruner. Narrative and backward design have many common features; nevertheless, there are only a few studies (Kang & Jeon, 2016; Yi, 2016) dealing with the connection between narrative and backward design. However, studies on narrative curriculum and backward design have outweighed their integration (Childre, Sands, & Pope, 2009; Shkedi, 2009; Fox & Doherty, 2011; Alfian & Tresna, 2017; Musa, 2016). Therefore, it would be meaningful to find ways to integrate narrative and backward design in instructional methods. With this fusion and instructional development, the new curriculum can be implemented successfully, and it can become spur future education. Besides schooling, education research areas will expand and deepen. This study will contribute to the development of schooling and pedagogy. Therefore, this study will explore ways to integrate narrative and backward design in curriculum and instruction, based on a literature review.

Research Design

The research design of this study is rooted in integrative forms of inquiry. This research design is suggested by Short (1991), and involves the integration of diverse research outcomes and knowledge by collecting data for specific needs. Therefore, this study collected and analyzed literature on narrative, backward design, and the Korean 2015 revised national curriculum. Simultaneously, the conceptual framework of the research utilized philosophical analysis. In sum, integrative forms of inquiry, including literature review, philosophical analysis on specific issues, and theoretical analysis constitute the methodology for this study. In the next chapters, each stage in backward design will be discussed together with the characteristics of narrative, providing implications for schooling. Exploratory and integrative research will be beneficial to providing a basis for further practical and statistical studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The 2015 Revised National Curriculum in Korea

From 2017, the Korean Ministry of Education (2015) implemented the 2015 revised national curriculum. The new curriculum is quite different from the previous curriculum. In particular, the focus of education is on developing students' six key competencies. The definition of each competency is as follows:

A. Self-management competency to lead one's life with self-identity and confidence based on basic abilities and qualifications necessary for one's 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 identify 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 the 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 the values and attitudes required to be a member of local, national, and global communities.

With these key competencies, the government emphasizes individual students' attitudes and career plans, the quality of learning with ambitious ideas, self-directed learning, and process-centered assessment. This emphasis shows that students' meaningful learning experience is now important and their learning should be related to life.

Backward Design

Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established Goals: 1.	
Understandings: *Students will understand that:* 1.	**Essential Questions:** 1.
Students will know: 1.	**Students will be able to do:** 1.
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance Tasks: 1.	**Other Evidence:** 1.
Stage 3 – Learning Plan	
1.	

Figure 1: Backward design template

Narrative

Bruner, a prominent education scholar, emphasized narrative in education context. For Bruner (1996), narrative is a mode of human thoughts, a structure for organizing knowledge, and an instrument for the process of education. He defines narrative as a series of accumulated acts that have a significant meaning in one's life. Besides, a narrative represents constructivism. People make meaning inside the narrative. They do not view the world by analyzing the segmented event; rather, they do so by understanding it in a wide context. Therefore, people can view their world through interpretation and re-interpretation, rather than the generation of an entirely new one.

A narrative generally has three characteristics (Bruner, 1990: 43-49): first, it consists of a person's special events or state of mind. The constituent itself cannot acquire life or a special meaning. Rather, it should be looked at in a larger context and be contingent upon the interpreter's state of mind; second, a narrative can be either facts or imagination. Both have the form of a story. As we can evaluate one with an imaginary function or appearance, a narrative constructs a holistic impression; third, a narrative can connect the normal and abnormal. People can explain why something that is usual is customary and why something else that is unusual is not relevant, by creating a story. When applying narrative in education, all participants' narratives are organized individually, and they can form the identity and culture of a learning community.

3. METHODS OF INTEGRATING NARRATIVE INTO BACKWARD DESIGN

In this paragraph, several ideas to integrate narrative into backward design are categorized in order of the stages of backward design: stage 1, stage 2, and stage 3. After dealing with methods of integrating the three stages, this study will discuss the overall theme. Based on the backward design template, several methods and proposals will be noted.

Stage 1

Established Goals: Backward design has three learning goals: "worth being familiar with," "important to know and do," and "enduring understanding." The width and depth of understanding increase from "worth being familiar with" to "enduring understanding." For instance, in mathematics, "worth being familiar with" can involve numbers and mathematical symbols. Regarding "important to know and do," students should understand the meaning of each mathematical symbol and should be able to use the symbol in calculations. Finally, "enduring understanding" can facilitate problem-solving in a real-life situation that needs calculation. Therefore, "enduring understanding" is transferable and universal, and shares commonness with the narrative. The narrative is both an accumulated meaningful life-story and mode of thoughts that construct life. "Enduring understanding," therefore, should have the form of a narrative. A teacher should consider which knowledge should be taught for constructing students' lives, and how to apply such knowledge for one's benefit.

Understanding: In backward design, there are six aspects of understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge. They are not hierarchically aligned, and all of them are equally valuable to students. From explanation to self-knowledge, students' understanding intensifies. In the areas of interpretation and perspective, students can compare and develop their thoughts with pre-existing thoughts in their minds. They can generate new or combined thoughts and knowledge, and their learning deepens. In the application area, by using the knowledge of a problem-solving or real-life situation,

students can utilize the knowledge in their lives and it accumulates. The application domain is connected to the interpretation and perspective domains. Finally, in the self-knowledge domain, the narrative's reflective trait is directly linked. Students can check the pre-existing knowledge and newly-learned knowledge, and ponder upon the relationship between the two. Their narrative can accumulate, and it becomes their life narrative. Therefore, in backward design, students' understanding should develop continuously in their life story.

Essential Question: Until recently, schooling did not acknowledge the importance of an "essential question." Though the teacher created explicit learning goals for students, the goals were usually about specific knowledge, and students could not understand the need to learn the contents. This made students lack motivation, and knowledge could not be transmitted to them. Therefore, an "essential question" is very important for students. The "essential question" is one that appears continuously in our lives. It indicates core ideas and exploration in specific disciplines, and motivates learners. Therefore, the "essential question" should be related to students' lives, and they should construct meaning by learning knowledge. A narrative's traits have common features with an "essential question." Therefore, a teacher should first suggest the "essential question" to students; they should reflect upon why they need to learn something, and how the learning outcomes can be applied or constructed in their lives.

Stage 2

Performance Tasks: For attaining and confirming the desired results, performance tasks should be organized with the format of GRASPS. GRASPS includes the items below (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

G (Goal): your goal (assignment) is _____.

R (Role): your role is _____.

A (Audience): your audience is _____.

S (Situation): your challenge includes _____.

P (Performance): you should develop _____ for _____.

S (Standards): your work will be evaluated through _____.

Based on the condition that an instructor has already set the goal and essential questions, GRASPS will be determined. Tasks are organized in the form of a virtual situation. Rather than learning knowledge by memorizing or reading as in the past, by doing GRASPS tasks, the learning experience will be meaningful and transferable for students. These GRASPS tasks are similar to the "narrative as a story." The "narrative as a story" is not merely a story; rather, it is easily accessible to students and it consists of students' meaningful learning experiences. The role and situation are congruent with the narrative. In performance tasks, students can view a specific role in particular contexts. By doing this, students can develop career awareness and a life plan. Therefore, GRASPS tasks not only resemble a narrative, but also encourage the development of expanded learning areas and later learning. In conclusion, a teacher should form the performance tasks not as a fragmentary one-time assignment, but as a form of narrative that is relevant to all learning areas.

Stage 3

Learning Plan: In accordance with stages 1 and 2, stage 3 suggests that an instructor should create a learning plan with WHERETO, which comprises the following aspects (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005):

W (Why, Where, What): convince students where to go and why to do

H (Hook, Hold): capture students' attention

E (Equip): prepare for students' exploration to issues

R (Re-think, Revise): provide chances to recall and reflect

E (Evaluate): provide chances to evaluate students themselves

T (Tailor): tailor the class to students' needs and interests

O (Organize): organize the lesson for deep understanding

Considering the narrative, a learning plan should indicate the ultimate learning goal to students, and they should recognize the essential questions. As essential questions and the final learning goal have some aspects in common with the narrative, this step is crucial for a successful class. Furthermore, essential questions should captivate students' minds, so that students should be motivated to learn the contents. A class with R and E can make students reflect upon their learning process and develop their minds and knowledge. This process will make students' lives meaningful and allow them to create their own narrative. Thus, a learning plan and a narrative are inseparable. Using a narrative with backward design will maximize students' learning experiences.

Discussion

To summarize the methods of integrating narrative with backward design's three stages, the final framework is depicted in Figure 2.

Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established Goals:	
Enduring understanding with narrative forms, a student's whole-life story	
Understandings:	**Essential Questions:**
Explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge should be the mechanism for scaffolding in students' lifelong learning and lives.	Core ideas and exploration in the student's lives
Students will know:	**Students will be able to do:**
1.	1.
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance Tasks:	Other Evidence:
G (Goal): be relevant to the student's life and life narratives	
R (Role): be relevant to the student's future life plan	
S (Situation): be relevant to the narrativistic contexts	
P (Performance): integrate R and S	
All tasks should be meaningful for future learning and life	
Stage 3 – Learning Plan	
W (Why, Where, What): link W to "essential questions"	
H (Hook, Hold): relate "essential questions" to "enduring understanding"	
R (Rethink, Revise)/E (Evaluate): make students reflect upon their learning and lives	

Figure 2: Backward design template with narrative

Students' learning does not end in an individual lesson or a specific test preparation. In the 21st century, learning should be future-oriented and continuous over the entire life of a person, and it must be related to all components of learning and life. Backward design with a narrative will facilitate understanding and implementing students' learning experience in schooling. Students' meaning-making in learning not only affects intellectual faculties, but also improves their health and well-being. What is important in this era is a student's own understanding and accomplishment of his/her own goals in life. There is no exclusive right answer or only one way to meaning-making. This encourages students' thinking and autonomy. Everyone takes ownership of their lives. A narrative's traits and enduring understanding in backward design would be the basis for students' life story-making. By using this template for instruction, a class will be much more connected to a student's life, and the relationship among students, teachers, and the community will become stronger.

4. CONCLUSION

Until recently, education has focused only on the quantity of knowledge and on acquiring good grades in tests. Students have lost interest and motivation, and have only studied to achieve a specific purpose. Once this goal was achieved, everything that was learned was soon forgotten. The type of class was teacher-centered, and students were passive listeners. This type of education has been in place for decades. This is not only a problem in Korea, but a problem that the whole world is experiencing. In order to solve these problems, we are proposing new education changes worldwide.

For this, backward design and narrative education emerged, to form a new education culture; both emphasize a student-centered class and life-related education. Effective methods should be determined to apply this curriculum to schooling. This study is aimed at exploring the integration of a narrative and backward design, considering that both share many common aspects. Based on the theory and main principles of backward design and the narrative, this study described ways to integrate the two. A narrative can be applicable in three stages of backward design. The results of the study are as follows.

The first stage of backward design emphasizes "enduring understanding" and "an essential question." Both emphasize learning content and goals that are sustained and linked to students' lives; this is in harmony with "narrative as a meaningful story" and the accumulation of thoughts in human life. Therefore, "enduring understanding" and "an essential question" need to be designed with the attributes of a narrative. In the second stage, an instructor needs to plan for performance tasks that allow students to achieve goals by using GRASPS. The performance tasks require students to perform these tasks in a virtual situation, similar to a real-life situation. This point is also akin to the property of a narrative. Finally, in the third step, a teacher should use the WHERETO elements to design a lesson plan, and three attributes of the narrative—the story, the mode of thoughts, and the instrument as an educational tool—are congruent with this step.

Therefore, a narrative and backward design have some common traits, and this study expects that the integration of the two will maximize the effect of education. This new approach, through the integration of the two, will make classes student-centered and meaningful to students' lives. Therefore, this convergence will help achieve student-centered education in Korea and the six competencies of the new curriculum, and will be beneficial not only to Korea but also for education worldwide. A limitation of this study is that, as it is based on a literature review, it does not deal with specific subjects. Furthermore, this study includes only descriptive ideas about the theme. In a follow-up study, the case study method will be used to demonstrate

the integration of narrative into backward design in each subject. Statistical data will considerably strengthen the benefits of integration between two theories.

Acknowledgement

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