

# Sea names and their issues over the national administration territories: Meaning, directions and perspectives in Korean geography education

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The geography education of sea names or sea naming demands a new approach of geography teaching and learning that is sea names appropriate in South Korea. Sea names are not only symbolic elements of landscape that reflect abstract or concrete national and local sentiment, but also it has significant potential for reinforcing competing national territoriality and its consciousness. This paper explores the utilization of learning methods and the significance of sea names in geography education in South Korea. Reading materials and inquiry modules with case studies are recommended as an effective teaching and learning plan for each school level for which flexible educational strategies are proposed such as description of sea names and explanation of geophysical features. In addition, sea names can be treated as a learning theme for better understanding international politics with adjacent countries in more flexible scales (e.g. local, national, and global scales). As sea names are one of the core themes in the understanding of sea-related geographical features in geography education in South Korea, sea names will continue to play their key symbolic role in the struggle over territorial sea towards territorial consciousness that has now become so central to the South Korea's geography education.

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## 1. Introduction

As the Korean Peninsula is surrounded by three seas (the *East Sea*, the Yellow Sea and the South Sea), the importance of territorial waters(sea) has long been recognized especially for the development of the country with insufficient land resources. The sea that surrounds the three sides of the country is reachable within a few hours from any area in Korea. As such, the Korean people have easy access to the sea, and recently it is being spotlighted as a space of production and leisure.

The sense of place and its perception of the seas among Koreans are changing as it

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becomes a space of leisure and experience at the same time. It is a place or space for experience and learning to Korean. Hence, the recently revised school curriculum also introduces new meanings of the sea along with other space meanings in the textbooks and deal with a place, area, or location as a mean of the sea.

Geographical naming related to the seas becomes an important topic as the basis for marine activities in school education in Korea. In addition, various surveys and research works have recently undertaken by the Korean government to suggest the standardization of the geographical naming in the seas of the Korea including the sea names.

This paper aims to enhance the understanding of the importance of the ocean and the geographical naming and to discuss several effective teaching and learning directions of sea-related names and meanings. This study also examines the significance of learning the sea names in geography education and discusses related geographical teaching and learning perspectives.

## **2. Meaning: Geography education and sea names**

The current school curriculums in Korea consists of the national common basic curriculum from grade one to grade ten and the elective curriculum from grade eleven and grade twelve. The contents related to the sea names are handled mainly in social studies subject including geography and science subject including earth science in the national common curriculum. Among the optional courses as vocational and technical subjects, marine science and ecology and environment subjects also include marine-related contents.

The geographical teaching of sea names in the classroom covers with regional geographical facts and knowledge, historical and cultural heritages, and environmental aspects to retain geographical attainments that has basic sea naming knowledge

In view of geographical education, the sea names are to be understood, not only as physical territories of certain oceanic areas, but also to be understood as a spatial result of various human activities of the residents. Hence, the sea names need to approach for a multidisciplinary topic with its appropriate teaching and learning methods. To this end, it needs to discuss the proper learning subject and contents regarding the sea names appropriate for the learners' level and scopes at schools. In addition, it is neces-

sary to construct the teaching and learning contents of the sea names to help pupils to gain a wide range of sea-related knowledge.

Therefore, geography subject at various school levels cover a wide range of ocean-related educational contents and it shares main contents of sea names at various scopes in geography teaching in the classroom.

In terms of geographical education, the contents of the sea names are of great significance in that exploring geographical issues including reminding its important territorial dimensions and it proposes an important opportunity for pupils to expand their geographical knowledge between sea and its geographical education (Haslam, 2001). In addition, sea names also contain several main teaching elements that assist the pupils in learning the geographical characteristics of coastal areas and regions that reflect local residents and their lives. Therefore, exploring appropriated learning methods of sea names associated with these complex geographical topics has been an important research topic in geography education in South Korea. The following section discusses the learning methods of the sea names in geographical educational perspectives in South Korea.

### **3. Directions: Learning methods of sea names in geography education**

#### **1) Learning of sea names in geography education curriculum**

This section discusses the two directions of the teaching and learning of sea names used to identify geographical meanings involved in geography education in South Korea: geography education curriculum and geographical naming education.

In the curriculum, sea naming is considered as a part of the marine geographical names, which divide the sea names to sea surface names and undersea feature names. The sea names also include landforms on the sea surface such as sea, strait, bay, creek, waterway, etc.

Learning methods for the sea names in geography education includes contents analysis and interpretation of the geography textbooks, exploring inquiry module and investigation scheme developments in the classroom, which provide a very special curriculum in terms of school programs and also extracurricular activities. In the consideration of the multidisciplinary features, it is more effective to integrate sea-related

names and their naming topics into relevant geography education courses and modules rather than to covert them as separate independent education contents. In the current education curriculum structure in South Korea, geography education is the only subject that includes physical and human related interaction with sea features and covers nature and human relationships of sea names. Hence, various adequate modules related to sea names can be adequately utilized in geography teaching in the classroom if effective educational schemes are provided in the main textbook contents and teaching and learning process. By so doing, the geography textbooks can play an important role in realizing the sea names curriculum.

For the learning of the sea names to be actively conducted, reading materials or inquire modules through which the pupils can find relevant learning contexts are more appropriate for reflecting the learning of the sea names in the geography textbooks rather than adding paragraphs describing the sea names in the textbooks. This meets the suitability of the geography curriculum targets and it helps the geography teachers to emphasize main contexts of the social issues related to sea names in South Korea and highlight the topics in the pupils' learning processes in the classroom. Recently, a trend in school textbooks in South Korea tends to emphasize the use of the modules and materials that deepen and supplement learning contents. As a part of the assessment of the pupils learning performances, such modules and materials are provided as separate and extra learning portions. For example, the name of the *East Sea* and sea names within the exclusive zone of Korea and Japan provide the potential motivation in the learning of territorial education as well as educating the basic geographical knowledge and facts. Thus, this section presents some examples of currently reflecting the sea names in school geography and its educational programs. Next section discusses learning methods and contents of sea names in association with geographical name education.

## **2) Sea names as geographical name studies**

Geographical perspectives on sea names include several educational elements: natural environment, human environment, regional changes, regional scales, awareness of regional scales, and map learning (Jo, 2004). The natural environment includes the sea names originated from geographical features, climate features, places and areas, and

locations. The human environment includes the sea names originated from the names originated from production, transportation, administration, service, and regions. The regional scale includes the hierarchy of place names, categorization, regional scope, classification, and awareness of local areas. The regional change area also includes the creation and disappearance of place names, history, change, and composition. In the map learning, scale, direction, location, contour line, and symbol in a map involves the utilization of place names that improve basic geographical learning abilities.

In the learning process of geographical names, in particular, sea names reflect not only static aspects such as description of the geographical distribution and regional patterns of the natural and human environments, but also sea names include dynamic aspects such as geographical changes in the place names such as creation and disappearance. In addition, sea names as general geographical name are also used to categorize hierarchical geography knowledge of geographical areas such as sea names and undersea names in the *East Sea*. For example, each school level (e.g. elementary, middle and high school) has its own primary contents categorized in geography teaching and learning contents, such as describing general sea names in the elementary school level (e.g. place names and their historical facts on the *East sea*), describing geophysical distributions and spatial characteristics in the middle school levels (e.g. sea mountains and sea basins in the *East Sea*), and explaining administered territories and their geographical perspectives in the high school levels (e.g. geographical naming and Exclusive Economic Zones).

#### **4. Perspectives: Learning significances of sea names in geography education**

The basic components of geography education contents consist of two geographic approaches; regional approach and systematic approach. Currently, sea names in the geography education in South Korea are mainly stated in the regional geographic aspect while in the systematic geography, sea names are treated restrictively to classify and categorize their geographical characteristics such as for economic, cultural and historical, geophysical aspects. Thus sea names are covered in regional geography theme.

Sea-related topics and teaching materials in geography education are mainly about the geographical features, climates, and coastal life styles. Especially when sea names

are used in regard to coastal life styles (e.g. 'life in a sea village'), the regional awareness and understanding of the locals can be enhanced. This is also related to identify the geographical name learning in terms of sea-related locality and history (Jo, 2004).

The sea names can be also connected to the awareness of the educational domain. The domain awareness of the sea names in geography education consists of landform territoriality aspect and territorial consciousness aspect. While the former is related to extrinsic value of geography education, the latter is related to intrinsic value.

As for the landform territorial aspects of sea names, the sea naming of the sea (e.g. *East Sea*, Yellow Sea) indicates that the sea area has been secured and the geographical range of the sea area should be externalized into textual and visual forms such as mapping and visualization. For example, as the sea naming of the *East Sea* could be forcibly renamed during the Japanese colonial period, the name itself can be regarded as a historical and cultural heritage. The names of the *East Sea* and Dokdo need are of symbolic significance as a space in that they are part of the national and cultural territory of Korea (Nam, 1999).

Hence, this discussion is related with a broad interpretation of the territorial consciousness of sea names. Geographical information on sea names can be basics for exploration of seabed resources as well as fishing activities. The standardization of sea names forms a part of the sovereignty. The concepts of a land territory and a territorial sea can be utilized for the geographical teaching that assists the pupils for better interpretation of international affairs. In particular, in the Northeast Asia, geopolitical circumstances related to sea or territorial water, if any conflicts are happened with or between these two countries for the territorialities, are of great educational importance for the understanding the territoriality consciousness aspects. Hence, such international political environments are also to be recognized and addressed adequately in geography education in relation to the extrinsic value as a part of the national territory. In terms of territoriality consciousness, sea naming is an important material of education that is closely linked to the nation people's life with the international politics and economic circumstances.

## 5. Discussions and conclusion

This paper deals with the learning methods and meaning of sea names in geography education in South Korea based with current national curriculums from elementary to high school levels. Sea names are not only symbolic elements of landscape that reflect abstract or concrete national and local sentiment, but also it has significant potential for reinforcing competing national territoriality and its consciousness. This paper explores the utilization of learning methods and the significance of sea names in geography education in South Korea. Reading materials and inquiry modules with case studies are recommended as an effective teaching and learning plan for the geography classes in each school level for which flexible educational strategies are proposed such as description of sea names and explanation of geophysical features. In addition, sea names can be treated as a learning theme for better understanding international politics with adjacent countries in more flexible scales (e.g. local, national, and global scales). As sea names are one of the core themes in the understanding of sea-related geographical features in geography education in South Korea, sea names will continue to play their key symbolic role in the struggle over territorial sea towards territorial consciousness that has now become so central to the South Korea's geography education.

### 요약

지리교육에서 바다이름에 대한 교육적 방안은 새로운 요구와 접근방법을 요구하고 있다. 따라서 한국의 지리교육의 상황에 적합한 바다이름의 교육 방안에 대한 연구가 필요하다. 바다이름은 국가와 지역의 지역적 정서의 명확한 실체인 동시에 하나의 영토와 영해의 영역성을 담고 있는 교육적 주제이다. 또한 바다이름은 우리나라 주변 국가들과의 국제적 이해와 국제 관계속에서도 이해되어야 한다. 바다이름은 해양과 바다와 관련된 지리교육적 주제중에서 핵심 요소중의 하나이기 때문에 영토적 의미에서의 접근도 중요하지만 영역성의 측면에서도 지리교육적으로 다루어져야 한다. 따라서 본 연구를 통해서 바다이름은 앞으로 지리교육에서 영토성과 영역성의 측면에서 복합적으로 다루어야 할 주제로 이해되어야 한다.