

Thesis: A Contextual Understanding of the Definition of Science in South Korea

Editor's note:

Byunghun Hyun defended his thesis titled "A Contextual Understanding of the Definition of Science in South Korea" in November 2011 in front of committee members James Hurlbut, Jane Maienschein, and Karin Ellison, earning him a Master of Science degree. <https://repository.asu.edu/items/14477>

Abstract:

Despite the minor differences in the inclusiveness of the word, there is a general assumption among the scientific community that the 'pursuit of knowledge' is the most fundamental element in defining the word 'science'. However, a closer examination of how science is being conducted in modern-day South Korea reveals a value system starkly different from the value of knowledge. By analyzing the political discourse of the South Korean policymakers, mass media, and government documents, this study examines the definition of science in South Korea.

The analysis revealed that the Korean science, informed by the cultural, historical, and societal contexts, is largely focused on the values of national economic prosperity, international competitiveness, and international reputation of the country, overshadowing other values like the pursuit of knowledge or even individual rights. The identification of the new value system in South Korean science deviating from the traditional definition of science implies that there must be other definitions of science that also deviate, and that even in the Western world, the definition of science may yield similar deviations upon closer examination. The compatibility of the South Korean brand of science to the international scientific community also implies that a categorical quality is encompassing these different contextual definitions of science.