Educational Policy Changes in Korea: Ideology and Praxis*

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During the last four decades Korea underwent a series of political agitations and that resulted the establishment of the Sixth Republic. During the same period, Korean education experienced remarkable changes in both quantity and quality. Under a government-dominant social system such as Korea, public policy has direct influence upon the praxis of education.

This paper will address the issue of determining the underlying values or ideology behind public education and policies and the reflection of these values in actual practice. This will involve an overview of the socio-political process in the evolutionary development of selected major education policies, reveal current policy issues and explore desirable policy direction in the relation to current ideological orientations.

I. Major Policy Changes and Their Ideological Orientation

This section will review the characteristic trends of policy changes in major components of the education system. The review will focus on the background and significance of the changes, on their ideological orientation, and on their actual effect on society.

1. Goals and Ideas of Education

When Korea achieved independence from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 her first task was to wipe out the remaining vestiges of Japanese totalitarianism and to recover her submerged national identity. Thus, the education policies in the later half of 1940s put emphasis on realizing the fundamental ideas of democracy and nationalism. The ultimate idea of education was expressed by the phrase

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“Hong-ik-in-gan,” which means the benefits for all of mankind. This spirit of humanism was an ancient and popular notion and had been a guiding philosophy in Korea for many centuries. Education was seen as a means of communicating and furthering Korean nationalist values based on traditional ideas of human cooperation and mutual prosperity.

To achieve this, the direct goals and contents of educational policy were completely revised to reflect the democratic values of equality, individual autonomy and fair access to opportunity and advancement. A single-track school system was adopted which encouraged public access to, and opportunity in, the educational system and the 1949 Constitution declared that “All people have the right to education.” Primary education was declared compulsory and paid for by public funds.

It might be skeptical, however, that these ideas of policies have been literally realized in practice. Despite frequent revisions of the Education Law, and despite a savage war, a military coup, and an economic boom, the statement of general goals of education and specific objectives by school level have remained unchanged. One implication is that the statements have little to do with actual practice (McGinn et. al., 1980, p. 33).

Most people do not hesitate to say that there has been big discrepancy between the manifested policy statements and practice in education. One example is that free education at elementary schools was not completely realized until the 1970s. The Korea Government as well as prominent political leaders stressed the need for strengthening nationalism through education. Accordingly such subject matters as Korean language and history were given more weight in the curriculum. In the 1950s the ideology of anti-communism took the top priority in education as well as in politics. The Student Defence Corps (Hakdo Hokook Dan) were organized throughout the country in both secondary and higher education levels. The organization engaged in agitation for movements of spiritual indoctrination, and institutionalized student activities under close supervision of the government. The organization was abolished after the student revolution of 1960, revived by the military government, and transformed into new student associations in the early 1980s.

The education policies for enhancing national identity have consistently been pursued by Korea’s political leaders and since the 1950s, the policies were specifically aimed at making students believe that national identity on the basis of Anticommunism was most important for political stability and national development. The students were indoctrinated to the notion that their private interests and aspiration were linked to national economic development and the prevention of the possible invasion from North Korea. Under the circumstances of a cold war ideological conflict between the divided parts of the country weakened nationalism because it might endanger and antagonize the anti-communist front
of the government.

In this context we can grasp the motive of the proclamation of the Charter of National Education in 1968. The charter was prepared with wide participation and consent of the public as well as executive and legislative branches of the Government. Its significance does not arise from its being a mandatory code but rather in its embodiment of Korean national ethic and spirit (Lee, 1974, p.18). The charter states “We have been born into this land, charged with the historic mission of regenerating the nation…. The love of country and fellow countrymen together with the firm belief in democracy against communism is the way for our survival and the basis for realizing the ideals of the free world.” Here we can find an understanding philosophy that education is viewed as an instrument for national development in political and economic aspects.

In the 1950s after the Korean War, a pragmatic education policy emphasizing industrial and technical education under the slogan of “one skill for one person” was very appealing in the face of the urgent need to reconstruct the economy. The government frequently adopted “education for economic development” or “nation building through education” as one of the major educational goals in annual policy statements by the President or Minister of Education. Thus the ideology of “development education” began to put into practice with concrete policy measures. This was reflected not only in the designing of the curriculum, but also in the decision regarding student admission quota for colleges and vocational schools. The Ministry of Education was guided by the proposals of the Economic Planning Board specifically on the basis of the manpower development plan.

In reality, however, though the government has promoted education as fundamentally contributing to economic development, major trends have not been toward skill acquisition and developmental values so much as toward the identification of students with the future of Korea as a corporate state. Korean education seems to have played a greater role in national political integration than in the development of skills and individual creativity.

2. Student Selection

Education policies concerning the student selection system have been the object of strong interest and criticism by the public. The burning desire of Koreans for education resulted in overheated competition to enter to prestigious schools at higher level and thus gave rise to problems incapacitating the educational system.

Schools focusing on drills in subject matters to be contained in the examinations had the effect of rote-learning and memorization dominating classroom instruction, and extra-curricula activities were given little attention. Students were emotionally distressed the strain of intensive competition and physically deteriorated due to excessive extra lessons. The parents were also negatively affected by
the heavy financial burden.

To eliminate this over-heated competition for entering middle schools and to normalize primary education, the Government adopted the "No Examination System for Middle School Admission" in 1968, under which students are allocated to schools within a school district by computer lottery. The reform restored to primary education its original function and normal operation of curriculum, but it invited another problem involving excessive competition for high school entrance. To cope with this, the Government again launched a "Temporary Lottery and Allocation System for Screening out High School Applicants" in 1973. Prior to this measure, each high school developed and administered its own entrance examination and selected students on the basis of the their test results. At present, in twenty large cities, all students take a qualifying examination given by the provincial Board of Education. Individual students passing examination are assigned by lottery to the district's high schools (MEROK., 1989, p. 33)

From the egalitarian viewpoint, the system of allocating students by lottery is highly commendable for eliminating the gap between schools and providing the students with an equal opportunity of education. This system also contributed to saving children from "the examination hell" and restored educational practice to normalcy particularly at the lower levels. In fact, repeaters were remarkably reduced in number and the student's health improved due to the alleviated burdens of study and stress.

On the other hand, the new entrance system brought students with heterogeneous backgrounds into the same classrooms and thus lowered the effectiveness of instruction. The enforcement of equal opportunities made the islands of excellence to be submerged in the sea of mediocrity. This system limited the students' latitude in their choice of schools and also undermined the autonomy of private schools and stymied their efforts to promote their own education programs. During the days of the First and the Second Republic (1948-1960), individual universities and colleges had enjoyed their own rights of student selection through their respective criteria and targeted examinations. While coinciding with the philosophy of autonomy, the system gave room for unfairness and corruption in the process of student selection by some private universities with profit-making orientations.

In 1962 the military regime attempted a number of drastic social reforms including the initiation of a national qualifying examination for college entrance. The system was abandoned after 1964, however, mainly because the Government had implemented it without adequate preparation and faced considerable objection and unforeseen problems in its enforcement. Thus autonomy was again granted to each higher education institution and this in turn brought about public criticism on the corrupted selection behavior of some private universities.

In 1968 the Ministry of Education again decided to institute a preliminary
college entrance examination system for the dual purpose of preventing unqualified applicants from entering college and of restraining unlawful selection. The student who passed the examination had to take another examination administered by the respective universities and colleges. The Governments strictly controlled the student selection process and the quota of admission, resulting in the recurring problem of severer competition for college entrance. Excessive private-tutoring caused many social problems; many student's health deteriorated, regular education at school was not duly respected and many families were on the verge of bankruptcy because of the tutoring expenses.

In 1980, cognizant of the seriousness of the situation, the transitionary military powers changed the Preliminary Examination into the Scholastic Achievement Examination for College Entrance, abolishing the regular entrance examinations by individual institutions. The new system assigned 30-50% weight to the scholastic records of senior high school students as part of the entrance criteria. The student could apply for admission to individual university after they got the results of the examination and the records. Simultaneously, the Government prohibited private tutoring by imposing heavy penalties. The system had the advantages of contributing to the normalization of high school education and of providing the applicants with decisive information. On the other hand, the system incurred great criticism for ignoring the right of autonomy of individual universities in selecting students and for relying heavily on a national written tests that had a leveling affect on educational aspiration.

Most recently the Ministry of Education modified the style of the Scholastic Achievement Examination and the process of application for college entrance. The modified system features the inclusion of subject test items, and high school graduates must apply to the departments which they wish to enter before taking the Examination. Through this modification individual universities are granted more autonomy in the process of entrants selection.

3. Access to and Conditions of Education

The Korean government has maintained the open-door philosophy in education ever since national independence in 1945. The new government embodied this spirit into at least two conspicuous policies. One was the encouragement of establishing private schools. Due to the financial limits of government, expansion of public schools could not meet the public demand for education. It was inevitable to depend upon the private schools to fill this gap. Furthermore the anticipation of land reform induced many land-owners to invest in the establishment of educational institutions, which seemed to gratify both personal honor and economic interests. The other policy concerned compulsory primary education which was promulgated in the Constitution during the Korean War. Thanks to the Six-Year plan for compulsory Education, enforced in 1954, 96% of the school-
age children were enrolled in elementary schools by 1959.

The rapid expansion of education might be the most conspicuous feature of the 1960s. It might have been caused by both the people's aspirations for upward social mobility by means of education and the increased income levels owing to accelerated economic growth. There was also the government's efforts to expand educational opportunities. Such expansion was not confined to primary education but encompassed all levels and continued at slower rates until the 1970's, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School level/Year</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1987</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>1,366.0</td>
<td>3,622.7</td>
<td>5,749.3</td>
<td>5,658.0</td>
<td>4,771.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Index)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(265)</td>
<td>(420)</td>
<td>(414)</td>
<td>(349)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>528.6</td>
<td>1,318.8</td>
<td>2,472.0</td>
<td>2,657.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Index)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(654)</td>
<td>(1,631)</td>
<td>(3,058)</td>
<td>(3,288)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>*40.3</td>
<td>273.4</td>
<td>590.4</td>
<td>1,696.8</td>
<td>2,237.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Index)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(678)</td>
<td>(1,466)</td>
<td>(4,213)</td>
<td>(5,556)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>101.0</td>
<td>201.4</td>
<td>602.0</td>
<td>1,467.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Index)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(1,290)</td>
<td>(2,586)</td>
<td>(7,770)</td>
<td>(18,767)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The figure is as of 1951.

The rapid increase of students in all levels of schools brought about a deterioration of school conditions: e.g., a shortage of accommodation facilities, unfavorable pupil/teacher ratios, and low per-pupil public expenditures. Though Korean education experienced remarkable expansion not only in enrollments but also in accompanying facilities and teachers, the public financial supports were low in contrast with many other developing countries. Some concluded that the public education system of Korea was more cost-effective and that Korea chose to emphasize quantity rather than quality, especially at the lower levels of the system (McGinn et. al., 1980, pp 68–79). Most public resources allocated to education were used for improving the condition of compulsory education. High social demand for education at secondary and tertiary levels, coupled with the governmental inability or unwillingness to provide educational resources, resulted in a heavy parental burden to finance public education and in the development of a large private school system.

In the later half of the 1970s, the authoritarian government tightly limited the quotas of entrants to four-year colleges and universities in order to improve the
quality of higher education and to balance the supply and demand of high-level manpower. Consequently competition for entrance to universities became very severe and the situation again demanded the previous open-door policy in higher education. One of the key elements of Education Reform in 1980 was the so-called "Graduation Quota Policy." In addition to a considerable increase in admission quota, four-year colleges could admit 30% of additional quotas of entrants. The portion had to be eliminated until the point of graduation.

This policy resulted in unprecedented increase of college students and a great expansion of opportunities for higher education in the early 1980s. Since then the ratio of enrollment in higher education against the school age population in Korea exceeded those of many Western developed countries except the United States.

The sudden increase of collegians was naturally accompanied by difficulties in securing proper educational conditions. For instance, the number of faculty members did not increase in proportion to the student population with the result that the overall student/professor ratio in higher education institutions worsened from 28.8 in 1980 to 39.7 in 1987. The situation of educational facilities showed similar trends. In Korea, Presidential Decree have described the minimum requirement for teaching staffs and faculties for all kinds of schools especially those to be newly established, but most schools have not met the requirements and the universities are no exception. In the early 1980s, the Government mitigated these legal requirements intentionally to facilitate the accommodation of the enormously increased numbers of students. Thus it can be said that the 1980 reform had an adverse effect on the quality of higher education. Although educational conditions do not automatically determine the quality of education, they are certainly important factors.

In a broader sense, college education in Korea still has some limitations to the equal opportunity of education(Kim S.B., 1983). To address this, the Government has put into force a series of policies for equalizing educational opportunities in broader sense, especially between Seoul and the provincial areas. For example the Government has provided special subsidies to foster provincial colleges and universities. In addition, the higher education institutions in metropolitan areas have restrained from increasing their quotas of student enrollment. The Ministry of Education has also supported a professor-exchange program between Seoul and provincial areas. Despite these policies, however, inter-province gaps have existed in terms of the ratio between high school graduates and college entrants. In addition, inter-area and inter-school gaps in educational conditions have not narrowed to a satisfactory level. It has resulted in qualitative disparity between schools and extreme competition for entrance to the "first ranking" universities in Seoul. Since the preference of metropolitan universities is also intertwined with other socio-economic factors, we can hardly expect that it will not disappear in a short period of time.
4. Contents and Methods of Education

What is included in the curriculum greatly influences the kind of person produced through the education process, and how the learning experiences are organized determines the effectiveness of instruction. During the past several decades there has been little change in the centralized operational style of the standardized curricula at the national level. The Decree of the Ministry of Education provided general standards for the curriculum. Up to 1970s it established very detailed standards in terms of subjects and time allocation for primary and secondary education. For higher education, however, it suggested only general principles and some strategic guidelines. With elapse of time, the standards have become broader and less concrete to give more room for regional interpretation.

The contents of textbooks, on which the teachers have depended heavily in classroom instruction, have been carefully controlled by the Government. Until 1960s, the Ministry of Education compiled all textbooks for elementary schools and many texts for secondary education with its own specialist staffs. Since then the Ministry has either published the textbooks drafted by specialized research institutes, or approved a few alternative versions developed by private publishers. Reference books and teaching aid materials have also been subject to the Ministry's approval.

The Government made large scale revisions of the curriculum in 1953, 1963, and 1973. Most of the reforms focused on the texts in social studies and moral education rather than on science and mathematics. After analyzing the themes of moral education textbooks, a study suggested that in general there had been a steady trends of emphases away from on individuals toward on the nation, by increasing the lessons dealing with anti-communism, nationalism, and patriotism (Colc, 1975, p. 200). Another study concluded that the trend had been as much or more toward anti-communism and acceptance of an authoritarian state as it had been toward individual initiative and entrepreneurship (McGinn, 1980, p. 43). Especially after the Yushin declaration by the Park regime in 1972, its totalitarian ideology was positively reflected in the textbooks.

Revising the curricula in 1963 and 1973, the Government formally acknowledged to have placed much emphases on production and usefulness of education. It is uncertain, however, that the contents of the textbooks and instruction in the classrooms did actually comply with the manifested compilation policy. The content of education would not appear to change in a direction that would be directly consistent with economic needs and with modern values (McGinn, 1980, p. 45). The instruction has seemed to comprise strict adherence to theoretical orientation with little relevance to real life situations. Students were encouraged to memorize the textbooks with little chance of experimentation or practice which would develop exploratory thinking and useful skills.
During the last several decades, needless to say, various attempts had been made to improve the conventional teaching method, but the effects were hampered by large class sizes and deep rooted examination oriented instruction. A most noteworthy project was the establishment of the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI). The Government set up the Institute originally to develop a new instructional system with emphasis on programmed ITV and self learning materials. Its ambitious attempt turned out to be unrealistic and was partially discontinued, but we should not underestimate its role as a center of curriculum development and of policy research. Actually the Institute has made enormous achievements in improving classroom instruction as well as education policies.

As for the qualitative improvement of higher education, the Government undertook a control approach at first and an incentive approach later. In 1950 there were strong criticisms against the loose application of academic requirements for degrees. In response to the demand for excellence in higher education, the Military Regime attempted a series of radical reforms in 1961 known as "Rearrangement Plans." Although most of the plans resulted in nullification, the mechanism of Government control in higher education has been institutionalized since then. The Ministry of Education intervened deeply in the entrance examination process and began to authorize enrollment quotas, tuition amounts, and degree conferment of respective universities. The Ministry also imposed guidelines on academic operations including curriculum development.

As an incentive approach, the Government initiated the "Pilot University Program" in 1973. The program selectively supported pilot institutions which met some qualitative criteria and adopted experimental reforms, by providing them with subsidies and allowing for greater autonomy. The reform proposal included the reduction of a dual major graduation system, and the application of an accelerated graduation system. The program began to be applied to ten selected universities, but it was gradually disseminated to all universities and colleges through the early 1980s. The authorities concerned evaluated the effects of the program positively from the viewpoints that it built self reform efforts and gave flexibility and variety to university management of academic affairs (KCUE, 1988, p. 40). From the standpoint of universities, however, negative evaluation seems to be prevailing based on the fact that most reform attempts resulted in a return to the status quo.

The intervention of the Government in academic affairs persisted under the authoritarian regimes from the Third to the Fifth Republics, on the pretext of enhancing the quality of higher education. The Ministry of Education suggested such guideline on curriculum operation as follows: Required courses for all students are in national ethics, Korean history, military training, and physical education; more than 30% of all curricula should be allocated to general education.
Besides that, as a means of quality control for educational content, the Ministry strongly recommended joint preparation of curricula and syllabi by interdisciplinary communication between universities with financial supports from research funds. The adoption of the graduation quota system in 1980 invited a stronger supervision of the Ministry regarding university management of academic affairs.

In sum, the ideology underlying the policies on teaching might be characterized by conformity or standardization. It legitimated government control over what and how subjects would be taught and sharply curtailed individual initiative and creativity of teachers. The conformity and control could be partially attributed to the centralized administration system and to large class size.

5. Administration and Finance of Education

In relation to the nature of educational administration, the Constitution specified: "independence and political neutrality of education shall be guaranteed." Based on this philosophy, the Education Law institutionalized the ideal of autonomous educational administration. At the central level, the Ministry of Education assumed the power to standardize all education activities throughout the nation. For local autonomy, school districts were created with corresponding Boards of Education at the levels of province and county in 1952. The country board's authority was limited to primary schools and the provincial board controlled directly the secondary schools. However, the Ministry of Education exercised the dominant influence in actual administration.

Primary and secondary education was financed partly by the national treasury and partly through an education tax levied by provincial municipal governments. During 1950s, however, more than a half of the funds for local school were collected through Parent–Teacher Associations (PTA).

The authoritarian government in the 1960s and 1970s centralized the administration system further and maintained only a nominal form of local autonomy. The county Boards of Education were abolished and the provincial Board, which was chaired by the Provincial Governor (appointed by the President), was to be composed of members elected by the Provincial Assembly, but they were actually nominated by the Minister of Education. The superintendent was also to be recommended formally by the Board, but in fact, the Central government controlled the election process. This pattern of centralization has continued into the present time.

The abolishment of the Education Tax in 1961 increased the dependence of local finance in the national treasury and accordingly resulted in strengthening the centralization of educational administration. However, the proportion of education finances in the central government budget was less than 10% in the 1950s and only rose to the level of 15% during 1960s and 1970s. The government enacted the "Grant for Local Education Finance Law" to secure a financial source
trast, the recent reform attempts appear to feature a more open democratic process and a pan-government effort. The reforms in education sector planning reflect the government's growing responsiveness to the recent democratization trend and its interest in public accountability and consensus.

II. Recent Policy Alternatives under Action or at Issue

There are a variety of policy alternatives being actively examined and considered for implementation by the authorities concerned. Since 1988 the Ministry of Education has scrutinized the concrete feasibilities of the policy proposals included in the final report of the Presidential Commission for Education Reform (PCER). Some of the proposals seem to be in the predicament of facing conflicts between competing interests. Others are considered as long term tasks, to which the Government and public have little objection, but they should inevitably be realized step by step within the limits of financial resources. At the same time, the Advisory Council on Education Policy to the Minister has reviewed relatively short-term policy alternatives to solve urgent problems. Some of these policies have already come into effect. The background and singificance of these respective policy alternatives may deserve further explanation in several categories.

1. Primary and Secondary Education

a). Earlier Entrance into Primary School

The entry age of primary school is set at six years in Korea, and the rigid adherence to chronological age has raised many problems. Even those whose age falls one day short of six years, are not eligible for entrance and have to wait another year. Limiting the entry age to the chronological age of six, in practice, amounts to total disregard of individual differences in mental age and this, in turn, becomes a serious obstacle to effective learning.

Accepting the recommendation in the Report of PCER, therefore, the Government plans to permit the children whose chronological age has passed five to enter schools on a selective basis (PECR, 1987, p. 81). The admission of children will be left to the discretion of the principal, who can make the decision in consideration of various factors. It is suggested that each school district develop a testing program to screen applicants.

Administrative officials are apprehensive that the permission of earlier entrance would cause classroom shortage for several years. School teachers also worry that a feverish zeal of parents to get their children admitted at earlier ages will cause many dysfunctions. Furthermore strong objections are being made by kindergarten teachers who anticipate the possible shrinkage of children enrolled in pre-school education.
for primary and secondary education in 1963. The Law earmarked 11.8% of internal taxes for local education and guaranteed the expenditure of teachers salaries.

The Law has been an institutional mechanism ensuring the stability of educational administration while avoiding the politics of budget allocation. The proportion of educational expenditures in the government’s budget kept increasing during the 1980s, amounting to 20% as of 1987. The increase of public education finance in relative as well as absolute terms can be attributed to the revival of the Education Tax as a national tax. The additional revenue secured by the tax, which occupied about 12% of the total education budget, was earmarked for improving educational conditions, specifically for expanding accommodation facilities. Originally the Government established the tax with a time limit of five years to 1986, but extended its valid period until 1991.

Though the Ministry of Education has tried to expand the resource input to education, sometimes by suggesting and supporting educational plans or reforms, its efforts have seldom had a satisfactory effect. The Compulsory Education Accomplishment Plan(1954–59), which was the first formal and energetic rehabilitation program after the Korean War, secured only 38 percent of the requested amount of funds(Paek, 1968, p. 37). The Five Year Educational Reconstruction Plan(1962–66) and successive mid-term plans in the education sector generated remarkable enrollment increases in excess of the targets, but it was not followed by corresponding increases in teachers and facilities. The long-term Comprehensive Education Plan(1972–86) fell to the same fate as many other previous plans (Kim J.C., 1971, p. 15). In short, inadequate financial support from the budgeting authorities has been the single most serious constraint to implementing educational policies as well as plans(McGinn ct. al., 1980, p. 39).

A noteworthy attempt at alleviating these problems in recent years was the establishment of the Presidential Commission for Education Reform in 1985. It was the first advisory body in the education sector, established directly under the Present, in Korea history. After three year of intensive activities including numerous surveys, conferences and public hearings, the Commission reported to the President a comprehensive set of reform proposals for educational development toward the 21st century(PCER, 1987). With the dissolution of the provisional Commission, the Ministry of Education began to scrutinize the feasibility and priority of the suggested proposals, in cooperation with the Advisory Council for Education Policy which was newly formed under the Minister of Education.

Since education policies are highly controversial and intertwined with socio-economic interests, however, the Council could seldom reach a consensus and rarely received the necessary cooperation from other sectors. Accordingly, in early 1989, the Government revived a presidential advisory body on education policy. In the past, many educational policies had been initiated by a few specialists and decided through a “black box” in the Ministry without exposure to the public. In con-
b) Accelerated Graduation and Grade Repetition

Korea has maintained a policy of automatic promotion within each school level. It is expected that all children will pass to the next higher grade at the end of the academic year. Teachers are not supposed to decide special promotion, repetition or dropout of each student on the basis of academic achievements. The automatic promotion runs counter to the principle of individualized instruction by anchoring all learners to one pace of learning.

PCER strongly emphasized that promotion to a higher grade should be contingent upon the individual's pace of learning. Its report recommended a kind of differentiated promotion system under which fast learners could obtain accelerated graduation while slower learners could stay at the same grade for another term (PCER, 1987, p. 88). The Ministry of Education intends to apply the promotion policy to the students from grade 4 to grade 12. In actual decision on promotion, the principal should consult with parents, based on the criteria and the test results, which are expected to be developed by the respective Boards of Education.

Many educators give warning about the fact that the differential promotion policy may have some negative effects, especially on the students' physiological outlook. The students who make an accelerated advance in grade may indulge themselves in self-assertiveness and a sense of pride. Additionally, the repeaters may suffer from an inferiority complex and finally drop out of the schools. Despite these possible dysfunctions, however, the necessity of motivating learning achievement is generally recognized as a means of making school more competitive and effective.

c) Autonomous Operation of High School Entrance Examination

The present system, which pursues "equalization through the random allocation of students by lottery", has pros and cons as reviewed earlier. At any rate we cannot deny that the prerequisites for the system, one of which was to eliminate the gap between high schools in terms of educational conditions, has not been realized despite of elapse of more than ten years. Thus the negative effects of the system appeared to outweigh its advantages.

Recently the PCER recommended an autonomous operation of selection procedures. The suggested reform gives each high school the responsibility of testing for entrance eligibility and allows the students to choose a school in their own district. High schools may also keep the presnet system of allocation by lottery. The decision on whether or not to adopt the new system will be delegated to the respective boards of education (PCER, 1987, p. 93).

Accepting the proposals of the PCER, the Ministry of Education prepared an implementation plan with the draft of a bill, but the Cabinet meeting reserved its adoption. The cabinet's reluctance seems to be based on the
apprehension that entrance examinations by each high school will induce the old problems of intense competition and strong demands for private tutoring. The high school entrance system, which has been one of the most controversial issues in recent years, will need further scrutiny, but it seems inevitable to recognize the freedom of choice of the schools and of the applicants at the post-compulsory education level.

2. Higher Education

a). Greater Autonomy for Higher Education Institutions

The management of higher education has been fossilized into bureaucracy, inertia and dependency. The Ministry of Education has made major decisions regarding most issues related to the management of the university, which requires a high degree of professional expertise.

In response to the persistent demands for autonomy in recent years, the government has delegated decision making authority or expanded the discretion of the universities on the following matters. First, the Ministry of Education allowed individual institutions to determine their amounts of tuition and fees, which had been controlled by the Government until 1988.

The policy measure coincides not only with the principle of a free competitive market, but also with the strong requests from private universities. It seems ironic, however, that many universities are now suffering from student intervention in the process of determining tuition and fees.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education plans to eliminate the current requirement that the appointee to the presidency of a university or of a small independent college must get approval from the Ministry. The amendment bill of the Private School Law which requires the approval, is currently under deliberation in the congress. Since the requirement has been used as a control mechanism, its elimination is of great significance vis a vis real autonomy.

Thirdly, the Ministry intends to grant full autonomy to individual universities in developing and applying their own devices for the selection of students until the early 1990s. Although the present entrance system which was implemented in 1988 is giving a considerable degree of autonomy to universities, they still have to use the Scholastic Achievement Test developed by the Central Education Evaluation Institute. The institute will transform the test into a Scholastic Aptitude Test and its future adoption will depend on the decision of individual universities.

b). Abolishment of Periodic Re-appointment of Professors

Since 1976 the Government enforced the system of appointing all the faculty members with the term from two to ten years according to their respective ranks. The appointment has been subject to renewal through a careful review
of each faculty member's academic achievements and other activities. This system might contribute a bit to stimulate the research and student guidance activities of the professors, but its negative effects could not be understated. The periodic re-appointment of professors undermined the consistency of their research activities and the sense of insecurity curtailed any sense of freedom. Furthermore, the vagueness of its criteria rendered the system vulnerable to political abuse.

Continuous strong criticisms urged the Government to repeal the provision of the re-appointment system and to allow autonomous systems of personnel management by individual universities. The Ministry plans to introduce a tenure system for appointing the professors of national universities. The laws concerned are in the process of amendment at the Congress. Since the re-appointment system became effective within political context of the authoritarian regime, its abolishment has symbolic as well as practical significance to the process of democratization in Korean society.

3. Educational Administration and Reform

1). Strengthening the Local Autonomy of Education

In early 1988, the National Assembly passed several acts concerning the realization of local autonomy system in the near future. The amended Education Law stipulates that the local board of education should change its role and status from an executive body to a decision making body, and that the local assembly should appoint the board members who would then have the power to elect the superintendent. The Law also provides for the considerable delegation of functions and powers away from the central government to the local authorities, especially in the spheres of financial and personnel administration.

It seems to provide a legal base for the greater autonomy of education administration at the local level, but the prospects of its successful implementation are not favorable at this point. The elections for the local assembly have been postponed mainly due to the political conflict between the Government and the opposition parties. Accordingly, the indirect election of the board members has not been realized yet. In practice, the local autonomy system may encounter considerable resistance from local government which will assume the responsibility for larger share of educational financing. In addition, it is questionable as to whether the local authorities have the resources and political expertise to effectively govern their regions of authority.

However, the local autonomy of education seems to be inevitable as well as desirable in the light of the recent trends toward democratization. The remaining task would involve how to engender the climate and conditions necessary for the effective realization of these proposed ideas.
2) Reform in School Management

The organizational structure of schools, which have a small proportion of management positions, makes the chance for promotion remote. Furthermore, once a teacher is promoted to principalship, he can retain this position until the legal retirement age. Thus the competition for promotion among the teachers has been intense, especially in urban areas where most schools maintain a large size.

Some criticize that the secured principalship tends to encourage self-righteous bureaucratic management of schools. In the process of decision making, school managers have not paid sufficient attention to the opinions of teachers and staff. Derived of opportunities to develop their own creative ideas, the teachers have habituated themselves to dependency on orders coming down from the top.

In this context, the majority of teachers argue strongly that the principalship should be subject to the term of office. This position was positively accepted by political parties as a public commitment, but it faced with serious resistance from the present principals and has not yet been fully adopted by the Government. Recently an organization of radical teachers contended that the plenary meeting of teachers in each school should exercise decision making power including the selection of their principal. The radicals also argue for the formation of a teachers’ union having the power of collective bargaining and of strike.

A periodic rotation of principals may contribute to expanding the promotional opportunities for teachers and to democratizing the leadership in school management. On the other hand, such a system will invite deterioration in the leadership and expertise of forthcoming principals. The Government seems to inclined to adopt a new system with the understanding that active principals would be protected. The radicals’ proposal gave a stimulant shock to the education circles, but it seems to receive minor support from the public.

3) Permission of Private Tutoring by College Students

Until the 1970s, as mentioned earlier, private tutoring had been so prevalent that it brought about serious social problems. Thus in 1980 the Government prohibited all kinds of private tutoring except in the field of arts and music. Violators of the prohibition were subject to heavy punishment: public servants whose children receive tutoring were dismissed from office; tutors were imposed criminal punishments; and the parents of violating students suffered from tax inspection.

The ban on private tutoring was in effect for several years and contributed to equalization of learning opportunities between the rich and the poor as
well as reduced the financial burden of the parents. However, the ban has been considerably weakened by the democratization trend of society, and private tutoring has again come to the force albeit in secret. In addition, from an ideological viewpoint, many people have criticized that the prohibition of tutoring infringes upon the human right of learning. In a vortex of hot debate on its pros and cons, the Government decided to permit the private tutoring done by college students in early 1989, but the authorities concerned have kept the banning of private tutoring by school teachers. As a supplementary service, television lectures are being broadcasted to provide all students with the same experience of tutoring in preparing for college entrane examinations. The decision to remove the prohibition also has a symbolic significance as it lifts another ban made by the authoritarian regime.

III. Ideological Dilemmas and Directions

The various education policies discussed above can be understood in light of their underlying ideological conflicts and goals. The term ideology here is meant to denote the philosophy or fundamental values pursued in education policy. The ideological dilemmas that have confronted the Korean government in its effort to formulate effective policy for national education can be summarized as follow:

1. Control vs. Autonomy

Since Korea has maintained a highly centralized administration style, the central government has controlled the nation wide education system including private schools. Despite a series of policy changes, the underlying mechanisms of control were hardly mitigate until the recent times, especially as regards student selection and local education. A historical review reveals that the military authoritarian regime tended to strengthen its control soon after its seizure of power and that the enforced "reforms" have in fact been restored over time.

Some degree of control on education might be inevitable in the Korean setting as means of ensuring public interest and social justice, but excessive control has hampered the initiatives and creativity of both the educational institutions and individuals. Centralized control prevent the educational system from responding to the diverse needs and conditions of different areas and schools. In view of past experience, there seems to be little objection to the suggestion that government control should be scaled down. The question then becomes one of how to balance state control and local autonomy.

The context of education policy in Korea has undergone remarkable changes in recent years. The demands for democratizaion and more autonomy are found in every sector of the society and the Government has so far been inclined to adopt an accommodative posture towards these demands. The new Constitution con-
tains a clause of "university autonomization." Accordingly education policy also faces a turning point or transition period toward greater autonomy. We can see some examples among the policies recently launched. The government began to grant more discretion to higher education institutions and to delegate many functions to local administrative authorities. The call for reform in school management is expected to result in autonomous decision making at each school level.

In the light of the prospective realization of a local autonomy system, nationwide uniform control is likely to be neither desirable nor feasible. A greater degree of autonomy should be accorded in general, and if necessary, some regulatory control could be exercised in accordance with an individual institution's capability for self-control. In promoting autonomy, critical factors would be in the attitudinal changes of bureaucrats and education administrators as well as changes in the socio-political outlook.

2. Standardization vs. Diversification

One of the characteristics in Korean education is the uniformity of its goals and content. In curriculum revision and textbook compilation, as reviewed earlier, the government has imposed highly uniform guidelines on primary and secondary education, emphasizing conformity with national goals. Education policies encouraged similarity between institutions and between programs. The typical examples would be the nationwide college entrance examination and the Presidential Decrees on the requirements of teachers and facilities by school levels. The pattern of policy implementation can also be characterized by conformity, in little consideration of the differences between urban and rural, and between public and private educational milieus.

The conformity in educational policy may be justified as an effective means for standardization and for quality control. In fact, this policy direction has contributed to the enhancing of national integration and the enforcement of all schools to secure educational conditions above the minimum level. The policies toward standardization have also corresponded favorably with the centralized administrative system and with the strategy for better administrative efficiency.

On the other hand, it is obvious that the policies enforcing standardization have also suppressed creative and innovative efforts by individual institutions. In addition, the policies emphasizing conformity must have hampered abilities to adopt to changing situations and needs.

Korea is pursuing the realization of an open democratic society. Thus the historical ideological controversy over conformity versus diversity may not be a serious bone of contention. It is not desirable, however, that the government should give up completely standardization efforts in education policy. The question is one of extent rather than existence.
3. Equality vs. Excellence

As Korean education has met with the rapid increase of students at all school levels, the Government has put as top priority in the pursuit of acceptable schooling environments. Some analysts criticize, as mentioned earlier, that Korean education achieved quantitative growth at the cost of quality. In other words, we can say that the equality of educational opportunity has precluded the excellence of education. A few typical examples of such policies would be the students selection system by lottery, the compulsory primary education, which engendered the situation of over large class size, and the automatic promotion between grades.

The equality of educational opportunity means a fair and equal chance of receiving education, without any discrimination due to social class, locality, or sex. However, the concept does not mean an absolutely equal chance, but relative fairness in accordance with one's capability and merits. Thus equality and excellence may be considered mutually exclusive at the first glance, but we can explore reconcilable policy directions between the two ideologies that render them complimentary.

The time has come for Korean education to end its marriage with quantitative expansion and instead seek to pursue individual excellence. Education directed toward this goal expands individual potential to the fullest extent and assists in the achievement of self realization. In this context, we may recognize positively such recent policies as accelerated graduation and grade repetition, autonomous operation of high school entrance examination, and the permission for private tutoring. The education which seeks excellence requires highly qualified teachers, well developed educational program that can cater to diverse needs, and advanced facilities. In addition, the Government should oversee the development of equitable conditions for fair competition, for objective evaluation, and for proper compensation.

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