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**CAN 'SCHOOL CHOICE' AND GREATER DIVERSITY SAVE THE
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF SOUTH KOREA?**

Lessons from the U.K.

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Introduction

This paper sets out to give an overview of the Korean school choice system, to draw comparisons with the English system, and to see what lessons for Korea can be drawn from the English school choice and school diversity system.

Although the definitions of ‘school choice,’ and ‘diversity,’ and ‘equity’ in education have been contested, in this paper these terms will have the following meanings. ‘School choice’ refers to the right of parents and students to choose which schools of higher grades to enter: specially in this paper focusing secondary school choice in England and middle school and high school choice in Korea. This paper discusses the education of students between the ages of twelve and eighteen in both countries. In England, students between these ages are in the secondary school system; in Korea, such students are either in middle school or high school. I must point out that this paper compares Korean school choice system only with the English system in the UK. As is widely known, the UK is a single state composed of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. But as the educational systems of the four regions differ significantly, this paper focuses only on the English school choice system.

As will be discussed, Korea’s schools are fairly homogenous, and parents are given little choice about which school their children attend. In addition, the central government has significant control over educational policy. Local authorities and individual schools have very limited powers. Since 1974, another important characteristic of the Korean education system is an “all schools equal” approach. The policy aims to make all schools, from primary schools to high schools, equal in academic achievement. However, because the policy mainly targets middle and high schools, this paper focuses on middle and high schools rather than primary school or higher education. Another characteristic of Korean education is the importance of private institutions which provide after-school tutoring to a significant portion of students. The range of tuition fee of private tutoring is very diverse and some fees are too expensive for middle or working class students to attend.

This paper starts from some questions about these characteristics of Korean education. The Korean education system has been praised from a social justice standpoint. Striving for school equality and assigning students to schools by lottery are meant to bring students of diverse socio-economic groups together in one school, causing equity through education. But after 30 years of the ‘all school equal’ policy and ‘school arrangement by lottery,’ segregation by education has become increasingly

severe. Freshmen at top universities come from mainly middle and upper class families; meanwhile, students from working class families have a harder time passing admission exams for top universities.

What has caused this increasing inequity? As we will see in chapters one and two, to study for their national university admission exams, many Korean students depend on private tutoring through private institutions rather than their schools. This paper tries to seek answers to questions these questions:

?Why does Korean society always have an argument related with ‘equality’ even though the school system seems to coincide with social justice?

?Would dependence on privately funded after-school classes decrease if a school choice system was introduced in Korea?

?Is it possible to both respect an individual’s right of choice and to protect social common good and social justice?

?Is school choice always accompanied by inequity?

?Can we improve Korean schools?

In chapters one and two, we will examine the Korean educational system by looking at schools and education policy. Chapter one provides an overview of policy and the effects of policy, and chapter two develops two social problems caused by the educational system: a dependence on private tutoring and increased socio-economic stratification in education.

Chapters three through five examine aspects of the English system and consider whether the English system has anything to offer Korean society. Chapter three looks at the English school choice system and national school diversity, with an overview of the system’s history and the dramatic change caused by the 1988 Education Act. Here, we also consider debates about ‘school choice’ in England. Chapter four covers the ‘Assisted Places Scheme,’ a policy of the Conservative Party from 1980 to 1987. The Assisted Places Scheme provided government funding for ‘poor but able’ students to study at independent, privately funded schools. Finally, chapter five overviews English academies, a new type of secondary school established by Tony Blair’s New Labour Party.

The conclusion returns to the questions asked in this introduction, and it uses the English school choice system to offer a message to Korea.

Chapter 1

The present condition of South Korean education

1. “All schools equal” policy

Since 1974, the Korean Government has applied an “all schools equal” educational policy to all middle schools and high schools. Before this policy, Korean middle and high schools offered entrance exams, and scholastic achievement varied widely between different schools. In short, there was a clear hierarchy of schools, much like the ‘school league tables’ of the UK and the USA.

The Korean Government put forward the “all schools equal” policy to remedy a side effect of school entrance exams: before 1974, high school entrance exams were so competitive that many young students were overworked in preparation for the exams. The Korean Government wanted students to have more time to relax.

At first, the “all schools equal” policy took effect in Seoul and other big cities. The affected area has expanded annually so that currently, the policy affects between sixty and seventy percent of Korean high school students. Policy enforcement varies between districts. For example, in Seoul and other metropolitan cities, students are assigned to their middle school and high school by a lottery system. In smaller cities and rural areas, students first apply to schools they want, and then the local education authority links students and schools by a lottery system.

In short, students and parents who live in urban areas have almost no school choice. So while the Korean system emphasizes equality in education, it seems to restrict freedom of school choice.¹

2. Educational system

In Korea, children usually start primary school, which has 6 grades, at the age of seven. Children under that age sometimes attend private or state-funded nurseries.

After attending primary school for six years, students then go to middle school for a further three years. Finishing three years of middle school completes the total nine years, from primary to middle school, of compulsory education. When students enter

¹ Youn J.I(2003) Diagnosis of Korean Education

high school they have to choose between academic high schools and vocational high schools. At this point, 72% of students go on to academic high school, while the remaining 28% go to vocational school.

? The Systems of Korean and English Education

KOREA		grade	AGE	ENGLAND		
note	course			grade	course	note
compulsory education (9 years)	primary school	1	6	1	compulsory education (11 years)	
		2	7	2		
		3	8	3		
		4	9	4		
		5	10	5		
		6	11	6		
	middle school	1	12	7		secondary school
		2	13	8		
		3	14	9		
		4	15	10		
choice between academic high schools and vocational schools	high school	1	16	11	6th form	
		2	17	12(lower)		
		3	18	13(upper)		
	university	1	19	1	university	
		2	20	2		
		3	21	3		
		4	22			

One interesting characteristic of Korean education is that there are many private schools supported by public funds. 19.6% of middle schools, 50.3% of high schools are private.² And 25% of these private schools are religiously affiliated.

Religious schools are common because in the early stage of modern education in Korea, missionaries often took the leading role in opening schools.

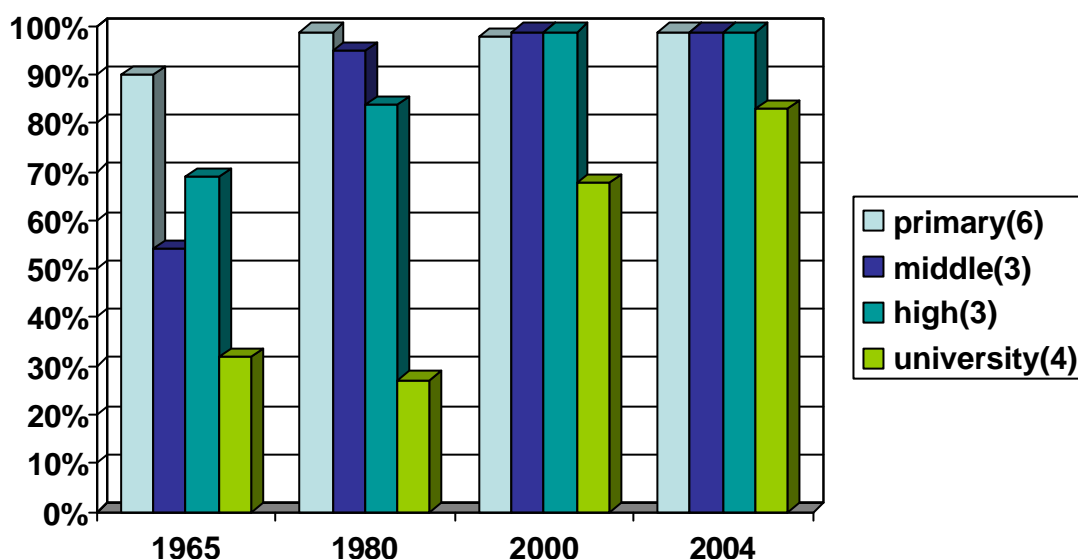
3. Strong value on education for children's education

Korean society places a high value on education. Even in the poorest families, parents are often devoted to getting education for their children. In 1960, Koreans

² Statistics of Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2004)

referred to universities as *gwanjoo*, English for “cow bone buildings.” The term refers to the practice in rural areas of selling the precious family cow to educate one’s children, even while the parents themselves may have been going hungry. The percentage of students who enter higher education is very high. This fact also is a result of the emphasis on education in Korean society.

? Percentage of students who enter higher education.



In 2004, 99% of children at the appropriate age entered primary through high school, and 83% entered university. These numbers are among the highest in the world.

Parents’ strong commitment to education has played a positive role in training talented people to work in industrial and social sectors. It has also contributed to economic development in Korea.

4. Private institutions

In Korea, many students study with private tutors or at after-school programs. Parents, anxious to secure their children a place in a highly competitive top university, often spend considerable sums of money on private tutoring for their children. For a fee, private institutions offer after-school classes in special subjects such as English, mathematics, Korean literature, natural science, social science, writing.

These private institutions vary in quality; some have outstanding teachers, educational methods, and entrance exams for students. The exams allow institutions to offer classes at different levels, with students assigned to classes suited for their needs.

Many Korean students and parents think private institutions are better than formal school in many aspects.

According to a recent poll by the Korean Member of Parliament, J.H. Lee, 72% of Korean students at the elementary through high school level go to private tutors.³ In Seoul, around 90% of students go to private institutes. Some institutes have classes that end as late as midnight.

Through various policies, the government has tried to weaken the hold private tutoring has on education. In 1980, the government formally banned all private tutoring, but the ban was ineffective and had to be gradually relaxed. In late 1990s, President Kim Dae-Jung declared in his inauguration address that the Korean government would “free young people from extracurricular activities and relieve parents from the heavy monetary burden of private tutoring.” The government declared that, in stages, it would ban tutoring for secondary students.⁴

But in 2000, the Constitutional Court of Korea decided that banning private tutoring violates the constitution. According to the Court, the government has a right to address educational inequality issue by extending compulsory education, but it cannot ban private tutoring, which is a human right. After this decision, the already widespread practice of private tutoring extended rapidly.

5. State control of educational policy

The Korean government is responsible for establishing education policy. The government, for example, manages school administration and the building of new schools. The Korean government also controls and sets tuition and academic curricula, and even the method of evaluating students. This governmental oversight and control applies to both public and private schools. Therefore, private schools lack the freedom to set their own academic curricula and activities.⁵

Governmental management of public and private school administration leads to standardization of education. Almost all Korean schools teach students the same subjects for equal amounts of time, with limited exceptions for specific subjects such as religious education. Students from all over the country learn the same content and use the same materials. Such standardized education means that particular schools do not stand out for their individual characteristics and merits.

³ Lee J. H (2006) Published in inspection of the government in 2006.

⁴ Mark Bray, (2006) Private supplementary tutoring

⁵ Youn J. I(2003) Diagnosis of Korean education

Chapter 2

Problems and challenges for South Korean education

1. Disregarding Formal School Education

In 2006, the Korean Education Development Institution (KEDI) surveyed 40,000 Korean primary and high school students from 570 schools to assess the attitude students had toward their education. KEDI asked students to rate their satisfaction with their classes on a scale from zero to 100, and they came up with the following, fairly disheartening results: the average primary school grade was 64; it was 52 for middle schools, 50 for vocational high schools, and 47 for academic high schools. Class work and academic counseling were rated the most disappointing areas.⁶

An OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) study from 2003 revealed similar results. When PISA, Program for International Student Assessment, examined differences in attitudes toward school between 29 nations, Korean students gave some of the most negative answers, with responses such as “school is not helpful to prepare future life,” “school class is a waste of time,” and “school teaches useless information for my future job.” The feelings of satisfaction of Korean students ranked 28 of the 29 nations surveyed. Korean students ranked 26 on their “sense of belonging at school,” and Korean students also gave negative answers about “teacher support.”⁷

The trend of young Korean students going abroad to study is surely linked to this widespread dissatisfaction. In 2005, 35,000 students left Korea to study abroad, according to figures from the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources. The number is a small absolute portion—only 0.5 percent—of the total number of primary and high school students, but this percent is on the rise. In 1999, 10,000 or 0.1% percent of students went abroad to study, but 6 years later it has increased to over 35,000. Until the 1990s, it was illegal for Korean students to go abroad for primary through high school education, so the phenomenon is a recent one.⁸

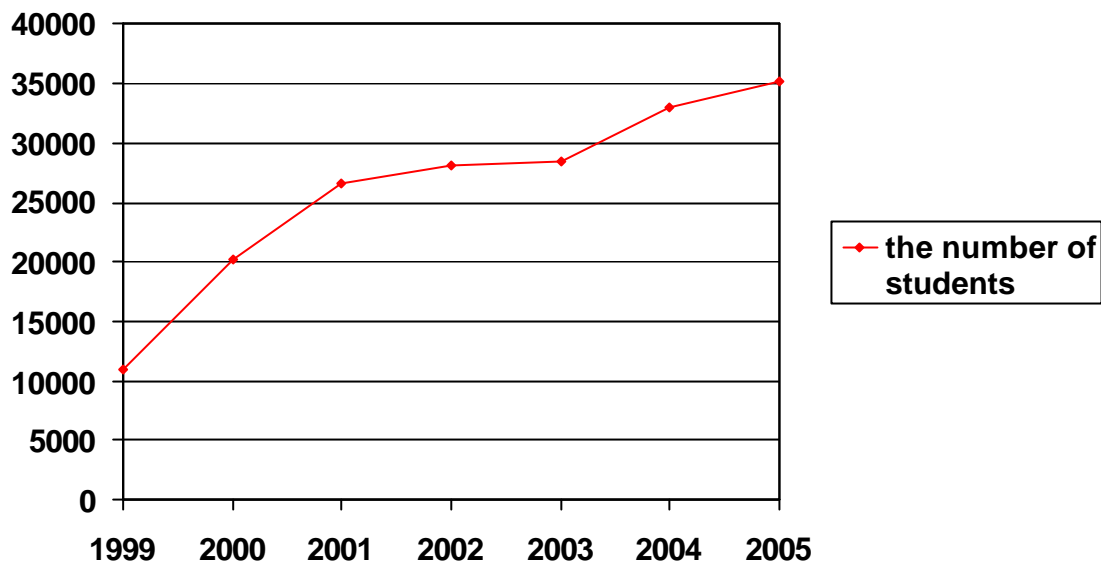
In some cases, children and mothers leave together to foreign countries, while fathers are left behind in Korea to send money abroad. In Korea, we refer to that kind of father as a “wild goose father,” a term that refers to the traditional meaning of the wild goose who travels great distances to bring back food for his child. If the female dies, the male goose takes care of his offspring on his own. So the term “wild goose father” carries a connotation of male sacrifice for his wife and children.

⁶ KEDI (2006) Research on the attitude towards school of Korean students

⁷ OECD Pisa(2004) Learning for Tomorrow's World

⁸ Statistics of the Republic of Korea, Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006)

?The number of students going abroad for primary and secondary education



Why has the number of Korean students going abroad been on the rise? Some people cite a failure of the formal education system, while others attribute these numbers to the great expense of private tutoring. For the amount of money many parents spend on private tutoring, parents could also send their children abroad to study. And Korean society's excessive competition also seems to encourage some students to study elsewhere. Surely none of these three factors functions independently. Failure of the formal education system, the costs of private education, and the competitiveness of the Korean system surely all contribute to an individual's decision to study abroad.

It is true that many students and parents are dissatisfied with the formal school system, and this dissatisfaction is due to the fact that even a student who excels has a small chance of realizing his full potential in the classroom. At the same time, a student in need of extra help is unlikely to find it. Korean schools do not offer lessons geared to each student's particular level, but rather they offer one set of materials and one curriculum for all students. Some teachers complain, "I don't know for whom I teach. When I teach for superior students rest of students sleep in the classroom, when I focus on inferior students rest ignore my words."

2. Power of Private Institutions

While the formal education system generates many complaints, the private tutoring system is received in a more positive way. These institutions offer different

levels of classes, so students can learn at a level appropriate to them.

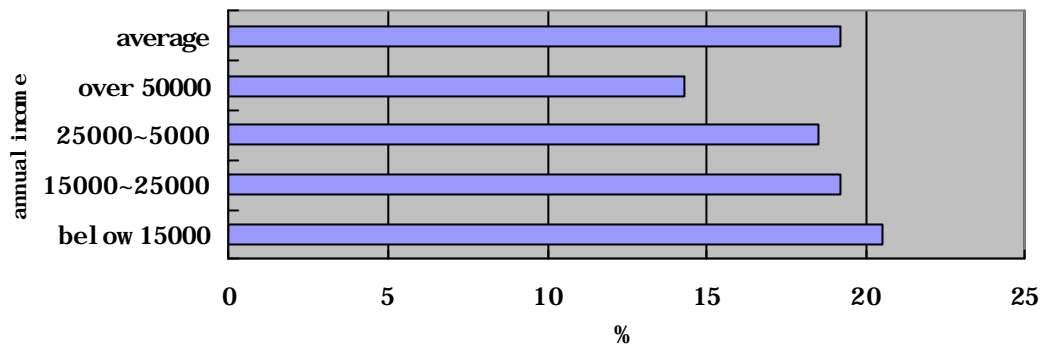
Many private institutions have good teachers, sometimes lured away from formal schools and into the private system. Talented teachers at private institutions can earn very good salaries, and some are even millionaires.

Parents, anxious that their children keep ahead in the competition for top universities, spend large sums to send their children to private institutions. The institutions often have entrance exams, making them seem even more desirable and competitive. Many students and parents think private institutions are a great deal better than schools. According to a poll by J.H.Lee in 2006, 72% of Korean school students go to after-school classes at private institutions. In cities, between 80 and 90 percent of students attend private institutions. A common saying is, “Sleep at school, study at private institution.”

According to research from KEDI, in the year 2000, 81% of parents were sending their children to after-school classes at private institutions. According to follow-up research in 2007, 19.2% of household income in Korea will be spent on tuition fees at private institutions.⁹ On average, a household pays £320 per month on tuition fees, and private institutions charge an average of £190 per student.

?Private institution tuition fees (not including regular school fees) as a percentage of total household expenses (2007)

⁹ Hyundai Research Institute(2007) ‘The study of private institute market’



Private education comes in many forms. Some students attend *hakwon*, institutions that hold classes for groups of students. Students may also have tutors they work with one-on-one, lessons with visiting teachers, or internet-based classes. In Korea, *hakwon* education is dominant in the private institution market. 58% of students go to *hakwon*, while 8% learn by individual or group tutoring in the home.¹⁰

Because private institutions do not register the exact number of students they teach and because private tutors often do not report their income, it is difficult to know the exact contribution of the private education industry to the Korean economy. Nevertheless, it is clear that private education has a significant price tag. According to a study of private institutions in Korea, the private institution market has been growing for the last 30 years.¹¹

? Volume of private institutions compared with GNP

year	1977	1980	1982	1985	1990	1994	2001	2004	2007
volume of Private Institutions (£)	151m	178m	255m	363m	1.67b	3.17b	6.38b	11.01b	17.93b
Private Institution /GNP (%)	0.36	0.96	0.47	0.51	1.39	1.86	2.7	3.4	3.9

3. Social Stratification by Private Tutoring

Too much dependence on private education institutions is not compatible with social justice; private institutions maintain and exacerbate social stratification.

¹⁰ KEDI (2000) Research of Private Institution in Korea

¹¹ Kwok S.K.(2003) Analysis of private institution

A recent study conducted by researchers at Seoul National University (SNU) demonstrated this correlation between a student's grades and family income.¹² In 2003, researchers from the very prestigious SNU collected data from the 12,538 students in its freshman class. In particular, students provided information about where they came from and their parents' occupation and level of education.

Analysis showed SNU has 17 times more freshmen from higher income families than from middle and lower income families. Students with stay-at-home mothers are four times more likely to enter SNU than those who have working mothers. According to the research team, full-time mothers indicate stable and profitable families, since the family's finances do not demand that the mother earns an income.

The SNU study demonstrates the close correlation between students' achievement and social class. Wealthy parents send their children to special private institutions, but lower income parents cannot send their children to these private institutions. In addition, stay-at-home mothers often concentrate on finding the best private institution for their children. Private institutions are very important in Korea because national entrance exams for university entrance are sometimes difficult, and public schools fail to prepare their students sufficiently for the exams. Even many public school teachers agree that their lessons are not sufficient. Some teachers even survey their students, asking, "Did you learn this unit in the private institute? OK, then skip it!"

Today's correlation between achievement and socio-economic status was not evident twenty years ago. In 1985, the number of lower or middle class students matriculating at SNU was roughly equal to the number of matriculating students from wealthier families. At that time, seven students per 1,000 high school students entered SNU from middle and low class, with another 8 from upper class families. In the 1980s, the Korean government banned all private tutoring, and during that time, Korea was under despotic rule. Therefore, this ban was strictly enforced.

Since this time, the rates have changed markedly. In 2003, out of every 10,000 high school students, 37 enter SNU from upper class families, and less than 3 students enter SNU from middle or lower class families. This stratification has only grown more severe.

It seems obvious that the difference between these students is access to tutors and private institutions: students from higher income families went to tutors to raise their grades, while students from lower income families studied without outside help. In Korea, college entrance is determined by a combination of high school grades and a

¹² Kim.K.U, Professor of Seoul National University (2003) Who are entering SNU?

college exam, an SAT-like test offered only once a year. Entrance exam score is, however, more important in college admissions decisions than are academic grades.

J. H. Lee and S. Kim¹³ insist that Korea's 'all schools equal' policy has caused a proliferation of private institutions. According to Lee, the tightly regulated education system has almost eliminated competition between different middle and high schools. Schools are unaware of or indifferent to students' needs, and they fail to take responsibility for their teaching. Thus, Lee and Kim conclude that the "all schools equal" policy has made private tutoring more popular.

4. Few choices before entering university

Urban students, at the age of 15, make the choice of whether to enter academic or vocational high school. There are also a small number of special high schools such as foreign language schools, science schools, and independent schools. But until university, the choice of what kind of high school to attend will be a student's only opportunity to express preferences about what school he or she attends.

In Korea, students applying to regular academic high schools are assigned a school based on a neighbourhood lottery system. Students entering vocational schools do still have control over what particular school they attend. According to the 1974 'all school equal' policy, all students are mixed on equal terms, regardless of academic achievement or socio-economic status. The policy's aim is social justice through educational equality.

But along with the 'all school equal' policy comes standardized education and excessive governmental control of schools. All schools have used the same textbooks and similar teaching schedules. The government mandates the number of times each subject is taught in a week, each school's number of students, guidelines for application, tuition rates, classroom content, and methods of assessment. This high degree of government involvement explains why one school is just like the next.

While governmental control is the comfortable norm for teachers and administrators, it may not be the way to most inspire teachers to be creative and energetic about their lessons. J.I. Youn, Professor of Educational study at the Seoul National University, has argued that the Korean education system serves the interests of the Government without paying attention to the needs of schools, teachers, or students.

¹³ Kim S. & Lee J.H. (2001) Demand for education and development state: private tutoring in South Korea

According to Youn, the Korean system fails to serve the needs of students or parents.¹⁴

5. The “all schools equal” system debate

The “all schools equal” policy has been in effect in Korea for thirty years. The Conservative party criticizes the policy, arguing that this attempt at educational equality has caused undesirable socio-educational change.

One problem is that this homogenizing of education causes the entire system to shift to the lowest common denominator, causing what has been called “classroom collapse.” Teachers cannot effectively teach a single classroom of students whose academic backgrounds are very diverse, so instead they often teach at the level of the least able students in the room. What is interesting is that industry and business sectors want to abolish the ‘all schools equal’ approach. One leading member of Samsung Electronics has voiced the concern that the current system is inherently stagnant. As he told a reporter, “Schools and teachers are living peacefully in the “all school equal” system. No one tries innovation in schools.”¹⁵

But some academics and school teachers insist that ‘classroom collapse’ is not related to the ‘all schools equal’ policy. This group warns that applying a market perspective to education is inappropriate. According to Kim, who is professor of educational study at Korea Maritime University, increasing school choice and ending the ‘all schools equal’ policy would make educational inequality spike. Kim insists that a marketplace model of education fails to guarantee fair competition, a social good. Because parental income often correlates strongly with children’s academic achievement, applying market principles to the educational sector would cause severe inequality.¹⁶

Chapter 3

The English school choice system

¹⁴ Youn J.I.(2003) Diagnosis of formal education

¹⁵ Chosun Daily(17 Feb 2005)

¹⁶ Kim Y.I.(2000) Dangerous experiment

1. History of the choice system

The 1944 Educational Act in the United Kingdom established free secondary education for all children. To create a meritocratic system, different types of secondary schools were to be divided by children's aptitude. Most Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had established an academically selective system after 1944 Education Act according to 'tripartite school system' which covered grammar, secondary modern and technical schools.

In 1960, the Labour Government introduced comprehensive schools in England. One of the reasons of introducing comprehensive schools was to reduce the number of school types in the hopes of providing greater equality of opportunity. The 1960s, therefore, were marked by a reduction in school diversity. But in 1974, the Conservative government pushed through a revised policy, which de-emphasized comprehensive schools. Instead, the government proposed a 'Charter of Parents' Rights'. Nevertheless in the 1970s and 1980s selective schools were gradually replaced by comprehensive schools in England. This was because Local Education Authorities controlled by the Labour Party pushed comprehensive schools.

Parents and students have been given greater choice between schools through the 1988 Education Reform Act, a broad policy covering grant-maintained (GM) schools, school-based management of schools, open enrolment and other issues. At that time, the Conservative government promised that it would bring efficiency to the education system and improve educational standards.

Passed in 1993, the Education Act encouraged a greater diversity of schools and thus moved all schools in England into a competitive market for children and parents. Such a market-oriented school choice system had been continually stressed since the early 1980s. At that time, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government insisted that competition between schools would give families greater choice about which school their children attended. In the 1980s, Conservatives also emphasized the power of families to express a preference for any school. The criteria for admission, exam results, curricula, and discipline and organization reports were provided to parents.¹⁷ When Thatcher became Prime Minister, her government also ensured the retention of grammar schools, publicly funded selective secondary schools, even though most LEAs in England had been moving toward comprehensive schools since 1960.

More recently, New Labour's educational policy has been mixed; Tony Blair

¹⁷ Geoffrey Walford(1994) Choice and equity in education

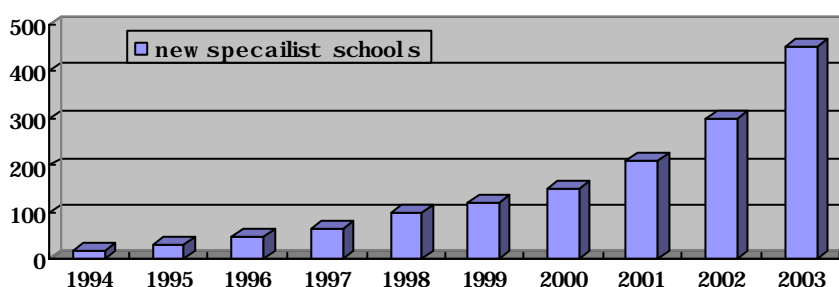
has reduced the emphasis on competition between schools and instead, encouraged greater cooperation.¹⁸ Current policy, however, still reflects a basic belief in school choice and diversity.

2. Diversity of school

In England, there are many kinds of secondary schools including independent schools, grammar schools, faith-based schools, stated funded schools, City Technology College (CTCs), academies, and specialist schools. This diversity explains why the school choice system is so important to the English education, and has been in place since 1988. And 'Choice' policy tended to coincide with 'Diversity'. In addition, two political parties tried to introduce a new school model so that they would win favour with voters.

The scope and nature of specialist schools, first established in 1994 by the Conservative party, have changed dramatically since the 1997 election of the Labour government. Specialist schools emphasize technology, mathematics, sports, arts, modern languages, engineering or science. Now, many secondary schools have become specialist schools. In 2003, there were 1,445 specialist schools; in 2006, specialist schools make up over 50% of all state secondary schools in England.¹⁹

?Number of new specialist schools each year



Established by legislation in 2002, academies are a new type of English school based on a Conservative Party initiative called CTC. Academies have been established in impoverished areas to improve the education of financially disadvantaged students. These schools have, while the government provides the majority of academy funding,

¹⁸ Geoffrey Walford(2006) School choice in England: Who makes the choice and what are the results?

¹⁹ Chris Tator, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

academies have some funding from sponsors and the private sector.

The beacon school was another school type introduced by New Labour in 1998. Beacon schools are high-performing centres of excellence. It is in beacon schools that new, effective practices are developed for eventual distribution to other schools. On average, beacon schools receive more financial support than typical secondary schools. Since 2002, secondary beacon schools have been replaced by a programme called the Leading Edge Partnership Programme. In the Leading Edge programme, innovative schools are identified and then selected to receive an additional £60,000 per year for three years.²⁰

Why does England have so many types of schools? First of all, LEAs are autonomous and can generate their own policies. This decentralization of educational policy differs considerably from Korea, where the national government dictates all educational policy. In England, changes in national education policy might not affect every local school.

Another important characteristic of English school diversity relates to funding and admissions.²¹ While academies, beacon schools, and many other special types of schools receive funding not only from local government but also directly from the national government, the traditional LEA-maintained school gets funding locally. All schools participating in school diversity reform can get financial benefits from the government.

Schools which are part of school diversity programmes are given some degree of selection in admission. For example CTCs could select between 10 percent and 20 percent of their students on the basis of aptitude or ability.

3. Discussion

Increasing school choice is usually a Conservative cause in England, while Labour governments in the past tended to emphasize the harmful effects of school choice. But under New Labour, many Conservative educational policies from the 1980s have remained in effect.

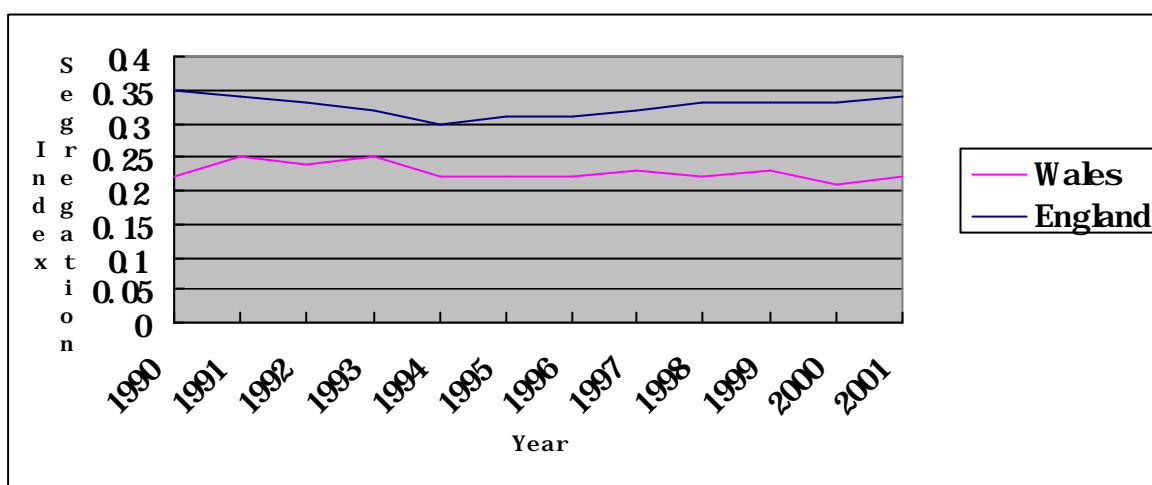
Greater school choice could lead to greater social stratification, and some research backs up this position. Such studies demonstrate that while, in theory, all parents are able to choose which school their child attends, in practice, not all families

²⁰ Chris Taylor, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

²¹ Chris Taylor, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

are equally able to make such a decision. For example, some parents cannot afford to pay for their children to travel to schools that are far from home. Other parents do not obtain the necessary information to make informed decisions about what school their child should attend. Finally, some parents cannot afford to move to an area where good schools exist. As a result, critics of the English school choice system have said it causes racial, ethnic, and class-based segregation.

?Segregation of free school meal pupils between secondary schools²²



The table above shows segregation through schools in England and Wales. The segregation index on the vertical axis shows the distribution between schools of the percent of students who receive free school meals. A segregation index of zero means that all schools have the same amount of students who receive free meals. On the other hand, a high index means that some schools have many free meal students and other schools have very few free meal students. In short, a high segregation index means that schools are more divided by social class.

From the table, it is clear that since 1997, socio-economic segregation in England has risen continually. Further, segregation in England is more severe than in Wales.

So is choice really a bad thing? Some scholars have suggested that the problem is the method of choice, because a well-functioning choice system is universally beneficial. Others argue that school choice itself increases social inequality.

Simon Burgess, Professor of Economics at the University of Bristol, has said, “School choice reform should aim to reduce the link between a child’s family income

²² Chris Taylor, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

and the quality of the school he or she attend...The current school system is only working for some, favouring children from more affluent families. Removing choice in favour of neighbourhood schooling would be a regressive step. What is needed is to reform the school choice system.”²³

But Stephen Ball, the Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education at the Institute of Education, University of London, has stressed that segregation is the result of school choice. According to Ball, “Middle class families are particularly attuned to the use of choice in education and particularly adept at choosing....Choice can and does encourage social segregation. Choice is relational.”²⁴

4. Implications for Korea

Since 1988, the British government has emphasized the importance of retaining a school choice system and school diversity. In the last twenty years, many state schools have become specialist schools; for instance, and some schools have been selected as beacon schools or leading edge schools. Because of this school diversity, English parents and students living in urban areas can choose a school for its particular characteristics. But parents and students in rural areas have less opportunity for school choice.

Compared with the English school system, Korean middle schools and academic high schools are mostly homogeneous in curriculum, teachers, students, teaching methods, and classroom materials. There are also about fifty special selective high schools and a handful of selective middle schools.

It is true that many privately funded middle schools in Korea have their own educational philosophies. But as we have seen in chapters one and two, the Korean government has great control over educational policy in both private and publicly funded schools. Therefore, middle schools in Korea have the same textbooks, curricula, and lesson schedules. The main difference between the various middle schools is the source of school funding: the state, a religious group, or private families.

The high school system is also fairly homogenous, although some vocational high schools do have unique characteristics. For example students can choose to attend a ‘video specialist school’ a ‘food specialist school’ or an ‘internet specialist school’ when they apply vocational high schools. These vocational schools are called ‘specific characteristic schools’.

²³ The Edge published by the ESRC(2006) Freedom of choice should help the poor...

²⁴ The Edge published by the ESRC(2006) ...But the middle-classes play the system

‘Specific characteristic schools’ have more freedom to create their own curricula and standards. In addition, these schools receive central governmental support. As a result, many vocational schools have tried to diversity by becoming ‘specific characteristic schools.’ Vocational schools are more advanced than academic high schools in terms of school diversity

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, school choice has been a source of controversy in England because it brings up issues of racial, economic, and ethnic segregation and social justice. But it is also true that many English students and parents enjoy their right to choose from diverse schools.

One important consideration is how a school choice system could be managed to ensure equality. Can school choice coincide with the common good and social justice, or are choice and equality at odds? As in England, this is an open question in Korean society, when this country introduces much choice and school diversity.

Chapter 4

Assisted places scheme for ‘poor but able’ students

1. Definitions and commentary

The Assisted Places Scheme was established in the 1980 Education Act, a piece of Conservative legislation. Through this scheme, children who could not afford tuition at independent schools were provided free or subsidized places if they passed the school's entrance examination. In 1997, 32,000 children were provided school tuition by the Assisted Places Scheme, legislation originally intended to help bright children from modest or poor homes. The Assisted Places Scheme has been held up as a catalyst for social mobility, providing opportunity for working class students to achieve high marks on national tests, admission to elite universities, and professional success.

The Assisted Places scheme was, in some sense, justified as an extension of parental choice: many 'able but poor' children, who have poor parents, could satisfy their academic needs through this scheme.²⁵

But because of criticisms that the scheme is a misuse of public money, the New Labour government abolished it with the 1997 Education (Schools) Act. This allowed children who were already in assisted places to complete the remainder of the current phase of their education.

Since the 1980s, the Assisted Places Scheme has caused much controversy. Scheme supporters insist that it provides a 'ladder of opportunity' to many poor children; it seems to increase social justice. But many critics stress the damage that it causes to the educational system as a whole. Sceptics wonder if it is right to use public funds to sponsor the removal of pupils from the public sector.

One important aim of the Assisted Places Scheme was to create a better 'ladder of opportunity' for poor but diligent and able children. With the disappearance of grant-maintained schools and grammar schools, 'poor but able' children were seen as lacking a chance to succeed. The Assisted Places Scheme had some degree of success by giving certain poor children more access to elite education. The scheme was also said to give these children the motivation provided by the promise of social mobility

As evidence of the scheme's achievements, a study from London University's Institute of Education has shown that almost 20 percent of pupils on the scheme were paid more than £70,000 a year by the time they reached the age of thirty. Only 7.6 percent of their state school counterparts achieved this income level. The same Institute of Education study also showed that children who were helped by the Assisted Places

²⁵ Tony Edward, John Fitz and Geoff Whitty(1989) An evaluation of the Assisted Places Scheme

Scheme scored higher on exams than their peers who went to state schools.²⁶

But what families benefited from this scheme, and did the policy operate well? The answer from Tony Edward, John Fitz and Geoff Whitty has been that there is no evidence to suggest that the main beneficiaries of the Assisted Places Scheme were from the target groups originally envisaged. This scheme was put in place to help working-class students, but the main beneficiaries were typically middle class. The beneficiaries, therefore, have not been those with the greatest need for the scheme.²⁷

Another criticism of the Assisted Places Scheme was that by pirating scholastic talent from state schools, the scheme hurt these publicly funded schools. Edward, Fitz and Whitty have insisted that state-funded schools already have difficulty attracting the most competitive pupils, and the scheme has only made this problem worse.

With the scheme's abolition in 1997 by Labour government, the socio-economic distribution of independent school pupils has been narrowed, though many privately funded schools have taken steps to provide their own funding for pupils from less advantaged backgrounds. The Conservative Party, which is currently out of power, is considering a successor to the Assisted Places Scheme known as 'Open Access Scheme.'

2. Implications for Korea

The English and South Korean educational systems differ greatly, not least of because the two countries have such different traditions and policies. When we compare English secondary schools and Korean high schools, which in English terms, teach students between secondary school year five and the sixth form course, the Assisted Places Scheme might be seen as a strictly British policy with no relevance to Korea.

First, Korean high schools are not compulsory, even though almost all young people go to high school. Second, high school tuition fees vary greatly between the two countries. English independent schools are very expensive (£12,000-25,000 per year), so working class families are excluded from these schools. In Korea, however, the nation's 2000 high schools all have similar tuition fees. The Korean government caps high school tuition fees, which range between about £650 and 750 per year. The nation's forty selective private schools, however, cost more. Nevertheless, these costs are capped at three times that of an ordinary school. Therefore, the maximum annual fee would be about £2000 to £2200, with additional boarding expenses. This cost certainly

²⁶ Daily mail(10th July 2006) Pupils robbed as Labour scrap Assisted Places

²⁷ Tony Edward, John Fitz and Geoff Whitty(1989) An Evaluation of the Assisted Places Scheme

would burden working and middle class parents in Korea, but not so much as English independent schools.

Third, private institutions have a strong influence in Korean society. As discussed in chapters one and two, many Korean students depend on private institutions to improve their academic and non-academic skills. Even students at selective Korean high schools register at private institutes, where they can learn higher-level material. Because of the prevalence of such private institutions, an Assisted Places Scheme to defray the cost of secondary school might have less influence in Korea.

Nevertheless, the Korean educational system can learn from England's experience with the Assisted Places Scheme. Koreans, too, must ask how the government provides for its 'poor but able' students. This is a crucial question, related to issues of equality and social mobility.

In many societies, education increases social stratification rather than creating a 'ladder of opportunity'. In Korean society, tuition and boarding expenses make it difficult for 'poor but able' students to attend selective private high schools. Such elite schools, then, teach students of mainly middle and upper class origin. The situation is similar at Seoul National University.

One important issue in Korean society is how to disconnect the link between social class and admission to selective schools. The introduction of an Assisted Places Scheme might provide increased opportunity for some 'poor but able' students. Such a funding system would motivate many students from poor areas to study with diligence. If the Assisted Places Scheme were brought to Korea, it must be carried out in a careful way to ensure that the scheme has proper beneficiaries—students from working-class families. At the same time, Korea's private sector should provide need-based scholarships for students to attend selective high schools.

Chapter 5

Academies in poverty areas

1. Evaluation and criticism

As discussed in chapter three, when parents and students have greater freedom to choose between different schools, the gap between the quality of English schools seems to grow. Some state schools, located in high achievement areas, attract more and more students; on the other hand, schools in poorer areas are often notorious for student violence and poor test results. This educational polarization is one reason that the Labour Government has introduced academies, which the British Secretary of State defines as “state-funded independent schools that will work with other schools to provide first rate, free education for pupils of all abilities.”²⁸ The Labour Party, concerned about high dropout rates in poor areas, has introduced the academy as an attempted remedy. The hope is to provide greater support to schools in poorer areas.

Academies owe their existence to partnerships between private sponsors and the government. Sponsors, which can include individual benefactors, businesses, or faith-based groups, are expected to provide up to 20 percent or ?2 million of startup costs, and the government covers recurring costs. Sponsors or their representatives serve on the governing body of the school. The academies differ from City Technology Colleges because Local Education Authorities are key partners in the establishment and development of an academy.²⁹

With the enactment of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the first three academies opened in September 2002, with nine to follow in 2003 and five more in 2004. The government aims to have at least 200 academies by 2010, including at least 30 in London.

If these 200 academies are built by 2010, academies will comprise only six percent of all secondary schools in England. But because academies are specifically being established in needy areas, they may have a disproportionately significant influence on the country’s educational system. Already in the regions of Southwark, Lewisham, and Islington, academies comprise 30 to 40 percent of total number of secondary schools in each area.

Academies are similar to the American charter schools introduced in the early 1990s, because both types of schools have private funds and are usually established in

²⁸ Chris Taylor, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

²⁹ Chris Taylor, John Fitz and Stephen Gorard(2005) Diversity, specialisation and equity in education(Oxford Review of Education)

poverty areas. Further, the academy and charter school systems were established to address the particular needs of academically under-achieving areas. That is why many academies and charter schools are located in areas challenged by poverty and high secondary school attrition rates.

Academies are diverse: some are established in former schools that have since closed, while other academies are brand new. And some represent a merger between three or four schools. Academy sponsors are also diverse and include owners of carpet manufacture companies, car dealerships, advertising firms, or other entrepreneurs and faith-based groups.

After their introduction as a new English school model, academies have been the subject of much debate. On the one hand, students and parents seem to welcome academies to their neighborhoods. John Bowler, a student at Haberdashers Aske's Knight Academy, said to a reporter that "school has changed and we students changed, too." Haberdashers Aske's Knight Academy was established on the site where an old state school closed in 2004. The sponsor and government invested large sums into Aske's Knight Academy; students were encouraged with new curricula, new uniforms, and new school buildings. Students who had previously suffered from low self-esteem said that they began to feel greater self-confidence in the new environment.³⁰

In the case of Bexley Business Academy, which opened in 2002, student attendance has risen from 78 to 91 percent in two years. During the same period, the percentage of withdrawal has dropped an impressive 700 percent. In addition, scores on standardized tests have improved; Bexley students are fifteen percent more likely to pass their GCSE exams than they were two years ago.³¹ King's Academy in Middleborough also changed positively. There, GCSE pass rates have risen from 14 to 34 percent in only one year.³²

Nevertheless, academies face many criticisms. Sceptics question whether concentrating funding in only a few schools is an efficient use of ? 50 billion of government money, the total budget of the academies programme.³³ Another subject of concern is the sponsors, and their ethical obligations and responsibilities. It was discovered recently that Grace Academy in Solihull has given more than ? 300,000 to an organization linked to its sponsor: a car dealer and property developer.³⁴ Critics of academies insist that the government is to blame for allowing a private sponsor to wield

³⁰ Interviewed by the Chosun Dailly Newspaper London correspondent Kim YJ(April 2007)

³¹ The Guardian(9th July 2004)

³² The TES(3rd September 2004)

³³ Education Deveolment(2005) published by Korea Education Development Institute

³⁴ The Guardian(5th March 2007)

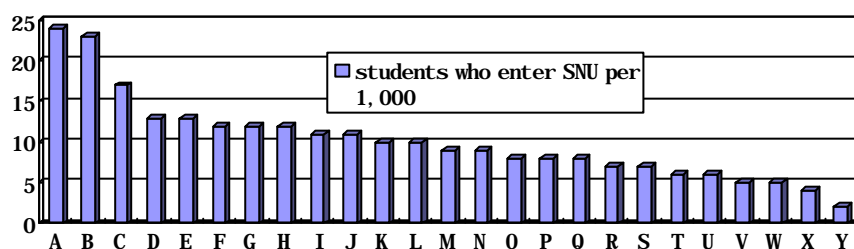
so much influence over state education.

2. Implications for Korea

Educational polarization is a key issue in Korean society. Even though schools are fairly homogenous, families still seem to strongly prefer or avoid certain middle schools and high schools. The reasons for these preferences are multiple, and certainly one of the most important factors influencing a family's decision to send their child to a school is the average performance of that school's students. Desirable schools with the best results are mostly located in middle and high class districts of Korea.

Data from 2004 shows how different districts in Seoul produce students with very different results.

?The ratio of students who enter 'Seoul National University' according to district in Seoul (2004)



Using data from the approximately 210 non-selective high schools in Seoul, this table offers a challenge to Korean society: how can we develop the schools located in districts X and Y? Land in these areas is occupied mostly by industry and slums, and many students in these areas have working-class parents. Such students have relatively little chance to attend private institutes, which are quite influential in Korean education. Students are disappointed with their situation, and the local schools have not been able to encourage these students to achieve their potential.

The Korean Government has tried to improve schools in poverty areas. Superior teachers are posted there, special public funds are provided, and publicly financed high-tech buildings are erected. But these policies have unfortunately failed to produce good results; the schools do not change, and families that can avoid them continue to do so.

The British academy system presents an excellent model for Koreans to consider, although it might be too early to evaluate the system in full because academies are relatively new. Nevertheless, through much trial and error, the British government

has found that academies resuscitate frustrated schools. The British government has insisted that of the diverse policies it has tried, results were minimal with all systems except for the academy system.³⁵

Shawn Hackett, the person in charge of Academies in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) of UK, said that there is no single way to improve students' scores in low-achievement schools. Academies succeed because, as he said, they make simultaneous use of multiple new measures, including the introduction of sponsorship and extra funding from the private sector, privately organized schools, improvement of teaching skills, stress on fundamental studies, rebuilding of schools, and an effective combination of sponsors, teachers and LEAs. According to the DfES, financially challenged schools in England have started to see positive change because of the combination of these diverse measures.³⁶

Rapid and innovative reforms in establishing academies provide an important lesson to Korean society, as Koreans debate how best to support poor schools in poor areas. The Korean government is obstinate in its "all schools equal" policy, even though schools do in fact vary considerably. For instance, each academic high school uses a different standard to evaluate its students. As Koreans try to improve schools, they must keep in mind that the policies differ between schools. By ignoring the differences between schools and the particular problems of schools in impoverished areas, the Korean government has missed the 'proper therapy' for those schools in need of special support.

Schools located in X and Y districts, for instance, demonstrate the need for diverse and intensive educational policies so that students achieve better results. Only after some reforms have been made successfully and students are achieving at higher levels should we consider whether it is right to support only certain schools with public funds or whether it is acceptable to link private organizations to schools.

Conclusion

³⁵ Peter Cook, principle of Peckham Academy (2007) interviewed by Chosun Daily Newspaper

³⁶ Educational development(2005) published by Korea Educational Development Institute

In the fifty years since the Korean War (1950-1953), South Korea has developed rapidly. The process of industrialization has created the need for many citizens to have special training, and the Korean education system has played an important role in creating a more skilled workforce. As was seen in the first chapter, during the 1960s and 1970s, the education system provided a kind of ‘ladder of opportunity’ in Korean society. The government extended compulsory education, and many schools were established for poor children. These new educational policies helped contribute to the dynamism of Korean society in those exciting years. Education was a tool of social mobility, offering social advance to ‘able but poor’ students who passed higher education exams. Children, born into lower income families, could become doctors or lawyers and advance into higher economic brackets. There was significant social mobility, and although the system was imperfect, it did seem to create a society with considerable social justice.

But since the 1980s, Korean society has changed significantly. That is nothing but educational segregation. As per capita income rises, increasing numbers of parents and students have started to express dissatisfaction with their schools. They complain that schools do not fit their demands, and students who are attending classroom lectures sleep through class. While state education has received many complaints, private tutoring through private institutions has become an important national education industry; many students now depend on private tutoring for academic improvement. Unfortunately, many students’ academic achievements seem to be correlated with the amount of private tutoring they receive. This is because good private tutoring is usually very expensive. The income level of a family is closely related to its children’s educational achievement.

Korean education is in a critical situation right now: parents and students put less energy into state-funded schools because they depend on private tutoring. As noted in chapter two, the prevalence and influence of private institutions causes increased educational segregation. How can this kind of problem be solved? The question, “Can we make schools work in Korean society?” is ultimately the same question as ‘how can we reduce the power and influence of private institution education?’ and ‘How can we prevent the social segregation that results from unequal access to private tutoring?’

In chapters three through five, the English school choice system has been surveyed and its applicability to Korean education considered. Some aspects of the UK system may offer solutions for Korea, although other aspects fail to translate between countries and cultures. In studying the advantages of the choice system and school diversity, the school choice and diversity issue in England has been reviewed. This topic

has been controversial in England since the 1988 Education Act, which stressed parents' right to choose schools. It is true that school choice system used to coincide with social segregation, even if there is not clear evidence of correlation between the two. But some scholars have been insistent that choice is a good thing in general. David H. Hargreaves, Professor of Education in the University of Cambridge, for instance, believes that people always favour choice over no choice and diversity over uniformity.³⁷ David Smith, Economics Editor of the Sunday Times, wrote, 'Choice is undoubtedly a good thing. There is no greater frustration for customers than being stuck with an inefficient monopoly provider'.³⁸

The Korean system as has been noted offers little school choice, and social segregation has become increasingly severe. It cannot be deduced that 'no choice leads to inequity' by the Korean experiment alone, but it can be clearly seen that a lottery system (random allocation of schools) is not an answer to the inequity issue.

So what system can offer school choice, diversity and equity?

Choice with equity

This paper has considered the English school choice model and how it might be applied to Korea society. Unfortunately, according to many researchers, the result of school choice in England has been negative. The problem is inequality, as has been seen.

Some scholars have been interested in questions like 'how can choice become equitable'? James Tooley, Professor of Education Policy at Newcastle University, has argued that, through reforms, choice can be consistent with equality.³⁹ He has written that "extra material resources would be needed to ensure that the disadvantaged young people had required funds for travel, uniform, and other extras'. In addition, Tooley suggested that failing schools should be identified quickly so that remedies can be provided. Under Tooley's model, the education system would need an early-warning inspection system with 'emergency squads' of experienced managers to turn around sinking schools. David Hargreaves has also argued that, all things being equal, families should have a diversity of schools from which to choose.⁴⁰ He stressed that 'diversity and choice cannot be left to market forces, but several types of state intervention are justified to protect the vulnerable from the unintended and inequitable side effect of market forces'.

³⁷ David H. Hargreaves(1996) Diversity and Choice in Education: a modified libertarian approach

³⁸ The Edge published by ESRC (2006) 'No choice but to have more choice'

³⁹ James Tooley (1997) Choice and Diversity in Education: a defence (Oxford Review of Education)

⁴⁰ David H. Hargreaves(1996) Diversity and Choice in Education: a modified libertarian approach

Simon Burgess, 'neighbourhood-based schooling' which is favoured by many opponents of choice system makes the segregation worse.⁴¹ He provided the evidence that more children from poor families go to lower-performing schools than their richer next-door neighbours. His key point is that to make an equal society a school choice system should be working effectively.

With regard to the Korean system, it would be useful to consider a school choice model from England. Although the school choice model is inspired by a market-oriented perspective, it can also offer greater social welfare. Generally speaking, Korean students have less opportunity than English students for choosing schools. Many Korean students from wealthy families depend on supplementary institutions to help them prepare for national tests. On the other hand, students from poorer families cannot afford private tutoring. 'Segregation by private tutoring' is the problem created by the current system. How should this issue be managed? Can the private sector's impact on Korean society be overcome? The most important first step to take is to make Korean schools work. With the right marketing strategy, schools can and should become more attractive than education through private institutions. This is necessary for schools to survive in the 'war against private tutoring.' A school choice and diversity system can be introduced to reduce the influence of private tutoring.

Needless to say, a school choice system cannot be implemented without considering students from lower income families. 'How can we help poor children in a school choice system?' 'How much public money should be spent to help these students?' Many English policies have been focused this topic, and new types of schools have been introduced. It is difficult to assess how effective these systems are in England, and it is also hard to say which policy would be most helpful in Korea right now. But clearly, both 'school choice' and 'assistance for the disadvantaged students' should be simultaneous goals.

Decentralized education system

How can school choice in Korean society be increased? First of all, it is

⁴¹ The Edge published by the ESRC(2006) Freedom of choice should help the poor...

important to decrease the power of government over individual schools. As noted in chapters one and two, Korea has centralized its educational system and schools are very homogeneous. The government draws up the curricula, chooses textbooks, and influences teaching methods, so individual schools are not special or unique. In the 1970s, this centralized school policy was effective in delivering education to many children in a developing country, and some scholars believe that this centralized control over individual schools enabled Korea to industrialize in a short time.

But, at the same time, the centralized system has had many problems. The Korean government has, through its 1974 “all schools equal policy”, formalized this tendency to homogenize education nationally. The government, having promised parents and students to make all middle schools and high schools equal in academic standards, put in place strong regulations on LEAs and individual schools. The government has meddled in the finances of schools, personnel changes among teachers, curricula, and student assessment.

Not only schools but also LEAs have been controlled by government. LEAs in Korea act only as messengers between schools and government. In addition, the Korean system suffers from a problem of communication between parents and schools. Schools seem to prefer taking the government’s direction and advice to listening to students’ and parents’ opinions.

The gap and conflict between schools and parents has become severe, and it is a central reason that parents and students place little value on state schooling. It is also interesting that since the 1980s, parents’ and students’ desire for education has become diverse as incomes have risen.

What can Korea learn from England in terms of schools’ autonomy? In England, LEAs and individual schools have significant power, and schools are diverse. As noted in chapter three, even if English educational policy changes nationally, a well-functioning local school system could continue. Because English LEAs communicate with local citizens, educational policy is made through communication between LEAs, parents, and schools. School diversity is, therefore, a result of democracy and tradition of mutual agreement.

Diversity within school

This paper has not covered the ‘diversity within school’ in English schools.

Almost all secondary schools in England work on the basis of tailoring their teaching to students' different academic attainments. Even in the primary school teaching method differs from child to child. It is a kind of common sense in education in many countries.

On the other hand, the angry voices among Korean parents and students complain about inefficient classroom management. As described in chapter two, most Korean students are taught with the same material in the same types of classrooms. But because students have different aptitudes in each subject, teaching access should be different. The Korean system ignores this basic principle by homogenizing the curricula throughout the country. A few years ago, the government introduced a policy called "taking lessons by students' level". which means that diverse classes are supplied in the same subject. But few schools are running this system right now. This system seems well-suited to meet the needs of parents and students, and there is no good reason why it should not be put in place more widely. Schools which do not have "taking lessons by students' level" are used to complain that they had only a bare minimum of teachers, money, and classrooms, but it seems to be an excuse. Korean schools which have delayed the introduction of this system deserve criticism.

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